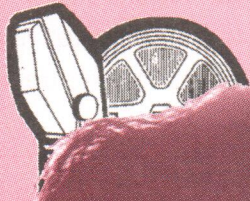


EXCLUSIVE REPORT: REMEMBERING RADIO PIONEER PERFORMER FLORENCE CASE

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RADIOGRAM

November/December 2009

B.S.



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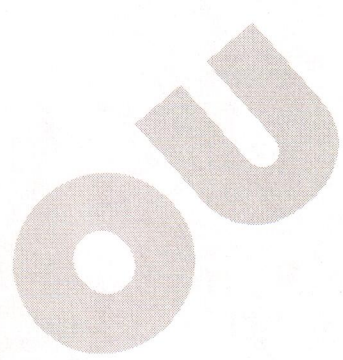
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ELECTION RULES

The Election Chair will be appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Board. The Chair will see that a notice of election is in the November-December issue of the SPERDVAC *Radiogram*. A copy of the election rules will also appear in the same issue.

Members wishing to run in the election for the Board of Directors must declare their candidacy to the Election Chair by Saturday, January 9, 2010.

Candidates' statements will be mailed with the ballots. The statement shall be limited to 200 words. Any words in excess of 200 words will be cut from the statements. Statements must be submitted to the Election Chair by Saturday, January 9, 2010.

The Election Chair is responsible for mailing candidates' statements with the ballots. Statements will be printed in reverse alphabetical order. A candidate's name will be eliminated from the ballot if his/her membership dues are not current.

Ballots will be stamped with the SPERDVAC logo and mailed first class no later than the second Saturday in February. If the official ballot is lost or destroyed, no other ballot will be issued.

All absent voter ballots must be received by the Election Chair no later than the Friday before election day. Absentee ballots must be mailed in an envelope with the word "Ballot" clearly marked on the front. Ballots delivered in person must be taken to the location of the annual membership meeting held in March.

No ballots will be accepted by 12:15 p.m. on that day. Absentee ballots will be placed in the possession of the Election Chair and remain unopened until all ballots are to be counted. No ballots will be counted prior to the official count.

A three person team, all non-candidates, will count the ballots. One of the team must be the Election Chair. The results, which include the exact count of the votes for each candidate, will be announced prior to the end of the March meeting and will be published in the April newsletter.

For the election to be valid, the minimum number of members voting for a quorum must be at least 5% of the membership whose dues are current and are eligible to vote. If there is not the necessary number of ballots for a quorum, the Election Chair will mail new ballots by first class mail by the second Saturday in April. They shall be counted at the May meeting.

If there is a quorum and a tie should occur, a run-off election between or among those tied will take place at the March meeting if a quorum is present. If not, new ballots will be mailed in the same manner as above to vote for those who are tied.

Ballots shall be kept in the possession of the Election Chair for a period of six months following the election, then they will be destroyed.

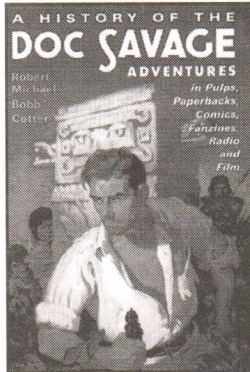
Any candidate wishing to campaign in any way not covered in these rules must apply to the Board of Directors prior to the second Saturday in February. Any candidate who campaigns in any way not covered by the election rules or approved by the Board of Directors may be disqualified as a candidate.

New Books of OTR Interest

'Audio Theater Guide' Offers Instruction in Performance

'The Man of Bronze' in Radio—Sort Of

The history of the amazing adventures of the prototypical superhero Doc Savage gets a comprehensive analysis in Robert Michael "Bobb" Cotter's *A History of the Doc Savage Adventures in Pulp, Paperbacks, Comics, Fanzines, Radio and Film*, a 239-page cloth-bound treatise recently published by McFarland and Company.



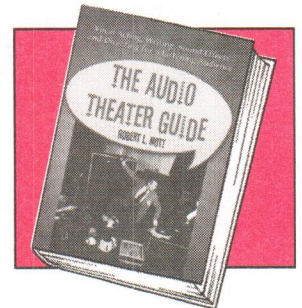
The author places the so-called "Man of Bronze" in a cultural context, noting that he first appeared in 1933 with the Great Depression and the gathering clouds of war as a backdrop. He follows the development of the character and the adventures within further historical events and within the changing tastes of readers with special attention paid to the horror and science fiction elements.

