

SPERDVAC **RADIOGRAM**

Vol. XVI, No. 3

The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

March 1990

The Front Page



The California Artists Radio Theatre performed Peggy Webber's radio adaptation of the stage play "The Front Page" which aired Feb. 25 on KPCC-FM, Pasadena. Featured in the cast were, from left, John Bliss, Bob Legionaire, Kathleen Freeman, sound effects man Ray Erlenborn, Jimmy Lydon, Parley Baer, Vance Colvig and Marvin Kaplan. A live audience paid to watch the broadcast, with proceeds going to the Greater Los Angeles Press Fund Foundation. See page 11 for additional photos.

IN THIS ISSUE

TED LEWIS MUSEUM See Page 8

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Larry Gassman

There has been a suggestion made that we change our convention in 1991 to the month of June. I would like your input. Would you rather have the SPERDVAC conventions in June or in November? Please drop me a line at PO Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90604. You may call the SPERDVAC number at 213-947-9800.

At our last board meeting Barbara Watkins suggested that we meet for our monthly gatherings in South Pasadena. My question to the many who attend our get-togethers is: What do you think? Would you drive to South Pasadena? Is this a centrally located place for our meetings? If you have comments or know of a suitable place to meet which is centrally located please let me know. I should mention that we will continue to hold our Valley meetings in Studio City for the foreseeable future.

Also, at our last board meeting I suggested that the board hold its meetings every two months following our regularly scheduled monthly membership meetings. The response was an overwhelming shout to the affirmative. The board will meet beginning in March every other month unless otherwise noted.

Member John Bruno would like to attend our monthly meetings. He has no transportation. If you can help call John at: 213-436-1272. He lives in Long Beach.

SPERDVAC holds a monthly swap meet before each of its membership meetings. Any SPERDVAC member can sell items if he or she has and is wearing a SPERDVAC name badge. If you need a badge, contact Don Keith, who is listed in our directory. A reminder that you need not be a member to attend our monthly meetings. We hope to see many of you when we salute Eddy King on March 10th.



MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

Former CBS newsman George Herman is looking for material on the beginnings of radio news broadcasting for use in an upcoming book he is writing. Members who may be able to provide written or printed matter which might aid him with this project should write him at P.O. Box 88, Main Street, Hancock, NH 03449.

SPERDVAC honorary member Howard Caine is appearing in a stage version of *Damn Yankees* at the Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido in Santa Barbara. Their performances are scheduled for weekday evenings at 8 pm, Sunday evenings at 7 pm and weekend matinees are at 2 pm. For ticket information contact the Lobero Theatre box office at (805) 963-0761.

Long Time SPERDVAC member Gene Ward is taking charge of the General Cassette Library 501+. Members may send their orders to Gene at Box 635, Tujunga, CA 91043-0635. Gene is replacing outgoing librarian John Madigan. Barbara Watkins is now librarian for Archives open reels 1001+. Many thanks to Pam Hanson, who

served as a librarian for ten years! Members wishing new order forms and mailing labels with the correct new addresses should send a self addressed, stamped envelope to the appropriate librarian.

We've been pleased to receive many kind comments about the *Radiogram* from members and other readers. Several individuals have written asking if we accept unsolicited manuscripts. The answer is YES! Our preference is for articles on topics not previously covered in this or similar publications. Typewritten, double space copy is appreciated.

Recording tape manufacturer AGFA has published an 80 page booklet based on their "Restoring Old Masters" seminar held last April. It includes a section on resolving the problem of tape squeal. The booklet is available free from AGFA, 100 Challenger Rd., Ridgefield Park, NJ 07660. Mark envelopes "Attn. Teri Sosa."

SPERDVAC is still looking for Southern California area volunteers to fill the positions of librarian for General cassettes 1001+, librarian for Archives reels 1-1000 and publicity coordinator. We would also be glad to hear from members who might be interested in filling a volunteer position sometime in the future. Since none of our volunteers will be able to assist us indefinitely, we would like to be in a position to fill vacancies quickly. Those interested in helping us now or in the future should contact President Larry Gassman at (213)947-9800.

We are returning checks and orders received for those libraries which are temporarily closed. Many thanks to member Barbara Cowan for filling outstanding orders for us.

Those who attended our last convention were aware that we had some difficulties with the hotel, especially on Friday evening. In a recent meeting with staff members at the Viscount Hotel we learned they lost their banquet manager and half of his staff a day or two before our convention, leaving them significantly short handed. We have been assured that these problems have been solved, new people have been hired and that if we do return in 1990 both food and room prices will reflect the 1989 rates.

Nearly all of the books SPERDVAC has had for sale were purchased in the past few weeks. At present we have no more books available for sale by mail.

