

# SPERDVAC **RADIOGRAM**

Vol. XVII, No. 8 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy AUGUST 1991



*At the Blackhawk Restaurant in Chicago, in 1942, are Kay Kyser (with arm raised), comedian Joe E. Lewis, and announcer Pierre Andre during a broadcast marking WGN Radio's 10th Anniversary. Note the used scripts strewn on the floor, keeping with a broadcast tradition. See page 4 for a story on the Chicago Big Bands and their importance to radio.*

*Photo courtesy Chuck Sengstock*



Send your wants in  
O T R-related  
material to  
McGee's Closet, %  
Barbara J. Watkins,  
PO Box 561,  
South Pasadena,  
CA 91031

**WANTED:** Bio info and possible obit for Jeannie Lang (1030s radio singer), Pat Patrick (Ersel Twing on Edgar Bergen's show), and Tony Labriola (Oswald on Ken Murray's show). Contact: Roger Paulson, P.O. Box 4, Needham, MA 02192.

**WANTED:** Radio shows written by John Dickson Carr. Hope to complete my SUSPENSE collection with him as writer. Also ELLERY QUEEN programs, in particular, "The Foul Tip" (7-13-44). Send your haves and wants for trade. contact: Lawrence Nepodahl, 1230 Vienna Blvd., DeKalb, IL 60115.

**WANTED:** LIFE WITH LUIGI show from 1948 where Mario Lanza is the guest. Contact: Clyde Smith, 64 Newton Blvd., Lake Ronkonkoma, NY 11779, (516) 567-8320 (work) or (516) 981-0520 (home).

**WANTED:** SMILE TIME, radio show of 1940s starring Steve Allen (cassettes or open reel). Also, Lux Radio Theatre "I Never Left Home" starring Bob Hope, 1-8-45; "Tribute to Vic and Sade" (part 2 only) narrated by Bob Arbogast, and any taped interviews with Bob Arbogast; and "Soldiers in Grease Paint", 11-25-43. Contact: C.J. Huck, 4 S. 230 River Road, IL 60555.

## Dick Stenta Guests August 10th

Former CBS staff producer/director Dick Stenta will be SPERDVAC's featured guest when we meet Saturday, Aug. 10.

During the early fifties, Mr. Stenta served as summer replacement director on **The Romance of Helen Trent**, **Our Gal Sunday** and **This is Nora Drake**. He worked on **The Couple Next Door** with Peg Lynch and on **Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar** in 1961-62 when the program originated from New York and starred Mandel Kramer.

Stenta's credits also include **Music on a Sunday Afternoon** (announced by Mike Wallace) and **The Woolworth Hour** (featuring Percy Faith). He directed radio broadcasts for Galen Drake, Robert Q. Lewis and Mitch Miller. During the 1957-58 season he directed **Sez Who**.

The meeting begins at 12 noon. It will be held in the community center of the South Pasadena Public Library, 1115 El Centro, S. Pasadena. The meeting is open free to the general public.

\* \* \* \* \*  
We will have the new books on The Amos 'n Andy Show and on radio musician Bernard Herrmann available at the August meeting.

SPERDVAC's Sept. 14 and Oct. 12 meetings will be at the Buena Park Public Library.

## SPERDVAC DIRECTORY

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# Radio Actor-Announcer Dwight Weist Dies

by Anthony Tolin

On July 16, as it must to all men, death came to Dwight Weist, **The March of Time's** "man of a thousand voices." The 81 year old actor died of a heart attack while vacationing at his summer home at Block Island, Rhode Island.

Dwight Weist was one of the busiest actors and announcers during the "golden age" of radio drama. On **The March of Time** broadcasts, Weist impersonated Adolph Hitler for more than a decade, and doubled as President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lindberg baby kidnaper Bruno Hauptmann and a wide variety of other newsmakers.

He was radio's first **Mr. District Attorney**, portrayed Police Commissioner Weston opposite Orson Welles and Bill Johnstone on **The Shadow** and regularly appeared on **Columbia Workshop**, **Cavalcade of America**, **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century**, **We, the People**, **Andy Hardy**, **The Second Mrs. Burton** and many of Norman Corwin's classic radio plays. He was also heard as the announcer on radio's **Aldrich Family** and **Big Town**, plus television's *Search for Tomorrow*.

Weist's voice was prominently featured in the *Pathe Newsreels* and in numerous television commercials for Bromo Seltzer and other sponsors. He appeared in Woody Allen's film *Radio Days*, announcing the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Martian invasion of New Jersey, a role he had been forced to turn down in the original **Mercury Theatre** broadcast because of a prior commitment.

