

Next SPERDVAC meeting is Sat., June 14, 12 noon St. Andrew's Lutheran Church 15520 Sherman Way, Van Nuys

SPERDVAC

RADIOGRAM

Vol. 23, No. 6

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

June 1997

Radio version of 'Alice in Wonderland' performed in June

A radio version of "Alice in Wonderland" will be performed four times this month in Los Angeles.

John Astin, William Windom, Parley Baer, Louis Nye and Elliott Reid are in the cast of productions planned by the California Artists' Radio Theatre. David Warner appears as Lewis Carroll and Ann Rogers, British musical comedy star who has been featured in New York stage productions of "My Fair Lady," will portray Alice. The cast also includes Ashby Adams, John Bliss, Richard Erdman, Kathleen Freeman, Linda Henning, Marvin Kaplan, Robert Legionnaire, Norman Lloyd and Jeanette Nolan.

Sound effects are being performed by Ray Erlenborn. The musical score is written and performed by David Pinto.

Their performances will be June 11 and 14 in Hollywood. Both days there will be 1:30 pm matinees at the Cinegrill in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

On June 14 there will also be a 10 am dress rehearsal open to the public and a 7 pm performance, both at the Hollywood Entertainment Museum, 7021 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood. For reservations and ticket prices for the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel performances, contact CART at

'Old Coyote' taping

The Wells Fargo Radio Theatre production of "Old Coyote" will be recorded June 28 at 4:30 and 7:30 pm at the Wells Fargo Theatre in the Aurdy Museum of Western Heritage near Griffith Park and the Los Angeles City Zoo. It airs on KPCC-FM July 12 at 5 pm.

Credit card reservations for tickets are being accepted during business hours at (213) 667-2000, ext. 317.

KPCC will also carry three hours of old-time radio July 4 beginning at 5 pm.

(213) 683-3422. The Hollywood Entertainment Museum's phone number is (213) 960-4833.

CART's productions run about 90 minutes and are recorded for broadcast Sunday evenings at 10 on KPFF-FM, Los Angeles. Veteran radio actress Peggy Webber produces and directs most of the shows, including all of the productions scheduled for airing in June.

On June 15 the CART show is Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband." It stars David Warner, Edward Mulhare, Samantha Eggar, Charlotte Rae, Bairbre Dowling, William Windom, Ian Abercrombie, Cornelia Hayes and Dan

O'Herlihy.

"Hamilton and Burr" by Tony Huston is set for airing June 22. It stars Norman Lloyd, David Warner, Marty Maguire, Bairbre Dowling, William Windom, Jo De Winter and others from the CART company.

Samantha Eggar, Joseph Marcell and Marvin Kaplan star in Peggy Webber's adaptation of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," airing on KPFF June 29. The cast includes Elliott Reid, Bairbre Dowling, William Windom, Ian Abercrombie, Marty Maguire, Richard Erdman, Parley Baer, John Bliss, Kathleen Freeman and Paul Keith.

Mr. Blandings builds his dream house



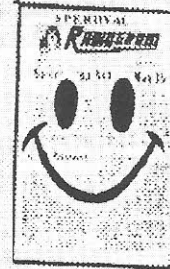
Arthur Anderson, back to camera, directs a re-creation of the **Screen Directors' Playhouse** story "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House" at Radio Classics Live VIII, Massasoit Community College in Brockton, Mass. May 2. From left, performers Jess Cain, Robert Dryden, Elizabeth Morrell and Rosemary Rice. Story on page 3.

PHOTO COURTESY WALTER BEAUPRE

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SPERDVAC is very grateful to these individuals who have contributed \$50 or more to our organization during the past twelve months. Tax-deductible donations, payable to SPERDVAC, should be mailed to Carrolyn Rawski. (See SPERDVAC Directory.)

Traveling this summer? Make cassette copies of SPERDVAC's tapes and enjoy them on the road!

Radio Classics Live VIII

by Walter J. Beaupre

OTR was very much alive and well in Brockton, Massachusetts during the first weekend in May. The Anna P. Buckley Arts Center of Massasoit Community College with its fine auditorium proved to be an idea place for such a venue. The view from every seat in the house was superb, and the college folks who engineered the audio had definitely done their homework. Hats off to producers Bob Bowers, Alan Chapman and Ken Ward; and likewise to Bob's coordinators Mike Pevzner and Tim Trask for facilitating first class productions.

Ken Meyer, former host of Boston radio station WEEI's **Radio Classics Live** show, did warm-ups for both the Friday evening and Saturday afternoon sessions, aided by Janet Strazdes, who is with Radio Collectors of America. Their trivia questions were mostly related to the shows about to be witnessed and served to separate the die-hards from the dilettantes.

Act I on Friday evening began with a salute to radio westerns with Boston's own Fred Foy as The Lone Ranger in "Burly Scott's Sacrifice." In a separate ceremony Fred Foy received the Ken Meyer Award for 1997. It should be duly noted that Ken Meyer did his Tonto lines from memory. Everyone else used a script.

Next, Parley Baer re-created his Chester Proudfoot role in a **Gunsmoke** episode, "Chester's Dilemma." Roland Blanchette was a convincing Matt Dillon. Will Hutchins then took center microphone to re-create his Tom Brewster role from TV's "Sugarfoot." The radio version was a scene from "The Hideout." The huge

cast of players was seated across the stage and consisted of local and regional radio personalities as well as students at the college.

Before intermission Peg Lynch and Parley Baer took the limelight to create the first of four episodes of **Ethel and Albert**. Peg Lynch Parley Baer worked marvelously together with the timing and dynamic interplay of a Lunt-Fontaine team. By the end of the weekend I felt that I knew Ethel and Albert as well as the likes of George and Gracie or Vic and Sade. If Peg and Parley come within a few hundred miles of your neck of the woods, don't miss them!

