

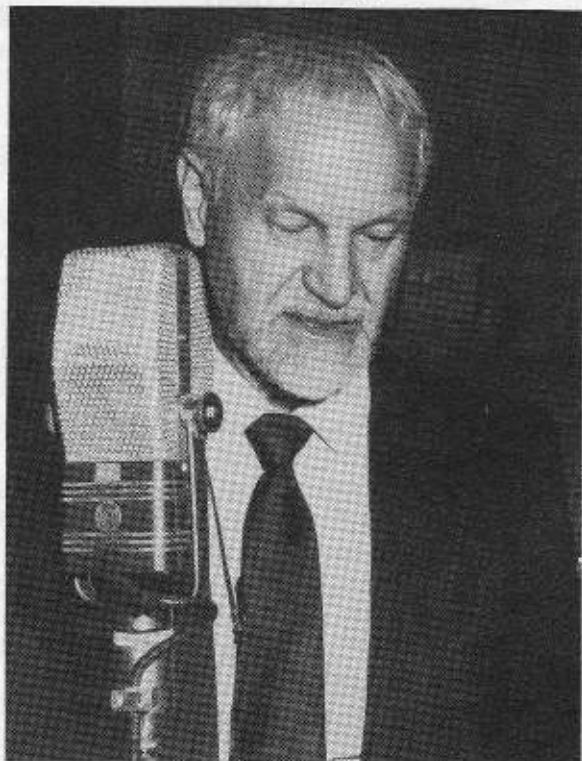
SPERDVAC

RADIOGRAM

Vol. XVII, No. 9 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy SEPTEMBER 1991

Mercury Theatre production assistant

Radio actor-producer Richard Wilson dies



Richard Wilson at SPERDVAC's 1985 convention
by Dan Haefele

Richard Wilson, production assistant for Orson Welles' *Mercury Theatre on the Air*, died Aug. 21. The 75 year old former actor was a victim of cancer.

Wilson's radio career began in the mid thirties when he was a student at the University of Colorado. He worked his way through college partly via radio acting on local programs in Denver. One of his early appearances was on a program called *Captain Midnight* (no relation to the network serial originating from Chicago).

That early exposure to radio included a few brief appearances on network shows originating from Denver. On one show he read public service announcements on a program sponsored by the Public Service Company.

Bitten by the acting bug, Wilson left college during his junior year. He went to New York City, where it was

his goal to earn \$175 to \$250 per week.

Influenced by the work of John Houseman and Orson Welles, he decided he wanted to work in the theatre. And he also sought radio work.

During his job search he, like many aspiring performers in New York, used the services of ex-vaudevillian Cliff Self. For a quarter, clients could come into the office of Self's Service Bureau and read listings of available acting jobs. Once when he was there a phone call came in with a radio job possibility. "Can anybody bark like a dog?" Self inquired.

"Inasmuch as my stomach was growling at the moment, I raised my hand," Wilson told SPERDVAC in a 1985 interview.

"There's a radio director named Irving Mitchell at CBS for a program called *Renfrew of the Mounted*. I want you to go over there and say Cliff Self sent you."

Wilson was one of three Self sent. "We turned out to be so good, snarling over seal meat, we were written into the script for the next four days." It was the young performer's introduction to New York radio.

Please turn to page 7

Recreations, panel discussions set for SPERDVAC convention

Radio performers Herb Ellis, Bob Hastings and Lon Clark will be featured in radio show recreations at SPERDVAC's 1991 Old Time Radio Convention. **Archie Andrews** and **Nick Carter, Master Detective** will be recreated as part of our two evening banquets. The event is set for Friday, Nov. 8 through Sunday, Nov. 10.

In addition, radio musician Bernard Katz will join us to demonstrate some of his work in network radio. Three of Spike Jones' *City Slickers* will take part in our 10:30 am panel. The participants are Joe Siracusa, Eddie Brandt and Earl Bennett.

The convention is at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza,

Please turn to page 8



MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

SPERDVAC's John Tefeller has begun hosting an old time radio program on KOPE radio in Medford, Oregon weekend evenings 7 to 10. The station is located 103.5 FM and can be heard throughout the Rogue Valley area.

We forgot to mention it, but the cover photo in last month's Radiogram came to us courtesy WGN Radio, Chicago. The picture was taken during a celebration of the station's tenth anniversary. Chuck Sengstock, author of the article on band remotes, tells us it was taken in 1934. But your beloved editor says Chicago's Mutual outlet first went on the air in 1932, so the picture should be dated 1942. Who's right? Can someone enlighten us?

And remember that nice picture we carried last month of Les Tremayne receiving the Lum and Abner Memorial Award. Your editor fell victim to the humidity in Chicago and failed to recognize the gentleman giving him the award is really Donnie Pitchford, the organization's president. Aren't we glad the editor is back in California where he NEVER makes mistakes?

The Cable Radio Network carries an hour of old time radio Saturday and Sunday evenings at six (West Coast time). Check with your local cable TV outlet to see if you can pick them up.

Thank you again to KGIL's John Swaney for the nice segment on SPERDVAC aired on his July 4th broadcast. Several OTR clips were featured on the show.

A reminder to tape library patrons: If you find a problem with a tape, PLEASE enclose a note ON TOP of the tapes when you return them. We can then fix the problem before allowing the tape out again.

We are busily recording more programs for our tape libraries, thanks in part to recent donations. Upcoming catalog pages will include more Jack Benny shows, **Damon Runyon Theatre** (from discs donated by Vern Carstensen), **Guest Star** (from discs recently purchased), **Wild Bill Hickok**

(there's more!), **People Are Funny** (from discs lent by Steve Knutson, who has also donated a volume containing 14 **A Day in the Life of Dennis Day** scripts) and **Alan Young Shows** from discs donated by Mr. Young.


Thanks also to Don Westcott who donated several AFRS discs and actress Sharon Douglas for contributing several photographs, magazines and a Radio Artists' Directory. And our gratitude to Dorothy Carruthers who donated over 350 discs which had belonged to her husband, a Mutual Radio engineer. The majority of them are Mutual musical programs such as **California Melodies** and **The Feeling is Mutual**.

Thanks to Barbara Watkins and Dan Haefele for preparing our Archives and General Library catalog pages. We expect another catalog page from each library before our November convention.

Alex Adams has helped us sort out some of the radio scripts we have received...Rita Perrin has kindly donated several radio scripts which belonged to her husband, actor Vic Perrin. They include several from **Dragnet** and **Gun-**

smoke.

SPERDVAC is actively seeking additional radio programs to preserve. If you have tapes or transcription discs to loan or donate, please contact John Gassman at (213) 947-9800.



SPERDVAC

Friends

ART HEARN
(IN MEMORY OF HERB NELSON)

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
(IN MEMORY OF ELLIOTT LEWIS & HOWARD DUFF)
BETTY LACKOW
(S. CALIF GAS CO. MATCHING FUND)

SHERWOOD SCHWARTZ GLENHALL TAYLOR BERNARD KATZ VEOLA VONN NELSON ARTHUR TRACY ADELE RONSON R. JOEL SENTER GEORGE WALSH GARRY PAPERS ART GILMORE SEAMAN JACOBS BARBARA FULLER JOHN DABALL HELEN KLEEB MICHAEL S. LUROS WALTER STAVES CHUCK BENEDICT DICK MURPHY ANDY RUSSELL ALICE BACKES DORIS SINGLETON RUSSELL J. FOLSOM ROY ROWAN	WILLIAM CONRAD PARLEY BAER LUCIA SILVESTRI BOB NEWHART LUCILLE MEREDITH AMZIE STRICKLAND JACK BROWN SHARON DOUGLAS FRANK BRESEE IRVING BRECHER TOMMY COOK DIX DAVIS ART HERN PHIL COHAN CASEY KASEM JOHN WRISLEY 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.