Of interest to OTR readers is that Cotter notes that no extant recordings exist of the two radio incarnations, one in 1934 that was written by Lester Dent for the Don Lee Network, and the second in 1943 that was locally produced by WMCA in New York, and was adapted from the Doc Savage comic books. Cotter's analyses of the radio versions are taken from the scripts, with Dent's collected in the 2009 book *Doc Savage: The Lost Radio Scripts of Lester Dent*. But Cotter gives no source for an examination of the later version's scripts that he describes as being "chock-full of genuinely twisted, outrageous '40s radio melodrama, monsters, and madmen."

Cotter also examines NPR's *The Adventures of Doc Savage* broadcast in 1983 as presented by the Variety Arts Radio Theater. Cotter describes the series as being "well-produced and enthusiastically performed, sometimes achieving the grand panache generated by genuine old-time radio shows."

The \$55 book with 26 illustrations five appendices is available at Amazon.com and direct from the publisher at www.mcfarlandpub.com or 800-253-2187.

Robert L. Mott's *The Audio Theater Guide: Vocal Acting, Writing, Sound Effects and Directing for a Listening Audience* is a comprehensive guide to audio performance—radio, voice-overs, commercials, live theatre, cartoons and more. Topics include microphone acting; vocal effects; writing scripts; manipulating emotions through sound; valuable tips for the director; a long list of sound effects and how to do them; and a series of commercials, scenes and sketches for practicing one's skills.



SPERDVAC members will recognize the name of Bob Mott. He's performed sound effects for various re-creations at SPERDVAC conventions. So Bob is not stranger to the art of "audio theatre." His long career in sound effects has graced films, cartoons, theatre and commercials. For radio he created sound effects for *Gang Busters*, *Philip Morris Playhouse* and *Perry Mason*. For television he created sound effects for *Ed Sullivan*, *Jackie Gleason*, *The Tonight Show*, *Playhouse 90*, *Captain Kangaroo* and *Bob Hope*. He has been twice nominated for Emmys for *Days of Our Lives*, and he also wrote for Dick Van Dyke and Red Skelton.

Bob bases his concepts on a single premise, that the "human voice is a magical instrument" and that words "on paper—cold words—have only as much color, as much power, as the reader gets out of them [but] take these same words and have them performed into a microphone and they suddenly become pictures in the minds of listeners."

As noted, Bobb then embarks a series of proposals to make audio theatre complete. His first three chapters are dedicated to voice training including an interesting definition of acting: "pretending you're something

you aren't," and noting that when "this is done with honesty, you'll no longer worry how you'll deliver a line; [it's] only how the character you're playing would deliver the line, and that requires a versatile voice."

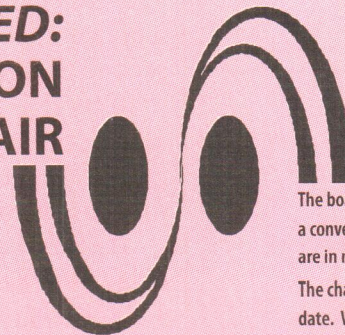
The next two sections deal with writing for the aural medium including suggestions for making sound effects "mean something," and directing for the aural medium including a glossary of director's hand signals.

Next, Bob offers guidance for would-be directors, from becoming aware of technical demands through first readings and dress rehearsals to the importance of timing.

The Audio Theater Guide joins Bob's previous comprehensive volumes on sound effects, *Radio Sound Effects: Who Did It, and How, in the Era of Live Broadcasting* (1993) and *Radio Live! Television Live! Those Golden Days When Horses were Coconuts* (2000).

The 223-page softcover is \$39.95 and is available from Amazon.com or direct from the publisher: www.mcfarlandpub.com or phone direct at 1-800-253-2187.

**WANTED:
CONVENTION
CHAIR**



The board of directors has voted to authorize a convention for 2010. No dates were set. We are in need of a chairman to run the event. The chairman and his committee will set the date. We would love to keep this tradition alive and with the right people we believe we can. If you fit the bill contact SPERDVAC; see directory page 14.

New CDs Added to Library

The following radio programs have been added to our General CD library:

800-810 JOHNNY DOLLAR	1753-1773 JOHNNY DOLLAR
1226-1246 X MINUS ONE	1847-1864 JOHNNY DOLLAR
1247-1256 DIMENSION X	1903-1945 JOHNNY DOLLAR
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1472-1482 GILDERSLEEVE	1975-1978 MILTON BERLE
1483-1485 PHILLIP MARLOWE	1979-2028 FAMILY THEATRE
1486-1489 SCARLET QUEEN	2109-2371 MISC.
1490-1494 NIGHT BEAT	9,10,97,98,137,138,139,551 SUSPENSE
1714-1753 GUNSMOKE	

These compact discs are available now from our General CD Library. Order today at this address:

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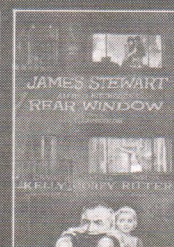
We hope to be adding more to this library in the coming months. Watch for new listings in *Radiogram*.

