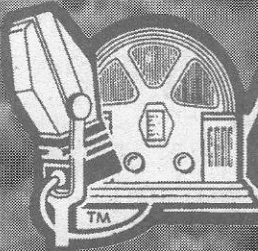


CHARACTER ASSOCIATION • BOOK REVIEW • AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

Sperdvac



RADIOGRAM

Vol. 34 • No. 2

November/December 2008

The Dream Hour

THE ANSWER IS

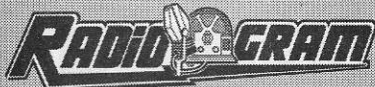
Yes! ☆

SEE
PAGE 5



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Volume 34 • Number 2 • November/December 2008



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SPERDVAC

ELECTION RULES

The Election Chair will be appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Board. The Chair will see that a notice of election is in the November-December issue of the SPERDVAC Radiogram. A copy of the election rules will also appear in the same issue.

Members wishing to run in the election for the Board of Directors must declare their candidacy to the Election Chair by Saturday, January 10, 2009.

Candidates' statements will be mailed with the ballots. The statement shall be limited to 200 words. Any words in excess of 200 words will be cut from the statements. Statements must be submitted to the Election Chair by Saturday, January 10, 2009

The Election Chair is responsible for mailing candidates' statements with the ballots. Statements will be printed in reverse alphabetical order. A candidate's name will be eliminated from the ballot if his/her membership dues are not current.

Ballots will be stamped with the SPERDVAC logo and mailed first class no later than the second Saturday in February. If the official ballot is lost or destroyed, no other ballot will be issued.

All absent voter ballots must be received by the Election Chair no later than the Friday before election day. Absentee ballots must be mailed in an envelope with the word "Ballot" clearly marked on the front. Ballots delivered in person must be taken to the location of the annual membership meeting held in March.

No ballots will be accepted after 12:15 p.m. on that day. Absentee ballots will be

placed in the possession of the Election Chair and remain unopened until all ballots are to be counted. No ballots will be counted prior to the official count.

A three person team, all non-candidates, will count the ballots. One of the team must be the Election Chair.

The results, which include the exact count of the votes for each candidate, will be announced prior to the end of the March meeting and will be published in the April newsletter.

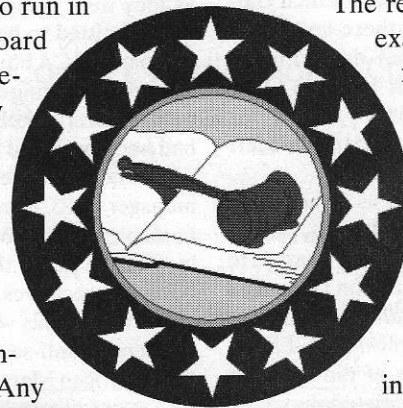
For the election to be valid, the minimum number of members voting for a quorum must be at least 5% of the membership;

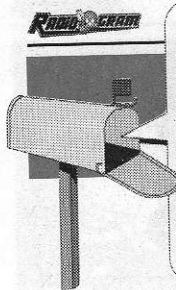
whose dues are current and are eligible to vote. If there is not the necessary number of ballots for a quorum, the Election Chair will mail new ballots by first class mail by the second Saturday in April. They shall be counted at the May meeting.

If there is a quorum and a tie should occur, a run-off election between or among those tied will take place at the March meeting if a quorum is present. If not, new ballots will be mailed in the same manner as above to vote for those who are tied.

Ballots shall be kept in the possession of the Election Chair for a period of six months following the election, they will be destroyed.

Any candidate wishing to campaign in any way not covered by these rules must apply to the Board of Directors prior to the second Saturday in February. Any candidate who campaigns in any way not covered by the election rules or approved by the Board of Directors may be disqualified as a candidate.





In The Mail

The Readers Have Their Say

No Swing, No Sway—Just Waltz

I got a kick out of “Remember Sway and Swing with Wayne King?” by Fred Essex in the September issue of *Radiogram*. The headline caught my attention right away because my parents were big fans of Wayne King.

Whenever Wayne King appeared at the Trocadero Ballroom at Denver’s Elitch Gardens my parents would be there and after the Trocadero was gone they danced to his orchestra at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs. Wayne King kept performing into his eighties when most other bandleaders of his generation were history.

Wayne King was known as “The Waltz King” and he did not “sway and swing,” but he kept his loyal fans happy for many years. He is mentioned on four pages in John Dunning’s *Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio*. According to Dunning, King helped establish Lady Esther cosmetics and made it one of radio’s most potent advertisers. It is estimated that King played more classics than any other two or three bands combined (page 73 of Dunning’s book). King’s theme song was “The Waltz You Saved for Me.”

Lon McCartt
Aurora, CO

RCA was co-founded by General Electric and Westinghouse

A few comments regarding some errors in the October piece on David Sarnoff, plus some advance info from my forthcoming music industry exposé book:

Contrary to the caption on the page 9 photo, Sarnoff was not the founder of RCA, nor was RCA formed solely by General Electric. RCA was co-founded by GE and Westinghouse. Ten years later, in 1929, RCA bought Victor Records because the government told GE and W that inasmuch as they were competitors they were no longer permitted to be joint owners of another company. RCA bought Victor in order to get the manufacturing capability and distribution network desperately needed to replace what had been provided by GE and W.

Sarnoff was hired by GE and W as general manager of RCA in 1919. By 1929 he’d risen to its presidency. When he established NBC in 1926 he ruled that no Jews be hired by NBC as executives, featured actors or staff announcers. This was because as a Jew he’d experienced anti-semitism as an office boy at the American Marconi Co. and he was aware that the Madison Ave. ad agencies were terribly anti-semitic. He was thus fearful that they would not send business to a “Jewish company”.

The announcer who broke the barrier was Hy Averbach and the actor was Ezra Stone who starred as Henry Aldrich. General

Electric bought back the moribund RCA in 1986 because boss Jack Welch wanted to get his hands on NBC Television and New York’s RCA Building. He jettisoned the world famous “His Master’s Voice” trademark, Radiomarine Corp., NBC Radio, RCA Manufacturing, RCA Broadcast Equipment, and the David Sarnoff Research Lab.