Began radio career in 1931

Street Singer Arthur Tracy visits SPERDVAC

by Dan Haeefe

It's been sixty years since Arthur Tracy's first appearance on the radio. William S. Paley hired him to sing on the CBS airwaves three times a week for a six week trial period.

When he first went on the air July 13, 1931, Tracy billed himself as "The Street Singer of the Air." On a friend's advice a few weeks later, he shortened his title.

"I've been singing since I was six years old," he explained. "When people came over over to the house, my father would always say, 'Sing something, son.'"

"It was the encouragement of the people who heard me, who gave me the courage and desire to go into show business," he continued. "Once I heard the applause, it was like magic. I never wanted to lose it."

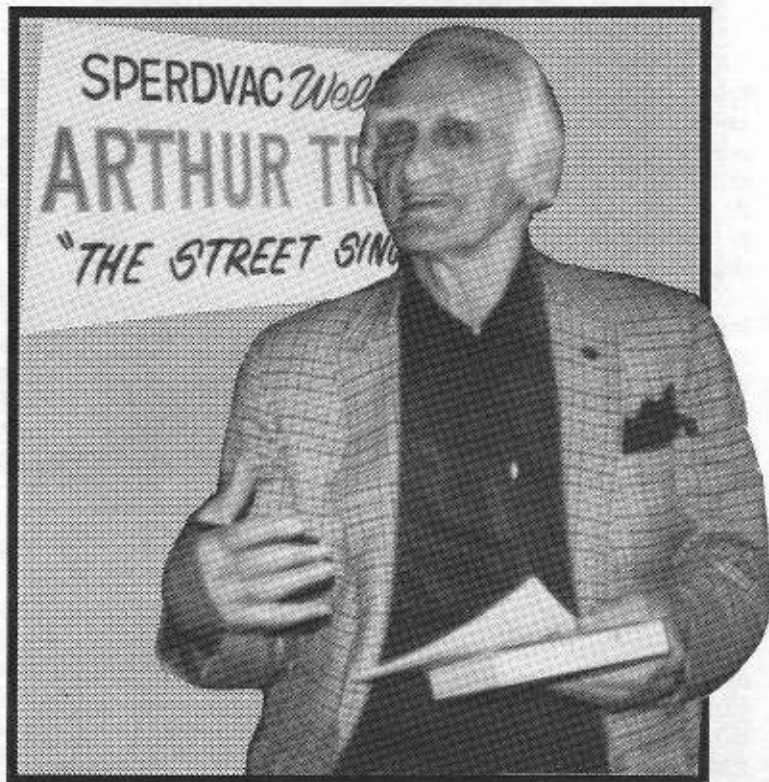
Tracy, who proudly announces that he is now 92, was SPERDVAC's guest at our August meeting. He filled in for radio director Dick Stenta, who became ill shortly before the meeting.

"I feel a kinship with this little microphone, which carried me out to the world," he told the audience. "What I have is a gift that God loaned me to give to you and it belongs to you."

Tracy recalls one of his earliest influences was Caruso. "I used to do without food and saved every penny I could to buy a Caruso record - one sided at the time - for \$1.75 and buy the sheet music of every aria he was singing for 25 or 30 cents," he explained. He played each record several times to become familiar enough with the performance to sing the songs much like Caruso.

The famed singer is remembered for the accordion accompaniment he provided during his vocals. But in truth he gave up the instrument early in his career.

"I have to make a confession," he told SPERDVAC. "I played the accordion so bad that my dad came to me when I was appearing at the Capital Theatre in New York...and said, 'Son, why do you want to struggle with sixty-six pounds on your chest? You are a singer. Why don't you give someone else a chance to



Arthur Tracy has been radio's Street Singer for 60 years.

make a living?"

Tracy gave his next performance that evening sans the accordion. He was pleased with the results, and so were the critics.

Before his radio work began, Tracy gave lobby performances at various hotels. There he earned \$25 per weekend. He was usually accompanied by a musical trio with a piano, violin and cello.

In addition to a 1986 interview which is already in our General Library, the August meeting's recording will soon be added so that members unable to attend may enjoy the afternoon SPERDVAC had with Arthur Tracy.

Who's on First?

Joining Larry and John Gassman on their program "Same Time, Same Station" at KPCC-FM, Pasadena, CA, are Bud Abbott Jr. and Chris Costello. They talked about their fathers' show business careers and listened to clips of the Abbott & Costello radio show. They have established the Abbott & Costello Fan Club, P. O. Box 2084, Toluca Lake, CA 91610-0084. The group published a quarterly newsletter. A&C are featured as part of a set of U. S. postage stamps commemorating American comics. The stamps are available in booklet form at all post offices.



WAKE UP AMERICA! Information PLEASE

by Barbara
J. Watkins

Member Steve Casper sends the following advice for reel-to-reel tape deck owners. If you need a reel-to-reel tape deck or if you need yours repaired, he suggests you contact Ed Cagle, 6527 Grattan Way, N. Highlands, Sacramento, CA 95660. Ed is retired and overhauls reel decks. He does an excellent job, according to Steve, and his prices are very reasonable. He is willing to ship his decks and offers a variety.

Members who have open reel machines can take advantage of SPERDVAC's open reel libraries, even if their collections are on cassette. Since open reel libraries are used by fewer members, you have a very good chance of getting the tapes you want sooner. All but reel 1407 are now available from the Archives Library 1,001 & up, open reel version.

CALLING ALL CLUBS

Here are two more organizations to add to the list of those devoted to a particular character or person, that appeared in the July *Radiogram*.

POPEYE Fan Club Popeye, in addition to being a comic strip and animated cartoon star, was featured on radio as well. For information on the Popeye Fan Club, organized in 1989, write to "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford, P.O. Box 869, Carthage, TX 75633. The club, a "cousin" organization to the National Lum & Abner Society, publishes a thick newsletter quarterly, and gets together annually at the "Popeye Picnic" in Chester, Illinois (the birthplace of Popeye's creator, E.C. Segar) every September.

The Bing's Friends and Collectors Society This is an organization dedicated to preserving the memory of Bing Crosby by helping members acquire Crosbyana such as recordings, video tapes, and of course tapes of Bing's wonderful radio programs. They publish a twelve-page newsletter six times a year and try to arrange luncheon get-togethers and a yearly banquet. The club has a world-wide membership, and is always looking for the serious Crosby collector. Yearly dues are \$10.00. For further information, contact Hobie Wilson, 236 Andrieux Street, Sonoma, California 95476-6909.

Fibber McGee and Molly Ed Sloan is interested in forming a club devoted to Fibber McGee and Molly and is looking for others interested in helping form the club or taking part in it. If interested, please write: Ed Sloan, West Quad House-Chicago Room 120, 541 Thompson, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Honorary member Bob Shannon writes that his now working harder than ever. He just appeared with Herb Jeffries at the Amphitheater in Seal Beach, Leisure World, before a crowd of 3,000. He's also lecturing on the Golden Days of Radio at club luncheons, schools, etc. His book, *Break into Broadcasting*, is doing exceptionally well all over the country, and he now has a literary agent who is handling his new book, *Good Jokes & How to Tell 'Em*. He is looking forward to October when he plans to take a two-week vacation in Wisconsin, where his career in broadcasting began.

Actor Page Gilman, whom we fondly remember as youngest son Jack Barbour on ONE MAN'S FAMILY, sends the following news: Old-timers gathered in Sacra-

mento on June 4 to celebrate the 90th birthday of ONE MAN'S FAMILY author-producer, Carlton E. Morse. While most guests were family members, announcer Dresser Dahlstead came up from Encino, California, and Page Gilman came south from mid-Oregon. Dresser had been more closely associated with Morse's I LOVE A MYSTERY, while Gilman had been on the very first ONE MAN'S FAMILY show in 1932 as well as its very last, in 1959.

