

SPERDVAC

RADIO MAGAZINE

SOCIETY TO PRESERVE & ENCOURAGE RADIO DRAMA, VARIETY AND COMEDY

No.
5



What has come to be known as "old time radio" is more than just a part of our history. It is part of our culture. Its emergence marked an important turning point in our ability to communicate information and ideas. The evils of war and glories of success came into America's living rooms through this invention. Radio became part of our nation's entertainment, education and an important source of news information. By giving us a new medium for the exchange of ideas, radio quickly became a significant contributor to American culture.

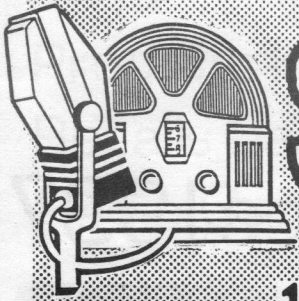
When SPERDVAC was founded in November 1974 the original conception was the establishment of a source of early radio broadcasts for the benefit of collectors. SPERDVAC was born in a era of nostalgia. We were gleefully looking back at a time--and medium--whose memory had already begun to erode.

But many of the people behind SPERDVAC, even in its early months, turned their thoughts to those individuals who were responsible for radio's "golden age." Eventually we began presenting guest speakers at our monthly meetings held in the Los Angeles area. In 1978 we established our Archives Library of programs recorded directly from the original transcriptions. Following a 1981 decision by our board of directors, we made our first \$1,000 donation to the Motion Picture Country House and Hospital in memory of radio actress Barbara Luddy. These moves led us to our present position as a non-profit historical organization dedicated to preserving not only "old time radio" but also the memories of those people long associated with these historic broadcasts.

If we have learned anything from SPERDVAC's first decade it has been to appreciate more than just the entertainment value of early radio. We have gained an appreciation of radio's performers, production people, writers, engineers, secretaries--in short, all of the men and women who helped make radio's infant years possible and so successful. We are grateful for their efforts and the end product of their work.

Our tributes to these people have come in the form of presentations at SPERDVAC meetings and articles in our publications. But perhaps our biggest tribute will always be our evergrowing libraries of broadcast recordings. SPERDVAC is endeavoring to make available to collectors and researchers top quality recordings of radio programs. With our two tape libraries we have gladly become a significant source of early radio recordings. These recordings will perhaps last longer than SPERDVAC itself and will help preserve the memory and an understanding of an important era in broadcast history.

This magazine is a token of our tribute to the variety of programs aired during radio's early years. It cannot adequately cover a period of several decades but it can help convey our appreciation of a nearly lost art form. As we begin our second decade, SPERDVAC wishes, through this publication, to express its appreciation to those who pioneered radio and to the many fine people within our organization who are helping to preserve the art of radio. Through their work the importance of radio and its impact upon our culture will not be quickly forgotten.



SPERDVAC

MAGAZINE

10th Anniversary Edition

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Cover photograph: Announcer James Matthews and Monty Margetts at the NBC Studios in San Francisco, 1937.

Bob Shannon

He's said yes to radio since 1937



Bob Shannon hosted Surprise Party but once he was surprised by a not so gracious hostess. Shannon carried the traveling microphone into listeners' homes in 1946 on CBS Radio.

Program Host Recalls Early Radio Career

By

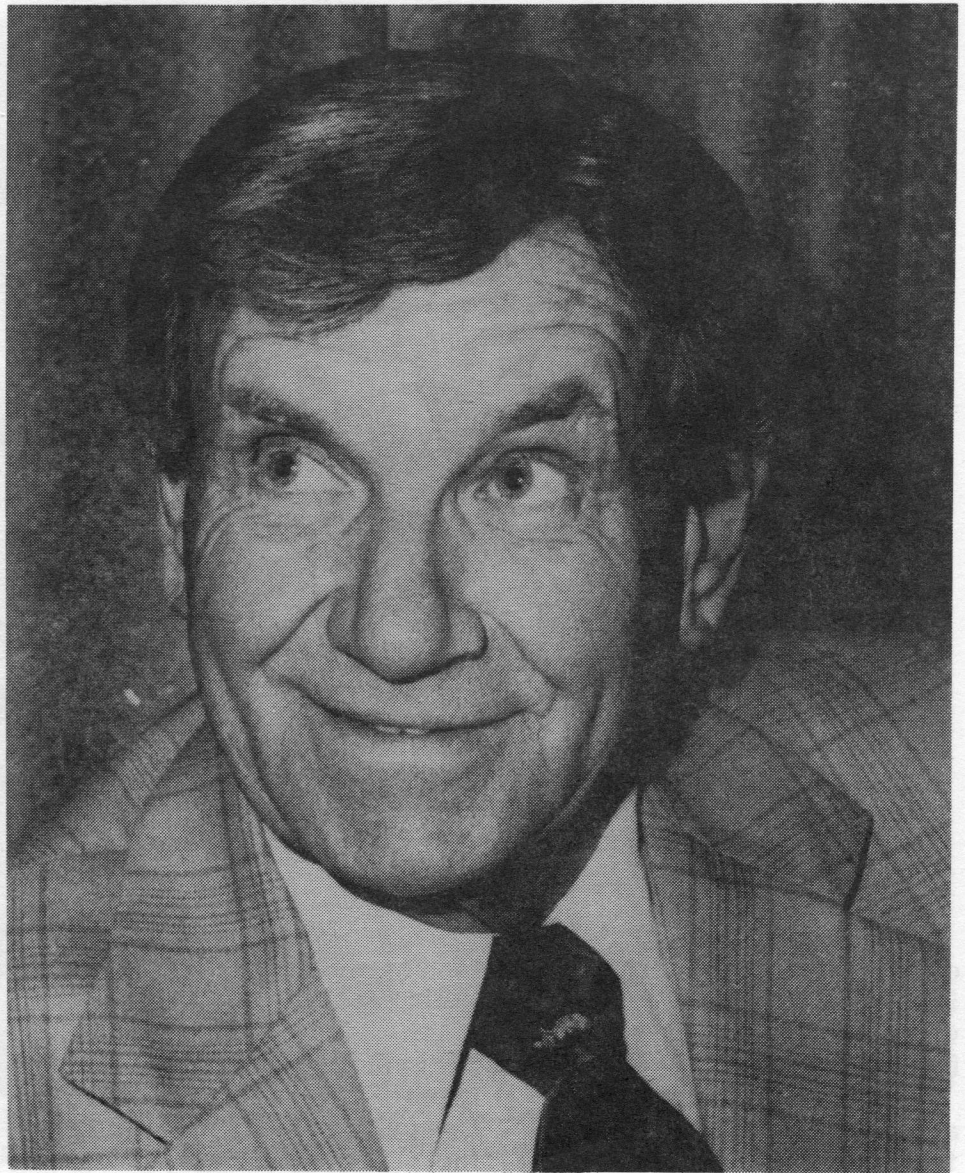
BOB SHANNON

The year was 1937. I was in high school in West Allis, Wisconsin. My neighbor and school mate was Walter Liberace, who many years later became famous as a piano player. When we were in high school Lee would hurry home each afternoon to practice his piano lessons and I would be off the local radio station where I worked from 4 to 6 pm on the air.

This was my apprenticeship in radio. Little did any of us realize at that time what an important role radio would play in the annals of show business.

In the early days we would improvise most of the programming as we went along. Talk about ad libbing - that's all we did. Shows in bowling alleys, theatre quiz shows (I have a lady in the balcony, doctor), Man on the Street interviews and even dance marathons. It was a wild, wacky business and I was eager to learn.

