

SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM

Archives catalog
pages 125-126
enclosed with this
issue. If your
copy is missing,
send a SASE to
Editor Dan!

Volume 19, No. 5 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy May 1993

New Archives catalog page offers thirty hours of OTR

A variety of programs are now available to SPERDVAC members through our latest Archives Librarry catalog page. Most of this month's 30 hours of offerings are dramas or music/comedy programs.

We have completed work on recording programs from the **Matinee Theater** series. Most of the shows are radio adaptations of popular films. But there are a few exceptions. "The Highwayman" is based on the poem of the same name. "A Stable in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania" is an original radio play which was never on the silver screen.

The series **Encore Theater** features stories of individuals associated with the medical field. Some of the programs are also adaptations of films; others were written specifically for the series.

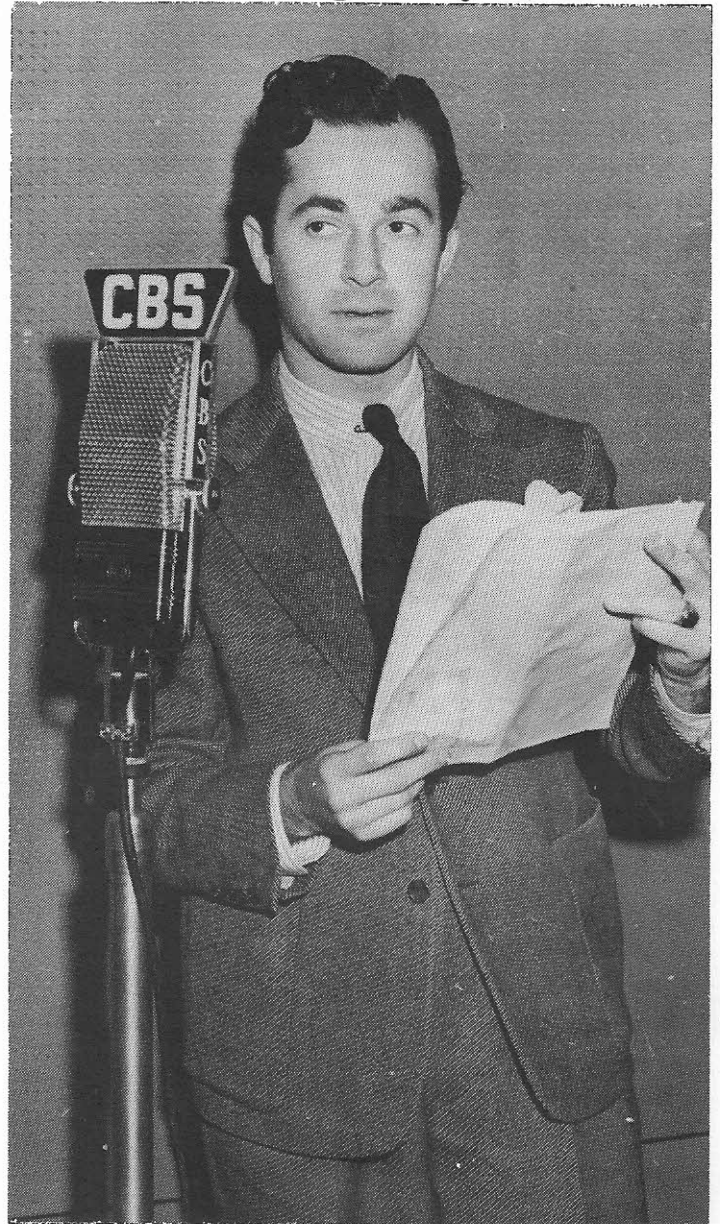
SPERDVAC members interested in special event broadcasts may enjoy the shows on Archives tape 1604. It features two special broadcasts aired in January 1942 and reflects the nation's involvement in World War II.

The **Frances Langford Show** recordings include comedy sketches on each of the 13 broadcasts. There are some paralells with the story lines on the **Mayor of the Town** programs. Both include a character named Holly Hoag (she was Holly Ann Hoag on **Mayor of the Town**). There is a noticeable connection between the sketch on the 7-17-47 Langford show and the 9-13-42 **Mayor of the Town** program.

Almost all of the programs on Archives catalog pages 125-126 were recorded from 12 inch 78 rpm records. Some are from glass discs. Others have formed a powder which is quite difficult to remove. It took us about 45 minutes to clean each of the **Frances Langford Show** recordings.

√ **Related story on page 3.**

Remembering Jerry Hausner



Long-time actor Jerry Hausner died April 1. His many contributions to American radio are reviewed beginning on page 8.

Have you used a SPERDVAC library lately?

MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

Kay St. Germain's stage performance from the trilogy "Club Indigo" opened April 23 at the Golden Theater in Burbank, CA. This is the third part of the trilogy and it is titled "Fade to Blue." Performances are 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and on Sundays at 2 and 7 p.m. The theater's phone number is (818) 841-9921.