Act II began with a rendition of the aria "Vilia" from "The Merry Widow" performed by Joan Beck, wife of sound effects wizard Barney Beck. Jess Cain then did a touching tribute to the late Norm Nathan, the reigning monarch of all-night radio in New England for many years.

At this point Arnold Stang made his entrance to become Gerard on **The Henry Morgan Show** episode in which Henry (tastefully impersonated by Jess Cain) tries to fix Gerard up with a bimchette named Minerva. Played by Ellen Kelly, Minerva provides mood music for the courting ritual with her vacuum cleaner. The ever-cautious Gerard makes it hilariously clear that he isn't having any

More comedy followed with a complete stagecast of a **Screen Directors' Playhouse** production of "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House." Jess Cain and Rosemary Rice were the Blandings. Rosemary Rice is a Gramme Award winner who may be best known

for her nine years on the "I Remember Mama" series. Arthur Anderson directed while Will Hutchins and Arnold Stang assumed supporting roles. This reviewer was particularly taken with the characterization of the Blandings' well driller, Mr. DeSander, played by Bob Dryden. Obviously pedigree shines through, for the program notes reveal Bob has radio lineage second-to-none: **Stella Dallas, Pepper Young's Family, The Guiding Light, Big Town, Gangbusters**. . . you name it, Bob has done it!

Following an **Ethel and Albert** encore, we left the theater for some sleep. That's not quite accurate. One of us interviewed Arnold Stang for SPERDVAC until 12:45 am! (*See story on next page.*)

On Saturday afternoon we returned for the final Radio Classics sessions. Charlotte Munsick sang an original musical salute to old-time radio accompanied by Bob and Dolly Fruzzetti. As one who has attempted this sort of thing, I'd like to tip my hat off to Dolly Fruzzetti for her live music themes, fills and bridges on a digital piano throughout the two days of presentations. An enviable performance!

After Albert confesses to Ethel that he no longer has a driver's license, we were treated to more delightful sitcom nostalgia when "Dagwood Goes to the Circus" starring Will Hutchins (who even LOOKED like Dagwood Bumstead) and Rosemary Rice, who simply looked lovely.

After intermission, Barney Beck, who had done sound effects for everyone from **The Shadow** to **Bert and Harry Piels**, demonstrated his impressive collection of gadgets and widgets, assisted by Eugene Ewing.

Radio at it's artistic best came next with a **Columbia Workshop** production of Lucille Fletcher's "My Client Curley" adapted by Norman Corwin. Arnold Stang starred in the role of Herb, the promoter who takes over a very special caterpillar that dances only to the tune of "Yes, Sir! That's My Baby!" Talented youngsters Guy Marochino and Artie Sharpe were

Continued on page 11



Peg Lynch and Parley Baer provided lots of laughs with their performances of **Ethel and Albert**. The scripts are by Peg Lynch, the show's star and creator.

“I am NOT a comedian!”

Arnold Stang says he's an actor who does comedy

by *Walter J. Beaupre*

The **Henry Morgan Show** for Eversharp on Oct. 30, 1946 (SPERDVAC Archives tape 736) opens with a send-up of pocket sized magazines with condensed articles [*Reader's Digest?*] In a skit about “The Morgan Magazine Digest,” announcer Ted Husing sets up the comic premise by introducing Henry as “foreign correspondent Rudley Mongoose, just returned from a 12 minute visit to the country of Snooznia. Mr. Mongoose is known as the author of such revealing books as:

Austria: A Country of Austrians

South Africa: Land of Smuts

The Boer War and Why it was Boring! and

Philadelphia: Gateway to India.

The following article was both written and condensed by Mr. Mongoose for the ‘Morgan Magazine Digest’ titled, ‘Snooznia: A Country to Watch.’”

MUSIC: Ominous fanfare. . .

MORGAN: Snooznia: A Country to Watch — so I watched it! My plane landed in Sneeznia, capital of Snooznia, early in January . . . or perhaps February, depending on what calendar you use. As you know, the Snooznian calendar has two Fridays because they're fond of fish. AS we landed, thousands of hungry Snooznians crowded around the plane, begging for 1946 Chevrolets. I naturally gave out as many as I could. After all, I'd come to learn something about this strange, mysterious, unknown people about whom I'd already written so much.

[Morgan drops the pontificating voice of Mongoose and addresses the audience as himself.]

What's WRONG with the first five rows here?

[Back in character as Mongoose.]

As I walked along the main street of Sneeznia suddenly, without warning, a sinister native stopped me and muttered. . .

NATIVE: Your shoe laces are untied!

The audience erupts in uninhibited glee. Morgan's show has been stopped by a familiar voice usually identified as “Gerard” and played by Arnold Stang. True, Henry has been getting respectable laugh responses to the sophisticated humor of the piece up to this point — even though his aside to the first five rows of the audience suggests that he expected better. Why the sudden magic moment? Just who *is* the radio actor who proved on this particular occasion to be more than a match for the enormously gifted Henry Morgan?

Recently I had the pleasure of interviewing Arnold Stang in his hotel room after a Friday evening appearance at Radio Classics Live VIII in Brockton, Massachusetts. He had been featured in a re-creation of an episode where Henry Morgan tries to arrange a date for Gerard with a neat-freak bimchette who uses her vacuum cleaner as mood music for the romantic tryst. The piece was as fresh



Arnold Stang during a performance of “My Client Curley” last month at Radio Classics Live VIII in Brockton, MA.

and funny as anything done today by Jerry Seinfeld and company,” and the audience loved it. Arnold modestly passed it off as an all in an evening's work, so we settled down to reviewing the past.

