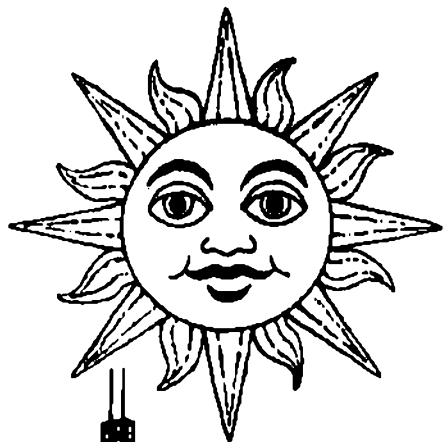


# NOSTALGIA DIGEST <sup>AND</sup> RADIO GUIDE



KATE SMITH

# ALL NEWS ALL DAY ALL NIGHT



News when *you* want it—any time, day or night.

**WBBM Newsradio 78**

# NOSTALGIA DIGEST<sup>©</sup>

BOOK TWENTY-ONE

CHAPTER ONE

DECEMBER 1994-JANUARY 1995

## *Hello, Out There in Radioland!*

**THANK YOU.** Thank you very much.

This issue of the *Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide* marks the completion of our 20th year of publication.

We'd like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to every subscriber on our list. Your support keeps this magazine rolling off the presses and helps our efforts to bring old time radio shows to our listeners. We are extremely grateful. We also very much appreciate the efforts of those who are columnists and regular contributors to these pages.

**THE COVER PHOTO** for this first issue of our 21st year spotlights Kate Smith, the "songbird of the south." You can hear Kate's 1944 Christmas Eve broadcast on *Those Were The Days* Saturday, December 17.

**WE WERE NOT ABLE** to bring together all that was required to offer an old time radio event in November as planned for the Museum of Broadcast Communications. But we can promise that we'll have a special radio event this coming spring. We'll keep you posted.

**IN THE MEANTIME,** please accept our best wishes to you and your family for a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year filled with good old memories.

Thanks for listening. —Chuck Schaden



*Ken Alexander  
Remembers ...*

## *Christmas Trees*



Christmas trees these days are set up in many living rooms and decorated and lighted a week or more before Christmas. This may have been the case also in the 1930s and '40s, but in our household and many others, the tree didn't make its debut until Christmas morning.

Our tree was delivered, along with the presents, on Christmas Eve by Santa Claus, and it was Santa who trimmed the tree.

Thus, on Christmas morning, when the children tumbled out of bed and dashed into the parlor to discover what Santa had brought them, they would see the tree, in all its splendor, for the first time. If the tree had already been up for several days, the effect on Christmas morning would have been anticlimactic.

As a matter of fact, as I later learned, it was the man of the house, not Santa Claus, who brought in the tree. He would go out on some pretext on Christmas Eve and return with the tree, which he would hide in the garage or on the back porch or in the basement.

According to legend, my maternal grandfather would announce on Christmas Eve that he was going out to get a haircut. (My grandmother was in on the subterfuge; she knew he was going to buy the tree.)

When Grandpa returned, Grandma would inquire, in the presence of the children, whether the barber had given him a good haircut. (This was her way of asking

whether Grandpa had been successful in buying an attractive tree.)

When Grandpa had answered that yes, the barber had given him a good haircut, Grandma would follow up the question by asking, "Did he bawl some?" (This was her way of asking whether the tree was a balsam. The kids were none the wiser.)

I never had a hand in decorating our tree until I was old enough to realize that the task was performed not by Santa Claus, but by the family.

Before the first ornament was hung, the tree had to be set up, and that was no mean task. (We're talking about a natural tree here; the artificial Christmas tree had yet to be developed.)

In the first place, the tree was found to be a bit too tall for the ceiling. Dad would then go to the basement and return with a handsaw, with which he would lop a few inches of height from the tree — either from the top or from the bottom, depending on the configuration of the branches.

*"Our tree was delivered,  
along with the presents,  
on Christmas Eve by Santa  
Claus, and it was Santa  
who trimmed the tree."*

Next, the stand would have to be adjusted so that the trunk would appear from all directions to be vertical.

After this had been accomplished, we would notice that the branches on one side of the tree were a bit sparse. We couldn't have that side facing into the room. We couldn't have it facing the window, either.

Some amateur tree surgery was indicated. Down to the basement Dad would go again, returning this time with a push drill. He would saw a couple of branches off the full side of the tree, drill a couple of holes in the trunk on the sparse side, and stick the branches into the holes.

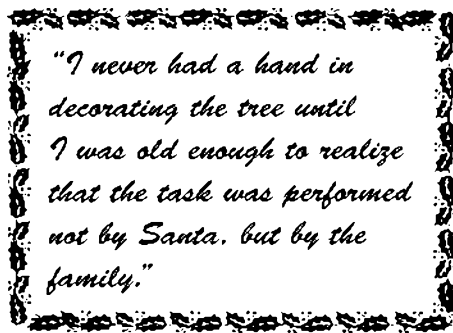
Now that we had a fairly symmetrical tree, the trimming could begin. But first, the butt end of the tree had to be immersed in a vessel of water. (Needles were beginning to fall already.) Some people advocated putting a bit of sugar into the water; others thought an aspirin tablet should be used.

