

SPERDVAC

RADIOGRAM

Vol. XVIII, No. 7 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy July 1992



In 1933, NBC inaugurated its new Radio City studios in New York with 15 guest artists at the microphone, including, clockwise, Paul Whiteman, Gladys Swarthout, Jessica Dragonette, The Revelers Quartet, Rosa Ponselle, Maria Jeritz and John McCormack. In the center is NBC president Merlin H. Aylesworth. See story on radio specials beginning on page 7.

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General Library catalog page 175-176 enclosed.

MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

SPERDVAC's tape machines have been going at full speed (and, we hope, not off speed). The results: Barbara Watkins' typing fingers produced the enclosed General Library catalog pages 175-176. Send Editor Dan a SASE if yours is missing.

SPERDVAC has learned that Jay Lacey has died. In the seventies Jay aired OTR shows on KPFFK-FM and KCRW-FM. He also helped us by promoting SPERDVAC on the air during our

early days.

Last month we neglected to credit Randy Skretvedt for supplying the cover photo of the *Date With Judy* cast. Many thanks, Randy.

We are very grateful to the many kind individuals who have donated funds to our organization. SPERDVAC would like to acknowledge a recent donation from friends and students of the late Art Hannes. When Mr. Hannes, a well-respected radio and TV announcer, passed away recently his family suggested donations be made to SPERDVAC in lieu of sending flowers.

Added job responsibilities

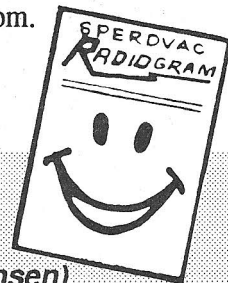
have forced Richard Glasband to step down from his position as a tape librarian. This means the open reel tapes numbered above 500 in the General Library will not be available until we have a volunteer member able to serve in that capacity. We would like to have *two* volunteers so that we can split that library in two parts, thus reducing the work load for our volunteers. Please, someone help us! We hate to have any of our tape libraries closed down.

NPR station KCRW-FM, Santa Monica, has moved Bobb Lynes' *Old-Time Radio Show* to the 7-9 p.m.

Sunday slot, reducing his program by one hour. Boo!

Member Jerry Williams, who visits us from time to time from his home in Oroville, stopped by SPERDVAC's storage facility again a couple of weeks ago. Jerry wasn't content to just look around, so he installed more lights for us. What a guy!

We hope you will enjoy the feature article on radio specials prepared by author Tom DeLong. Tom also provided most of the pictures which are included. Thanks again, Tom.



SPERDVAC FRIENDS

Art Hern

(In memory of Ed Prentiss)

William Froug

(In memory of Mort Fine)

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(In memory of Earl Robinson)

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(In memory of Sara Seegar Stone)

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(In memory of Dick Joy)

Herb Ellis

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Lillian Buyeff

(In memory of Elliott Lewis & Jack Johnstone)

Bea Wain

(In memory of Andre Baruch)

Elliott Reid

(In memory of Howard Duff & John McIntire)

Veola Vonn

(In memory of Hanley Stafford & Frank Nelson)

Jerry Burling

(In memory of Bob Jensen)

Audrey Marsh

(In memory of Meri Bell Sharbutt & Andre Baruch)

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(In memory of Verna Felton, Bea Benaderet and Frank Nelson)

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(In memory of John McIntire, Elvia Allman, Howard Duff, Elliott Lewis & James McCallion)

Kay St. Germain

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Hy Averbach

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Jack Younger

William Conrad

David Richardson

Lucille Meredith

Walter Bunker

Glenhall Taylor

Bob Newhart

Jack Brown

John Larch

Mary Jane Croft Lewis

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SPERDVAC is very grateful to these individuals who have contributed \$50 or more to our organization during the past twelve months.



by Barbara J. Watkins

Thanks to member Steve Weeks of Rome, Georgia who sent several items of information. One is a quote from the May 12th edition of the Atlanta *Constitution*, "Now's the time for OTR buffs interested in a National Comedy Hall of Fame to put their money and memorabilia where their mouths are. Organizers need both if the facility in Peoria, Ill. — home of OTR's Fibber McGee and Molly, as well as Richard Pryor and the late Sam Kinison — is to become a reality. Civic leaders say the facility, proposed six years ago, is a natural for the city whose critical vaudeville audiences made 'Will it play in Peoria?' part of the language." (No address or phone number was included in the article.)

Steve also cites an article in the Spring 1992 issue of *Journal of American Culture* by Gary Edgerton who examines "The Murrow Legend as Metaphor: the Creation, Appropriation, and Usefulness of Edward R. Murrow's Life Story." Edgerton, chairperson of the Communications Department at Goucher College in Towson, Maryland, includes seven full-page, black-and-white photographs in his scholarly article which runs from pages 75 to 91. There is also a photo of Murrow at work on the cover.

CALLING ALL CLUBS

Hello Again is in its 23rd year, published by Jay Hickerson six times a year. Subscriptions are \$12 per year. It contains lots of useful information for the old time radio fan, with reviews of other publications in the hobby, names and addresses of collectors who have radio-related items or are looking for them, or want to trade with others.

Also included is the latest update on the annual Friends of Old Time Radio Convention, to be held this year from Oct. 22 thru 24 at the Holiday Inn North, at the Newark International Airport in New Jersey. Each issue also lists show business personalities who have died within the past months, with their age, date of death, and some of their credits in radio. Jay has now compiled a list of all the radio personalities who have died between 1970 and 1990, of whom he is aware, listed alphabetically with date of death and age. The 17 pages are \$3.00. For this

or a subscription to *Hello Again*, write to Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514, (203) 248-2887, FAX (203) 281-1322.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Arthur Peterson who portrayed Reverend Ruthledge on the early days of *Guiding Light* on radio, appeared on the Primetime Special on CBS, Friday, June 12 celebrating the 40th anniversary of the television show. It came to television in 1952, and broadcast on both media until 1956 when the radio show went off the air. It began on radio on Jan. 25, 1937 and became the longest-running show of any kind in theatrical history. Peterson's character Dr. Ruthledge was the "guiding light" in the community from 1937 to 1946. On the television special, he recalled the words he spoke some fifty years ago:

"There is a destiny that makes us brothers
None goes his way alone.
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own."

Guiding Light has changed a great deal in the past 55 years, but it was nice to see that they did not forget the radio show where it all began, and the principal actor from those days.

Send your information, questions and comments for this column to Information Please, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031. 'Til next time, spaceman's luck!