Oliver Berliner
e-mail

The caption in question was written by the editor and the error should not reflect on the scholarship of author Jim Cox.

THAT’S A LOT OF SPACE BACK THERE FOR AN ADDRESS

You’ve probably noticed the back page of this issue, and, yes, there is a lot of space back there. It’s not us, folks. New US Postal regulations went into effect this month, and the regulations demand that a page that displays a mailing address be free of all clutter so the automated readers don’t get confused. So that means nothing but the address, return address and postage permit. You’ll find the SPERDVAC directory now on page 14. What a world!



X MINUS ONE

We have just added about 60 hours of *X minus One* to our General CD Library:

800-810
1226-1246
1847-1864
1900-1952
2008-2016
2109-2356

We are planning to add more as time permits so stay tuned for
X MINUS ONE



“Jingle bells, jingle bells,
jingle all the way, O
what fun it is to
ride in a one-horse
open sleigh—*eigh!*
Jingle bells, jingle
bells, jingle all
the way, O what
fun it is to ride
in a one-horse open
sleigh.”

**THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON
SPERDVAC
WISHES EVERYONE
A JOYOUS HOLIDAY**



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

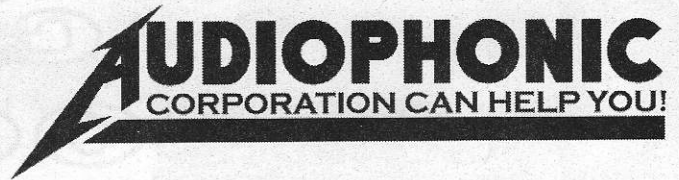
The answer is YES!

Yes!!! SPERDVAC will have an old-time radio convention in 2009. At the recent board meeting held after the regular meeting on Saturday, October 11, the board appointed Jerry Williams and Bobb Lynes as co-chairs of the CONVENTION 2009.

Convention 2009 will be held May 1, 2 & 3 at the Beverly Garland Holiday Inn on Vineland in North Hollywood. Plans are tentative so any suggestions for re-creations, workshops, panels, etc. are welcome. We're also calling for as many volunteers as we can get to help out in any way possible both before the convention and on-site at the hotel. Volunteers are NEEDED!!

For up-dates and info contact Jerry Williams at mrj1313@sbcglobal.net

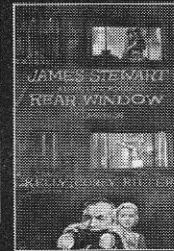
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character association

by

FRED ESSEX

When glancing at the television set if a familiar program is on, whether one of the reruns of *CSI*, *ER*, *Seinfeld* or whatever, we associate with the characters. We can define them, know what they stand for or represent, and do so without thinking. Why? We literally see them; they're there; although encased in the tube we know them.

But it wasn't so in the days of old time radio. Still, we knew the characters in the drama, knew what they represented and could relate positively or negatively to their actions. We didn't see them or had any idea what they actually looked like unless we picked up a magazine with their picture in a beauty salon or barbershop. What triggered our subconscious? Their voices. Each was distinctive, representing a specific character which our mind would accept and define.

On *Ellery Queen* when Ted deCorsia spoke we knew he was Sergeant Velie, or in the early days before the *Mercury Theatre*, The Shadow was Orson Welles. Remember the distinctive voice that called weekly, "Henry, Henry Aldrich," or Amos or Andy or the Kingfish, or the spoken meter of Bing Crosby, or Don Ameche and Frances Langford together as The Bickersons.

Think about it and let your mind wander back, if you're old enough, to the mid-forties when the voices of radio characters were familiar. At the time we didn't realize each was distinctive enough and purposely chosen to subconsciously define their character to us.

When casting from a group of several actors, each capable of a professional performance, the Casting Director had to know without any doubt the differences in their voices so there would be no confusion in the mind's-eye of the listener. Imagine the problem if both the hero and villain had similar voices! An absolute no-no yet each had to sound normal.

Yes, there were comedic situations involving such as the distinctive character voice of Arnold Stang or the high pitched laughter of a woman during the Milton Berle Radio Show and we knew it was his mother who happened to be in the front row of the studio audience each week.

Then there were times when the casting gal would hire some new people for, sup-

posedly, insignificant lines to evaluate their abilities.

Remember, all shows were live in those days with no chance of editing. I was directing a Ripley show telling the story of two unscrupulous trainers at a race track who had cut off half of the tail hair of a consistently winning allowance horse so it wouldn't be recognized. Their plan was to change its name and enter it in a cheap claiming race at the track. Since the track betters never would have heard of such a horse, it would result in long odds. Then they would bet heavily and when the horse won, they would make a bundle.

According to the true story which we were telling, they heard someone had learned of their plot. At that point the script dialogue, as well as I can recall, read:

Trainer 1: (really concerned) What'll we do? If this gets out we'll lose our licenses.

Trainer 2: Shut up! Think. There's gotta be a way.

Trainer 1: Yeah, but what?

Trainer 2: (has an idea, raising his voice) I know. Bundle the hair we cut off with a strong cord then tie it back to the rest of the tail. And who could he tell?

Trainer 1: Well, I dunno . . .