Most of the ornaments in those days were made of very thin, opaque glass, thinner than the glass that light bulbs are made of. Most of the ornaments were of a solid color: crimson, dark blue, dark green, silver, or gold. They were so shiny that you could see your reflection in them.

These iridescent balls come in about three sizes, as I recall; the largest was about four inches in diameter. They were beautiful objects, and, like many things of beauty, they were very fragile. I accidentally broke several of them by dropping them on the floor. The most fragile were the largest ones, which would very likely break even when dropped on a rug.

When one of these ornaments broke, it made a popping sound like that of a light bulb when it breaks. And it didn't just break—it shattered.

Besides the round glass ornaments, we had a few ornaments of celluloid in other shapes: an angel, a swan, a basket, a little house. There were also a couple of bells made of a thin metal, and, of course, a star, which was placed at the top of the tree.



Some families would make a garland of popcorn threaded on a string, and wind the string around the tree. Children might split a walnut in half, eat the nutmeat, glue the halves of the shell together, paint the shell with a bright water color, and insert a bit of wire for a hanger, thus creating an ornament.

Peppermint candy canes also made attractive ornaments, and they didn't need to have hangers attached.

Some manufacturers called it Angel Hair, some called it Silver Rain, and still others called it Icicles. What it was, was tinsel — long, thin strips of metal foil which many families used to give the tree an added glitter.

There were two ways of applying tinsel to a tree. One could carefully drape each strand over a branch so that it hung straight down, like an icicle. Or, one could stand back a couple of feet and toss the tinsel at the tree, a few pieces at a time, allowing it to land where it might.

The first method lent the tree a neater appearance; the second gave the tree a more casual air, but it took much less time. Each method had its proponents. Which was the proper way? This was the subject of many a running friendly family dispute.

More than anything else, of course, the lights are what give a Christmas tree its warmth and its magical aura.

My parents used to tell of Christmas trees of their childhood, very early in the century, which were adorned with lighted

## CHRISTMAS TREES

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candles. What a fire hazard that must have been! I wonder how many tragic fires at Christmastime were caused by a candle igniting a dry tree.

The first Christmas tree lights in my recollection were slightly smaller, and more pointed, than the standard bulbs used today. The lights on each string were connected in series; this meant that the electric current had to flow through each bulb, one after the other. Thus, when the filament in one of the bulbs broke --- that is, when one of the bulbs burned out --- the continuity would be interrupted, and all the lights on the string would go dark.

Considerable time was spent, during the holidays, replacing burned-out bulbs. The replacement of a bulb took only a few seconds; the time was consumed in determining which of the bulbs had burned out.

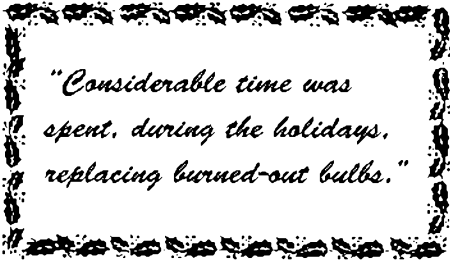
One way was to take a spare bulb which was known to be good, and place it in the first socket of the string that was out. If the string still didn't light, you would know that the bulb you had just replaced was not the dead one. You would then use that bulb to replace the next one on the string. You would keep doing this until the string lit up; then you would discard the last bulb you had replaced --- that was the dead one.

This system worked if there was only one burned-out bulb on the string. If there was more than one, you were in trouble.

Sometimes, instead of screwing a bulb into each socket, the man of the house would stick the tip of a small screwdriver into each socket so that it touched both contacts. If the string lit up, he would know that that socket was the one which had held the dead bulb. This method, of course, was dangerous, and was *not* recommended.

Here, too, if there was more than one dead bulb involved, the system wouldn't work.

The best method of locating a burned-out bulb was to remove one of the bulbs



*"Considerable time was spent, during the holidays, replacing burned-out bulbs."*

from a string which was lighted, and use the resulting empty socket to test each of the bulbs in the string that was out.

If there happened to be no spare bulbs on hand, you could wad up a piece of tinsel, place it in the socket, and screw the dead bulb in on top of it. Then, with the exception of the dead bulb, the string would light up. This measure, too, would *not* have been approved by the underwriters.

Some time in the '40s --- I believe it was after the war---a revolution occurred in Christmas tree lighting. A new system was introduced in which 110-volt bulbs were used and connected in parallel; that is, each socket had its own pair of wires branching out from the string. Thus, if a bulb burned out, the rest of the bulbs would continue to burn.

Why hadn't somebody thought of that before?

Then came the tiny bulbs which we used to call Italian lights, as many as 35 or 50 on a string. Like the other Christmas tree lights, these came in colors, but sometimes we'll see a tree outdoors festooned with nothing but white ones.

While I was working as an office boy in a downtown office in the late '40s, one day in mid-December the office manager gave me some money from petty cash and sent me out to buy a Christmas tree for the office. I found a lot around Randolph and Jefferson where trees were being sold. There I selected a tree which I thought would be suitable and purchased it for \$1.50.

When I returned to the office with the tree, the staff gathered around to see what I had bought. The boss's secretary asked me how much I had paid for the tree, and I told her.

"You paid a *dollar and a half* for that?" the secretary shrieked.