Convention registrations accepted

SPERDVAC is now accepting registrations for our upcoming old time radio convention. The convention begins on the evening of Friday, Nov. 20 and concludes about noon Sunday, Nov. 22.

We are continuing preparations for a salute to Jack Webb and *Dragnet*. Sound effects artist Wayne Kenworthy will join us from Idaho and actress Joyce McCluskey plans to participate. Veteran performers Peggy Webber, Harry Bartell and Herb Ellis will also be involved.

SPERDVAC is still searching for leads to others connected with Webb's radio shows. We would like to know the whereabouts of musician Walter Schumann, writer James Moser and Jack Robinson, another writer.

Our current plans include a panel presentation on Webb's radio work and a recreation of *Dragnet*.

Peg Lynch and Parley Baer will star in a recreation of the comedy series *Ethel and Albert*. Other radio-related convention activities are still in the planning stages.

SPERDVAC's convention will be at the Crowne Plaza Holiday Inn, 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles. It is located near Los Angeles International Airport and free shuttle transportation to and from the airport is available.

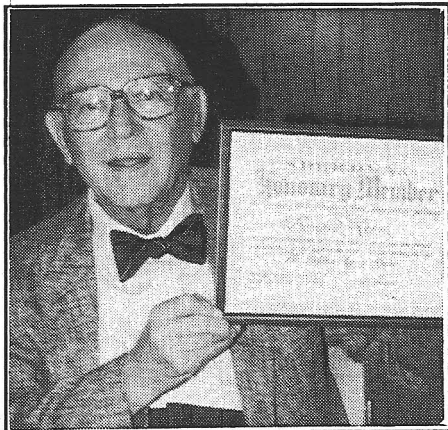
In memory of Bernard Katz

SPERDVAC's association with Bernard Katz was fun...and much too short.

Bernie was a delight to be around. He entertained us with funny stories and a few of us—too few, in fact—were treated to an impromptu concert at our 1990 convention when he sat down

at the bar's piano. Those around were pleased with the tunes his talented fingers produced.

He wasn't showing off. "Do you think it's all right?" he asked someone before he began playing. It was, we assured him.



Katz at SPERDVAC in 1989.

Bernie, born Joseph Bernard Katz in 1910, was 15 when he began entertaining radio audiences with his musical abilities. He grew up performing for audiences in his native San Francisco. There he later became a pianist for the NBC Orchestra.

Later he and his cousin, Mel Blanc, made their way to Hollywood, determined to break into big-time show business. It wasn't long before Katz was supplying music for some of radio's most celebrated shows, including *Mayor of the Town* with Lionel Barrymore and *This is My Best* with Orson Welles.

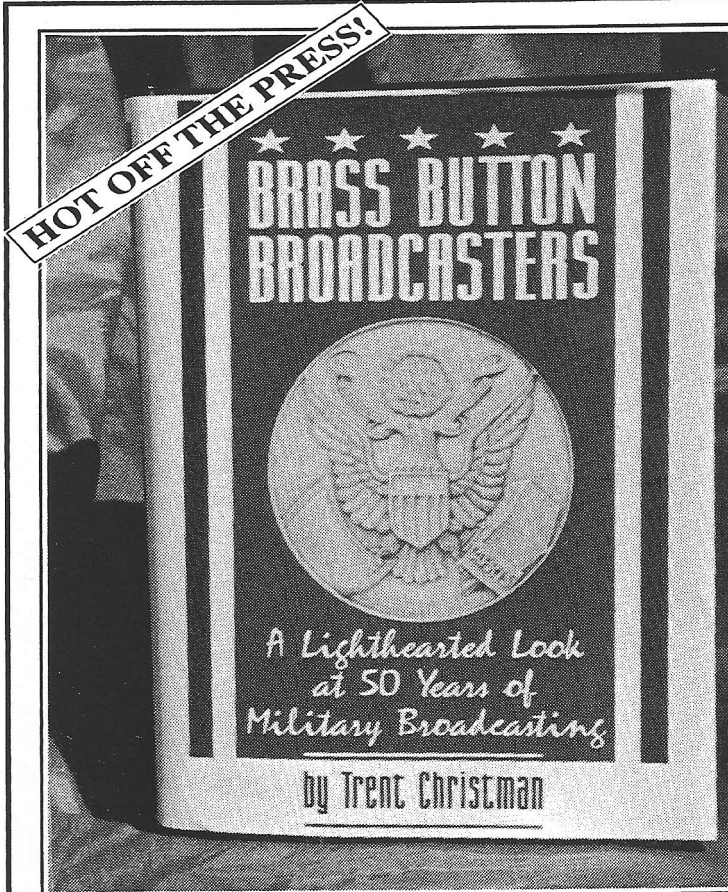
When radio began its bow to the infant television industry, Bernie bowed out without fanfare. He, his wife and son headed back to San Francisco in 1950. There he went into an unrelated business, which he remained active in until his death on May 22.

The musician loved playing for people. For years he played piano on weekends at rest homes in his neighborhood. When a major earthquake struck the Bay Area two years ago, Bernie spent the night alone at home without electricity, playing his piano for about three hours.

Bernie was about to make an interesting contribution to SPERDVAC's store of radio history. Later this month he was going to recreate before a video camera the 15 minute *Mutual Katz on the Keys* show he used to do in the late thirties. From his home, playing on his grand piano, Katz wanted to give us a nearly authentic representation of the radio show.

We won't have that pleasure now. But there are still those cherished stories and programs on tape.

RADIOGRAM PAGE FOUR



"Brass Button Broadcasters is about the most amazing broadcast system in existence: The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. And what fun! It's the hilarious account of a 50 year organization with all its quirks, tribulations and miracles."

—*The Pulse of Radio*

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—*Armed Forces Broadcasters Association*

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—*AFN TV Guide—Europe*

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JULY 1992

Bernard Katz

Reprinted from *Radio Life*, Sept. 14, 1947.

Builder of Musical Bridges

by Charles J. Levin

"As a youngster, nothing gave me more pleasure than attending an afternoon screening in a silent movie when the orchestra pit was empty. As the plot unfolded, orchestra music would well up inside of me and keep pace with the picture. It was music which I felt was more appropriate than the hackneyed scores of that era."

Bernard Katz, musical director of the "Mayor of the Town," "The Hollywood Star Preview" and the "Cresta Blanca Program" was talking about music and radio and himself, the last under almost continuous prompting.

Though known in radio as one of the most creative and original composers and conductors, Bernard almost wound up as a concert pianist. Born and educated in San Francisco, he was a serious piano student at eight and began playing the instrument at four without formal instruction.

