

SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM

Archives catalog
page 119-120
enclosed. If
yours is missing,
send a SASE to
Editor Dan!

Vol. XVIII, No. 2 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy February 1992

William Alland guests

William Alland, long associated with Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre, will be SPERDVAC's featured guest at our Feb. 8 membership meeting.

Alland was an actor on many of the Mercury Theatre programs, including the famous "War of the Worlds" broadcast. He was also frequently on the Campbell Playhouse series.

Our guest wrote the radio program *Doorway to Life*, an evening dramatic show directed by William N. Robson.

The Feb. 8 meeting begins at 12 noon in the community room of the South Pasadena Public Library. It is located at 1115 El Centro, South Pasadena. The SPERDVAC meeting is open free to the public.

SPERDVAC election nears

SPERDVAC members are receiving ballots with this newsletter for the March 13 Board of Directors election.

Seven candidates are running for the seven open positions. The candidates are Martin Ehrich, Glenda Kelly, Bobb Lynes, Don McCrosky, Michael Plett, Carolyn Rawski and Robert Steinmetz.

Paid SPERDVAC members are receiving a ballot plus candidates' election statements. Members may mail their ballots to Catherine Passarelli, 10615 Butterfield Road, Los Angeles, CA 90064. The envelope should be clearly marked "Ballot." Members may deliver ballots in person at the March 13 meeting. No ballots will be accepted after 12:15 pm that day.



Long-time radio syndicator Charles Michelson visited SPERDVAC last month to discuss his work in broadcasting. See story on page 7.

FOR YOUR RECORDS

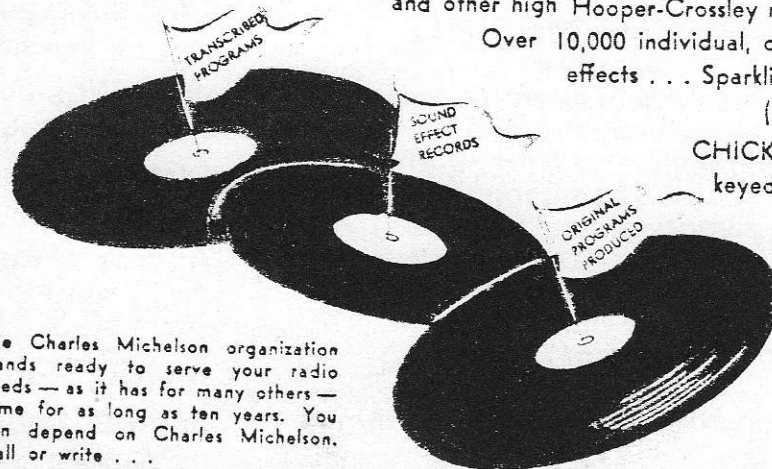
45 "tried-and-true" transcribed programs (THE SHADOW, and other high Hooper-Crossley rated shows) . . .

Over 10,000 individual, distinctive sound effects . . . Sparkling "live" shows

(NICK CARTER,

CHICK CARTER, etc.)

keyed to network and local markets.



The Charles Michelson organization stands ready to serve your radio needs — as it has for many others — some for as long as ten years. You can depend on Charles Michelson. Call or write . . .

CHARLES MICHELSON

PIONEER PROGRAM PRODUCERS—SINCE 1934

MURRAYHILL 2-3376

67 WEST 44th STREET
NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

MURRAYHILL 2-5168

A 1944 advertisement for Michelson's transcription service.

MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

Fund raising is under way for a Jack Benny statue planned for unveiling late this year in Rancho Cucamonga, California. Private and corporate donations are being sought. Mayor Dennis Stout is part of the Jack Benny Memorial Committee.

The International Jack Benny Fan Club has a new address. It is 3561 Somerset Ave., Castro Valley, CA 94546. President Laura Lee has moved to the West Coast. The fan club received some nice press in the Nov. 29 edition of Knight-Ritter newspapers.