The file clerk chimed in: "The guy must've seen you comin', Kenny."

"You call that a *tree*?" said one of the draftsmen. "That's not a tree. That's a *branch*."

My feelings were hurt. I had been sent by the office manager to buy a tree, and I had bought one. I had used my best judgment. The price was \$1.50, and I paid \$1.50. I had been hired as an office boy, not as a purchasing agent.

Later, I learned that the office crew had merely been to get a rise out of me. In that, they had succeeded. Just as it was customary to have a Christmas tree in the office, so it was a custom to tease the office boy who had bought the tree.

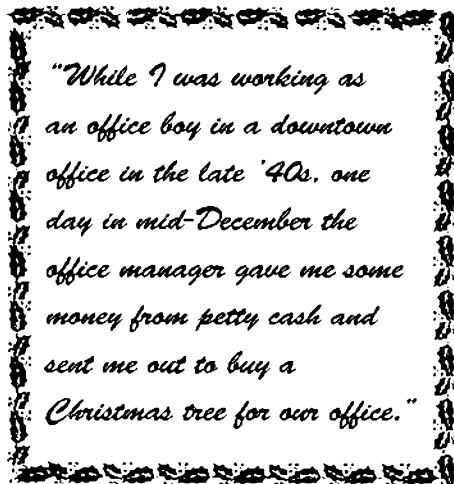
All of us have seen elaborate Christmas displays in front yards. Often, the centerpiece is an evergreen growing on the lawn. For the rest of the year, it's just an evergreen, but in mid-December it becomes a Christmas tree. Enough of these displays, especially on a night when the ground is white with snow, can turn a neighborhood into a magical fairyland.

In the old days, all Christmas trees were natural trees. Nowadays, many of the trees are artificial. You can buy an artificial blue spruce or Norway pine or any kind you want. Although these lack the fragrance of a conifer, they look like the real thing, they don't shed needles, and they needn't be disposed of after New Year's.

Glass ornaments are still sold, but the stores are now also selling ornaments with a satiny finish which are much less fragile than the glass.

The lights, too, have changed. The bulbs are not only a different type from those of the 1930s; they also do more than merely glow. You can buy a string of lights that will dance, chase, fade in and out, or do all those tricks in sequence.

Basically, though, the Christmas trees



*"While I was working as an office boy in a downtown office in the late '40s, one day in mid-December the office manager gave me some money from petty cash and sent me out to buy a Christmas tree for our office."*

of today look pretty much like those of the '30s.

During the holiday season, Christmas trees can be seen everywhere—in offices, in stores, in banks, in barber shops, in lobbies of office buildings, in restaurants. Thousands of families have lunch every year under the great tree in the Walnut Room of Marshall Field's State Street store, no matter how long the wait for a table.

Then there is the tree in Grant Park, and the one on the Daley Center Plaza. The ornaments and lights on these trees may number in the thousands. These are spectacular Christmas trees.

I think that the best of all the Christmas trees is the one in your own home. And I think that the best time to enjoy it is on one of the quiet evenings between Christmas and New Year's. Then, the shopping, the wrapping, the mailing, the baking, the unwrapping, the ooh-ing, the aah-ing, and most of the activities that make the season such a busy time are done with, and you're able to spend some time alone with your thoughts.

On one of these evenings, with carols playing softly, it can be most pleasant to bask in the serene glow of the colored lights as you contemplate the tree, and entertain sweet memories of Christmases long past. ■

# Radio Adventures with Jungle Jim

BY BILL KIDDLE

Fictional characters with finely tuned attributes of skill and daring have been a part of American culture for the past six decades. Jungle Jim was one of these heroes.

Alex Raymond, a well-known comic strip artist for King Features Syndicate, created the character of Jungle Jim in January, 1934 as a companion strip to Buck Rogers. Both were placed in the *Comic Weekly* section of the Hearst Sunday newspapers in fifteen cities coast to coast, with an estimated circulation of over 10 million readers.

The Adventures of Jungle Jim might have remained just another good comic strip had it not been for the merchandising departments within the Hearst and King Features organizations. They needed a new comic strip and radio program to compete with both Flash Gordon and Tarzan in an expanding media market for adventure drama in the mid-1930's.

Jungle Jim Bradley, the new action hero, was pictured in the comic strip as a tall, dark handsome and muscular adventurer. His basic outfit included pith helmet, riding pants, and a gun in its holster. On radio these masculine symbols were enhanced by the solid acting ability of Matt Crowley, a voice that would be heard on action and detective radio programs for over three decades.

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*Bill Kiddle is a retired high school teacher whose interest in radio drama dates to his undergraduate days at Lake Forest College and weekly theatre productions over WKRS, Waukegan. He is a reviewer of old time radio tapes for the North American Radio Archives and is an occasional writer for the Nostalgia Digest.*

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The radio program which started over Mutual radio in November, 1935 followed the storyline of the comic strip closely. In some areas the program was aired on weekdays, while in other locations, like New York City and Pittsburgh, it was aired on Saturday morning. The episode appearing in the Sunday comics had been broadcast the previous week in a 15 minute "preview." For example the episode entitled "Jungle Goddess" from 12/29/35 was broadcast between 12/23 and 12/28/35. The merchandising approach was a major success and Jungle Jim remained in the newspapers and radio for 18 years.