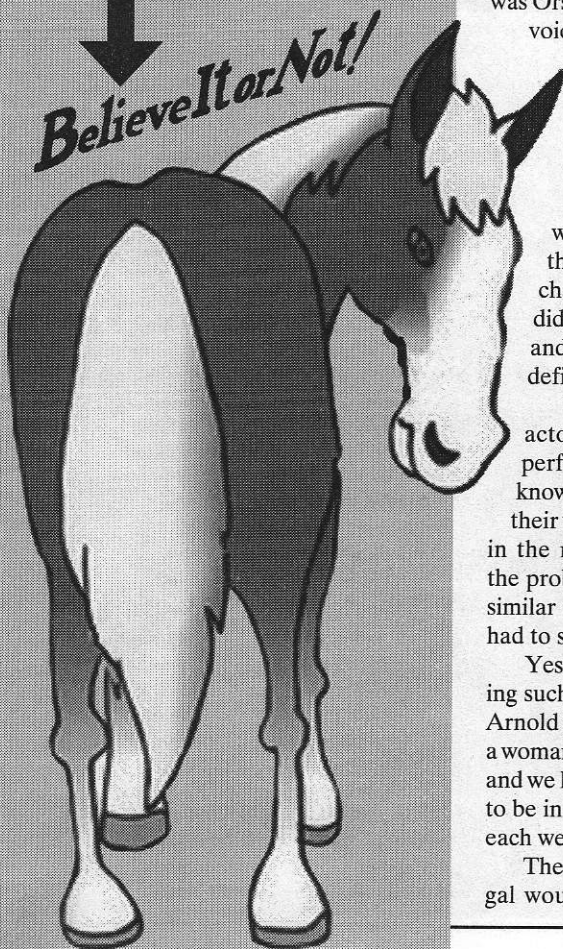
Trainer 2: (yelling at him) Go! . . . Tie it back on the horse's tail!

The new person had been assigned the part of Trainer 2 and all went well in the dress rehearsal. However, when we were on the air he evidently became so involved with the story, when he came to the last line it came out as "Go! Put it back on the horse's ass!"

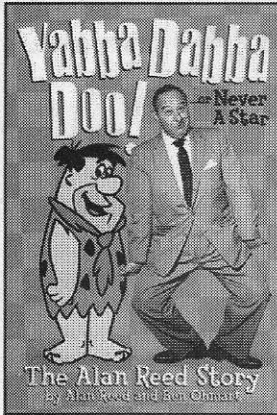
From the control room I quickly rolled my hand in a circular motion to tell them to keep going and few of the listeners would ever be sure they heard what they heard. But after the resolution and conclusion of the unusual story when Ripley gave the punch line, "Believe it or not, it's true" (he never just said "Believe it or Not") we all broke up, even the board engineer who seldom smiled.

Fortunately, those were exceptions. From week to week we purposely cast actors with distinctive voices and the listener was never aware we had trained his theatre-of-the-mind to visualize the characters they were portraying.

As Irving Berlin wrote years ago in a song still immediately recognized, "There's no business like show business." 🎵