Long-time comedian Morey Amsterdam was recently honored at an evening "Nostalgia Night"

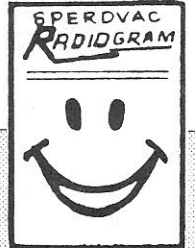
gathering by Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters. He talked of his radio and television career. Did you know he wrote dramatic spots on the **Good News** radio series, plus comedy sketches for Al Pierce, Bob Burns, Red Skelton and Will Rogers, among others? He also wrote the popular tunes "Rum and Coca Cola" and "Why, Oh Why, Did I Ever Leave Wyoming?" Amsterdam, now 84, is well remembered for his role on the Dick Van

Dyke TV series.

SPERDVAC treasurer Chester Allen has spent quite a bit of time updating the SPERDVAC index. Members can use it to look up program titles and find listings of tapes with those shows. The index, which lists all of the programs we had available as of March 1993, is available to SPERDVAC members from Carolyn Rawski. (See the SPERDVAC Directory.) Send Carolyn 98 cents in postage (OK, you can send a \$1 postage stamp if you want to add your two cents worth)

and she will mail the index. It's handy to use if you want to quickly find listings for OTR shows. (PSST! Thanks again, Mr. Allen!)

We have been fortunate to receive two nice donations: Mrs. Bob Sweeney gave us discs of Sweeney & March shows and rehearsals. And Barbara Pixley surprised us with 16 photos which had belonged to radio producer Cecil Underwood. Many thanks!



SPERDVAC FRIENDS

Jerry Burling

(In memory of Bob Jensen)

Art Hern

(In memory of Ed Prentiss)

Audrey Marsh

(In memory of Mari Bell Sharbutt & Andre Baruch)

Dix Davis

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

Jeanette Nolan McIntire

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

Kay St. Germain

(In memory of Andre Baruch)

Estelle Oppenheimer

(In memory of Jess Oppenheimer)

Parley Baer

(In memory of Mary Lansing & Howard McNear)

Phil Cohan

(In memory of Andre Baruch & Elvia Allman)

Naomi Lewis

(In memory of Dick Mack)

Dorothy Geiger

(In memory of Milton Geiger)

Hy Averback

(In memory of Bob Sweeney)

Tyler McVey

(In memory of Lou Krugman)

Herb Ellis

(In memory of Bob Sweeney & Lou Krugman)

Tim Behrens & Amzie Strickland

(In memory of Frank Behrens)

Norman Corwin

(In memory of Byron Kane, Fletcher Markle & John McIntire)

Elliott Reid

(In memory of Jerry Hausner)

Bill Cook

(In memory of Bob Crosby)

Glenhall Taylor

(In memory of Jerry Hausner)

Jean Gillespie

(In memory of Jerry Hausner)

June Foray

Chuck Benedict

Richard Murphy

Dennis Crow

Bob LeMond

Jack Younger

David Richardson

Bob Newhart

Russell J. Folsom

John Larch

John H. Bunker

Jack DaBall

Rosemary DeCamp

Gary Papers

Alice Backes

Lucy Kibbee

William Conrad

John Guedel

Casey Kasem

Walt Staves

Dr. R. S. Richards

Gerold Clemons

Sharon Douglas

Helen Garrison

Jack Brown

Lucia Silvestri

Bob Hite

Mary Jane Croft Lewis

Joan Banks Lovejoy

Charles Isaacs & Doris Singleton

Willard & Mary Anna Waterman

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

Do you recognize this radio actor?

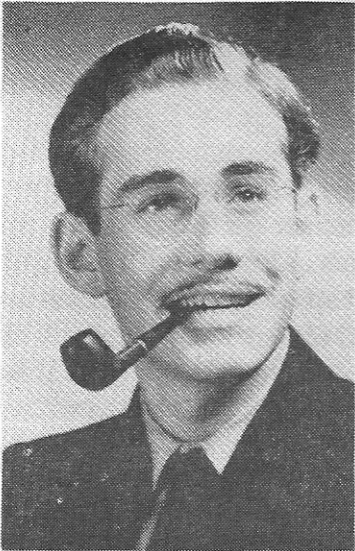


Photo taken in 1941.

We knew this actor in his younger years when he looked very different from this picture. The glasses, mustache and pipe are affectations to make him appear older. Here's a clue to his identity: those who knew him in private life recall his hatred for smoking.

Last month we were pulling your collective legs just a little. Yes, we did know we were running a picture of Adolphe Menjou. The unidentified actor behind him is character actor James Burke.

The lady at the right is still a mystery. We heard from members who thought she is Dinah Shore...or Andrea King...or Frances Langford...or Irene Manning...or Helen King.

√ The identity of this actor is on page 11.