It seems likely that the Jungle Jim persona as an adventurer and explorer was inspired by several popular movies of the 1930's. In 1931 MGM released "Trader Horn," an adventure film about an African explorer and trader. The following year Frank Buck, the big game hunter, starred in "Bring 'Em Back Alive" and Johnny Weismueller was introduced as "Tarzan the Ape Man." Edgar Rice Burrough's jungle lord. The success of these films sparked interest in jungle lore.

Jungle Jim's field of operation was the vast and undefined region known as "east of Suez," where he was at home in rain-forests of Sumatra, Borneo, Malaya, and the many thousands of islands of the South Seas. Later Jim Bradley ventured on to the mainlands of Asia, Africa, and even South America. The American was aided by a Malayan sidekick, Kolu, who was initially his servant, and called Jim "tuan" (master). Like Jim, the turbaned and barechested Kolu was an expert on jungle lore and



# JUNGLE JIM

BY ALEX  
RAYMOND

UNERRING INSTINCTS OF A BORN LEADER, JIM PICKS HIS  
FROM A SCORE WHO VOLUNTEER FOR ACTION WITH HIS  
FIT



JIM'S  
FIRST  
LIEUTENANT  
IS A STRAPPING  
AUSTRALIAN BUSH-FIGHTER,  
NAMED BEARDSLEY--A VETERAN OF  
CAMPAIGNS IN GREECE AND AFRICA. HIS SECOND  
LIEUTENANT IS A CHINESE OFFICER, KNOWN AS SING  
FE--A VETERAN OF FOUR YEARS OF GUERRILLA WARFARE  
ON THE DESPOILERS OF HIS COUNTRY. HIS FIRST SERGEANT  
A MALAYAN, WHOSE COURAGE, INTELLIGENCE AND  
DEVOTION HAVE BEEN JIM'S FOR YEARS---

tracking. Like "Tonto" and "Kato," Kolu became an inseparable partner with a white man in the realm of adventure. On radio, Kolu, the always serious black hero, was played by Juano Hernandez.

During the first year on the air, while dealing with the "Bat Woman Adventure" in South East Asia, Jim encountered Lilli deVrille, a "dragon lady" type of femme-fatale, known to her underworld friends as "Shanghai Lil." With Jim's "manly persuasion" she reformed and became both one of the best secret agents in China and Jim's closest female friend.

In the comic strip Lil was portrayed as a Myrna Loy-Marlene Dietrich shady

lady. In fact, Lil's character and personality was lifted from the 1932 Hollywood movie "Shanghai Express" which starred Ms. Dietrich. During World War II, Lil and Jim parted for a while; he continued to fight the Axis on the battle front and Lil, a recent FBI agent, enlisted in the U.S. Marines as an officer. Following the conflict they were reunited for more adventures. On radio, first Franc Hale and, later, Vicki Vola played the sultry Lil.

Prior to the international hostilities in Europe in September of 1939, Jungle Jim was an apolitical person and his crime fighting abilities were directed against international criminals — pirates, bandits, kidnapers, and all manner of cutthroats

## JUNGLE JIM

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who preyed upon missionaries, ranchers, traders, and other law abiding persons. In "Bat Woman" (1/13/35 to 3/29/36) Jim and Kolu save Rev. Chalmers and his lovely daughter Lynn from the evil Jacque LeBue, a one-time partner of "Shanghai Lil."

In the second great adventure, "The Purple Triangle," Jim and Kolu travel to China to battle an international crime syndicate led by an American gangster, Derek Blugar. The crooks are attempting to overthrow the Nationalist government of China and the U.S. consul in Shanghai instructs Jim to "stop Blugar, dead or alive." Shanghai Lil and a Chinese guide by the name of Chang help Jim destroy this international menace.

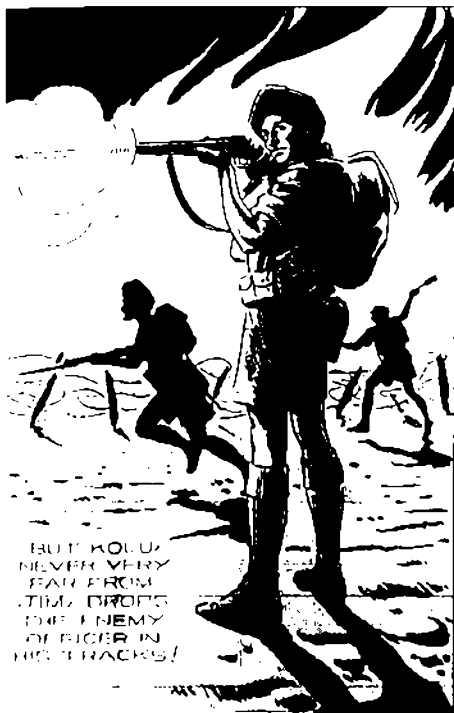
As world conflict drew near, Jim's wide-ranging talents were recruited for espionage by the American government. "Your fame as a hunter and trapper is exceeded only by your reputation as a jungle detective," the U.S. Consul in Shanghai told our hero when assigning him a job as "a crusader for right against wrong." In Bradley's last two pre-war adventures "Panama Canal" and "Thorsen's Island," aired from 9/1/40 to 3/15/42, he protected America's defenses against enemy operatives. The U.S. Marines even played a part in the successful capture of Thorsen's Island, and Lil confesses that she is an FBI agent. They are all on the same team.