Where was Arnold Stang born? About 30 miles from where we were doing the interview — in Chelsea, a town just north of Boston on the way to Revere Beach. The Stangs had lived for a couple generations in this area. Had he been born in a show-biz family? No way! The Stangs took a dim view of any form of acting. This fact, however, didn't stop Arnold from being fascinated by the kiddy program **Let's Pretend** which he heard every Saturday morning over local station WEEI and which originated from New York. He decided that he would like to

Continued on page 10

SPERDVAC Directory

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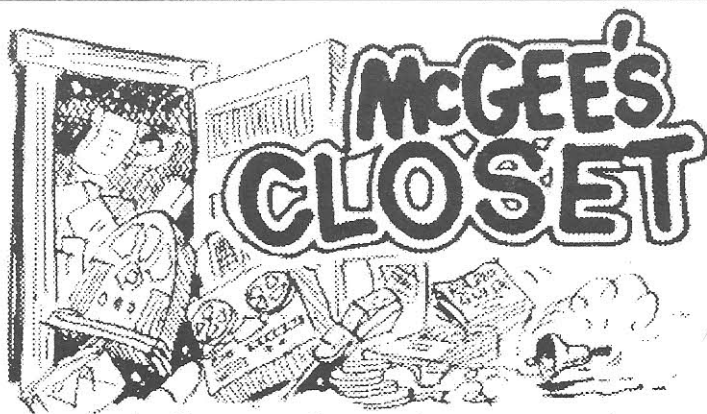
VIDEO LIBRARY: Jerry Williams, 381 Table Mountain, Oroville, CA 95965.

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: Bob Herman, 1329 Garrison Ave., Port Orchard, WA 98366-3321 (Blind only)

ACQUISITIONS: (Discs, tapes & printed materials): John Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603. (562) 947-9800 for both General and Archives Libraries.

CATALOGS: Ted Theodore, 1175 Brockton St., El Cajon, CA 92020-1706.



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 628, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Please specify desired taping format (cassette, open reel or DAT).

FOR SALE: *Tune in Yesterday*, first edition, excellent condition in very good dust jacket, \$100; paperback, good condition, \$50; *The Jack Benny Show*, excellent condition, \$35. Plus shipping \$6. Contact: Jordan Young, P.O. Box 661, Anaheim, CA 92815. Call 1-800-677-1927 or e-mail jyoung@fia.net to reserve.

FOR TRADE: I am looking for someone to trade old radio shows with. I can trade in cassettes only. I have a large collection of OTR tapes including almost the entire collection of **The Great Gildersleeve**. Contact: Tom Warner, 23 Hamilton Ave., Kearny, NJ 07032.

FOR SALE: Two TEAC open reel recorders, 100 reels of tapes and cassettes recorded one time. Make offer. Contact: Bill Hardin, (714) 522-5722.

WANTED: Recording (78, LP, open reel or cassette) of an NBC radio program of Dec. 7, 1933 honoring the 20th anniversary of the Hal Roach Studios in Culver City, CA, if a recording of the event does indeed exist. Contact: Charles Huck, 4 So. 230 River Road, Warrenville, IL 60555-3813. E-mail Huck_Enterprises@msn.com or FAX (630) 393-9925.

WANTED: Any radio broadcasts by opera star Titta Ruffo in the 1920s or 1930s, any format, or any information about same. Contact: Tony Randall, One West 81st St., New York, NY 10024.

Questions or comments?

Write to your SPERDVAC board of directors:

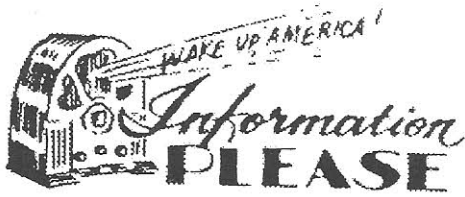
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by Barbara J. Watkins

Thanks to Shelley Herman for the information regarding the history of the tape recorder which appeared in last month's *Radiogram* in the Mail Call column. Member Charles Huck also sent in some information on the subject and later added an article about "A History of Radio Program Collecting" by Professor Marvin R. Bensman, of the University of Memphis, Department of Communications. This article came from the Internet and we do not have the author's permission to reprint it here.

If you have been thinking about ordering tapes from the Archives Open Reel Library (1001 & up, the only one open), please act as quickly as you can. As happens in the life of all SPERDVAC libraries, there comes a time when it must be split in two. This happened several years ago with the cassette version of this library, and it is now time to do the same with the open reels. The problem is, unlike the cassette version, there is not sufficient demand to justify the cost of printing new labels for a new librarian. At the moment, there are only three members borrowing from the portion below 1500. They have all been advised that there is only a limited amount of time left before these reels go into storage, and will not be available again until the unlikely event of a renewed interest by members in borrowing these reels. Reels 1000 through 1100 are already in storage, and 1101 through 1200 will be in a couple of months. By the end of the year, only Archives tapes 1501 and beyond will be available in open reel format. So act fast! (Cassettes of *all* Archives shows will continue to be available, as usual.)

On a personal note, my condolences to the family and friends of long-time SPERDVAC member Robert Piekarski of Waukesha, Wisconsin. Bob had borrowed tapes from our libraries for as long as I have been a librarian. I only met him once, back in the 1980s when he was

in the southern California area and able to attend a SPERDVAC meeting. Bob was a very active member of the Milwaukee Area Radio Enthusiasts since 1976. He'll be missed by his many friends in the old time radio hobby. Bob died of cancer on April 16.