Joyce McCluskey guests May 8

Radio actress Joyce McCluskey will be SPERDVAC's guest when we meet Saturday, May 8.

McCluskey worked in network radio's dramatic programs beginning in the late forties.

Her credits include **Dragnet, Lux Radio Theater, Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar, Suspense, The Whistler, This is Your FBI, Gunsmoke** and **Pete Kelly's Blues**.

Other radio programs on which she appeared include **Stars Over Hollywood, Halls of Ivy, Family Theater, Broadway is My Beat** and **Broadway is My Beat**.

She also did some radio soap operas, including **This Woman's Secret** and **Alias Jane Doe**.

The May 8 SPERDVAC meeting begins at 12 noon. We will meet at St. Andrew's Luthern Church, 15520 Sherman Way, Van Nuys. The meeting is open free to the general public.

Catalog pages now computer generated

by John Gassman
Acquisitions Chair

You may have noticed that recent Archives Library catalog pages have been compiled via computer. Dan Haeefe did them on his computer, just as he has done the newsletter. And as of last month the General Library catalog page additions are also prepared the same way.

For many years both Barbara Watkins and Dan Haeefe have typed catalog pages on a standard typewriter for SPERDVAC. And while there is nothing wrong with that format, using a computer offers us many more advantages.

Computers allow us to choose more readable typefaces, use bold type and italics, and give the pages a nicer look. We are trying to make pages easier to read and make it easier to locate programs quickly.

Another advantage of computer-generated catalog pages is the ability to quickly make

changes and corrections.

SPERDVAC needs two or three volunteers from anywhere in the nation with computers capable of duplicating our present format. With additional help, we hope we can eventually issue two or three catalog pages at a time. Currently our goal is to issue a catalog page from either the Archives or General libraries each month.

Additional volunteers with good quality recording equipment capable of dubbing from open reel to cassette (or from open reel to open reel) are needed. Members able to help with recording work may contact me at (310) 947-9800. Those willing to assist with our computer plan should contact Dan Haeefe directly.

We again thank Barbara Watkins and Dan Haeefe for their typing efforts in the past and look forward to the new computer-generated catalog pages in the future.

SPERDVAC meetings

Held the second Saturday of the month at 12 noon.

June 12- South Pasadena Public Library
1115 El Centro,
South Pasadena

July 10- Thousand Oaks Public Library
1401 E. Janns Road,
Thousand Oaks

Aug. 14- St. Andrew's Luthern Church
15520 Sherman Way,
Van Nuys

Radio career credits slip by most newspaper scribes

by Thomas A. DeLong

The entertainment world recently lost a number of popular show business headliners. Accounts of their careers occupied many paragraphs, even full columns, in many daily papers. But all too often the write-ups on these venerable stars and their multi-media accomplishments failed to include their radio milestones and credits.

Fans are provided with a performer's successes and failures on stage and recordings, in television and films. Yet rarely does an obituary include information on yesteryear radio activities. Because much film, TV and disc material is regularly aired and generally retrievable as well as often available in the marketplace, these facets of a performer's work are unfailingly well covered. Old radio programs, however, are harder to come by. Out of view - in essence, earshot - such broadcasts simply slip by most newspaper writers.

The widely heralded tagline - "star of stage, screen and radio" - once had real meaning and appeal. Indeed, radio filled many hours a week in a show business agenda and lined plenty of pockets as well. And, no doubt, these stars themselves would be among the first to remind obit writers of their accomplishments at the radio mike.

In a full-page 3,500 word account of Helen Hayes' life in *The New York Times*, for example, no mention of her days on the air was made. The first lady of the American theatre pioneered in early radio drama. The **Helen Hayes Theatre** brought well produced plays to

listeners for a number of seasons as early as 1935. Later, in the 1940s she broadcast dramatizations of popular stories and even supervised the entire production, including casting. As late as 1963, Hayes headed a radio repertoire company called **The G. E. Theatre**, a prestigious but shortlived series for syndication in stereo to FM stations.

And one should not overlook her many outstanding guest appearances on such memorable programs as **Lux Radio Theatre**, **The Radio Hall of Fame** and **Screen Guild Theatre**. Even **The Bard** gained an audience when Helen Hayes helped to bring **Streamlined Shakespeare** to radio in a 1937

Continued on page 7

McGee's Closet

McGee's Closet is a free service to our members and honorary members. Send your wants in OTR-related material to McGee's Closet, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91301. Please specify desired taping format (cassette or open reel).

WANTED: The following books: *Radio's Golden Years* by Vincent Terrace, *The Great Radio Comedians* by Jim Harmon, and *Tune In Yesterday* by John Dunning. Please send price and condition. Contact: Dennis Duffy, 625 Lost Pine Way, Absecon, NJ 08201, (609) 748-1050.