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BOOKMARKS



Long Overdue Biography of Perry Como is Welcome Treat

by Thomas DeLong

THE long and solid yet somewhat bland career of Perry Como is presented in this, his first, biography. Como stands with Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra as top-level crooners of the 1940s. Heard on many recordings, well-promoted radio series, and briefly seen on movie screens, Como built a loyal following that grew in the pioneering era of television. His popularity as a singer/entertainer extended into the 1990s.

British writers Malcolm Macfarlane and Ken Crossland have skillfully produced *Perry Como: A Biography and Complete Career Record* (McFarland, hardcover, 300-pages, \$55). A number of key sources are in-depth interviews Perry granted to journalists in the UK where his RCA Victor recordings and personal appearances rivaled his acclaim in America.

A young barber in western Pennsylvania, Como (1912-2001) sang in local community functions. At age 20 he auditioned for Freddie Carlone, a regional bandleader, who hired him as vocalist. His voice, untrained and natural, and influenced by Crosby and Russ Colombo, garnered widespread bookings for Carlone. When big band maestro Ted Weems sought a crooner, Perry came aboard. With Weems he gained national exposure via band remotes and vocals on Weems' Decca releases, along with weekly airings of *Fibber McGee and Molly* (1936-1938) and the musical quiz *Beat the Band*. The ASCAP ban made it difficult for the latter broadcasts to continue. Weems' band soon broke up, and most of its members joined the military. In early 1943 Perry began his solo career on regular broadcasts over CBS. He reached the peak of musical radio with his NBC weekday evening series *Chesterfield Supper Club*.

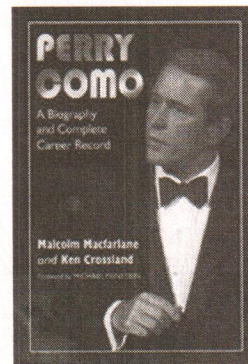
Perry's recordings frequently led industry charts. His version of "Till the End of Time" topped all three of the *Billboard* charts, spending a total of 21 weeks there in 1946.

He had a talent for putting over songs, such as "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes," "Dream Along with Me," "Zing Zing-Zoom Zoom," "Catch a Falling Star," "Hoop-Dee-Do," "Papa Loves Mambo," and "It's Impossible."

An instant success on television, Perry and his songs worked best when they chaired several characteristics, the authors note: "a catchy and memorable tune, an equally memorable title that featured regularity in the lyric and an arrangement that matched Como with a vocal chorus—usually led by Ray Charles who contributed the lion's share of reminiscences to the text."

McFarlane and Crossland give attention to details that bring Perry's nice guy, somnambulant image to life. Not an easy task with his determination to lead a very private existence and raise a family apart from the limelight. Moreover, their impressive research concludes with a 37-page chronology of Como's life, plus full info on recording sessions and TV appearances.

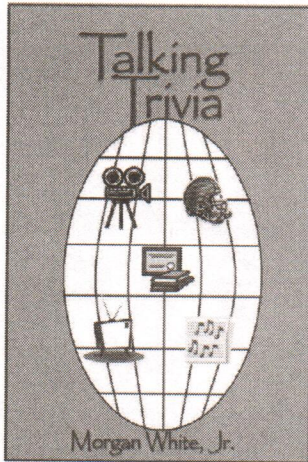
Writer Gerald Nachman once called Como the Classic Coke of singers. "It is hard to get excited about this most unexciting of performers, yet you can hear him all night and not get bored." ♪