A new fan club dedicated to the radio work of Carlton E. Morse has been formed. Contact James Mayor, 26824 Howard Chaple Drive, Damascus, MD 20872-1247. The first issue of their newsletter has been published.

An organization for those interested in space memorabilia, including radio, tv, comics, etc. is *Galaxy Patrol*. Contact Dale L. Ames at 22 Colton Street,

Worcester, MA 01610.

SPERDVAC is STILL in need of a meeting facility in the San Fernando Valley area. Please pass along any leads or suggestions to us at (310) 947-9800.

Member Albert Fisher has recently purchased the rights to the *Amateur Hour*. If your cable tv system has Family Channel, tune in Sundays at 9 pm Pacific time. Repeats are Saturdays at 8 pm West Coast time. These are new shows hosted by Willard Scott.

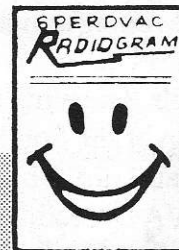
KMPC, Los Angeles, has postponed the radio production originally planned for Feb. 8. No new broadcast date has yet been set.

The California Artists Radio Theatre production "Lotus Land," is scheduled for airing on KPCC-FM, Pasadena on Feb. 9. The two hour live program begins at 5 pm. It was written and music was scored by Ian Whitcomb. The script was adapted by CART's Peggy Webber, who will also produce and direct the show. Les Tremayne, Robert Rockwell, Richard Erdman, Kathleen Freeman, Linda Kaye Henning, Sean McClory, Paul Keith, John Bliss and Joseph Marcel will be featured with Leslie Easterbook and Ian Whitcomb. Tom Hatton will host. The musical gives a British view of Southern Cali-

fornia during the World War I - 1929 era, and focuses on the entertainment industry. There is a \$7.50 donation requested for those attending the live broadcast at the Pasadena Civic. For directions or to make reservations, call KPCC weekdays at (818) 585-7000. Several of CART's earlier productions are being aired beginning this month on many of NPR's affiliate stations.

Many APR stations will air *Empire of the Air* sometime between Feb. 8 and Feb. 29. The radio production is a 90 minute drama. Steve Allen is the narrator. Locally, KCRW-FM will carry the show Feb. 9 at 7 pm and KPCC-FM will air the program Feb. 23 at 5 pm.

Milton Berle appears on Larry Mantle's *Airtalk* at KPCC-FM at 6 pm, Feb. 3. On March 8 the station's *Same Time—Same Station* program salutes *Space Patrol*. Guests will include Ed Kemmer (Commander Corey), announcer Dick Tufeld, writer Lou Huston and Andy Anderson, an authority on the radio-tv series. The show begins at 5 pm.



SPERDVAC FRIENDS

Dorothy Geiger

(In memory of Milton Geiger)

Elliott Reid

(In memory of John McIntire & Howard Duff)

Kay St. Germain

(In memory of Meri Bell Sharbutt)

John Larch

(In memory of Vivi Janiss)

Art Hern

(In memory of Herb Nelson)

William Froug

(In memory of Mort Fine)

Joe Thompson

(In memory of Earl Robinson)

Frank Bresee

(In memory of Andre Baruch)

Marty Halperin

(In memory of Dick Joy)

Harry Bartell

(In memory of Jack Johnstone)

Rita Perrin

(In memory of Vic Perrin)

Shirley Mitchell

(In memory of Howard Duff & Elliott Lewis)

True Boardman

(In memory of Bud Hiestand, Elliott Lewis & John McIntire)

IN MEMORY OF DOUGLAS EDWARDS, PIONEER NETWORK NEWSCASTER

Bob Newhart

Bernard Katz

Casey Kasem

Chuck Benedict

John Wrisley

Naomi Lewis

Dick Murphy

Andy Russell

Audrey Marsh

Joan Banks Lovejoy

Alice Backes

Russell J. Folsom

John B. Daball

Truda Marson & Richard Chandlee

Mary Jane Croft Lewis

Vern Carstensen

Doris Singleton

Jonathan Hole

Roy Rowan

Lucia Silvestri

Garry Papers

Hy Averback

Henry Tchop, Jr.