EDDY KING GUESTS MARCH 10

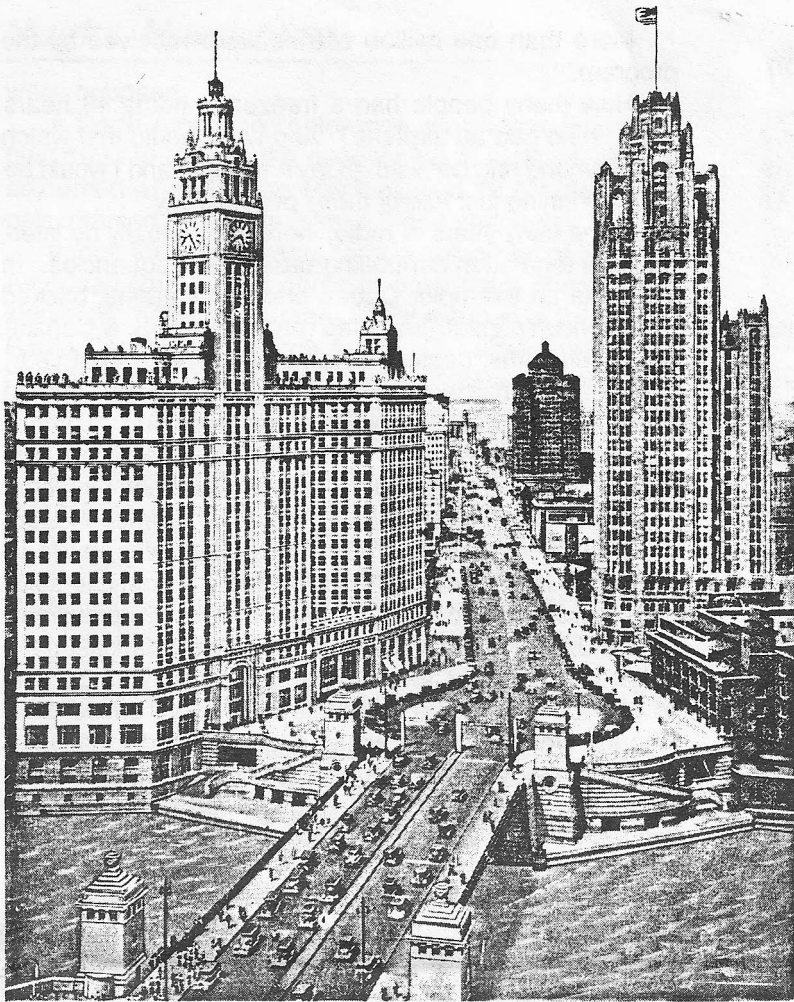
SPERDVAC's March 10 membership meeting will feature radio announcer Eddy King. Mr. King, long associated with NBC Radio, was announcer on *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*, *The Judy Canova Show*, *Four Star Playhouse* and *Rocky Fortune*. He also did network TV program announcing and was the voice of NBC-TV station KNBC, Los Angeles.

The SPERDVAC meeting, which is free and open to the public, begins at 12 noon. We will meet at Western Federal Savings and Loan, 12175 Ventura Blvd., in Studio City.

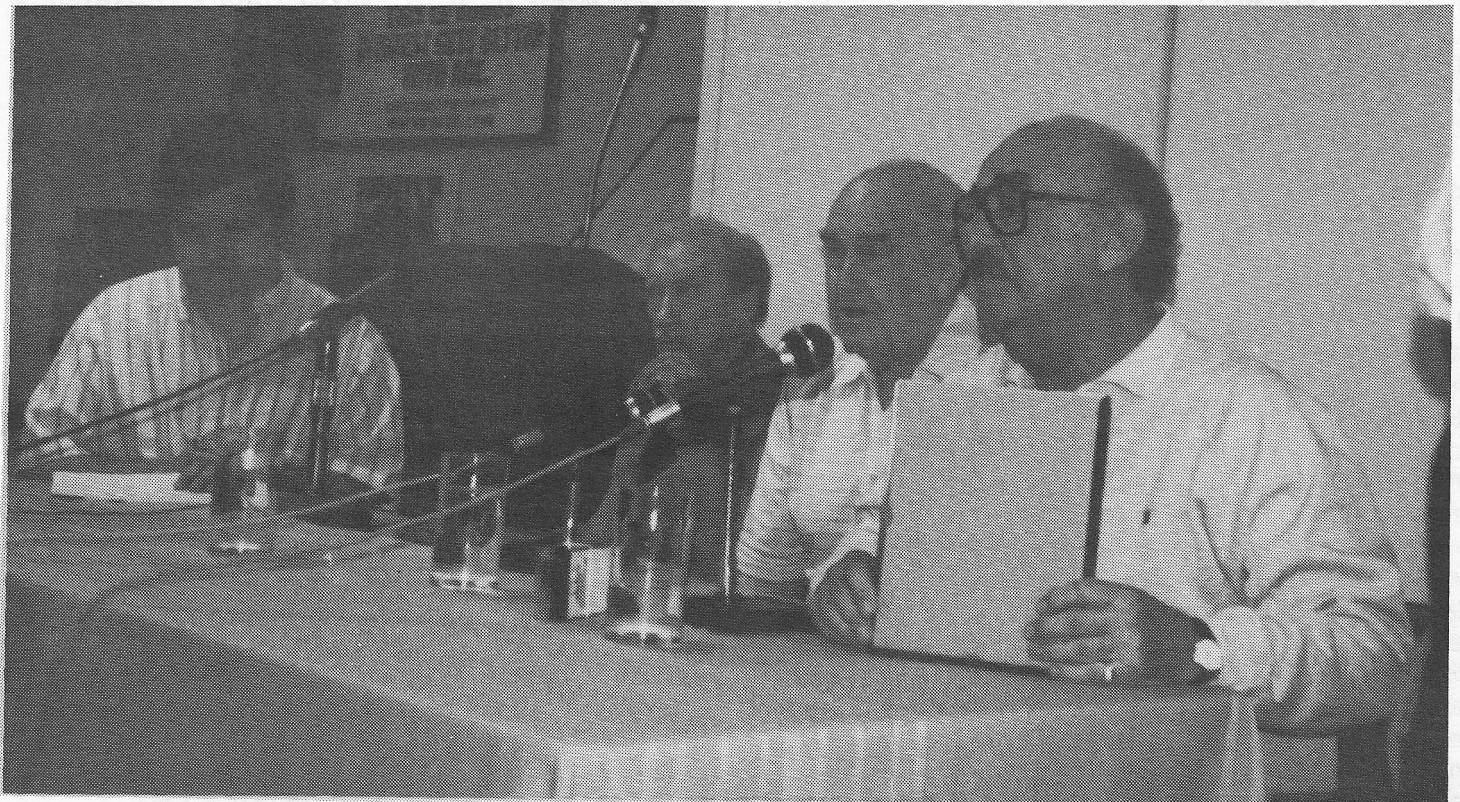
MARCH 1990

CHICAGO NETWORK RADIO

Three radio pros remembered their lives on Tom Mix, Sky King, Silver Eagle and Jack Armstrong at SPERDVAC's Feb. 10 meeting.