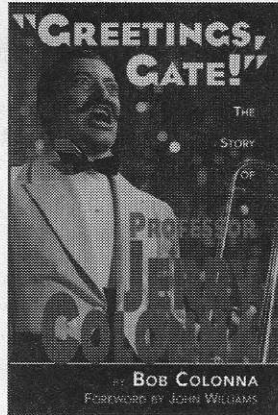


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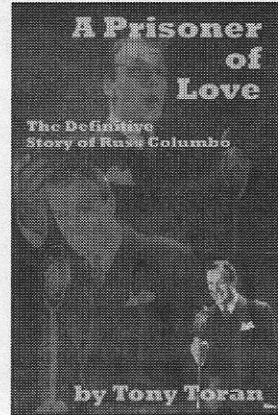
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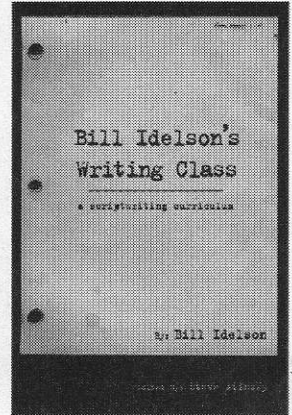
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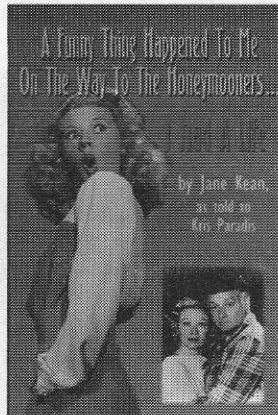
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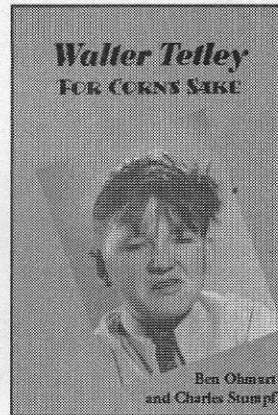
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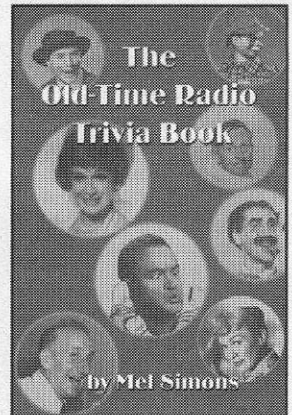
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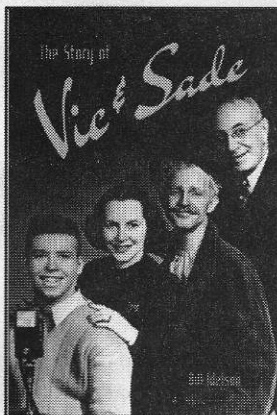
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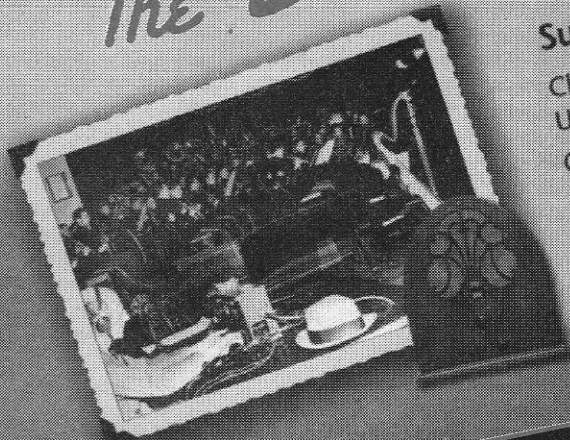
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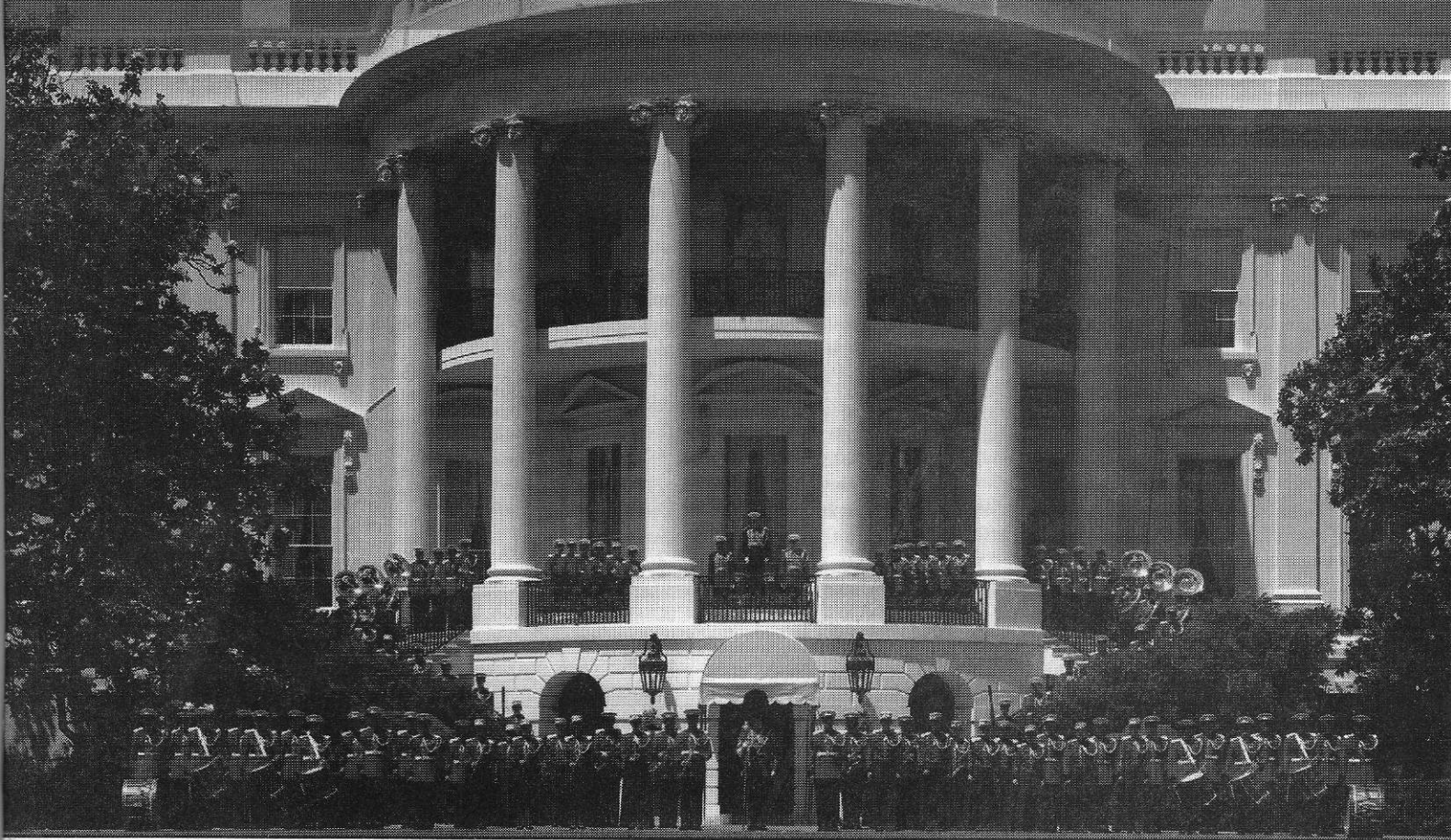
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E CORPS & THE DREAM HOUR



by Jack French

The United States Marine Band has a long and extensive broadcast history, dating back to the earliest days of the Golden Age of Radio. The band made its radio debut over a Washington, DC station on June 7, 1922, inaugurating a series of weekly musical programs. These shows were "remotes," meaning they originated not from the local radio station, but off-site, in this case a makeshift studio at Anacostia Naval Air Station. At that time, this military installation was primarily a seaplane base.

By early 1923, the broadcast site for the band had been moved to the Marine barracks, 8th and I Street, S.E. on the west side of the Anacostia River, where it would remain for decades. On August 1, 1923 the Band performed on the air for the premiere broadcast of WRC, an NBC affiliate, thus beginning a very long and close association of the band and that radio station.

The enjoyment of the Marine music by the American public predates by many years the advent of radio. The birth of the Marine Band

can be traced to July 11, 1798, when President John Adams signed into law the establishment of the U.S. Marine Corps. That document specifically included positions for 32 members of a Marine fife and drum corps to be led by a drum major. In over two centuries the band has served every American president since Adams, thus becoming the oldest, continually active, professional musical organization in U.S. history.

The Marine Band gave its first public concert in Washington DC. on August 21,

1800, at a location just northwest of the current site of the Lincoln Memorial. Thereafter it continued to play for the public at various times and venues, including national tours which began in 1891. But it did not reach the average American household until that first radio appearance in 1922, which began a regular Wednesday night concert series over the air waves. During the following decades, the band would be heard very often on a host of network programs on NBC, CBS, and Mutual. In just one month, January of 1933,

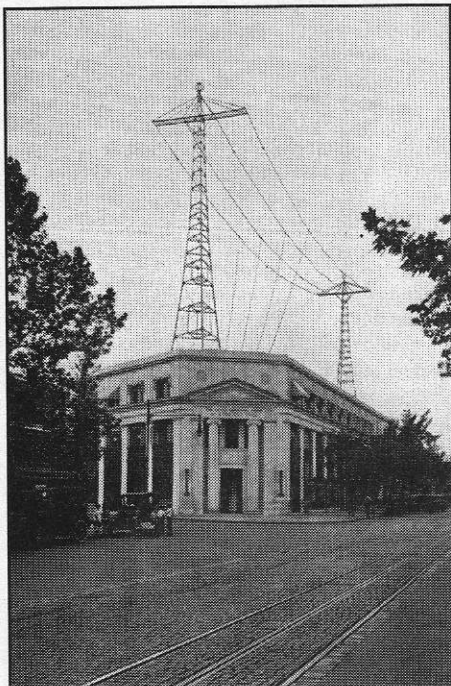
Our thanks to Jack French for this exclusive look at *The Dream Hour*. The author wishes to thank Master Gunnery Sergeant Michael Ressler, Chief Archivist, and his staff at the Library of the Marine Band in Washington, DC for their generous assistance rendered in researching this article. Our thanks as well to MGS Ressler for contributing illustrations and photographs.