The busiest radio actors of 1997 have to be Peg Lynch and Parley Baer! They are taking **Ethel and Albert** on the road this year. In April they performed at the 11th Annual Old Time Radio & Nostalgia Convention in Cincinnati, then on to the 8th Annual Radio Classics Live in Brockton, Massachusetts the first weekend in May. We just had the pleasure of seeing them perform in conjunction with Peggy Webber's California Artist Radio Theatre series at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel's Cinegrill on May 14 & 17. (This appearance will later be broadcast on KPFK-FM, Los Angeles.)

Next it is on to Denver for the Radio Historical Association of Colorado, on May 23 and 24, for two more performances of **Ethel and Albert**, then to the Kate Smith Festival the last weekend in May in New York. Then they will appear at the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound (REPS) Radio Showcase V on June 27 & 28. For details, see last month's *Radiogram*.

Congratulations to honorary SPERDVAC member Alice Backes for her fine performance on the Columbo story "A Trace of Murder" broadcast May 15 on ABC television. She played Harriet, the mother of the bride.

All of you living west of the Mississippi who were envious of all of the radio activities happening on the east coast, namely the Cincinnati convention and the weekend in Brockton, Massachusetts these past two months, not to mention the upcoming National Lum & Abner convention (see May *Radiogram*), we do have a few things out here, too. In addition to the Denver convention re-creations last month and REPS this month is the Seattle area, southern California has an activity or two also. Besides the **Ethel and Albert** productions for CART, here are some more: The L. A. Theatre Works is busy producing plays as part of the "The Play's the Thing" radio theatre series. In May they produced "Quartermaine's Terms" and this month's play is "Guns" starring Edward Asner, Tyne Daly and Yearly

Smith. These shows are recorded live before a theater audience at the Doubletree Guest Suites hotel in Santa Monica for future broadcast on KCRW 89.9 FM as part of **KCRW Playhouse** and on the National Public Radio network. This month's shows are June 4 through 7 at 8 pm. Tickets are \$23 and \$26. For information on the July performances, call L.A. Theatre Works Box Office at (310) 827-0889.

News of the California Artists Radio Theatre (CART) performances of "Alice in Wonderland," and the **Wells Fargo Radio Theatre** production of "Old Coyote" are one the front page. These are shows well worth supporting.

In July at our monthly SPERDVAC meeting, KCSN's "Thirty Minutes to Curtain" will re-create a show from **The Great Gildersleeve** series. Until now you thought there could only be two Gildersleeves, Harold Peary and Willard Waterman. We'll do our best to add a third name to that role. The meeting will be at the South Pasadena Public Library's Community Room at noon. Everyone is invited to attend and best of all — IT'S FREE!!! Don't miss it.

Someone right now is thinking, "Why do they always talk about local news?" The answer: BECAUSE WE'RE HERE. Only you are THERE! Tell us about what is happening in your area. Two members have questions which WE can't answer: 1. "I can't find any radio stations that play radio shows here in Killeen [Texas], HELP!" and 2. "Please provide info: is anything happening in or near Philadelphia, PA with regard to OTR?" Please pass along any information you may have for these two members and we'll include it here.

Finally, someone inquired about the SPERDVAC video library. Some of the meetings and conventions are available on video for members to check out and enjoy. For details on what is available and the cost, etc., send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the video librarian, Jerry Williams. See the SPERDVAC Directory for his address.

Send your questions, comments and information for this column to Information Please, Barbara J. Watkins, P. O. Box 628, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Til next time, spaceman's luck!

Created by Irna Phillips

Searching for a brighter day

by Jim Cox

In the postwar era of the late forties, the last three radio soap operas to successfully attract audiences for a sustained period made their debuts. The first was **Wendy Warren and the News** on CBS in June 1947. It was followed by **This is Nora Drake**, initially appearing on NBC in October 1947, later moving to CBS.

The third new serial — actually the last of the era that can be included based on longevity — was **The Brighter Day**. Initially heard at 10:45 am on NBC Oct. 11, 1948, it was also the end of the highly acclaimed radio serials produced by creative genius Irna Phillips.

Perhaps readers will recall that one of Phillips' distinguishing techniques was an intense emphasis on character development. Another technique was the way she placed principals into recognizable, believable situations. She was also the first to bring dramas about professionals to the microphone (and later, before the camera). She originated the medical-related soap opera, some of which still thrive on TV today.

But in **The Brighter Day**, her protagonist was a minister, not a physician or a nurse. Phillips had successfully been down this road before as she placed a clergyman in the center of her well received soap, **The Guiding Light**, in 1937. Now it was to be Reverend Richard Dennis' turn to face the crises developing in the little village of Three Rivers. It was there that he pastored a small, nonsectarian congregation.

A widower, 'Poppa' Dennis (as he was affectionately called by his own brood), was the father of four daughters

(Elizabeth, Althea, Patsy and Bobby) and a son (Grayling). Despite the fact that the reverend was the central character, a woman's plights contributed heavily to the action, as was true of almost every soap opera.

In this case, it was the eldest daughter, Liz, who at age 25 was attracting plenty of suitors. Lots of story material abounded there. At the same time, she was attempting to fill a self-appointed role of "keeping the little family together" following her mother's untimely death. With her feet planted firmly on terra firma, Liz was confidant to her father, a counselor to her siblings and a worrier about the unbridled, headstrong ambitions of her impetuous sister, Althea. The serial proved to any disbelievers that ministers' children also have feet of clay.

