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AND  
RADIO  
GUIDE



HARRY VON ZELL

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BOOK FOURTEEN CHAPTER FIVE

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1988

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### NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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Well, we hate this, but we have no choice.

The cost of publishing the *Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide* has been steadily rising and, finally, we have come to the conclusion that we must review our subscription rates.

Over the past two years we have watched printing costs climb more than thirty percent and typesetting, layout, photo and other editorial charges increase about the same.

And earlier this year when postal rates jumped, so did we!

The last time the *Nostalgia Digest* underwent a subscription rate change was in 1984, so we've been able to hold the line for some time.

But now, effective with this issue, we are obliged to increase our one-year subscription rate from \$10 to \$12 (for six issues). A two-year subscription increases from \$18 to \$20 (for twelve issues).

If you've been a one-year-at-a-time subscriber, your annual cost won't increase if you sign up for a two-year subscription. And if you've been a two-year-at-a-time subscriber, the increase is minimal.

We promise to continue bringing you good reading and good information in every issue of the *Nostalgia Digest* and we are appreciative of the support you and our other readers and listeners have given us in the past.

We started this little love letter to the good old days about fourteen years ago and we hope to continue for a long, long time to come.

With your help, we'll do it!

Thanks for listening.

*Chuck Schaden*

# SPEAKING OF RADIO



## *Chuck Schaden's Conversation with HARRY VON ZELL*



*Harry Von Zell was one of the best known and foremost announcers and personalities in radio. His broadcast career spanned almost the entire lifetime of radio's "golden age" and he made an easy transition into television.*

*We lost him in 1981, but several years before he died, in 1975, we had an opportunity to visit with him in his home in Encino, California where he reminisced at length about his interesting radio career.*

*Of course, we had to ask him about his now-famous and legendary blooper concerning the President of the United States, Herbert Hoover.*

Ah, well it had to be 1931, I guess. And as often as this has been redramatized and printed or spoken about, I've never heard it told right. They always had me introducing the president. We weren't even in the same city! It was on the occasion of Hoover's birthday, and CBS had decided they wanted to make some sort of a special tribute to him on that occasion. So they decided to devote a full evening, two and a half or three hours of all-star radio entertainment. They had everybody who could make a noise do anything to participate in the program. I began with a seven-page review of Herbert Hoover's life. From the time he was a small boy in elementary school, already showing the qualities of initiative and leadership, and so on. Herbert Hoover, later in high school, entrusted with the business of managing the football team. Later in college, he was repeatedly president of the student body, managed the athletic departments, and all of this. I must have mentioned in that opening the name of Herbert Hoover no less than 20 times. I was very young at the time, actually still in the category of a cub announcer on the Columbia Broadcasting staff, and was very

nervous. It was an assignment I never would have expected to get. It came right out of the blue. I performed this chore at the opening of the evening in a state of trance. It was like I was standing over here listening to somebody over there say these things.

As it progressed, I couldn't feel relaxed, but it impressed me that whoever that was talking over there, was doing a pretty good job! I went all the way through it, got down to where I only had one last thing to say and I relaxed. I don't think I can repeat it verbatim, but this last line was merely in the form of wishing this tribute, as simple as it was in its conception, hoping that it would add to his happiness and somehow convey to him the extent of our love and respect and esteem to the President on his birthday. And I said, we hope we have all joined with the voices of all the people in the world, who are receiving this program by short wave. Happy Birthday to our President . . . Hebert Heevew . . . Heeb hheb! Ha!

You see what happened is that the tension I had been under, not just during the process of delivering this review of his life, but for about three days in anticipation of

the responsibility, the tension relaxed. And when it did, the tongue went right to the roof of my mouth and stuck there and nothing worked! I walked out of that studio, (we were on the 23rd floor of the Columbia Broadcasting System building) and fortunately the windows were not operative. They were fixed windows or I would have jumped out! And I thought that whatever career might have been a potential in my life began and ended right there in that one incident. It turned out not to be so. Evidently that has been my chief claim to fame, notoriety or what.

*Notoriety, perhaps, not your claim to fame certainly. How did you recover? What did the bosses of CBS say?*

Well, everybody was very kind. William Paley, who was then the owner of the network, was there with a large party of important people. The governor of the state was there. Mayor Walker was there. I would say there were about 100 seated in the studio. And of course I thought I had no job any more. The first one to get to me was Paley and he said, "Son, you did a beautiful, beautiful job, and you needn't worry because it's understandable that emotionally you could have been moved in such a way as to cause this slip of the tongue." And the only answer I had to that was, "I want to kill myself!" But they kept me on, and good fortune just seemed to come my way. One good thing after another. I think it was perhaps because of the uproar that came out of that bloop, that I became a target. All the people who were buying programs on CBS wanted me for their announcer, because they thought everybody would listen to see what I would do!

*You had been in radio for a few years before that?*

Oh, yes, I had been in . . . well let's see I went to New York with Columbia Broadcasting in 1930, and I had been working in radio on the west coast, you know, local stations, since 1922.



*That's pretty early. Radio was very young in '22.*

Yes, it was as young as I was. I think we were about the same age.

*What were the radio stations like? What were the studios like at that time?*

Well, we had then KFI, The National Broadcasting outlet on the West Coast, which was at that time very large in its wattage power, covering a lot of territory; KHJ, which later became the Mutual Broadcasting outlet; KFWB, the Warner Brothers Station; and KNX in Hollywood. They all came along in pretty rapid succession. So there was quite a field of stations if you could perform in any way average or perhaps a little above average, you could get work. If you were average you usually worked for nothing. It was new, and people who had the urge to sing or play or whatever they did, or recite, would all flock into those stations and offered themselves, and if they were acceptable they worked. But I began to get paid. I think it was at KNX, where they gave me a half hour a week, for which I got \$25.

*And what did you do?*

## SPEAKING OF RADIO

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I sang. I started as a singer, and then later I became employed by a man by the name of Bill Chartles, who was known then on radio as the new idea man. He had formed a breakfast club from our audience and had at that time, nearly 300,000 members. And the only thing that they had to do, in order to hold a card in the breakfast club which gave them certain buying benefits at certain shops and markets and so on, was that they used religiously the products that we advertised.

We worked on practically every station then in operation from 6:30 in the morning till 9:30 in the morning. Our group numbered about 25 or 30 people, instrumentalists. We had the Gump Family, Andy, Chester and whoever, which was a banjo trio of excellent quality. We had a girl by the name of Louise Hollet, who could sing and play the piano, like nobody! We had good entertainment and that grew to be very big. Then on one of the stations which we periodically appeared (Chartles would shift around from station to station to be sure he covered every possible audience), he offered me a job to work at the station permanently as an announcer, time salesman, copywriter, engineer. And I sang under two different names. I did my popular songs on a request program with my ukulele where I would accompany myself. I performed that under my own name. Then I also assumed some name. (I've forgotten what that was) where I performed as a concert soloist and had an accompanist and a violinist who played along with me. I was trained at that time, so I could do either one fairly well. I'm sure I didn't fool anybody, because the voice was close enough that they knew there had to be some connection between those two names!

*People were really eager, though, for any kind of entertainment on radio in the '20's.*

Yes. The quality and reception was not that good, because of the static. But then later when they improved the microphones and came along with a carbon microphone that worked. If the carbon didn't become disturbed, then you would have to hit it with a pencil or something, because it made a noise like bacon frying or something. But the technological progress was very rapid and with that the sale of radios picked up. It boomed. I think our home was probably one of the last to have a radio set, because my father never thought the thing would last more than five years! He thought it was some kind of a grown up toy, that would wear itself out. He later changed his mind.

*You proved it.*

Well, you see his point of criticism in my decision to take a steady job in radio. I was at the time an assistant paymaster of the Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad. He thought, when I left that position to go work at a radio station for \$25 a week, that I had made a mistake. He expressed his reasoning by simply saying it won't amount to anything. "It's a toy and it'll disappear." And I had had enough experience at that time to form an opinion of my own, which was that this medium—aside from what it could do for people in outlying places, where they were more or less isolated from cities—it could expand their imagination, and their vision and their lives. And even more pointedly than that, because of the obvious appeal of this medium to a listener here and a listener there, millions of people, it was destined to become the most powerful and the most economic advertising medium the world has ever known. That's what it did, and that's what it still is.

*And how! Well, you actually got involved in an advertising agency operation for a while didn't you?*

Yes, well you see the work that I had to do early was public relations, promotions, sales, everything. That taught me



something. I was only with CBS for I think about four years.

*You did the March of Time for them in that period?*

Yes. I was the original Voice of Time on radio. This came about through the efforts of a man who talked me into going to New York in the first place. He was himself at that time with a large advertising agency. He said, "You're bound to get a job on the networks and you're bound to do well." Well, anyway, he later left the advertising agency that he was with and became head of the programming department at CBS headquarters in New York. When the March of Time came along, they had offered it to Ted Husing. They wanted Ted Husing as the Voice of Time. Ted's love was sports and he was already involved with setting up a football schedule which would take him to cities and towns away from New York. And he didn't want to do the March of Time, but if they had to have him, he had made up his mind. But this man of whom I spoke went to them and said, "I want you to at least listen to a new young fellow that we have on the staff." And they were then coming close

to releasing their first show, and were within a day or so of getting ready to do the dress rehearsal of that show. So they had me do that. Then Arthur Pryor, who was the director of the March of Time, came out of the studio and said, "Do you want this job?" I said yes, and so I became the Voice of Time.

*How long did that last?*

Four years, and then Young and Rubicam, who were moving pretty rapidly into the top spot among advertising agencies with radio productions for their clients, asked me. The way they put it, they needed me for a certain program. And the only way they felt that they could get me, because that program was on the opposing network, would be to hire me away from CBS. So they did. I went over there and was in their radio department for nearly six or seven years. The program that they needed me for was the Fred Allen Program.

*Town Hall Tonight?*

Town Hall Tonight, yes, and that was a joy, and I enjoyed doing that, but they had others. They had Kate Smith. They had Ed Wynn. They had a program *We the People*, which was very big with the audiences. That was a big show. So I found myself really spread around. I was not just on one network, but I was on all networks at one time or another.

*And you were actually employed by Young and Rubicam.*

Yes, I could service only their clients.

*I see, one of which had to be Bristol-Myers. Wasn't that on Town Hall?*

Bristol-Myers was on Town Hall Tonight, and then came a situation. You'll remember the Town Hall Tonight Hour had co-sponsors. Sal Hepatica for the Smile of Health, Ipana for the Smile of Beauty and there was a conflict in the thinking of two men. Now those companies, under Bristol-Myers, operated as separate entities, although the parent

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company was Bristol-Myers. The advertising head of Ipana did not feel that Fred Allen covered as much of the audience as perhaps another personality might. They knew that we had good audiences, 'cause our ratings were always very high. But because of Fred's particular style and his particular personality and his particular approach to humor, they felt that he was missing a large segment of potential audience. And so there was this constant bickering back and forth and they finally decided to split the hour into two half hours. When that decision was made, Fred backed off. He said it would be impossible for him to do a half hour after doing an hour. He wrote it entirely himself. He said, "I've been doing this so long, I wouldn't know what to do in a half hour." So he said, "You go get somebody and I'll go off somewhere else." And they got Eddie Cantor. So then I became Eddie Cantor's announcer. Eddie Cantor would not stay in New York during the winter. So that meant that I was migrating back and forth, back and forth.