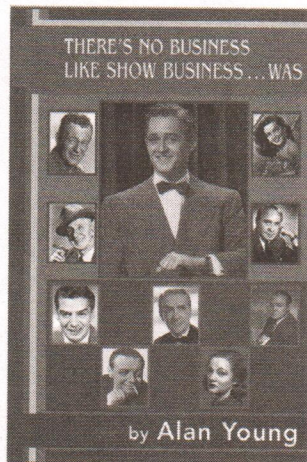
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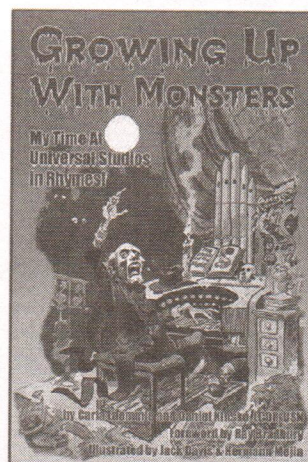
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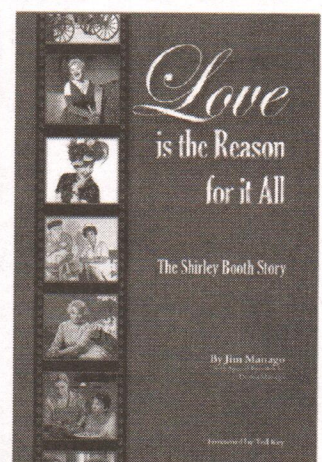
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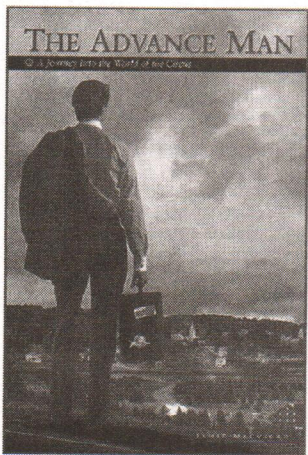
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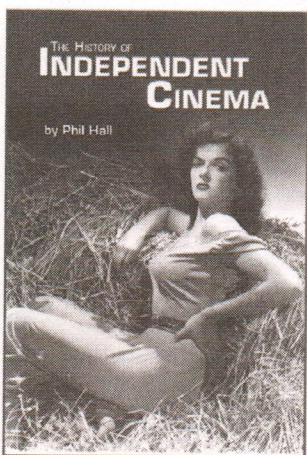
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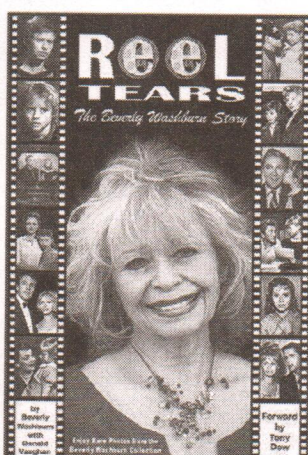
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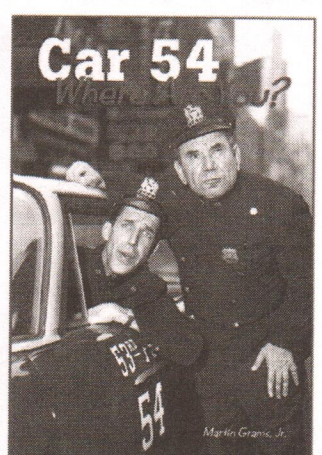
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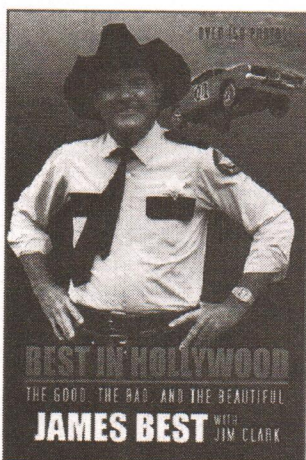
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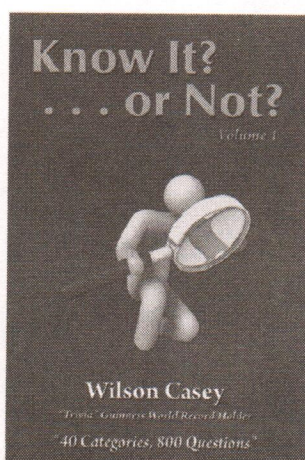
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All About that

Alice Blue Gown Girl

by DAVID S. SIEGEL

How does one begin to explain the pleasure and challenge that comes with being given the opportunity to meet someone whose very first appearance before a radio microphone took place in 1926, the very year that NBC was created? It came about purely by happenstance.

I had just completed a talk about radio to a group of senior citizens when I was approached by a member of the audience who told me that her elderly mother had been a radio performer in her youth. The bits and pieces of information that followed convinced me that a meeting with her mother would be a rewarding experience. It took only a couple phone calls to a second daughter, who visited her mother each week, to arrange a meeting and an interview.

Shortly before noon, Saturday, July 11, 2009, Florence Klein and her daughter, Anne Panoff, along with an aide arrived at my home. Florence, seated in a wheelchair, frail but feisty at age 92, was in an up-beat mood; it was quite obvious that she was pleased to know that someone was anxious to learn about her showbiz career. After photocopying the press clippings that were in her scrap book we spent close to a half-hour engaged in an interview which was dutifully recorded.

What follows is a narrative based on the information provided to me by Florence and supplemented to a large extent by the press clippings and other materials found in her scrapbook with much of the material corroborated as much as possible by her daughters.