When the bridge, foreground, was up, actors couldn't always get to broadcasts on time.



John Gassman interviewed Chicago radio performers Jonathan Hole, Jack Lester and Cliff Norton at the February 10 SPERDVAC meeting. We'll soon add a recording of the gathering to our tape library.

Hugh's Hues

By Hugh Anderson

The March 24th, 1947, issue of *Broadcasting* gives a report about radio's biggest giveaway up to that time. As you read, take your time and try to envision the prizes - it's overwhelming! And then try to guess what all this merchandise would be worth today. I sure wouldn't mind winning all that stuff today! The magazine reported:

"RECORD RADIO GIVE-AWAY. Prizes for Women Who Guessed Identity of Mrs. Hush Total \$17,590.

When Mrs. William McCormick, a Lockhaven, Pa. housewife, answered her telephone on March 15, and told Ralph Edwards, m.c., of NBC's **Truth or Consequences** show, that the mysterious "Mrs. Hush" was Clara Bow, she became the winner of prizes totaling \$17,590, an all-time high for radio giveaways. Not only did this fabulous contest make Mrs. McCormick happy, but it raised more than \$400,000 in contributions to the "March of Dimes" campaign.

Last Jan 25 **Truth or Consequences**, sponsored by Procter & Gamble Co. for Duz, began broadcasting a mysterious voice of a woman called "Mrs. Hush" who each week, recited a four line verse which contained clues to her identity. To be eligible for the competition, listeners had to write a letter in 25 words or less on "We should all support the March of Dimes because" and enclose a contribution to the campaign along with the entry. Three letters were picked each week and the writers were phoned during the broadcast to give their opinions on who "Mrs. Hush" was. The first week of the contest three prizes were offered, and by the time Mrs. McCormick guessed the answer on March 15, there were more than a dozen.

Mrs. McCormick, her sister, and a neighbor had gotten their heads together and figured that "Mrs. Hush" was Clara Bow. They had sent in a total of 24 letters during the time the contest was in progress at the rate of one a week.

It was Mrs. McCormick's eighth letter that was picked as one of the three best for the week ending March 15.

The prizes, which Mrs. McCormick and the two other women are still trying to split three ways were: a 1947 Ford Sportsman convertible automobile; Bendix washer; United Airlines trip to New York for two with a week-end suite at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel; a \$1,000 I.J. Fox full length silver fox coat; a Columbia trailer which sleeps four and includes stove and refrigerator; a 1947 RCA Victor console radio phonograph with a \$100 library of Redseal records; a Jacobs home freezer filled with Birds Eye frozen food; a Tappan gas range; Electrolux vacuum cleaner with all attachments; a Crosley Shelvador refrigerator; a week's vacation for two at Sun Valley, Idaho, with transportation paid; a Brunswick billiard table installed in the home; an Art Carvel \$1,000 diamond ring; a compete Hart, Schaffner and Marx wardrobe for each adult in the immediate family; a Fitzgibbons residence heating boiler; free maid service for one year; a 144-piece set of American china; a Remington-Rand typewriter; a Luscombe Silvaire airplane worth \$2,500; a complete house painting job inside and out by Sherman Williams.

More than one million entries were received by the program.

How many people had a freezer at home 43 years ago? Who had an airplane? And what would that watch and diamond ring be worth today? My wife and I would be happy winning just half of those prizes today.

In the early years of radio, there was virtually no international regulation controlling broadcast frequencies. In 1932, as an example, Cuban-Mexican stations, backed by American capital, "squatted" on or near U.S. & Canadian wavelengths, causing much interference. That year, Raymond Wilmotte developed the directional antenna that then shielded broadcast areas from one another. But the foreign stations continued to interfere on U.S. clear or split channels and this was a world-wide problem.

At the fourth International Radio Conference in Madrid, beginning Sept. 3, 1932, an attempt was made to solve this interference problem. Several possible solutions were placed on the discussion table. Europe wanted the U.S. to agree to broadening of the broadcast band below 550kc. The Canadian delegation, with the backing of Mexico and Cuba, presented a compromise plan wherein North America would receive 7 additional 10kc channels below 550kc. American broadcasters favored the plan but the State Dept., Navy, Army, Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Commerce and some shipping interests

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Hughs Hues cont. . . .

were opposed.

A North American conference, which was held in August 1933 to resolve the overlapping of stations, abruptly adjourned when Mexico which wanted 12 AM clear channels, refused America's offer of 3 or 4 channels.

It took four more years for the delegates of the North American countries to come to agreement of station assignment. Agreements were finally reached at the Havana Radio Conference, March 1937. The agreements safeguarded U.S. allocations, gave exclusive and semi-exclusive facilities to Canada and Mexico with shared facilities to Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Newfoundland. All governments still had to ratify the agreement and all did with Mexico being the last to do so on Dec. 29, 1939.

Thus, on March 29, 1941, the largest physical shake-up in radio occurred. Broadcasting outlets around the world, including over 800 stations in the U.S. alone, switched frequencies to resolve the international interference problem.

