

RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

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April, 2006

Jack Benny Turns 40?

By Dr. Charles Beckett

Two of comedian Jack Benny's radio personality characteristics were being miserly and, year after year, remaining 39 years old. However, on his February 13, 1948 radio show, he acknowledged that he would become 40 on his next birthday, the following day. The conversation on the subject of his age begins when announcer Don Wilson asks, "Tell me Jack, how's it feel to be a year older?"

Jack answers, "Don, I don't know. It seems strange to advance another year, but then, on the other hand, there's something exciting reaching 40 -- Yes sir." Don replies, "Well, Jack, you may be 40, but I must say you look much younger." Then Benny says, "Well, Don, it's nice of you to say that, but, let's face it. I mean, my age is beginning to show, you know, a little wrinkle here, a gray hair there... time marches on."

Don tells Jack that before they get on with the show, he has a surprise for him -- the studio audience is going to sing Happy Birthday, which they do.

When Mary Livingston wishes him happy birthday, Jack replies, "And just think, Mary,

tomorrow I'll be 40." Never one to miss an opportunity to heckle Jack, she reminds him that when he and Eddie Cantor were in Vaudeville together, they were both the same age, and now Cantor admits that he's over 50. "How come you're only 40?" she asks. His answer is short and simple, "Oh, I don't know. Just lucky, I guess." Then, he adds, "Anyway, Mary, now that I'm approaching middle age, I'll have to slow down the mad social whirl and cut down my night life a little."

Mary's not about to give up her prodding. "Some night life. You have a hamburger and fries, squeeze the waitress's hand and then run home and pretend you're Errol Flynn."

Mary reads Jack a birthday card from her sister, Babe. "Congratulations. It's wonderful to be 40, Jack. I've been there twice and I'm coming back."

Dennis Day congratulates Jack, and Phil Harris gives him a present -- one glove. When Jack asks why only one glove, Harris tells him he only needs one because his right hand is always in his pocket. Then he asks, "Hey, Jackson, look, all kidding aside, how old are you going to be tomorrow?"

Jack replies, "40."



(Continued on page 3)

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

PO BOX 1908, Englewood CO 80150 (303) 761-4139 -

Dedicated to the preservation of old-time radio programs, and to making those programs available to our members

Old-Time Radio is Alive and Well in Colorado!

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President:	Larry Weide	5270 E. Nassau Cir. Englewood, CO 80113	(303) 758-8382	lweide@attglobal.net
Vice-President:	<i>Open Position</i>			
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Treasurer:	Maletha King	900 W. Quincy Ave. Englewood, CO 80110	(303) 761-4139	dickking@earthlink.net
Newsletter:	Carol Tiffany	1394 Golf Vista Court N. E., Palm Bay, FL 32905	(321) 723-7803	ctiffany@worldnet.att.net
Talking Newsletter	B.J. George	Email - bj39@tds.net		Talking Newsletter egroup - http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rwun
Membership:	Maletha King	PO BOX 1908 Englewood, CO 80150	(303) 761-4139	dickking@earthlink.net
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Convention Schedules

20th Annual OTR and Nostalgia Convention, April 21 - 22, 2006; Contact Bob Burchett, 10280 Gunpowder Rd., Florence, KY 41042 (888-477-9112) haradio@hotmail.com

17th Annual Radio/TV Classics Live will be held May 5 & 6, 2006 at The Buckley Performing Arts Center, Brockton, MA., Contact: Buckley Center Box Office, 1Massasoit Blvd., Brockton MA 02302, (508) 427-1234, www.radioclassicslive.org

31st Old-time Country and Bluegrass Contest and Festival, Aug 28 - Sep 3, 2006 at Harrison County Fairgrounds in Missouri Valley, Iowa. For information contact Bob Everhart at Box 492, Walnut, IA, 51577 (712) 762-4363 bobeverhart@yahoo.com

Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention, Sep 14 - 17, 2006 at Four Points Sheraton, Aberdeen, MD Web site is www.midatlanticnostalgiaconvention.com, For information call Michelle or Martin at (717) 456-6208

31st Friends of Old-time Radio Convention, Oct 19 - 22, 2006 at the Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For information contact Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 (203) 248-2887 JayHick@aol.com or check our web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

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Then Phil says, "What are you talking about? You've got toupees older than that."