### *Every week?*

No, every year. I was eight or nine months in Hollywood, and three or four months in New York in the summer. After I had gone through that experience for several years, I was still receiving my salary from the advertising agency, but I was servicing really only one program, one client. And . . . I just didn't like it. I resigned two or three times and they paid no attention to me! Well finally, they gave up. When that happened I came back to California as a free lance announcer. Of course I had Eddie Cantor, with whom I had signed exclusively, until Dinah Shore became so big. The demand for her on the part of a number of advertisers was, you know, constant and very big.

### *She was a regular on his show.*

Yes, for quite a number of years. And



Eddie finally felt that he just couldn't hold her, and he gave her a release from her contract and she took a show. We were on NBC, and she took a show on CBS. It was only a matter of weeks when Eddy came to me and said, Harry, Dinah wants you to do her show. So I did. Then he contracted Joan Davis, a comedienne, to work on the show. Well, it wasn't very long before she became big enough that she was wanted badly by a number of advertisers for a show of her own. Eddie called and then I had three shows!

This is about the time that you could see television as an industry right on the horizon. Their testing in the east was convincing. And I was concerned about this problem of perhaps making a transition from the total audio side of the electronic medium to the visual side, and the camera. So I had hired an agent to see if he might find me some small character parts in movies. I wanted nothing that had anything to do with radio, because I wanted to find a place in pictures as a character actor. And he did. 20th Century Fox, during the summer months had me in a picture in the



nature of the supporting role, character role. They were coming up with other things, but they couldn't shoot around me and here I had these three radio shows a week! Well, that finally resolved itself. Television came along, I looked at it, didn't like it. I was dumbfounded that they introduced television as a comparable operation to network radio and I couldn't see where there was a possibility of that. Television gave everything. It gave the sound. It gave the picture. It gave the voice. It gave the music. It gave everything. As a mass production medium, around the clock release, I felt that it was not what the medium was meant to do.

I did a few programs locally. I did one big hour with Alveno Ray and the King Sisters, which held a big audience for a long time until it got too expensive for the local advertisers to afford and that dropped. I tried another little program, a late evening thing, I think we called it the Lazyboners. It was a sort of relaxed, forget-it type of thing. Life is easy. Life is pleasant. People are good. I was able to get enough guest stars of stature, to keep that on, but I didn't like doing it. I wasn't getting any satisfaction out of it, really. So I had about made up my mind that there was nothing in television for me, when I got word that Bill Goodwin had left the Burns and Allen television show, which I watched religiously every week. I was fascinated by what they were able to do on television in contrast to what others were trying to do. And when I got that news, I immediately picked up the phone and got a hold of Willy Burns, George's brother. He didn't even ask who it was. He said, "All right Harry, you're on the list." Ha! "This is a critical change for us to have to make," he said. And it was. Bill had been a very important member of their cast in addition to handling the commercials. But, he said, "We don't know what we're going to do. We're just going to test. You will be tested." I think there were about 20 others who tested. When they finally got down to a decision, I ended up with

the show. Though I'll never know exactly why or how. It came down to a choice between two of us, and the other one was Bill Banyon, who had done Red Ryder in the movies. He had done some acting on radio, but not a lot. He was not associated in the public mind with radio. I think that when they finally got down to make a decision between the two they picked me because people were used to hearing me sell products. They felt that I would do a better job of selling the product than Banyon would. So I got the job and am I glad.

*You did a marvelous job with it! Did you work with George and Gracie in the radio series as well?*

Well, I did several series with George and Gracie early when they first went on radio. But with this business with the exclusive thing with Cantor I couldn't at that time. Bill Goodwin became their announcer, and was with them permanently for about 17 years. So he would have to be their man. During that time, Bill and his agent were convinced that Bill should have a show of his own, and he should have. There were two or three times when he got the opportunity. At that time he would go to George and say, "Well I've got this thing." George would say, "All right, go!" Then George would call me and he would talk to Eddie and Eddie would say, "Alright, if you want him go ahead and do it." We had no conflict sponsorwise or anything of that sort. And I had done that two or three times and I think that's why Willy said "you're on the list." Because as close as the audience could place Bill Goodwin with Burns and Allen, there were reasons why they could associate me with them, also. 'Cause I had spelled Bill Goodwin on and off, when he had gone off on these trials for a show of his own that didn't quite work out.

That led to another problem. My association with them on television lasted about 11 years. Then with the failing health of

## SPEAKING OF RADIO

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Gracie, she had to retire. We had to finish, and I was at loose ends. We knew two years prior to the time of our conclusion of the production that we were going to finish. Of course my agents were out scouting around, and when they finished, they had three new shows. All of which had been sold and were ready to go into production and take to the air on television. Two of the shows had a running part and they wanted me for it. The other one offered me so many weeks out of each year, and they wanted me for it. I asked for a script of each one, which puzzled my agent, who said, Harry, the show is sold. I said, "Yeah but I want to know what I'm going to do?" I read each of the scripts and sorry, I wouldn't have been happy. They didn't, any of them, last very long.

*What were the shows?*

I'm not going to tell you, because several of the people are still around. It was not their fault that the show failed. The production was just not good, writing was not good, at least not in my opinion, and as I say they didn't do well, and it doesn't suit anybody's purpose to say who the staffers were. The premise of two of the shows, I thought, was very weak. I didn't see how that could hold up. They had good writers, experienced writers, but they were not experienced in television, they were experienced in radio. A couple of them had done some pretty good screen writing, but they didn't have the feel for television. You see, in motion pictures, people go to a theatre, they pay money, they go in to see it. If they've picked a bad picture that's their problem. But radio and television goes into their homes, and one of the things that always troubled me was that so many of the advertisers who used television, so many of the people who held positions as producers or directors in radio, looked upon it always as a mass medium, which of course it was, in that there was a mass of people out there. But in the strict and

basic sense, it was the most intimate and the most socially personal medium in the world, because you were entertaining one, two, three, four or five people of a family in their living room, or their den or their bedroom in their own home. An advertiser in radio would give me copy, orating and pounding and shouting his wares, and I simply couldn't do it. I said I will not holler at people in their own houses. You must speak to them as if you are sitting there with them in their home and appreciate if they keep that dial tuned to where you are. You owe them a great debt of thanks for allowing you in and letting you stay. But they never got it!

*Well, you were the number one announcer in radio, and in television . . .*

Well, I wouldn't say the number one announcer, I would say certainly for a period of years had to be the busiest. Because as I said, Young and Rubicam's stature in the advertising field attracted more and more large advertisers. For those who used the networks, I was there, unless there was a conflict of one with the other from one network to the other. I couldn't do them both. But I was running from studio to studio practically every night in the week.

*How many shows did you have on at a single time.*

I never counted them, but someone told me that there was a period there where they counted me on 23 commercial shows in one week. And I don't know how I ever did that. I know that in two and a half years, I shed about 70 very healthy young pounds of muscle!

*You worked with the major comedians on radio, much more than as an announcer but really as part of the show.*

Well, that came out of the Fred Allen experience, I hadn't been with Fred as his announcer for more than two or three weeks before an occasion arose in which one of the cast of the Mighty Allen Art Players (there were four of them) got an



**HARRY VON ZELL** on the mike as Eddie Cantor and Bert Gordon, the Mad Russian, get ready to join in the fun.

opportunity to do a rather important role in a new Broadway play and Fred said, "Alright, we can work around you while you're in rehearsal" and so on. But they got to a point where the producers of that play decided they better take it out of town for a few weeks, maybe to Boston or some place and give it a trial run in a theatre. Well, that posed a problem for Fred and that came up very suddenly. So the first reading rehearsal after Fred had gotten the news that Teddy Bergman (Alan Reed) wasn't going to be available. He asked me to read his lines in the Mighty Allen Players sketch. I did and Fred said, "Look, would the agency mind if I hired you, you know, paid you separately to become one of the actors?" Now this put me in a little different category. I was a performer as well as an announcer. Then, of course, when I went with Eddie Cantor. He used me as a foil.

*He used you extensively. You were really half the show.*

Yes, and then with every sketch that we had there was always a crazy little part of

some kind they would write in there for me.

*There was, in one season for sure, it may have lasted longer, where you become a father of a baby that was named Eddie Cantor Von Zell Jr.*

Oh, that was a frightful thing! Yes, the way it started was the news came that Mickey, my wife, was with child, that we were expecting and right away Eddie said, "It's got to be a boy, and I'm going to adopt it. And I'll have a son." That was the pitch on the show. He milked that to death on the program, and it turned out to be a girl. So he wouldn't have any part of that! We had to pretend it was a boy. He was just beside himself with disappointment. So he hired Billy Grey who could do a baby. He could cry like a baby, and make little noises like a baby. So for weeks, my little girl was on the radio as a boy! Well that finally petered out because everybody knew it was a girl.

*Well, it was good fun though! Then a whole Cantor show would be built around some kind of a conflict between you . . .*

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Yes, he ran Gracie Allen for President, or he put her up for President when she did a guest spot on his show, and then Burns picked it up. The public and the press went for it very big. I forgot who she was running against. It had to be Roosevelt, I guess! But George wrote little campaign speeches for her to give each week on the program, and of course they were typical Gracie Allen speeches. But she got over 25,000 write-in votes!

*That says something doesn't it?*

I think if it had run longer, the write in votes would have been more impressive.

*Cantor was on for Bristol-Myers, Ipana, and Sal Hepatica . . .*

Yes, for a while, and then he switched over to Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer. Then we still had, I think, nearly three or four years to go. His contract with Pabst was for seven years originally with options. It still had about three or four years to go, but Eddie was really trying to do too much. He had done a picture with Warner Brothers and he was doing our show and

then going around to the military camps when the Second World war came along. He overtaxed himself and suffered a little setback. His doctors said, "Eddie, at your age and the way you expend energy, you just have to back off. We recommend that you get yourself off the air for at least six months, or a year or whatever." Eddy said, "Well, I can't do it because I have a contract." So the doctors wrote a letter to the Pabst Company and they, of course, released him from the provisions of the contract. He proceeded to take it easy by doing the quiz show. I think it was the \$64 Question, which he took over from Garry Moore.

*Take It or Leave It?*

Yeah, Take It or Leave It, yes. So that left me in the middle of the season without employment. I went back to the movies. I did ten two-reel comedy shorts for Columbia pictures. I played myself and the plots had to do with what happens to a fellow that was a broadcaster.

*What was the series called?*

The series had no name . . . like the Andy Clyde series, and the Three Stooges. It was done by the same department that did all those. It was just the name of the film, starring Harry Von Zell, and then what the sequence would be about. These two-reel shorts ran about 15 or 16 minutes. I guess, in the theatre. I never saw one!