Barbara Whiting

William Conrad

Lucille Meredith

Glenhall Taylor

Jack Brown

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

Fred Allen At Old Orchard Beach

By Walter J. Beaupre

In his next-to-last "Town Hall Tonight" show of the '39 season (see 6-21-39 SPERDVAC G-1182) Fred Allen interviews the egomaniac director/producer Dawson Bells (Orson Welles?) about his summer theater plans. At one point in the script we hear:

BELLS: Mid-summer I'm presenting a season of Shakespeare in a lighthouse off the coast of Old Orchard, Maine.

ALLEN: What about the audience?

BELLS: The audience will be in Biddeford ten miles away.

ALLEN: How will people know what's going on?

BELLS: The orchestra seats will have telescopes.

The balcony seats will have opera glasses. . .

ALLEN: And the folks in the gallery?

BELLS: Er. . .they can't see me.

ALLEN: And that goes for me too!

(A polite "titter" from the studio audience is heard.)

As the most cerebral of the radio comics Fred Allen often went over the heads and around the flanks of his listeners. In retrospect the bit was potentially very funny on many levels, but on one level the Old Orchard/Biddeford reference was strictly an in-house joke.

Fred must have been looking forward to spending his vacation as he usually did at Old Orchard Beach. He of course knew – as few of his listeners did – that Old Orchard was a lively summer resort and that Biddeford was a hopelessly "square" mill town a few miles south. Biddeford was the place where you took your laundry or went grocery shopping on a rainy beach day: strictly from dullsville. I'm speaking now from the point of view of a "hip" tourist in 1939 – not as an upstanding citizen of Biddeford/Saco today who lives a stone's throw from George Bush's summer place in Kennebunkport!

But Old Orchard did indeed "swing" for the two months of summer each year. It was directly accessible by train from Boston and New York, by Grand Trunk Railroad from Montreal, by trolley from either Portland or Kennebunkport by way of Biddeford/Saco, and by auto from all other points. Old Orchard was called "Canada's Miami Beach," and French as well as English was heard everywhere. Robert Taylor in his excellent biography *Fred Allen: His Life and Wit* spends an entire chapter (pp. 211-220) on Fred's Old Orchard vacations, explaining that Fred's Aunt Lizzie took him there as a child. Taylor also mentions Ocean Park, a very quiet, conservative Baptist enclave right next door.

As luck would have it, the present writer spent the first two weeks of August, 1939, as a 14 year old at Camp Judson in Ocean Park. Now, every red-blooded male at Camp Judson had two goals in mind: (1) to make contact with as many girls as possible at Camp Hazzeltine and (2) to sneak off to "wild and wicked" Old Orchard whenever possible. The present writer had a third goal which evolved from rumors floating around Camp Hazzeltine that radio star Fred Allen had a cottage just over the town line in O.O. – and had been sighted! I was bound and determined to meet Fred Allen.

Fred was my favorite of all the radio comedians. The morning after each of his shows I would drive my family crazy by repeating as many of his jokes as I could remember – which was most of them! Imagine what a thrill it would be to meet him in person. That would make the two weeks at summer camp complete! With a fellow camper I devised a plan. Every afternoon when we went to the beach swimming we took turns standing watch opposite the cottage identified as the Allen residence. By mid August the North Atlantic warmed enough so that



you didn't need to test the waters with a brass monkey, but we still spent very little time battling the surf. Walking back and forth from the beach to the Allen cottage was a pleasant diversion. Actually the cottage rented by Fred was small and very modest. I remember it was not ocean-front property and stood very close to the road connecting Ocean Park to Old Orchard. It faced southeast. There was an open porch along the front. I don't remember any "Beware of the Dog" sign mentioned in Taylor's account. We simply stood across the street watching the porch for any signs of life.