His progress was prodigious. At twelve he was good enough to appear in a recital before 5,000 at the University of California's Creek Theatre in Berkeley. One month later, Katz made radio history by repeating thirty minutes of his concert over San Francisco's Station KLS. He became the first pianist to present a live music broadcast in an era when phonograph records were the accepted presentation. (Let's keep Petrillo out of this.)

He began to take music as a career, and at nineteen he was pianist for the California Theatre, one of the city's best movie houses. In addition to playing with the house orchestra, he was a featured soloist and introduced many of his own compositions. His background of eight years of study in harmony, counterpoint and composition be-

gan to yield tangible results.

His first job in radio came in 1932 as chief staff pianist for NBC in San Francisco. For the next five years he built up a wide reputation for his keyboard virtuosity. "I played everything from Bach to boogie," Katz recalled. "Radio fascinated me and I said goodbye to a concert career after four very successful appearances with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra."

Following his start in radio, he came to Hollywood in 1936 as pianist, organist, and arranger for Mutual's KHJ. His original program, "Katz on the Keys", fifteen minutes three times a week, achieved a large network following.

He began his pioneering with instruments, a research spirit which has not left him, by using the first electric organ and Novachord on the air in solo capacity. Various effects which he secured for Arch Oboler's "Lights Out" mystery series have today been accepted as standard practice.

"Although I have the greatest respect for orthodox conceptions in radio music composition and direction," Katz added, "I never hesitate to use original effects so long as they are in authentic support of the script."

A good example of this viewpoint was his alert use of six Balinese drums played by native drummers to augment his large orchestra on "This is My Best" when Charles Laughton was the featured actor. Another sparkling score was his unusual treatment of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Prepared in just two-and-one-half days, it delighted even such a critical producer as Orson Welles.

Incidentally, Katz does all of his own arranging.

His debut as a full-fledged musical director and conductor

came with the program "Point Sublime" in 1941. His musical scores were evidences of a new and fresh trend in radio composition.

Lionel Barrymore, long an admirer of Bernard's work, was specially intrigued by the "Point Sublime" scores. In 1942 he was instrumental in calling Katz to the podium of "Mayor of the Town," a post which he has since held.

In 1944, he became musical director for "This is My Best" and led one of the largest orchestras employed for a dramatic show. He also composed and directed for the "Hollywood Players."

As a builder of musical bridges, Katz is one construction man who crosses his bridges before he builds them. His bridges, built of notes rather than of steel, have become a recognizable trademark for the nation's listeners. One of his greatest contributions to radio scoring was to make incidental music tuneful in its own right without sacrificing the technical demands of the script.

"I strive to make all of my bridges, even the shortest," Katz explained, "complete compositions within themselves — each a sort of musical microcosm — yet the music must be simple and effective. The timing must also be so perfect as to attract little attention from either the studio or the unseen audience.

He is a perfectionist. On "Mayor of the Town" his men have played the Lionel Barrymore theme hundreds of times. Yet before each broadcast, Bernard always finds time to polish it until it emerges weekly as bright and silky smooth as a brand new composition.

"I am also a bit of a fanatic in the matter of completely fresh scores for each broadcast," he stated, while on this theme of perfectionism. "I am completely convinced that a new

Continued on next page
RADIOGRAM PAGE FIVE



Send your wants in OTR-related items to McGee's Closet, c/o Barbara Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031.

WANTED: "50 Years of Radio Broadcasting" – Don Gardiner, Fred Foy, etc. Also, "Inside Radio with Pioneer Broadcasters" and "Armed Forces Radio Service Story", all listed on reel 276 of SPERDVAC's General Library, but not available. Will take reel-to-reel or cassettes. Contact: C. J. Huck, 4 S. 230 River Rd., Warrenville, IL 60555.

WANTED: Pictures of the AFRS Orchestra under the direction of Major Meredith Willson, vintage 1944 or 1945. Contact: Bill Sherman, 695 Temple Hills Dr., Laguna Beach, CA 92651, (714) 494-1359.

WANTED: "Song of the Tom-tom" (a Mutual special) which aired Sept. 23, 1949 and a Gabriel Heatter's Easter Sunday 1947 special dramatization of the life of pianist Abrasha Brosky. Any help in locating these shows or ideas on how we might locate them would be most appreciated. Contact: Mr. & Mrs. W. Harper, 301 East Buena Vista Ave., North Augusta, SC 29841.

Katz: builder of musical bridges

(Continued from previous page.)

musical score adds to the brightness of any program broadcast. Under normal circumstances I do not repeat the scoring of any show or any segment of it on another program. It takes considerable more time, but I feel better about it."

To what does he attribute his distinctive style?

"I believe it is through keeping bridges and back-grounds interesting with the use of melodies which develop musically along with the plot."

The diminutive but dynamic Katz believes that musical scoring, both radio and motion pictures, is still in its infancy. He would urge more rehearsal time, better arrangement of instruments, improved studio acoustics, and the occasional use of new instruments new to the present day symphony orchestra.

Bernard's three major hobbies are hunting, fishing, and photography. His thirteen year old son, Nolan Herbert, is also very gifted musically, but seems to favor the career of an actor. Young Nolan's eyes are continually on the career of his cousin, Mel Blanc, possibly radio's outstanding comedy specialist.

The Katz household lives comfortably in Hollywood. Mrs. Katz, the former Florence Ruth Beale of New York, is a collector of rare china and oriental charms.

Katz' ambition is to organize and conduct a symphony orchestra. He eyes this goal with almost reverent fidelity — a fine tribute to his perpetual respect for beautiful music and enthusiastic musicians.

WANTED: FRANK WATANABE AND THE HONORABLE ARCHIE, JOE PENNER, AL PEARCE, TIZZIE LISH, JACK KIRKWOOD; also earliest AMOS AND ANDY (& SAM 'N HENRY), plus earliest years in general. Have rarities to trade, will buy, no sell. Also have jazz and swing, and need John Dunning's book *Tune In Yesterday*. Contact: Don Manning, Box 82214, Portland, OR 97282, (503) 244-9748.

WANTED: Copies of THE LINE-UP, a police radio show. Contact: Dan Sherman, P.O. Box 172, Days Creek, OR 97429, (503) 825-3924.

WANTED: Trading partners who specialize in adventure, mystery, detective and "rare radio dramas" from the era of the 1930's through the late 1950's. I have a solid collection of programs from ACE WILLIAMS, ACTION THEATRE and THE ABBOTTS at one end of the alphabet to VOYAGE OF THE SCARLET QUEEN, WEIRD CIRCLE, WHISTLER and X MINUS ONE at the other. My special interest is in ESCAPE, I LOVE A MYSTERY, INNER SANCTUM, MR AND MRS. NORTH, THE THIN MAN and any and all rare adventure dramas. Contact: William Kiddle, 315 Cherrywood Rd., Buffalo Grove, IL 60089.