At that time, the double feature had gone into effect as a result of the major studios having been divorced from their releasing units and they had to have some wedge by which to sell the product that was coming out. In those days, a major studio would turn out anywhere from 30 to 40 major pictures a year. But when they found themselves in a situation where the theater management or the management of theatre chains with whom they were dealing could be discerning on what they wanted. They had to use a little leverage. A big picture came out and with a lot of big publicity by

Chuck Schaden's



## SPEAKING OF RADIO

*Conversations with . . .*

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Rudy Vallee | <input type="checkbox"/> Harold Peary  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Don Ameche  | <input type="checkbox"/> Jack Benny    |

. . . and many others

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the producing studio, all of the theatre managers and management wanted that picture. Well, a policy evolved from that on the part of the majors, that if they wanted this picture as a first run in their neighborhood in their theatre then they had to take another picture as a co-feature. Whether they wanted it or not they had to pay for it. So that was the way that came about. There was only one way to go.

I had these 10 two-reelers under my belt, when I quit. It got to be too tough. I used that and the agent that I employed used that to have at least an entrance into picture companies, and I think the first big one I did was with Universal. "The Saxon Charm." was a five-star picture, and I had a good role in that and I had a good one in a big picture at Fox, "For Heaven's Sake" with Edmund Gwen. That was another five or six-star picture and it was a good hit picture. Then there were several more pictures, so that kept us eating.

*Well, it was good experience too, because it would get you ready for television.*

Well, I did get something on radio during that period. Oh, it was an audience participation show, Meet the Missus, with the Columbia Network. I didn't like it. I didn't like the idea of it and I think the reason they had me do that was that I had replaced Tom Breneman on Breakfast in Hollywood, which was one of the biggest shows ever for audience. They felt that would take me into this thing, but I tell you, Meet the Missus was nothing like Breakfast in Hollywood!

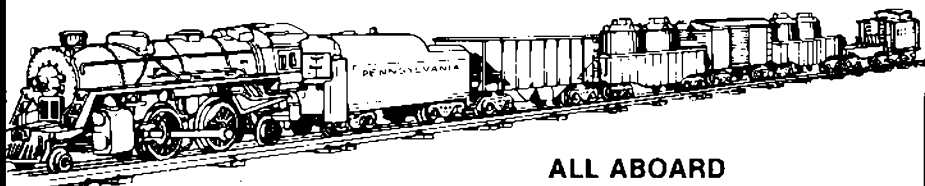
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OUR CONVERSATION WITH  
HARRY VON ZELL  
CONTINUES IN THE NEXT ISSUE  
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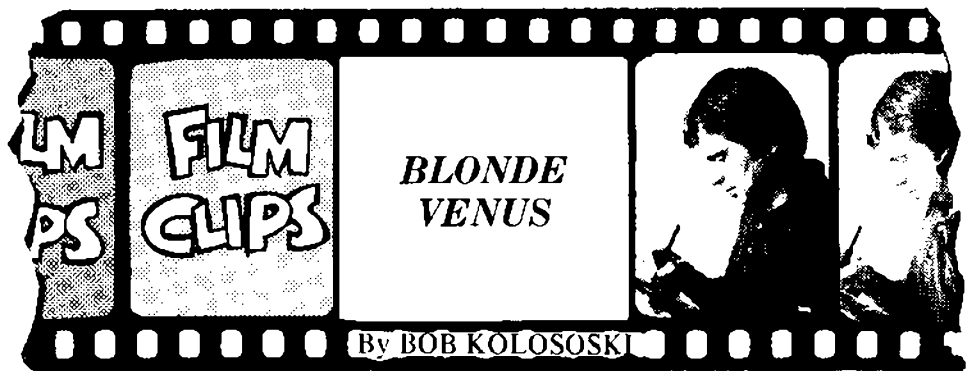
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Marlene Dietrich is a forgotten woman today even though for a brief flash in history she was considered the most provocative woman in the world. Her popularity overshadowed Greta Garbo, whom Marlene was often said to resemble,



**MARLENE DIETRICH**

and her fame so far-reaching that Adolph Hitler personally ordered her to return to her native Germany (she refused).

She was the first movie star to publicly wear men's trousers and thus started a fashion revolution that persists to this day. In 1937 she was the highest paid female movie star in the world and in 1938 was labeled "box office poison" by film producers. She proved them wrong in 1939 with her fiery performance as Frenchie in "Destry Rides Again" co-starring James Stewart. Her film career was something of a roller-coaster with as many dips as crests, but even though she had been down she was never out.

She was born into a semi-well-to-do family in pre-World War I Germany. Her father was a professional army officer and her mother something of a benevolent general. The young Maria Magdelene Dietrich was brought up in a disciplined environment (a quality that later helped her survive the rigors of the Hollywood studios) and tutored in the fine arts by her aristocratic mother. The young Marlene (her two names had been contracted) became an avid reader and learned violin and piano. Her life seemed set in place with her eventually blending into the German aristocratic society.

World War I shattered the dreams of millions and at its tired conclusion Marlene was fatherless and her family fortune exhausted. She enrolled in Max Reinhardt's acting school in Berlin in 1921. Her



**DESTROY RIDES AGAIN:** Jimmy Stewart, Marlene Dietrich, Brian Donlevy in a scene from the 1939 film.

ambition was to be a stage actress and perform in the great world dramas. Her need for money to help support her mother and sister demanded she take any part offered to her and small parts in second rate plays were always available. She began to do minor film work during the day and her stage work during the evening. From 1922 to 1929 she appeared in dozens of films and plays but was still nothing more than an aspiring actress. Then in 1929 she met Josef Von Sternberg. Marlene Dietrich would undergo a metamorphosis to emerge as an international film star.

Von Sternberg, a successful director in Hollywood had been called to Germany to direct Emil Jannings (at that time the leading German actor) in "The Blue Angel". The part of Lola the cabaret singer was open and several leading

German actresses were under consideration for the part. One evening Von Sternberg went to a stage musical revue and spotted Marlene—he knew he had his

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## FILM CLIPS

Lola. After much quibbling with Jannings and the producer, Von Sternberg signed Marlene to an exclusive contract and began filming "The Blue Angel". The film was a huge success and Marlene was on her way to Hollywood and Paramount Studios.

Von Sternberg convinced the Paramount top brass that he had a suitable rival to MGM's Greta Garbo. Paramount gave Dietrich a contract and Von Sternberg free reign to do a series of films starring his new protegee. The Von Sternberg-Dietrich films are a strange mixture of erotic images and excessive style clearly conceived by Von Sternberg to showcase his new star. His passion to make Marlene a star erupted in gossip about their relationship (they were both married) resulting in a 1933 alienation of affection suit by Mrs. Von Sternberg against Marlene. Dietrich (not easily threatened) challenged the suit and it was dropped. More than once Von Sternberg announced he would stop direct-

ing Marlene, but at her insistence he was drawn back to her like a moth to a flame. Indeed in most of their collaborations their relationship is played out for the audience to view and judge. Marlene leaves the man she loves (a Von Sternberg surrogate) for another sacrificing her passion for the sake of her true love.

Even by Hollywood's less-than-puritanical standards the Von Sternberg-Dietrich relationship was a bit strange. To Marlene he was a mentor and Svengali and to Von Sternberg she was his unattainable Venus; the supreme obsession in his life. The irony was that his desire to present her as an object of forbidden love would eventually destroy his career. His last two films with Dietrich, "The Scarlett Empress" and "The Devil is a Woman," were critical and financial failures. They destroyed the studio's confidence in him ("you're only as good as your last film") and exorcised all the creative energy he had. Like professor Roth in "The Blue Angel" Von Sternberg had gambled all for his Lola and lost. After "The Devil is a Woman" Von Sternberg would only direct seven films in the last 35 years of his life.

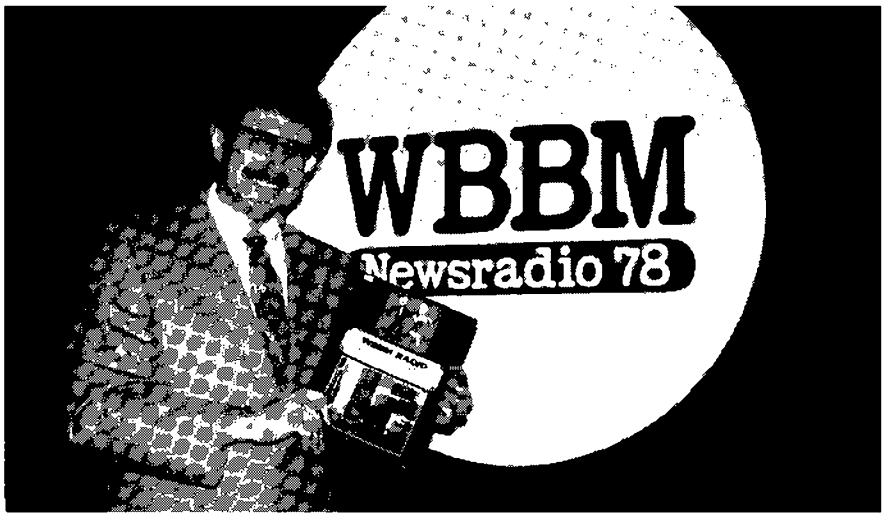
As for Marlene, "Destry Rides Again" would revive her film career and she worked with Ernst Lubitsch, Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder and Alfred Hitchcock. Her work with these fine directors was varied but always first class. Her role of Christine Vole in Billy Wilder's "Witness for the Prosecution" (1958) was a *tour de force* for Marlene and she nearly stole the film away from Charles Laughton.

Marlene would ooze sensuality on cue and make strong men melt with a simple facial gesture. Her early films with Von Sternberg were dripping with frustrated passion and if remade today would certainly be considered adult entertainment. She was an island unto herself and survived her own screen reputation to do some top rate comedy and drama; and a self-parody or two. If Garbo was the Queen of the elaborate soap opera then Dietrich was the Empress of Exotic melodrama.



MARLENE DIETRICH





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# AUGUST

## RADIO CLASSICS — WBBM-AM 78 MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M. SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> Lights Out Stand By For Crime	<b>2</b> Fibber McGee This Is Your FBI	<b>3</b> The Falcon Burns & Allen	<b>4</b> Lone Ranger Dragnet	<b>5</b> Sealed Book Green Hornet	<b>6</b> Life of Riley Hopalong Cassidy Jack Benny This Is Your FBI
<b>7</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>8</b> Burns & Allen Gangbusters	<b>9</b> Green Hornet Lights Out	<b>10</b> Lone Ranger The Falcon	<b>11</b> Great Gildersleeve Sealed Book	<b>12</b> Hopalong Cassidy Dragnet	<b>13</b> Great Gildersleeve This Is Your FBI Jack Benny Dragnet
<b>14</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>15</b> Republican Convention NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>16</b> Republican Convention NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>17</b> Republican Convention NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>18</b> Republican Convention NO RADIO CLASSICS	<b>19</b> Sherlock Holmes Sealed Book	<b>20</b> Six Shooter Dragnet Jack Benny Black Museum
<b>21</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>22</b> Dragnet Fibber McGee	<b>23</b> Sealed Book Stand By For Crime	<b>24</b> Lights Out Hopalong Cassidy	<b>25</b> Jack Benny The Falcon	<b>26</b> This Is Your FBI Green Hornet	<b>27</b> Dragnet Great Gildersleeve This Is Your FBI Life of Riley
<b>28</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>29</b> Gangbusters Lone Ranger	<b>30</b> Fibber McGee Dragnet	<b>31</b> Hopalong Cassidy The Falcon	<b>PLEASE NOTE</b> Due to WBBM's commitment to news and sports, <i>Radio Classics</i> may be pre-empted occasionally for late-breaking news of local or national importance, or for unscheduled sports coverage. In this event, vintage shows scheduled for <i>Radio Classics</i> will be rescheduled to a later date.		