Several years ago Weist received an unusual phone call from Germany. The director of *The Name of the Rose* wanted him to narrate the Sean Connery-F. Murray Abraham film but had a problem with the former radio announcer's reading on the audition tape. "Can you make your voice sound like an old man?" he asked. "You don't know who I am," responded the then 76 year old



Dwight Weist as the star of **Mr. District Attorney** on NBC in 1939. actor. "I can make my voice sound old if I apply myself."

Born in Palo Alto, CA and raised in Scranton, PA, Weist graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1931 and performed at the Cleveland Playhouse before moving to New York in 1934. He was co-founded of the Weist-Barron School of Television and Commercial Acting, where he taught for 35 years. Mr. Weist was an active member of the American Federation of Television and Radio Actors and former president of the Screen Actor's Guild's New York chapter.

Dwight Weist was the first East Coast guest to perform at a SPERDVAC convention. He recreated his role of Commissioner Weston in the 1986 **Shadow** cast recreation.

Beginning in 1982, Weist became an annual participant at the Friends of Old Time Radio conventions held on the East Coast. There he portrayed leads in recreations of **The Green Hornet**, **The Shadow** and **Mr. District Attorney**. He was prominently featured in their presentations of **Superman**, **The Aldrich Family**, **Quick as a Flash**, **Big Town**, **Mercury Theatre "War of the Worlds"**, **Mandrake the Magician**, **Lux Radio Theatre** and **Columbia Presents Corwin**.

A consummate professional, Weist recreated his **March of Time** roles at the Friends of Old Time Radio 1989 convention after under-going emergency oral surgery the previous evening. His last public performance was in a **Big Town** recreation at the first convention of the Manhattan Radio Club.



Dwight Weist and Les Tremayne recreated **The Shadow** at SPERDVAC's 1986 convention.

# Broadcasting The Dance Bands

By Chuck Sengstock

As an early radio fan and collector of dance band remote broadcasts, I have a thousand questions about how these remotes were done.

For example, what kind of mikes were used? How did the on-location engineer know when it was clear to put the band on the air? Was the announcer on location or back at the studio?

While researching this subject for a book I am writing, I came across the answers to many of these questions and learned that the remote dance band broadcasts became almost an art form.

I used to marvel at how good the bands sounded on AM radio-kind of mellow, as if the high frequencies had been cut off. It turns out that is exactly what happened. The leased telephone lines connecting the remote locations with the studio couldn't carry frequencies much higher than about 5,000 cycles per second (5 KHz), even the best of them (the phone company graded them A, B, C, etc., based on their clarity and ability to transmit signals). Compare that to today's standard of 15,000 cps for high fidelity sound.

Most networks used two leased lines to connect the location with the studio: a broadcast line and a talk line to communicate with the studio. If the broadcast line would go out for some reason, a facile remote engineer could quickly switch the program to the talk line, but with a significant drop in clarity, since the talk lines were usually of inferior quality (and less costly).

## Timing the Broadcasts

In the early days, an announcer was usually on location to introduce the band and announce the tunes. He also acted as an ad-hoc producer, and it was his responsibility to get the band on and off the air on time (the cues came from the studio, usually via the talk line. In some cases they used a signal bell). In lieu of an on-site announcer, it was up to the engineer.

Through surviving transcriptions, we can hear some of the unsuccessful attempts to terminate remote broadcasts smoothly and on time. The band occasionally was still in the middle of their final song or medley of tunes as the network faded them off the air too soon with the obviously embarrassed announcer trying to ad lib his way out of the situation.

In the earliest of days, the remote engineer was right near the bandstand with his amplifier. But some of the more enterprising of them soon built crude booths to help isolate them from the sound so they could better adjust the microphones and balance the output. Later still, most locations broadcasting the bands on a regular

basis had more permanent, sound-proofed broadcast booths for the technicians.

## Medleys and Line Charges

The medley, said to have been developed by Guy Lombardo in his early Cleveland days, became a fixture on band remotes. It was a good way to crowd in a lot of tunes, and it soon became a standard production tool. By putting a medley at the end of a broadcast, the announcer, leader and engineer could more closely time the show by adjusting the length of the medley, a kind of musical pad.

Later, the stations and networks, in an apparent economy move, no longer sent announcers to the remote locations and kept them, instead, in the studios. This accounted for the occasional poor balance between the band and the announcer's voice on some broadcasts—the announcer sounding proportionately louder.

