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June, 2006

BLONNN-DIEEE!!

by Paul Barringer

In the 1920's, artist Murat (Chic) Young had drawn several comic strips, "The Affairs Of Jane", "Beautiful Bab", and "Dumb Dora", all flapper type strips, typical of the predominate interests of the era.

On September 8, 1930, Young presented his new strip, "Blondie". Early in the strip the focus was on a giddy, flirtatious young flapper named Blondie Boopadoop and her many boyfriends, who included the wealthy Dagwood Bumstead, a young playboy, heir apparent to the lucrative J. Bolling Bumstead Railroad Empire.

The strip never did take off as Young would have liked, and with it facing the fate of his other strips, Young, in an attempt to bring the strip out of the doleful decline it was in, decided to have Blondie and Dagwood fall in love.

Despite continued objections from J. Bolling Bumstead about marrying the lower class girl (Blondie), Dagwood was resolute in his quest to marry Blondie and went on a 28-day hunger strike. Eventually, J. Bolling Bumstead softened his strong

stance against the marriage. However, when the couple married on February 17, 1933, Dagwood's family disowned him, and his millionaire father cut Dagwood off without a cent.

Vowing to live on love, the couple moved to a quiet humble home in the suburbs. Facing a doubtful future during the depression years, and needing to make a living, Dagwood went to work for the J. C. Dithers Construction Company. The marriage of the two was just what the doctor ordered for Young's strip. It started to increase in popularity, and soon became one of the favorites of readers across the nation. Thus, the foundation was set for future movies, television and, of course, RADIO.

Blondie began on radio July 3, 1939, eventually running on all three networks until July, 6, 1950. The radio show was originally slated as a summer replacement for "The Eddie Cantor Show", but returned full time

The Blondie radio show cast included:



Blondie: Played by Penny Singleton, Ann Rutherford, Patricia Van Cleve.

Dagwood: Played by, Arthur Lake.

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RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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Convention Schedules

REPS Radio Showcase XII, June 23 - 24, 2006; Contact Mike Sprague, Box 723, Bothell WA 98041, (425) 488-9518 hrrmikes@aol.com, also check web site: (www.repsonline.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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RETURN WITH US NOW...

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June, 2006

Alexander: (Baby Dumpling): Played by Leone Ledoux (infant stage), Tommy Cook, Larry Simms, Bobby Ellis, and Jeffrey Silver.

Cookie: Played by, Leone Ledoux (infant stage), Marlene Aames, Norma Jean Nilsson, Joan Rae

J. C. Dithers: Played by Hanley Stafford.

Mrs. Dithers: (Cora) Played by Elvira Allman.

Herb Woodley: (neighbor) Played by, Frank Nelson, Harold Peary.

Mr. Fuddle: (neighbor) Played by, Harry Lang, Arthur Q. Bryan.

Alvin Fuddle: Played by, Dix Davis.

Dimples Wilson: Played by Veola Vonn, Lurene Tuttle

Harriet: (Blondie's friend) Played by Mary Jane Croft.

Other regulars early in the program included, Hans Conried, Rosemary DeCamp, Ed Mac Donald, and Bill Goodwin. Sponsors for the show included Camel Cigarettes, Super Suds, Colgate and Ford.



Born Dorothy McNulty on September 15, 1908, **Penny Singleton** showed an early interest in show business. Billed as "Baby Dorothy", Penny Singleton at age 8, sang and danced between the acts at a silent movie theater. After finishing the sixth grade in elementary school, she joined 'The Kiddie Kabaret',

a touring vaudeville act, where she became a skilled performer.

In 1927 she debuted on Broadway in 'Good News', and in 1930 she repeated the role in a film version of the stage musical. When she joined the Hollywood scene after marrying Lawrence Singleton (a dentist), she changed her name and started being billed as Penny Singleton, (Penny being derived from saving large numbers of penny coins).