# SEPTEMBER

## RADIO CLASSICS — WBBM-AM 78 MONDAY thru FRIDAY 8:00-9:00 P.M. SATURDAY and SUNDAY 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> - All of the programs we present on <i>Radio Classics</i> are syndicated rebroadcasts. We regret that we are not able to obtain advance information about the starlines of these shows so that we might include more details in our <i>Radio Guide</i> . However, each show we present is slightly less than 30 minutes in length and this easy-to-read schedule lists the programs in the order we will broadcast them on WBBM-AM. The first show listed will play at approximately 8 p.m. and the second will be presented at about 8:30 p.m. and so forth. Programs on <i>Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. Thanks for listening.				<b>1</b> Gangbusters Hopalong Cassidy	<b>2</b> Dragnet Lights Out	<b>3</b> Burns & Allen Six Shooter Jack Benny Sherlock Holmes
<b>4</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>5</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>6</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>7</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>8</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>9</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>10</b> Burns & Allen Great Gildersleeve Lights Out Jack Benny
<b>11</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>12</b> Dragnet Sealed Book	<b>13</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>14</b> The Falcon Lights Out	<b>15</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>16</b> Gangbusters Hopalong Cassidy	<b>17</b> Jack Benny CBS Radio Mystery Theatre Burns & Allen
<b>18</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>19</b> Hopalong Cassidy Lights Out	<b>20</b> Gangbusters Sealed Book	<b>21</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>22</b> Dragnet Lights Out	<b>23</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>24</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre Double Feature
<b>25</b> Old Time Radio Nostalgia Night	<b>26</b> Gangbusters Stand By For Crime	<b>27</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>28</b> The Falcon Hopalong Cassidy	<b>29</b> CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	<b>30</b> Dragnet Lights Out	

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

## WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

# AUGUST

**PLEASE NOTE:** The numerals following each program listing for Those Were The Days represents timing information for each particular show. (9:45; 11:20; 8:50) means that we will broadcast the show in three segments: 9 minutes and 45 seconds; 11 minutes and 20 seconds; 8 minutes and 50 seconds. If you add the times of these segments together, you'll have the total length of the show (29:55 for our example). This is of help to those who are taping the broadcasts for their own collection.

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 6th

**KRAFT MUSIC HALL** (12-16-48) Al Jolson stars with guest Dinah Shore, plus Oscar Levant, Lou Bring and the orchestra, Ken Carpenter. Kraft Foods, NBC. (9:05; 10:20; 10:20)

**SUSPENSE** (4-24-47) "Win, Place and Murder" starring Richard Conte as a private detective tracking down the murderer of a bookie. Roma Wines, CBS. (11:20; 16:58)

**JUDY CANOVA SHOW** (12-27-47) Judy and a great cast: Mel Blanc, Joe Kearns, Ruby Dandridge, Gerald Mohr, the Sportsmen, Charles Dant and the orchestra. Judy reminisces about her diary as the year comes to an end. Colgate, Halo, Super Suds, Palmolive. NBC. (10:05; 15:12; 3:25)

**ELEVENTH HOUR** (1950s) "Invitation to Death." A doctor whose brother has died calls his closest friends

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together for cocktails and dinner. The guests get more than they bargained for. AFRS rebroadcast. (11:50; 11:10)

**FIBBER MCGEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO** (4-28-74) Jim Jordan stars as Fibber McGee with Chuck Schaden as a fan of old time radio. Chuck visits Fibber in his Wistful Vista home where they tune in to an old superheterodyne radio with the ability to draw in vintage shows not only from the past but from specific nights from the past. There are seven broadcasts in this series and we begin with the first program: The Sunday Shows: Jack Benny, The Shadow, Mercury Theatre. Charlie McCarthy, Eickersons. Larry Thor announces. Chrysler Airtemp, Syndicated. (18:00; 22:00; 13:45)

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 13th

**X MINUS ONE** (3-7-56) "A Gun For Dinosaur" with Alister Duncan, Wendell Holmes, Donald Bucka. A great white hunter takes a hunting party via a time machine. Sustaining, NBC. (14:01; 13:56)

**SONGS BY SINATRA** (10-24-45) Frank Sinatra welcomes his old boss Tommy Dorsey in this broadcast from New York which also features the Pied Pipers and Axel Stordahl and the orchestra. Old Gold Cigarettes, CBS. (20:00; 6:17)

**HAUNTING HOUR** (1946) "The Sixth Button." A sea captain who has been murdered leaves a strange request in his will. Syndicated. (12:06; 12:44)

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DENNIS DAY** (10-16-48) Dennis Day stars with Bea Benadaret, Barbara Eiler, Frank Nelson, Herb Vigran, Vern Smith. Dennis loses his job, but is promised a commission if he can sell one hundred acres of Texas oil land. Colgate, Palmolive, NBC. (13:36; 15:13)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO** (5-5-74) Fibber and Chuck tune in to the Monday night shows: Lux Radio Theatre. Blondie, Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar, Superman, Suspense, Burns and Allen. Chrysler Airtemp, Syndicated. (15:55; 11:55; 18:00; 7:05)

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 20th

**HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL** (10-4-59) John Dehner stars as Paladin who travels to a fabulous ranch owned by a legendary French countess. Sustaining, CBS. (10:40; 12:00)

**EDDIE CANTOR SHOW** (2-7-45) Eddie stars with Harry Von Zell, Bert Gordon, Leonard Seuss, Nora Martin, Billy Gray. "Eddie Cantor Von Zell Junior" is kidnapped! Sal Hepatica, Trushay, NBC. (9:35; 10:35; 8:10)

**WEIRD CIRCLE** (1940s) "Duel Without Honor." Lt. Stamm wants to marry Marianna, but she is in love with another officer in the garrison. Syndicated. (11:50; 12:25)

**WILLSON-NESBITT SHOW** (9-8-42) Meredith Willson and his orchestra plus storyteller John Nesbitt appear in this summer replacement program for Fibber McGee and Molly. Nesbitt tells the story of a golden necklace. Songs by Connie Haines and Bob Carroll. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (8:15; 9:15; 10:35)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO** (5-12-74) Chuck tries to get Fibber to tune in to a McGee show from a Tuesday night in the past. Also heard are clips from Bob Hope, Ed Wynn, Lum and Abner, Red Skelton, and Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons. Chrysler Airtemp, Syndicated. (11:15; 12:00; 6:50; 22:50)

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 27th

**LET'S PRETEND** (1950s) "Cinderella" is dramatized by the Pretenders as Uncle Ted relates the story of the evil sisters who try to keep Cinderella from going to the ball. Syndicated. (13:33; 11:30)

**EDDIE CANTOR SHOW** (2-14-45) Eddie welcomes guest songwriter Hoagy Carmichael. Harry Von Zell, Bert Gordon, Billy Gray, Nora Martin. Sal Hepatica, Trushay, NBC. (10:40; 9:45; 8:25)

**THIRD MAN** (1950) "The Double, Double Cross" stars Orson Welles as Harry Lime. Zither music by Anton Karas. Syndicated. (11:30; 13:10)

**SPOTLIGHT REVUE** (6-25-48) Spike Jones and his City Slickers star with Dorothy Shay, the Park Avenue Hillbilly. This last show of the season features Doodles Weaver and guest Don Ameche. Broadcast from San Francisco, California. Announcer is Mike Roy. Coca Cola, CBS. (12:10; 17:40)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO** (5-19-74) Fibber and Chuck listen to the Wednesday shows as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve drops in at 79 Wistful Vista. Hal Peary makes a guest appearance. Clips include Duffy's Tavern, Gangbusters, Kay Kyser, Mr. District Attorney, Eddie Cantor, and the Great Gildersleeve. Chrysler Airtemp, Syndicated. (14:40; 15:00; 8:00; 16:00)



FIBBER MCGEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO — in the studio during a rehearsal for the 1974 series for Chrysler Airtemp: Chuck Schaden (in the olden days, with a beard), director Jim Dolan, and Jim Jordan.

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

## SEPTEMBER

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd

**GUNSMOKE** (12-16-56) William Conrad stars as Matt Dillon, with Parley Baer as Chester, Howard McNear as Doc, Georgia Ellis as Kitty. A fiery red-headed woman registers still another complaint with Marshall Dillon. L&M Cigarettes, CBS. (6:50; 6:50; 10:30)

**QUIET PLEASE** (9-6-48) "The Third Man's Story" stars Ernest Chappell in a drama by Willis Cooper. A young boy is jealous of his older brother. Sustaining, ABC (17:40; 6:00)

**ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** (1-23-49) Ozzie pesters his way into Harriet's "girl party" with his card tricks. Ozzie and Harriet Nelson star. International Silver Co., NBC. (15:05; 14:50)

**MR. MOTO** (3-26-51) "The Force Called X07" with James Munk as Mr. Moto, "the world's greatest international detective-philosopher." Moto is contacted by a physics teacher who is working on a secret atomic weapon. Syndicated. (10:28; 17:25)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO** (5-26-74) Jim Jordan stars as the Squire of

Wistful Vista who welcomes old time radio fan Chuck Schaden. The pair listen to Fibber's old radio to hear the sounds of radio's golden age. The Thursday Shows: Abbott and Costello, Baron Munchausen, Kraft Music Hall, Aldrich Family, Rudy Vallee, Green Hornet, Chrysler Airtemp. Syndicated. (13:35; 8:00; 15:45; 15:15)

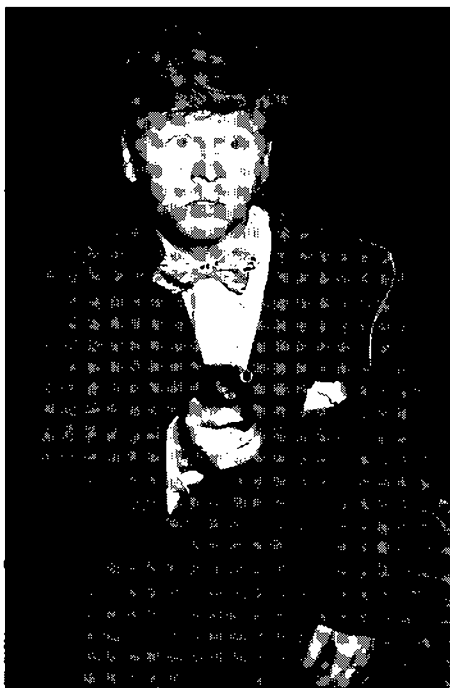
### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10th