The locations and the station or network split the cost of the remote broadcast. The location usually paid for the leased line charges, and the station or network paid for the announcer, engineer and equipment. There are stories that the bandleaders occasionally chipped in on the line costs, too, in an effort to boost their band's exposure via the airwaves.

But, by the late '30s, the networks and Musicians Union began flexing their muscles over various issues. The network-owned stations in Chicago announced that, after January 15, 1938, they would no longer do network remote pickups from any Chicago locations without a \$100 per week service charge, to be paid by the location.

Only a couple of spots paid up, mostly because they had clauses in their contracts with the bandleaders to pro-

Cont. on page 5 . . .



"Waltz King" Wayne King, a popular attraction on the American airwaves in the thirties, forties and fifties, gained national fame through his three-a-week *Lady Esther Serenade* broadcasts from Chicago. He is pictured during a 1967 appearance at the Willowbrook Ballroom in Chicago. (© 1989 Charles A. Sengstock Jr.)

vide a network line. Most did not pay, however, and some of the hotels even switched from name bands to local or semi-name (or territory) bands and put their money, instead, into more expensive floor shows.

This did not last for long, and the bands again began broadcasting. But from that point on, a service charge was the entry fee for a network pickup, later for local pickups, as well. That remained true until the last remotes in the mid-1980s.

### Balancing the Bands

Microphone setups, band balance and other technical issues soon became important negotiating points between bandleader, engineer and station or network production people. It was such a hot topic that a column began appearing in *Downbeat* magazine, the musicians Bible in the '30s and 40s, which discussed broadcast techniques for bands. It was called "The Air Angel."

How a band sounded on the air, of course, was important to both the station and the leader. Reputations often were made or broken this way. Some leaders, during air-checks, were known to go to the studios to monitor the balance of the mikes and hear how the band sounded

*During radio's "Golden Age", many hours of preparation preceeded a typical 15 minute network dance band remote broadcast.*

from the hotel or ballroom.

Most radio engineers agree that a one-microphone pickup was the purest and most technically correct. but that was in a controlled studio environment. More often than not, three mikes were used on location: one in front of the saxes and/or violins, a second in front of the band for announcing, vocals and solos, and a third somewhere around the piano to pickup the rhythm section.

The major network O & O (owned and operated) stations maintained "set-up files" for all major locations from which they did remotes, and for all the major bands that played these spots. The files - usually on 3 x 5 cards - were to assist the engineers in positioning the microphone in the proper places. One set of cards with which I am familiar also indicated the "pad" or volume control settings for each microphone plus the suggested setting for the "master" control on the remote amplifier.

Theses index cards vastly simplified the remote engineer's task of band setups. Even the height of the mike was indicated if that was a critical factor. So was the type of mike.

In the late '30s and early '40s, many Western Electric 618A pressure mikes were used for the bands because they were rugged, directional, relatively cheap and more expendable than the more expensive studio mikes. Another less-expensive but adequate mike used in that period was the so-called "eight ball (Western Electric 630A)."

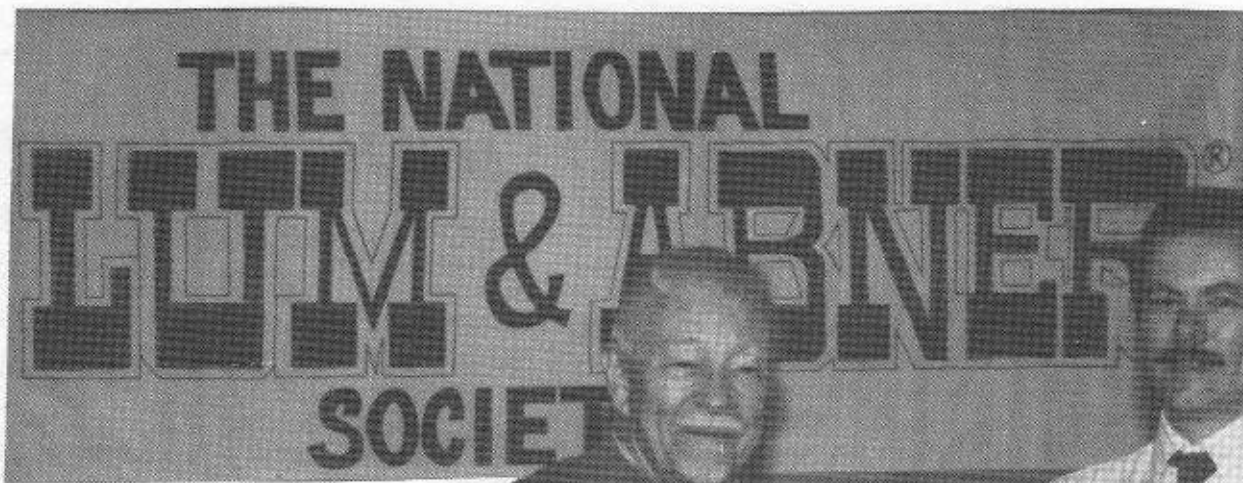
For some long-standing hotel and ballroom locations, however, stations and networks frequently used better mikes. The Western Electric 639A Cardioid microphone, for example, was widely used by the Mutual Network at it's main Chicagoland remote locations (Aragon, Trianon, Blackhawk, Palmer House, etc.) in the late 1940s. These microphones were left on location by the stations or networks, as were the remote amplifiers, to save the time and effort of constantly transporting the equipment.