Singleton got her big break in 1938 when the film version of Blondie (the comic strip), was cast. Shirley Deane was originally cast as "Blondie" for the film, but after Deane was unable to perform the role, Singleton dyed her reddish brown (auburn) hair blonde and got the role, whereupon she was signed to a contract by Columbia. After the success of the film, Singleton was a lock for the radio "Blondie".

Singleton left the radio show in 1949 and she was replaced by Ann Rutherford for the remainder of the show's run on N.B.C. When the show moved to A.B.C. Patricia Van Cleve (Mrs. Arthur Lake) played "Blondie" on the opening program, but was immediately replaced by Ann Rutherford, who continued to portray "Blondie" for the rest of the show (which was its last hurrah).

In May of 1950 as a replacement for "Fibber McGee" and in June of 1950 as a summer replacement for "The Bob Hope Show", Singleton was on radio once again as a widow selling real estate to support two daughters, in a show titled "The Penny Singleton Radio Show".

In 1950, after the craze for Blondie ended, Singleton, rather than feeling bitter, went on tour with her own night club show which in turn led to USO tours of military bases in Korea. A keen and insightful businesswoman, Singleton was also instrumental in creating residuals when she had a clause inserted in her Blondie contract which included payment for repeats of the Blondie radio shows or movies.

Back in the mid 30's Singleton had been worried about being type cast when she was playing parts in several movies where she played women of dubious character. She once said "I just didn't want to be typed, it goes to show you how you can eat your words, and I became probably the most typed actress in the world. But at least (Blondie) had some dignity".

In the 1973 book, "Saturday Afternoon At The Bijou" (A book on film serials) Singleton said "I'm proud and grateful I was Blondie", "She was dumb

and shrewish sometimes, but she was real and sympathetic and warm, a real woman, a human being, and that's how I tried to play her".

On November 12, 2003 in Sherman Oaks, California, Penny Singleton died from complications of a stroke suffered two weeks earlier at the age of 95 and was interred in San Fernando Mission Cemetery in Los Angeles California. She had had a long and varied show-business career and was, in many respects, a true pioneer in her field. Some examples of her varied career include the following:

In the movie "Swing Your Lady" with Humphrey Bogart, Penny Singleton was the recipient of the actor's first on screen kiss. Penny Singleton was the voice of "Jane Jetson" on Hanna Barbera's "The Jetsons" TV cartoon show. In 1966, Singleton was the leader of the first strike of Radio City Music Hall's Rockettes, striking for, and gaining improved working conditions. Singleton was the first woman president of AGVA, (American Guild of Variety Artists) an AFL-CIO affiliated union.

In 1974, Penny Singleton received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from St. John's University).



Arthur Lake, (Dagwood) was born Arthur Silverlake on April 17, 1905, the son of two circus acrobats, billed as "The Flying Silverlakes". The family moved to California in the late 1910's, where Arthur joined the act. As a juvenile, Lake soon joined the silent film genre of the era, appearing in mostly comedies with Universal Studios, but in 1930 his option was dropped. He freelanced at RKO, Monogram and other studios, until signing a contract with Columbia Pictures in 1938 to star as "Dagwood

Bumstead" in the Blondie film series. After the 1938 film and three following films, Lake joined Penny Singleton to carry their roles to radio.

Lake became famous for his role of Dagwood, both in films and radio, but he was so identified with the character he was seldom asked to portray any other character on radio or in films. Lake, unlike Penny Singleton, didn't mind being known and typecast as the bumbling, dimwitted "Dagwood". He so loved the role, he once said he wished "he could play Dagwood forever". In 1950, after the last Blondie film (28 total) Lake's career came to an end. Although Lake did appear as "Dagwood" in the short-lived CBS TV series Blondie, (which only lasted nine months) Lake's dream of playing "Dagwood" eternally, came to a sudden sad climax at the age of 52.