NOTE: WHEN SUBMITTING AN AD ABOUT RADIO SHOWS, PLEASE INDICATE WHAT FORMAT YOU WANT OR HAVE, REEL-TO-REEL, CASSETTES OR BOTH. THANK YOU.

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Specials

on the
radio
airwaves



Listeners in the early 1930s tuned in special programs with such opera stars Grace Moore, here shown with a Westinghouse receiver.

by Thomas A. DeLong

"You ain't heard nothin' yet," Al Jolson said to audiences on Broadway, in the movies and over radio. But this tag line especially identifies the early decades of broadcasting. Hearing was everything to radio audiences; they, indeed, were *listeners* — an eager, loyal and grateful multitude.

Tuning in the voices of the famous and celebrated was keenly anticipated, and in the hinterlands where theatrical touring companies, vaudeville and concert artists rarely journeyed to perform, it was a magical

experience.

But no more so when radio networks gathered an array of headliners and special guests to open a new studio, to celebrate an anniversary, to welcome overseas audiences, to honor leading American artists, to launch a new product, or to promote a public service campaign.

On such special occasions, stars of stage, screen and, of course, radio crowded around the microphone—the likes of whom have rarely been duplicated on television screens. The very cost of producing such shows

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RADIOGRAM PAGE SEVEN

Radio's special broadcasts continued



Announcer-actor Warren Hull in Hollywood celebrated Mutual's birthday jamboree in 1938.

today staggers and discourages even the most affluent TV broadcasters and sponsors. "Live" all-star events, with the exception of the Academy Awards and other entertainment industry awards presentations, remain few and far between. And perhaps they were meant only to flourish as aural milestones during radio's all-too-brief golden epoch.

The very first, and one of the longest, commemorative celebrations on the air took place in 1926 to inaugurate the National Broadcasting Company. RCA formed the chain to plug into the major centers of entertainment and offer prime-time, big name programs on a daily basis. The flagship, or key, stations were WEA and WJZ in New York. On Nov. 15, they linked up with 17 other stations for a gala 4-1/2 hour program from the Grand Ballroom of the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

Music, popular and classical, held sway as the newly-appointed president of the NBC Red and Blue networks, Merlin H. Aylesworth, greeted listeners from Maine to Missouri. The New York Symphony Orchestra conducted by Walter Damrosch, baritone Titta Ruffo, pianist Harold Bauer and the New York Oratoria Society occupied the first hour and a half. During this segment—heavily laden with Wagnerian excerpts—a remote pickup from Chicago brought to millions the voice of opera diva Mary Garden.

Music of the masters was briefly interrupted by a

15 minute monologue by wisecracking Will Rogers. He spoke from the dressing room of an Independence, Missouri theatre, where he was appearing. "The event," wrote a commentator, "proves there are no physical confines to the broadcasting studio."

The next hour featured the works of Beethoven, Chopin and Verdi, before turning to a lighter vein: The WEAFLight Opera Company with excerpts from Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pinafore" and Edwin Franko Goldman's band and "The Stars and Stripes Forever." At eleven o'clock, the venerable vaudeville team of Weber & Fields came to the mike for a bit of comic patter.

Dance bands from four nearby Manhattan hotels and nightclubs—George Olsen from the Pennsylvania Grill, Ben Bernie at the Roosevelt, B. A. Rolfe from the Palais d'Or, Vincent Lopez at the Casa Lopez—climaxed network radio's first big night. From "Lohengrin" to "Nola" by the mere flick of a switch!

During 1927, the Columbia Broadcasting System had gathered together a competing chain of 15 far-flung stations, including KMOX in St. Louis, WMAQ in Chicago and WCAU in Philadelphia. In September, Columbia went on the air from New York, by then the center of the new industry called radio. On its debut, CBS presented "The King's Henchman," a full opera with a cast from the Metropolitan Opera and composer Deems Taylor as commentator. Surely a portent of one of radio's long-lasting staples.

CBS conductor Howard Barlow also led a studio symphony, and staff singers, Elizabeth Lennox, Charles Harrison, Elsie Theide and Frank Croxton, added their talents. Popular music held the spotlight with Red Nichols' and Don Voorhees' peppy rhythms. Listeners of the madcap 1920s welcomed this second national network—a venture so new it had to rent studios from station WOR for a year or more until William S. Paley took over the broadcast reins and led the fledgling onto solid ground.

Both CBS and NBC were anxious for advertisers to sponsor programs, even if it were a one-shot broadcast. In 1928, to introduce the new six-cylinder Dodge auto (price: \$900), Dodge Bros., Inc. took over 55 NBC affiliates. One of the first coast-to-coast link-ups, it featured from Hollywood the voices of Norma Tallmadge, Dolores Del Rio, Charles Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and John Barrymore. A unique event in

Continued on page nine

Radio's special broadcasts *continued*



Radio paid homage to composer Jerome Kern on a special American Album of Familiar Music broadcast in 1935. From left to right, soprano Lucy Monroe, Jerome Kern, producer Frank Hummert, conductor Gus Haenschen, tenor Frank Munn and co-producer Anne Hummert.

those days of *silent* pictures.

Three years later, in 1931, GE sponsored *The Hour of Magic*, a special tribute to the scientists and engineers who "made broadcasting possible." Graham McNamee introduced the galaxy of stars whose "genius and charm helped make broadcasting popular." They were crooner Rudy Vallee, soprano Jessica Dragonette, tenor Frank Munn, impresario S. L. "Roxy" Rothafel, piano duo Ohman and Arden, maestro Vincent Lopez and comic singer Phil Cook.

A year later, in a public-spirited gesture, NBC via WEAJ gave air time for the Musicians' Emergency Aid campaign. A half-dozen Metropolitan Opera luminaries sang: Lily Pons, John Charles Thomas, Gigli, Grace Moore, Martinelli, Gladys Swarthout. Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Walter Damrosch and Carmella Ponselle also appeared in the NBC Fifth Avenue Studios. As a special attraction, Carmella's sister, Rosa, sang "Auld Lang Syne" from the S.S. *Saturnia* midway between Europe and the U.S. Marconi Company engineers had

Continued on page ten
RADIOGRAM PAGE NINE

Radio's special broadcasts continued



CBS saluted Irving Berlin's songwriting career in 1938 with an all-star show featuring Al Jolson, bandleader Al Goodman and Ethel Merman.

labored for days to build a complete radio station on the ship and bring the magnificent voice of Rosa Ponselle to music fans throughout North America.