**JIMMY DURANTE SHOW** (5-5-48) The Schnozz, guest Victor Moore, and regular Peggy Lee go on a tour investigating the nation's transportation problems! Roy Bargy and the orchestra, the Crew Chiefs, Howard Petrie. Rexall Drugs, NBC. (8:37; 9:10; 10:30)

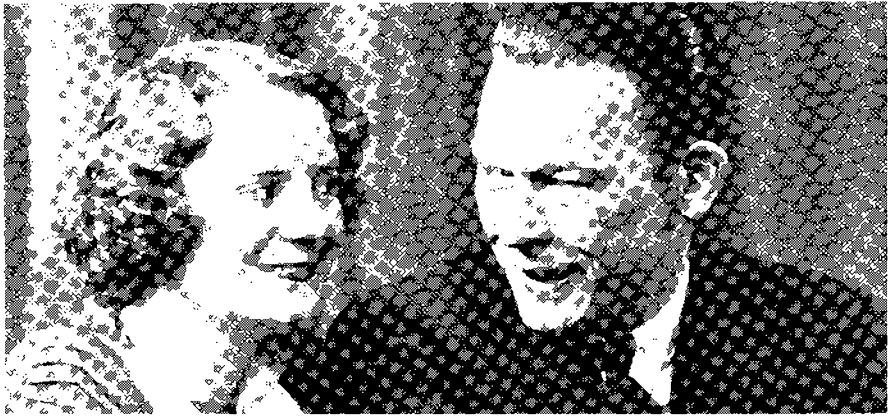
**YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR** (6-13-50) "Trans-Pacific Import-Export Company Matter" stars Edmund O'Brien as the "man with the action-packed expense account." "America's fabulous free-lance insurance



EDMUND O'BRIEN as Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar on TWTD, September 10th.



MICKEY ROONEY in a dramatic role on Suspense on TWTD, September 17th.



PORTLAND HOFFA and FRED ALLEN on Town Hall Tonight on TWTD September 17th and September 24th.

investigator" investigates a case of arson. Cast includes Hal March and Hy Averback. Sustaining, CBS. (15:00; 10:35)

**PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (10-31-48)** Phil gets involved with politics and Remley coaches him on matters of political science. Elliott Lewis co-stars with Walter Tetley, Robert North, Rexall, NBC. (12:05; 9:20; 7:20)

**PHILCO RADIO TIME (2-2-49)** Bing Crosby stars in this broadcast from San Francisco with guests Jimmy Durante and Gertrude Niesen. Ken Carpenter, the Rhythmairs, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Philco, ABC. (7:40; 7:00; 14:15)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (6-2-74)** Fibber and Chuck tune in to the Friday shows: Lone Ranger, Can You Top This?, First Nighter, Bill Stern. Challenge of the Yukon, You Bet Your Life. Chrysler Airtemp, Syndicated. (21:50; 9:50; 20:55)

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17th

**FRED ALLEN SHOW (3-20-40)** In a classic broadcast, Fred welcomes Capt. Charles Knight, an eagle expert who brings Mr. Ramshaw, a trained eagle to the program. The eagle gets loose and flies around the studio, above the audience! "The Average Man's Roundtable" is the forerunner to Allen's Alley, and the Mighty Allen Art Players spoof radio give-away shows Harry Von Zell, Portland Hoffa, Wynn Murray, the Merry Macs, Peter Van Steeden and the orchestra. Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (15:55; 19:30; 11:05; 13:45)

**DIARY OF FATE (3-9-48)** "Trina Crawley Entry." The story of a 23-year old girl who let fate take her to the gas chamber. Syndicated. (14:00; 15:00)

**SUSPENSE (12-8-49)** "For Love or Murder" starring Mickey Rooney with Lurene Tuttle. A piano player in a nightclub is urged to kill the husband of his lover. Autolite, CBS. (16:20; 12:35)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (6-9-74)** In the final program of this seven-show series. Fibber and Chuck tune in to the Saturday Shows: Let's Pretend, Judy Canova, Grand Central Station, Life of Riley, Truth or Consequences. Gale Gordon makes a guest appearance as Mayor LaTrivia. Chrysler Airtemp, Syndicated. (13:20; 12:45; 23:35)

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th

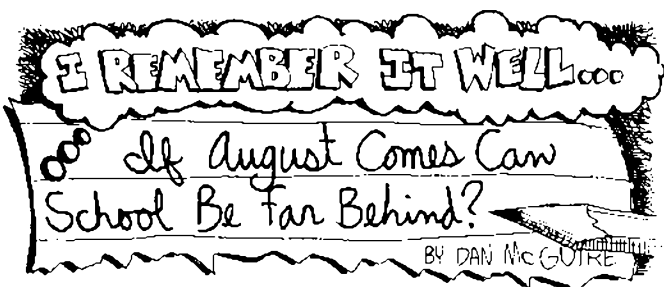
**BOB HOPE SHOW (1-30-51)** Judy Garland is Bob's guest in this remote broadcast for servicemen at March Field, California. Cast includes Doris Singleton, Jack Kirkwood, Hy Averback, and Les Brown and his band of Renown. AFRS rebroadcast. (14:20; 10:30)

**CREAKING DOOR (1967)** "Dangerous Dive." Two explorers decide to retrieve a large amount of gold from a ship that went to the bottom of the sea in 1942. State Express Cigarettes, BBC. (12:38; 12:36)

**FRED ALLEN SHOW (3-27-40)** Fred is still a bit upset over the "eagle" incident in last week's program. The Mighty Allen Art Players present "Who Killed Mac Borden," a Tin Pan Alley murder case. The Average Man's Roundtable discusses Leap Year and guest Mr. T. Hee, a director from the Disney studios, talks about the making of the animated feature "Pinocchio." Harry Von Zell, Portland Hoffa, John Brown, Wynn Murray, Peter Van Steeden and the orchestra. Ipana, Sal Hepatica, NBC. (14:25; 17:30; 11:35; 14:30)

**GI JOURNAL #26 (1940s)** Kay Kyser, the old professor, is Editor-in-Chief of this edition of the Armed Forces Radio "newspaper" with Linda Darnell, Jerry Colonna, Ish Kabibble, Georgia Carroll, and Mel Blanc. Entertainment includes a sketch about western shows on radio. AFRS. (9:40; 8:10; 10:30)

**THE WHISTLER (7-9-45)** "Highway of Escape" is the Whistler's strange story. A young woman who works at an isolated desert motel kills her stepfather to escape her dreary life. Signal Oil Co., CBS. (7:00; 11:50; 11:48)



Between the ages of 6 and 14, my cohorts and I viewed August as a sort of eleventh-hour month. When we dashed home with our final report cards in May, summer's possibilities seemed unlimited. Now August signaled a countdown period of our remaining vacation days.

School resumed on the Tuesday after Labor Day. It varied with the calendar. Yet, inevitably, the first week of August brought a day when one unwelcome fact was unavoidable. One month from today we'd be back at our desks in James Giles Elementary School.

To paraphrase one of my first children's books: *A* was for *August*, *anticipation* and *anxiety*. *A* was for our ambivalent approach to and adversarial attitude about August.

All during June and July, my pals and I strove diligently to enjoy the seemingly endless days of freedom at our disposal. Spontaneity was our watchword. A rubber ball, the steps of a front porch and two players were enough for a makeshift ball game.

If two or three more players arrived, we could move into the street, switch to a bat and softball and play peggie-move-up. A few more players would prompt a jog to the schoolyard diamond. Twelve kids was enough to pick teams and play pitcher's hands and right field out.

Three players could while away hours at Old Maid, Sorry, Chinese Checkers, Parcheesi and other sit-down games. For larger groups there were more active games: Hide and Seek (in a dozen varia-

tions); Statue Maker; Red Light/Green Light; Mother, May I?

We ran the gamut from two kids playing War with a double deck of cards to mini-battalions waging fierce battles between the Americans and the Germans. (After WWII this reverted to cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians.)

In between activities, we might spend an hour on someone's back steps, discussing the crucial question: "Well, what'll we do now?"

"I dunno, Wayne. Whadda you wanna do, Chuck?"

"I dunno, Danny. You guys wanna play radio station?"

"Nah. You always get to be the MC."

"What's an MC, anyway?"

"It stands for 'Mister Charles'. 'N' I'm the only one whose name is Charles. So I *have* to be the MC."

Often if nothing special presented itself, we just roamed the neighborhood looking for inspiration. We walked. Rode scooters. Pushed each other in wagons. In later years rode bikes. And we donned roller skates.

Roller skates that had metal wheels. Straps that went around your ankles. Clamps that tightened over the toes of your shoes. Comedian Shelley Berman observed that certain words can evoke waves of acute nostalgia. Words such as: *skate key*.

Thus did most of our waking moments in June and July involve: a) enjoying ourselves in one activity or another; b) plotting what fun stuff to do next; or (c) staying on the move to avoid being recruited for work details. (Parents seemed to share a

universal notion that idle children were bound to get into mischief.)

Suddenly the sultry "dog days" of August were upon us. After two months of working feverishly at having fun, it was tempting to spend some time lazing in the shade. But now our days of carefree sport were numbered. We must respond to the challenge.

Everything we'd neglected to do, or wanted to do once more, took on new urgency. As Chicago's weather grew more humid, a day of swimming rated high priority.

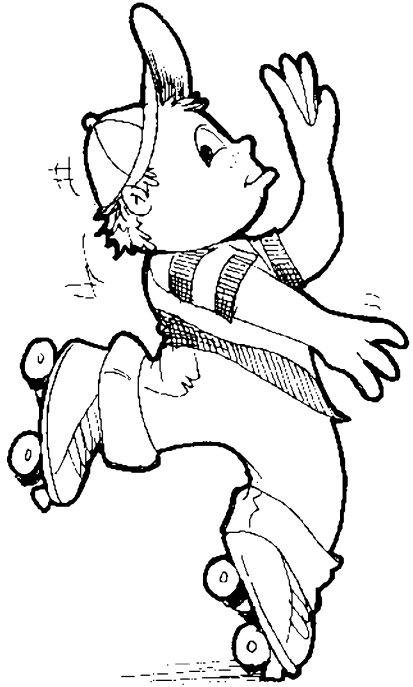
In our younger years this meant a trip to Portage Park, the closest Chicago park that boasted a pool. Our swimming abilities varied, but we all knew how to dog paddle and leap into the pool so as to direct a tidal wave into our pals' faces.

Before and after swimming, we worked out on the park's tall swings. At the corner where we caught our streetcar there was a large bowl-shaped water fountain with six continuously flowing drinking spouts. A favorite sport was to cover several of the spouts while one of your buddies was taking a drink. With more pressure diverted to his spout, it would suddenly erupt into his nose.