The days of band remotes are gone, but certainly not totally forgotten. Because of the vast collections of these and other radio broadcasts organized by SPERDVAC and other organizations, we can still recapture some of the charm and romance of that period in our musical history.

*Chuck Sengstock is a Chicago area resident and SPERDVAC member who, as an avocation, has studied the history of Chicago popular music - particularly the dance bands and theater orchestras - for the past 30 years. He has written extensively on the subject and on the development of jazz music on the city's south side during the teens, 1920s and 1930s. He is currently working on several books on these subjects.*



Popular bandleader Jan Garber (left) playing his violin to the rhythm of drummer Lew Palmer (center) and guitarist Don Reid (right) during an early broadcast, probably from Chicago's Trianon Ballroom. (Photo courtesy WGN Radio; from the Chuck Sengstock Collection.)



*Tim Hollis presents radio actor Les Tremayne with the Lum and Abner Memorial Award*

## National Lum and Abner Society Convention Salutes Actor Les Tremayne

Actor Les Tremayne was the guest star and honoree when the National Lum and Abner Society held its seventh annual convention on June 22. Tremayne shared the microphone on occasion with the comedy team during their Chicago radio days in the 1930s.

The convention featured a luncheon, in which area personalities with ties to the Lum and Abner legend were recognized.

Among them were the real-life daughter of Pine Ridge storekeeper Dick Huddleston, a character on the program voiced by Tuffy Goff, and Ruel Bain, a mountain fiddler who played in a local band organized by Mr. Huddleston that toured extensively in the name of Lum and Abner.

Les Tremayne introduced the audience of NLAS members to his career via a clip from **First Nighter** series, in which he was a regular. Mr. Tremayne kept the crowd entertained with his memories of the golden age of radio. Following a video profile of the actor's work in animated cartoon voices edited by NLAS executive secretary Tim Hollis, Mr. Tremayne was presented with the Lum and Abner Memorial Award.

An additional award was presented in honor of Mrs. Eloise Plaster, the widow of Oscar Plaster, the Mena pho-

tographer who shot the first publicity photos of Lum and Abner. Mrs. Helen Hartzell, widow of the late Clarence Hartzell (the memorable Uncle Fletcher on **Vic and Sade** and Doc and Ben Withers on **Lum and Abner**), was presented with recordings of recently discovered programs featuring her husband.

The evening's entertainment, following supper, was a multi-media presentation entitled "The Wonderful World of Lum and Abner," originally compiled by NLAS president, Donnie Pitchford, and refined and edited by Tim Hollis. The voice of Les Tremayne served as the anchor for this collection of historical slides, videotapes clips, audio interviews, radio program highlights, and music that offered the audience an enjoyable survey course in Lum and Abner history. Previous honorees Roz Rogers, long-time L & A head writer, and distinguished announcer Wendell Niles, attested to Mr. Tremayne's professionalism in special letters read at the meeting.

Those interested in this organization should send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Tim Hollis, Executive Secretary, The National Lum and Abner Society, Route 3, Box 110, Dora, Alabama 35062. Dues are \$8.00 annually, which includes six issues of the *Jot 'Em Down Journal*.



by Barbara  
J. Watkins

One OTR club we haven't mentioned in quite some time is the *Milwaukee Area Radio Enthusiasts*, which has been in existence for sixteen years. They hold meetings every other month, and publish a newsletter five times a year. Their meetings usually feature a guest speaker who worked/is working in radio, or a live play production.

Their May meeting was quite unique, though. It took place on a bus! The club members chartered a bus and went to Chicago to visit the Museum of Broadcast Communications, stopping off first for a brief look at Chuck Schaden's Metro Golden Memories store. For more information about the group, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Milwaukee Area Radio Enthusiasts, c/o Ken Pabst, 4442 N. 77th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53218.