WANTED: Any existing 1930's programs of: **THE JACK PEARL SHOW**, **THE SMITH FAMILY**, **THE SMACKOUTS**, **LIGHTS OUT** (15 minutes, before Oboler), **BETTY AND BOB**, **PAINTED DREAMS**, **TODAY'S CHILDREN** and **CLARA, LU AND EM**. Also want to buy or trade for more **WITCHES TALES** and **HERMITSCAVE**. Send lists. Contact: Robert Schultz, 7943 N. Kolmar Avenue, Skokie, IL 60076.

WANTED: **HAWK LARABEE**, 1947-48 western, CBS, any format. Original title **HAWK DURANGO** 1946-47. Contact: Stan Delahoyde,

Box 33063, Phoenix, AZ 85067.

WANTED: Missing episodes of BBC's **PAUL TEMPLE** "Jonathan Mystery" last episode, "Alex Affair" episode 2, "Van Dyke Affair" episode 1; BBC's "The Hard Buy" episode 2; "Same River Twice" episode 3; "Spy Who Came in from the Cold" episode 4; "I Claudius" episodes 2 and 3; **LORD PETER WIMSEY** "So Much Blood" episode 5. Will swap. I have over 12,000 shows on cassette. Contact: Larry Siskind, 3725 131st Avenue NE, Bellevue, WA 98005.

WANTED: Photographs of Armed Forces Radio Service broadcasts and behind the scenes photos, especially those of the Meredith Willson orchestra. Contact: Bill Sherman, 695 Temple Hills Drive, Laguna Beach, CA 92651, (714) 494-1359.

WANTED: Microphone for Uher 4000 tape recorder (plays 5" open reels). Contact: Larry Dobkin c/o SPERDVAC.

Have you heard these shows?

We've been culling through a large quantity of radio show scripts donated to SPERDVAC and have come across several for network broadcasts unfamiliar to us. Perhaps some of our readers can shed some light on these:

What's on Your Mind? A 30 minute evening show on CBS in 1940. Tom Breneman is the host and Art Gilmore is the announcer. Guests allegedly from the studio audience express opinions or offer ideas on changes or inventions they would like to see. But, the whole show is really scripted. On the 10-10-1940 show one guest wanted to build a road across the Bering Straits "to connect the tip of Alaska with Asia." His reason: "It would bring the climate of Hawaii to the whole Pacific Coast." An unrelated series of the same name aired on CBS in 1936.

The Ghost Walks. A 15 minute evening show on CBS. This script is dated 8-29-1946 and might have been a summer replacement series. It aired at 8:45 p.m. and presented each week "another strange fantasy as told by the conscience of a person who actually lived." In the program's opening the announcer tells listeners "each Thursday evening as the Ghost Walks, he is forced to live again the misdeeds which destined him to walk and walk — and tell and retell his story, through all eternity."

The Adventures of Dr. Hunt. "Crime! Mystery! Action! The Adventures of Dr. Hunt, and the Wonder Dog! — Friskie." Guess what dog food sponsored this Sunday afternoon show on CBS? Art Gilmore announced this one, too. The main character and his dog solve mysteries in just 15 minutes. The series aired in 1940.

Retribution. This show was broadcast over ABC's Pacific Coast stations in 1946-47. In February 1946 it was airing Thursday nights at 6:15. Later it was shifted to the 9 p.m. slot on Tuesdays. Dwight Hauser was the writer-director of these stories of "that entity which guarantees payment in kind for all who tread the paths of waywardness." The thirty minute drama was narrated by Lou Merrill. His opening lines, in "authoritative-cynically pleasant" vocal tones, are: "Retribution - Unavoidable - Inevitable! Yet, there are always some who invite its tragic call! DO YOU???" We don't have any recordings from this series. *Do you?*

None of these shows are listed in *The Big Broadcast, Tune in Yesterday* or even in Jay Hickerson's new *Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming and Guide to All Circulating Shows*. We would enjoy hearing from readers who have additional details about any of these programs or from performers who have recollections of working on the show.

SPERDVAC Directory

All articles and artwork © 1993 by SPERDVAC unless otherwise indicated. Published monthly except December 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: P. O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9712. (310) 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 90250-7108 (310) 973-5060.

LIBRARIES:

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

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

GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1001+: George Lovas, P. O. Box 3757, Crestline, CA 92325-3757

GENERAL LIBRARY - Open reels 1-500: Don Keith, Box 5861, Glendale, CA 91221.

GENERAL LIBRARY - Open reels 501 +: Jim Allen, Box 500, N. Hollywood, CA 91603-0500.

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 1-500: Richard Karman, 2515 NE 37th, Portland, OR 97212.

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 - Open reels 1-1000: CLOSED

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

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

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

AUDIO RADIOGRAM: 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, 1329 Garrison, 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 & printed materials): John Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603. (310) 947-9800 for both General and Archives Libraries.