Jack interrupts the program to read a telegram from his sister Florence that has just been delivered to him. "Dear Jack, I've been listening to your program and I thought I should send you this wire immediately. You're mistaken about your age. You're not going to be 40; you're going to be 39." to which Jack replies, "Oh, no. This can't be. This is awful..."

Mary asks, "How old did your sister say you're going to be tomorrow?"

Jack replies, "39. Oh, my goodness. This is embarrassing. But, my sister Florence ought to know. I guess instead of being born in 1909, it was 1910." Jack then calls Rochester and asks him to look at his birth certificate and tell him what the date of birth is on it. Rochester says that he can't, because "there's a hole in the paper where it was erased once too often."

Jack ends the conversation about his birthday with, "Well, there's nothing I can do, and I'll have to take my sister's word for it... I'm 39!"-- which he remained for the rest of his professional career.

Author's Note: Jack Benny was born February 14, 1894, which, in 1948, would make his real age 54.



RETURN WITH US NOW...

Old Time Radio Moments of the Century (Part 9)

(The following article by broadcast historian Elizabeth McLeod is reproduced here with her permission.)

Ms. McLeod has listed her "top 100" 20th Century Radio Moments. We will be presenting 10 of her selections in RWUN each month for ten months.

20. Death and Funeral of FDR 4/12-15/45



For a generation of Americans, he was simply "the President." Millions loved him -- millions hated him. But all Americans are stunned at his death, when on the afternoon of April 12th, children's adventure serials are interrupted by the sudden announcement of Franklin D. Roosevelt's passing. Radio helps express a nation's grief with detailed coverage of the funeral procession on all networks, including a memorably emotional description by CBS's Arthur Godfrey.

19. 8MK Becomes KDKA 11/2/20

It wasn't the First Radio Broadcast -- experimental stations had been on the air for over a decade. It wasn't the first Scheduled Broadcast: some of the experimenters had been operating on a scheduled basis before the first World War. It wasn't the First Radio Election Coverage -- Lee deForest had offered detailed coverage of the 1916 returns over 2XG, New York (and got the results wrong). In other words, many of the "firsts" claimed for this famous broadcast have their basis in the Westinghouse publicity department, not in reality. So why is it important? Well, the Westinghouse publicists did a good job. A very good job. They make an essentially regional event into headline news all over the country -- and in doing so help make Americans radio conscious. KDKA would go on to be an important laboratory for future radio developments -- as would Westinghouse's second station, WJZ in Newark (later, in New York)

18. The 1924 Democratic National Convention June-July 1924

"Alilllll-a-baaaaaaama casssts twennnnnty-four votes for Oscarrrrr W. Un-der-wooooo!" That's the call, as delivered a total of one hundred and three times by Alabama Governor William Brandon during the Democratic National Convention, as broadcast June 24th thru July 9th, 1924. The eventual nomination goes to John Davis, who will of course be trounced by Coolidge in the general election that fall. Underwood was actually a pretty significant figure in politics at the time -- he had been Senate Minority Leader, and went on to become Governor of Alabama. But all anyone remembers about him is that

he got those 24 votes at the convention. Eighteen stations make up the AT&T network for this broadcast, extending as far west as Kansas City -- and the RCA stations also join in. The broadcasters are Graham McNamee and Phillips Carlin for AT&T, and Major J. Andrew White and Norman Brokenshire for RCA, who together help to introduce millions of fascinated listeners to the intricacies of the political process -- and also spawns a national catch phrase that echoes across playgrounds and city streets for much of the summer.