Unheralded Bill Smith starred as 'Poppa' Dennis — he had no other memorable roles in radio aside from this one. Margaret Draper (later Fay of **Ma Perkins** fame) and Grace Matthews (a leading lady on **The Shadow** and **Big Sister**) were cast as Liz. Other regulars, mostly unknown outside **Brighter Day**, included Jay Meredith as Althea, Pat Hosley as Patsy, Lorna Lynn as Bobby and Billy Redfield as Grayling.

There were three announcers — Ron Rawson was the best remembered; others were Len Sterling and William Rogers. William Meeder played an original theme on the organ while Procter & Gamble sponsored the series for its first seven years on the air (for Drefl dishwashing suds, new blue Cheer laundry detergent and other products).

The Brighter Day shifted to

CBS July 11, 1949 at 2:45 pm, remaining through July 1, 1955. It then disappeared for a month, returning Aug. 1, 1955 at 2:15 pm on CBS where it was heard until its cancellation May 28, 1956.

The program debuted on CBS-TV in 1954, featuring a cast totally different from the radio series. It continued there with similar plots until September 1962.

While **The Brighter Day** was created by Irna Phillips and was written for a time by **Ma Perkins** author Orin Tovrov, for most of its life its author was John Haggart.

The program's epigraph is well remembered by faithful listeners: "Our years are as the falling leaves; we live, we love, we dream, and then we go. But somehow we keep hoping — don't we? — that our dreams come true on that brighter day."

George Fenneman dies

The announcer best remembered for his association with Grouch Marx and **You Bet Your Life** has died. George Fenneman died May 29 of a respiratory ailment. He was 77. Fenneman worked in San Francisco prior to moving Hollywood radio.

Radiogram advertising rates

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- Quarter page — \$25
- Rates are for publication in two issues of the *Radiogram*.

Stories from a radio preservationist

Editor's note: Many of the individuals who have been active in preserving radio broadcasts have stories — even short yet interesting ones — to tell. One of those preservationists is sharing a few unrelated experiences with SPERDVAC.

by Jerry D. Burling

A few years ago I used to work for NBC in Burbank, Calif. One day, I was sitting at Floyd's Shoe Shine Stand in the Studio Building getting my shoes shined (the Shoe Shine stand is still there, located just outside Studio Three, where "The Tonight Show" with Jay Leno is taped) when someone sat down in the chair beside me. I looked over and saw that it was Tony Randall.

After my initial shock, I couldn't resist asking him about his days playing Reggie on **I Love a Mystery**, when it aired on Mutual Radio out of New York. He expressed surprise that I remembered back that far, then told me a funny story.

Carlton E. Morse, who created, wrote and directed the show, always exited the control room every day following the broadcast, via the door leading to the outside hallway. However, one day he left the control room using the door leading into the studio. He approached Tony and started talking to him. Tony said that when he responded, Mr. Morse looked startled and exclaimed, "What? You mean you are not English?" (Tony's character, Reggie, had a British accent, while Randall does not.)

Tony replied, "No, I'm just a poor Jewish boy from Arizona."

Mr. Morse then said, "Well, I thought you were a foreigner of some kind." Tony laughed because he realized that Morse was kind and was making a very funny joke.

Toward the end of the conversation, I asked Mr. Randall if he had any recordings of the **I Love a Mystery** programs. He replied that he did not.

Not long ago, I worked with Bob Furmanek, who was, at that time, the

archivist for the Abbott and Costello Estate, in retrieving many of the Abbott and Costello radio shows from Ziv Television, who had them in storage. The recordings were personally paid for and saved by Lou Costello.

Later, Bob and I transferred some of these radio programs to 1/4 inch audio tape for the estate. Some of the transcriptions were from the World War II years and others were from the Saturday morning children's program, which aired on ABC Radio following the war. I liked the war years shows better than the children's programs because Abbott and Costello's comedy timing seemed to be better on the former. The war years material is simply fantastic in sound and humor.

Bob told me he heard that Lou hated the fact that their team was sometimes referred to as "A and C," instead of Abbott and Costello. Lou would see "A and C" printed on storage cartons, or contracts, etc. and it would upset him.

The "Who's on First" routine was apparently in circulation on the vaudeville circuit, in a drastically different form, prior to its use by Abbott and Costello. Lou adapted it for their use, since it was not copyrighted. As everyone knows, it has become one of the most famous comedy routines ever. It is so popular, even to this day, that it has been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

In addition to Lou Costello being one of the finest comics ever, Bud Abbott was one of the finest straight men, thereby creating an unbeatable team. Bud would let Lou ad lib and stray out of their routines just far enough, then he would say, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. What has that got to do with..." whatever was the subject of the routine and he would steer Lou back in.

There has been a rumor going around that the "lost" **Great Gildersleeve** shows have been found. I can now say that this is true because I was

the one who found them. I received the transcription discs from someone who worked at NBC the same time I did. All of these shows have been transferred to tape for Carl Amari, of Radio Spirits, Inc., and they can be purchased from this source.

They were transferred from 16 inch acetate transcriptions and the sound is so good that you can hear the feet of the actors shuffling around on the studio floor and the rustle of script pages.

The Great Gildersleeve originated out of Studio C and Studio D (depending upon which studio the show was assigned to that week) when NBC Radio was located at the corner of Sunset and Vine Streets in Hollywood.

Prior to audio tape recording, network radio shows were aired live because there was no effective, quality way of recording them for delayed broadcast. Sixteen inch audio transcriptions usually did not sound good when played back along the network. This necessitated performing the entire program twice in one day and compelled an effort on everyone's part to make the two shows sound exactly the same — an impossibility, even under the most ideal circumstances. Ultimately, two shows a day became an expensive chore for all involved and, many times, resulted in two completely different sounding programs since the performers and crew were usually more relaxed (or tired) for the second show.