The early network era treated listeners to special broadcasts from overseas, usually via shortwave. At Christmas 1929, for example, greetings and music were flashed from England, Holland and Germany. In return, both European and Yankee audiences heard two holiday music shows. NBC's Nat Shilkret directed a large orchestra and soloists, Gladys Rice, Eva Taylor, Robert Simmons and Elizabeth Lennox. The following day, at a tobacco-can-shaped mike, Shilkret, Lennox and Taylor were joined by Jessica Dragonette and the Revelers quartet in a program of typically American music, including Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," a medley of Stephen Foster's airs and W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues."

By 1933 network radio had grown from a fad to an institution. Each and every day, tuning up the living room Philco or Atwater Kent became a ritual. A wel-

comed respite from the cares and worries brought by the Depression and boon to those with no money to spend.

One of the brightest nights that year marked NBC's 7th anniversary and the opening of Radio City in Manhattan's new RCA building. This "city within a city" contained 35 studios, including the enormous three-story 8-H auditorium, which held 1,500 spectators.

That evening, Nov. 11, 1933, 8-H—the largest studio in the world—reverberated to the 60-voice Schola Cantorum Choir, the 75-piece NBC Symphony, and 15 guest artists, some of whom had already become radio "regulars." Jessica Dragonette, leading lady of Cities Service Concert, sang the much-requested "Indian Love Call." Rudy Vallee, host of the weekly *Fleischmann Hour*, crooned "Under the Campus Moon." Walter Damrosch, major domo of the *Music Appreciation Hour*, conducted the *March from Tannhauser*. The Revelers—Frank Parker, Elliot Shaw, Lewis James and Wilfred Glenn—harmonized on "Great Day." Frank Munn, tenor star of *The American Album of Familiar Music*, sang Victor Herbert's "My Dream Girl."

From Opera and the concert hall came John McCormack and Maria Jeritza. From the theatre, Jane Cowl. From records and nightclubs, Paul Whiteman. And speaking from Hollywood, Will Rogers; from Milwaukee, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, who would years later become radio's Amos 'n' Andy. For audiences from Portland to Pomona, and around the world by shortwave, the hour-long dedication offered audible proof that radio had won a secure place among the arts and sciences.

NBC reinforced this fact two years later on Dec. 7, 1935 when it opened new Hollywood studios, amid all the traditions of tinsel town—bright lights, staring crowds, cops and stars. "Okay, folks," host Al Jolson remarked,

Continued on page eleven

Radio's special broadcasts continued

"you're in for one of the greatest evenings of entertainment you've ever listened to." The ebullient showman was right on target.

Meredith Willson, general music director of NBC's Western Division, opened with tunes from Hollywood musicals. Conductors Victor Young, Nat Shilkret, Johnny Green, Ben Bernie (from New York) and Paul Whiteman (from Brooklyn) appeared, and Jolson shared the singing with Rudy Vallee (from Pittsburgh), James Melton, John Charles Thomas (from Chicago), Phil Regan and Bing Crosby. Bing, in fact, showed up to sing "On Treasure Island," dressed like he had come in from his ranch—and he had! Distaff vocalists included Marion Talley, Gladys Swarthout, Anne Jamison and Ruth Etting (from Honolulu).

The musical selections reflected the current crop from Hollywood's bustling studios: "Thanks a Million," "You are My Lucky Star," "I'm Sittin' High on a Hill-top," "Where Am I?" and "The Piccolino." Personalities of the early "talkies" joined in: actresses Irene Rich



Connee Boswell and Eddie Cantor sang Berlin tunes on a special coast-to-coast tribute to the famed composer.

and Mae Robson (she delivered a tribute to Will Rogers, recently killed in a plane accident, and to other departed cinema greats), dancer Bill Robinson, comedian Jimmy Durante (at Brooklyn's St. George Hotel) and from London, actors Roscoe Ates, Buddy Rogers and Douglas

Continued on page twelve

Radio's special broadcasts continued

Fairbanks, Jr.

In a year or two, both NBC and CBS would open larger, more modern quarters in the movie capital., reflecting the solid ties between radio and films.

Radio salutes to America's leading song writers characterized the tune-filled 1930s. Programs honored Sigmund Romberg, George M. Cohan, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern and Victor Herbert. In 1938 CBS aired an anniversary show on Irving Berlin's 30th year as a composer, offering such lasting melodies as "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "All Alone," "Say It Isn't So," "Marie" and "Easter Parade." (In the prolific songwriter's future were many more hits: "White Christmas," "The Girl That I Marry," "There's No Business Like Show Business" and "You're Just in Love.")

Columnist Walter Winchell in his familiar staccato

style introduced Berlin: "For lovely melodies . . . for simple, honest sentiments . . . for words and music that have become a permanent part of the American scene . . . for a gentle and gracious personality: an orchid to you, Irving Berlin."

Irving Berlin stood by at the Columbia Playhouse in New York to hear an array of past and present artists connected with his songs. Headliners of the early 1900s—Sophie Tucker, Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor and John Steel—joined stars of the '30s—Ethel Merman, Rudy Vallee, Tommy Dorsey, Connee Boswell, Guy Lombardo and Alice Faye. It was a night to remember for the tunesmith of whom songwriter Jerome Kern said, "Irving Berlin has no place in American music; he *is* American music."

The Mutual Broadcasting System, robust in the

Continued on page thirteen



Jim and Marian Jordan, radio's Fibber McGee and Molly, were among the NBC comedians taking bows on the network's 15th anniversary gala in 1941.

Radio's special broadcasts continued



Kay Kyser, his vocalist Ginny Simms and band members rush from an airplane to a World War II era broadcast to help raise funds to finance the war effort.

number of affiliates but weak in programs, had been formed in the wake of the CBS and NBC successes. Linking chiefly WOR, New York; WGN, Chicago; WLW, Cincinnati and WXYZ, Detroit, MBS lacked clout and prestige, notwithstanding Uncle Don's brisk kiddie shows, Alfred Wallenstein's innovative musical offerings, and popular weekday cliffhangers, **The Green Hornet** and **The Lone Ranger**.

In September, 1938 MBS marked its fourth anniversary with a birthday jamboree. From five cities, stars trooped to the mike. From Los Angeles, Irish tenor Morton Downey, Hollywood's Patricia Ellis, Warren Hull and Fuzzy Knight, and maestro Harry Sosnick opened the six-hour variety show. At 8:30, Fort Worth came on the line with country songs, Negro spirituals, a 50-piece ensemble playing "March Slav," and gubernatorial nominee Lee O'Daniel and his hillbilly band.