I'll never forget one of the first radio broadcasts I did on the Wisconsin Radio Network. It was in the early 40's and I described a ship launching at a Great Lakes shipyard. A half hour of descriptive ad lib and not bad if I do say so myself. By this time I



Bob Shannon

was working at WTAQ in Green Bay and was closely associated with the famous Green Bay Packers.

In 1941 I returned to my hometown of Milwaukee and a staff announcer's position at the top radio station in Wisconsin, WTMJ. It was a brief period because the war came along and I found myself at Fort Sill, Oklahoma one morning when I awoke.

After a hitch in the Army I came west and joined the Columbia Broadcasting System. At that time I was one of the

youngest network announcers in the country. What a thrill it was to work with some of the all time greats in the entertainment business: Jack Benny, Lionel Barrymore, Jean Hersholt, Jimmy Durante and Gary Moore, Binnie Barnes and William Demerest, Wallace Ford, Jack Kirkwood and so many others I can't begin to recall.

Radio was big in the forties. The advertising agencies and their clients had some of the biggest and brightest stars in motion pictures tied to



Shannon, singer Harry Babbitt and announcer Bob Moon combined their broadcast talents with female contestants on the 1951 program Ladies First, aired over the Mutual-Don Lee Network.

exclusive radio contracts. It seemed everyone wanted to get into the broadcast medium.

As a staff announcer at KNX-CBS I was fortunate to be on the proverbial "ground-floor" where things were happening. I worked as an announcer, master of ceremonies, voice impersonator and actor. These were the wild, wonderful days of "big time" radio. Little did we realize at that time that our beloved industry would become the Golden Age of Radio.

Radio had a tremendous influence on American life. Father Coughlin spoke to the nation from Detroit, Michigan each Sunday afternoon back in the thirties. His views were shared and debated by every facet of religion. Amos and Andy were an

overwhelming success in their portrayal of two blacks from Harlem who benevolently operated the Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company. As a matter of fact, they were so popular with radio listeners that even motion picture houses were forced to stop the movie during their show and pipe the program through the loudspeaker in the theatre.

Joe Penner had every kid in America asking, "Wanna buy a duck?" And Eddie Cantor musically extolled, "I Love To Spend Each Sunday With You." And speaking of Sunday, who doesn't remember taking a musical ride on the "Manhattan Merry-Go-Round?" These were great days and radio was a great medium.

President Roosevelt soon discovered the power

of talking intimately with the American public on his famous "Fireside Chats." It wasn't long after that that politicians picked up the challenge and purchased time to sell their political beliefs, and themselves, to the voting public through this new medium of communication.

Yes, radio did influence the American way of life. Sponsors were purchasing blocks of air time to sell their wares. The salesmen of course were the polished announcers of the day. Don Wilson sold Jello with the aid of Jack Benny and Company. Little Orphan Annie sold Ovaltine and Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy, sold Wheaties. The announcers became the all important link of communication between sponsor and listener.

The voice of Jimmy Wallington (the "daddy" of all announcers and my very dear friend) was one of the most heard voices on trans-continental (coast to coast) radio. There was Harlow Wilcox, Andre Baruch, Bill Goodwin, Harry Von Zell, Pat McGeehan, Dan Seymour, Ken Carpenter and Ken Niles to mention just a few. There were many more, all possessing great voices and the ability to read commercial copy with an air of flamboyancy. The possessors of these magnificent voices were trusted salesmen, never prone to mendacity.

I, too, was fortunate enough to work steady and "sell" a variety of products, both locally and to national audiences. You can't imagine what a



Bob Shannon's Rumpus Room at WTMJ, Milwaukee, was visited by the Andrews Sisters and Billy Maddox, a regular stooge on the program. Shannon inherited the show around 1940 from announcer Johnny Olson when he left for New York and fame as a radio and TV voice man.

tremulous, yet challenging experience it is to stand before a microphone and address the entire nation. We were all like the test pilot flying a new plane - we couldn't make a mistake. Everything was "live" and we were branded as letter perfect orators. But as tense and as anxious as we were, most performances came off letter perfect.

There were mistakes of course - so called bloopers. Like Harry Von Zell's introduction of the President of the United States - "Hoobert



Curt Massey and Bob Shannon joined a House of Murphy contestant kissing the Blarney Stone during a 1947 Mutual broadcast.



THE MAN SAYS YES. Frank Graham, Shannon, Van Des Autels and the Klever Kook at KMPC, Los Angeles in 1949.



Shannon conducts a "man in the street" type interview for Voice of the Neighborhood, aired on KMPC. Photo is from the broadcast of December 20, 1948.

Heaver." These bloopers are today recognized as classic material and are memorialized in books and as a basis for entire television shows.

Yes, radio in the Golden Years was quixotic. We all had a love affair with the medium.

When I started free-lancing in 1949 I made those every day trips up and down Sunset Blvd., and Vine Street - radio row. I was doing live radio shows at KMPC, KNX, KFI (off the beaten track on Vermont Avenue) KHJ, KFVD, KECA - sometimes as many as



Bob Shannon is joined by Tommy Dixon and director J.C. Lewis in a promotion for Women Are Wonderful, another Shannon radio program of the late 1940's.

seven shows a day.

In the early fifties we all saw the tremendous potential in television. But nobody in radio wanted to admit that one day there would be a possibility of this medium overpowering ours. But I had to try it on for size and I did just that. My first television show was a pernicious property called "Beat Me To The Draw" on which I acted as the master of ceremonies. Oh how different from my beloved radio - makeup, hot lights! Everything smacked of motion picture making. "Beat Me To The Draw" was a quiz show that premiered in 1949 and originated in the studios of W6XAO on top of Mount Wilson. We had to drive to the top of the mountain each week and in the wintertime fight the bitter cold and snow.

After that it was one television commercial after another. I also worked as a master of ceremonies

on many variety shows. But the sadness of the demise of radio was too much to bear for some. I managed to roll with the punches and kept active in both radio and television throughout the fifties and sixties.

Today I'm back in radio and very happy about the whole thing. As the head of my own company, "Goodtime Radio Productions", we produce "The Man Says Yes" which I emcee on National Public Radio station KCSN-FM, Northridge. I guess you can say I've gone full cycle because the same show I'm doing today was the top quiz show in Los Angeles back in 1949 on KMPC. The show will be heard also on commercial radio in the near future.

Today radio lives and will continue to live in the hearts and minds of everyone everywhere thanks to the wonderful, dedicated people at SPERDVAC.

BOB SHANNON "The Man Says Yes!"

(INDEED YES-YES)

KLEVER KOOK

Flavored Flour

Makes ALL

Meat Dishes

Taste BETTER

Flavored Flour

Makes ALL

Meat Dishes

Taste BETTER

6 DELICIOUS BEEF-PORK
FLAVORS-- CHICKEN-FISH
LAMB-SHRIMP



"THE MAN
SAYS YES!"

Monday thru Friday
1:00—1:30 P. M.

KMPC

710 ON YOUR DIAL

Olan Soulé's Chicago Radio Career



One of the highlights of Soulé's radio career was the decade he co-starred with Barbara Luddy on the *First Nighter* program. When he joined the popular show in 1943 it was still originating from Chicago. Pictured in this 1946 photo are director Joe Ainley (whose wife, actress Betty Lou Gerson, frequently appeared on the program), Barbara Luddy and Olan Soulé.



Olan Soulé and Barbara Luddy as they appeared in 1943. Miss Luddy took the female lead in 1936. When the program moved to Hollywood in 1947, Luddy and Soulé traveled with it.



Barbara Luddy and Olan Soulé became SPERDVAC honorary members in 1977.