Speaking of Chuck Schaden, a one-year subscription to his *Nostalgia Digest*, six issues, is \$12.00. It features many fine articles of interest to radio fans, plus a two-month schedule of radio programs broadcast on "Old Time Radio Classics," WBBM-AM 780, Monday through Friday, midnight to 1:00 AM, Saturday and Sunday 8:00 to 10:00 PM, and on "Those Were the Days" Saturday 1:00 to 5:00 PM on WNIB-WNIZ FM 97. Chuck recently had Dan Haefele on his WBBM show to promote SPERDVAC. For a subscription, send your check to Nostalgia Digest, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 66053.

For those interested in the radio sets themselves, an excellent publication is *The Horn Speaker*, published by Jim Cranshaw. It is published monthly except in July and August. Subscription rates are \$12.50 for one year or \$20.00 for two. If you want to see it first, a single issue is \$1.50. Write to The Horn Speaker, Box 1193, Mabank, TX 75147.

As promised last month, here's more information about *Listening Guide Newsletter*. It is published quarterly by BRC Productions, P.O. Box 2645, Livonia, MI 48151. If you subscribe now, you can receive four issues for \$12.00. Among the articles you'll find in issue no. 5 (January/February/March) are "Information and Help to the New collector, part V" by Terry Salomonson; letters from readers; a radio series review, this time on BROADWAY IS MY BEAT, written by Bob Proctor, complete with a log of the shows of that series that are known to be in circulation; and "A Pile of Words from the Editor." Also, of course, is the article about THE SHADOW litigation that we mentioned here last month. Coming up in issue no. 6 will be an article about Wyllis Cooper's QUIET PLEASE, including a log; an article entitled "Lo-Fi in a Hi-Fi Age" which promises that there is hope for old time radio in the digital age, and invites you to "find out what leading archivists are saying about the digital storage medium, and an alternative 'lo-fi digital' format proposed for old time radio."

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** We'd like to hear from our honorary members. Let us know what your news is so we can let others know what you're doing. Don't be

modest, we're interested!

Send your news, information to share, questions or suggestions to Information Please, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031. 'Til next time, spaceman's luck!



IN MEMORY OF DOUGLAS EDWARDS,  
PIONEER NETWORK NEWSCASTER  
JOHN LARCH

(IN MEMORY OF VIVI JANISS)  
KAY ST. GERMAIN

(IN MEMORY OF MERI BELL SHARBUTT)  
ELLIOTT REID

(IN MEMORY OF HOWARD DUFF & JOHN McINTIRE)  
DOROTHY GEIGER

(IN MEMORY OF MILTON GEIGER)

RITA PERRIN

(IN MEMORY OF VIC PERRIN)

JOE THOMPSON

(IN MEMORY OF MARY MARTIN & TOMMY HARRIS)

HERB ELLIS

(IN MEMORY OF ELLIOTT LEWIS & HOWARD DUFF)

JOHN McINTIRE & JEANETTE NOLAN

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JUNE FORAY

NAOMI LEWIS

AUDREY MARSH

JOAN LOVEJOY

VERN CARSTENSEN

JONATHAN HOLE

ANDRE BARUCH & BEA WAIN

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.

# HUGH'S HUES

By Hugh Anderson

"Evenin', folks, how y'all? This is the Old Professor, Kay Kyser, bringing you Sperdvacians your Kollege of Radio Knowledge Summer Semester Scan.

"The other day Ish Kabibble asked if there was a terrible earthquake in San Francisco in 1906 and I told him there was. He said he though so 'cause in some places the girls in the night clubs were still shakin'. After which Ish offered a high class poem:

*"Oh, a girl named Lena McClean*

*Fell in a washing machine.*

*It gave her a bosh*

*And what was left of Lena came out in the wash."*

"I offered that was a fine poem and asked the name of the poem. To which Ish answered, 'Dope in the Soap.'"

"Professor, the hallowed halls of Kyser Kolledge ring to the sound of scurring fee and the student body await your scholarly words."

"Alright, students, enough of that foolishness! It's time for our exam. I don't want any of you chillin' cheatin'. Last time, we were studying the history of FM radio but before that y'all did good. This time, I expect you to do better! Right now, chillin' let's test!"

1. For ten (10) points, what was the date of the first broadcast of the Lux Radio Theatre from Hollywood? A. Oct. 14, 1934; B. July 29, 1935; C. June 1, 1936. ("No hints, chillin', otherwise the junebug will get you.")