Florence Stimmel was born on November 17, 1916, in New York City. Song came to her quite naturally. When only four or five years old she and her older brother Arnold, neither of them bashful, would sing for the guests at a summer resort in White Lake, NY, where the family vacationed

At age 10, Florence enrolled as a voice

student at a prestigious music studio operated by Orry Parado. John Pennino, in his 2006 definitive biography of soprano Rise Stevens, makes reference to the future Metropolitan Opera diva (three years older than Florence) who studied at the same school.

Radio was in its infancy at the time. The National Broadcasting Company controlled two stations in New York City. WEAJ, the flagship station of NBC's red network, aired the more profitable commercial programs. WJZ, which was founded in 1921, became the flagship station of NBC's blue network in 1927. With top professional talent reluctant to appear on the relatively new medium of radio, and potential sponsors equally reluctant, it was not uncommon for stations to make use of amateur entertainment. Thus it was that in 1924 WJZ, influenced by a local newspaper campaign that cried out for on air opportunities for talented young children, created a radio program hosted by Milton Cross called *The Children's Hour*. In 1927 the program was renamed *Coast to Coast on a Bus*.

Orry Parado was an astute business person who recognized the publicity value of having his students perform on the radio. A number of Parado's prize students including Renée (Rise) Stevens and Florence Stimmel appeared on *The Children's Hour* as early as 1926. Family and friends attending a song recital on Monday evening, June 27 1927, at the Grand Ballroom of the hotel Waldorf-Astoria were presented with a printed program that read in part: "Presenting pupils of Orry Parado featuring the Children under his direction

at WJZ." A copy of this program is featured in the aforementioned scrapbook.

During the next three years young Florence would make regular appearances on the *Infants Home Of Brooklyn* program heard on the short-lived station WPCH. She was also heard a number of times on station WABC's *Boy's Club* program. In 1930, Florence, now 14-years-old, appeared on *The Tin Pan Alley* program aired on radio station WOR.

The turning point in the career of any performer who has struggled for recognition without financial reward comes, as it did for Florence, when a paycheck finally signaled better days ahead. Those better days began in 1931. After several appearances on WOR's *Market and Halsey Street Playhouse* program Florence was assigned to a 15-minute sustaining program of her own with six musicians for backup. Enthusiastic listener response led to the station adding two additional sustaining spots to her schedule on Monday and Wednesday evenings. In a move indicative of the station's confidence in its young soprano, 12 to 14 musicians, directed by Sherman Keene, were assigned to provide her musical accompaniment.

At this point in her career, 15-year-old Florence was aware of the challenges that she would face in the competitive world that she had embarked upon. A decision was made, and on Saturday morning, November 21, 1931, New York City newspapers listed the WOR 10:15 a.m. program as *Florence Stimmel Sings*. And then on Saturday morning, November 28, 1931, New York City newspapers listed the



Florence Case got her first radio experience performing on *The Children's Hour* in 1927 hosted by Milton Cross. The program later became *Coast to Coast on a Bus*.

WOR 10:15 a.m. program as *Florence Case Sings*. Goodbye struggling amateur. Hello professional who was featured in her very own program and who had adapted a stage name befitting her new status. She began to be heard on a number of commercial programs including several appearances as a guest artist with Abe Lyman's Orchestra on a program known as *Rambling through the Nightclubs* on radio station WABC.

WOR signed Florence again but this time she would be sponsored by Littmans', a local women's dress shop. Reminiscent of another *Children's Hour* alumna, the teenage singing sensation Mary Small, who as Little Miss Bab-O sold her sponsors products, Florence became known as The Alice Blue Gown Girl. The program which aired on Sundays could be heard at 12 noon followed by a repeat performance 7 p.m.

A column appearing in the *New York World-Telegram* on May 18, 1932, written by Jack Foster, refers to Florence Case as: "One of the outstanding features of the day." Another newspaper critic wrote: "Miss Case has acquired the art of presenting popular songs of the day a little bit differently than the stereotyped manner of other mike songbirds."

An article appearing in the July 1932 issue of *Music World Almanak* titled "Native New Yorker, Achieves Fame As a Radio Singer," noted that "Miss Case's success may be attributed not only to the fact that she has an unusually well cultivated soprano voice, but also that she pays good attention to detail in the rendition of her popular songs." A newspaper critic is also quoted as saying that, "Miss Case has a voice which injects a pleasing newness and vitality into tired popular songs."