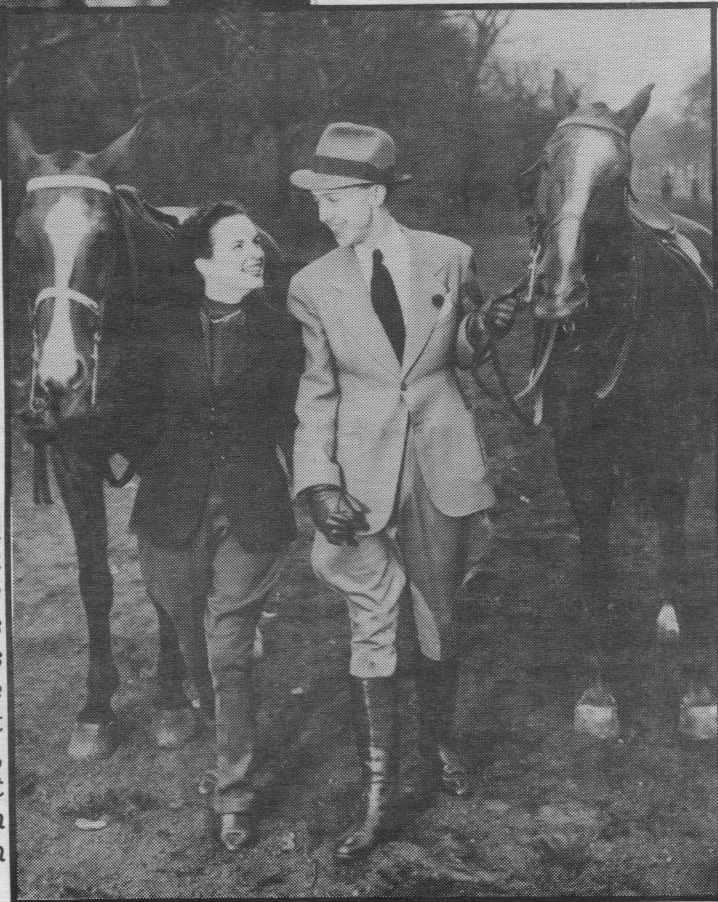


Olan Soulé with Simone Simone at WGN, Chicago, about 1938.



Bess Flynn's Bachelor's Children aired from the CBS-Chicago studios, 1935-1946. Soulé (upper left) played Sam Ryder and Marie Nelson was Ellen Collins. In the lower portion of this 1936 picture are Patricia Dunlap (Janet Ryder), Hugh Studebaker (Dr. Bob Graham) and Marjorie Hannan (Ruth Ann Graham).

Another popular Chicago soap opera featuring Olan Soulé was Midstream. It came to network radio in 1939 under the sponsorship of Teel Toothpaste. Soulé was the voice of Timothy Storey and Mercedes McCambridge was Midge Conway. The characters Midge and Timothy first met over the NBC airwaves on November 29, 1939, and the WMAQ aircheck of that broadcast, recorded from a transcription Soulé donated to SPERDVAC, appears in the SPERDVAC tape libraries.





When Chandu the Magician originated from WGN, Chicago about 1935 the cast included Olan Soule, Audrey McGrath, Howard Hoffman (he was Chandu) and Cornelia Osgood.



Joan and Kermit aired from the CBS studios in Chicago. Fran Carlon co-starred on this continuing drama of the late thirties. It was written by Milton Geiger, who later wrote and adapted many top-rated network productions.

CATALOG VIA COMPUTER

by Frank Rosin

The personal computer or PC can be quite an aid to the management of a vintage radio program collection.

I have been collecting for over 20 years and have a fairly large collection. At first I would type a card for the tape box, then one for a running list, and last a 3x5 card for each individual episode. This meant typing everything three times. I soon abandoned the 3x5 cards but had to thumb through many pages of the

reasons I would chose the same equipment today.

There was no software then (or now for that matter) available for this cataloging job in the market place for purchase. By just jumping in, reading the manuals, and trying this and that, soon several computer programs were written to service the data. Over the next few years changes and additions to the programs have been made yet nothing has ever been typed in more than items have become available and prices have come down in the expanding technology.

The computer required some changes made in the way episodes were cataloged, mostly in standardization. The problem is complex because of the diversity of material. First the reels were renumbered starting with #1 progressing upwards with each reel succeeding assigned the next higher number. It makes no difference in which order reels are entered but I did try to group reels of the same series in the running catalog.

The general catalog can be printed with two reel formats. The first is with a reel of episodes dedicated to one series such as figure 1. The heading is printed with the general quality for the reel with the A-B-C-D code and then the series title. (See figure 1)

Below the headings are the episodes on the reel. The far left column is a computer access number for

FIG 1
RADIO PROGRAM
TAPE CATALOG P.202

108- 750	REEL 713 (A)	OUR MISS BROOKS
751	NETWORK WITH COMMERCIALS BUT SOME SLIGHT SURFACE NOISE	
752	1	10-2-59 SHORT ONE ATHLETIC UNIFORM
753	2	10-23-49 GIFTS FOR PHILIP
754	3	11-20-49 PARTY LINE
755	4	12-25-49 SCHOOL TEACHER'S CHRISTMAS
756	5	1-30-50 EMBEZZLEMENT
757	6	2-6-50 POOR HEAT IN SCHOOL
758	7	1-25-50 CURE THAT HABIT INC.
759	8	1-29-50 SCHOOL ON SATURDAY
760	9	3-11-50 THE BURGLAR
761	10	5-28-50 THE TRAFFIC COURT
762	11	9-10-50 RUMORS
763	12	10-1-50 MEASLES

running list to find individual episodes. As the collection grew this became more and more time consuming.

One evening in the summer of 1979 while at dinner with a friend we discovered a similar situation with his collection of railroad timetables and books. We decided the problem must be solved and the first thing to come to mind was a Xerox type duplicating machine. This appeared to be rather limited in use though. Home computers were reaching the market and as he had some experience where he worked with a computer we decided to look into what might be available.

We discovered there were less than 6 computers that could possibly be used. It was easy at that time to eliminate by price, limitations in use, and lack of support. After a couple of months of research we both purchased an Apple II+, two disk drives, CRT screen and printer. Although there are many more brands available at the present time, for many

FIGURE 2
RADIO PROGRAM
TAPE CATALOG P.204

108- 825	REEL 720 (A)	VARIOUS
826	1	1-24-52 STARS IN THE AIR ENCHANTMENT
827	2	4-20-52 STARS IN THE AIR STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERE
828	3	4-27-52 STARS IN THE AIR DEEP WATERS
829	4	5-11-52 STARS IN THE AIR JEZEBEL
830	5	5-18-52 STARS IN THE AIR NIGHT SONG
831	6	3-13-52 HOLLYWOOD STARTIME IVY
832	7	4-5-52 STARS IN THE AIR HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO
833	8	12-27-51 HOLLYWOOD SOUNDSTAGE CALL NORTHSIDE 777
834	9	6-16-45 AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE TIGHT WAD
835	10	5-15-48 CURTAIN TIME TWO LOVES HAVE I
836	11	1-11-42 AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE SECOND FIDDLE
837	12	11-18-42 AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE HE WOKE UP FAMOUS

FIGURE 3

	<u>SUSPENSE</u>	<u>ALPHABETICAL</u>	P. 1
359	1 (453)	6-1-50	A CASE OF NERVES EDWARD G. ROBINSON
490	2 (529)	9-25-56	A CASE OF IDENTITY FARLEY BAER Sch C
866	3 (810)	3-27-60	A COFFIN FOR MR. CASH LEON JANNEY
812	4 (794)	1-19-58	A CROWDED VOID BARTLETT ROBINSON
743	5 (395)	1-13-44	A DIME A DANCE LUCILLE BALL
559	6 (751)	5-17-59	A FRIEND OF DADDY'S FRANK LOVEJOY
487	7 (529)	8-15-56	A FRIEND TO ALEXANDER JOHN DEHNER
617	8 (446)	8-3-43	A FRIEND TO ALEXANDER ROBERT YOUNG
765	9 (397)	6-15-44	A FRIEND TO ALEXANDER G. FITZGERALD
512	10 (531)	3-31-57	A GOOD NEIGHBOR JEFF CHANDLER
284	11 (400)	4-5-45	A GUY GETS LONELY DANE CLARK