At last we were rewarded when Fred Allen appeared on his porch with another man. We yelled "Hi Fred!" and waved frantically. He stepped down off the porch to greet us. What we said to him next I don't recall, but I do remember that he surprised us by inviting us inside. He surveyed the clutter and said, "Pull up a wet bathing suit and sit down!" We roared with laughter. Fred Allen was even funnier in real life than on the radio! We didn't see Portland Hoffa nor ask about her, because it never occurred to us that Fred and Portland were married. Nor did we ask to be introduced to Fred's friend. I remember him as a kind person, a little awkward (as we were) meeting strangers, who seemed pleased that we liked his program.

Frankly, I don't remember much else about that summer except that it marked the end of childhood and innocence. On the day we were to leave camp we were told that Hitler had invaded Poland and the world was at war. During subsequent summers at Old Orchard the "Dodge-em" cars and "Noah's Ark" weren't nearly as exciting. Girls took over as the main attraction while the midway and the pier were only a backdrop. I never thought to look for Fred Allen again at Old Orchard although I listened faithfully to his radio shows during the war years. I'll always be grateful to him for being gracious to two pimply kids – for being FUNNY IN PERSON for our benefit. From what I have read since, he was apparently that kind of very special guy.

The Little Radio Station That Could

By Ray Smith

As 1991 came to an end, so too did a piece of world radio history. Radio Luxembourg, the tiny station which for over 50 years beamed English language shows into the United Kingdom and Ireland, from its studio in the heart of the Grand Duchy, broadcast for the last time, December 31.

For years Radio Luxembourg had held its own against the mighty BBC. In the 60's it staved off competition from Britain's pirate ships like Radio Caroline and Radio London. Ironically, it was probably because of Britain's short-lived love affair with the pirates that Radio Luxembourg changed its programming almost totally to reflect teen and top forty audiences and dedicated itself to the record charts.

Such was not always the case. As late as the early 60's, Radio Luxembourg was still providing balanced programming, reaching out to family, children's, religious as well as top 20 audiences. Sunday nights were reserved for quiz shows like Michael Miles' UK version of **Take Your Pick**, sponsored for years by Beechams Powders.

Variety, comedy and vaudeville were featured in the 40's and 50's. Shows like Carroll Levi's **Discoveries** and Hughie Green's **Opportunity Knocks**, gave talented newcomers the chance to "star" on the wireless and be heard by the UK's listening millions. All three of these shows later became very successful on Britain's fledgling "commercial" TV network.

And of course there was no shortage of action, suspense, Scotland Yard and even sci fi dramas. Another family favorite was **Dan Dare of the Eagle**, a space age hero transferred to radio from the comic strip pages of one of Britain's favorite "boys adventure" papers, published by the Hulton Press.

As a youngster, I recall the BBC's 5 pm children's hour, as more or less approved listening. And great programming it was, too. But my pals and I got a bigger kick tuning in Luxembourg later in the evening to enjoy the fun and games of shows like that sponsored by Ovaltine. I still remember the "gang song" of the Ovalteenies.

We are the Ovalteenies,
Happy girls and boys,
We wake each morning bright and gay,
So we enjoy our work and play
We love a song and story,
Won't you share our joys
At work or play we're never mean,
No happier children can be seen
Because we all drink Ovaltine,
We're happy girls and boys.

Another popular favorite for the younger set was sponsored by the MacDonald Penguin Biscuit Company, makers of a delicious chocolate biscuit. While the BBC's religious shows in those years ranged from Sandy McPherson's Chapel in the Valley, to the Anglican church-orientated Chorale Evensong, Radio Luxembourg happily beamed in US evangelists like Garner Ted Armstrong and the World of Tomorrow. I doubt if Canterbury was amused.