The critical acclaim reflected in the accolades seen above was indicative of the kudos earned by Florence in the form of fan letters received from scores of radio listeners. It should be noted that by 1932, the 16-year-old soprano was savvy enough to recognize that her voice was more attuned to singing the blues than some of the operatic arias that she had mastered under Parado. Her voice, her youth and the name recognition gained as a result of being a featured radio entertainer would lead to several offers to perform on the vaudeville circuit as well as many invitations to participate in various charitable benefits.

Florence joined Vincent Lopez and his Orchestra along with a number of other radio performers in a program in support of the World War I veterans at Chelsea Hospital at Castle Point, NY. She found herself in the company of several nationally known personalities including Leon Errol, Ernie Hare and Billy Jones, Bill Robinson, Red Grange and Rudy Vallee when she entertained at the *New York Daily Mirror's* Elephant Fund benefit at the Ziegfeld theatre. Other early appearances for good causes as well as for publicity include being on hand at Reuben's Benefits for Crippled Children, and for benefit programs for the Daughters of Jacob and the Newark Athletic Club.

The Branford theatre in Newark with a seating capacity of 2800 offered Florence and Bennie Fairbanks and his band a week-long engagement (May 20 to 28, 1932) to entertain its patrons between the showing of first-run films. In those early days of radio, fans who could afford the price of a ticket took advantage of an opportunity to see as well as hear a popular radio entertainer. This, no doubt, accounted for an impressive turnout of fans, a successful engagement and a number of similar engagements at other large film palaces in the metropolitan New York area. Among these were the Audubon, located in Washington Heights and the Crotona theatre located in the Bronx. Both theatres had seating capacities of over 2000, were built by William Fox in 1912 and have long since been demolished.

"Florence Case in Demand" was the bold headline that appeared in the August 12, 1932, edition of the *New York Daily Mirror*, which was a Hearst publication in which Walter Winchell's column appeared regularly. A local radio personality identified as Dr. Cohen wrote that, "Last Monday Florence Case, the Alice Blue Gown girl of radio assisted me in

When I asked her how she managed to become one of Don Bestor's vocalists her simple reply was, "I auditioned for it."

my radio program as guest star. . . [With] . . . more than three hundred letters . . . received from our audience asking that Florence again sing for them." Cohen continues: "Miss Case is the sweetest little girl with the sweetest

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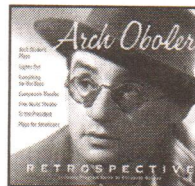


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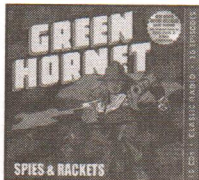


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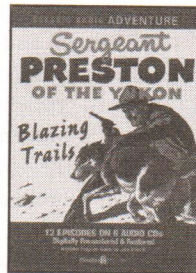


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voice on the air. Her manner and charm, as well as her ease of delivery, has won her many friends and admirers. Her singing of popular songs in the new manner apparently meets the demand, of radio audiences everywhere, for many of the letters have come from the remotest points where radio programs must satisfy to remain on the air. I have bound all of these letters together and sent them to her with a request that she appear as my guest this coming Monday, August 15."

By 1933, three years shy of her 20th birthday, several newspaper critics credited Florence with beating the odds as one of the few child entertainers whose career blossomed as she matured. When I asked her how she managed to become one of Don Bestor's vocalists her simple reply was, "I auditioned for it."

Don Bestor, a bandleader whose fame has faded over the years, was at the top of his form in 1933. In what can be only interpreted as confidence in his newly signed vocalist, the

New York Daily News reported that, "Don Bestor, for the first time since he lost Ramona, will feature a female vocalist when Florence Case warbles for him next week."

Metronome, a popular magazine devoted to the arts, featured a photograph of Florence headed "Busy Girl," and to prove the accuracy of its claim the following appears below the photo: "Florence Case, soprano, is heard over WEA, WGLO local stations Tuesday and Saturday and WGY Schenectady. Also appearing in *Show Boat* at Lake George, NY and is featured with Don Bestor's Orchestra. Miss Case just made three recordings for Victor."

Unemployment during the height of the Depression had a profound effect on musicians. Attendance was down at most locations that traditionally offered live music. An exception to that pattern occurred in May 1933 when several New York City newspapers reported on the teaming of Don Bestor and his band with comedian Benny Rubin, who were keeping the seats filled at the Loew's State theatre. Don's band could also be heard on the radio. The band appeared on Jack Lait's *Home Magazine Gaieties* program which aired on station WINS. They were also featured on a series of late-night remote broadcasts that NBC aired by means of a direct line to the Biltmore, an upscale New York hotel.