2. Five points each: A. What famous sounds do we most remember about the "Inner Sanctum Mysteries"? B. On the program, who was . . . "This is your host, . . . ?" (Quiet, students. We want the answer to be squeaky clean.)

3. Five (5) points: Who was the famous southern gentlemen who lived in Allen's Alley?

Bonus Question: Five (5) points for each correct answer. Name three other Alley residents.

4. The Screen Guild Theatre began on CBS Jan. 8, 1939. Ten (10) years later, The Screen Director's Playhouse began on NBC, Jan. 9, 1940. For ten (10) points, in what year did they both end? ("Here's a hint, students. Boddy Thomson hit his 3-run homer to give the Giants the win over the Dodgers for the National League Championship.")

5. A. What was the singing group of which Roy Rogers was a member when he broke into movies and Big Time Radio? Ten (10) points.

B. Super Bonus Question. Twenty (20) points. What was the first singing group Rogers sang with on radio?

6. A. Who was the host of "Quiet, Please." Ten (10) points.

B. Who was the announcer on "The Big Story?" Ten (10) points. ("Hush, students! We want the answer to be Earnest!")

7. A. One man played the role of "Nick Carter" on radio. Who was he? Five (5) points, And what did he do before he entered radio? Fifteen points.

B. The name of Carter's gal Friday/secretary was \_\_\_\_\_ ? Ten (10) points.

8. For another ten (10) points, the announcer for the Molle' Mystery Theatre was \_\_\_\_\_ ? ("Don't say more now, chillin'")

9. What was the phrase made famous on the "March of Time"? Ten (10) points.

10. "From out of the past come the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse Silver!"

A. How many men played The Long Ranger? Fifteen (15) points.

B. Who was the writer of the Long Ranger? Ten (10) points.

C. Who was the ruthless gang leader who ambushed the six Texas Rangers trailing him and his gang? Five (5) points.

D. And the Lone Ranger's name? Ten (10) points.

"O.K., students, let's not tarry to tote up the score. Here's the answers for you to recon, take what you get and no more!"

1. C - June 1, 1936

2. The creaking door and Raymond, played by Raymond Edward Johnson.

3. A - Senator Beauregard Claghorn.

B - Mrs. Pansey Nussbaum, Titus Moody, Falstaff Openshaw, Ajax Cassidy, Socrates Mulligan, McGee & McGee, Senator Bloat, John Doe, Serge Stroganoff, Pablo Eatthepeaches.

4. The Guild last broadcast on May 31, 1951; the Playhouse on August 30, 1951.

5. A - Sons of the Pioneers.

B - Uncle Tom Murray's Hollywood Hillbillies.

6. A - Ernest Chappell

B - Ernest Chappell

7. A - Lon Clarke, alias Nick Carter, was an opera singer.

B. - Patsy Bowen.

8. Dan Seymore.

9. "TIME - Marches On!"

10. A - Jack Deeds, George Seaton, Earl Graser, Brace Beemer.

B - For years, Fran Striker wrote 60,000 words a week for radio, the Lone Ranger Comics, novels plus scripts for **The Green Hornet** and **Sargeant Preston of the Yukon**.

C. & D. - Butch Cavendish bushwhacked the Rangers and killed all but one and the lone survivor was nursed back to health by Tonto. The Captain who headed the tracking party was the older brother of the Ranger who lived. Captain Dan Reid asked his brother, John Reid, to care for his wife and son Dan, should he die. When John Reid recovered with the help of Tonto, he donned his black mask and became The Lone Ranger. He raised his nephew, Dan Reid, sending him back east for proper schooling. Years later, Dan became owner of the *Dailey Sentinel* newspaper (which I always assumed was in De-



# Convention Set Nov. 8, 9, 10

SPERDVAC's 1991 Old Time Radio Convention will feature program recreations, including **Archie Andrews** with Bob Hastings and **Nick Carter, Master Detective** with Lon Clarke. The event is scheduled for Friday, Nov. 8 through Sunday, Nov. 10 in Los Angeles.

Our new convention site is the *Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza*, 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles. It is located near the corner of Airport and Century Boulevards. Shuttle bus service from Los Angeles International Airport to the Holiday Inn is available.

The convention begins Friday at 6:30 pm with a cocktail hour. The evening banquet and program, including radio show recreation, begin at 7:30 pm. Saturday's panel discussions and workshops run from 9 am to 5 pm. Saturday evening there will be at 6:30 pm cocktail hour with program and dinner at 7:30 pm. Sunday's brunch and program are planned for 9:30 am until about 12 noon.

The Collectors' Room will be open Saturday from 8 am until 6 pm.