Didjknow: The number of car radios sold in 1947 to-

taled 2½ Million? The total sold the previous year was 150,000. . . . The real name of Ish Kabible was Merwyn Bogue. . . . In the European Theatre of War, March 1945, the Army moved a 60 kw transmitter mounted on 17 trucks to the vicinity of Berlin and CBS's Bill Downs was chosen to parachute into Berlin to make the first American broadcast as the Allies occupied the city. . . . The Office of Censorship in March, 1942, forbade the mentioning of weather conditions during the broadcasts of baseball games. . . . The first annual George Foster Peabody Radio Awards for "outstanding meritorious public service" were given to CBS, WLW, Cincinnati, WGAR, Cleveland and KFRU, Columbia, Mo., in March 1941. These awards were instituted by the Henry W. Grady School of Journalism of The University of Georgia.

March's Marvelous Memory: A broadcast of Archibald MacLeish's "The Fall Of The City" on Columbia Workshop, CBS, March 4, 1937, aired from the Seventh Regiment Armory in New York, introduced a powerful new voice to radio - Orson Welles.

"I'm goin' back to the wagon, boys. These shoes are killin' me!"

Radio in Review



HATTIE: THE LIFE OF HATTIE McDANIEL.

By Carlton Jackson. Madison Books. (4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Md 20706). 1989. Clothbound. \$18.95.

A few will argue that *Gone With The Wind* was perhaps the greatest movie Hollywood ever made. Ten Oscars were handed out for that film, and a very well deserved one for Best Supporting Actress went to Hattie McDaniel for her role as Mammy. In a new biography that addresses her accomplishments in show business, we find that Hattie was a very talented performer who achieved success in all mediums of entertainment, from vaudeville to films to television.

She was a true pioneer for her people, and in fact was the first black actress to sing on radio. But we remember her best as BEULAH, the wise and witty maid of the Henderson family.

The author meticulously researched her radio career and found a gifted artist who could steal scenes too. In fact, listen to any *Amos 'N Andy* from 1945-47, and hear her as Sadie Simpson, Andy Brown's landlady, with great comic timing.

Concerning her radio work, Hattie started in 1931 on *The Optimistic Do-Nut Hour* over KNX. After *Gone With The Wind*, producer David O. Selznick wanted a radio show for Hattie based on her Mammy character. William Paley of CBS dashed cold water on the idea back in 1940.

Hattie worked hard at her craft, and even those who auditioned against her for radio or film roles (Ernestine Wade, Ruby Dandridge, Lillian and Amanda Randolph and others) remained friends. This book is highly recommended.

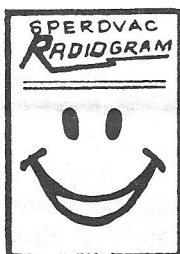
Cont. next page . . .

MARCH 1990

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SPERDVAC

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We are so grateful to the many Friends of SPERDVAC who have contributed \$50 or more to help defray costs of the society. The above members have donated funds during the past year.

RICHARD DURHAM'S DESTINATION FREEDOM: Scripts From Radio's Black Legacy, 1948-1950. Edited by Dr. J. Fred MacDonald. Praeger Publishers. (88 Post Rd West, Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881). 1989. Clothbound. \$45.

Discrimination and stereotyping were areas that black artists experienced in this century in various areas of show business. In radio, there was a wonderful exception. In 1948, when *Destination Freedom* first aired, it represented a striking incongruity. Only heard locally, over WMAQ, NBC in Chicago, this half hour series presented the achievements and careers of eminent blacks. Richard Durham, considered one of the most significant Afro-American dramatists, wrote the entire series. It ran two years.

In this volume, Dr. J. Fred MacDonald has presented the best 15 of the 105 scripts of that series. An introductory chapter by Dr. MacDonald traces Durham's professional background along with a history of blacks in radio and how *Destination Freedom* fit into late 1940's dramatic radio. A bibliography, including a complete log of this series, concludes this important work. Highly recommended!

ALICE FAY: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY. By Barry Rivadue. Greenwood Press. (88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport CT 06881). 1990. Clothbound. \$35.00.

This is number 10 in the continuing series of bibliographies in the Performing Arts from Greenwood Press. Alice Faye's radio work has not been thoroughly documented in prior works and this book is a pleasant surprise as Rivadue presents a balanced look at her career in all mediums in which she performed. Chapters include Filmography, Discography, and the Stage.

The real surprise is in the Broadcasting Chapter. Besides her guest spots on shows ranging from *Jack Benny to Lux Radio Theatre to Suspense*, we have a complete log of *The Fitch Bandwagon* (69 shows, from 9/29/46 thru 5/23/48), and *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*, (206 shows, from 10/3/48 thru 6/18/54). We are not given the plots, but instead the songs Faye sang. But at least their correct air dates and length and program number are documented.

Greenwood Press has always done an outstanding job with their radio history related books. Add this one to your library.

WBBM RADIO: YESTERDAY & TODAY. By Chuck Schaden. WBBM Radio Publication. (Order from the author: Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053). 1988. Softbound. \$10.00 + \$2.50 shipping & handling.

Here is a fascinating story about a pioneer radio station, the longtime CBS Chicago affiliate. The author, a long time collector, broadcaster and presently active with the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago, is well qualified to write WBBM's story.

WBBM went on the air in 1923 and many early network shows got their start on this station. The daytime serials, the band remotes, the local programs that enriched the listenership are highlighted in a 128 page volume loaded

with hundreds of vintage photographs.

The author has interwoven the growth of network radio along with the local programming that also made up WBBM's schedule. The research, dates, and events are accurate and enjoyable to read.

PHARMACY AND MEDICINE ON THE AIR. By Dr. Mickey Smith. Scarecrow Press, Inc. (52 Liberty St., Box 4167, Metuchen, NJ 08840). 1989. Clothbound. \$22.50 + \$2.50 shipping and handling.