When we were older our parents permitted us to journey to Montrose Avenue beach. It involved transferring three times and two hours in transit. Mothers packed lunches and we bought soda from beachfront vendors. Of course, we had strict orders not to go into the water for an hour after eating.

Chicago's beaches were less crowded in those days. We played catch with a rubber ball in and out of the water. Non-swimmers had plenty of fun jumping over or diving into the waves. At its warmest Lake Michigan is still cool. It felt great on our sweaty young bodies.

We bypassed the beachhouses by wearing our suits under our clothes. They'd be a little crusty on the trip home, but the cool dampness felt good and reminded us what a swell day we'd had.



Wayne and Bobbie were Cub fans. They made it to Wrigley Field for about a dozen games each season. I enjoyed listening to Bert Wilson's radio play-by-play, but only got enthused about seeing a game when time was running out. Then I made sure to join my pals, regardless of who the Cubs were playing or what their chances.

I recognized only a few of the best known players. I often needed Bob or Wayne to explain the ruling on an unusual play. While most kids prayed for a foul ball to come their way, I dreaded the possibility, knowing I'd embarrass myself by dropping it.

Still, as I munched my hot dog and sipped my ice cold Coca Cola, no one got more into the spirit of the game than I did. The one drawback was a nagging suspicion that I might be a jinx to our home team. Never did the Cubs win a game when I was in the stands.

## I REMEMBER IT WELL

---

Chuck was a frequent patron of the Chicago Theatre, where live acts shared the bill with first-run movies. He especially liked to see some of his favorite movie stars in person and try to collect their autographs.

I often joined Chuck, even though my enthusiasm for the stage shows didn't equal his. Because this was something we could do on weekends all year, I often took a pass. But come August it was on my "must do" list as one more semi-special event.

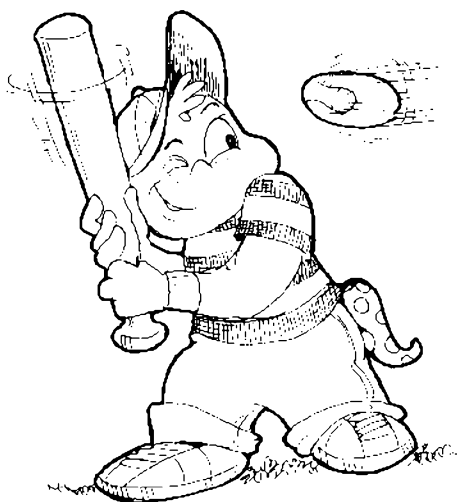
In retrospect, I must credit the Chicago Theatre with introducing us to many future headliners who had not yet achieved star billing.

Wayne and I were avid fishermen. As often as possible we coaxed our fathers into taking us to the Fox River, Chain O'Lakes or any fishing spot within easy driving range. When we acquired bicycles, we spent many days pulling bullhead catfish and occasional carp or turtles out of the Des Plaines River.

August demanded a special excursion, though. One year we rode north on Route 42A to where farms prevailed. Then we headed east until we reached Skokie Lagoon. We'd been told it was stocked with large crappie and bass. Maybe so. We caught only bluegill and sunfish.

Another August, with sack lunches and fishing poles tied to our bikes, we pedaled up Route 12 all the way to Lake Zurich. Once there, we found the lake surrounded by private properties, the only access a commercial park geared to picnickers and swimmers.

Undaunted, we rode back to the Des Plaines. En route, we stopped at the roadside stand of an orchard that advertised itself with a gigantic apple. For ten cents each had a large glassful of homemade (non-alcoholic) apple cider. Delicious. And the day's outing was perfect for including in our "What I Did This Summer" essays.



For most of my gang, one more day at Riverview was a must. We'd raid our treasure chests, beg some extra change from the folks and go on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday—"2 cent days." Admission to "the world's largest amusement park" would be two cents and most rides would be at reduced prices.

Knowing it was our last visit of the year, we rode almost every attraction, even those we normally deemed "baby stuff." There were restaurants that served sandwiches and other real food, but as a point of honor we survived the day on candy, frozen treats and soda pop.

Departing Riverview was perhaps symbolic of our impending return to the school routine. After Labor Day, the park would close. There would be no more "Ride again, 5 cents" until next summer.

Eventually, Labor Day arrived. For most folks it meant family gatherings, usually with a backyard picnic. During the afternoon, my pals and I visited each other's groups and mooched snacks between meals.

A couple of years my family turned it into a 3-day holiday. Braving the traffic



horde on Route 66 (remember Route 66?), we drove 200 miles to Springfield and spent the weekend visiting with Dad's family. Either way, it was a fitting finale to a kid's vanishing vacation.

Returning to school wasn't as bad as anticipated. After racing to do a little of everything during that last month, it was sort of nice to have your schedule laid out for you.

On the first weekend of the new semester, we breathed a sigh of relief and began planning how to more judiciously allocate our vacation time next year.

*Editor's Note: A is also for accolade, apple and award. Address all above to the dedicated teachers who each September renewed their struggle to instill some knowledge in our awesome assembly of not august scholars. APPLAUSE!!*

## WE GET LETTERS

### About Dan McGuire's Last Column

**HOMEWOOD, IL**—It was the article by Dan McGuire in the June-July '88 *Nostalgia Digest* that got me to think back a long, long time, to the movie houses of my early days—with two substantial differences.

First, I'm old enough to be young Dan's mother, at least, and more likely his grandma, so I can really take the long view. Second, I was a south-sider, and he a north, and as any old Chicagoan knows, those are two different worlds—or at least they were, 'way back then.

The neighborhood where I spent my years from kindergarten through two years of college (roughly 1921-1936) was bounded on the east by South Shore Drive and the Lake, on the west by Stony Island Avenue, known to us locals as just plain "Stony". North and south, it stretched between 67th and 71st Streets.

My earliest movie house remembrance is of the Jackson Park theatre, at the southeast corner—well, almost at the corner—of 67th and Stony Island. I started going there when I was so little that I required an adult to go with me, to get me there and home again. I have only dim—very dim—memories of "The Sheik" with Valentino, and fabulous adventure tales starring Douglas Fairbanks—senior, that is! When I became older, and did my movie-going with friends, the J.P. was still there. Next to it was a hamburger place called, if I stretch my memory, The Hobby House. Its prices were in keeping with what small finances our generation of Depression kids could afford. Going "Dutch Treat" was not unheard of, as often our dates could come up with money for one hamburger-with-milk-shake, but not for two.

Two other movie theatres became important to our early social life. Both of these were patronized with one's family, or girl friends, or the current "flame". One was the Hamilton, on the north side of 71st Street between Jeffrey Boulevard, and South Shore Drive and the Lake. The Hamilton was the smallest of the lot—a

nice, cozy little house, very comfortable for sitting and holding hands, and digging into greasy bags of popcorn that were wonderfully redolent of the oily "butter" that was used in popcorn machines in those days. The other was the Jeffrey, ever so much fancier than the J.P. and Hamilton, and larger. It, too, was on 71st Street's north side, just west of Jeffrey Boulevard, and directly opposite the exit of the Illinois Central's Bryn Mawr suburban station. The most important thing I recall about "The Jeff" is that during my earlier days, several acts of real, live vaudeville were offered as part of the programming. There would be maybe three to five acts, probably none of them the greatest, seeing that they hadn't made it to the stage of, for instance, the Palace in downtown Chicago on Randolph Street.

The Palace had the class acts—such as Red Skelton, who was just beginning to be known, and who convulsed the entire house with his pantomime of a weary party girl getting out of her dance party clothing, including a very recalcitrant girdle.

We became older still, and moved along into going to what were really movie palaces, distinct from movie houses. These lovely places were, most of the time, reserved for really serious dating, as admission prices there ran higher, as I remember now. Primarily in this category there were three. (1) The Tower, on 63rd Street just a short walk west of Stony Island—walking east would have landed you in Jackson Park. The theatre was so named because of a tower that resembled a church steeple rising high over the central building. According to local lore, this originally was intended to be a radio tower for broadcast studios that were to be located there. (2) The Tivoli, on Cottage Grove Avenue, just a skip and a jump south of 63rd Street. It was a big house, and may well have been one of the proverbial Balaban and Katz masterpieces—I'm not sure. In any case, it was palatial, richly furnished

## LETTERS ABOUT McGUIRE

with huge chandeliers and probably velvet upholstered furniture, deep carpeting and much "gold" trim everywhere. It looked every inch as one would imagine an Oriental potentate's castle to be. (3) The Avalon, by far the most opulent, and the largest. It was rather far afield from my home base, a good distance away and far, far south on 79th Street, just east of Stony Island. It was of such magnitude as to take the breath away. This was, I'm 99 percent certain, indeed a B&K motion picture palace—so posh that even the ladies' room was a wonder to behold. It is possible that, unless I have it confused with some other place, this was one of the B&K theatres that had the twinkling stars and drifting clouds, all the elements of a dream-world fairyland.

No young people owned cars then—indeed, it was still a rare family that owned one, unless Father required one for his business. We traveled, sometimes even in formal dress, by foot, or street car, or city bus. And occasionally we covered considerable territory when there was a good film to be seen.

Before writing this I looked into the current Chicago telephone directory and found, to my sorrow but not surprise, that none of these theatres exist any more, with the exception of the Avalon—and even that one, while still with us, no longer has its old, original name. Instead, it has been revitalized as the new Regal theatre, which opened only within the past year as a new entertainment center. It is good to know that, at least, it has its old walls alive once more with song and music and laughter!

My thanks to Dan for getting the old memories moving.  
—ADELAIDE F. WASSERMAN

**SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA**—The story about the Patio Theater in the last *Nostalgia Digest* set my memory to working overtime. I've been dredging up old memories not only about the movie house, but also about the area which it served.

I've always believed that the Patio was built by the Mitchell brothers who owned it when I was a kid. I've also always believed that these brothers owned another movie house you likely never knew existed.

The Patio was built around 1930, give or take. Since I was born in 1922 I can't be expected to remember exactly. I have the conviction that I was a patron of the Patio during its first week of operation. Were you aware that there was another movie house located about 100 yards north of the intersection of Naragansett and Irving Park?—on the east side of the street, of course. This was a silent movie house that stopped operating about the time the Patio opened.

My memories of this silent movie theater—if it had a name, I don't remember it—and the Patio are intermingled. The Patio ran silents after it opened, the first version of *Wings* for instance which was redone with sound. A great many cartoons were first silents, and then re-issued with a sound track of music or sound effects. This was done with the bouncing ball sing-

alongs whose music came originally from the pit piano or, in the case of the Patio, the organ. (Incidentally, I was happy to see that the restored Patio has the organ, doubtless on its lift, still there. As near as I can tell, the restored theater is exactly as it was with one exception; the screen was square when it first opened.)