FIGURE 4

	<u>SUSPENSE</u>	<u>BY DATE</u>	P. 2
686	58 (446)	8-10-43	FOUNTAIN PLAYS, THE EDMUND CHERN
957	59 (446)	8-21-43	SORRY WRONG NUMBER AGNES MOOREHEAD Sch C
958	60 (446)	8-28-43	KING'S BIRTHDAY, THE DELORES COSTELLO
959	61 (446)	9-2-43	SINGING WALLS, THE PRESTON FOSTER Sch C
960	62 (446)	9-9-43	MARRY FOR MURDER LILLIAN GISH
961	63 (446)	9-16-43	CROSS-EYED BEAR, THE VIRGINIA BRUCE
962	64 (446)	9-23-43	MOST DANGEROUS GAME, THE ORSON WELLES

corrections. Next appearing as we go across the line are a running count for the reel, quality, date, episode title, cast, and comments, if any. All information for any particular episode appears on one single line. A line or more of comments can appear at any location in several type styles if more information is needed.

The second type of reel is one that contains more than one series on the reel. At the top rather than a series title I put the word VARIOUS. (See figure 2)

As each program episode on the reel is printed below this heading the series title will appear underlined then followed by the other data.

For each episode, if the quality code is different than the heading it will appear before the date; if it is the same it is not printed.

The logo at the top and bottom of each page appears automatically. An entire page is not printed here but in figures 1 and 2 the bottom of the page is moved up to show the bottom logo.

These can be printed as many times as desired again for one page, an entire catalog, or individual reel. The data has only been handled once. A box listing is either inserted in the

box with the reel of tape or glued to the outside of the box. If a mistake has been made or new information obtained it is rather simple to change, add, or delete and only the information in question need be disturbed. The corrected data can be printed immediately or any time in the future.

This all might have been done with the duplicating machine but the computer really begins to shine when all the data is in. It can be extracted and worked on in almost any form.

I usually extract and then sort by series title. The computer scans all the data, sets aside what I want, sorts alphabetically by episode title and then by date. In figures 3 and 4 I have extracted a short part of the Suspense series. It could be from any series, long or short and by storing a pathway number with the data it can be printed without sorting again. (See figures 3 and 4)

When printing this type of listing I can add other data such as episodes I do not have or episodes that are unavailable for the printing of a complete log. (See figure 5)

There is a column of reel numbers in brackets. This is where I can find

FIGURE 5

SUSPENSE		BY DATE		P. 1
698	1 (392)	6-17-42	BURNING COURT, THE	CHARLES RUGGLES First program
699	2 (392)	6-24-42	WET SATURDAY	CLARENCE DEMENT
790	3 ()	7-1-42	LIFE OF NELLIE JAMES, THE	JEANNE CAGNEY
791	4 ()	7-8-42	ROPE	RICHARD WIDMARK
792	5 ()	7-15-42	WITNESS ON THE WEST-BOUND LIMITED	
1	6 ()	7-22-42	-a-PRE-EMPT-	
793	7 ()	7-29-42	PHILOMEL COTTAGE	ERIC DRESSLER
794	8 ()	8-5-42	FINISHING SCHOOL	MARGO
795	9 ()	8-12-42	SUSPICION	
700	10 (392)	8-19-42	CAVE OF ALI BABA, THE	ROMNEY BRENT
182	11 ()	8-26-42	-b-PRE-EMPT-	
701	12 (392)	9-2-42	HITCH-HIKER, THE	ORSON WELLES
147	13 ()	9-9-42	-c-PRE-EMPT-	
702	14 (392)	9-16-42	KETLER METHOD, THE	ROGER DEKOBÉ
703	15 (392)	9-23-42	A PASSAGE TO BENARES	PAUL STEWART

the episode with a blank indicating I do not have the episode.

In figure 6 I have extracted and counted only the series titles. This is mainly a check for mistakes. The computer cannot recognize 'THE LONE RANGER' from "LONE RANGER' and other close but not exact titles. A printout of this list is kept near the computer for reference of how each is listed, another standardization necessary. (See figure 6)

It has taken some time to get all 2300 + reels entered but once all of them were entered it has been easy to keep up to date as new reels are added to the collection.

I have not gotten into programming the computer here but would like to mention one difficulty that had to be solved early in the process: the date.

The date is entered as we usually see it such as 12-4-84. In order to use the date for sorting episodes in date order it must be edited. The year

must be first, the dashes eliminated, and single digit numbers expanded to two digits with a zero. It is held in the computer as 841204. When it comes back to me the computer moves the year back to the right, adds dashed and remove the unwanted zeros. It appears again as 12-4-84. There are dates with years only or just year and month or perhaps no date at all, requiring additional adjustment.

Episode titles, cast lists, comments and other data need less attention but do need some with the computer doing it quite rapidly. With a printer that does 150 characters or so per second, normal for today, the printer never slows down for all the editing.

I am fascinated every time I sit down and turn on the computer. It has almost become more fun that collecting the vintage radio. If anyone is interested in the program listings to take advantage of what I have done please feel free to drop me a note. I can send them on a disk for immediate use on an Apple or the printout for translation to another computer.

My collection is now manageable, an individual item can be located in a few seconds, and printing any type of list takes little effort. I did need to learn something about computer programming but it was not too hard. The programs run fine now with little attention to the workings of the computer. Another benefit has been all the other record keeping and games that can be used on the computer numbering in the thousands. As time goes by justification for purchase gets easier and easier.

FIGURE 6

1	1	AMOS 'N' ANDY
2	2	ARROW NEWS REPORTER
3	1	ASK-IT-BASKET
4	1	AUNT JENNY'S REAL LIFE S
5	1	BACHELOR'S CHILDREN
6	1	BASEBALL GAME
7	1	BIG SISTER
8	1	BRENTA CURTIS
9	1	CAREER OF ALICE BLAIR
10	1	CERTIFIED MAGIC CARPET
11	1	DICK CARROLL ORCHESTRA
12	1	DOCTOR SUSAN
13	1	FDR
14	1	GOLDBERGS
15	1	HILLTOP HOUSE

The Radio Life of Dick Mack



A former performer on stage and radio, Dick Mack also made his mark on the radio industry as a writer, producer and director. A proud moment for him was Lionel Barrymore's performance of a scene from "A Christmas Carol" on the Rudy Vallee Sealtest Program on NBC.



A Rudy Vallee Show rehearsal in the early forties once turned into a conga dance. Pictured from left to right are John Barrymore, Diana Barrymore, Hattie McDaniel, Joan Davis and Vallee. Several rehearsal recordings of the Sealtest Program were donated to SPERDVAC's Archives Library by Mack's widow Naomi Lewis.



Performing a scene from "Richard the Third," the Brothers Barrymore, Lionel and John, rehearse their parts for a Vallee broadcast. Peering over their shoulders are Dick Mack and Rudy Vallee.