Convention chair Larry Gassman says he welcomes volunteers who will assist for an hour or two during the convention. To volunteer assistance or obtain up-to-date details of the convention plans, phone SPERDVAC during business hours at (213) 947-9800.

## Hugh's Hues Cont. . .

troit) and put his son Britt to work on the paper. Britt inherited the *Sentinel* and became "The Green Hornet." Like his grand-uncle, Britt was to don a mask, have a faithful companion and ride the fastest steed in the world, the Black Beauty. He hunted the biggest of all game, public enemies who try to destroy our America" as did the Long Ranger.

"Y'all did well! You were good students this summer. I see y'all did your studying and knew the answers. Let's see how you scored."

170 & over: For this sterling score you'll win the **Pot O'Gold**

145 - 170: You just **Hit the Jackpot.**

110-145: You folks must be **Quick as a Flash!**

80-110: Alas chillin', you better pay a visit to **Dr.**

**I.Q..**

Below 80: Everybody will wonder **What Makes You Tick?**

"However, for all you students who took our "Yankee Doodle Quiz" and "Bet Your Life" you could win "Double or Nothing", y'all will receive next month's issue of the *Radiogram!* "Can You Top This?" "It's a Chance of a Lifetime!"

"Glad y'all could come. We had a lot of fun havin' ya - but right now, chillin', Let's Dance!!!"

August's August Facts: Davy Crocket, King of the Wild Frontier, was born August 17, 1786. . . . Women won the right to vote (19th Amendment) August 26, 1920. . . .The Panama Canal was opened August 15, 1914. . . .And in August, 1923, the No. 1 hit song was "Yes, We Have No Bananas."

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



## MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

We are happy to announce that these cassettes are back in circulation in the General Library:

19 63 123 125\* 137 138 140 148 154  
163 174 197 247 254 271 273 283 292  
299 301 303 306 307 320 321 326 338  
345 349 379 465. (\* Tape 125 is in poor sound quality. We hope that a member with good quality recordings of any or all of the programs from this set will help us make an upgrade.)

Last month we neglected to credit some of those responsible for the award-winning *California Artists Radio Theatre's* production of "The Powder River Policy." Marty Halperin served as the engineer. John Harlan was the announcer. The music was provided by Ian Whitcomb and Calvin Ward was the associate producer for the live broadcast.

Bud Abbott Jr. and Chris Costello will discuss their fathers' show business careers on *Same Time, Same Station*, 89.3 FM, Pasadena, CA on Sunday, Aug. 11 beginning at 5 pm.

Because the summer is vacation time for some of our librarians, we would like to remind SPERDVAC members there may be a delay in filling some tape orders. Please be patient as some of our volunteers are taking a bit of time off.

The U. S. Postal Service is planning to issue a set of five commemorative stamps saluting American comics. At press time we were unable to confirm the exact release date, but we understand they are expected no earlier than Sept. 12. The stamps, which were drawn by famed artist Hirschfield, pay tribute to Jack Benny, Abbott and Costello, Fanny Brice, Laurel and Hardy and Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

We are grateful to Charles Sengstock for his informative feature on dance band remotes and the accompanying photographs. Next month we will look back at David Sarnoff's career. Member Oliver Berliner has provided an article on the radio pioneer. Incidentally, he is a grandson of Emile Berliner, inventor of the microphone and the disc record.

Following the SPERDVAC meeting on Aug. 10, there will be a Board of Directors meeting at the same location. Members are welcome to sit in on the meeting and watch our elected decision makers in action.

# The Radio Life of Howard Caine

*Decided on show business career at age 12 1/2*

by Dan Haefele

Howard Caine's show business career began when he was a 2 1/2 year old performer in *Our Gang* silent comedies being filmed in his native Nashville. "My brothers and sister...took the outfit off of a doll I had, dressed me in it, and took me down to the Lowes Theatre in Nashville where they were auditioning," he recalls.

Hal Roache's brother Jack grabbed the little boy dressed in bib overalls, picked him up by the back straps "like a suitcase" and brought the youth to his brother's attention. Later, when their filming in Nashville was completed, Roache tried in vain to convince the Caine family to move to Hollywood.

## Amateur performer

From the age of five, Howard Caine appeared in plays at school, Temple and at a neighborhood playhouse. Then, when he was 12 1/2, he and his family moved to New York City. It was there he declared his intentions to be an actor.

"My brothers and sister were 14, 17 and 19 years older than me, which meant I had five parents," he explained at SPERDVAC's July 13 meeting. "The whole family gathered around the dining room table - which is the Jewish battleground - and the attitude was that if that's what I wanted to do, that I would never be successful at anything else because I would never be happy."