17. Crosby In The Can 1946.

Actually, it should be Crosby in a paper sleeve -- since Bing's first venture in to pre-recorded programming was done on disc, not tape. Excited by the potential for a flawless performance afforded by disc-editing techniques exploited during the war years by the Armed Forces Radio Service, the crooner finds himself a sponsor and a network willing to allow him to experiment with pre-recording his regular weekly series beginning in the fall of 1946 -- and Philco Radio Time proves a success. Among those who notice is an Army veteran named Jack Mullin - who had become interested in the tape-recording systems used by the German radio during the war years, and who convinces Crosby to invest in his fledgling Ampex Corporation. The Crosby program begins to be mastered on tape in 1947 --and with Crosby's support, Ampex becomes a major force in the development of broadcast recording technology, leading the way the in the early development of video tape in the 1950s. And Crosby's success in recorded form helps to bring down the unreasonable network barriers against the use of prerecorded programming -- already compromised in many areas, the walls come tumbling down for good in 1949.

16. The Dempsey/Carpentier Fight 7/2/21

What the KDKA Harding-Cox Election Broadcast was in legend, the broadcast of the Jack Dempsey-Georges Carpentier Heavyweight Fight is in reality: the event which really makes the general public sit up and take notice of radio. While no more than a thousand hobbyists heard the KDKA Election Broadcast, advance publicity leads over two hundred thousand to hear the fight broadcast eight months later, and the resulting excitement draws many thousands of others into discovering what this new radio thing is all about. As was his custom, David Sarnoff greatly exaggerates his role in promoting this epoch-making broadcast -- the real man behind the scenes -- and behind the mike -- is Major J. Andrew White: who would go on to be one of the major figures in the early years of CBS

15. The inauguration of Coolidge 3/4/25



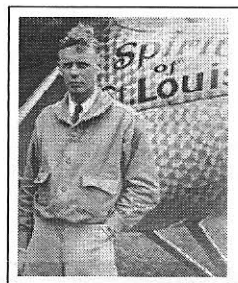
RETURN WITH US NOW...

For the first time, Americans from coast to coast listen in as the President takes the Oath of Office and delivers his inaugural address. AT&T's Red Network and RCA's smaller Radio Group network broadcast all the pageantry as Calvin Coolidge begins his first full term -- and proves himself to be an adept radio speaker, well-attuned to the demands of the microphone. An estimated fifteen million listeners follow the proceedings, with Graham McNamee at the microphone for the Telephone Group and Major J. Andrew White and Norman Brokenshire on hand for the RCA/Westinghouse stations.

14. The Dempsey/Tunney Long Count Fight 9/22/27

If the twenties were truly the "Golden Age Of Sport," the second heavyweight title fight between Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey at Soldier Field in Chicago may be the high point of that age -- and radio helps make it so. For the first time, all NBC's associated stations, Red, Blue and Pacific, are joined to broadcast a single event, with the exuberant Graham McNamee and Phillips Carlin at the mike. Was the final count improperly delayed? Debate still rages to this day.

13. McNamee, Carlin, Cross and Daniel broadcast the return of Lindbergh 6/11/27



It's the News Story Of The Decade -- the moment which seems to epitomize the mystique of the "Roaring Twenties." And when the twenty-five year old newly-promoted-to-Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh returns to the United States courtesy of the U. S. Navy, a team of NBC's top announcers turn out for day-long coverage of his arrival -- helping impress the moment forever on the national consciousness. And, to this day, recordings of the honest, overwhelming *thrill* in Graham McNamee's voice as he sees the aviator step down the gangplank capture the essence of that moment in a way the printed page never can.

12. Radio Transforms Itself 1931-33

Two factors change the face of radio programming during the lowest ebb of the Depression -- a disastrous season on Broadway in 1931, and the desire of advertising agencies for better bang for their bucks. The collapse of the Live Theatre drives many of the top names of musical comedy and vaudeville into broadcasting -- Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Burns and Allen, and many others all turn to radio during these years, and in doing so, forever shift the emphasis in programming away from radio-grown talent and toward Big Names. Agency control of program development builds on this trend -- taking the responsibility for program building away from the networks, and placing it under the control of sponsors: firms interested more in selling product than in encouraging real creativity. The result, from the mid-thirties forward: a compulsively cautious attitude

toward innovation in programming that dominates the medium until the rise of television