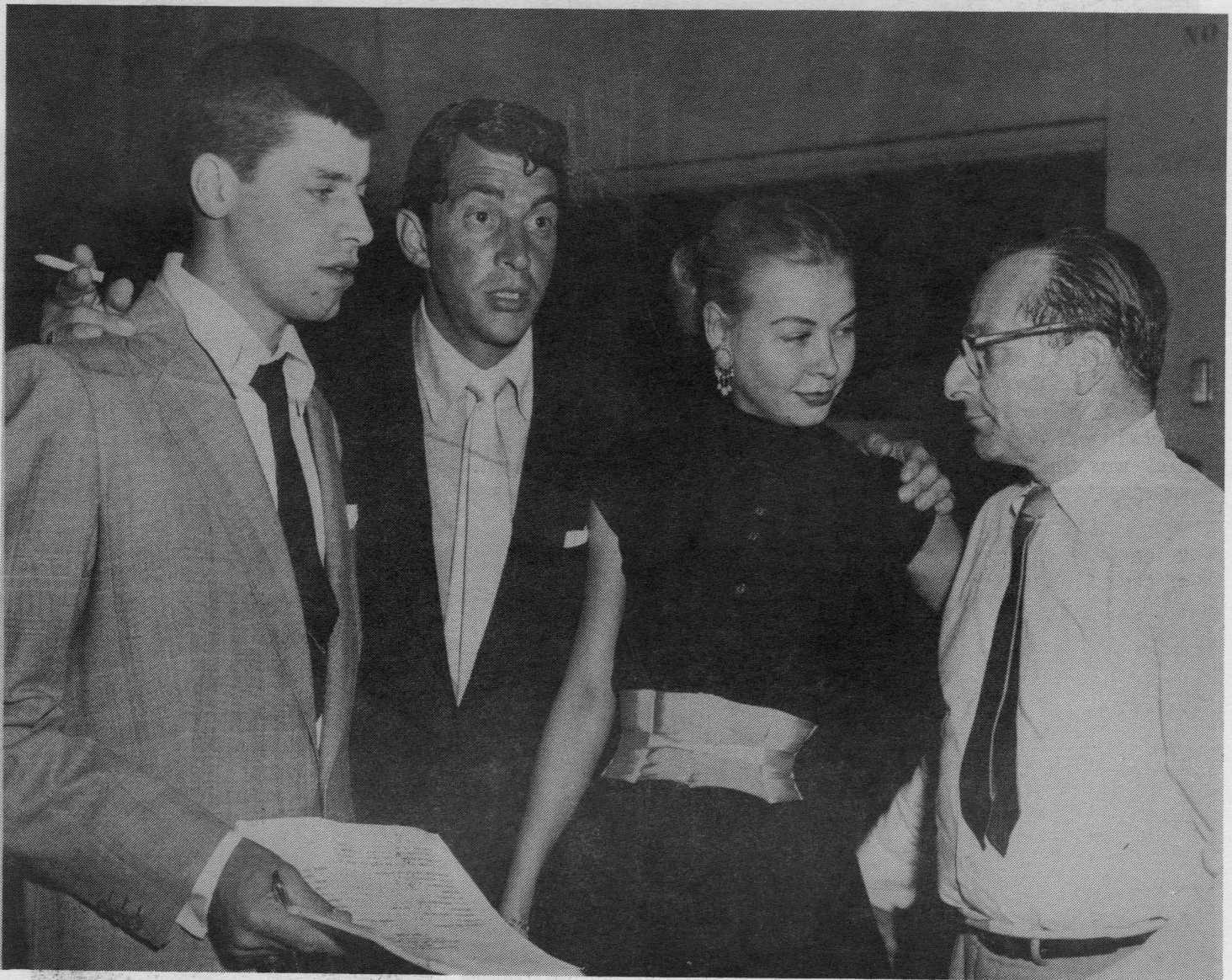


When Lauren Bacall was nervous about doing a live broadcast Mack offered advice and Groucho Marx offered the diversion of humor. Note actress "woodshedding" (rehearsing) in the background.

KENNY BAKER



Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin had their own NBC show beginning in 1949, after the CBS talent raid. Mack followed Robert L. Redd in the producer/director position. The announcer was George Fenneman. Here they discuss a script with Vera Ellen.





QUEEN JOAN AND HER COURT. Joan Davis gained prominence on the Rudy Vallee program in 1941 and was teamed with Jack Haley in 1943 on the Sealtest Village Store after Vallee joined the Service. On a later Davis comedy offering, *Leave It to Joan*, her cast included singer Andy Russell, Verna Felton, Shirley Mitchell and announcer (and court jester) Harry Von Zell. Dick Mack was the writer, producer and director of the Davis comedy series.



Between comedy sketches Joan Davis touted Roi-Tan cigars to her radio listeners.



"Never has anyone so little taken so much from so many," declared a Winston Churchill impersonator when Charlie McCarthy became engaged to Marilyn Monroe in 1952. "Whoever heard of someone gettin' hitched to a hitching post?" quipped Jack Kirkwood. Mack wrote comedy sketches for Edgar Bergen and spared Monroe fans eternal gloom when Charlie's blood test showed no blood, only sap.

Joan Davis and Danny Kaye topped the radio ratings with their own programs as much as they towered over Dick Mack. Mack directed Kaye's Blue Ribbon Town Program after Pabst and Groucho Marx parted company.





First Nighter Anecdotes

by
**LES
TREMAYNE**

For the first six years of my radio career, I was very particular about keeping a daily record of every show I worked - the date, time, name of show or episode, each and every character I played (and sometimes there were up to 10 in a single show!), and, later on, pertinent observations and specific comments pertaining to these or made by others, which I felt important enough to record. My career accelerated to such an extent (up to 45 shows a week!) that I found it impossible to keep this radio log current and abruptly stopped recording the facts on May 30, 1936.

This curtailment was brought about, also, by the fact that I took my first vacation beginning on April 20, 1936 - four days after my 23rd birthday and a month before I began my stint on "The First Nighter" program as the romantic leading man and co-star with that exquisite actress, my lovely leading lady Barbara Luddy. This

role lasted until I quit the show in the middle of 1943 and went to Hollywood for the second time.

Actually, I had been working on "The First Nighter", off and on in various roles, since 1934. (The program first hit the air on Thanksgiving night in 1930, over WIBO on Chicago's far north side, with its creator, Charles P. Hughes, playing the role of Mr. First Nighter, the host. June Meredith was the leading lady and co-star with my dear old friend, Jack Doty, a superb actor with an outstanding voice, as the leading man. Hardly anyone seems to remember Jack Doty as the original leading man. He wasn't with the show very long, which may account for that fact.

When Jack left, the Campana Corp., our sponsor, came up with a young, handsome, dashing leading man named Don Ameche. Don, at the time I knew him, was the #1 actor around Chicago.

It came about that I (physically quite opposite to Don, which, thank goodness, didn't matter in radio), replaced him in five different parts on



First Nighter stars
Barbara Luddy
and Les Tremayne
costumed for their
roles in "Three
Men and a Mes-
sage"

Barbara Luddy joins Les Tremayne at a 1978 SPERDVAC meeting. They are two of over one hundred radio veterans to become SPERDVAC honorary members.



four different shows as he left each program: Capt. Hughes and Coach Hardy, both characters on "Jack Armstrong, The All-American Boy" (that was primarily because Don's voice was almost identical to that of his younger brother Jim, who played Jack Armstrong); Bob in "Betty and Bob"; the romantic leading man and co-star with Anne Seymour in "Grand Hotel"; and, ultimately, the leading man in "The First Nighter", as I mentioned above. Although I had been playing various roles on "Grand Hotel" since 1933 and "The First Nighter" since 1934, my first audition to replace Don in both "Grand Hotel" and "The First Nighter" was on August 21, 1935.