As these different titles would indicate, the earlier programs were primarily aimed at those who were homebound or confined to bed by illness or infirmity.

the band was featured on twelve different network programs. In addition to special concerts which were broadcast from different sites, the networks fashioned other programs for the Marines, usually regularly scheduled weekly ones. There were many different series with a myriad of titles over the years: *School Band*, *Masterpieces of the Ballet*, *Education Hour*, *4-H Club on National Farm & Home Hour*, *National Park Series*, *Operatic Half Hour*, *Congress Speaks*, *School of the Air of the Americas*, *Spirit of '42*, *Victory Hour*, and many others.

Some of these radio series lasted for several months, many ran for years. But by far, the longest, continuous network broadcast series of the Marine Band was *The Dream Hour*. This popular musical series debuted on June 12, 1931, and remained on NBC until September 11, 1954, for a total of 952 programs. This weekly program aired on different days and at different times over the years, and even its title changed back and forth.

A press release of May 31, 1931, announced that the program would soon debut and would air weekly on Fridays for an



Facilities of WRC in Washington DC in 1923 at the time of the premiere broadcast.

hour throughout the summer. It stated the new series was planned for those who were confined, and each program would be made up, in so far as possible, entirely of requests. Captain Taylor Branson, Marine Band leader, stated the requests should be sent to the U. S. Marine Barracks, Washington, DC or to the radio stations broadcasting the programs. He added that the entire membership of the Band, 78-men, would be participating.

For its first three months in 1931 it alternated between *The Shut-In Hour* and *The Shut-in Request Hour*. In September 1931 the title became *The Dream Hour for Shut-ins*, although the former names were utilized infrequently thereafter. On February 28, 1933, in the waning days of the Herbert Hoover administration, Charles F. Adams, outgoing Secretary of the Navy, ordered the Navy and Marine Bands to cease all radio broadcasting. This action was taken to placate the American Federation of Musicians who claimed that 140,000 Americans were dependent upon playing music for their livelihood and the service Bands were in direct competition with unemployed musicians. Adams' successor, Claude A. Swanson, took over on March 4th, with the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, which was broadcast live with the Marine Band. However it would be another six weeks before the original order was rescinded by Secretary Swanson on May 6, 1933.

When the Marines were back on the air, Secretary Swanson had given their radio series a new name, *The Patriotic Hour*. After a few months, the Marines went back to calling their show, *The Shut-in Dream Hour*, apparently with the consent of the Secretary. By March of 1934, the series was titled *The Evening Dream Hour*. But in the fall of 1934 the Marines began alternating the show's name between *The Dream Hour for Shut-ins* and *The Shut-ins' Dream Hour*. With storm clouds of war gathering in Europe and Asia, in March 1939, the title was changed again, to *The Patriotic Dream Hour for Shut-ins*. It would retain that name throughout World War II, reverting back to *The Dream Hour for Shut-ins* in 1946. The series would retain that title until it went off the air in 1954, except for one brief period in 1947 when the name was *Musical Memories*



Marine band leader Taylor Branson as an enlisted member of the band when he was serving as assistant director in 1921.

for *Shut-ins*.

As these different titles would indicate, the earlier programs were primarily aimed at those who were homebound or confined to bed by illness or infirmity. The requests of those listeners were given priority in selecting the musical numbers of each succeeding program. Cards and letters from all over North America poured into the Marine Band headquarters each week. The early scripts reveal that the chosen listeners whose requests were honored, were even mentioned on the program, though not by name. The announcer of each show would state the musical selection to be played and then briefly describe the requester as, for example, "an 88-year-old G.A.R. veteran with a fractured hip in St. Louis," "a blind girl in Allentown, PA," "a 12-year-old boy in Toronto General Hospital," or "a very sick man recuperating near Owasco Lake, NY."

Later this practice of describing the requester was discontinued, and although requests were still honored, the announcer would spend more time explaining or describing the various musical numbers. So instead of saying in 1933 "we hope that the twelve ladies deprived of their sight up in Cambridge, MA, who, while they weave and cane the chairs, will now enjoy 'The Blue Danube.'" The announcer decades later would introduce "The Egmont Overture" with "In Beethoven's music to Goethe's tragedy, we find one of the earliest examples of a great composer drawing his inspiration directly from the words of a great poet."

When *The Dream Hour* began in the summer of 1931, its very first announcer for NBC was Arthur Godfrey. The young redhead was only 27-years-old at the time, and while he

would eventually scale the heights of fame on television, in 1931 he was just a staff announcer with WRC in the nation's capital. Godfrey and Captain Taylor Branson hit it off from the beginning. Within a few months, Branson even allowed his announcer to sing on the program, including "Pale Potomac Moon," a song Godfrey had written.

In the fall of 1931, Godfrey, driving to an airport near Leesburg, VA, was hit head-on by a truck that veered into his lane. The horrific accident rendered Godfrey comatose for days with over thirty bone fractures. Doctors doubted his chances; however, Godfrey somehow survived although he was left crippled for life with reoccurring pain that never completely left him. During his months of absence, the radio station sent replacement announcers to narrate *The Dream Hour*. Godfrey returned on January 4, 1932, as announcer for the Marines amidst a warm welcome from the Marine musicians. He continued on as the regular announcer for the next two years, with Stanley Bell substituting for him in the event of scheduling conflicts or medical treatments.