Doctors, drugs and pharmacy played a part in the Golden Age of Radio through both program content and sponsorship. The author, dean of the School of Pharmacy at Mississippi State, and a member of SPERDVAC, is well qualified to write on this.

Well organized, this work includes interview with people such Willard Waterman and Phil Harris, to see how medicine played an important part in their programs. Both popular and little known shows are profiled. The author did his homework and worked with many collectors and educators to make this work worth having. An excellent photo section and program logs plus a detailed reference section are included.

THE LOST ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES. By Ken Greenwald. Mallard Press - An imprint of BDD Promotional Book Company, Inc. (666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103.) 1989. Clothbound \$9.98.

London, 100 years ago. A mysterious figure emerges from the shadows. He appears for only an instant, and then disappears into the damp fog, the sound of footsteps against the cobblestones soon fading away. . . .

For the first time, we have 13 original stories of that master detective, Sherlock Holmes, based on the radio series *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, written by Denis Green and Anthony Boucher.

The author is SPERDVAC's own Ken Greenwald. In his foreward, Ken explains how he approached this writing challenge: "Denis Green and Anthony Boucher were wonderful writers and I had no intention of trying to best them. Instead, I wanted to augment them, to add to their writing with my own. What I have done is take a long lost medium of writing radio plays, and turn them into the short story form. There is much in the radio plays format that doesn't work well in the short story format. I had to change these things and add dialogue where necessary. Musical bridges that were used in the radio shows to show passage of time had to turn into Watson's narrative describing what Holmes and he were doing."

The flavor of Victorian England is all there is as the words literally lift right off the page. Some of the stories include how and when Holmes met Professor Moriarty, and why Holmes bought his Sussex bee farm. Other spine tingling tales include Holmes and Watson pitting their wits against a headless monk, and a terrified man who wakes up each morning with fresh blood on his hands.

A full page illustration from each story is done by noted artist Alfredo Alcalá, and his work is superb. Beautifully bound and affordably priced, this is one work you WILL want to add to your collection. Twenty-five copies will be available at this month's SPERDVAC meeting.

McGEE'S CLOSET

McGee's Closet, %
Barbara J. Watkins,
PO Box 561,
South Pasadena,
CA 91031

WANTED: Does anyone out there have anything by Beatrice Kay? I prefer her singing in late 30's - early 40's. She had her own program BEATRICE KAYE KAPERS in mid-40's. Contact: H. Vincent Eschenmann, 9979 McCreary Road, P.O. Box 251, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0251.

WANTED: OTR collectors in the Champaign-Urbana, Danville, or East Central Illinois area who would be interested in swapping or trading radio programs. Contact: John D. Anthony, 1210 Magnolia Lane, Rantoul, IL 61866, phone (217)892-2333.

WANTED: Episodes of the early THE SAINT series with Edgar Barrier or Brian Aherne. Cassettes preferred. Will trade other shows or blank tapes. Contact: Tom Nolan, Box 6512, Burbank, CA 91510

WANTED: To trade for episodes of AMOS AND ANDY featured on the syndicated radio program, "When Radio Was." These shows are being deleted in the Detroit listening area. Have large variety of OTR on cassette for trade. Contact: Mike Kuypers, 54338 Chateau Pte., Utica, MI 48087, (313)651-8728.



If you don't find everything you want to know about radio in SPERDVAC's *Radiogram* or other clubs' newsletters, you might like to subscribe to one or more of the independent publications in the hobby today.

The granddaddy of them all is *Hello Again* published by Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514. This is a newsletter of generally 4 to 6 pages which is published every other month. It contains the latest news on the upcoming convention of the Friends of Old Time Radio held each October in Newark, New Jersey; names and addresses of collectors and what they are offering or looking for; information on new radio shows produced today; new books and magazines, and a listing of radio-related obituaries. A one-year subscription is \$10.00. It is now in its 21st year.

Beginning its 7th year is the *Old Time Radio Digest* published every other month by Royal Promotions, 4114 Montgomery Road, Cincinnati, OH 45212. Subscriptions are \$12.50 per year. Each issue is usually 32 pages and has a feature article such as "1920s Radio: The Child Prodigy Goes Bumming" (Nov/Dec 1989), miscellaneous articles, reprints from old radio magazines, occasional letters, and classified and dealers' ads.

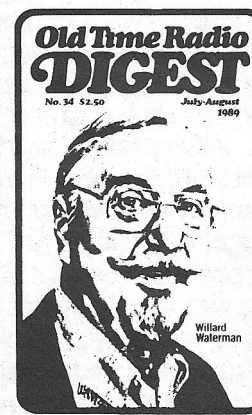
Chuck Schaden's Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide, now in its 16th year, is published every other month. Subscriptions are \$12.00 per year. The center six pages con-

tain listings of the old time radio shows to be aired on Chicago area radio stations WBBM (AM 780 and WNIB-WNIZ (FM 97) for the two-month period, which would make this a must-have for radio fans who can pick up these stations. For the rest of us, there is plenty in the other 28 pages. For example, the Feb/Mar 1990 issue features Jack Benny's radio and film career. A regular feature is a column by Dan McGuire, "I Remember It Well" which is a vivid mind's eye look back to the days of our childhood. Send subscriptions to The Hall Closet, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053.

For those who are interested in the old radio sets themselves, I highly recommend *The Horn Speaker*, published 10 times a year by Jim Cranshaw, Route 3, Box 79, Canton, TX 75103. Subscriptions are \$12.50 per year, or \$20 for two years. Each issue is filled with technical and historical information about radio, and classified ads for all types of radio-related items.