On comedy programs, the studio audience was also different. An example of this would be **The Jack Benny Program** in which Jack is approached by a stuck-up man and ordered to give up his money or his life. When Jack retorts, "I'm thinking it over!" the studio audience laugh on the East Coast live feed is much louder, and goes on for a longer time, than on the West Coast edition. SPERDVAC has examples of dissimilarities, from various shows, in its libraries.

We believe the "lost" **Gildersleeve** discs were recorded off of one of the two

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The Radio Bookshelf

Fred Waring's widow tells his life story

Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians by Virginia Waring. University of Illinois Press. 404 pages. \$34.95.

When Fred Waring wrote the introduction to this writer's book, *The Mighty Music Box: The Golden Age of Musical Radio* (1980), I asked why after some 60 years as one of the country's most innovative and popular conductors he had not published his autobiography. He related a story that such a work had been written in draft form years earlier but was lost in transit and never revisited. Now, a dozen years after his death, the saga of Waring and his Pennsylvanians has been richly and effectively told by his widow, pianist Virginia Morley Waring.

This orchestra with its choral singing ensemble occupied a special place in American music, and radio brought it to millions of households for 17 years. Waring's Chesterfield series, circa 1940, was "the best quarter hour in radio" according to many editors' polls and more people heard **Pleasure Time** each week than had ever listened to a musical show. In 1934 Ford Motor paid his aggregation \$12,500 a week — the highest ever in those days — and for the first time a network (CBS) bought a theatre just for his broadcasts (the Hudson in New York). And earlier it was radio in Detroit in 1922 that rescued a stranded and struggling Waring nine-piece Jazz Age novelty dance band.

This well-researched and well-documented biography takes the reader backstage, be it broadcasting or concertizing, for a vivid picture of the modus operandi of this tough taskmaster and performance perfectionist.

"To the end of his life," writes Virginia Waring, "Fred would not print programs for the audience. This could be hard on the performers, but was a key reason his shows were always alive and

vital, even after months on the road. His Chesterfield show was never frozen until minutes before air time. Maybe a piece

sounded over rehearsed or didn't follow the preceding number logically, so he

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Fred Waring radio chronology

The Fred Waring Show (Musical variety) (1/4/32..10/4/57)
 1/4/31 - 32, Sustained, NBC, Mon
 1932 - 33, CBS, Sun
 2/8/33 - 1/31/34, Old Golds, CBS, Wed, 10 pm
 2/4/34 - 9/30/34, Ford, CBS, Sun, 8:30 pm; 9:30 pm as of 4/29/34
 also 2/8/34 - 6/28/34; 9/13/34 - 6/27/35, Ford, CBS, Thu, 30m, 9:30 pm; 60m as of 1/3/35
 7/2/35 - 7/28/36; 9/1/36 - 12/29/36, Ford, CBS, Tue, 60m, 9:30 pm; 30m as of 1/21/36; 9 pm as of 6/30/36
 also 1/17/36 - 12/25/36, Ford, NBC Blue, Fri, 30m, 9:30 pm; 9 pm as of 6/5/36
 10/8/38 - 3/4/39, Bromo-Quinine, NBC, Sat, 8:30 pm
 6/19/39 - 6/9/44 (**Chesterfield Time**; also called **Pleasure Time**; **Victory Tunes**) Chesterfield, NBC, Mon.-Friday, 15m, 7 pm
 9/7/44 - 12/28/44, NBC Blue, Thu, 7 pm
 1/4/45 - 5/31/45, NBC Blue, Thu, 10 pm
 6/4/45 - 8/27/46, Sus, NBC, Monday-Friday, 11 am; three times a week as of 1/14/46
 also 1/15/46 - 7/7/49, American Meat, NBC, twice a week, 30m, 11 am; 10 am as of 9/30/47; Thu, 10 am as of 1/13/49
 also 6/18/46 - 9/24/46; 6/24/47 - 9/30/47, Johnson Wax, NBC, Tue, 9:30 pm (Summer replacements for **Fibber McGee & Molly**)
 8/30/46 - 11/27/46, Florida Citrus Growers, NBC, three times a week, 11 am
 also 3/14/47 - 4/4/47; 7/18/47 - 7/8/49, Minneapolis Valley Canning Company, Fri, 11 am; 10 am as of 10/3/47
 10/6/47 - 9/29/49, GE, NBC, Mon, 10:30 pm; Thu as of 7/29/48
 also (6/7/48 - 9/29/48) Johnson, NBC, Tue, 9:30 pm (Summer replacement for **Fibber McGee & Molly**)
 7/16/49 - 7/22/50, Minneapolis Valley Canning, NBC, Sat, 10 am
 10/1/56 - 3/15/57, ABC, Monday-Friday, 2 pm
 4/9/57 - 10/4/57, ABC, Monday-Friday, 9:30 pm; 10:30 pm as of 6/17/57
 Syndicated - ZIV (156 30-minute shows broadcast) Theme - "I Hear Music;" "Sleep"
 —data compiled by Jay Hickerson in his book *The Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming and Guide to All Circulating Shows*. Available for \$46 from the author, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514.

“I am not a comedian” *continued*

be on the program and sent a postcard to that effect. Of course, thousands of children wanted to be on the program, but CBS dutifully sent him a form to complete which he mailed back post-haste. What followed was almost as unbelievable as the fairy tales enacted on **Let's Pretend**.

Without his parents' blessing this 9-year-old took his savings and bought a round-trip bus ticket from Boston to New York, showed up all by himself at the Madison Avenue offices of CBS on a Saturday morning, and found himself in a waiting room with dozens of other children with their doting parents. When it was Arnold's turn to be interviewed he walked in solo and recited Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven." Before he left New York for the bus ride back to Boston he had been hired to appear on **Let's Pretend**. Arnold remembers also that the program was actually broadcast at that time not from the CBS studios but from a theater which later became Playhouse 54.