It may surprise some that the Patio once featured vaudeville on Saturday night. Vaudeville died during the early 1930's because of the talkies, but they didn't drag the body away for another several years. Big time vaudeville continued in the Loop having been renamed "Stage Shows" at the Chicago and the Oriental until after WW II, and, of course, at the Rialto there was burlesque. The Patio featured a steady stream of jugglers—most of whom were well supplied with cigar boxes—song-and-dance acts, bell ringers, comics who pretended to be masters of ceremony, banjo players and assorted other acts that didn't know when to quit. I remember the very last stage presentation at the Patio. By the mid-1930's the supply of "professionals" had dried up, so the Patio presented an occasional amateur show. This was the case during a Christmas season when an amateur kiddy show was presented at a Saturday matinee. Stage presentations at the Patio died a violent death when four little girls came on one by one, all of whom did a very bad imitation of Shirley Temple singing *On The Good Ship Lollypop*.

Vaudeville was succeeded by Dish Nite and Bank Nite. These were efforts to draw patrons at a time when the average weekly salary was probably less than \$18 a week. It was a hard choice to make, whether to spend the adult admissions of 35 cents for entertainment or hamburger. The lure of possibly winning \$20 on Bank Nite was irresistible; winning meant the family ate good for two weeks or so. Winning \$100 was the ultimate in good fortune! And many a family ate off Dish Nite dishes well into WWII.

As I said, the silent movie house closed when the Patio opened. It was a narrow, fairly long barn of a building, and it will be a surprise to learn that it was used as a place to hand-make airplanes out of canvas and wood. I don't think many planes were actually made there. Within a rather short time the building became a rug cleaning plant. Then it was torn down.

The movies of the early 1930's were strictly escapist films to help the patrons forget that they had left despair, frustration, defeat, near starvation, and poverty outside.

Always on Saturday there was a serial of some kind. More often than not the villain was not revealed until the last chapter, and he always turned out to be the one least suspected. Gene Autry's very first venture into films was a serial about an underground civilization that was far advanced of the humans on the surface which made us ripe for conquest. I remember serials about invisibility machines, mad scientists, lost civilizations, spies of various persuasions, Tailspin Tommy, Don Winslow of the Navy, Flash Gordon, and Zorro. Name a situation and they probably made a serial about it.

This letter is getting too long. —LARRY LAVIERI

# The Home Front

## *1945 Shortages: America Waits Patiently*

By Todd Nebel



By late 1944 and early 1945, many of the things that had been in short supply earlier in the war were now scarce or non-existent on the American homefront. Cigarettes had never been rationed before but now, in 1945, they simply did not exist. Coffee had been rationed right along, but now it too suddenly disappeared from the shelves. Butter had disappeared and so did shortening and many popular brands of soap. If you were lucky enough to find it, Lux was eight cents per cake.

It was rumored that bread soon would be rationed, so tens of thousands of girls of the homefront wrote to their mothers to get recipes for homemade bread. Gasoline had been rationed all along and so were tires and other rubber products such as hot water bottles. However, as the war dragged on, it was virtually impossible to find a new tire or tube in any garage or filling station. Finally, the shortages were so severe that even the White House served a typical wartime lunch of chicken salad, hard rolls without butter, coffee and pound cake without icing, following FDR's fourth inauguration.

To avoid food shortages in 1945, American women learned to "put up" vegetables by canning. Pressure cooking, which was used only before by commercial canners, was introduced to the American housewife by the War Production Board. The WPB issued special orders to see that there was a sufficient nationwide supply of pressure cookers, glass jars and rubber sealing rings for every American housewife.

We all know that Mrs. America was a homefront heroine during World War II, but how did she cope with the shortages on her own personal level? First, to be an American housewife in 1945, life was rather complicated not only in caring for a family and probably working an outside job, but also tending to her own needs and wants as a consumer. When the sun shown bright, the American housewife spent what little free time she had tanning her legs so she could avoid wear on her hosiery. With a lot of searching she might have found a pair of nylons on sale in her size, and learning a trick from her sisters in uniform, she kept them in a glass jar to prevent deterioration. A sexy style she used when she dressed up were nylons with a black seam and black pointed "clocks" at the heels. These were worn with high platform shoes, high ankle straps, and of course, leather heels because of the rubber shortage.

In 1945, do-it-yourself permanent wave kits for home use had entered the marketplace and sometimes two or three housewives would get together and devote a day to giving each other permanents. If the housewife was only going shopping, she would often hold her hair in place with a loose net which she called a "snood". In cold weather she probably chose a scarflike head covering that she had borrowed from Russian peasant women called a "babushka". She often painted her nails and lips a dark red, almost burgundy. She also smoked almost as much as her husband did, usually preferring the popular

## THE HOME FRONT

unfiltered brands of cigarettes, though some of the Ladies smoked Virginia Ovals, which were filtered.

Our typical housewife of 1945 used a cream-style deodorant, washed her hair with Packers Tar Soap and brushed her teeth with Ipana or Teel. She was, as a result of advertising campaigns, terrified that she might have body odor (or "Beeeee-Ooooooh", as the foghorn voice said it in radio commercials) and halitosis, so she bathed and gargled as advised by Madison Avenue.

Younger girls on the homefront of 1945 were busy writing letters to boys in the service whom they did not even know. The boys' names were supplied by the USO and cooperative school boards. The girls also knitted pairs of khaki socks as well as khaki mittens to be turned over to the Red Cross for the boys overseas. Most of the young bobby soxers also tried to emulate the movie star Veronica Lake in both hair style and fashion. Veronica, who wore her long hair brushed over one eye eventually had to cut her hair, because so many young girls who had copied her style got their hair caught in machines. Several girls were actually scalped.

Both men and women thought that the Norman Rockwell paintings for the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* accurately defined what American typified in 1945. His New England-inspired pictures of a family seeing a soldier off on a train, or a family at Thanksgiving dinner or kids around the Christmas tree, represented to many Americans just what our country had been struggling so tirelessly for.

Americans in search of entertainment went to the movies in 1945 which were dominated by Abbott and Costello (frequently in uniform) who served up their routines in vehicles which usually ended on a patriotic note; and the Andrews Sisters who could always be seen singing their bouncy tunes in a USO or stage door canteen while finally ending in a fade out



VERONICA LAKE

to martial strains.

A new featurette that was extremely popular in 1945's moviehouses was called the *March of Time* and was prepared by the editors of *Time* magazine. It was narrated in movies and radio by Westbrook Van Voorhees whose image never appeared on the screen but whose voice, became known to millions with his enthralled sign-off of "Time [pause] Marches On!"

Strong characterizations were taking shape in movie scripts in 1945 and patrons were treated to such fare as "Wilson", starring Alexander Knox: "The Story of G.I. Joe" with Burgess Meredith portraying Ernie Pyle; "The Lost Weekend" with Ray Milland and Jane Wyman; "Mildred Pierce" starring Joan Crawford; "The Keys of the Kingdom" starring Gregory Peck; "A Song To Remember" starring Paul Muni and Merle Oberon and "The Corn is Green" with Bette Davis.

Two excellent musicals could be seen, "Meet Me In St. Louis" starring Judy Garland and Margaret O'Brien and



JOAN CRAWFORD

"Anchors Aweigh" starring Frank Sinatra, Kathryn Grayson and Gene Kelly. Warmhearted entertainment could be found in "A Tree Grows In Brooklyn" starring Joan Blondell and Dorothy McGuire, "National Velvet" with Mickey Rooney and Elizabeth Taylor and "State Fair" with an all-star cast.

For those who liked adventure there was Errol Flynn in "Objective Burma." For those who liked the world's sexiest body combined with a pleasant singing voice there was Betty Grable singing "A Nickle's Worth of Jive" in *Diamond Horseshoe* and for those who liked comedy there was one of the all time bests with Danny Kaye and Virginia Mayo in "Wonder Man."

As the war neared its end, Americans did not neglect their jukeboxes and record players; they patronized them like never before. The movies brought their share of good scores like "The More I See You" from "Diamond Horseshoe", "On the Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe" from "The Harvey Girls", "Some Sunday

Morning" from "San Antonio", "You Came Along From Out of Nowhere" from "You Came Along" and "Laura" from "Laura."

Songs that reached hit status on their own included "Autumn Serenade", "For Sentimental Reasons", "Symphony", "Till The End of Time", "You Won't Be Satisfied" and two novelty tunes, "One Meatball" and "Chickery Chick."

The paperback book, which was born just before the war, was proliferated in 1945 as a device to save paper stock. Increasingly it became a device to entertain not only stay-at-home Americans who were waiting patiently for war's end, but also Americans on duty at outposts around the world. The paperback was easily mailable because of its light weight and it was also inexpensive which prompted special editions of best sellers to be issued for the G.I.'s. Among the best selling books that year were John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*, Kathleen Winsor's sizzling *Forever Amber*, *The Black Rose* by Thomas Costain and *The Egg and I* by Betty MacDonald.

The sports world was struggling back into existence in 1945 with the triumphant return of lights for night baseball games (despite the energy saving ban on lights for nighttime affairs) as well the filtering back of some sports players from overseas service. Events worth noting were the announcement by Branch Ricky, Mentor of the Brooklyn Dodgers, that he would hire Jackie Roosevelt Robinson—the first Negro player in the major leagues; and of course, the defeat of the Chicago Cubs by the Detroit Tigers—four games to three in the 1945 World Series.

While the American homefront saw the end of World War II within sight in 1945, it did not mean that the sacrifices Americans were accustomed to were ending; in many instances they intensified. What Americans did have in 1945 was a strong resolve that the world would soon be a better place because of the sacrifices they were making in 1945.

# WE GET

**BERWYN, IL**—I'm writing to congratulate you on the fine job you did with the special celebrating WBBM's 20th anniversary of being Newsradio 78 and their 65th anniversary on the air. I hope that the people at WBBM were as pleased with the show as I was! I am not old enough to remember WBBM in its pre-newsradio days, so it seemed strange to hear that there was other types of programming on the station. I also found the interviews with the people who worked at WBBM throughout the years interesting, as well.

I do have another reason for writing. On the following Sunday, you continued the celebration of WBBM's anniversaries by playing three shows from the station's early days. I taped those shows, but I forgot to write down the original date of broadcast for those shows. I was wondering if you could give me those dates? The shows were Gold Coast Rhythm, the American Family News with John Harrington, and the Whistler featuring Fahey Flynn.

—LARRY LEOPARD

**(ED. NOTE)**—The Whistler was from September 8, 1946; John Harrington's News was from June 4, 1946; and the Gold Coast Show was dated July 21, 1950.)

**WATSEKA, IL**—Having purchased a copy of your book *WBBM Radio Yesterday and Today*, I would like to compliment you for the outstanding job you have done in writing this account of WBBM.—FRANK W. SMITH

**ROCKFORD, IL**—I am 12 years old and since I started listening to your program, old-time radio has become a great hobby. Actually, it was quite by accident that I discovered your show. It was probably a year and a half ago that I turned on WBBM just to see what was on. You were in the middle of a particularly hilarious Jack Benny Show—where Jack was recovering from amnesia. I listen every night except when I'm at Church. Then sometimes if my brother is home, he'll tape *Radio Classics* for me. Between us, we have nearly 40 tapes of classic programs. My favorite police show is *Dragnet*, my favorite adventure is *Lone Ranger*, and my favorite comedy is *Jack Benny*. Keep up the good work. You do a great job as *Classics* host.