11. **Andy sued for breach-of-promise by Madame Queen January-March 1931**

Movie theatres really do interrupt their screenings to play "Amos 'n' Andy" over the sound systems. Department stores really do broadcast the show over their public address speakers. Water consumption really does take a drop for fifteen minutes, six nights a week. And when Andy Brown is taken to court by his beautician fiancée Madame Queen in early 1931 -- the climactic event in a storyline that's been brewing for over a year -- an estimated 40 million listeners hang on the outcome of each night's episode. For a weekly show, that would have been an unprecedented audience -- but for a *nightly* show, it's a stunning accomplishment. The secret of the program's success is readily apparent to anyone who digs back into the early scripts: a gallery of finely-drawn, fully-realized, and all-too-human characters, and an instinctive, near-Dickensian grasp of serial storytelling technique. What also becomes apparent is that by and large, listeners don't tune in to *laugh at* the characters. They tune in because they truly *care* about what happens to Amos, Andy and their friends -- fictional characters who are as real to Depression America as the people next door.

Hello RHAC club members,

I just want to spend a moment of your reading time to focus on an issue that affects everyone's enjoyment of our newsletter. And that is the submission of articles for print - or the lack thereof.

Of course we've been privileged to have had the services of really fine authors who submit their articles to be included in our newsletter. (Forgive me Winston), but we owe so much to that which has been done by so few. The problem is we're having difficulties keeping enough stories in the pipeline to ensure a uninterrupted supply of interesting articles

So now I'd like to add my voice to that of our terrific publisher, Carol Tiffany, in calling upon all of our membership to consider contributing stories for print in RWUN. Surely, many of you who experienced OTR first hand have memories, anecdotal accounts and possibly historical knowledge of shows and personalities. Heck, even I, as a third grader, was on Art Linkletter's "House Party" program - holly cow, come to think of it, that was 60 years ago!

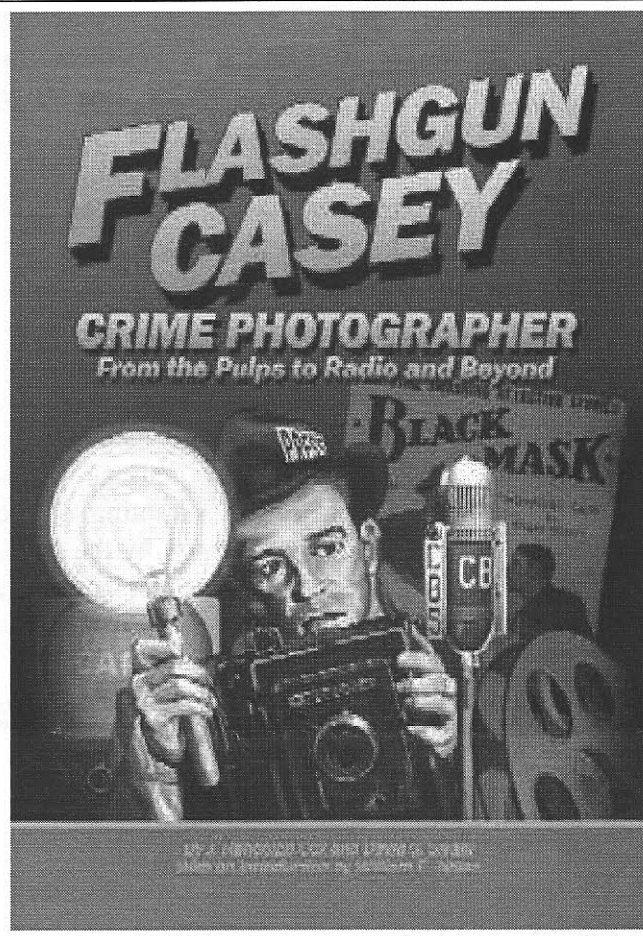
Anyway, please consider submitting a story - via mail or email. I assure you, that Carol will see to it that you will be proud of whatever you contribute.

