



# RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COLORADO

Volume 38, Number 1

\* IMPORTANT MESSAGE - PAGE 4 \*

January/February, 2013

## AN EXAMPLE OF TRUE LOVE

by Jack M. Richards

Okay ladies and gentlemen, today we play "Name That Mystery OTR Show." No, it's not a story about a crime or a harrowing adventure.

Our subject is the old "boy-meets-girl" theme. The handsome (?) young man is heir to a large fortune controlled by a domineering locomotive industrialist. The "hero" falls madly in love with a 1920 flapper, Miss Boopadoop. She is unacceptable to the family who consider her a gold-digger. To prove his undying love for the girl, our resolute young man goes on a twenty-eight day hunger strike (a very difficult task for this hero). The strike fails to convince the wealthy family and he is disinherited. The couple gets married anyway on February 17, 1933.

At first this story concentrated upon clashes with the wealthy family and the "Gold Digger" but that was soon abandoned and the old, wealthy family was written out of the picture. The couple moved to the suburbs; got a dog, raised a family and lived happily ever after. They are still together after almost eighty years providing a great example of true, undying love.

Now who are the boy and girl?

Well, that fellow is none other than Dagwood Bumstead and the gal is Blondie. Their comic exploits were exposed in a fondly remembered "family favorite" Old Time Radio series, but first appeared in the "funny papers."

Blondie was created as a comic strip on September 8, 1930; it is still running in many newspapers around the country today. Its creator was Marat (or as he preferred "Chic") Young. He was responsible for some other lesser known strips such as *Beautiful Babs*, *Colonel Pottersby* and *the Duchess* and *Dumb Dora* but it was with *Blondie* that he gained fame. Today the comic strip is being written and drawn, in collaboration with a number of other artists, by his son, Dean Young. *Blondie* has the well-deserved honor of being the most widely read comic strip in history.



The popularity of *Blondie* expanded as it moved into OTR, the movies and finally on to TV. Part of the reason for its success is that Young believed in reality and that the characters should grow and age. A son, Baby Dumpling (aka Alexander) was born in 1934 and the daughter, Cookie, in 1941. (Not a bad looking teenager for being almost 70 years old.)

As a family, the Bumsteads deal with the same everyday problems that we all face; an overpowering boss, carpooling, unpaid bills and

**Continued on Page 3**

# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

PO BOX 1908, Englewood CO 80150

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

Hear RHAC on the web, 4th Sunday of every month, at 8:30pm Mountain time at;  
"OTR From The Rockies" - <http://www.yesterdayusa.com/saturdaylive.htm>

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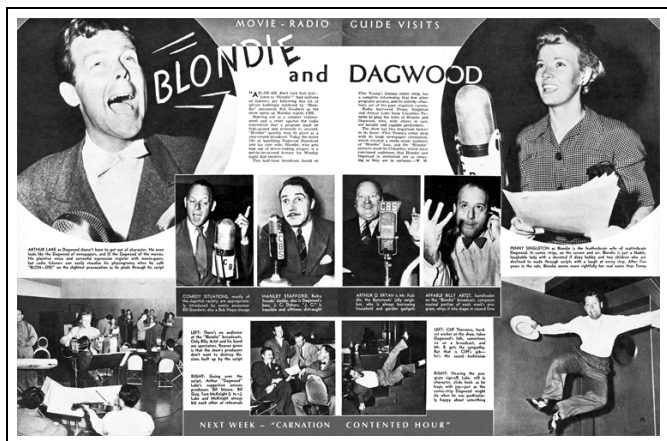
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## 2012 Convention Schedules

**At this time there are no reported conventions**

nosey neighbors who borrow everything. The difference is that Dagwood is a stumbling, bumbling klutz who needs Blondie to keep him in line.

Dagwood does have two redeeming qualities: He has a lightning quick mind that can add a column of numbers in his head. As he processes the information you can just hear gears spinning and meshing. His second feat is that he makes a spectacular sandwich, such a celebrated talent that the word ‘Dagwood’ has been added to the dictionary. Between the slices of bread Dagwood adds any leftover he can find in the refrigerator; meat, vegetables, cheese, or even fish. You need to be like a snake with the ability to unhinge your jaw in order to wrap your lips around his creations.



From the comics, the show moved to Hollywood in 1938 where it unfolded on the screen, quickly to be followed by a prominent place on the radio dial. The first Blondie on film was simply titled *Blondie*. From there 27 sequels were made. They were light bits of fluff and fun to watch.

*Blondie* debuted on the airways on July 3, 1939 on CBS, using most of the same stars on the air as on film. The show was sponsored by Camel Cigarettes as the summer replacement of *The Eddie Cantor Show*. It continued in that time slot until early 1944 when it moved to the Blue Network. On August 13, 1944 it slipped back to CBS where it remained until 1948. Next NBC had the honor of broadcasting the show for Super Suds until late the same year when it bounced again. This time it was to ABC, also sponsored by Super Suds. There it remained until its last performance on July 6, 1950.