From WOR's Times Square Playhouse, M.C. Alen Prescott introduced conductor-composer Morton Gould and a western medley. Wallenstein next stepped to the podium to lead the orchestra through a high-brow segment, followed by the Charioteers singing "Glory

Road." William Gaxton, Broadway star of "Anything Goes" and "Of Thee I Sing," and Benay Venuta, blues singer, rounded out New York's input.

Chicago brought to the festivities a concert program of works by Schubert, Mozart, Brahms and Grofe. At midnight the customary pickups of the country's big bands filled the ether. On this night, Mutual offered Dick Jurgens, Bob Crosby, Red Norvo, Skinnay Ennis, George Olsen and Little Jack Little.

NBC waited in the wings to top upstart MBS. Three years later, in 1941, the country's first network marked its 15th anniversary by bringing 2,000 performers to the microphone. Taking place only weeks before the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the program featured a round table discussion on war developments and a talk by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. NBC president Niles Trammel also pointed out that the network had just withdrawn its staff from Berlin because the Nazis insisted on using them for propaganda purposes.

Music and comedy, however, once again dominated this occasion. NBC spotlighted its tremendous

Continued on page fourteen

Radio's special broadcasts conclusion

lineup of comedians: Jack Benny, Red Skelton, Burns and Allen, Fibber McGee and Molly, the Great Gildersleeve, and Lum and Abner. From NBC's stable of singers came Lucille Manners, Vivian della Chiesa and Conrad Thibault. Plus there were the Quiz Kids, sportscaster Grantland Rice, Breakfast Club host Don McNeill and newsman Lowell Thomas. And no celebration was complete without Rudy Vallee and Bing Crosby.

Glenn Miller and Kay Kyser livened up the party, as did the cast of the WLS Barn Dance. Special guests included H.V. Kaltenborn, Edmund Lowe and Victor McLaglen, and the Army, Navy and Marine bands. It was a solid—and loud—tribute to a network broadcasting more than 30,000 individual programs a year.

The years 1941-45 accelerated the number of special broadcasts to boost morale at home and at the front, as well as to advance overall war efforts. Programs promoted scrap metal and paper collections, blood donations, victory gardens and V-mail. Many launched Treasury bond drives by marathon shows that ran, not for hours, but for days. Kate Smith at CBS sold a staggering \$112 million in bonds during a single 24-hour broadcast. NBC's Parade of Stars in February, 1944 kicked off the 4th War Loan Drive with four consecutive nights of guest artists, ranging from Amos 'n' Andy, Bob Burns and Bill Stern to Bing Crosby, Frank Munn and the First Piano Quartet.



Kate Smith with producer Ted Collins sold \$112 million in war bonds during a 24-hour marathon appeal. The special program aired on CBS Oct. 6, 1942.

By V-J Day, listeners had been indulged with a veritable cornucopia of performers heard from 42nd Street to Hollywood & Vine.

"Radio fare has not been rationed," CBS vice president Frank Stanton reminded listeners. "Radio is one product that can be produced for the armed forces without depriving the civilian."

It was perhaps radio's finest hour. The golden days and nights beside the living room Zenith would soon pass . . . and with them, the thrill and excitement of glorious star-filled "gifts" from the air.

Prize-winning writer and SPERDVAC member Thomas A. DeLong is the author of the recently published book *Quiz Craze: America's Infatuation with Game Shows*.

Radio comedian-actor Bob Sweeney dies

by Dan Haefele

Bob Sweeney, the radio actor teamed for several years with Hal March, died June 7. He was 73.

Sweeney went to college, intending to become a teacher. He participated in several drama productions at San Francisco State and decided he wanted to enter show business. "All of a sudden I decided I wanted to be a radio announcer," he told SPERDVAC in a 1988 interview. "This meant more to me than anything in the world."

After graduating from college Sweeney worked the early morning shift as a cab driver in San Francisco so that he would be available for auditions in the late morning and early afternoon. His first radio job was at KSAN in San Francisco.

In 1942, he became chief announcer at KYA. Hal March had a 6-7 a.m. disc jockey show at the station and Sweeney did a similar program the following hour. "We played records, told jokes and read anecdotes and clips from the AP newswire," he said.

"Every once in a while we had a joke needing a straight man," he explained. "So I would straight for him while I was preparing to go on and he would stick around and straight

for me."

The station manager agreed to allow them to team up for a two hour show. However, the manager suggested that Hal, whose real name was Mendleson, change his name.

"He wanted to be able to say, when the program started, that 'Hal marches on' so we became Sweeney and March from that moment on," he revealed.

The team broke up when March decided to go to Hollywood to become a movie star. Film offers did not come his way and the team was reestablished.

Once, when their network show had been canceled, they met for lunch at a popular Hollywood restaurant. After their meal, they began to walk in the direction of KHJ, the Mutual outlet.

"We were lamenting the fact that we were out of work and that they had the audacity to fire us," he recalled. "We were pumping one another up about how wonderful and funny we were. And a voice behind us said, 'Look, if you guys are so wonderful, why don't you come in here and we'll talk about it.' It was one of the executives at the Mutual Broadcasting System." They ended up with a contract for a comedy show

on Mutual.

In addition to their work on local and network radio as a team, Sweeney and March did radio work independently. Sweeney recalled working frequently on an unusual show originating from KHJ. "The script was never completed when we went on the air," he said. "We would be on the air while they were still typing it. They would hand us another page as we finished one."

Working a live network show under those conditions required a certain talent for unrehearsed readings. "The facility that radio actors had was quite remarkable," he observed. "They could 'hit' a character very quickly and they could sustain that character for 20 pages and not know where they were going for the next eight."

For a while the team worked at a New York station. After about a decade together, Sweeney and March decided amicably to split the team. March stayed in New York and Sweeney returned to Hollywood.

In early television, Sweeney teamed with Cathy Lewis on the *Fibber McGee and Molly* show. Later, he directed tv programs, including *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Hawaii Five-O*.

Detroit actor Ernie Winstanley dies

Ernie Winstanley, an actor at Detroit's WXYZ in the thirties, forties and fifties, died May 27.

Winstanley was 14 in 1933 when he was hired to perform on the air with the Jewell Players, organized by James Jewell. There he appeared frequently on *The Lone Ranger*, *Challenge of the Yukon* and *The Green Hornet*.