His success created a slight problem in logistics. Commuting from Chelsea, Massachusetts every weekend to New York for a grammar school child had its pitfalls. He had also been employed to do the **Horn & Hardart Children's Show** for NBC Sundays. Luckily, Arnold had an aunt who lived on the Upper West Side in Manhattan. He moved in with her and continued schooling while adding a second Sunday show to his schedule, **American Pageant of Youth**.

With three years of network radio under his slender belt, Arnold Stang did his first legitimate theater work at age 12. The play was "All in Favor" and had tryouts in Baltimore, Boston and Philadelphia before opening at the Henry Miller Theater in New York. The critics called the show a "Junior Mister," suggesting it was riding on the coattails of the enormously popular hit of the early forties, "Junior Miss."

Movies were the next challenge and Arnold made his trek to Hollywood with his mother in tow. Mrs. Stang was lonesome for her family back East and soon returned there while Arnold stayed in Tinseltown to make "Seven Days Leave" with Victor Mature and Lucille Ball. The 1942 RKO musical about a sailor on leave who must marry within two weeks to collect his inheritance was directed by Tim Whelan and also featured Ginny Simms, Buddy Clark, Peter Lynd Hayes and Harold Peary. The hit song in the film was "Can't Get Out of This Mood." (Incidentally, the film is available through Turner Home Video.) RKO loaned out Arnold to Columbia for "My Sister Eileen" with Roz Rogers, and to MGM for a Bob Hope feature, "They Got Me Covered." Dorothy Lamour also starred in this World War II yarn about a fired war correspondent who tries to prove his worth by uncovering a Nazi spy ring.

Truth continued to be stranger than fiction while this teenager found himself living all alone in a house rented for him by the studio. Not to worry! There was little chance for him to get into trouble. "All my time was spent at the studio," he declared. "I probably never would have seen the Pacific Ocean if it hadn't been for Victor Mature. I'd do six days a week at the studio — and then radio on Sundays."

Stang has nothing but admiration for actor Victor Mature, who "kept an eye on me and took me to his home on weekends." He survived — thanks to the kindness of some other rather exotic "strangers."

"Rita Hayworth wrote a note to my mother every weekend to keep her posted," he said. Bob Hope and Jack Benny took a personal interest in him as well.

His first network radio show as a
Concluded on next page

Radio preservationist

network edited master audio feeds, as reference for the NBC legal department. The original **Great Gildersleeve** edited air master audio tapes did not survive and are gone forever. They were sent, kicking and screaming, to that great radio show repository called the Los Angeles County Garbage Dump.

Try to get these **Great Gildersleeve** radio programs if you can. It is a complete season, for 33 weeks, in 1951. You won't be disappointed.

Fred Waring *conclusion*

would substitute a number in which he foresaw a more spontaneous performance. . . With the clock ticking away, the arrangers would rush to their cubicles to rewrite entire passages, push the copyists into a frenzy, rehearse the performers, and somehow manage to get the changes ready before the show went on-the air."

Regrettably, Waring fell into the ranks of the forgotten big bands/orchestras; his radio work ended in 1950 and a TV series for GE concluded four years later. After that, he was virtually ignored by the media but continued with annual tours into the 1980s. His choral arrangements, used by countless school and community groups, perhaps remain his greatest legacy.

Mrs. Waring has crafted a superbly balanced account of one of this century's foremost entertainers — and even includes a CD of excerpts from radio shows and commercial recordings dating from 1923 to 1963.

- - Reviewed by Tom DeLong.
[Fred Waring appears in DeLong's recently published, *Radio Stars: An Illustrated Biographical Dictionary of 953 Performers, 1920 through 1960*, from McFarland Press.]

“I am not a comedian” *conclusion*

featured performer was a partial summer replacement for Jack Benny's **Jell-o Program** on NBC Sundays at 7 pm. It was called **The Remarkable Miss Tuttle** and starred Edna Mae Oliver as Josephine Tuttle. Arnold Stang played Miss Tuttle's nephew Bobby Shuttleworth. The program aired July 5 to Aug. 30, 1942.

When he returned to New York, Arnold found himself doing a lot of radio comedy, including appearances with Fanny Brice and each of the Marx Brother. And he spent two seasons on the **Al Jolson Show**. Fred Allen turned out to be a valuable friend, and Arnold once played the son to Fred's Rip Van Winkle for the **Theatre Guild on the Air**.

All day every day he went from one radio show to another, often with only a candy bar at lunch.

What does Stang think of Henry Morgan, the controversial man behind the radio personality? “An absolute genius,” is his unhesitating reply. “He pulled up the standards of a lot of other shows. You'd be surprised, perhaps shocked, if you knew the number of famous entertainers who came to rehearsals to watch Henry work his magic — and learn from him.”

Arnold also makes it clear that Morgan was “often his own worst enemy” (a paraphrase of his description).

Apparently Henry insisted that everyone on his show sit down sit up front in a row of chairs until it was time to step to the microphone and deliver lines. Arnold chose not to buy this regimentation and would wander around doing other things—but always back to the microphone on time for lines. Morgan refused to accept this and it was a source of constant friction.

“As well as we worked together on the air,” admitted Stang, “we were never friends outside the show. I remember once he invited me to a

housewarming at his Fifth Avenue apartment. I went but I couldn't wait to get away!”

Nevertheless, Arnold Stang was not one to let personal feelings cloud his objective assessment of Morgan's amazing talents. “Whenever I got a big laugh on the Morgan show it was because of brilliant planning—nothing else! I am NOT a comedian. I am an actor who does comedy.”