Arthur Lake was the brother of actress Florence Lake and the nephew of Marion Davies. Lake, earlier in his film career played Harold Teen (another comic strip character) in the 1934 movie. Lake was also the voice of Hook, (not Captain Hook of Peter Pan) the sailor in U.S. Navy films, similar to Private Snafu in films produced by the film studio.

In 1946, Warner Brothers produced an animated short "Hollywood Canine Canteen", where it is possible, but not known for sure that Arthur Lake might have been the voice for the "Dagwood" caricature. The animated short was about a group of dogs that decided celebrity dogs deserved a nightclub for dogs. All of the dogs looked like Hollywood celebrities, such as Edward G. Robinson, Jimmy Durante and others. Some of the dogs had celebrity like names, such as, 'Kanine Kayser', "Boney Goodman", "Hairy James" and "Dogwood and Blondie". The movie was shown on TCM cable channel on December 3, 2005

Arthur Lake died of a heart attack In Indian Wells, California, on January 9, 1987, and was interred in the Hollywood Forever Cemetery in Hollywood.

Other tidbits about Dagwood include: On the radio program, there were several different openings featuring Arthur Lake; "Uh-uh-uh Don't Touch That Dial, It's time for..... (Lake:) Blond-deee, or Uh-uh-uh Don't Touch That Dial, Listen To.....(Lake:) Blond-deee, another opening was, Uh-uh-uh Don't Touch That Dial, Because There's Nothing Else On, You Might As Well Listen to..... (Lake:) Blond-deee.

Dagwood's name never appeared in the title of

any of the Blondie movies.

In 1947, King Features Syndicate published a book called "Blondie's Cook Book" (I have an updated copy circa 1966) in which there is a collection of 277 recipes of Dagwood's favorite soups, salads and "SANDWICHES" which includes the Skyscraper Special (aka The Dagwood) which is the famous sandwich listed in the dictionary and seen in the comic strip.

The Dagwood sandwich is in the dictionary. In Webster's New World Dictionary it is described as "A thick sandwich with a variety of fillings, often of apparently incompatible foods, such as peanut butter, avocado, horseradish and a fish". The American Heritage Dictionary lists it as Dagwood, a multilayered sandwich with a variety of fillings, (after Dagwood Bumstead, a character in the comic strip Blondie).

The Mustard Museum plans to nominate Dagwood into their Mustard Hall of Heroes.

In the 1957 Blondie Television show, Pamela Britton was cast as Blondie, Dagwood was played by Arthur Lake, Herb Woodley was played by Harold Peary, and Elvira Allan was seen as Cora Dithers, the same role she had in the Blondie radio series.

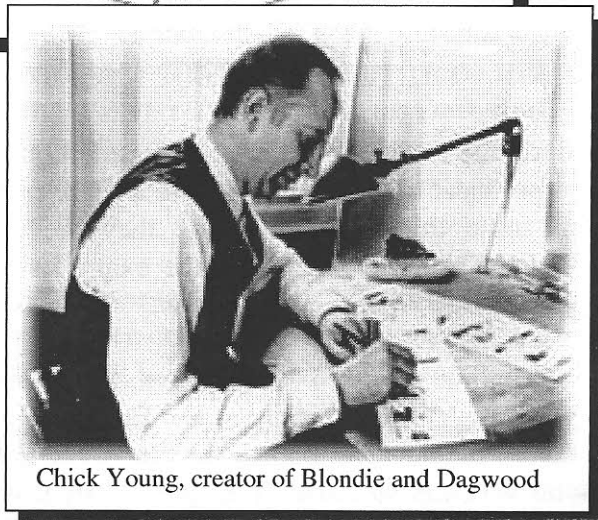
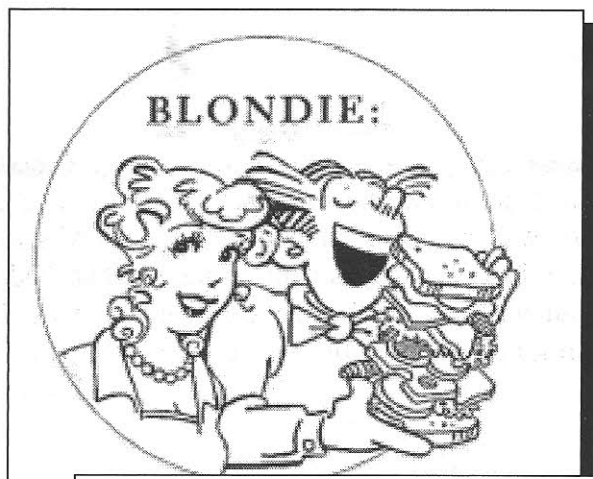
In the 1968 Blondie Television show, Patricia Harty was Blondie, Dagwood was played by Will Hutchins and Jim Backus was Mr. Dithers,