Godfrey's last appearance on *The Dream Hour* was January 2, 1934. WRC station manager Berkeley sent Don Lowe to announce the program the following week. This was the first notice the Marines had that Godfrey had just been fired by Berkeley. Captain Branson was not impressed with Lowe and took over the announcing duties himself. Later Branson tried to get Godfrey reinstated at WRC but Berkeley refused to rescind his decision. Lowe became the second announcer on *The Dream Hour*. Over the 23 years the program aired, *The Dream Hour* would have dozens of announcers; a few would become household names such as Bob Trout and Mack McGarry, but most of the others were known only locally, including Bryson Rash, Ted Kimball and Edwin Rogers.

Although the program was usually called *The Dream Hour*, this did not necessarily mean all the listeners heard it for 60 minutes each week. The Marine Band in the early years always played for the full hour, but not all of the stations aired it in its entirety. For example, in 1932, the band played before the radio microphones from 3 to 4 pm. NBC broadcast the entire hour but CBS aired only the first half hour, and local station WMAL broadcast the first 45 minutes. By 1938 the program was reduced from an hour to 30 minutes and that change was eventually made permanent.

The weekly programs of *The Dream Hour* beamed over national networks—NBC and CBS—as well as several regional entities, including the Wisconsin Network. This broadcast series was very popular with radio audiences from coast-to-coast. A typical assessment of it appeared in the July 7, 1936, edition of the *Ruston Daily Leader* in Louisiana:

His [Captain Taylor Branson's] *Dream Hour Shut-in* concerts are recognized as the finest non-commercial programs on the air. Each week over a nation-wide network...the Marine Band speaks the symphonic language of the world—music.

The carefully chosen music on the series unquestionably contributed to the popularity and staying power of the series. *The Dream Hour* featured a wide spectrum of excellent music, delicately balanced to highlight many different musical styles, periods and genres. A typical program would usually include: a classical composition (i.e. 3rd movement of Mendelssohn's Third Symphony), an opera excerpt (i.e. "Bacchanale" from *Sampson et Dalila* by Saint-Saens), a military march (frequently one by John Philip Sousa), a popular song (i.e. "The Bells of St. Mary's" by Adams), a semi-classic or light opera selection (i.e. overture to *The Merry Widow* by Lehár),



Captain Taylor Branson as the director of the Marine Band during *The Dream Hours* broadcasts in the late 1930s.

a folk tune (i.e. "Irish Fantasy" by Pinto), religious hymn (words spoken, not sung, by the announcer), a waltz (Strauss' "The Blue Danube" was requested most) and some novelty number (i.e. "Let's All Sing Like the Birdies Sing" by Hargraves.)

In an interview with the *New York Times*, which was published on March 13, 1932, Captain Branson discussed which musical pieces he had received the most requests for since *The Dream Hour* debuted. He named Liebestraum by Liszt, Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven, and the Light Cavalry Overture by Suppé. Requests for non-classical music frequently named "The Old Oaken Bucket," "Holy Night," and "Old Black Joe." Branson added that there was always a demand for standard sacred songs and military marches.

Several times a year *The Dream Hour* for *Shut-ins* would, instead of offering a wide menu of different musical choices, present a show with one central theme. For example, the January 30, 1934, program commemorated the birthday of President Franklin D. Roosevelt so most of the numbers played were personal favorites of the president, including "Home on the Range" and "Mother Machree." Each year, on the program that was closest to March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, many of the selections would celebrate the Irish musical heritage. Other holidays were celebrated annually with a central theme: Independence Day, Christmas and Memorial Day.



Captain Branson conducting the Marine Corps Band during a broadcast in 1930

One of the most memorable specials on *The Dream Hour* was the program of June 9, 1951, which celebrated the

Throughout its history, *The Dream Hour* was nearly always produced in the Marine Band auditorium in Washington, D.C. However, on October 27, 1944, the show came from Studio 6A in Radio City Center in Manhattan.

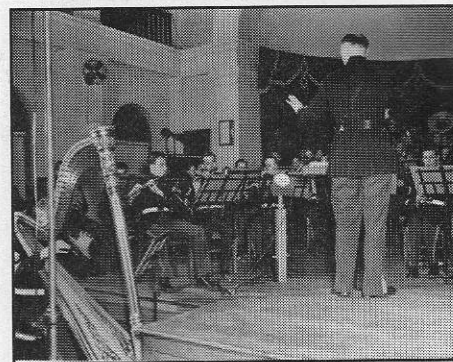
20th anniversary of the debut of that series. This broadcast was the 823rd program in the series. The script and the music played provided an excellent historical review of that Marine Band program. The show paid tribute not only to the band and its leader, but also past announcers Arthur Godfrey, Bob Trout and Kenneth Banghart. This program ended with the hymn, "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past."

During the annual Marine Band tour each fall, virtually all radio broadcasting by the band ceased. In the early 1930s the tours were usually less than 30 days. By 1938 the tours were up to 45 days duration and they remained approximately that length until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. All tours were canceled during World War II so most weekly band programming, including *The Dream Hour*, aired uninterrupted through each autumnal season. When the resumption of the tours was authorized in 1946, each yearly tour averaged 60 days, normally from mid-September to mid-November, during which time *The Dream Hour* could not be heard.

The networks would fill the Marines' slot with another musical program, frequently *The*

Musical Appreciation Hour with conductor Walter Damrosch or a concert series by the Boston Symphony. Once their slot was surrendered there were delays getting *The Dream Hour*, and other Marine Band programs, back on the airwaves. Several times *The Dream Hour* would resume broadcasting, after having been assigned a different day or a different time, but their audience seemed to have no difficulty in finding them again.