Thanks to John Ruckert for informing us about a radio museum in Minnesota called Joe Pavak's Museum of Wonderful Wireless, located at 3515 Raleigh Avenue, just east of Highway 100 and 36th Street, St. Louis Park, (612)926-8198 or 8123. The collection includes a wide variety of equipment arranged in displays tracing the development of each type, from the primitive spark broadcast transmitters and crystal sets of the 1910's to the beautiful consoles of the 1940's and 1950's. Also displayed are tubes, military equipment, horn and cone-type speakers, microphones, headphones and other early equipment. A special section is devoted to various radio brands made in Minneapolis and massive working loudspeaker, circa 1929, from the Old World Theater in St. Paul, former home of **A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION**. Other displays include a mock-up of a broadcast studio and engineer's booth, a telegraph office, and a working amateur radio station open to visiting ham operators. Museum hours are noon to 4 pm Tuesdays through Fridays, and 9 am to 1 pm on Saturdays. Admission is \$2.00 for adults, \$1.00- for students and seniors. I would like to hear from anyone who has already visited this museum. Let us know your impressions. It certainly sounds like a place to circle on your maps if your planning a visit to that area of the country.

Send your information or questions for this column to Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Til next time, Spacemen's luck!



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Is Everybody Happy?

Ted Lewis Museum celebrates musician's 100th birthday in June

By Timothy Acord

I recently visited the museum that honors the man who made the question, "Is Everybody Happy?" famous. For some six decades - all across the country and in many places around the world - Ted Lewis entertained kings, queens, and presidents. Yet, despite his fame, Ted never forgot his origins. Nor did he forget that it was the people who accorded him their favor.

Ted was born in the small Ohio town of Circleville on June 6, 1890. His parents, Benjamin and Pauline Friedman, named their son Theodore Leopold. Ted adopted the stage name of 'Lewis' years later when he decided that 'Friedman' did not fit the average theatre marquee very well.

Benjamin and Pauline, who owned a ladies' clothing store, had little use for entertainers. They did everything they could to dissuade Ted from becoming one. Rather, they preferred that he work in their store, where - since ladies wanted to be waited upon by those of the same sex - the only job Ted could do was sweep the floor. Understandably, Ted was underwhelmed at the prospect of continuing that task for any length of time. He mowed lawns in his spare time in order to acquire a clarinet. Then he joined the Circleville Boys' Band. His first professional singing job, in a Circleville movie house, paid four dollars a week.

The Friedmans sent Ted to business college in Columbus, but he had little interest in that. While working in Goldsmith's Music Store, he became acquainted with a vaudeville circuit operator, Gus Sun. He convinced Sun to give him a job. Ted was playing in the El Dorado, a New York City cabaret, when his father, who was on a buying trip to the Big Apple, located him and carted him back home. Alas, the bug had bitten and there was no holding Ted back - he returned to New York, changed his name, and organized the Ted Lewis Nut Band.

The instant success that the band achieved was just the tip of the iceberg as far as the popularity that Ted was to attain. He became the first performer to headline at three Broadway nightclubs simultaneously.

In 1915, Ted married Adah Becker three times - all in one day! There was a civil ceremony, a religious wedding, and a third on stage that night. His beloved Adah would remain at his side as his wife until his death, and she would also become his business manager in 1923. Despite Ted's genius at the thing he did best - entertaining - his ability to handle the financial side of his career was an absolute disaster. Adah's talent for managing was the perfect complement to Ted's ability to enthrall his audience.

Ted came across what would later become his trademark in a game of craps in 1916. A Hanson cab driver named "Mississippi" was fresh out of cash, and Ted probably figured out a way to give the man a few bucks without having him feel he was accepting charity. The cab driver bet his old top hat against Ted's cash. Wouldn't you know it? The guy rolled two sixes and gave his hat to Ted. For the remainder of his career, Ted used that battered hat vir-

tually unchanged - except that a silver lining was added.

Ted opened his first New York cabaret, the Bal Tabarin, in 1918. He became a partner in the Montmartre Club and later opened the Ted Lewis Club on 52nd Street.

Ted's popularity flourished. He became a star of stage, screen, radio, and records. Columbia Records accorded the honor of special labels to only two of its most popular recording acts - Paul Whiteman and Ted Lewis. Even publishers of sheet music knew that the mere presence of Ted's name and likeness on their wares was sure to boost sales. Through it all, Ted remained a humble man. He could have easily afforded the most lavish of leather cases to contain his stage makeup, but he preferred the simplicity and functionality of an ordinary cardboard box.

It is of great credit to the man to note that he was one of the first bandleaders to integrate blacks into his troupe. He cared about a performer's talent, not skin color. If the group happened upon a hotel that would not accept blacks, no one in the band stayed there - they all went to another hotel.

One of Ted's signature songs, "Me and My Shadow," was always an important part of his act. The person who played Ted's shadow was the most important individual in the show other than Ted himself. Over the years, the honor was accorded to five men - four of whom were black.

Ted never forgot his hometown. He is one of the three reasons why Circleville, Ohio, is famous. Another is Circleville's claim of being the first U.S. small town to use electricity to light its streets. The third reason for Circleville's fame is its annual Circleville Pumpkin Show. For me, Circleville is famous for one other reason - it's my Dad's hometown, too. My dad tells me he used to see Ted at the Pumpkin Show. Adah Lewis would always try to book her husband's act into nearby Columbus each October, so Ted would be able to attend his hometown's biggest event - billed as "The Greatest Free Show on Earth." My dad recalls one particular year when he saw Ted along with Sophie Tucker in the Grand Marshall's car in the big Pumpkin Show parade as it rambled down Court Street.