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



by Barbara J. Watkins

We are happy to announce that recent reports of the death of Jim Harmon, the author of a number of books on old time radio, have been greatly exaggerated. We spoke to him shortly after hearing the rumor and he is fine. He was not in Chicago nor involved in a train accident anywhere else either. Jim's most recent book, *Radio Mystery and Adventure and Its Appearances in Film, Television and Other Media*, is available from the author for \$42.50 postpaid. You can contact Jim at 634 So. Orchard, Burbank, CA 91506, 843-5274.

Calling All Clubs
Radio Collectors of America (RCA), 8 Ardsely Circle, Brockton, MA 02402, meets monthly and often has telephone interviews with people who worked in the golden age of radio. The members were delighted to have Sheldon Leonard available by phone at their March meeting. Secretary Bob Levin wrote in the April issue of their newsletter, "It was fascinating to listen to this talented 86-year-old man relating to us his adventures in the many

mediums he has participated in throughout his life. Relating stories and anecdotes about himself and people he starred with, Mr. Leonard kept us enthralled. This was probably the best telephone interview we have ever had."

Milwaukee Area Radio Enthusiasts has had the dedicated services of Ken Pabst as the editor of their newsletter ever since the club began in 1975. After 17 years he is stepping down, for a well deserved rest. Congratulations, Ken, for your contributions to your club and the old time radio hobby!

Tune In, issue #4, contains a letter from George Wagner announcing the formation of an organization for younger collectors called Audio 2100. The idea is still in the planning stage. Tentatively, the voting membership would be limited to those under age 35, although others could join as advisory or associate members. If you have any suggestions or comments, write to George Wagner, 2411 Ohio Avenue, Apt. #2, Cincinnati, OH 45219. To subscribe to *Tune In* write to Rob Imes, 1844 East Longmeadow, Trenton, MI 48133. The bimonthly publication sells for \$1.00 per issue.

Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club publishes a newsletter called *Radio Recall* every other month, edited by veteran OTR writer Jack French (whom some of you

may remember from *NARA News*, the quarterly publication of the North American Radio Archives.) The MWOTRC was organized in 1984 by Jim Burnette, their president emeritus. Membership dues are \$15.00 per year for those living within 40 miles of Washington, D.C. and \$10.00 to everyone else. The club has both cassette and reel-to-reel libraries. To join, write to Jack French, 5137 Richardson Drive, Fairfax, VA 22032. Please enclose a SASE if reply is desired.

Where Are They Now?

We are glad to hear from *Bob Hite* who worked in radio and television for 50 years. He worked at WXYZ in Detroit for seven years where he was commercial announcer on **The Lone Ranger** and narrator on **The Green Hornet** and **Challenge of the Yukon**. He left WXYZ to take a job as staff announcer at CBS in New York where he worked for 35 years, until he retired. He now lives in Sarasota, Florida and still does some volunteer announcing. His son Bob Hite Jr. followed him into broadcasting and is the 6 and 11 pm anchorman on the NBC station in Tampa, Florida.

Send your questions, comments and information 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!

Trading roster information needed

There's still time to be added to SPERDVAC's trading roster. Send these details to Dan Haefele, 4366-D 136th St., Hawthorne, CA 90250. Send him a SASE if you'd like a copy. Members with longer lists of collecting interests may use a separate sheet. The trading roster is for SPERDVAC members only.

SPERDVAC 1993 TRADING ROSTER INFORMATION

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (optional) (____) _____

Desired recording format(s) _____

Collecting interests _____

If you don't want to cut up your Radiogram, feel free to photocopy this page or neatly print/type your information and mail it to the editor.

Radio credits slip by scribes *Continued from page 4*

summer festival. But all these accomplishments were overlooked in most tributes to Hayes.

The Los Angeles *Times*, on the other hand, briefly noted her radio performances in its front-page article. Although it mentioned the Helen Hayes Theatre of the 1930s, a wartime nursing recruiting show and other public service spots, this paper's extensive, and other exemplary, tribute fell short on radio attainments.

Other recent obits similarly omitted important radio credits, too. Actor Dana Andrews' well-received starring role in the syndicated 1952 series **I Was a Communist for the FBI** never got mentioned. Coverage of bandleader-singer Bob Crosby failed to include his music-making on **The Camel Caravan**, **Pet Milk Show** and **Club 15**, and for Jack Benny one or two seasons. In the mid-1940s Jose Ferrer played Philo Vance, one of radio's popular detectives. His performances as this private eye disappeared from his career credits without a trace.

Radio aficionados, however, were heartened to read of Dick York's youthful foray as **Jack Armstrong** on Chicago radio and Ray Denton's participation in **Let's Pretend** on many a Saturday morning in New York.