We thank Bob Shannon and Page Gilman for writing and look forward to hearing from others who were a part of the Golden Age of Radio.

Send your news, information or questions for this column to: Information Please, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031.



Send your wants in OTR-related material to McGee's Closet, % Barbara J. Watkins, PO Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031

WANTED: POPEYE radio programs (aside from the common four in circulation) for personal use, as well as for the POPEYE Fan Club (see "Information Please" this page). Contact "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford, P.O. Box 869, Carthage, TX 75633.

WANTED: Five and three-quarter inch empty reels or with tape and boxes (open reels), for Grundig professional reel-to-reel recorder. Also wanted are NATIONAL BARN DANCE episodes, reel-to-reel 2-track or cassettes. Contact: C. Huck, 4 S. 230 River Road, Warrenville, IL 60555.

WANTED: British radio shows, 1940s to 1990s, comedy, drama, quiz, music hall, band, documentary, etc. Also UK radio memorabilia, and sources/contacts for BBC or Radio Luxembourg shows. Have some cassette dubs to swap. Contact: Ray Smith, 2229 Bedford Avenue E., Regina, Canada, S4N OH1.

FOR SALE: Sound effects records (three), perfect condition with jackets, auto crashes, plane crashes, DC-2 motor, Packard engine, baby cries and more. I have owned these over 25 years. Because of rarity, prefer you pick up in person, \$30. Contact: Carl Starkey, 2365 Palermo Avenue, Upland, CA 91786, (714) 482-3352.

WANTED: Any episode of SMILIN' ED McCONNELL'S BUSTER BROWN GANG that features an announcement for a five inch Froggy the Gremlin squeak toy. Also, anything related to Fred Allen, Lum and Abner, Fibber McGee and Molly. Would like to get in contact with other OTR program ticket or premium/item collectors/dealers. I have a Radio Orphan Annie Secret Society pin, and a ticket to the 9-13-44 broadcast of BEAT THE BAND that I am interested in selling or trading. Contact: Jason Edward Beard, 615 James Street, #507, Syracuse, NY 93203.

WANTED: Chicago Cubs broadcasts from Chicago stations from the 1930's - early 1950s. Want mostly World Series broadcasts or unusual games. Also want any radio programs featuring Jack Brickhouse from the 1940s and 1950s. Contact: Henry Tchop, Jr., 312 Seminole Lane, Carol Stream, IL 60188.

WANTED: OTR shows of LIFE WITH LYONS, SMITH OF HOLLYWOOD, THE ALDRICH FAMILY,

HUGH'S HUES RADIO'S TOP ANNOUNCERS

By Hugh Anderson

This month we'll look at Carpenter, Wallington and Von Zell, all three being voted among the top five in their time.

Ken Carpenter moved to Pasadena, Calif., with his family during the Depression. A prospective employer gave Ken a lead to employment as an announcer with KHJ, Los Angeles, owned by Don Lee. Bob Swan auditioned Carpenter and informed him that KHJ had just hired an announcer from KFI. Carpenter went to KFI, auditioned for Chief Announcer Don Wilson and landed a full time job.

In 1933, Ken was appointed Chief Announcer after Wilson left to cover east coast sports for NBC. In 1934, Wilson began his long association with Jack Benny. Carpenter began sport announcing in 1935 for KFI. A year later, he began, as a free-lancer, announcing on **The Kraft Music Hall**. Ken stayed on as announcer for Bing Crosby for 20 years through sponsorships by Kraft, Philco, Chesterfield and General Electric.

Several hundred editors and columnists were polled by *Motion Picture Daily* magazine in 1940 and they chose Carpenter as the 3rd best in the country. Don Wilson ranked 1st, Milton Cross 2nd, Harry Von Zell 4th and Bob Trout was rated 5th. In 1941, the magazine poll showed Carpenter in 4th place with Wilson 1st, Von Zell 2nd, Cross 3rd, Trout 5th. Also in 1941, the *Movie and Radio Guide* listener poll showed Carpenter in third place behind Wilson and Cross. Carpenter announced **The Chase and Sanborn Hour** (Bergen and McCarthy) in the late thirties; **The Great Gildersleeve**, **One Man's Family**, **Halls of Ivy**, **Lux Radio Theatre**, and he was the last announcer for **Truth or Consequences**. He moved on to TV as the announcer for *Lux Video Theatre* from Oct. 2, 1950 to Sept. 12, 1957 and was the host during the summers of '55, '56 and '57.

Jimmy Wallington began working at WGY, G.E.'s station in Schenectady, N.Y., in 1928. The station had begun experimenting with a TV scanning-disc system in which Wallington was interested. They also had a short wave station that could be heard around the world. Jimmy read family letters over this station to members of the Admiral Byrd expedition treading toward Little America. Because of this NBC, two years later, invited him to New York to meet the group upon their return. The crew's arrival was delayed and he managed to do some network announcing while waiting. When the crew arrived in June, 1930, Wallington was aboard a seagoing tug, 350 miles at sea, when



Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Wallington in 1935.

they met. Jimmy yelled, they recognized his voice and he went aboard for the remaining trip to New York. There, he and Graham McNamee did the remote broadcast of the triumphant return.

September 13, 1931, saw him announce the first **Eddie Cantor Show** on which he was a part of the comedy routines. That year, Jimmy was voted 6th in a poll of top announcers by the nation's radio editors. In 1933, he was awarded the Gold Medal for good diction. The next year he was rated second to David Ross as the most competent studio announcer. He won the Gold Medal again plus the *Star of Stars* best announcer in 1935 and the following year was selected the best announcer in *Radio Guide's* poll. The *New York World Telegram* radio editor's poll picked him as the best announcer.

On October 5, 1939 he became the commercial an-
Cont. on next page . . .



At a **Kraft Music Hall** broadcast in 1936 were Fred and Dorothy Stone, Bob Burns, Paula Stone, Bing Crosby, announcer Ken Carpenter and Jimmy Dorsey.

Hugh's Hues Cont. . .

nouncer for **Texaco Star Theatre** with Adolphe Menjou as Master of Ceremonies, comedian Ned Sparks and actress Una Merkel. Ken Murray became the permanent m.c. later in the year.

Early on he announced **The Gibson Family** in the '30's, **Major Bowes, Rudy Vallee Show, Stella Dallas** and **The Mysterious Traveler**. In 1944 he was the announcer for **The Allen Young Show, "The Jack Kirkwood Show** and **The Doctor Fights Back**.

In 1926, Harry Von Zell went to work as an announcer/singer at KMIC, Inglewood, Calif. His next stop was Los Angeles as sports announcer and singer/writer/producer. In 1927 he went to KGB, San Diego, as program director, then back to Los Angeles. In 1929, Harry was employed at KTMR in Los Angeles as a staff announcer. Paul Whitman and orchestra had Ted Husing as their Old Gold Cigarette announcer. They were in L.A. awaiting the start of filming of "The King of Jazz." Husing had to return to N.Y. so audition were given to find a replacement. Harry's boss insisted he try out, he did and he became Husing's successor.

During the next two years with the Whiteman Orchestra, Von Zell became friends with the young Bing Crosby. During one road trip, they roomed together. CBS President William Paley heard Crosby on record during a sea voyage to Europe and sent a wireless that he wanted Crosby signed. Upon Paley's return, Crosby was scheduled nightly at 7:00 pm, in N.Y., against **Amos 'n Andy** over at NBC. On September 2, 1931, Harry Von Zell introduced Bing for his first broadcast on his own show. shortly, Bing moved back to L.A. but Von Zell had commitments in N.Y.