Ted made it possible for the town he loved to set aside several areas as a park for all to enjoy. Ted Lewis Park remains as a lasting tribute to Circleville's favorite son. Ted is also well remembered for his contributions to Berger Hospital, also in Circleville, and for the many band instruments he provided to the local schools.

In the Ralph Edwards' 1950's TV show *This is Your Life* episode in honor of Ted, "The High-Hatted Tragedian of Song" was presented Ohio's Governor's Award, the state's highest citizen's award by Governor Michael DiSalle.

Ted and Adah maintained their primary residence in the same fashionable New York apartment for more than 50 years. The neighborhood would later become well-known for being the location of the shooting of another

Cont. next page . . .

Ted Lewis cont. . .

popular musician, John Lennon. On Wednesday, August 15, 1971, Ted's life also ended there, but in a much more peaceful manner. He died, at the age of 81, in his sleep next to his beloved Adah.

Ted apparently never anticipated that there would ever be a museum to honor him as his will did not provide for funds to establish one. In fact, on Edward R. Murrow's *Person to Person*, Ted said that he hoped that the Smithsonian would one day accept his hat. When the time finally came, the Smithsonian and others asked if they could have the old hat. However, Adah's answer was no. She had decided that the place for the hat was Ted's favorite town. In 1972, she and Ted's longtime secretary, Bee Goodman, made a trip to talk to the Pickaway County Historical Society about a room dedicated to Ted. The meeting culminated in an agreement that led to the establishment of the Ted Lewis Museum Board that year. Show business greats such as Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope, and Bing Crosby made generous contributions that supplemented the bulk of the finances provided by Adah.

Polly Miller, who joined the board in 1973, made the suggestion to house the museum in the Society's Genealogical Library, which was located in the old bank building. That building is the only one left from the days when Circleville was still truly a "roundtown" - originally laid out within the area of a prehistoric Indian mound. The old bank building was a good location for the Ted Lewis Museum for another reason, too. It is located just across the street from the building that contains the second-floor apartment where Ted was born.

It took a few years to complete the necessary building restoration and organize the collection, but the museum opened on June 5, 1977, the day before what would have been Ted's 87th birthday. Adah's long-time dream was realized as she cut the ribbon across the new museum's front door.

As visitors approach the Ted Lewis Museum, they can hear the strains of Ted's music coming from a loudspeaker up to one side of the front door. Visitors are greeted by Polly Miller or 'Fritz' Cox, two delightful ladies who love to share memories of Ted and Adah.

Ted's prized top hat is the centerpiece of the museum. It is displayed alongside his clarinet. The ladies report that Ted had the hat heavily insured and that it had been stolen and ransomed twice over the years. The clarinet had been modified with an extra hole so that Ted could play it with one hand while holding it high over his head.

The museum's antique walnut display cases house everything from instruments, photographs, and awards to sheet music, records, and even a fur-covered top hat. The contents of the cases represent only a small portion of the museum's holdings - many items are not available for public display. These items include Ted's own copies of test pressings of rare recordings (one never having been released in any form) and transcriptions of some of his radio shows. Recently, Mark Berresford, a writer for the British jazz publication called *Storyville*, visited the

museum to do research on Ted Lewis. Mark received access to virtually all the holdings for his work. In his article on the museum in the December 1, 1989 edition of *Storyville* (#140), Mark states: "As for the collection itself, it must rank as one of the finest dedicated to a musician, and I certainly know of nothing in the jazz or jazz-oriented field to compare with it."

Cont. page 10 . . .

SPERDVAC DIRECTORY

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Ted Lewis from page 9 . . .

Mark goes on to say, "...the whole of the Lewis life is covered; from photos as a baby, through schooldays and the town band, the lean years of tent shows and vaudeville trouping before joining Earl Fuller's Famous Jazz Band, and on to the halcyon days of the 1920s when he was a star on both sides of the Atlantic, the later days of one night stands and broadcasts with increasingly indifferent bands, right up to TV appearances in the late 1960s"

In 1988, the Genealogical Library moved to a new location, leaving the whole first floor area of the bank building for the museum. This has allowed an expanded amount of the collection materials to go on display; moreover, it has allowed the addition of a Ted Lewis Theatre at the rear of the building. The theatre has a large screen TV, a videocassette machine, and vintage theatre chairs. If you go at a busy time such as during the Pumpkin Show, you will probably only get to see a short program of the highlights of Ted's career; however, if you go at other times, you can choose what you would like to see - perhaps the *This is Your Life* show or *Person to Person*. Maybe you'd like to see a full-length movie featuring Ted.

Now that Adah is gone, the museum is supported by donations and sales of Ted Lewis-related gifts. visitors can purchase a 60-minute cassette called "The Very Best of Ted Lewis," on which side A is from Decca Records and side B is from MCA Records. Or, choose a T-shirt - available in any size (and any color as long as it's black) - that says "Is Everybody Happy?" on the back and has a picture of the top hat and clarinet with the words "TED LEWIS

MUSEUM CIRCLEVILLE, OHIO" on the front in white. Or just get an "Is Everybody Happy?" button.

Of particular note to Ted Lewis aficionados is the release of a brand new cassette, called "The Rare and Unheard Ted Lewis, 1923-33," from the Neovox Record Company in England. The project was conceived and coordinated by Mark Berresford in conjunction with the Ted Lewis Museum. Dave Smith carefully transferred the rare and sometimes damaged 78 RPM recordings from Ted's personal collection. One of the test recordings is not known to have ever been released in any form. A limited number of the cassettes is available through the museum.