—RODNEY FREDERICK

**(ED. NOTE)**—Glad you found us, Rodney. And glad that you enjoy these good old shows.)

**CHICAGO**—Recently you played a Damon Runyon Theatre on your *Radio Classics* program on WBBM. It had to do with a character called "Broadway." If my memory serves me correctly, I believe you said John Brown played this part and that he also played Ozzie Nelson's next door neighbor and William Bendix' friend on the Life of Riley. I thought Don DeFore played "Thorney" as Ozzie's neighbor and Tom D'Andrea played "Gillis" as Riley's friend. Perhaps I'm getting confused with radio and TV, but would appreciate your comments.

—GLADYS PIHA

**(ED. NOTE)**—John Brown played Thorney and Gillis on

radio, DeFore was Ozzie's neighbor on TV and D'Andrea was Riley's friend on television.)

**KIRKLAND, IL**—I am a thirty-nine year old free-lance artist from Kirkland, Illinois, which is about eighty miles west of Chicago. I enjoy listening to your *Radio Classics* program every evening while I paint. Your extended weekend shows are especially enjoyable, and the hours seem to slip away as I listen and work.

I also like to listen to classical music and have been fascinated by the music which turns up on the old radio shows. As you know, classical music provided an easy and inexpensive source of themes and backgrounds for some of the old radio shows.

As most listeners know, the famous theme music on the *Lone Ranger* is taken from Rossini's "William Tell" overture. But, part of a lesser-known classic is also heard on every episode. After the mid-show commercial break, the story resumes with a rousing excerpt from Franz Liszt's symphonic poem "Les Preludes". I have also heard bits and pieces of other classics such as Verdi's opera "Aida" in various episodes of the *Lone Ranger*.

Another well-known theme has become closely identified with the *Green Hornet*. The popular "Flight of the Bumble Bee" comes from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's "Tsar Saltan" suite from his opera "The Legend of the Tsar Saltan". Every episode of the *Green Hornet* also features an excerpt from another classical suite. As suspense builds, usually when the title character pursues crooks in his "Black Beauty", the suspenseful background music is actually part of Igor Stravinsky's "Firebird" suite from his ballet of the same title.

Music for the theme of *The Challenge of the Yukon* (my favorite show) is perhaps lesser known. I discovered that that lively music comes from the overture to the comic opera "Donna Diana" by Emil Nikolous von Reznicek, an Austrian composer.

I am sure that there are other classical music excerpts, of which I am unaware, that were used on the old radio shows. I am not a music expert, just a fan. And I do appreciate your show. I hope that this radio music trivia is of interest to you. Keep up the good work.

—JOHN SLOBODNIK

**(ED NOTE)**—Thanks very much for your interesting and informative letter. Trivia, you say? We should say not. You've made a nice contribution to the enjoyment of the vintage programs.)

**OCONOMOWOC, WISCONSIN**—My wife and I would like to thank you and WBBM for presenting *Radio*

# LETTERS

**Classics.** We greatly enjoy both the programs and your commentary. Our son Daniel, age 8, loves the Sgt. Preston episodes. I can't help but feel that nothing develops a child's imagination as quickly as radio drama. We are fortunate enough to own several older radios and the fun of listening to a program with no other lights but the dial and the soft reflection of the tubes from the back of the set is an experience in itself. Not to mention the sound filtered through those old paper speakers.

—FRANK BURKE

**PRINCETON, IL**—I enjoy the old radio shows on WBBM every night at eight bells. I am retired now, so of course that means I do remember them all from childhood, from an old battery-operated radio. Life was simple then and I'm glad I lived at that time. Anyway, I go to bed at eight to listen to the stories and the radio plays all night. I get a big kick out of WBBM people—they're all just great!

—MARY DOROTHY BOHM

**OAKLAND, IL**—I really enjoy listening to your program of old time radio shows each night. It's refreshing to listen to entertainment that the whole family can enjoy. On Sunday, June 5 you played some of the Great Gildersleeve, and I understood you to say that you also played an interview with Harold Peary. I was unable to hear that portion of the program. Is there any possibility that you could re-broadcast the entire program? I am a big fan of Gildersleeve and would enjoy hearing everything you played.

—ED FROST

**(ED. NOTE—**Well, I doubt if we'll be able to repeat the entire program, but perhaps, some time in the future, we'll rebroadcast the interview along with some different Gildersleeve programs. Thanks for listening.)

**CHICAGO**—I'm not a steady listener, except when you air a Jack Benny show, but your program has provided me with more than just a nostalgic glow. I'm using a couple of lines of information I picked up in a novel I'm doing about the post-war years. Several of your shows—particularly the recent Pearl Harbor day broadcasts and the Normandy Beachhead broadcasts of a few years ago—helped me put the war in perspective. It wasn't until I heard a Jack Benny show of January, 1942, that I realized the country was seriously facing the possibility that we might lose. For me, your program provides history in its easiest-to-take form.

—WAYNE KLATT

**ELGIN, IL**—Here's my check for another gift subscription to *Nostalgia Digest* for my brother. He and I grew up in the radio age and spent many nights listening quietly to the big upright Admiral radio between our beds. I've taped many of your programs for him in Bartlesville, Oklahoma and the subscription is a

welcome sight in his mailbox—he reads it from cover to cover. Incidentally, we used to listen to the "Mars Romance Playhouse" or something like that. I've never heard it played since. We didn't admit to each other that we liked that "romantic stuff," but we listened every week anyway. I also remember "Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-B Riders." It's a treat to know my brother will be able to get the *Digest* for two more years. Thanks again for a super publication.

—LUCY THOMAS

**(ED. NOTE—**You are probably referring to "Curtain Time" sponsored by the Mars Candy Company. The program usually presented light, romantic comedies. The show was broadcast on the NBC network and originated in studios at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago.)

**OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA**—I've been wanting to write for a long time now and finally have gotten around to it. I can't tell you how much I enjoy your programs. Unfortunately the reception isn't always that great but whenever it is, you can be sure I'll be listening. There is nothing like the old radio shows and I really believe that they'll never be replaced. I love your show and thanks also to WBBM. By the way, I also listened to a lot of Blackhawk games on 'BBM as they are one of my favorite teams. Congratulations to WBBM on its 65th Anniversary.

—JOHN WEEKS

**GLEN ELLYN, IL**—I would be glad if you would tell me the orchestra that plays your *Radio Classics* theme song. "Thanks for the Memories."

—LOUIS E. FORD

**(ED. NOTE—**Our theme, which we borrowed from Bob Hope, is played by Frank De Vol and his Rainbow Strings. It's from an album called "Radio's Great Old Themes" which is now out of print, but you might come across it in a flea market or garage sale. It's Columbia LP record CL 1613 or Columbia Stereo record CL 8413.)

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# GUESS WHO!



This little tyke was born on February 10, 1893 and this photo was taken when he was just three years old.

His father was a barber, but the youngster didn't grow up to follow his father's footsteps. Instead, his footsteps were often followed by a spotlight as he grew up to become one of America's favorite entertainers.

A pianist, singer and comedian, this popular fellow strutted his stuff in vaudeville, radio, television and movies in a career that spanned nearly seventy years. He died on January 29, 1980.

If you can identify this show biz giant, you might win a \$25 gift certificate from Metro Golden Memories in Chicago.

Any reader of *Nostalgia Digest* is eligible to make a guess.

Just send a note to GUESS WHO, *Nostalgia Digest*, Box 421, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053.

Tell us who he is and you get the prize. In case of a tie, a drawing will be held to determine the winner. One guess per reader, please.

Guesses must be received by *Nostalgia Digest* no later than August 15, 1988 so we can print the name of the winner — and a more recent photo of our celebrity — in the next issue.

Have fun!

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## JACK BENNY SHOW

### Jack's Birthday

Once again Jack is still not age 40 . . . when happy with something, why change it? Skits with Jack taking violin lessons from Professor LeBlanc, and Rochester's boating accident are funny. An Indian Reservation commercial is thoroughly enjoyable. Lucky Strike, 2/17/46.

## JACK BENNY SHOW

### A "Nice, Sweet" Program

Jack has been criticized by a writer who has written an article saying that Jack's show consists of sarcastic humor and insulting jokes. Jack does a nice, sweet program, "Life Can Be Beautiful Type," for the writer. Don Wilson even sings the commercial. Lucky Strike, 2/24/46.

## AMOS 'N ANDY SHOW

### A Phony Antique Desk

The Kingfish buys an antique desk for \$6.00 after being told it once belonged to George Washington! Some love letters were put into the desk and signed by George. The Kingfish thinks they were written by George Washington and worth \$10,000. Andy buys half interest in the letters for \$12.00. Rinso, 1/12/45.

## AMOS 'N ANDY SHOW

### Andy Gets Adopted

An old lady walks into the lodge looking for an orphanage. She wants to adopt a son, now that she is a rich widow with a big house. The Kingfish says the son should be age 40, the age her son would have been if she had one. She agrees, and Andy becomes her adopted son. Rinso, 2/23/45.

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Each  
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**SEPT**

TAPE NO. 2

## JACK BENNY SHOW

### Broadcast from Chicago

Jack is performing at the Chicago Theatre, and he says that 5,000 people came to meet him at the train. He leads them in a Congo line for two miles that finally ends at the Chicago Theatre box office! A lot of local Chicago and Waukegan gags. Dennis Day is his usual funny self with some great lines. Lucky Strike, 5/11/47.

## JACK BENNY SHOW

### Broadcast from New York Guest — AL JOLSON

Al Jolson sings two fine songs in the inimitable Al Jolson style . . . "April Showers" and "You Made Me Love You." Mr. Kitzel has a funny skit, and the Sportsman Quartet sing a commercial. Phil Harris says he is the toast of New York . . . "Rye" toast. Lucky Strike, 5/18/47.

## AMOS 'N ANDY SHOW

### Andy Plays Soldier

Once again, Andy is worried about a breach of promise suit. His lawyer, Gabby, tells Andy that a service man cannot be sued. Andy borrows a corporal's uniform and visits the "breach-ee" with the uniform on to show her he is in the army and cannot be sued. Full of complications. Rinso, 2/9/45.

## AMOS 'N ANDY SHOW

### Sapphire's Old Boyfriend

The Kingfish becomes jealous when he sees Sapphire talking to an old boyfriend. He is upset and is going to do something about it. He decides that the best thing he can do is keep Sapphire busy, so he gets her a job where there are no men. Of course, it doesn't work out the way the Kingfish expected. Rinso, 2/23/45.

GET YOUR TAPES at the Metro Golden Memories Shop, 5425 W. Addison Street, two miles west of the Kennedy Expressway in Chicago, or BY MAIL when you send \$6.50 (includes postage and handling) for EACH tape to HALL CLOSET, Box 421, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053.



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