Legendary Broadway and film musical star Vivienne Segal died at 95 last December. While The New York *Times* covered her stage successes (ranging from Sigmund Romberg's "Desert Song" to Rodgers & Hart's "Pal Joey") and screen achievements (notably Romberg's "Viennese Nights" and Jerome Kern's "The Cat and the Fiddle") that journal gave no indication of her

busy radio schedule.

Significantly, it was radio that rescued Segal and gave her singing jobs when she lost all her savings in the stock market crash and Depression. Once again, the Los Angeles *Times* recognized an entertainer's radio career, in this case, reminding readers of Vivienne Segal's widely listened-to, mid-1930s performances on **American Album of Familiar Music** and



When musician Bob Crosby died on March 9 newspapers mentioned little of his radio work.

Waltz Time.

Too often radio fans and collectors fail to reach out and remind the media of radio's role in the history of 20th century entertainment. Perhaps they concentrate on preaching to the already converted. Now more than ever, with golden-age broadcasting gone from the air for nearly 40 years, it's time to emphasize the part that radio played in the life and career of an actor, singer, comedian or bandleader. This needs to be "broadcast" beyond vintage radio parameters. It must be beamed toward journalists in the mainstream. Only then will radio of the past begin to gain the high recognition it once received and still justly deserves.

SPERDVAC member Thomas DeLong is the author of many books and articles on broadcasting. They include **Frank Munn: A Biodiscography of The Golden Voice of Radio** (with co-author Rodney Steiner) which will be published by Sasco Associates this fall.

Writer Jim Harmon is still ALIVE!
(Regret same named man's death)

Still selling his new book:

RADIO MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE

Long entries in depth — *The Shadow, Lone Ranger, Tom Mix, I Love a Mystery*, much more. Over 300 pages, fifty photos, hardbound, autographed, \$42.50 postpaid. Phone: (818) 843-5472.

Jim Harmon

634 S. Orchard Dr.

Burbank, CA 91506

Radio character actor Jerry Hausner dies



Actors Ronald Colman, Jerry Hausner and Elliott Lewis go over a script for a *Favorite Story* broadcast in 1946.

by Dan Haefele

Radio actor Jerry Hausner died April 1. He was 83.

Hausner's first stage appearance was in a 1927 production at Central High School in Cleveland. Around the same time he sold newspapers after taking over the street corner where Bob Hope sold papers.

Also during his high school days a friend asked him to visit WJAY radio in Cleveland, where they were invited to go on the air. The two

young friends performed comedy routine gratis, billing themselves as Sid and Jerry.

After he graduated, Hausner joined a traveling vaudeville company. When the troop returned to Cleveland for a few days, Warren Wade, station manager at WTAM radio, introduced him to two young performers who wanted to audition a comedy show without scripts.

The actors were Chet Lauck and Norris Goff, who America would later know as Lum and Abner. He

agreed to write a sketch in which he would portray a fast talking medicine salesman on their live audition broadcast.

"I came in from the audience and interrupted them with my script," he told SPERDVAC in a 1986 interview. "But these guys never looked at a script. They didn't say one thing that I had written." Later, he said, the ad lib artists were forced to write scripts for their weekday 15 minute program.

Continued on next page

Radio character actor Jerry Hausner dies

About two years later, Hausner again met the team in New York. He introduced them to actress Velma McCall, who joined their network program in Chicago. When the **Lum and Abner** program moved to Hollywood in 1937, McCall went with them and Hausner soon followed. She later married Hausner.

During his days in New York, Hausner and his girlfriend Velma often went to watch broadcasts of **Maxwell House Showboat**. "We used to go up to see this program in Radio City. They paid us a dollar apiece to be members of the audience," he recalled. "That paid for our dinner because they didn't know you could get people to come in for nothing."

Early days in Hollywood

In his early days in Hollywood, Hausner was an underemployed actor renting a furnished room near the networks' broadcasting studios. "I couldn't afford bus fare," he explained.

Director Glenhall Taylor hired Hausner to perform on **Silver Theater**, providing the young actor one of his first Hollywood radio jobs. His association with Taylor led to other work, including **Screen Guild Theater**. "If you got to know (radio) people, they hired you," Hausner observed. "There wasn't as much auditioning as there is today."

True Boardman, another of early radio's top directors, hired Hausner for a show called **Sunset at Nine**. "The Sunset Oil Company sponsored it," Hausner recalled. "It was a live show Sundays at 9 p.m. It was a variety show. Boardman was going to use a record of a baby cry,

but it was too scratched up. So I said, 'I can do a baby cry for you.'"

Radio crier

Hausner's ability to do a very convincing baby cry, which he had learned from the Spanish clown **Petito**, would bring him work on many of network radio's most successful programs. He cried for American radio listeners on the **Bob Hope Show**, the **Jack Benny Show**, and even on the opening commercial for **Mayor of the Town**.