I was accepted as the lead on "Grand Hotel" and played it for a couple of years. This meant that I was already working for the same sponsor, the Campana Corp. But, since "The First Nighter" was their "bigger" show of the two (and for those too young to know, I must mention that "The First Nighter" was one of the biggest and most popular dramatic shows on the air at that or any other time), they wanted to make sure they were doing the "right thing", I guess, by scouring the country from New York to Hollywood

and points in between, as well as overseas - something unheard of in those days!). I sweated it for quite a while and then finally went to Tom Wallace, the head of the agency, and Emo Oswalt, the President of Campana, and asked them why I wasn't even being considered. I had already replaced Don in all those other shows which I was still doing, and was at that very moment playing the lead in their other half hour drama on Sunday afternoons, "Grand Hotel".

It surprised them, I guess, because they said that was a good idea. I assume they hadn't given me another thought after the original audition which won me "Grand Hotel". I also believe they were looking for some sort of "movie name". Anyway, call it intuition or what-you-will, it seemed I really had the drop on everybody because I knew and had worked with Don, knew his voice and his delivery, and I also knew why Campana couldn't find a new leading man. They wanted Don Ameche! I instinctively knew that if you didn't or couldn't sound like Don, your chances would be pretty slim. He, and they, had been eminently successful together.

When they told me to come in for an audition, the first thing I did was call one of the sweetest girls in the

business and the friend of all the Chicago actors, long, lean Betty Mitchell at RCA in the merchandise mart, and asked her to get out one or two of Don's old "Betty and Bob" records for me to listen to, which she did ... and I did. I timed it so that immediately after listening to them to refresh my memory, I went on up to NBC in the same building and into the studio where they were waiting for me. I was given a one page soliloquy from a former "First Nighter" script which I read for them ala Don Ameche - or a reasonable facsimile of same. I knew this was the only thing that would make any impression on them and it worked! They "fell on the floor", so to speak and rest is history.

For me, "The First Nighter Program" was the greatest "I.D. Point" of my career. Even today, 41 years after leaving it (and, indeed, that was a wrench), the "First Nighter" is the first vehicle people I meet mention in connection with me. I've been in radio



Luddy and Tremayne were voted America's number one dramatic performers during the years they co-starred on the First Nighter program. They broadcast the show from Chicago.

for 54 years, TV since 39, theatre since 20, motion pictures since 16 (I started at age 3 in London, with my mother). I've spent 68 years in show business, with three plays on Broadway, (one of them, "Detective Story", a "hit", ran for 18 months). I've made at least 35 motion pictures and worked my tail off in practically all of the "live" television shows of the '40's and '50's and '60's -- and most of it could have been for naught if it hadn't been for "The First Nighter".

The program was neck and neck in the polls, year after year, with various top shows, loaded with movie names and at 10 times the budget. Bidy (Barbara Luddy) and I were voted number one actor and actress many times in the same polls. In the '40's I was voted one of the three most famous voices in America, along with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Bing Crosby. All because I had a place to show my "wares". How lucky can you get!

In September 1943, I was out in Hollywood working with Bob Crosby and The BobCats on our Sunday afternoon half hour show. Campana inquired as to whether I would be interested in returning to "The First Nighter". Sadly enough, my answer was no. I felt I needed New York and Hollywood to round out my career.

Another interesting comment about what life deals out to you - in 1982, I discovered that Twentieth Century Fox had written to me in care of the ad agency that handled "The First Nighter", to ascertain whether they could negotiate a contract with me. That was in 1936, right after I had taken over the "First Nighter" lead role. The letter never reached me. Campana had been burned once before with Ameche and 20th Century. I learned of Campana's negation of any discussion with me about signing with 20th forty-six years too late! The irony is they had no right to do what they did. I was not under any sort of exclusivity with Campana. They simply overlooked informing me of 20th's "feeler". But, by now, the statute of limitations has run out and the people who were involved are either retired - or dead - along with the kind of dramatic radio I've been talking about.

For SPERDVAC -
With many
thanks
Sincerely
As
Tremayne



Chandu the Magician.....Revisited



THE SEARCH FOR ROBERT REGENT was the first adventure aired when Chandu the Magician returned to radio 28 June 1948. Here cast members Irene Tedrow, Lee Millar, Tom Collins and Joy Terry peer into a crystal ball with better reception than television of that era.

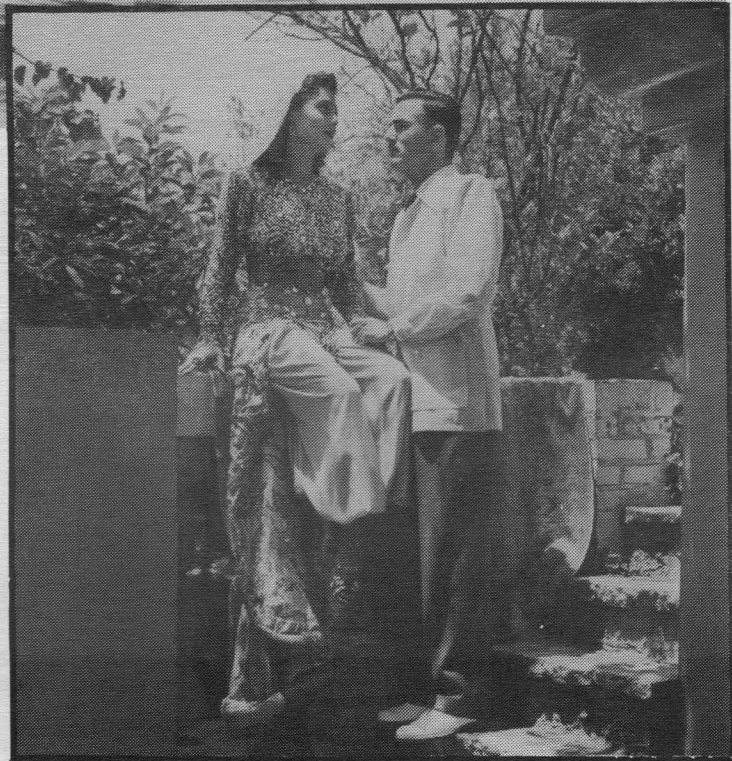


Danger lurked behind every corner on Chandu. Pictured above are Irene Tedrow, Tom Collins and, in disguise, announcer Howard Culver concealing a box of White King Soap. Below, Culver struggles with Millar (son Bob Regent).





WOOING A PRINCESS. Director Cyril Ambruster confers with Princess Nadji, played by Veola Vonn.



Chandu (Tom Collins) sometimes required the assistance of Princess Nadji. This set of photographs was taken at the Irene Tedrow Kent residence, Hollywood, in 1948.

Radio's

Pat McGeehan

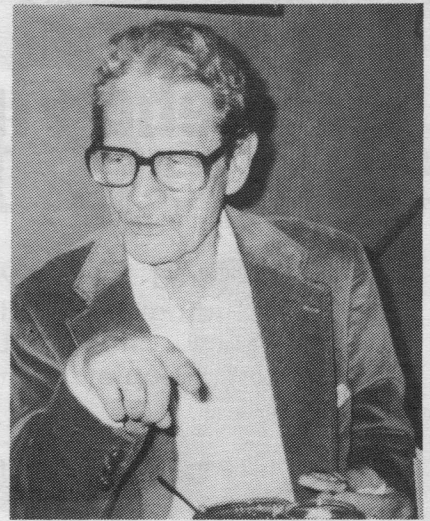
by Stan Reyburn

If you ever want to meet the quintessential Irishman with a sparklin' in his eyes, hinting the mischievous with a grand heart, you have in two words, Pat McGeehan.

From vaudeville appearances in the 1920's to voiceovers in the 1980's he has covered the world of entertainment like a blanket. Aided by his friend, radio and TV personality Bob Shannon, this writer conducted an interview with McGeehan last June. Here are some of the highlights of this slice of living history.



Pat McGeehan, center, is joined by long-time pal Bob Shannon and Jack Brown, general manager of KCSN Radio, Northridge, CA.