The Blondie comic strip is still shown in over 2,000 newspapers 7 days a week and reaches over 250 million readers. The strip is even shown in Kuwait of all places and is on many comic strip web pages.

Unlike many comic strips, Blondie has kept up with times, although she and husband Dagwood never seem to age, her kids are grown and are teenagers. Blondie, along with her neighbor, Tootsie Woodley run a catering service and she even uses a laptop computer.

Although the Bumstead children have grown somewhat, if Baby Dumpling, aka Alexander Bumstead hadn't stopped growing in his teens in the strip, he would be 71 years old today.

Dagwood still works for J. C. Dithers, but now he is the webmaster for the construction company. Dagwood no longer has to run out the door every morning to catch the bus, he now carpools.



Chick Young, creator of Blondie and Dagwood

2005 marked the 75th anniversary of the Blondie comic strip. Blondie was one of 20 comic strips to appear in the 1995 "Comic Strip Classics" series of U.S. postage stamps.

How well I remember listening to the Blondie radio program and wondering if there really was some one as dim-witted as Dagwood, but oh how I enjoyed every minute of the program.

RHAC Member Paul Barringer

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Research for this article included: Hundreds of web sites, Library of Congress, Find a Grave, Imdb, Public Library, old radio tapes and old radio magazines.

My LEAST Favorite OTR Series

by Jack Mandik

A few months ago your editor suggested that readers submit a few words about their favorite OTR series for an ongoing newsletter feature. The most interesting submission by far is the following from Jack Mandik of Skokie, IL.

You asked for it, so here it is: an unflattering article about a vulgar show.

“TRUTH or CONSEQUENCES”

To tell the truth, I'd like to give the consequences to the producer of this show. I have a sense of humor, but some things aren't funny; they are cruel or vulgar. The following are some examples of very unfunny occurrences on this show:

At one time, *Truth or Consequences* advertised all over New York City about a new European violinist making his debut at one of the city's concert halls. Who was this violinist? You guessed it! It was one poor guy who didn't tell the “truth” and didn't know one end of a violin from the other. This unfortunate guy looked like a complete jerk on the concert stage in front of all those people who attended. (THEY got a regular concert as a consolation prize.)

Another poor soul was a teenager they found who didn't have a date for her prom. TOC told the whole country that she was a wallflower and a loser. The “good news” for this contestant was that the show had arranged a prom date for her with Guy Madison, at that time the hottest newcomer in Hollywood. This was supposed to make her the envy of her school while in reality it made her more the object of pity.

Next up we have another man who failed to tell the “truth”. His consequence was a trivial stunt which he completed and then returned to his seat with his friends. Soon after, a “lady” sitting beside him loudly accuses him of indecency. The poor man was humiliated and embarrassed and said something like “I have friends here!?!” The “female” accuser then turned out to be Milton Berle in drag. Very not funny!

RETURN WITH US NOW...