Another of his early radio jobs was on **Thrills**. The program paid \$15 and provided him new contacts. There he met Hanley Stafford and Frank Nelson. "I remember Hanley saying, 'You know, I've had a very good week. If get another five dollar job I'll have fifty bucks this week.'"

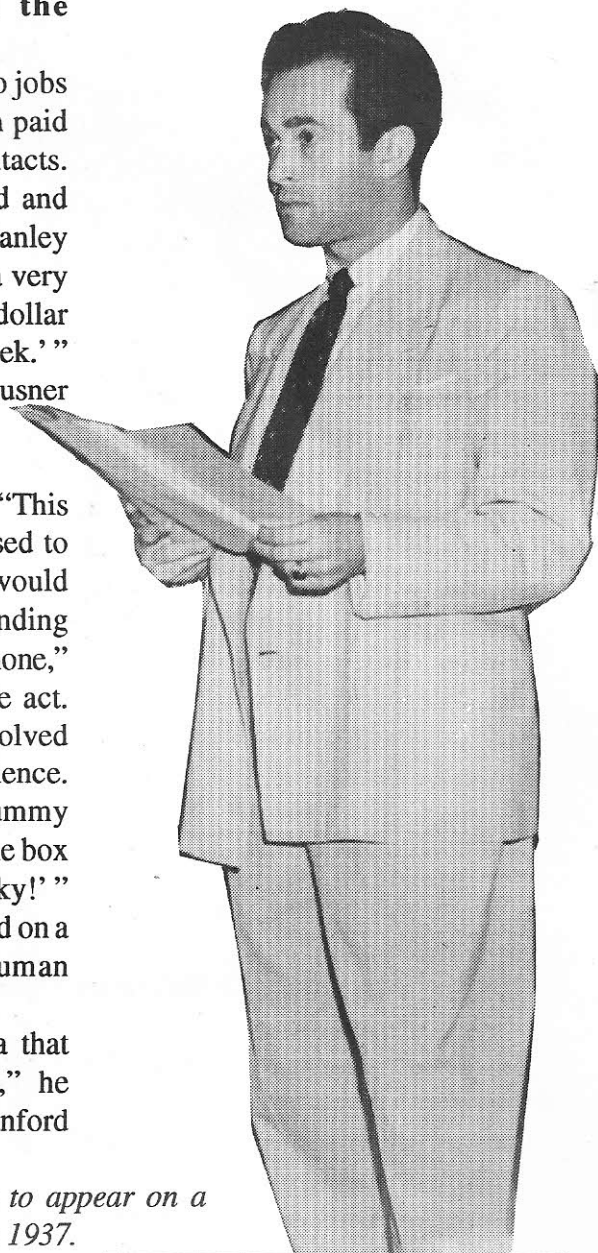
During the late thirties Hausner and Frank Gabby brought an old vaudeville act of theirs to the **Rudy Vallee Show**. "This ventriloquist I worked with used to sometimes lose his voice and I would fake the dummy's voice by standing in the wings and using a microphone," he explained of his vaudeville act. "Most of the time our act involved me heckling him from the audience. Then, when he brought the dummy out, the dummy looked up to the box and saw me and said, 'Hi, Stinky!'" Hausner and the dummy carried on a conversation making his human partner the butt of their jokes.

"Somebody got the idea that we should go on the radio," he continued. Producer Tony Stanford

scheduled them for the Vallee program.

Hausner and Frank Gabby did a comedy sketch without a dummy on Vallee's **Fleischmann Hour**, but got only a lukewarm reception from the studio audience. The following week they appeared again, this time using material written for them by Billy K. Wells. And because Gabby disliked doing routines with a

Continued on next page.



Jerry Hausner awaits his cue to appear on a Silver Theater broadcast in 1937.

Radio's Jerry Hausner dies



"I can do this lying down," Jerry Hausner might have joked. That's Elliott Lewis holding the CBS microphone. Photo was taken in 1939 following a Silver Theater broadcast.

dummy, they never tried using one on the air.

"Our fourth week on the Vallee program they hired Edgar Bergen," he said. "Bergen was an inferior ventriloquist, but he had something Gabby didn't have. Charlie McCarthy had a personality. He was like another human being. It didn't matter that he was a wooden dummy. He came off on the air as another kind of a character."

In 1937 Ed Gardner, who would later become the famed Archie of **Duffy's Tavern**, hired Hausner for a **Good News of 1937** broadcast. (Hausner often provided meals for Gardner in their lean New York days.) Once, during a rehearsal lunch break, Hanley Stafford had a plan which would aid his career.

"You want to go have some lunch now," asked Hausner, who

played Baby Snook's little brother. "Let's wait until this theater clears," Stafford replied. "I have to do something and I don't want anyone to see me."

When almost everyone had left, Stafford penciled in his name on the announcer's copy of the opening credits. "The following week, they were so successful with the Baby Snooks routine, they were held over," Hausner explained. "They used the same opening page of the script because it was their standard opening, so Hanley's name was now typed in."