Mr. Winstanley said he played the *Lone Ranger's* nephew Dan Reid for a while, but was forced to leave the role when his voice changed. Then he worked in the sound effects department at the station.

His other radio credits include *Junior Matinee* and *Children's Theatre of the Air*.



Ernie Winstanley, left, with member Jerry Williams

Radio in Review



RADIO PREMIUM AND CEREAL BOX COLLECTIBLES. By Tom Tumbusch. Chilton Book company. One Chilton Way, Radnor, PA 19089. 1991. Softbound. \$22.95. 175 pages.

For would-be or established OTR premium collectors, eat your hearts out! What you would give to have every single premium shown on the pages of this fascinating new release. Unlike those who collect or trade just the shows, the premium collectors in this hobby are an extremely dedicated group who will go to great lengths to procure that missing premium that may have been discarded or lost so many years ago. Premium shows are big draws nationally.

For the novice or established collector, this is perhaps the best guide to have. Tom has written four previous editions, but each succeeding one has always presented more premiums, and more information to collectors. For the first time cereal boxes are showcased. Radio shows that offered premiums at one time or another are listed alphabetically. The juvenile adventure shows were not the only ones offering premiums. Daytime serials and a few comedy shows also offered similar items that are just as rare.

Besides Tom Mix, Jack Armstrong, and The Lone Ranger, programs such as Jack Benny, Bob Hope, One Man's Family, Amos 'N' Andy, Ma Perkins, and Gangbusters each had something unusual to offer. An important area, that of grading items, is shown for each offer. Whether it is Good, Fine, or Mint, you know its value if you have it, or want it. Two 8 page color sections are worth the cost of this volume alone. Every premium is shown via clear b&w or color photos and all are virtually mint in appearance and presentation.

The author is an expert in this field, and this book is worth its price and more. Future volumes no doubt will appear due to the continued interest in this subject. Rings, badges, decoders, books and more are showcased.

—Chris Lembesis

BRASS BUTTON BROADCASTERS. By Trent Christman. Turner Publishing Co., P. O. Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002-3101. 1992. Clothbound. \$39.95 + \$5.00 P&H. 208 pages.

On the 50th anniversary of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service Trent Christman has written the

- ✓ Radio Premium and Cereal Box Collectibles
- ✓ Brass Button Broadcasters

most thorough account of the network's history ever written.

Drawing on the recollections of some 300 former and current AFRS/AFRTS staffers, Christman traces the network's activities from the very beginning (May 1942) to the Gulf War of 1991. The author focuses on the behind the scenes activities at AFRS. He looks at how and why certain decisions were made.

In those early days, with no predecessor in this type of broadcasting, AFRS personnel had to establish their own guidelines. This work covers the many challenges they faced and the successful—and unsuccessful—attempts to overcome difficulties. It is an interesting story of the creativity many individuals demonstrated in keeping America's fifth network on the air.

One of the interesting stories covered is the "local" programming the individual AFRS stations created. The stations were not hooked together by telephone lines, as were the stateside networks. Instead, AFRS supplied American network shows, sans commercials, which were played by each station. But the network did not supply enough programming to fill the entire broadcast day, so impromptu shows were frequently created to fill the void. Trent Christman provides a view of those "local" shows, most of which were never recorded.

Another oddity of their story was the way America's network shows were transcribed for rebroadcast on AFRS without the commercials. Marty Halperin's account of the way he and others deleted commercials in those pre-tape days is given fine coverage.

Also included is a profile of Col. Tom Lewis, one of the creators of Armed Forces Radio.

This oversized coffee table volume contains numerous photographs which trace the network's growth and development. In addition to the many behind the scenes stories, there are accounts of the popular AFRS shows still enjoyed by OTR collectors: **Command Performance**, **G. I. Journal**, **Mail Call** and others.

Christman has an advantage over others who might have attempted such a monumental view of AFRTS. He worked for the network. In fact, he spent 21 years at AFRTS in Germany. His work is truly a fitting tribute to the network as it enters its second half-century.

—Dan Haefele

BOOK ENDS: Harper-Collins is no longer distributing the hard cover edition of *Jack Benny: The Radio and Television Years*... Tony Thomas is writing a book about Dick Powell... Oxford University Press plans a re-release of Frank Worthheim's *Radio Comedy*.

Listening to the wireless



Radio listening in the 1950s... Scottish style.

by Ray Smith

The other day, I was listening to a BBC quiz show. One of the questions was, "What is a selection box?" I doubt if many *Radiogram* readers know the answer. But having grown up in the Scottish Highlands of the 1940's and 50's, I knew a selection box was what each of us wanted to find in our Christmas 'stocking.'

It was a gift box, brightly painted in circus, spaceship, cops and robbers or cowboy themes and it was called a selection box because it contained a 'selection' of favorite chocolate bars and candies. . . sweeties, as we used to call them in the British Isles.

All the major British candy companies like Cadbury, Fry, Rowntree, MacIntosh and Duncan, many of them now merged, had their own particular boxes which contained an exciting selection of their products. Being a person of eclectic tastes, even as a precocious youngster, my selection box would have to contain such chocolate bars as Mars, Peppermint Creme, Walnut Whip, Tiffin and Five Boys. Nowadays they'd have to call that one "two and one half girls @ 2 and one half boys!"

But while it's easy to pick a selection box of favorite candy bars, it's much more difficult to fill that selection box with my favorite radio programs. Truth is, I loved 'em all.

So instead, let's put together a

composite selection of the radio shows you might have heard on a typical day in the Scotland of the 1950's. Imagine beautiful scenery, mist, rain and howling gales. Typical summervacation weather. You stay home and "listen to he wireless."

As an early riser, you tune in the BBC Scottish Home Services (SHS) and find *Morning Music*, this morning played by Ronnie Munro and his Orchestra. No irritating deejay chatter here, just the formal between tunes announcements of BBC Scotland's Chief Announcer, Alistair McIntyre. He

also does a 5 minute show called *Program Parade* which highlights the BBC Home, Light and Third Programme offerings for the day. At 7:45 a.m. there's a time to *Lift Up Your Hearts*, a religious and inspirational offering prior to the all-Britian 8 O'clock News, read today from London by Frank Phillips.

Following a hearty Scottish breakfast of black pudding, Ayrshire bacon and fried bread, washed down with a up of hot Typhoo tea, you switch to the Light Programme, just in time for *Housewife's Choice*, a daily record request show. This week's host is a semi-regular: one-time singer, bandleader and impresario, George Elrick. For years he was Mantovani's manager.