On March 22, 1942, just a few months after Pearl Harbor a radical change took place in the radio-newspaper relationship to the series. Jim and Kolu were assigned to Southeast Asia to battle the Japanese military with a multi-national (UN) commando force. The radio version of Jungle Jim expanded on this concept and had Jim and Kolu join up with Col. Sing Lee of the Chinese army to disrupt the Japanese war-effort in occupied Malaya, Java and at least one unnamed island off the mainland coast of Southeast Asia. New characters were added to the story line: a Frenchman; a

Russian; and American-born nephew of Col. Lee; plus a host of other Allied military people. At the outset, "Sgt. McGovern" was the lone American serviceman assigned to the guerrilla unit commanded by Capt. Jim Bradley. The weekly comic strip had Jungle Jim returning to the Western Hemisphere for a series of undercover operation against Axis agents in the U.S. and at strategic points in South America. During this period Jim operated without the services of Kolu or Lil.

In early 1945 the radio script writers placed Jungle Jim and his commandos on an unnamed Japanese-occupied isle in the South China Sea. Here they met a beautiful American filmstar, Jane Loren, the surviving member of a USO troupe, whose plane had been shot down by the enemy. Ms. Loren becomes a regular member of the unit. Later, after being rescued from the island, the U.S. government returns Ms. Loren and the Bradley raiders to Hollywood for a war movie, but Axis agents kidnap the film star and Sgt. McGovern. In the finale of this chapter Sgt. Mack is badly wounded when Jim and the military police destroy the spy ring. The lucky serviceman stays behind to marry Ms. Loren as the commandos go back into action.

World War II is coming to a successful conclusion for the Allied cause and Jungle Jim is back to the mainland of Asia once again. The newspaper version of these last wartime adventures has Jim and Col. Sing Lee battle the Japanese in occupied China. The radio script writers placed Jim, Kolu, Frenchy, and Col. Lee in Japanese occupied Indo-China. Here they come to the aid of "Alabam," a downed American airman with a pronounced southern drawl. On V-J Day the raiders switch from fighting the Japanese to concentrate on an evil French drug runner who is using a new and potent form of opium to turn the Vietnamese villagers into slaves. All during World War II, the radio version of Jungle Jim was much more strident it its



BUT KOLU  
NEVER VERY  
FEAR FROM  
JIM DROPS  
THE ENEMY  
OF FIGHT IN  
THE TRACKS!

anti-Axis propaganda, especially as directed against the Imperial Japanese government and its conduct of the war with respect to POW's and civilian populations in the areas that they controlled.

Following the end of World War II, the radio and newspaper versions of Jungle Jim remained permanently separated. The radio exploits were only "based upon the comic strip of the same name appearing in *Puck*, the *Comic Weekly*." The radio adventures continued in the traditional 15 minute format for listeners in 15 different regions, all served by Hearst. In the storyline Jim comes back to the States, is reunited with Lil and joins with Kolu for some South American adventures. Unfortunately, the almost unbroken collection of radio episodes becomes badly fragmented. Only a handful of quarter hour dramas from the late 1940's survive. With the "retirement" of Juano Hernandez from the role of Kolu, the program developed a case of character anemia, and the series declined rapidly.

The comic strip version of Jungle Jim flourished in the post war era. Jim, Kolu, and Lil ventured forth as globetrotting adventurers, "crusading against evil doers." In the winter of 1945-6 they travelled to South America to the "Pagano Mines" to battle slavers and their pygmy henchmen.

By springtime the trio were on a South Seas' mission in an episode entitled "Chen Fu, and the Isle of Pearls." After the "Bull Bragg Jungle Mystery" in the fall and winter of 1946-1947, the focus of events shifted back to the mainland of Asia, first to India and the story of "The Maharaja of Golore" and then to the "top of the world" into the remote regions of Tibet and the yarn entitled "Grand Lama of Tsang."

In the last years of the comic strip Jim, Kolu, and Lil returned to the familiar landscapes of Southeast Asia. The winter and spring of 1949 they were facing dangers in the jungles of Indo-China (Vietnam); on a platinum expedition to New Guinea; a sunken treasure in the East Indies; and after escaping a coral reef shipwreck, they visited the Celebes to participate in a uranium expedition.

The final comic strip adventure, the "Malay Pirates," pictured in the Sunday supplement between October 10 and December 28, 1952, took Jim and his faithful friends full cycle. They returned to the Malay peninsula to battle traitors, spies, and terrorists. The Final episode, (#893), was aptly titled "End of the Trail." Jungle Jim had come a long way in the pursuit of world peace and the protection of those people unable to defend themselves from the forces of evil.

Jungle Jim was a great, yet unknown, character in American popular fiction. ■

*(ED. NOTE Tune to Those Were The Days on WNIB, Saturday, January 7 for a quartet of Jungle Jim episodes from the WW II years.)*





WALTER WINCHELL

of heavy cream in order to divert a billion quarts of milk to the manufacture of butter, cheese, and dried milk for export.