## Family's advice

Caine's family advised him to rid himself of his Southern accent. The youngster was trained at a New York speech and acting school where he learned to lose the accent. He also took radio acting classes there. Traveling via New York's subway system, where he could hear a wide variety of foreign languages and dialects, the aspiring actor recognized how marketable his skills would be if he could replicate foreign accents.

As Caine's acting abilities contin-



Howard Caine

ued to develop, radio acting jobs came his way. His youth became an asset during World War II because many of his colleagues joined the Armed Services. At 17, he commonly played roles of men in their forties.

"And during the war there were all of those dialects being used (on radio)," he pointed out.

Actors of the era had cards printed which advised radio directors of the bearer's vocal age range and accents and dialects performed. "In those days we went to see the guys responsible for producing and directing radio shows," he told SPERDVAC. "They (the directors) all had one of those 3 x 5 metal index card boxes and they kept those cards in there." Caine's casting card indicated his ability to perform 32 dialects.

## Limited rehearsal time

One of the major differences Mr. Caine sees between radio and stage acting is radio's limited rehearsal time and the medium's requirement for the ability to do good first-time script readings.

"We sat down with a script that we never had in our hands before, got a read-through, corrections and timing. It was a luxury on hour and half-hour shows to get another read-through for timing after the (script) cuts. Then we'd get on mike and do it," he said.

"On 15 minute soaps, we might or might not get the read-through. They might just time it the first time on

mike and make cuts, then have a quick dress (rehearsal) for timing and then we were on the air," he continued.

Mr. Caine had running parts on two of radio's top soap operas, **The Guiding Light** and **The Brighter Day**.

## Organists' abilities

Looking back, he is greatly impressed with the abilities of the soaps' organists, who he views as "another actor" in the show. Often the organist had only the theme music in advance, he said, and was responsible for determining the correct musical bridges on very short notice.

Around 1951, **The Guiding Light** scripts were performed on radio and television. "We would come in at 1:30 pm, do the standard radio rehearsal, and go on the air at 3," he explained. "Then we would sit down in the radio studio and take cuts to turn it into a television script. . . We took out the lines like 'Oh, there's someone at the door. I'll bet it's Jean. Let me go to the window and see. Yes, it's Jean. I can see her standing there.'

Then we would block (the stage movements) for the camera. And we'd come in at six the next morning to have the (television) rehearsals. We went on the air at 11:30 or 12 noon."

## "Burlesque" dialect

On Radio City Playhouse, director Harry Junken once told Caine that his Chinese dialect was being done incorrectly. During rehearsal the director said, "Howard, the phoney stuff turning the R into an L sound is burlesque Chinese." Caine felt his portrayal was accurate, so during the dinner break he suggested the cast should go to a Chinese restaurant. When their waiter spoke in the same dialect, he turned to the director and asked, "Is he burlesquing?"

In recent years the actor has worked in television and in several stage productions.

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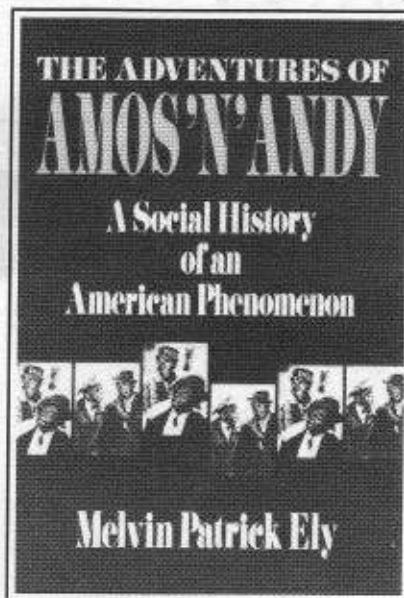
—Arnold Rampersad, author of *The Life of Langston Hughes*

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—C. Vann Woodward, author of *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*

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SEPT ISSUE

August 16, 1991

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

*Following are highlights of issues discussed and decisions reached at the June 8 meeting of SPERDVAC's Board of Directors:*

Allocated \$500 for repairs of broken windows at SPERDVAC's storage facility.

Voted 5-0 to place full page ads in the next two issues of *Modern Radio Drama* magazine.

Approved nomination of Dorothy Geiger as our new publicity coordinator.

Approved purchase of used Scotch 208 open reel tape for the Archives Library.

Decided to delay action on a proposal to open membership to Canadian residents. The issues of various mailing costs will be considered in their final decision.

Allocated \$100 for repair of the electric typewriter being used by Barbara Watkins.