Thank you and regards to all,
Larry Weide - Pres. RHAC

Flashgun Casey, Crime Photographer: From the Pulp to Radio and Beyond

By J. Randolph Cox and David S. Siegel

A review by Stewart Wright



Casey, Crime Photographer, like many other Radio series, had its origins in pulp fiction. A new book by J. Randolph Cox and David S. Siegel deals with the Casey character from his first appearance in the pages of a pulp magazine, to later occurrences in novels and comic books, plays, motion pictures, Radio and television. The authors have uncovered much previously unpublished information and have laid it out in a very readable format.

The Casey character was the creation of George Harmon Coxe and initially appeared in a short story in *Black Mask*, a popular pulp magazine of the 1930s. That original short story, "Return Engagement," is included in **Flashgun Casey** as is a biography of Casey's creator, who was twice President of the Mystery Writers of America (MWA) and recipient of the MWA Grand Master Award in recognition of his lifetime contribution to the mystery genre.

The non-Radio occurrences of Casey are thoroughly documented in the book. The various literary, theatrical, motion picture and video productions involving the crime-fighting photographer are discussed. Changes in the Casey character and supporting cast to meet the demands of the different media are mentioned. The authors also provide synopses of all 21 short stories and novelettes, six novels, four comic books, two films and a play. Additionally, there is a broadcast log for the 1945 and 1951-1952 television series.

There is extensive coverage on the Radio series; it comprises approximately 40 percent of the book. There are photographs and an illustration of all main cast and crew members. A variety of topics relating to the Radio series are elaborated on: how *Casey* came to Radio; an overview of *Casey's* Radio career; cast and crew information and program changes; series title, times slot, and opening changes; an assessment of *Casey's* popularity; ratings during different times of its run, and a sampling of plot summaries. Radio scripts for "Hanged by the Neck" and "The White Monster," two *Casey* episodes that are not in circulation, also have been incorporated by the authors.

The Radio log was compiled from numerous sources including the scripts of the primary writer, Alonzo Deen Cole, CBS archives materials, and information from a variety of newspapers and other sources. This series log includes broadcast dates for all episodes, titles for all but 19 episodes, writer credits for most episodes, broadcast days and times, and whether or not an episode is in circulation. The log also lists those episodes whose scripts were reused.

Flashgun Casey, Crime Photographer: From the Pulp to Radio and Beyond is well-written and researched and highly informative. David S. Siegel and J. Randolph Cox should be congratulated for bringing much new information into print. If you are a fan of this popular radio series and/or would like to learn more about the various incarnations of this character, this book is for you.

Flashgun Casey, Crime Photographer: From the Pulp to Radio and Beyond

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RETURN WITH US NOW...

**From the Desk of
the Editor
by Carol Tiffany**



Hopefully, by the time this reaches you, Spring will have finally arrived and April's showers will be here in force. Here in the "Sunshine State", we really need the precipitation! Anyway, a nice rainy day is a good time to sit down for a quiet read with this issue of your newsletter.

In this issue Dr. Charles Beckett gives us a tongue-in-cheek look at the show wherein Jack Benny finally turns 40 years old (for about 23 minutes). We have reached the next-to-last installment of Elizabeth McLeod's "Moments of the Century" and we also have a review of Flashgun Casey from Stewart Wright. Unfortunately, space limitations have forced us to postpone this month's trivia quiz, but the feature will return next month.

We are in real need of some articles (or outlines, or ideas for articles) for future issues of the newsletter. We have a few regular contributors, but it is somewhat disconcerting not to have articles ready for a couple of issues ahead. If you have an idea, or a completed article, please let your editor know what you have in mind at the E-Mail or regular mail addresses listed on page 2 of the newsletter. Thanks in advance for any help you can offer.

We wish you a Happy Easter and good listening to all...



**New in the Tape
and CD Libraries**

by Maletha King

This month we're offering three reels of "Old Gold Comedy Theater". This is a comedy series that featured some of the best actors of the day, such as Dick Powell, Herbert Marshall and Alan Young. Although not having a long run, these shows were quite exceptional.

Next we're beginning the entry of the entire series of "New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes". As the series progressed different actors took on the main roles. However, it did start with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. These are all good episodes that will keep you on your toes and provide enjoyable listening.