**Winchell Wit Waivers** — At the end of Walter Winchell's weekly broadcast, the announcer gave him an item hot off the teletype. It was datelined "Moscow" and reported that Hitler had been killed while inspecting his Eastern Front. As Winchell read the message, his eyes began to bulge, and his hands began to tremble. The "FLASH" of all flashes had come to him after he'd left the air. While mouthing expletives, he suddenly shrieked that this always happened to him. Then, after Winchell calmed down, he was told that Blue Network wags had produced the phony item to celebrate his tenth year on the air for the same sponsor.

**Hoarding Rush** — When the Chief of The Office of Price Administration put ceilings of \$.69 to \$1.65 on women's

hose, he accidentally revealed a secret and started another hoarding rush. The secret was that there were only 600,000 pairs of silk hose left on manufacturers' and merchants' shelves. Women had thought there were many more.

**Saving the Roads** — The Board of Public Works in Los Angeles, noting a new trend related to the tire shortage, has asked the City Council to make it unlawful for motorists to drive on their rims.

**Sub-Chasers In Midwest** — The 173-foot submarine chasers and convoy escorts built at Bay City, Michigan, face a 2,100-mile fresh-water journey before they reach the ocean's waves. First, they steam up Lake Huron and down Lake Michigan to Chicago. Then they pass through the Chicago Drainage Canal and the Illinois River on their way to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico.

**He's In The Army Now** — When Gene Autry, popular star of radio and western films, joined the Army, he continued to wear cowboy boots because regular shoes threw him off-balance. However, when a reviewing officer spotted the western footwear, he reminded Sergeant Autry that he was now a soldier in the United States Army and not a member of the Texas Vigilantes. The next day Gene turned out for inspection wearing regulation Army shoes and, fortunately, stayed on his feet.

**Good Samaritans** — After a driver delivered a new ambulance from Detroit to Miami, he asked how he'd gotten gasoline along the way with no ration book. The driver explained that during the trip he saw two soldiers lying by the road, stopped, and helped them into the back of the ambulance. The soldiers had been to an all-night party and needed a place to sleep. After that, whenever he pulled into a gas station, the driver showed the operator his two unconscious passengers. All of the station operators along the way assumed they were dead and filled the tank. ■

# The Night Waco, Texas Made It To the Original Amateur Hour

BY RICHARD J. VEIT

The decade of the 1930s was the very heart of radio's Golden Age, and this held true not only in the big cities like New York and Philadelphia but in rural and even isolated areas as well. It was a genuine national phenomenon, made possible by the proliferation of new licensees and the increased range of modern transmitters. Rare indeed was a square mile of the United States that was not reached by at least one station's signal.

By the year 1939, citizens of Waco, Texas, could count on dependable reception from a number of Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio stations — WJAA, WBAP, KRLL, KPRC, KTRH, WOAI, and KTSA — in addition to the city's very own local frequency, 1420, WACO.

Radio had long since overtaken newsreels as the number two source of current events information, and — with its unique capacity for instantaneous reporting of the looming war in Europe — it was even beginning to challenge the dominance of newspapers.

But families turned to radio most often for one thing: entertainment. Only the movies could top it for capturing the public's imagination (and in 1939 Hollywood happened to be enjoying its greatest year ever). The airwaves were filled with some of the most famous programs in entertainment history, usually on a coast-to-coast hookup.

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*Richard J. Veit is the former editor of WACO Heritage and History magazine and an enthusiast of old time radio. He has served as an announcer at radio stations in Waco, Houston, Austin, and Dallas.*

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In 1939, people could tune in (among countless other programs) *The Green Hornet*, *The Aldrich Family*, *Dick Tracy*, *Charlie McCarthy*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Blondie*, *Burns and Allen*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Gangbusters*, *The Shadow*, *Rudy Vallee*, and *Your Hit Parade*.

Another popular show of the period — usually rated among the top half-dozen in audience appeal — was *Major Bowes and His Original Amateur Hour*. It first aired in 1934 over WHN in New York but was picked up by NBC the following year, under the sponsorship of Chase & Sanborn Coffee. By the fall of 1936 it had moved to CBS with a new sponsor, Chrysler Corporation. The program's guiding spirit, 65-year-old Major (his military rank during World War I) Edward Bowes, was a radio pioneer with keen business sense. By 1939, his net income was \$15,000 per week.

A unique feature of his *Amateur Hour* was the weekly spotlight that it cast on a town or city, which the producers in New York selected for each program from scores of hopeful applicants. Primarily, of course, the show was a talent contest, with about twelve acts competing weekly, and the "honor city" segment was strictly peripheral. Yet, cities across the country — including Waco, Texas — coveted the national recognition that such a popular network program could provide.

The publicity committee of the Waco Chamber of Commerce contacted *Amateur Hour* producer Lou Goldberg early in the spring of 1939 and supplied him with an envelope full of information on the Heart of Texas city. By late May,



**MAJOR EDWARD BOWES, creator of and guiding force behind *The Original Amateur Hour*. His talent show concept skyrocketed to the top of the ratings, first for NBC, then for CBS.**

committee chairman T. Howard Williams — otherwise a clerk for Texas Power & Light Company — was delighted to report that Waco was a finalist, having survived the cutdown process (through which obscure entries, as well as those not within range of a CBS affiliate, were removed from consideration).