Earlier in 1931, Harry was to sub for Ted Husing as the announcer on the first broadcast of **The March of Time** on March 6th. Husing resumed as the announcer for the remaining 13 week run. During the initial thirteen week run, Westbrook Van Voorhis was cast as the "Voice of Fate". After Von Zell left, Van Voorhis began his longtime role as announcer and "The Voice of Time."

Harry, as did Wallington, had an association with Byrd's south pole expedition. He was the CBS commentator on weekly short wave broadcast reports of the expedition.

In 1934, he became a member of the radio production staff of the Young & Rubican advertising agency. He had many duties and developed his sense of comedy.

He was born in 1906 and moved with his family to Sioux City, Iowa, as a teenager. After high school he attended UCLA where he played football, was a short-lived prize fighter and a bank messenger before hiring on at KMIC.

In 1936, Harry was the announcer for **Stoopnagle and Budd**. He was ranked 9th to Wallington's 1st (Don Wilson was 2nd) in *Radio Guide's* announcer poll.

In 1940 *Motion Picture Daily* ranked radio announcers with Von Zell in 4th place. In 1941 *Movie and Radio Guide* listeners poll for radio announcers voted Harry the 5th place spot. In 1942, they voted him 4th. In 1944 he became the announcer for **Burns and Allen** after Bill Goodman moved to **The Frank Sinatra Show** as a comedian.

Harry was the announcer for many programs: **The**

Aldrich Family, The Amazing Mr. Smith, The Phil Baker Show, Behind the Mike (with host Graham McNamee), **Ben Bernie, Bright Star, Burns and Allen, Eddie Canter Show** (following Wallington), **Duffy's Tavern, Honolulu Bound, Joanie's Tea Room** (with Joan Davis), **Silver Theatre, Stoopnagle and Budd, Time to Smile, Town Hall Tonight** (with Fred Allen following Wallington), **Your All-Time Hit Parade**. He was the umpire in **Quizzer Baseball**, co-stared with Billie Burke in **Chicken Every Sunday** and co-stared in **The Fabulous Dr. Tweedy**, a 1946 summer replacement. Harry moved on to TV as the announcer for **The Burns and Allen Show** 1951 thru 1958. Bill Goodwin again preceded him for the first season, 1950-51.

As you follow these three you'll note that each was touched by the other in some way showing how close the radio fraternity was. Once again most of the material was gleaned from Ray Poindexter's *Golden Throats & Silver Tongues*, a super book.

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

McGee's Closet cont.

and ARCHIE ANDREWS. Please send a list first. I have some of the above. I will provide cassette tapes and postage. Contact Beth Holman, 16705 Craigmere Drive, Middleburg, OH 44130.

FOR SALE: My collection. Over 960 CBS, ABC, NBC, MBS Hollywood Radio Broadcast tickets from 1937-1949, most mid-40s. Over 215 different studio audience shows. Ninety-three pages of memories from the Golden Age. Excellent B & W Xerox copies. If you worked in early radio, or enjoy it, don't miss this! \$25.00 check or M.O. Contact: George G. Entz, 5454 W. 6th Place, Lubbock, TX 79416.

WANTED: THE COLUMBIA WORKSHOP broadcast of "Do Not Open for 5,000 Years", broadcast February 6, 1939. At one time this show was available from Radio Yesterday. It no longer is. Did anyone get a copy of that show when it was available? I need it for research. Contact: Patrick King, Rt. 6, Box 477, Waco, TX 76706.

FOR SALE: AKAI GX77 reel to reel, 7 inch, 2-speed, 4-track stereo, excellent condition, \$300.00.

WANTED: BBC's production of the Francis Durbridge PAUL TEMPLE series, starring Peter Cook and Marjorie Westbury. What have you - trade or what? Contact: William E. King, 425 Crafton Avenue, Pitman, NJ 08071, (609) 582-8485, no collect calls.

WANTED: CHARLIE McCARTHY radio shows and items, traded or bought. Contact: Bob Carroll, 249 Chicopee Street, Chicopee, MA 01013.

FOR SALE: Approximately 500 acetates and ETs. Contact: Terence Goggin, 1777 N. Vine Street, #409, Los Angeles, CA 90028, (213) 286-9825.

FOR SALE: The last set of Fibber McGee's Closet: The Ultimate Log of Performances by Fibber McGee and Molly, 1200 pages, two volumes, \$99.00 Contact: Tom Price, P.O. Box 1661, Salinas, CA 93902, (408) 753-2558.

WANTED: I will transfer to tape any 16" transcriptions, also looking for any and all radio premiums or radio-related collectables. Send lists. Contact: Wally Stall, Box 22141, Oklahoma City, OK 73123, (405)721-6408.



16th Annual Friends of Old Time Radio Convention

GUNSMOKE

Oct. 24-26, 1991 Holiday Inn North · Newark, NJ

Guests

Special Convention Guests who have given definite or tentative acceptance of our invitations:

West Coast Guests

John Archer - FBI in Peace and War
Parley Baer - Gunsmoke
Harry Bartell - Gunsmoke, Charlotte Greenwood
Lillian Buyeff - Gunsmoke, Suspense
Sam Edwards - Meet Corliss Archer, Gunsmoke
Herb Ellis - Gunsmoke
Ray Erlenborn - (sound effects artist)
Ray Kemper - (Sound effects) Gunsmoke, Straight Arrow
Tyler McVey - Gene Autry, One Man's Family
Shirley Mitchell - The Great Gildersleeve
George Petrie - The Falcon, Charlie Wild
Willard Waterman - The Great Gildersleeve

New East Coast Guests

Bob Bell - (Prod./Dir) Decision Now (Am. Legion)
Vivian Block - Let's Pretend, Wilderness Road
Eddie Bracken - Aldrich Family; Eddie Bracken Show
Oscar Brand - Folk music artist; 50 years on radio

Returnees

Arthur Anderson - Let's Pretend
George Ansbro - (Announcer) Ethel and Albert
Barney Beck - (Sound effects artist) Nick Carter, The Shadow
Jackson Beck - (Announcer) Superman
Lon Clark - Nick Carter
Bob Dryden - Superman, Big Town
Louise Erickson - Great Gildersleeve, A Date with Judy
Lucille Fletcher - (Writer) Sorry, Wrong Number

Earl George - Captain Midnight, Ma Perkins
Raymond Edward Johnson - Inner Sanctum
Peg Lynch - Ethel and Albert
Gil Mack - Chick Carter, The Thin Man
Ted Mallie - (Announcer) Many Mutual shows
Charlotte Manson - Nick Carter
Stella Reynolds - (writer) John's Other Wife, Aunt Jenny
Adele Ronson - Buck Rogers, John's Other Wife
Terry Ross - Sound effects artist
Sidney Slon - (Producer, director, writer)
Ezra Stone - The Aldrich Family
Arthur Tracy - The Street Singer
Florence Williams - Front Page Farrell
Betty Wragge - Pepper Young's Family

Events

The following events are tentatively scheduled. Some may be added or dropped depending on additional guests or other changes. Time will be announced at the convention.