Don Bestor and his (as the ad read) Orchestra were entertaining nightly in the Le Casino Bleu room of the Biltmore. One member of the audience who was particularly impressed by the voice and appearance of blues singer Florence Case was S. L. Rothefel, known in his day by the nickname of "Roxy." Although few today have ever heard of him, he was known as one of the most successful showmen in motion picture history. He worked his way up from nickelodeon operator to that manager of movie houses to radio broadcaster; at one time or another he managed New York's Strand, the Rialto, the Rivoli, the Capitol, and the Roxy (his own) theatres in addition to managing the Radio City Music Hall. As a footnote, today's Rockettes were once known as the Roxyettes.

Rothefel was so impressed by Florence that he persuaded Bestor to release her for a week in order that she might be featured as part of the stage show at the Radio City Music Hall. The program of the week beginning Thursday, November 2, 1933, identifies Erno Rapée as conductor of the orchestra and Florence Case and Jan Peerce as vocalists.

I was curious as to why, just when things were looking promising for a bright future with the Don Bestor band, Florence would leave that organization to sign on with a lesser known bandleader. What I learned was that sometime between November 1933 and May 1934 Don Bestor signed a lengthy contract to appear at New York's Pennsylvania Hotel. Some three weeks into the assignment Florence lost her job. It seems the hotel management came to the conclusion that she looked "too Jewish."

A further brief word about Don Bestor, who is perhaps best known to radio fans as the bandleader who provided the music for the Jack Benny program from April 6, 1934 to July 14, 1935. He is also credited with having written the jingle used in the Jell-O commercials. While he would continue to lead a band until sometime in 1947, he never regained the degree of popularity that he enjoyed in the early 1930s.



Florence, quite naturally pained by the abrupt and unfair manner that led to her dismissal, was determined to resume her singing career as soon as possible. The otherwise optimistic young singer was faced with the realization that with unemployment at its height in the midst of the Depression getting back to work as a band vocalist would require extraordinary good fortune. Luck alone could not have brought the alliance about, however. Several factors played a role in bringing Emil Velazco and Florence Case together. In addition to possessing a sultry voice and pleasing delivery of lyrics, her stage, nightclub and years of vocalizing on several different New York radio stations brought to the alliance the element that Velazco sorely lacked—name recognition.

A name few current music historians recognize and one rarely if ever cited in reference books is that of Emil Velazco. He was born in Mexico City on October 20, 1898, and during his early years taught himself to play the piano. He then learned to play the organ and earned a degree in music at The Chicago Music College at age 18. For a short time thereafter he became the youngest instructor at the





Jacques Renard née Jacob Stavinsky, for whom Florence Case sang during her "missing years" in Boston.

college. Velazco played the organ in movie theaters in the United States and Europe when movies were silent, but when Warner Brothers introduced sound to film Emil and others in similar circumstances either found other employment or went broke.

Steady employment or the closest thing to it might be achieved if one or more of New York's several radio stations could be induced to employ him as a staff member. His efforts to achieve that goal were frustrated more often by the legendary queen of radio organists, Rosa Rio, whose skill and charm won a large percent of the most desirable assignments.

By 1934, the year that Florence found herself at liberty, the only steady employment that Velazco could count on was a 15-minute sustaining spot each Sunday on WOR. Emil convinced himself that with the proper presentation he, too, could join the ranks of others whose talents were no greater than his and earn a comfortable living as a band leader. Charles E. Green would serve as the personnel (or booking) manager for the new band.

"The outstanding novelty of radio and the dance world" appeared in large print below a photo of Velazco in the advertisement that appeared in trade magazines introducing the

new band. Copy went on to read: "The world's only dance Orchestra using a full-tuned \$15,000 portable pipe organ. The only a new idea in dance music in 10 years."

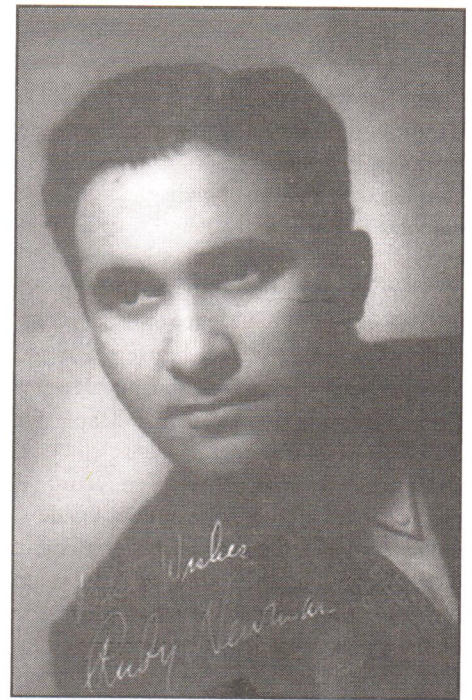
And thus it was that Florence would again see her name and photo appear in the various theatrical columns as the vocalist to be featured with the newest band sensation. A number of these almost identically worded clippings are in her scrap book. They serve to reveal the next stage of Florence's career. These inspired messages are evidence of the degree to which the once aspiring amateur had embraced the tools of the trade to maintain her visibility and image in the minds of radio fans. A case in point: "Florence Case, chosen from a group of several vocalists early in May (1934) when Emil Velazco opened with the unique orchestra in the Grill Room of the Hotel Taft, has proved strong drawing card with both in-person and Columbia listeners. She sings alone and in boy-and-girl numbers with Jack Goodman in Velazco's regular CBS sustaining programs."