Then, on Saturday, July 1, it became official. Williams received a communiqué from Major Edward Bowes of New York that Waco, Texas, would be the featured city on the July 27 program. "This designation," Williams told the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, "which has been arranged through the efforts of our Chamber of Commerce, will bring nationwide publicity to Waco, and we are very proud of the opportunity to present Waco in such a favorable manner over a national radio hookup that is so generally popular."

Ironically for Wacoans, their special night on the *Amateur Hour* would not even be carried locally, due to the fact that

Waco's radio station, WACO, was a national affiliate of Mutual rather than the Columbia Broadcasting System. Fortunately, however, reception from the CBS station in Dallas, KRLD, was fairly reliable and was scheduled to be improved dramatically in plenty of time for the broadcast.

Sure enough, on July 16, KRLD increased its power from ten thousand to fifty thousand watts — the maximum allowed by the Federal Communications Commission — and began transmitting from twin 475-foot towers erected near Garland. The timing of the power increase and the Bowes salute to Waco was purely coincidental, but it would have been difficult to convince some Wacoans — especially those with poorly crafted antennas — that providence had not played a part in their good fortune.

As the great night approached, excitement in the city continued to build, and particularly so when Major Bowes's personal envoy, James M. Gaines, arrived on Saturday, July 22. To Gaines fell the responsibility of making all local preparations for "Waco Night," including the formulation of a suitable script. He was aided by Lloyd A. Wilson, secretary of the Waco Chamber of Commerce. Together they combed through hundreds of pages of prospective broadcast material, before editing the essential paragraphs down to the requisite two minutes of air time.

Half a continent away, in New York City, several Waco amateur performers were auditioning for national exposure on the July 27 program. The competition was fierce, as always, with some six hundred weekly applicants for the dozen or so available spots.

Three days later, on Tuesday, July 25, Mayor Theodore M. Gribble officially proclaimed Thursday as "Major Bowes Day" in Waco:

Whereas, Major Edward Bowes will pay tribute to the city of Waco, Texas, on his "Original Amateur Hour" program on Thursday, July 27,

## ORIGINAL AMATEUR HOUR

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1939, from 7 to 8 p.m., central standard time, and

Whereas, the program will be heard over the Columbia Broadcasting System's nationwide network and affiliated short-wave stations throughout the world, and

Whereas, this world-wide audience approximating twenty million listeners will hear a vivid word picture of the historical heritage, commercial, industrial, civic, social, and educational life of our city, be it therefore

Proclaimed, that Thursday, July 27, 1939, be known as "Major Bowes Day" in Waco, and that all citizens of the city be hereby urged to recognize the day by listening to the program and participating in the voting.

Mayor Gribble also honored the genial master of ceremonies by officially naming him Honorary Mayor for the Day, Honorary City Manager for the Day, Honorary Police Chief for the Day, Honorary Fire Chief for the Day, and Honorary Deputy Sheriff for the Day.

As all of its faithful Waco listeners were well aware, the format of *Major Bowes and His Original Amateur Hour* was consistent from week to week. Each program was sixty minutes in duration, interspersed with occasional Chrysler commercials. There would be roughly a dozen contestants, each performing a specialty act — usually, but not always, of a musical nature. There might be dramatic readings and comedy acts as well, but the strictly visual talents (such as magic, hand shadows, and pantomime) were ineffective on radio and never made it past the cutdown.

In fairness to the participants, the order of appearance was left strictly to chance, with a spinning wheel determining the sequence of acts. This custom gave birth to Major Bowes's trademark catch-phrase, "Around and around she goes, and where she stops nobody knows."

During the course of each show, the program's listeners were invited to call a designated telephone number to vote for their favorite performers. As it was also permissible to cast a ballot by postcard, the winning name was never really confirmed until several days later. Each week's particular featured city not only received free publicity, but also preferential treatment in the voting process — local lines would be established, at the network's expense, to ensure a sizable turnout.

For the Waco show, CBS financed the installation of forty additional telephone lines, arranged in series, to handle the extraordinarily heavy volume of calls that was anticipated on Thursday night. Calls would be accepted from 7 until 8:30 — a half hour after the program was over — so as to accommodate everyone in the KRLD listening area who wished to cast a ballot.

Waco's assigned number (9-1-0-0) would be manned by fifty-eight "specially trained operators," who would quickly tabulate the voters' preferences. Individual callers were allowed one vote per act per telephone call. Families were permitted up to three votes per act per telephone call. And larger gatherings (such as house parties) were given credit for up to twenty-five votes per act per telephone call. On the air, Major Bowes himself would read the names of the first and the two hundredth Waco callers. Periodically, he would also pass along progress reports on the local balloting.

Beyond the privilege of a toll-free telephone number, Waco listeners were to be treated to a special program, over WACO, which would begin at the conclusion of the *Amateur Hour* (8:00) and last for fifteen minutes. This bonus coverage would report the latest voting returns and present a detailed description ("word picture") of the network's temporary Waco operations.

Air time for the quarter-hour broadcast — which would originate from the Waco office of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company — was purchased by the two local Chrysler dealerships, Central Motor



# TONIGHT Major Bowes Salutes WACO

Station KRLD-7 to 8 p. m.