Thursday

Dealers Rooms: 3 pm - 7 pm; 9 pm - 11 pm
Cocktails and dinner: 5:30 - 8:30
Visit with your friends and the special guests
Meet Barbara Grossman, author of "Fanny Woman," the Story of Fanny Brice (3:30 pm - 7 pm)
"The Bickersons" with **Sam Edwards** and **Shirley Mitchell**
Big Band Party with Jim Albert

Friday (Daytime)

Dealers Rooms: 9 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Presenting Raymond Edward Johnson
Community groups and re-creations (Gary Yoggy)
An informal radio quiz (David Zwengler)
Gunsmoke Panel (Gabe Barabas and an all-star cast)

The Dave Warren Players presents "A Christmas Carol"
Raymond is "The Highwayman"
Oscar Brand talks about folklore and radio and much else
Jack French talks about Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose

Friday Night

Cocktails and dinner: 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Meet the guests
Re-creation (**FBI in Peace and War**; with John Archer,
Jackson Beck, George Petrie); also meet the cast
Re-creation (**Ethel and Albert**; with Peg Lynch and Bob
Dryden); also meet the cast
More big band party with Jim Albert

Saturday (Daytime)

Dealers Rooms: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Re-creation (**The Great Gildersleeve**; with Willard Waterman,
Shirley Mitchell and Louise Erickson)
BBC panel with Barry Hill and Brad Ashton
"The Teenager in Situation Comedies" with an all-star panel
The Dave Warren Players presents "Buck Rogers" with **Adele
Ronson**
A visit with **Arthur Tracy**
Meet the Authors (**Joan Benny**, others)

Saturday Night

Cocktails and dinner: 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.
A tribute to Radio (Vignettes and parodies)
The Dave Warren Players present **Allen's Alley**
Re-creation (**Gunsmoke**; with an all-star cast)
Awards, raffle

Getting There

By Air: **Continental Airline is the official air
line** for our convention. See details on **attached no-
tice**.

Free shuttle bus from airport. From LaGuardia or
Kennedy, take limousine service or helicopter to Newark
airport; then free shuttle

By Bus: Bus service from Manhattan's Port Authority to Newark
Airport; then take shuttle bus.

By Car: From NJ Turnpike, take Exit 14; take second right
marked **SERVICE ROAD** after toll booth. **DO
NOT TAKE FIRST RIGHT** which is Rt 1 & 9.
Take second right directly under bridge marked service
road. You must take one of the right - hand tolls and
stay on the right.

From Garden State Parkway south of airport, take Exit
140 to Route 22E to Routes 1 & 9 North, local.
Follow the blue sign marked **SERVICE ROAD**.
Follow to hotel.

From Newark Airport, exit airport and follow route 1 &
9 North to **SERVICE ROAD**.

By Train: Check your local train schedule; there's a station in
Newark

Cost

Reserve your spot as soon as possible. Prepaid tickets are held at
the door

Thursday, October 24th: \$27.00. Choice of
London broil, chicken cordon bleu, stuffed fillet of sole.
Please indicate choice when you make your reser-
vation.

Friday, October 25th: Daytime only (9 am - 5:30
pm) **\$10.00** if paid in advance; **\$15.00** at the door.

Friday, October 25th: Daytime and evening includ-
ing buffet dinner (9 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.) **\$37.00**.
Discount of \$4.00 for those over 62 and under 16.

Saturday, October 26th: Daytime only (9 a.m. -
5:00 p.m.) **\$10.00** if paid in advance; **\$15.00** at the
door.

Saturday, October 26th: Daytime and evening in-
cluding buffet dinner (9 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.) **\$43.00**.
Discount of \$4.00 for those over 62 and under 16.

Complimentary coffee Thursday, Friday and Saturday; compli-
mentary Danish on Friday and Saturday mornings; compli-
mentary hors d'oeuvres Friday and Saturday evenings.

Dealer's Tables are **\$35.00** each plus appropriate reg-
istration fees. See enclosed sheet.

Hotel: **\$60.00** for a single, **\$65.00** for a double. Reserve
rooms with me when you send in convention registra-
tion. **Pay for rooms upon arrival.** Rooms should
be reserved by October 5th. Give me details such as
names, nights, etc.

Ads: Ads may be placed in our program book. **See at-
tached notice.** This will be a special, enlarged, 16th -
anniversary book

Registration

Advance dinner reservations **must** be made. Reservations are
limited (Friday 300; Saturday 400). Make checks out to
FOTR or Jay Hickerson

**Mail to Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden,
CT 06514. (203) 248-2887**

SPERDVAC

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

P. O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9712 (213) 947-9800

Invites you to our

\$90

Complete Weekend

*Partial convention rates
detailed on registration form*



Convention

November 8, 9 and 10, 1991

Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles

Near the corner of Century and Airport Boulevards

**Friday and Saturday evening
banquets featuring old-time
radio program recreations**

Guests from Early Radio

Panel Discussions

Workshops

Nick Carter, Master Detective

starring Lon Clark

Archie Andrews Show

starring Bob Hastings

Spike Jones' City Slickers

with Eddie Brandt, Joe Siracusa & Earl Bennett

See reverse side for additional details.

Join us for the...

SPERDVAC 1991 OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION

SPERDVAC's 1991 Old Time Radio Convention is set for November 8, 9 and 10. The new convention site is the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Our convention will feature radio show recreations starring many of the professionals who helped make the medium's early days possible. Actor Lon Clark will reprise **Nick Carter, Master Detective** and Bob Hastings will be featured in a production of **Archie Andrews**.

SPERDVAC is hosting workshops and panel discussions related to old time radio during the day on Saturday, Nov. 9. Radio musician Bernard Katz plans to be on hand to demonstrate his work on network radio shows and his KHJ program **Katz on the Keys**. Saturday's events will include a panel of three of Spike Jones' *City Slickers*. Friday and Saturday nights we will present banquets and program recreations. There will be a brunch and program Sunday morning to conclude our convention.

Registration begins at 5:30 pm Friday. The no host bar will open at 6:30 and the dinner and program begin at 7:30 pm. The Collectors' Room will be in operation Saturday from 9:00 am until 6:00 pm. Our Saturday workshops and panel discussions run from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. (There is no lunch planned as part of the convention package. However, we have allotted the 11:30 am to 1:00 pm slot for lunch. The hotel is offering an excellent no host buffet luncheon at their *Strings* restaurant if we can guarantee a minimum of fifty for that meal. The cost is \$7.95 and must be paid separately from the convention costs. There is a place to indicate your lunch reservation on the registration form.) The no host bar opens Saturday at 6:30 pm. Our Saturday evening banquet and show begin at 7:30 pm. We plan to conclude the Friday and Saturday night presentations at about 10:30 pm. Sunday's brunch and program will run from 9:30 am until 12 noon.

Admission to the complete convention is \$90; the price increases to \$95 at the door. For the benefit of those unable to attend the entire weekend, we are offering rates for specific events. They are indicated on the registration form. Registration packets will be distributed at the door. Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt.

Dealers' tables will be available, for \$30 each, for those who wish to sell radio-related items. (Unauthorized sales of unlicensed radio broadcasts is prohibited.) Dealers wishing to attend events outside the Collectors' Room must register for those events. To reserve a table in the Collectors' Room, contact Catherine Passarelli at 10615 Butterfield Road, Los Angeles, CA 90064.

The Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza has accommodations available for those who wish to stay overnight. The special SPERDVAC convention rate is \$73.13 per room per night, including 12.5% bed tax. To take advantage of these rates contact the hotel directly and specify you are attending the SPERDVAC convention. The hotel also offers a special \$5.50 per day parking rate for tickets validated by SPERDVAC. Campers, motor homes and trailers may park in the valet parking lot behind the hotel. Shuttle service from Los Angeles International Airport is available free by phoning the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza from the airport. Their number is (213) 642-7500.

SPERDVAC 1991 OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

Name _____ Non-member Member # _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Day phone _____ Night phone _____

Banquet meal seating: smoking non-smoking special diet _____

NOTE: If you wish to be seated with other guests, please send all reservations in together.

CONVENTION RATES:

1. Complete convention package (Friday, Saturday & Sunday) \$90.00 _____

2. Friday dinner and program \$30.00 _____

3. Saturday daytime activities (9 am to 6 pm) _____

4. Saturday evening banquet and program \$35.00 _____

5. Sunday brunch and program \$15.00 _____

Total: _____

Check here if you wish to make a reservation for a buffet luncheon at the Strings Restaurant at the hotel Saturday, 11:30 am to 1 pm. The cost is \$7.95 per person and must be paid separately at the convention.