The choice of listening housewives reflect the BBC pop scene of the 50's. There's Donald Peers singing "In a Shady Nook, by a Babbling Brook," Irish hit parade star Ruby Murray doing her Top Ten success "Softly, Softly," songwriter Paddy Roberts with his tongue-in-check ditty, "The Ballad of Bethnal Green," which refers to a gal who was "blond and dumb and lived wiv 'er mum," etc.

In more serious vein, "The Dam Busters March," from the successful UK war movie starring Richard Todd, is thumped out by Billy Cotton's Band and we hear a super version of the powerful ballad "For I May Never Pass

This Way Again," belted out by Robert Earl. Come to think of it, Robert's still belting that one in 1992.

But at 9:55 we go back to the Home Service for *Five to Ten, a Story, a Hymn and a Prayer*, followed at ten, by the BBC theatre organist Sandy McPherson. And at 10:30 we listen to *Music While You Work*, a half hour of non-stop light music played today by Geraldo and his Orchestra.

Just before noon, ex-patriot Canadian disc jockey Dave Gell holds court on the Light Programme, and at 12:30 p.m. Bill Gates takes to the air and says "welcome" to *Worker's Playtime*. Today, the show comes from a factory canteen in the North of England.

Opening the show is Italian accordion wizard Camilleri followed by cheeky Lancashire comedian Bill Waddington, known nowadays to millions of televiewers world-wide as the old curmudgeon Percy Sugden on *Coronation Street*. Today's vocalist is Barbara Lyon, daughter of Bebe Daniels and Ben, formerly from the US, and topping the bill is the wicked master of double entendre, and from the wink, wink, nudge, nudge, school of comedy, Frankie Howard.

Time for lunch, and a switch back to the Home Service for the comforting tones of Roy Plomley asking Sir Malcolm Sargent what twelve gramophone records he'd take with him to the Desert Island. *Desert Island Discs* recently celebrated 50 years on the beeb, although Roy sadly passed away in '85. Another long-running show, *Women's Hour*, a sort of women's magazine of the air, takes us through to 3 p.m.

More band music played by *Primo Scala and His Accordion Band* precedes the famous soap, *Mrs. Dales Diary*, the everyday trials of an upper middle class doctor's wife. Today, series star Dilys Powell tells us she's been "terribly worried about Jim lately."

Back to regional programming at 5 p.m. with *Children's Hour* from Scotland. The head of children's broadcasts, Kathleen Garscadden, introduces the tales of Tammy Troot (trout), a kilted

Continued on next page

RADIOGRAM PAGE SEVENTEEN

JULY 1992

Listening to the wireless *continued*

talking fish, written by Lavinia Derwent and told by Glasgow actor Willy Joss. And for the older children, Alan MacKinnon's written another exciting adventure serial about *The Boys of Glen Morroch*, which takes us up to 5:55 p.m., and time for Kathleen to sign off as she always does with her famous "good night, children, good night,"

After *National News*, *Scottish News* and *Sports News*, we stick with the home service for *Scottish Dance Music*, toe tapping jigs, reels and strathspeys, played this evening by the legendary Jimmy (M.F. Blue Bell Polka) Shand and his Scottish Dance Band.

We got so carried away listening to Jimmy, that we missed our daily dose of *The Archers*, an everyday story of country folk, on the Light Programme. But we can catch up with the Omnibus Edition next Sunday. However, we do enjoy *Radio Newsreel* on the Light at 7, and at 7:30 it's *Have a Go*.

Veteran radio personality Wilfred Pickles (uncle of *Hill St. Blues* star Vivian Pickles), his wife Mabel, Harry Hudson the pianist, and producer Barney Colehan, present *Have a Go* today from Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire. It's an enjoyable mix of local color, talent and a quiz, with the warm Yorkshire accent and humorous style of Mr. Pickles making sure everyone has a good time. Then it's *Educating Archie*, a family comedy half hour featuring Peter Brough and his wooden dummy Archie Andrews. Sometimes called the UK's answer to Bergen and McCarthy, Brough is the long-suffering butt of schoolboy Archie's practical jokes. In tonight's show Archie's abetted by his new "tutor" cockney Max Bygraves, girlfriend Monica alias Beryl Reid, the talking harmonica of Ronald Chesney, and in support roles a pre-Goons Harry Secombe and a pre-Hancock Hattie Jacques. No wonder Peter and Archie are favorites of the Royal Family.

A change of pace at 8:30 p.m. as Peter Cooke and Marjorie Westbury star in the latest episode of *Paul Temple and the Laurence Affair*, written by crime novelist Francis Durbridge, and that leads into *Any Questions*, a network show from the West of England hosted by Freddy Grisewood and featuring a panel of well-known personalities including Lord Boothby and Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe. Members of the "town hall" audience ask the panel their opinion on topical issues of the day.

But it's getting late and we've been listening to the wireless non-stop since around 7 o'clock this morning. Almost time to call it a day. Before clambering "up the wooden hill to Bedrodshire" we switch the dial one last time for *A Book at Bedtime* and find the distinguished actor Carlton Hobbs reading an excerpt of a Sherlock Holmes story penned by Conan Doyle. Hobbs normally plays the great detective on BBC, and it's always an experience listening to his unique, rich voice.

What's this? It's not Carlton Hobbs. . . must have dozed off. . . Finlay J. MacDonald reading *The News in Gaelic*. Now I really MUST climb the wooden hill. So as dear "Auntie" Kathleen Garscadden might say, Good night, everyone. . . good night.

RADIOGRAM PAGE EIGHTEEN

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JULY 1992



THINK BIG

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Music on AFRS programs topic of July 11 meeting

Music on the Armed Forces Radio Service network programs will be the subject of discussion at SPERDVAC's next membership meeting. Our guests, Bill Sherman and Art Gault, were musicians in the AFRS Orchestra. They were under the direction of Major Meredith Willson.

They will discuss the many AFRS shows at our July 11 meeting. Among the programs they worked on were *Command Performance*, *Jubilee*, *Mail Call* and *G. I. Journal*.

The SPERDVAC meeting is at the Buena Park Public Library, 7150 La Palma Blvd., Buena Park. It begins at 12 noon and is open to the public free of charge. Guests are invited.

In our last episode...

Duffy's Tavern was discussed extensively at last month's SPERDVAC meeting. Guests Hazel Shermet, who played Miss Duffy for three seasons, and Larry Rhine and Bob Schiller, both writers on the comedy series, told the audience about their work on the program and many of the behind the scenes episodes.

Their recollections will be the basis of a feature article on Ed Gardner and the *Duffy's Tavern* series in next month's *Radiogram*. Stay tuned!