Reyburn: When did you first get the show business itch?

McGeehan: When I was five years old my uncle encouraged me to perform for the "poor people." It turned out to be a poetry recital at the Elks Club in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I'm originally from that area.

Reyburn: How did you get your first big break in the business?

McGeehan: My first real exposure was in vaudeville at age 14. I was working the pottery plants (his index fingers are curved from working the pots) in East Liverpool, Ohio, and I would appear in amateur night performances at Mr. Peter's Strand Theatre. My fellow workers applauded my performance the most because if I won they would get an Eskimo Pie on me. You might say my first break was the Eskimo Pie.

Reyburn: What types of media have you worked and what are some of the roles you have played?

McGeehan: I've worked the Catskills in the "borscht belt," done chauffeur work and during the 1920's I worked as an extra at practically every film studio in the New York area. Some of the people I performed with were Richard Dix, Lillian Gish and Rudolph Valentino.

In addition, I had parts in musical comedies. I remember a cold reading for NBC in their old studios at 711 Fifth Avenue in New York. I happened to see a sign that said "audition" and proceeded up to the 11th floor to ask the young lady there where the audition was. She handed me a script, sent me to the microphone and told me to read the copy. Well, since that young lady and the producer were both Irish, I got the job. I was supposed to

do a newscast at 7 pm the next evening, the top listening hour. I told all my friends at the rooming house to listen. Instead of news, it turned out to be the role of Chet Tieman, a nasty bank clerk on David Harum. I got a whopping \$50.00 per performance. That was really big money in those days.

After a siege of illness I landed in Pasadena, California where I worked at the Pasadena Playhouse. I did some Shakespeare opposite Lurene Tuttle on radio using some of the training I'd learned there.

During the day I worked with the WPA as a concrete spreader/foreman. It was my crew that poured the Pasadena Freeway from Avenue 54 to Avenue 59.

I later began doing radio and worked on all the local stations, such as KIEV, KGFJ, KHJ and the like. It was excellent experience. I had a continuous radio career

McGeehan Interview

until 1959, when I retired.

I also worked some TV shows, including the Red Skelton Show and Art Linkletter's People Are Funny.

Here is a partial list of radio shows Pat was involved with in character, voice or announcing parts:

David Harum; Aunt Mary; Hedda Hopper; Louella Parsons; Irene Rich; Romance of the Ranchos; Screen Guild Theatre; Red Skelton Show; Ginny Simms Show; People Are Funny; I Was There; The Whistler; Red Ryder (Pat was the original Red Ryder on radio); Suspense; Inner Sanctum; Arch Oboler's Plays; Zero Hour; Dr. Christian; Stars Over Hollywood; Billie Burke Show; Burns and Allen Program; Fred Allen (when he visited the West Coast); The Marines Tell it to You; Blondie; Kay Kyser; Bob Hope Show; Bing Crosby Show; Bergen & McCarthy; The California Story (by Meredith Willson); Hour of St. Francis; Family Theatre.

On Mondays Pat used to do ten shows at \$5.00 per program. His day would begin at 7 am and end around 11 pm.

Reyburn: What is your favorite role of those you've played?

McGeehan: I think my favorite was the occasion I imitated Hal Holbrook doing Mark Twain for the University of Southern California in a CBS television series. This voice simulation led to a later role portraying Sir Thomas Wolfe.

Reyburn: Tell us a little about your family and their involvement in show business.

McGeehan: Bernice, my lovely wife, has been doing publicity for Lawrence Welk's production company and has recently been appointed public relations director. She has collaborated with Mr. Welk in the writing of seven best selling books about his organization. Bernice was formerly a radio actress appearing as a soap opera star under the name Karen Holdt, who portrayed the Amazing Jennifer Logan.

Our son is a writer, following in his mother's footsteps and our daughter, Mary Kate, has a role in "Falcon Crest." She is Gilberti's daughter-in-law on that series.

Reyburn: What's the most amusing thing that has ever happened to you in this business?

McGeehan: While doing the program

"Marines Tell it to You," I had the job of conferring a medal on the program. The copy was quite lengthy and there was no place to stop. While I was reading the copy the producer helpfully took off my coat. Then Hans Conried took off my suspenders. Then they proceeded to take off my pants and burn the script while I was still reading it. After I finished reading the script, the producer said it was I who deserved the medal.

Reyburn: Who was your favorite performer to work with and why?

McGeehan: Red Skelton. All the people working on the program were like family. After a while one was able to anticipate what the other people would do because there was a lot of ad libbing. That was the true test of an actor.

Reyburn: If you had it to do all over again, what might you do differently?

McGeehan: Nothing. I think that each situation in my life was a building block to another. It has been very satisfying.

Reyburn: What advice would you give an aspiring actor?

McGeehan: Don't stop trying. Keep plugging along because that is the only way that success will ever be achieved.

SPERDVAC's First Decade



Jerry Haendiges is one of SPERDVAC's three founders. He was supplying programs for airing on Kevin Stern's "Don't Touch That Dial" at KCSN, Northridge, California. Listener James Coontz, night sports editor at the Los Angeles Times, suggested an organization of old-time radio show collectors might be formed. Haendiges supplied the shows, Stern supplied the publicity via his Thursday night program, and Coontz was selected as SPERDVAC's first president.

Marvin Miller delighted a packed house at a 1976 SPERDVAC meeting with memories of his broadcast career. He traced his career from St. Louis through Chicago to Hollywood, and along the way became one of radio's most versatile voice men.



George Fenneman told SPERDVAC why the secret word will always be Groucho. SPERDVAC's second president, Joe Crawford, presented Fenneman with an Honorary Membership Certificate.

FILL AN EVENING WITH NOSTALGIC DREAMS



SPERDVAC's
2nd Annual Founders
Dinner • Sun., Nov. 21st.

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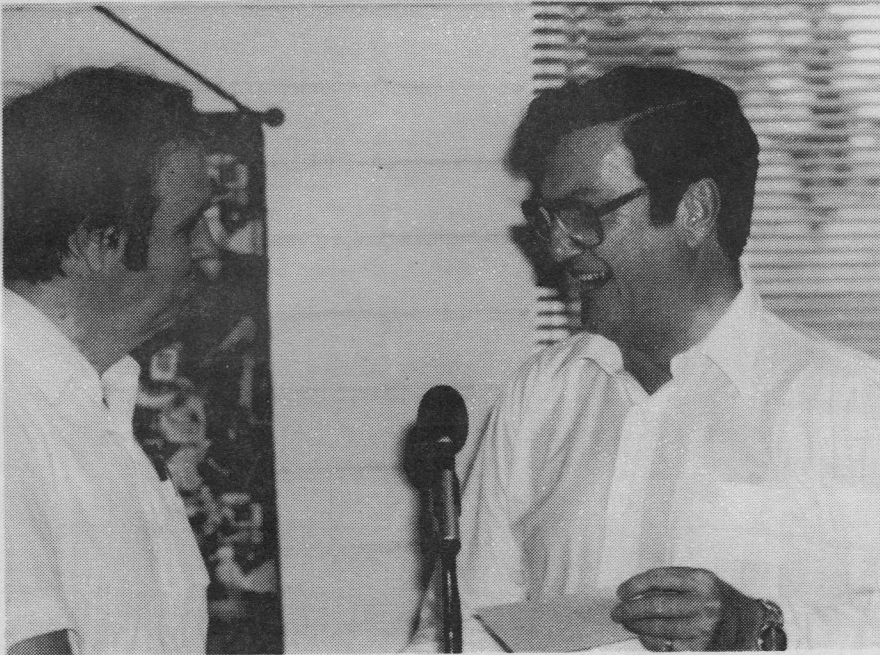
When SPERDVAC celebrated its second anniversary the same night NBC marked its golden anniversary, the turnout was impressive and Doodles Weaver entertained with hilarious quips and stories of his days as one of Spike's City Slickers. John Milton Kennedy acted as Master of Ceremonies as he would again in 1982 and at the 1984 Convention.