As to the run of *Blondie* on TV, I won't discuss this in any detail. Actually I believe there were two attempts plus an animated try to bring *Blondie* to the tube. However, the casts were unfamiliar to the public. It was not a success.



Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake

The actor who played Dagwood remained constant throughout the OTR and movie runs and even on TV although by that time he looked more like a Grandpa than the father of two small children. That actor was Arthur Lake. Lake (real name Arthur Silverlake) was born into a circus family on April 17, 1905 in Corbin, KY. He started in movies playing light comic characters. His first major role originated from another comic strip, Harold Teen. It wasn't until he took the role of Dagwood that he hit big-time, eventually earning a star on the famed Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Although *Blondie* was portrayed by three other actresses over the radio run (Alice White, Patricia Van Cleve and Ann Rutherford), most OTR listeners identify the role with Penny Singleton. Penny (although a natural red-head) became Blondie just like Arthur Lake became Dagwood.

Penny was born Mariana Dorothy Agnes Letitia McNulty on September 15, 1908 in Philadelphia into a newspaper family. She sang and danced her way through vaudeville, Broadway and early movies until she was cast in the Blondie role. There she stayed for a long, long stint. She was last heard as Jane Jetson on TV and in the movie *The Jetsons*.

Penny was the first woman president of an AFL-CIO-affiliated union, AGVA, the American Guild of Variety Artists. Her accomplishments include organizing the union in Las Vegas, driving the Mafia from the New York area chapter, and leading a successful strike by the Rockettes against Radio City Music Hall. Penny was a shrewd businesswoman. She created the concept of residuals — the practice of paying actors for repeat broadcasts of their shows or movies — and had a residuals clause written into her Blondie contract. She actually coined the term “residuals.”



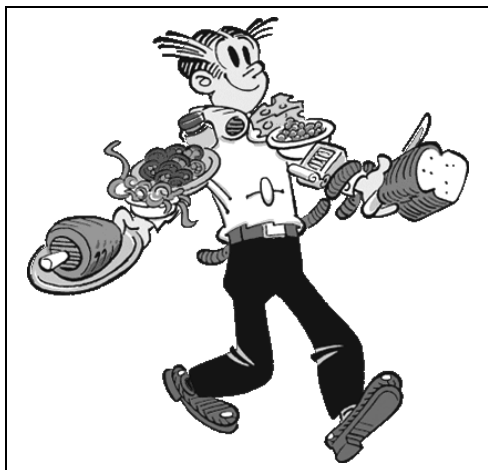
The actors in supporting roles on the *Blondie* show read like a Who's Who In Radio. They include; Leone Ledoux as Baby Dumpling and as a very young Cookie; (as Cookie grew older the voices of Norma Jean Nilsson, Joan Rae and Marlene Aames were heard.) Tommy Cook, Bobby Ellis, Larry Sims and Jeffrey Silver were featured at different times in the role of Alexander.

Perhaps the funniest character on the *Blondie* show was Dagwood's irascible boss, J. C. Dithers played to bombastic perfection by Hanley Stafford. A hilarious recurring bit found Dithers running Dagwood's little finger through the office pencil sharpener (or at least threatening that punishment for his employee's alleged commission of a Bumstead boner! ) Dithers' wife, Cora was portrayed by Elvia Allman; the Bumsteads' neighbor Herb Woodley by two radio greats, first by Frank Nelson and later by Harold Peary. Other cast members included Arthur Q. Bryan as Mr. Fuddle; The Fuddles' son Alvin (Dix Davis); Mary Jane Croft (Harriet); Veola Vonn and, later Lurene Tuttle (Dimples.) Announcer greats were Bill Goodwin, Howard Petrie, and Harlow Wilcox.

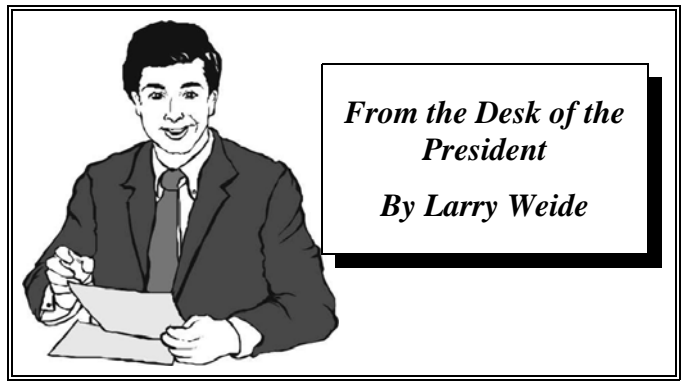
The show had one of the most memorable openings ever. I'm sure all OTR fans remember:

*Ah-ah-ahah! Don't touch that dial! Listen to .....*

**"BLONNNNNNNNNNNNDIE!"**



**RETURN WITH US NOW...**



First of all, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of you the very best for the new year. We've seen a lot of changes in our world over the past 12 months. As I prepare this message for the January issue I'm not yet aware of whether or not we went over the "fiscal cliff". Did we make it?