But even in those days Luxembourg carried the latest in pop music, including the top 20 and shows featuring

some of Britain's leading musical entertainers of the times. Honky tonk piano queen Winifred Atwell and the man with the "golden trumpet" Eddie Calvert were just two of the many stars who garnered large audiences for their weekly 15 minute shows and further boosted their record sales in the bargain.

Another weekly mainstay was back-to-back Scottish Requests followed by Irish Requests. One of my favorite Radio Luxembourg announcers was the smooth-voiced Englishman Peter Maddren, who suddenly became "Wee Peter Jock MacMaddren" as he tackled listener's requests from hard to pronounce places like Auchtermuchty or Clachnacudden, requesting equally hard to pronounce songs like "It's a braw bricht, moon licht nicht." His huge Scottish audience took it all with great good humor. But they never missed a show.

By this time, readers not overly familiar with the UK radio scene of those days are probably wondering why Radio Luxembourg needed to exist in its English language format when the BBC, with all its resources and talent, could have put on similar shows. The simple answer lies in the power of the almighty advertising dollar.

Under its charter, the BBC has never been allowed to carry advertising of any kind. BBC shows are financed through radio licence fees paid by the public at large. Radio Luxembourg had no such restriction. It was in fact a "permanent" pirate, perched on Britain's doorstep, bombarding the population with radio commercials for everything from soap powder to chocolate bars, from football (soccer) betting "pools" to the newest kind of dry gin. It was a terrific commercial proposition.

Apart from the English-speaking shift announcers and the technical staff, all of whom were on site in the Grand Duchy, Radio Luxembourg's production shows were all pre-recorded at studios in the West End of London and shipped back to Luxembourg for transmission over to Blighty. Surely this was a unique concept for radio anywhere. But what ever became of all the tapes or transcription records that must have been made?

Not surprisingly, many North American OTR collectors who have British shows with advertising, attribute them to the BBC. Unless they happen to be from Australia, New Zealand or South Africa (and sometimes you can be fooled) the chances are you are the proud owner of OTR from the rarest of the rare, dear old Radio Luxembourg.

Luxembourg used to have a unique sound. It came on the air to the strains of a string orchestra playing the Luxembourg Waltz. While this chirpy melody was playing, one-time booth announcers like Keith Fordyce, Ted King, Don Moss or Barry Alldis, would chant a 'voice-over' in time with the opening bars of the waltz.

Then we'd hear the famous time check gong. Not the loud "boing" of the loinclothed chap on old J. Arthur Rank movies, but a civilized short "ping" signaling the hour or half hour, followed by the phrase familiar to Luxembourg fans around the world, "this is Radio Luxembourg, your station of the stars broadcasting on 208 metres, medium wave."

To some it was the 'soap suds' station from somewhere in Europe. To many others who enjoyed Radio Luxembourg as it used to be, it will always be remembered as *The Little Radio Station That Could*.



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

WANTED: JOHNNY LUJACK radio program. In 1948, the JACK ARMSTRONG summer replacement (at least in the Midwest) was the JOHNNY LUJACK program in which Johnny was a Heisman trophy winning football player at Notre Dame, and later a Chicago Bear. I'm looking for a cassette of any of these programs. Even Mr. Lujack doesn't have any. Contact: John F. Kepler, 808 Radcliffe Avenue, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272; (213) 454-1264.

WANTED: A copy of THE GREAT GILDER-SLEEVE program in which Peavey makes his first appearance. Contact: Mickey C. Smith, The University of Mississippi, Pharmacy Administration, School of Pharmacy, University, MS 38677.