With an August 13, 1934, news clipping identifying May 1934 as the beginning of the Case-Velazco collaboration, another clipping from the January 8, 1935 edition of the *Washington Post* by gossip columnist Ed Sullivan read, "Florence Case, oriole with Jacques Renard's crew and Dick Landers are romancing," states clearly that the Velazco-Case combination lasted no more than seven months, demonstrating once more the wisdom of Robert Burns observation regarding the best laid plans of mice and men.

When I read the Ed Sullivan piece aloud to Florence, some 73 years later, she laughed calling it the kind of nonsense designed to keep one's name before the public. Fully aware that Velazco was but one of several musicians whose lives intertwined with that

His efforts to achieve that goal were frustrated more often by the legendary queen of radio organists, Rosa Rio, whose skill and charm won a large percent of the most desirable assignments.

of the talented Ms. Case is it folly to ask why more effort was not expended to explore the achievements and failures of so many others who, like Marlon Brando's Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront*, "could have been con-



Ruby Newman, 1930s band leader, for whom Florence Case sang "What a Dummy Love Has Made of Me."

tenders"?

Prior to Florence becoming a vocalist with Jacques Renard, her radio and stage appearances were concentrated in the New York metropolitan area. Beginning with Renard the majority of her radio and stage appearances took place in and around Boston. With little in the way of detail from Florence, her scrapbook or the internet regarding the Boston years, I contacted Donna Halper, distinguished radio historian and scholar, who specializes in women in radio and radio in Massachusetts. Donna was able to verify at least two appearances that Florence had made on Bay State radio stations. One such appearance took place on September 3, 1935, on radio station WLLH in Lowell, MA. A second

appearance was uncovered sometime early in 1936 on WNAC-Boston. Both programs identified Dick Landers as the male vocalist. Renard's name did not surface.

Jacques Renard was a Russian immigrant

who settled in a town just outside of Boston. His real name was Jacob Stavinsky. He was a violinist known as the Coconut Grove orchestra leader until the early to mid 1930s where he performed mostly in Massachusetts. He graduated to radio as bandleader for such notables as Burns and Allen, Eddie Cantor, and Joe Penner among others.

There being no additional clues in the interview I had with Florence or in her scrapbook, what remained were very few facts and a lot of speculation. We know that Jacques Renard was engaged as the bandleader for the *Burns and Allen* program from October 2, 1935, to July 1, 1936. There is no record indicating that Florence Case or Dick Landers, both of whom had been vocalists with Renard, ever appeared on the *Burns and Allen* radio program. It is reasonable to conclude, based on the dates revealed by Donna Halper, that Florence and Renard had parted company sometime before October 1935.

We know that Florence made a recording for Victor with a bandleader named Ruby Newman dated November 10, 1936. One song was titled "What A Dummy Love Has Made Of Me" and the other "Down In The Depths." One internet site describes the lyrics and delivery of the songs as follows: "Ruby Newman's orchestra produced a record that cannot be beat for tricky arrangements. The smartest lyrics of the season are sung by Florence Case, gal with a very torchy voice, in 'Down in the Depths' and 'What a Dummy Love has made of Me.' From two Broadway musicals, the first is heard in Cole Porter's *Red, Hot and Blue*, the second in Bee Lillie's *The Show Is On*. This record is not for children."

Knowledge of the recording does not necessarily establish that Florence was a full-time vocalist with Ruby Newman. We do know that Ruby enjoyed a reputation for intelligence, charm and wit. He led a successful society band, performed primarily in the mid-1930s and for the most part in Massachusetts.

Florence signed her longest and most productive contract on January 11, 1937, when she eloped with Ira Edward Klein, a practicing dentist and instructor at NYU's College of Dentistry. Florence never looked back.♣



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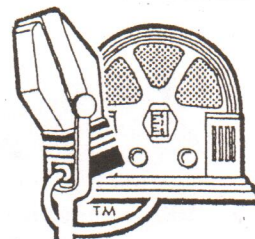
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