There were many cancellations of individual programs of *The Dream Hour* over the years, some caused by mundane factors, i.e. "lines down." But a number of shows had to be canceled because of an important news bulletin or a dignitary's speech and a number of historical events superseded the Marines' radio show. Their August 5, 1938, show was pre-empted by a news special on the transoceanic flight of Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan. On March 29, 1939, a speech by French premier Daladier on German aggression took over the slot of *The Dream Hour*. The Republican Convention in 1940 pre-empted the June 27th show of *The Dream Hour*. A world-wide radio appeal for peace by Pope Pius XII forced the cancellation of the Marine program scheduled

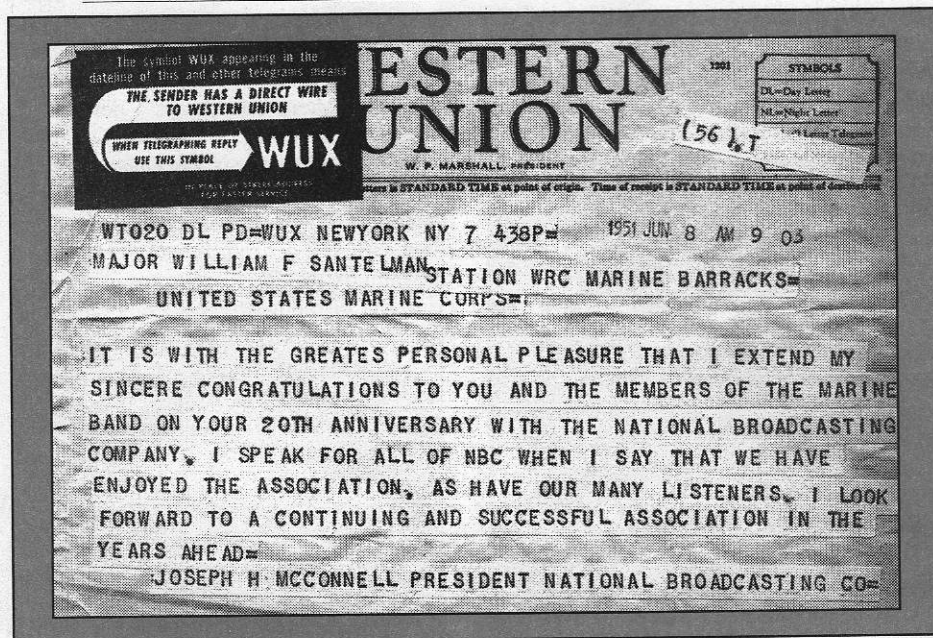


Captain Branson conducting a 1935 broadcast from the Marine auditorium.

for June 26, 1941.

There were a number of "firsts" associated with *The Dream Hour* over the nearly two-dozen years it was on network radio. On August 5, 1932, the performance was unique in that it included for the first time on radio an actual dress parade. In an arrangement with a Marine marching group in the Midwest, the Band in Washington, DC played for the former's dress parade, which they listened to over a loud speaker. About two years later, on June 29, 1934, *The Dream Hour* became the first radio show to include the use of an octorimba in the band. However, this musical instrument never gained wide acceptance in U.S. bands or orchestras and few musicians today have ever heard of it. Throughout its history, *The Dream Hour* was nearly always produced in the Marine Band auditorium in Washington, D.C. However, on October 27, 1944, the show came from Studio 6A in Radio City Center in Manhattan. The band was on an overnight trip to New York City and arrangements were made for the program to be broadcast there. Every program in *The Dream Hour* series was broadcast live until 1950. On December 8, 1950, the Marine Band made its first recording of the show. Although some networks, principally Mutual, had aired recorded (or transcribed) shows for years, NBC was very reluctant to do this and only grudgingly gave permission to individual series. Once the Marines obtained this authority from the network, they utilized this procedure many times through the early 1950s. It allowed them to record two or more shows in the same sitting for later airing, which was a time-saver for the band and the network.

The Dream Hour has not been heard on the air for over fifty years, but it is not forgotten. As recently as February 3, 2008, the Marine Band performed a re-creation of that radio show at the University of Maryland as one of their scheduled public concerts. The Marine Band library maintains the surviving scripts and audio copies of U.S. Marine radio shows. Their holdings for *The Dream Hour* constitute 42 whole or partial scripts and 70 entire or partial audio recordings. ♪



Telegram from Joseph H. McConnell, NBC president, congratulating Captain Branson and the United States Marine Band on the 20th anniversary of *The Dream Hour*.

"AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR..."

by Bob Mills



Product association had from Bob Hope's beginnings in radio played an indispensable role in Hope's career. The first in a long list of products with which he would be associated over the years was Pepsodent tooth paste.

Following glowing reviews in Paramount's *Big Broadcast of 1938*, the makers of Pepsodent offered Hope his own radio show to replace their sponsorship of the popular *Amos 'n' Andy Show*. Hope had wanted to get into radio ever since his first appearance on Rudy Vallee's *Fleischmann Hour* earned him \$700 for a two-minute interview. "This is my kind of business" he thought. And prepare for it he did. Throughout the thirties, he appeared as a guest on radio shows including *The Major Bowes Capitol Family Hour*, *The RKO Theater of the Air*, *The Bromo-Seltzer Intimate Hour* and *The CBS White Flash* program sponsored by the Atlantic Oil Refining Company. The offer from Pepsodent, which came as a result of his successful appearances on NBC's *Woodbury Show* with Frank Parker and the Shep Fields Orchestra, was his first real opportunity to host his own program.

He was off and running.

He assembled a crack staff of veteran radio writers that included Milt Josefsberg, Norman Sullivan, and Jack Douglas, an experienced announcer named Bill Goodwin, an orchestra leader, Skinnay Ennis—soon replaced by Les Brown—and a walrus-mustached, former trombonist named Jerry ("Greetings, Gate") Colonna. Over the next few years, the cast would be joined by Patricia (Honeychile) Wilder, the musical group Six Hits and a Miss, society debutants Brenda and Cobina (Blanche Stewart and Elvia Allman), and Barbara Jo Allen as Vera Vague.

The Pepsodent Show debuted on September 27, 1938, and had all the earmarks of a hit. Unexpectedly, it got off to a rocky start. "We really had no idea what we were doing," Hope admitted. He told us it took ten or twelve weeks of tinkering with the format before he was satisfied with the laughs he was getting from the studio audience, many of whom he personally corraled in the hall outside his studio as they emerged from *The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show*.