WANTED: Have dozens of reel to reel tapes, half track. Looking for someone to transfer to cassettes. You keep the reels. Reels have many radio programs. Also looking for anyone who can furnish cassette interview of November 5th TOM SNYDER SHOW with guests Lon Clark and Bob Hastings. Will trade. Contact: Don Patrissi, 93 Augusta Drive, Newington, CT 06111; (203) 666-8226.



by Barbara J. Watkins

As this column begins a new year, I'd like to thank those of you who have sent in information to share in the past, and invite all of you to use this column as a means of answering some of the zillions (well, maybe tens) of questions you may have had about radio. With over 2,000 readers, someone out there may be able to help.

Bill MacDonald of Minnesota asks: "Is that Jackson Beck's voice on both the Aamco and Little Caesar commercials? I've been impressed with his booming voice for 40-plus years. They don't make them like Beck, Mason Adams, Fred Foy or one other gentleman's voice that I've heard lately but can not place a name to it. He used to be heard on detective shows, mainly as a back up part."

Yes, that is Jackson Beck, and the other voice you hear is probably Ralph Bell, who has done a lot of voice over work. He was heard on many, many series coming out of New York during the golden age of radio, and was a part of CBS RADIO MYSTERY THEATER produced by Himan Brown in the 1970's.

WANTED: Owner's manuals for the following AKAI reel recorders: Model 1722W and Model GX-215D. Original manuals or copies are acceptable. Willing to pay a reasonable price for either. Contact: Jack Palmer, 145 North 21st St., Battle Creek, MI 49015.

WANTED: OTR shows of the QUIZ KIDS, PHIL HARRIS/ALICE FAYE SHOW. Please send list first. I have some of them. I will provide the cassette tapes, mailer and postage, or I will trade but I won't buy them. Contact: Beth Holman, 16705 Craigmere Drive., Middleburg Hts., OH 44130.

WANTED: A list of available SINATRA shows. I have a vast collection and would be willing to trade. I am very interested in his 1942-1945 radio shows and his 1950 to 1952 radio appearances. Contact: Ed O'Brien, Troy Hill Apts. Bldg. 7-2C, Troy, NY 12180.

WANTED: On audio tape the HAL PEARY SHOW, THE GREAT GILDER-SLEEVE and songs recorded by Frances Langford or Judy Canova. Contact: Kayleen Sybrandt, 3333 Morningside Road, Wilmington, DE 19810.

WANTED: COLUMBIA WORKSHOP broadcasts: "The Pussycat and the Expert Plumber Who Was a Man" 9-29-40; "Riders to the Sea" 9-19-37; "Melodrama" 5-14-38; "Richard III" 6-2-46, and "Program Preview" 8-29-36. Also, does anyone have any information as to why Edythe Wright left Tommy Dorsey's band in October 1939? Contact: Patrick King, P.O. Box 24072, Waco, TX 76702-4072.

WANTED: Photocopies of any admission tickets to OUR MISS BROOKS or to THE TIDE SHOW (Oxydol Show) with Jack Smith. Contact: Cameron Schell, 214 Fitzgerald Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

William Goldberg would like information about a book entitled *Captain Midnight* written by TV's Captain Midnight, Richard Webb. He saw an article in *Memories Magazine* Feb/March 1990 which states that Webb has published four novels, and recently completed his first book of popular history which he titled *Captain Midnight*. If anyone has information on how to obtain a copy, please contact William Goldberg, 8548 Tolbut St., Philadelphia, PA 19152, and let us know, too.

CALLING ALL CLUBS

The *Listeners of the Modern Mazarine Gramophone* is a corresponding group, (recognized by the Baker Street Irregulars) *focused* on the performances of Sherlock Holmes on stage, screen and radio. The society began in November 1990, and invites new members to join by sending \$5.00 for a one-year membership to Lawrence Nepodahl, 1230 Vienna Blvd., DeKalb, IL 60115. Lawrence is also interested in forming a club dedicated to the varied radio detectives that have come across the airwaves, everyone from Ellery Queen to Gregory Hood. If interested, please write to him at the above address.