Anyway, changes have also occurred within RHAC as well. You all know by now that, due to circumstances beyond our control in terms of financing and operational support, we have had to change our membership processing system. Basically, this means that we're now using our newsletter to convey membership dues due notices rather than through postal mail. Those of you who submitted your 2013 dues along with your prorated 2012 dues did not receive a dues due notice inserted into your newsletter. However, **everyone's address label** will continue to inform you of when your next dues will be due. Of course it will now always be in January, but the year might change if you have paid any years in advance. Whatever year your dues are due, that's when you will receive your dues due letter - along with an addressed return envelope.

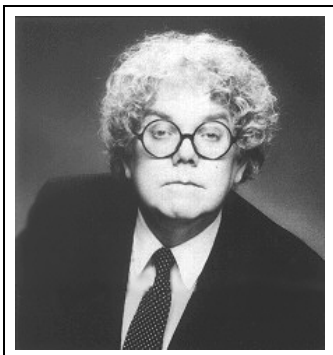
Another **very important change** to note; From now on **the only dues due notice you will receive** will be the very visible and colorful one in the January issue of the newsletter. Because of the length of time between newsletter issues and the cost of the special processing for creating newsletters with and without dues notices **we will no longer be sending out a second or dues delinquent notice. You will have until the end of February to submit your dues before your membership is canceled.**

We hope that you all understand that these changes are necessary in order to allow us to continue to provide all the club services you enjoy and come to expect.

- With my best regards, Larry

# Born 20 Years Too Late

By Fred Hobbs



Stan Freberg's contributions to broadcasting and other aspects of show business are impressive, in many respects monumental. Concerning Old Time (Network) Radio, his creations of sharp satire, hilarious parody and clever repartee should have kept him in the spotlight for decades joining mega-stars such as Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Bob Hope and the husband-wife team of George Burns and Gracie Allen.

Freberg didn't leave OTR; it left him. In the 1950s, "The Golden Age of Radio," as it was known, was dying, but Stan Freberg was just warming up. A CBS series, *That's Rich* featuring the fresh talents of Freberg, aired from January 8 until September 23, 1954. That situation comedy show resulted from the huge popularity of Freberg's Capitol Records' satires. (More about those later.)

*That's Rich* starred Freberg as Richard E. Wilk, described by John Dunning in *The Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio* as "a shy bumbler who mixed schoolboy naivete with razor-sharp satirical observations." The show's cast included Peter Leeds and Daws Butler, both of whom played prominent roles in several other Freberg presentations.

One innovative suggestion from Freberg was the inclusion of dream scenes, which allowed him to perform his popular recorded satires in front of a live studio audience.

In 1957, Freberg landed what surely both he and his fans hoped would be a long network radio gig. The *Stan Freberg Show* came to the CBS radio line-up in 1957, purportedly as a replacement for Jack Benny. It's true that Benny had turned his concentration to television, but a re-run radio show *The Best of Benny* continued in its familiar time slot (Sundays at 5 p.m. Mountain Time) until 1958. Freberg's show ran at 5:30 p.m, which up until 1955 had been occupied by *Amos 'n' Andy*.

Regardless of the exact broadcast time, many OTR fans find it a shame that the *Freberg* show lasted for only 15 episodes from July to October, 1957. The show failed to attract a sponsor. At this period of time, the long-standing practice of a single sponsor supporting an OTR feature (*The Lucky Strike program starring Jack Benny, The Lux Radio Theater, Maxwell House Coffee Time, etc.*) was passing into radio history. Freberg disdained the idea of the alternative--"spot" commercials running throughout his show, interrupting the continuity of his creative offerings. Also, he frequently complained about network interference with scripts featuring some of his patented and pointed satires.

Having no sponsor, the show was severely handicapped. Troubles with the "network vice presidents", aka censors, contributed to the ultimate cancellation of the Freberg outing. (Fred Allen and Bob Hope were among other OTR greats who earlier had voiced similar complaints.)

The scenario of the demise of the network show, however, by no means diminishes the fabulous success of Freberg in radio...local radio. Freberg's Capitol Records' humorous take-offs were heard every day on hundreds of stations. Although many stations continued to carry national network radio news, they otherwise featured their home-town disc jockeys playing the top records of the time.