Stafford had added name credit to his \$35 a week compensation. The credit helped him get other radio jobs and the success of the Baby Snooks routine he did with Fanny Brice gave him leverage for demanding a higher salary. "He went on strike every

year, held out for more money, and was eventually getting \$3000 a week," Hausner revealed.

A friend gave him a letter of introduction to Edward G. Robinson. Robinson hired Hausner for parts in the **Big Town** radio series.

In the late forties Hausner tricked his friend Jim Backus into auditioning a voice for a proposed series of cartoons. Backus did not like to audition for jobs so Hausner arranged for them to be invited into a studio to see the work being done on the shows. Before the afternoon was over Backus became the voice of Mr. McGoo and Hausner was his nephew Waldo.

Hausner's circle of radio friends included Herb Vigran, who he introduced to Glenhall Taylor. Vigran, too, became a performer on **Silver Theater**.

During World War II Hausner worked for the Armed Forces Radio Service. He produced the AFRS shows **Yank Swing Session** and **Personal Album**. "**Yank Swing Session** was interesting for me because all I had to do was assemble some records," Hausner recalled. "I didn't know enough about swing music so we got Johnny Mercer. He would come down once a week and go through our library to pick out the choice records to be played on the show."

"We had Shirley Temple and June Allyson and other big stars on as mistress of ceremonies," he added.

Hausner, like so many of radio's professionals, was able to do many dialects and accents. But he made a living sounding very much like himself.

Continued on next page

Jerry Hausner conclusion

"I became well known as a guy who sounded as if he just walked in off the street," he observed. "I didn't sound like an actor at all. I realized that was a saleable commodity — that there were very few actors who could sound like non-actors."

Hausner also was a photographer. During the war he took many pictures for the Armed Forces Radio Service.

After the war, he was hired to play the part of Sid Weiss, lawyer to Sam Spade on the audition program for a radio series William Spier planned for broadcast on CBS. Actor Lloyd Nolan was set to play the lead. When a contractual obligation prevented Nolan from appearing on the program, Hausner watched as several actors auditioned for the role.

Wally Maher, Frank Lovejoy and Elliott Lewis all auditioned for the part the same day Howard Duff

won the lead role on **Sam Spade**. "I didn't audition for it because I already had a part," Hausner explained.

But Spier decided not to use the character Hausner had been set to portray. "I was on that show from the beginning to the end," he said. "I played all kinds of parts but the character of Sid Weiss never came back."

"The paradox was that if you heard him on a **Sam Spade** show as a tough cabbie, you'd never imagine he was such a cultured man," noted Hausner's long-time friend, actor Elliott Reid.

At Hausner's memorial service Reid noted, tongue-in-cheek, that **Sam Spade** producer/director William Spier needed "actors who feared nothing and would stoop to anything." Reid noted in jest, "So, of course, Jerry was perfect for that show."



Jerry Hausner, left, played a lot of tough characters opposite his long-time friend Howard Duff on *The Adventures of Sam Spade*.

Some nostalgic gatherings

These gatherings may be of interest to SPERDVAC members:

"An Al Jolson Festival" is set for July 8-11 at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel and the Friars' Club. It includes screenings of vintage Jolson films including "The Singing Fool," "The Singing Kid" and "Go Into Your Dance." There will also be a presentation of rare film footage of Jolson's 1940 Broadway stage show "Hold On To Your Hat."

Guests and entertainers will include Clive Baldwin (whose natural singing voice is Jolson's vocal twin), Evelyn Keyes, Davey Lee (the original Sonny Boy) and Betty Garrett (Mrs. Larry Parks).

The cost of the entire convention is \$165 before May 15 and \$200 after. Checks should be made payable to the International Al Jolson Society and mailed to Harry Rhinehart, 12 Mauger Rd., Elverson, PA 19520.

The *Lone Pine Film Festival* will salute the 60th anniversary of the Lone Ranger when they gather at Lone Pine, California on June 5 and 6. Their guests will include Clayton Moore, Richard Beals and announcer Fred Foy. The cost is \$150 for the entire weekend. Their address is P. O. Box 111, Lone Pine, CA 93545.

Cruises of Distinction, in conjunction with the radio program *When Radio Was*, has an OTR-related Caribbean cruise slated for late June. It features OTR seminars, program recreations, trivia contests and more. On hand will be Art Flemming and sound effects expert Ray Erlenborn. The ship leaves San Juan on June 26, returns July 3. For details and prices call them at 1-800-634-3445.

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 • Who is the actor?
 • the photograph was taken.
 • was still in high school when
 • He's Byron Kane. He
 •

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When *Lights Out* originated from Chicago, Boris Aplan's menacing voice announced, "Lights out...everybody!" Here he is about to cut off the lights at NBC's Chicago studios.