(Since this show enjoyed a very long run, it must have occasionally been funny or at least interesting. However, incidents such as those cited by Mr. Mandik are, in my opinion, at best embarrassing and at worst cruel. – ED)

From the Desk of the Editor by Carol Tiffany



Well, another long hot summer has arrived. Hopefully, all of our RHAC members have enjoyed a memorable Memorial Day weekend to kick off the summer season. As I recall, summer in the Golden Age of Radio wasn't about reruns but about summer replacement series, some of which turned out to be very good indeed. Quite a few of my OTR favorites started out as summer replacements. Maybe it would be a good thing if we dusted off a few of our seldom-heard OTR tapes and earmarked them for listening this summer.

This issue features another wonderfully well-researched article from frequent RWUN contributor Paul Barringer. As usual, Paul has unearthed many little-known sidelights about a show, its concepts, spin-offs, and the people who made it a success! Your editor was certainly surprised by many of the facts in Paul's featured article about *Blondie*.

We also have a press release about the upcoming REPS convention in Seattle. This should be a great experience for all of those who will be attending. Additionally, this issue has the distinction of presenting the first totally unfavorable review of an OTR show ever found in the pages of RWUN.

Unfortunately, due to a time delay, we will be beginning Stewart Wright's new series of biographical portraits of OTR personalities in the July issue instead of this one.

Good listening to all...

The Trivial Matter of OTR's Comic Roots by Carol Tiffany

Many of the classic OTR series had their roots in Comic books or newspaper comic strips. From the description given, try to identify the title and/or lead character of the show.

- A. This red-headed teenager was constantly torn between his two girlfriends, blonde Betty Cooper and brunette Veronica Lodge.
- B. This young college athlete and friend Dale Arden left Earth to battle Ming the Merciless on the planet Mongo.
- C. This young man fell asleep in the 20th century and woke up in the 25th where he met Wilma Deering, a woman warrior defending Earth.
- D. This young wife and mother of two children had to cope with the most bumbling husband on record.
- E. Skeeze Wallet and Wilmer Bobble were partners in the Wallet and Bobble Garage.
- F. Pat Ryan and Terry Lee were adventurers in the Far East during WWII.
- G. Little Beaver was friend and sidekick to "America's famous fighting cowboy"...
- H. With his pal, Tank Tinker, he was ever away on dangerous missions involving flying every type of aircraft imaginable
- I. "Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound."

(See the answers on this page)

Museum of Television & Radio

By Paul Barringer

How would you like to be able to push a button and listen to FDR's first fireside chat? Do you want to hear Orson Welles' infamous "War of the Worlds" broadcast of 1938? Then you probably would enjoy visiting

The Museum of Television and Radio
465 N. Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA.
(310) 786-1000 or (310) 786-1025

The Museum has collected over 90,000 television and radio programs, and it's all available to the general public. The various rooms have been named in honor of their celebrity sponsors. Inside the Museum you'll find:

The Ahmanson Radio Listening Room: where you can use headphones to listen to special Museum radio series and broadcasts from five pre-programmed channels;

The Ralph Guild Radio Studio: a small working radio station where the Museum can broadcast live and taped radio programs; the public is invited to watch most broadcasts, for a behind-the-scenes look at the way a radio station works. Additionally, it has regular seminars about individual programs, featuring radio clips from the Museum's collection

The John H. Mitchell Theatre: a 150-seat, state-of-the-art screening room (which will be used for special daily screenings and seminars)

You will have to pick up a schedule at the Information desk when you first arrive. You'll be allowed immediate access to about half of the museum's immense collection. The other half is in the archives, which will take about a week to retrieve. You must make a reservation to use the Library at the lobby front desk when you arrive. Then just reserve your selection and have at it

Excerpts taken from "Hollywood tidbits@yahoo.com"

Answers to the Comic Roots Trivia Quiz

- I. Superman (aka Clark Kent)
- H. Hop Harrigan
- G. Red Ryder
- F. Terry and the Pirates
- E. Gasoline Alley
- D. Blondie Bunsstead
- C. Buck Rogers
- B. Flash Gordon
- A. Archie Andrews