Radio was in its infancy and there was, as yet, no reliable method of measuring listenership. Later, the Hooper Ratings and the Crosleys, audience sampling systems similar to today's Neilsen Media Research, would be used to set advertising rates. But when Hope began, the Hoopers were still a few years away, and while he was satisfied with the reactions of his studio audiences, he wondered how he and his on-air gang were doing in the hinterlands.

But whenever he approached executives at the ad-agency that represented Pepsodent, all he seemed to get was, "Don't worry about

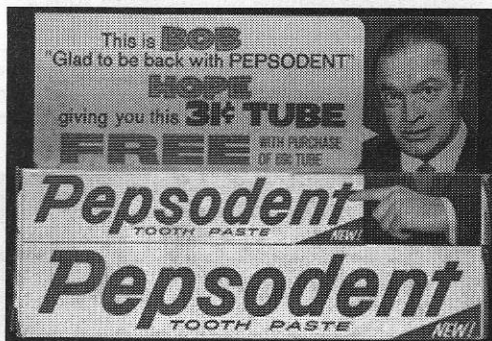
it, Bob. You're doing fine. Just keep doing what you've been doing." Somehow, he got the feeling they weren't leveling with him.

One day, after the show had been on for almost a year, he was approached by a man on an exclusive country club golf course who had been playing in the foursome ahead of him. "Bob, I want to thank you," said the man. Hope, thinking he was a fan, thanked him. "No," continued the man. "I want to thank you for making me a millionaire." Of course, Hope had no idea what he was talking about.

It seems the golfer had owned a small cardboard-box factory that serviced many clients—including Pepsodent. "About six months ago," he explained, "Pepsodent doubled their orders, then a week later, tripled them. Eventually, I dropped my other customers and provided boxes for your sponsor exclusively. My company became so successful, I ended up selling it for a million dollars thanks to you."

Hope was stunned. No one at Pepsodent's ad agency had mentioned such a large increase in their product sales. Completely by accident, Hope had stumbled onto an audience gauge as accurate as the Hoopers would later become.

Hope smiled wryly as he concluded his story. We all sat mesmerized. "Well?" one of us asked, "what did you do then?" "Let's just say," said Bob, "when contract renewal time came along, I negotiated one of the biggest goddamned raises in



the history of radio."

The persuasive power of the mass media to sell products couldn't have been driven home more forcefully and Hope never forgot the lesson he learned from it. Over the ensuing years, he would make sure that his name became aligned with major sponsors whose products he would hawk enthusiastically in countless TV commercials—a practice that, early-on, some Hollywood stars of Hope's magnitude considered somehow degrading to their art. Later, of course, many of them would come around, lending their names to everything from beer to vacuum cleaners.

Along with Pepsodent, Hope's name would be linked with Chrysler and, later still, with Texaco, a relationship that culminated in 1974 in a five-year television production deal that netted Hope \$4 million, a record at the time. In 1979, he filmed commercials for Coca-Cola on the Great Wall of China. In the mid-1980s, he received \$3 million from Southwestern Bell Telephone for a series of TV spots for their Silver Pages that took him just three days to film.

Locally, he appeared in numerous commercials for California Federal Bank, in which he was a major stockholder. Fittingly, his final appearance on television, at age 95, was in a commercial for K-Mart directed by Penny Marshall. ♣

Excerpted from *The Laugh Makers: A Behind-the Scenes Tribute to Bob Hope's Incredible Gag Writers* by Robert L. Mills to be published later this year by BearManor Media. Copyright © 2008 by Robert. L. Mills.

BOOKMARKS

Vallee Bio Covers Career in Pictures

by Tom DeLong

In the mid-1970s I spent an afternoon in the vast Rudy Vallee "career archives" at his home in the Hollywood hills. His mountain-top estate encompassed a playhouse-theatre chock full of memorabilia that he opened for my book research on music and radio. One could have perused a week or more among these artifacts. Vallee, a highly popular singer and band leader from the late 1920s to the World War II era, enjoyed a ten-year run (1929-1939) as an NBC star of the weekly program *The Fleischmann Hour*. He gathered a treasure-trove of transcriptions, photos and publicity from that program and others. He guarded his archival treasures, mining it for three autobiographies and a fourth unpublished. And it provided material for a touching memoir penned by his widow, Eleanor. As a note, the collection was sold to the Thousand Oaks, CA, library upon his death in 1986.

Rudy continues to attract writers, and the latest is Doris Bickford-Swarthout and her *Rudy Vallee: A Pictorial Biography*, published by BearManor Media. The 404-page soft cover contains a well-written concise account of Vallee's early life and rise to fame, and his place as a show business legend—a story interspersed with countless illustrations. His career touched a wide spectrum of entertainers of the 20th century through his radio series, and as host he invited many to the microphone for their first time on a coast-to-coast hookup, including Eddie Cantor, Bergen and McCarthy, Kate Smith, Bob Hope and Gloria Swanson.

This biography also delves into his numerous feuds and love affairs, his frugality and testy temperament that seemingly bordered on the bipolar.

Although there is a discography of sorts, the narrative overlooks his significant recording activities, a major part of his success as a crooner. Rudy's New Haven-rooted Yale Collegians matured into the seven-piece Connecticut Yankees. Its early discs—"If I Had You," "Let's Do It," "A Little Kiss Each

Morning, a Little Kiss Each Night," "Sweetheart of All My Dreams," and similar love songs captured the hearts of young women and helped open the doors to network radio and personal appearances.

Readers will welcome the sections on Vallee's radio and television credits and screen roles, beginning with his first feature *The Vagabond Lover* in 1929 and into his comic character parts in *The Palm Beach Story*, *I Remember Mama* and *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer*. His last appearance, a cameo, was in *Won Ton Ton, The Dog Who Saved Hollywood* in 1976.

A performer who really never retired, Rudy Vallee continued into his 80s with a one-man show before large and small audiences—sometimes merely a handful at home. I was one such privileged dinner guest in 1984. In essence, this book visually captures the fabled life he led on stage and off. ♪



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