Stang says he once had an entire shelf of scripts in his apartment where characters were identified as “an Arnold Stang type.” One could describe the persona as “plucky,” “brash,” “appealingly vulnerable” — the quintessential “rugged individual” who down deep isn't rugged at all.

He describes himself as a team player with little interest in doing stand-up routines or a one-man show. Once, Stang recalls, Milton Berle was ill and couldn't appear on **Texaco Star Theater** so the young actor was asked to fill in. In the earliest stages of rehearsals it was clear to Arnold that he should step aside for another personality.

In spite of his preference for radio, Stang was soon advised by his agent to do TV in order to survive in radio as well. “Remember,” he added, “I started out to be a serious actor. I was a member of the Actor's Studio and I played serious parts in ‘Man With the Golden Arm’ and in ‘Somebody Up There Likes Me.’ What I do is acting — comedy acting.”

Although he was later a favorite on TV's “Texaco Star Theater,” “I much preferred radio as a more intelligent and creative medium.” Ironically, Milton Berle had been a flop on radio. It was his writer/producer Nat Hiken who made “Uncle Miltie” a Tuesday night phenomenon. Hiken went on to work similar magic for Phil Silvers on “Sergeant Bilko.”

Is there a Mrs. Stang? “Oh, yes!

I'm still with my 'original wife' Joanne. I call her my 'current wife,' but we've been a team for 49 years.” She writes for the *New York Times*.

Are there children? Yes, a daughter who is a pediatrician and a son who taught art history and currently is an art dealer.

His hobbies include backyard gardening (he calls himself a “member of the Black Thumb Club”), plus “writing, directing and re-writing.” Stang likes to travel to England twice a year to see shows.

[Special thanks to Eileen Tierney in the Media Center at the University of Rhode Island, Roy Waite of Tokyo and Jack Hickerson for additional data related to this article. —WJB]

Radio Classics Live

most believable as “Stinky” and Bobby, the original discoverers and trainers of the unique insect. Ellen Kelly did a very believable Eleanor Roosevelt. Arthur Anderson directed “My Client Curley” and provided convincing impressions of commentators Walter Winchell and Gabriel Heatter.

(While talking with Arthur and his wife at the Saturday night cast party I was fascinated with his accounts of 18 years on **Let's Pretend** and as a cast member of Orson Welles' Mercury Theater production on Broadway of “Julius Caesar.” Arthur's book named in honor of the kiddy show is now high on my Christmas wish list.)

Parley and Peg returned for a final visit with **Ethel and Albert** before we braved the rain and headed for the evening cast party back at the Brockton Holiday Inn.

In retrospect, when such a class act is held within easy commuting distance of Boston (the “Athens of America”), it is only fitting to report the attendance figures at “Radio Classics Live VIII” as follows:

Friday evening: CDLXXV

Saturday afternoon: CCL

Next year . . . be there!

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DEADLINE
July 1997 issue

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Early copy is always appreciated!

University seeks donations for radio preservation project

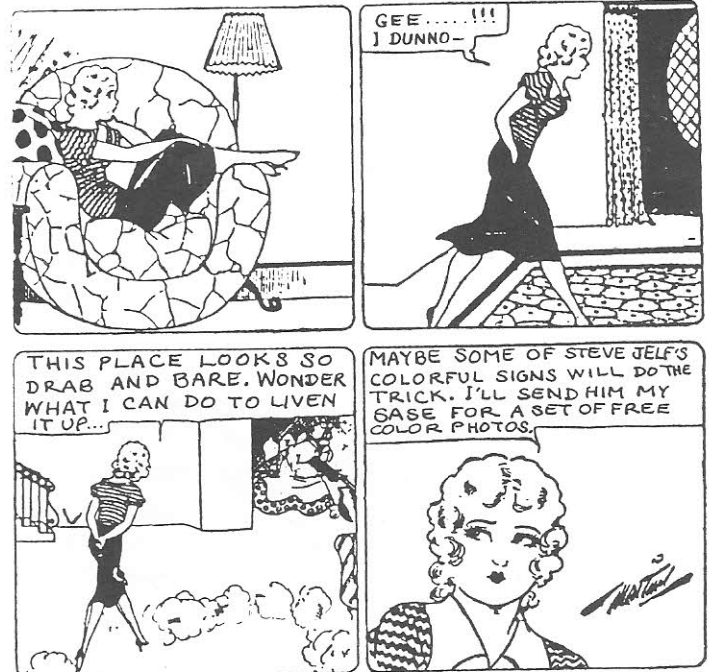
East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania is in need of donations to purchase computer equipment suitable for transferring vintage radio programs from open reel to CD-ROM.

The ESU Vintage Radio Project also has the goals of obtaining software systems to reduce extraneous noise endemic to aging open reel tapes and software useful in indexing and cataloging collection entries. The project is also soliciting donations of additional radio broadcast recordings.

The radio broadcasting preservation project began when collector Robert Brunet, editor of the OTR publication *The Daily Sentinel*, donated a collection of some 3000 hours of classic programs to the university in 1993. The school named Rob McKenzie, faculty advisor to the campus radio station, director of the ESU Vintage Radio Project.

One of the challenges the project faces is finding ways to preserve the programs, most of which are recorded on now-deteriorating Shamrock brand open reel tapes.

Monetary and equipment donations may be made to ESU Vintage Radio Project, ESU Foundation, Reibman Building, East Stroudsburg University, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. Project director Rob McKenzie may be contacted at his e-mail address: mckenzie@esu.edu or phone (717) 422-3886; fax: (717) 422-3777.



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