Check here if you worked in early radio.

Send checks or money orders, payable to SPERDVAC, to: SPERDVAC Convention, c/o Chester Allen, 13415 Egbert St., Sylmar, CA 91342. For additional details or to volunteer convention assistance, call Larry Gassman at (213) 947-9800.

Mercury Theatre's Richard Wilson dies

Continued from page one

Shortly afterward, director Irving Reis invited him to play a small part on a **Columbia Workshop** broadcast. Then he began getting regular parts on **Philip Morris Thrill Spot**, a weekly series directed by Charles Martin. The cast included Ed Jerome, Ted deCorsia, Everett Sloane and Ray Collins. Orson Welles was another of the program's regulars.

One of the show's memorable performers was deCorsia. "He would stand just barely within mike range," he recalled, "but behind you, and read your line better so the director didn't miss it that he should have been playing that part, instead of the lesser part he was always cast in."

Wilson was cast to play the lead on a **Thrill Spot** episode and it was the beginning of a long association with Orson Welles. "That was the first time Orson ever spoke to me," he said. "He came up to me and said 'That was a very good job.'" The following week, at Richard Wilson's invitation, they had lunch together. Welles invited him to watch rehearsals of "The Cradle Will Rock."

When Welles established the *Mercury Theatre*, Wilson was offered the opportunity to join the stage production company. Wilson played some small parts in the Mercury productions, then "steadily veered toward production from that time on."

His respect for Orson Welles grew as they continued to work together. Reflecting on their serialized radio performances of *Les Miserables*, Mr. Wilson commented, "One has only to listen to this 1937 broadcast to realize what this man really did for radio, what he did for music in radio, what he did for sound in radio...I was really impressed with how good it was."

Paul Stewart, another of the *Mercury Players*, introduced Welles to Homer Fickett when the latter was working on the **March of Time**. Welles joined the cast. "That's how Orson first achieved his renown as a radio actor," Wilson once told SPERDVAC. It was there, too, that Welles met many of the performers he would later invite to join the *Mercury*.

The *Mercury Theatre on the Air* came to CBS in 1938. Many of the *Mercury Players*, including Wilson and Welles, worked on both stage productions and the radio series simultaneously. "I was a production assistant and generally paid out of the radio budget, no matter what I was doing," he explained. At the time of the infamous "War of the Worlds" broadcast they were busily preparing a stage play.

"I was stage managing a play that the Mercury was supposed to open the following week called 'Danton's Death' and I was in a hurry to get out (of the studio)," he recalled. "None of us thought it was really any good."

Wilson said he used to have a transcription made during the show's rehearsal. At one point Welles could be heard whispering to actor John Houseman, "Jack, Jack. We've got to do something about this...This is so ghastly. This is so terrible. Nobody's going to believe a word of this. As soon as this rehearsal is done, let's have a meeting and shape this thing up."

"It was too late to do anything truly drastic (to the script). It just got more fine tuned," Wilson explained.

Wilson credited actor Paul Stewart with the quality of the "War of the Worlds" broadcast. When writer Howard Koch was having difficulty adapting the H. G. Wells tale for radio, Stewart took charge and gave format

Please turn to page 8



At SPERDVAC's convention in 1985, Richard Wilson, left, served as director of our recreation of the ESCAPE production "Country of the Blind." He also performed an acting role in the show. Pictured during the rehearsal are Peggy Webber, Lou Krugman, Vic Perrin and William Woodson.

SPERDVAC's November convention plans set

Continued from page one

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 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 Friday banquet will include Italian vinaigrettes, grilled chicken breasts with mushroom sauce, egg noodles, fresh vegetables, rolls, and cappuccino moose cake. Saturday evening's menu includes a garden salad

with ranch dressing, roast prime rib, baked potato, broccoli and baby carrots, rolls, coupe continental and ice creme. Sunday's brunch features melon in season or choice of juice, scrambled eggs and bacon, country potatoes, blueberry, bran or apple muffin and assorted yogurts. Coffee and tea are available at all three meals.

The Collectors' Room will be open Saturday from 9 am until 6 pm. Dealers who wish to sell radio-related items may rent table space. Additional details are included on the convention flier enclosed with this edition of the *Radiogram*.

Volunteers who can assist for an hour or two during the convention are invited to contact convention chair Larry Gassman. To volunteer assistance or obtain up-to-date details of the convention plans, phone SPERDVAC during business hours at (213) 947-9800.

Mercury Theatre's Richard Wilson dies

Continued from page 7

instructions to the writer. It was Stewart's idea to employ the format of interrupting a music program with news bulletins, he said.

"He helped in every aspect of the production," Wilson continued. "He was responsible for the many wonderful sound effects."

"The intention of the program was to scare the crap out of everybody," Wilson observed. "His (Welles') disappointment was that he didn't think it was scary enough."

Wilson gave SPERDVAC an account of the unusual incidents which took place during the broadcast. He explained that he left the studio during the program's middle break and went into the lobby. "There was still a receptionist on duty," he said. "She was the only one there and she had both phones (at her ears) saying over and over 'I'm sorry, it's only a radio broadcast.'"

Some listeners phoned complaints to the New York City Police. "Two policemen stepped out, in uniform," he recounted. "They looked around quizzically because it (the lobby) was absolutely vacant except for the receptionist and me...They were sort of puzzled that nothing remotely like this panic they'd received word of was happening.

"So they started to wander down the lobby toward me and I causally directed them toward the studio...They walked up the three or four steps and looked through the glass door to see what was happening inside the

studio...They saw all this acting going on and the orchestra playing. They stood there for two or three minutes, surveying this scene. They went in the door during a musical bridge and worked themselves quietly around the room...and ended up in the control room where Paul (Stewart) was. They just folded their arms and watched the program with great interest," he continued.

CBS executives, Wilson explained, immediately called Welles in for a conference. "And Orson was asked to say that he had no intention of doing anything like that to frighten people. It has often been said that his greatest acting job was talking to the newsreels after 'War of the Worlds' in which this humble man apologized and didn't know what it was all about," he added.

"The reason I don't have a script today is because somebody was sent to collect all the scripts and see that none of them got out to anybody," he revealed.

Wilson's stage credits with the Mercury Theatre include "Shoemaker's Holiday," "Too Much Johnson" and "Five Kings." He was an actor with John Houseman in "Native Son" and stage manager for the production of "Around the World in 80 Days."

In motion pictures, he was assistant producer of "Citizen Kane" and directed the Paramount films "Al Capone," "Three in the Attic" and "Man With a Gun." His favorite, he once said, was "Pay or Die." His film acting credits include "The Other Side of the Wind" and "F for Fake," both directed by Orson Welles.

SPERDVAC DIRECTORY

All articles and artwork © 1991 by SPERDVAC, unless otherwise indicated. Published monthly by the **Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy**, a California non-profit public benefit corporation. Membership is open to all U.S. residents. Dues are \$25 for the first year and \$15 for renewals. Annual subscriptions to the *Radiogram* ONLY are \$15 in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, and \$20 to other countries.