Golden Radio Buffs of Maryland sent a copy of their Nov/Dec newsletter "On the Air." It contains lots of news about happenings in the Baltimore area and news of general interest to the radio hobby. The Golden Radio Buffs began their 21st year of existence last month, having been founded in January 1972. A hearty congratulations to them from all of us in SPERDVAC! For membership information, write to Mace Esterson, 5309

Continued on next page...

Radio in Review



ONE NIGHT STAND SERIES 1-1001. Compiled by Harry MacKenzie and Lothar Polomski. Greenwood Press Inc. 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881. 1991. Clothbound. \$49.95. 448 pages.

Greenwood Press has been the most consistent publisher of areas of radio history and their latest releases will testify to this. This is a detailed look at the Armed Forces Radio Service's **One Night Stand**. But more than that, it is also a thorough look at the history of Armed Forces Radio, an important part of our radio heritage.

The half hour **One Night Stand** transcriptions originated from live broadcasts or remotes from popular ballrooms and hotels in the United States. Every type of band was represented from novelty, Latin, Hawaiian, sweet, dance, swing to jazz. No doubt many readers have copies of some of these programs which brought a touch of home to service men and women and civilians stationed in remote locations.

The **One Night Stand** series from 1943 to 1965 made AFRS the biggest music producer the world has ever known. Except for a small number of transcriptions missing from libraries, this book is detailed.

Compilers MacKenzie and Polomski have gathered together every available shred of information for this exhaustive volume. For AFRS collectors, this book is a feast of information to assist in organizing a collection of **One Night Stand** broadcasts.

This book presents an extensively researched history of the Special Service Division of AFRS that oversaw the production of the transcribed broadcasts and how they were distributed globally. Also there is a detailed discussion of the methods and materials of transcription and reproduction as well as a history of Armed Forces Radio.

A chronological discography for the Regular Series, Fill Series, Popular Music Replacement Series, and unidentified programs follows. Five appendixes contain information such as location addresses, a directory of bandleaders, themes, and more. Many individuals helped in the preparation of this work, including honorary members Jack Brown and Marty Halperin, who supplied photos of his early days in radio at AFRS. A highly recommended book to own about a unique era in radio.

GORDON MACRAE: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY. By Bruce Leiby. Greenwood Press Inc. 1991. Clothbound. \$42.95. 256 pages.

Our second work from Greenwood Press presents a long overdue tribute to a versatile entertainer who was a part of radio's Golden Age. In an industry where success can be rare and fleeting, Gordon MacRae achieved his success in six areas of show business: theater, film, nightclubs, TV, records and radio. Many will attest that it was radio that best showcased his talents and greatest success.

Who can ever forget **The Railroad Hour**? For six

years it was a favorite of those who enjoyed the best in light operettas and good music. But MacRae's career in radio goes back long before he became host of that series. In fact, he entered radio as a page in New York but his singing ability caught the attention of executives who put him on the air, and the rest is show business, as many would say.

A separate section highlights his media credits, and his radio output is not overlooked. Besides a complete log of the **Railroad Hour**, his other starring series **Gulf Spray**, **Teentimers Club**, and **Texaco Star Theater** are also presented. Guest appearances on other programs during his ten years in radio are also included.

The **Railroad Hour** log, compiled by OTR log expert Ray Stanich, is the hands-down highlight of this work. It includes the original air date, network, length, production, and the guest star. Every production is completely and accurately presented.

This is an excellent work that highlights Gordon MacRae's own professional accomplishments and honors, his political and charitable involvements, and his personal struggles and triumphs. Looking at the personal side, the author recalls MacRae's triumph over alcoholism, his stroke, and the battle with cancer that took his life in 1986.

For a balanced look at a fine entertainer, this work will be a welcome addition to your library, whether you are a fan of good music or the career and contributions of Gordon MacRae. Excellent reading!