Since this year marks the 100th anniversary of Lewis' birth, the museum is in the process of planning special events commemorating the man and his music throughout the remainder of the year. The museum is open on Fridays and Saturdays from 1 to 5 p.m.; however, special arrangements can be made by calling 614-477-3630. The address is as follows:

The Ted Lewis Museum, Inc.
133 West Main Street
P.O. Box 492
Circleville, Ohio 43113-0492

Next time you're in Ohio, make it a point to stop at the museum that honors the man who always asked "Is Everybody Happy?" You'll be happy that you did!

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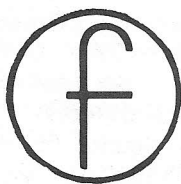
The author is a SPERDVAC member as well as the Metropolitan Washington Old-Time Radio Club.

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Andrew F. Inglis

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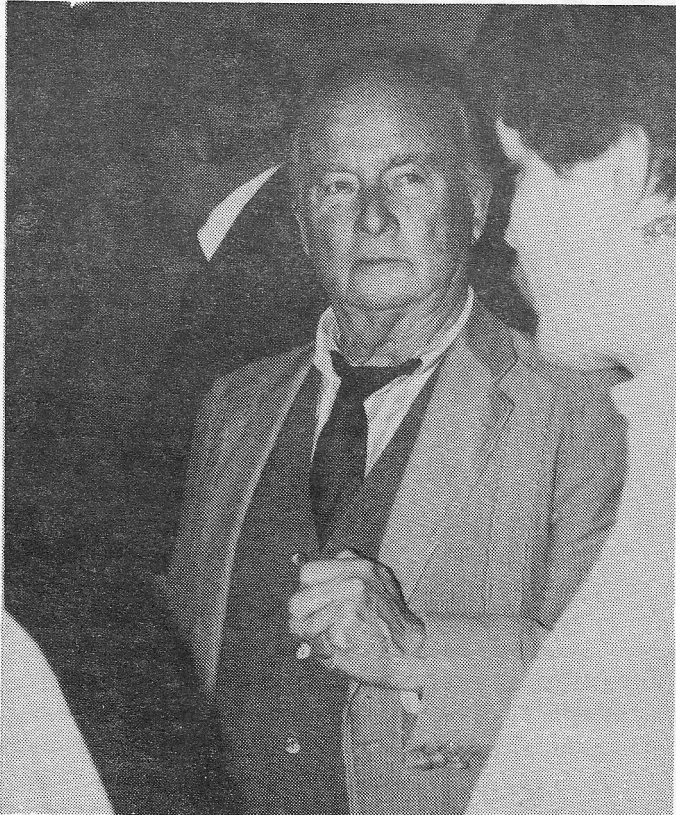
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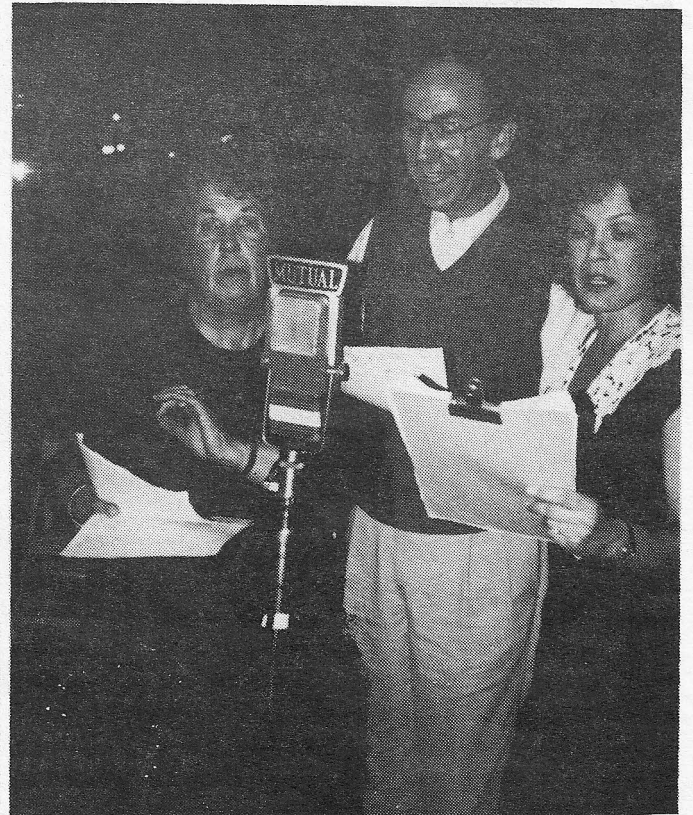
SPERDVAC's friends Parley Baer (Sheriff Hartman) and Lou Krugman (as Diamond Louie) have been featured in many of the California Artists Radio Theatre's productions.



Vance Colvig, left, was convict Earl Williams and Tom Hatten was Kruger.



William Woodson portrayed Walter Burns, the hard-hearted, foul mouthed editor.



Kathleen Freeman, Paul Keith and Linda Kay Henning mugged for the SPERDVAC camera after the show.

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APRIL ISSUE
March 20, 1990

DID YOU VOTE YET??
SPERDVAC Board of Directors'
Election Day is March 10.
Details in February *Radiogram*.

1990 SPERDVAC MEETINGS

Regular Meetings: 12:00 NOON

March 10 - Western Federal Savings
April 21 - Buena Park Public Library
May 12 - Western Federal Savings
June 9 - Western Federal Savings
July 21 - Buena Park Publix Library
August 11 - Thousand Oaks Public Library
September 15 - Buena Park Public Library
October 13 - Western Federal Savings
November 9 & 10 - SPERDVAC Convention

Locations:

Western Federal
12175 Ventura Blvd., Studio City

Buena Park Library
7150 La Palma Avenue, Buena Park

Thousand Oaks Library

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