SPERDVAC INFORMATION AND OFFICIAL BUSINESS: Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9712 - (213) 947-9800

MEMBERSHIP AND RADIOGRAM SUBSCRIPTIONS: Carolyn Rawski, 7430 Gaviota Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406

RADIOGRAM EDITOR: Dan Haefele, 4366-D, 136th St., Hawthorne, CA 90250, (213)973-5060

LIBRARIES:

GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1-500: Bob Steinmetz, PO Box 669, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 501-1000: Gene Ward, Box 635, Tujunga, CA 91043-0635

GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1001+: Oran Marksbury, 2273 Colgate Dr., Costa Mesa, CA 92626

GENERAL LIBRARY - Open Reels, No. 1 thru 500: Don Keith, Box 5861, Glendale, CA 91221

GENERAL LIBRARY - Open Reels, No. 501 and up: Richard Glasband, 7700 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 1-500: TEMPORARILY CLOSED

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 501-1000: Gary Mollica, 135 N. Meredith Ave., Pasadena, CA 91106

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 1001+: Bruce Miller, 1616 Harper Ave., Redondo Beach, CA 90278

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Reels: 1-1000: Temporarily closed

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Reels: 1001+: Barbara Watkins, Box 628, S. Pasadena, CA 91031

HOLLYWOOD MUSEUM LIBRARY - Cassettes: Glenda Kelly, 2323 Ralston, Redondo Beach, CA 90278

PRINTED MATERIALS LIBRARY - Jon Hughes, 7119 Owensmouth Ave., Canoga Park, CA 91303

AUDIO RADIOGRAMS: Send C-90 cassette in returnable mailer to Stuart Lubin, 627 N. Fuller Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90036, (213)653-2548 (for Blind Members only)

AUDIO SPERDVAC CATALOGS: Contact Bob Herman, 601 Sutton Ln. #5, Port Orchard, WA 98366 (206)876-5850 (for Blind Members only)

MEMBERSHIP BADGES: Send \$5.00 each to Don Keith, Box 5861, Glendale, CA 91221

ACQUISITIONS: (Discs, Tapes and printed materials): John Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603, (213)947-9800 for both the General and Archives Libraries.

CATALOG PAGE & LIBRARY ORDER FORMS: Carolyn Rawski, 7430 Gaviota Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406

Sept. 14 SPERDVAC Meeting Features Ex-Radio Engineer

Former radio engineer Wendell Seward will be SPERDVAC's guest at our September 14 meeting.

Mr. Seward began his radio work at station KJBS, San Francisco in 1936. Later, we went to RCA Communications, where he engineered short wave transmissions of programs carried on NBC. These included **Hawaii Calls** and **Voice of Hawaii**. He also sent NBC programs to Hawaii.

In 1944 he went to work for San Francisco's KPO radio. He remained there until 1951, then moved to television work in Los Angeles.

The SPERDVAC meeting will be at the Buena Park Public Library, 7150 La Palma Ave. in Buena Park. (Follow the freeway signs to Knott's Berry Farm.) The meeting begins at 12 noon and is open free to the general public.

Remembering Stu Wilson

by Dr. Stan Reyburn

"Are you ready, Los Angeles? --- "Yes!" "Are you ready, San Francisco?" --- "Yes!" "Let's begin The Quiz of Two Cities."

Stu Wilson recently passed on at the age of 87. Up to a few years ago, he could still be heard on the Air on Los Angeles station KBIG. He was a gentle and considerate man - perfect for getting the best out of the contestants who vied for the honor of keeping Los Angeles at the top in the heap in the radio quiz program's contest between the two California cities. The magic and panache of Stu Wilson kept the program alive and fresh. Wilson graced other old time radio programs, including the morning show **Rise and Shine**, but his true forte was **Quiz of Two Cities**.

Each week from the Melrose studios of Mutual-Don Lee's KHJ (now the enclave for KCAL-TV, Disney's Los Angeles independent television outlet), emcee Stu Wilson would prevail. The show was a light-hearted fun poking by Stu's San Francisco counterpart, manifesting their rivalry by seeing if the contestants representing their municipality would prevail over the other.

The show provided a unique form of entertainment far lacking in our modern world of digital recordings and the one dimensional offerings of television. Being part of a live radio audience with the warm-ups and watching the inner workings of the technical aspects of radio programming was fascinating.

Members of the studio audience of 1940's radio quiz shows were often the happy recipients of the sponsor's product. In the case of the **Quiz of Two Cities**, it was Listerine. This writer had enough Listerine Toothpaste to create a center line on the road between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The Launching of David Sarnoff

by Oliver Berliner

The name David Sarnoff was so intertwined with the emergence of commercial network and local radio that historians are hard-pressed to mention one without the other. Yet few people know the quirk of fate and curious sequence of events that catapulted this poor immigrant from obscurity to the presidency of one of America's foremost manufacturers. Biographies conveniently omit the single factor that made David Sarnoff the epitome of the "self-made man." Let's explore it.

By the time he was a teenager, young Davie had determined where his future lay. He was hooked on a fledgling phenomenon known as radio. He landed himself a job with the American Marconi Company, which had established transmitting and monitoring facilities on Long Island and in Brooklyn to facilitate wireless communication between Europe and the United States. Curiously, Marconi also had a listening station on the roof of Wanamaker's Department Store in Manhattan which was in operation only during the hours the store was open.

One of Davie's duties was to serve as a messenger for his employer, which permitted him to visit not only Marconi's various installations but also to make contact with others with whom Marconi was doing business. Perhaps because of his Russian origin or out of the general aura of anti-Semitism that pervaded the "industry," David was often referred to by both co-workers and his other contacts as "Jew-boy," although he was apparently well liked.

So "gung-ho radio" was the youthful Davie that he would visit the Marconi facilities after hours, just to be near that which he'd come to love. And thus he found himself late one night in 1912 at age 21, turning the receiver at the Brooklyn facility, hoping to pick up a transmission...any transmission. Suddenly, there it was. The unimaginable was unfolding before his young ears. He had turned in to the distress signals from the unsinkable Titanic! Alone in the radio shack, he was to be the only person on land who would ever hear them.

RMS Titanic went under at about 2 a.m. What was he to do? Others might breathlessly have placed a frantic telephone call to the *New York Times* in hopes some sleepy reporter on duty there might believe this story of the unthinkable. But he didn't.

David Sarnoff's news of the Titanic disaster led to an insider stock sale. In return, he became RCA's general manager a half-dozen years later.

When the Manhattan office of the White Star Line opened that morning, David Sarnoff was at the door. He informed the incredulous officers of the steamship company that their flagship - their only ship - had sunk. So convincing was he that they believed him . . . and carried their belief further: They sold their White Star stock right then and there. Then they released the bad tidings. (And on this occasion they chose not to "shoot the messenger bearing bad news.")

Now the whole world knew of the disaster. The insiders had bailed out. The other stockholders took a bath as the share price plummeted. And a few powerful men were suddenly indebted to the "Jew-boy."

Young Sarnoff then hastened to Wanamaker's where he purportedly remained for three sleepless days and nights, taking down the names of the surviving passengers as they came over the wireless from the nearby ship, Carpathia, which had plucked as many as she could from an otherwise placid sea that boasted one iceberg too many.

David was keeping the Titanic disaster spotlight to himself. He'd become a star. . . and radio was the only other thing he'd allow into the limelight.

Little is known of Sarnoff's exploits between the Titanic disaster and that subsequent catastrophe, World War I. But during this conflict it became evident to the U. S. government that wireless communication among military units, naval units, Washington and our future allies in any subsequent war would be of strategic importance.

And so it was that in 1918 the two electric products giants, General Electric and Westinghouse Electric, were asked by Washington to join together to create a company that would design and build transmitters and receivers for military and commercial communication purposes. Thus came the Radio Corporation of America in which a small shareholder, United Fruit Co., was anxious to obtain radio equipment for communications with its plantations in Latin America.

A half-dozen years after the Titanic incident, Sarnoff contacted various White Star

officers, those insiders who'd profited by the information he provided. He reminded them that they "owed him." The result was that these captains of industry persuaded their counterparts at GE to make David Sarnoff the general manager of the new RCA.

The sinking of the Titanic signalled the launching of David Sarnoff's career. A decade later the government forced apart the two behemoths that it had put together. They specified that competitors could not jointly own another company. Financier J. P. Morgan assisted in the spin-off of the private owners' interests in RCA to the stock-buying public. (RCA became one of the notoriously speculative stocks during the 1929 run-up and crash.) David Sarnoff was elevated to the chairmanship of the RCA Board of Directors.