—Chris Lembesis

Information Please Continued

Haddon Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21207. Benefits include a newsletter published six times a year, a tape library on cassette, and meetings every other month for those who live in or visit the Baltimore area. Membership is \$20.00 for the first year, and \$15 for renewals.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Honorary member **Ward Byron** received the Diamond Circle award from Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters at its November luncheon. This award is presented to those who have made major contributions to the broadcasting industry. Congratulations! Honorary member **Lenore Kingston** writes the group's newsletter "Who's What/What's Where." She ends the October issue with a great quote from the New York Times, commenting on the TV demonstration at the 1939 World's Fair: "The problem with television is that people must sit and keep their eyes glued to a screen. The average American family doesn't have time for it."

We are always glad to hear from our honorary members and others who worked in the golden age of radio and learn what you are doing these days.

Please send information, questions or 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.



Relax, Archie!

*Last month a bit too much ink got into the printing press and this photo came out so dark we decided to run it again. Bob Hastings, left, portrayed Archie Andrews and Hal Stone was Jughead Jones when they were reunited in SPERDVAC's recreation of *The Adventures of Archie Andrews* at our convention in November.*

Charles Michelson: Syndicator of radio

Charles Michelson became involved in syndicating radio programs in the late thirties when he sold a series of 52 weekly shows to an Australian radio station. Within a short time he was busy supplying transcribed broadcasts to American stations. One of his earliest radio associations was with the **Happiness Boys** program.

When publishers Street and Smith wanted to market **The Shadow** outside the Blue Coal sales area, Michelson was hired to sell the program to sponsors in other parts of the nation.

"We sold the show to Grove's Four-Way Cold Tablets in the Mid East and Pacific Coast," he said, "and the Carrie Salt Company in the Midwest."

Selling a live show to several sponsors throughout the U.S. presented some technical problems. Several commercials had to be aired simultaneously to the proper block of stations.

"I'm no engineer, but I figured this out," he told SPERDVAC last month. "The program originated from the Empire Theatre in New York...On the center stage was the announcer and on the left stage we had a 'telephone booth' for one of the other announcers and on the right stage we had a 'telephone booth' for the Carrie Salt announcer.

"The job was to coincide the commercials for all three so they went in and out at the same time," he added. He asked the organist to stretch out bridges before and after commercial breaks to allow for slight differences in announcers' reading speeds.

Mutual Radio sales manager Ed Wood once told him the network wanted a 15 minute family show to air before **Superman**. Michelson developed the idea for a new series, **Chick Carter**, the radio offspring of Nick Carter.

Early in that series Mutual offered Chick Carter stamps to young listeners who sent a dime with their requests to join the "Chick Carter Club."

"I hadn't realized the impact of radio," he said. "But two or three days later I went into the office and I couldn't get in the door. There were stacks of bags full of mail all over the place." It took five weeks to fill all of the orders.

Chick Carter, a sustainer, remained on the air until the people at Checkerboard Square purchased the time slot in 1944 for the **Tom Mix** series.

In the fifties Michelson began syndicating American television shows in Australia.

His radio syndication work continues and he is running 27 different series throughout the world. Six programs, including **Box Thirteen**, **Dragnet** and **Cisco Kid**, currently air on the BBC. Soon he will also be supplying **Tales of the Texas Rangers** to British listeners.

This month he will air a three-part **Gangbusters** story about the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre.

Singer Ken Darby dies

SPERDVAC honorary member Ken Darby died Jan. 24. He was 82.

Mr. Darby was best known in radio as the lead singer with the King's Men on **Fibber McGee and Molly**. They performed on the NBC comedy series for nearly 13 years. He did the musical arrangement for the *Night Before Christmas* presentation aired annually on the McGee program.

Earlier, Darby sang with the King's Men on **The Kraft Program** in 1933 when the show featured Paul Whiteman.

Darby was also active in the film industry. He was responsible for musical arrangements on several Disney movies and worked on 20th Century Fox films in collaboration with Alfred Newman.

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