Weaver at SPERDVAC in 1976



SPERDVAC DONATES \$1000 IN BARBARA LUDDY'S MEMORY



A 1981 decision by SPERDVAC's Board of Directors established the Barbara Luddy Fund, named in honor of the late radio actress. SPERDVAC donated a thousand dollars to the Motion Picture Country House and Hospital in Luddy's memory in 1982 and again at the Tenth Anniversary Convention in 1984. At left, Bill Campbell accepts the donation for the home from President Bobb Lynes. Below, First-Nighter costars Les Tremayne and Olan Soulé speak at a luncheon marking the 1982 donation.





SPERDVAC Presents
Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

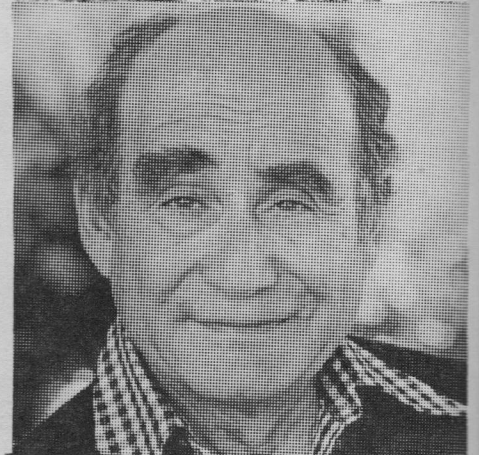
SAT. 13 NOV. 1982

A SUSPENSE TALE.....
"WORLD OF DARKNESS"
 A LIVE RE-CREATION OF THE RADIO PLAY
 EXECUTIVE PRODUCER—
BYRON KANE

CAPITOL RECORDS
 1750 VINE ST.
 HOLLYWOOD

DOORS OPEN:
6:00 P.M.
 CLOSE:
6:45 P.M.

Les Tremayne and Janet Waldo starred in "World of Darkness," a Suspense play originally aired in 1944. Byron Kane organized a cast of radio row's finest to recreate a live network production for SPERDVAC.



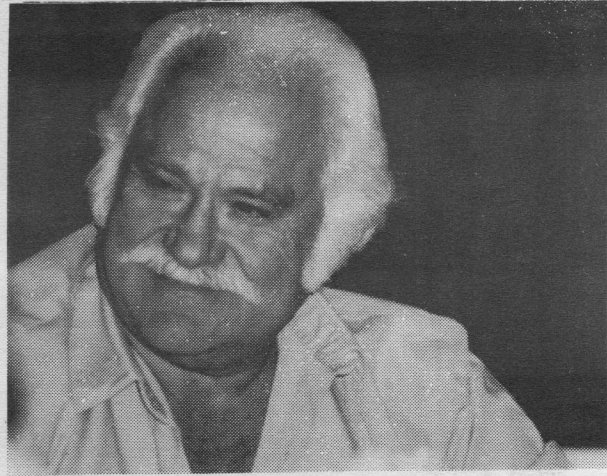
Byron Kane got the idea for a re-creation when he heard Jack Kruschen recount the time he played five roles on one show. Kane played a crazy man in his 60's and a young man of about 18.

The first read-through began at 11 a.m. in a studio at Capitol Records. Seated from left are Les Tremayne (back to camera), Lurene Tuttle, Vance Colvig, Byron Kane (back to camera), Janet Waldo, Jack Kruschen, and assistant director Ken McManus. Not shown is director Fletcher Markle.

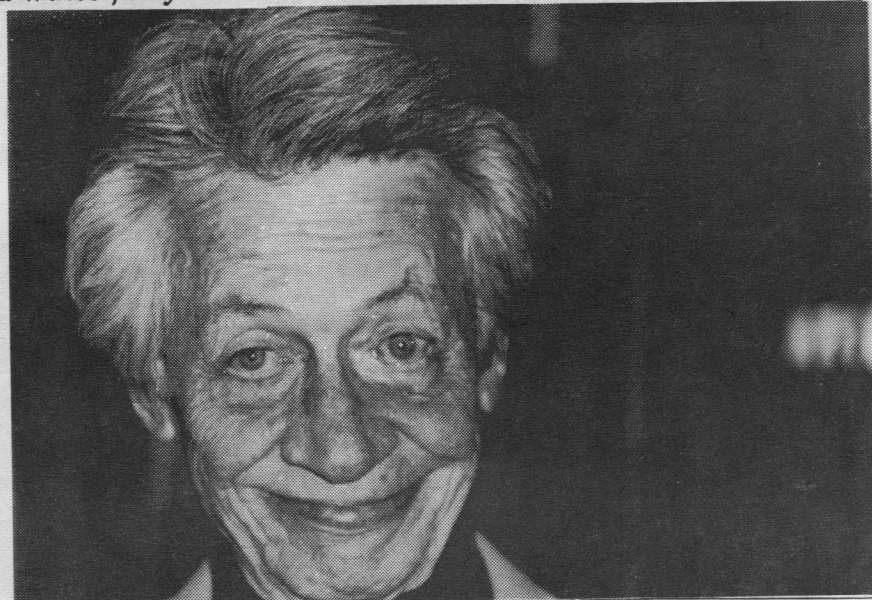


Frank Martin was a surprise addition to the Suspense cast. None of the others knew that Byron Kane had arranged for the first Suspense announcer to return to the role he performed on the 1944 broadcast. He hadn't spoken of Roma Wines for years.

Jack Kruschen "tripled" on the show. He played a homicide detective, plus two parts on a Roma Wine commercial: Kruschen held a conversation with himself (as the American host and the Latin guest) and the audience loved it.



Virginia Gregg played three roles in a Suspense play. A few months earlier she discussed her many radio roles in a SPERDVAC meeting saluting CBS performers of the 1950's.



Vance Colvig was the voice of a Belgian dog and an American police dispatcher. He and his father, Pinto Colvig, were radio performers.

Veola Vonn and Frank Nelson were SPERDVAC's honored guests at the October 1982 banquet. The following month Nelson played the "Man in Black" role the late Joseph Kearns performed four decades ago.





Herb Ellis and Herb Vigran broke up frequently while recounting their radio experiences.



Bea Wain sang and Andre Baruch announced on "Your Hit Parade," but at a SPERDVAC banquet they had to contend with the image of W.C. Fields looking down at them. Baruch announced the famous musical program the season Fields was a regular.



Founding president James Coontz greets comic Stan Freberg at a 1976 SPERDVAC meeting.

SPERDVAC

Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

(A Non Profit Educational Public Benefit Corporation)

P.O. BOX 1587 HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90028 (213) 254-8173

SPERDVAC is a non-profit organization with seven goals:

1. To provide the finest collection of quality programs that members may listen to and duplicate for their own collections.
2. To seek out and honor the people who made radio's "Golden Age" possible.
3. To promote and encourage drama, variety and comedy programs – old and new – on radio today.
4. To work vigorously to stop the commercialization and sale of old radio tapes.
5. To collect and maintain, for members and other interested people, a library of radio history and to use this material in the publication of a newsletter, or special brochures, in preparation of an accurate and complete account of radio, from its earliest days to the present.
6. To contribute to the support of non-commercial radio stations interested in and aiding the goals of the society, including broadcasting "Old-Time" radio programs.
7. To alert members to trends in drama, variety and comedy broadcasting, and to publish special radio program listings and news releases to inform members and the general public.