Postscript: RCA formed NBC in 1926. Electrical recording of disc records had been introduced the previous year by Western Electric, an AT&T subsidiary and itself a maker of broadcast equipment. Immediately after "going public" RCA realized it was now shorn of its manufacturing and distributing facilities. Another Wall Streeter, Seligman & Co., had bought from the retired (1927) Eldridge Johnson the largest block of Victor Records shares. Seligman persuaded the few other Victor shareholders, including my father, Edgar, president of Victor Talking Machine Co. of Canada (which itself had been founded by his father, Emile Berliner, inventor of the microphone and the disc record) to sell their Victor shares to RCA, resulting in the newly emerged RCA Victor.

In this fashion RCA acquired manufacturing facilities and know-how plus the distribution system it needed, to say nothing of the world's most famous trademark, "His Master's Voice." Curiously, in 1986 the General Electric Co. bought back 100% ownership of RCA; sold off the record label as well as the consumer products lines. I wonder what David Sarnoff, long ago deceased, would have thought about this latest turn of events.

NEW FROM THE FREE PRESS

“Melvin Patrick Ely has undertaken to tell nothing less than the entire story of this astonishingly popular and yet problematic show, and to establish its place in the history of racial understanding—and misunderstanding—in America. Ely combines serious scholarship with a keen eye for irony and illuminating detail to make *Amos 'n' Andy* a striking book on American race relations in this century as seen from the radically transforming perspective of radio and television.”

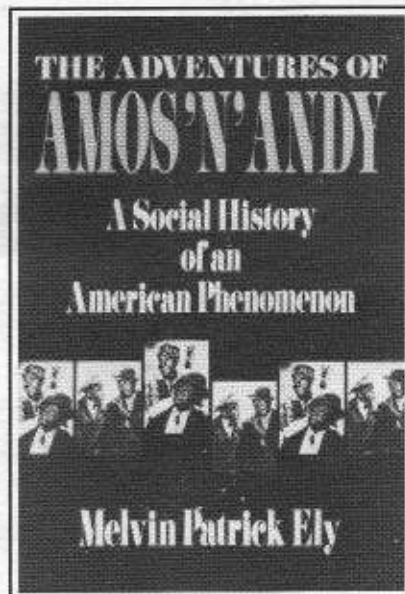
—Arnold Rampersad, author of *The Life of Langston Hughes*

THE ADVENTURES OF AMOS 'N' ANDY

A Social History of an American Phenomenon

Melvin Patrick Ely

In 1930, 40 million Americans indulged in a nightly obsession: they leagerly tuned in to *Amos 'n' Andy*, a radio serial created and acted by two white men about the adventures of two southern blacks making a new life in a northern city. The humor and drama of *Amos 'n' Andy* made it the most popular radio show of all time, but audience responses, reflecting America's changing racial landscape, evolved over time, especially in the wake of a rising tide of black consciousness. Recalling the antics, humor, and universal appeal of *Amos 'n' Andy* scripts and their impact on questions of race, Ely narrates a fascinating American tale of the shifting and ambiguous color line in 20th century America.



1991 ISBN: 0-02-909502-6 \$22.95

“A rare study of popular culture that is also valid as serious history.”

—*The Washington Post Book World*

“The book does not pretend to address all the social repercussions of humorous depictions of African-Americans in the mass media, but it does provide an informative, well-researched analysis of the history of an important episode in that depiction.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“A stunning achievement in social and cultural history. The research is awe-inspiring and the writing flows beautifully. Ely opens wide a window on many facets of American culture and racial perceptions during the first half of the twentieth century.”

—James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*

“The problem of the twentieth century, Du Bois averred, would be the problem of the 'color line.' But what happens when the color line serves double-duty as a punch line? Melvin Patrick Ely offers an engrossing, perhaps definitive, account of one of the most fascinating episodes in popular entertainment this century. There was never anything black-and-white about the achievements—and failings—of *Amos 'n' Andy*, and Ely's work helps us make sense of its ambiguous legacy.”

—Henry Louis Gates, Jr., author of *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*

“Melvin Patrick Ely's *Amos 'n' Andy* brings new and refreshing subtlety and complexity to our understanding of American racial attitudes, black as well as white, during the first half of the century.”

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

For Visa, MasterCard, or American Express orders, call toll-free 1-800-323-7445 Monday through Friday between 9am-5:30pm Eastern time.

FP
THE FREE PRESS

A Division of Macmillan, Inc./
A Maxwell Macmillan Company
866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022

ORDER FORM

Please send me _____ copy(ies) of *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy* (0-02-909502-6).

Enclosed is my check/money order for \$22.95 (plus \$2.00 shipping and your local sales tax) per book. Complete form and mail to:

THE FREE PRESS, Attn: Dino Battista, 866 Third Ave., NY, NY 10022

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

per 932/ psl 932 roy 9 cancel 0

SPERDVAC



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

SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM

c/o Dan Haefele
4366-D 136th Street
Hawthorne, CA 90250

U.S. Postage
PAID
First Class
Hawthorne, CA
Permit #98

FIRST CLASS MAIL



DEADLINE

Copy for Oct. issue
September 20, 1991
It's OK to submit copy early!

Radio in Review



BERLIN CALLING by John Carver Edwards. Praeger Press, 1990. \$21.95.

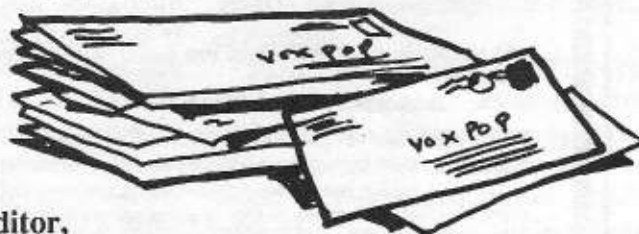
She was a Southern belle, the daughter of Atlanta socialite Ellen Luckie Anderson and husband Robert - and the unlikeliest of Nazi propagandists. However, Jane Anderson assumed the nickname "The Georgia Peach" for her World War II broadcasts on Joseph Goebbels' USA Zone radio network. Her Third Reich exploits, along with those of four other broadcasters and three journalists, are recounted in John Carver Edwards' **Berlin Calling**.

The book, scholarly in tone, relies upon extensive research, trial transcripts, FBI case files and letters written by the principals. Edwards avoids the tedium of many scholarly works by presenting the findings in short biographies.

He provides insight into his subjects' collective heart of darkness - appropriately, Ms. Anderson's relationship with author Joseph Conrad may have been romantic. OTR fans interested in Nazism and World War II propaganda will find **Berlin Calling** a valuable addition to their libraries. Edwards, archivist at the University of Georgia, helps to put a specialized aspect of the hobby in context.

- Steve Weeks

VOX POP



Editor,

I find the SPERDVAC *Radiogram* very newsy and refreshing reading about "ye old radio days." I especially noted in "Radio Days of Howard Caine" that he speaks of *organists' abilities* and how he was greatly impressed with the soap opera organists who he viewed as *another actor* in the show. To me, it was a great compliment.

I always considered the many actors and actresses as *my family* on the shows I played. We cared about one another and you can be sure I supported them when the air time cue was given.

With only the theme music in advance, the director knew he could count on the organist to play the correct bridges on very short notice. We loved our work!

Rosa Rio
Huntington, CT

Editor's note: Acclaimed theatre pipe organist Rosa Rio has been inked for an 8 pm performance at the Shelton High School auditorium in Huntington, CT on Oct. 19. Tickets are \$10 at the door or \$8 in advance by writing to the Rosa Rio Studio, 130 Mill Street, Huntington, CT 06484.