If this was the end of "The Golden Age of Radio", it was the beginning of a new role for the medium. On dashboard sets, in the kitchen, on the patio, at the beach, radio was still alive and well and Freberg was considered the most prolific and innovative purveyor of comedy on the 78s, 45s and LPs of the late 40s, 50s and 60s that were broadcast on good old AM radio! (Of course, Freberg also benefited greatly from proceeds of the sale of those records which became part of the personal collections of his fans.)

The list of Freberg's hits on vinyl is long indeed. That list can be left to discographies, Google or other sources, but just for fun let's single out a few.

One of the classics is the take off on TV's *Lawrence Welk Show* "Wun'erful, Wun'erful Wun'erful" made it on the top ten records list of *Billboard Magazine* in 1958. Welk's long-time theme was "Bubbles in the Wine." Real bubbles, created in the studio, floated above and around the musical performers. Freberg performed a hilarious send-up imitating Welk's North Dakota-German accent. Various stars on the Welk show of the 1950s were similarly spoofed. The record ended with Freberg (Welk) frantically calling for someone to

“Turn off the Bubble Machine,” while the orchestra, singers and the Aragon Ballroom itself were sailing out to sea from Santa Monica on a cushion of bubbles!

Other favorites include Freberg’s version of “The World is Waiting For the Sunrise” in the style of the multi-voice recording by Les Paul and Mary Ford. Toward the end, the Les Paul guitars seem to almost explode and then wind down to virtually no sound. Very clever use of the technology of the time.

Then, there is “Elderly Man River”, the spoof of the song “Old Man River” from the famous musical, “Showboat.” Freberg attempts to sing the song and is interrupted frequently by an obnoxious censor with a buzzer, Mr. Tweedley, who berates him for not being sensitive to senior citizens, for using incorrect grammar and slang words such as “taters” for potatoes. Just before Freberg is ready to sing the line he knows will be censored “you get a little drunk and you land in jail,” he says: “Take your fingers off the button, Mr. Tweedley; we know when we are licked!”



Freberg created a very clever long-playing record about, surprisingly, famous events in American history. “Stan Freberg Presents the United States of America” Volume One-The Early Years, was released in 1962. He parodied incidents in the history of the U.S. from 1492 until the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783. The songs and dialogue, written by Freberg, were styled in musical theater format. The album was a favorite of radio station programmers who broadcast it often on American holidays such as Independence Day on July 4 as well as Thanksgiving and Columbus Day. Well known radio voices included Peter Leeds, Shep Menken, June Foray, Barney Phillips, Walter Tetley (LeRoy on “The Great Gildersleeve”) with Paul Frees as narrator. “Stan Freberg Presents the United States of America, Volume Two” was planned for

release in 1976 during America’s Bicentennial, but was not released until 1996.

Freberg’s voice was also heard on numerous memorable radio and TV commercials, many of which he wrote and produced. He was featured in both on-screen and voice-over roles in motion pictures. Frequently collaborating with Daws Butler, Freberg provided voices and was a puppeteer and writer on “Time for Beany,” a triple Emmy award production.

Most recently, Freberg, demonstrating his regard for Old Time Radio, served a stint as host of the syndicated feature “When Radio Was,” a program still heard on individual stations throughout the nation, including Denver’s KEZW.

In his autobiography, “It Only Hurts When I Laugh,” Freberg details his adventures in advertising land, his broadcasting and other show biz triumphs and challenges including his early days in radio and his life as the son of a struggling Baptist minister.

Comedian, puppeteer, advertising creative director, animation voice actor, author...Stan Freberg is an American original. Even though he was born 20 years too late, OTR fans recognize that he is an important and influential legacy that is still developing from the Golden Age of Radio!

*Listen for these features coming up on the monthly offerings of “OTR From The Rockies:*

January: Famed actor and producer Elliott Lewis as he produces and directs an episode in the adventure program, “Voyage of the Scarlet Queen” and then is featured in his long-running comedy turn playing Frankie Remley on “The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show.”

February: Elliott Lewis again, this time as producer of “Crime Classics” and “Cathy and Elliott Lewis On Stage.”

March: “Mr. and Mrs. North and “The Adventures of the Thin Man” Two OTR shows featuring fictional husband-wife teams who always seem to combine a bit of romance and humor with the quest to solve murder mysteries.

April: The one, the only Groucho Marx with his spontaneous humor on the quiz show “You Bet Your Life” plus some of his most famous guest appearances on Old Time Radio.

May: Popular OTR shows featuring stunts involving audience participants. Art Linkletter hosting “People Are Funny” and Ralph Edwards headlining “Truth or Consequences.”

June: “The Big Show,” with top stars of Old Time Radio, the movies and the stage.

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