(TUNE ON YOUR DIAL)

VOTE  
FOR YOUR  
FAVORITE  
AMATEUR  
CALL  
9100  
BETWEEN  
7 AND 8 P.M.  
TONIGHT



HEAR

Our City  
Extolled to a  
World Wide  
Audience Over  
the Coast-to-  
Coast Facilities  
of the Columbia  
Broadcasting  
System

Special Broadcast-WACO-8:00 to 8:15 P. M.  
Special Broadcast-WACO-8:00 to 8:15 P. M.  
Special Broadcast-WACO-8:00 to 8:15 P. M.  
Special Broadcast-WACO-8:00 to 8:15 P. M.

America's Number One Show Sponsored By

## FOUR GREAT CARS

Chrysler, Buick and Dodge Trucks, Buses and Cycles

DEALERSHIP ONLY 1939 TO 1941. SEE LISTINGS IN CO-OP ADVERTISERS

CENTRAL MOTOR COMPANY

STERLING MOTOR COMPANY

1000 Austin Avenue  
Waco, Texas  
Telephone 408

2501 Highway  
Waco, Texas  
Telephone 721

CO-OP NEWSPAPER AD for July 27, 1939, as Waco's two Chrysler dealers attempted to take advantage of the broadcasting windfall.

Company at 906 Austin Avenue, and the Robert H. Sterling Motor Company at 925 Austin Avenue. Local ratings were expected to be well worth the investment.

On Thursday, July 27 — "Major Bowes Day" in Waco — the *Amateur Hour* offices in New York City received telegraphed messages of greeting from hundreds of local civic leaders and state officials.

The Chamber of Commerce airmailed to Major Bowes a bronze plaque, which commemorated his program's salute to Waco, Texas. Upon arrival at CBS headquarters, the plaque was placed on permanent display — alongside thousands of other pieces of memorabilia — in the Chrysler Building's famous Bowes Museum.

Another Waco touch were the splendid bouquets of flowers that decorated the *Amateur Hour*'s CBS Radio Playhouse. They were ordered via telegraph by a consortium of local florists. One Waco florist, George E. Wolfe, happened to be in New York at the time, and he delivered his floral arrangement to the studios in person.

Meanwhile, anticipation in Waco that morning reached a new level when it was learned that at least one local amateur (of the several who had auditioned in New York) still had a chance to be selected as an on-the-air performer. Whenever possible — without seriously compromising the program's integrity — the *Amateur Hour*'s producers made an effort to include one contestant from the honor city. As showmen, they knew that a "favorite son" in the ranks would add enormously to the show's suspense.

The final Waco hopeful was a 23-year-old bass singer by the name of Joseph C. Hester, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Harlan Hester of 1504 Clay Avenue. (His father was credit manager of the R. T. Dennis Company furniture store.) Joseph Hester attended Waco High School, then studied voice for three years at Baylor University before moving to New York City to venture into the music business. He contacted CBS soon after he learned that Waco was scheduled to be an *Amateur Hour* "honor city."

At midday on the 27th, Hester was notified by one of the program's producers that he was wanted immediately at the CBS Radio Playhouse. Hester knew this could mean only one thing — that he would soon be singing before a studio audience of 1500 and a worldwide radio audience of more than twenty million.

The balance of the afternoon was spent in rehearsal with his CBS-furnished accompanist. Over and over they practiced the "Evening Star" aria from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, as audio engineers pushed buttons and turned dials for optimum microphone levels.

Then, around 5:30, Major Bowes treated the sixteen successful auditioners

## ORIGINAL AMATEUR HOUR

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(including four alternates, called "Reserves") to a splendid dinner in a nearby Manhattan restaurant. Though it may have seemed a philanthropic gesture on the Major's part, in actuality the lavish meal was a thinly disguised fact-finding mission. The talented youngsters were encouraged to dine to their stomachs' content, all the while answering gentle, grandfatherly questions from their renowned host. Later that night, some of those same queries would be heard by millions.

Just prior to broadcast time on Thursday night, July 27, 1939, thousands of Wacoans gathered around their radio receivers, relaxing while they caught the final few minutes of *Let's Listen to a Story* on KRLD. In stark contrast, the CBS Radio Playhouse was a beehive of pre-curtain activity — as nervous performers, technicians, and sponsors went to their marks, work stations, and "royal boxes," respectively.

At ten seconds before 7 o'clock, Waco listeners heard an announcer say, "This is KRLD Radio, 1040 kilocycles, Dallas, Texas. The time is 7 o'clock." At that same instant in the CBS studio, ten seconds before 9 o'clock (Texas was on standard time, New York on daylight time), a floor director shouted, "Ten seconds to air. Stand by." Then, from coast to coast on eighty-one CBS stations, and around the world on the shortwave network, *Major Bowes and His Original Amateur Hour* was on the air.

Following a single stroke of the *Amateur Hour* gong and a brief introduction from announcer Ralph Edwards, Major Bowes opened the program with his inimitable greeting: "All right. All right. Thank you, Ralph, and good evening, friends. Our wheel of fortune spins for the two hundred and twenty-eighth consecutive time. Around and around she goes, and where she stops nobody knows."

Characteristically, the show offered a variegated mixture of talent — everything from a boy soprano to a player of the spoons. This was the lineup, in order of appearance:

1. The Garris Sextette (popular instrumental group)
2. Joseph Hester (classical bass singer)
3. Jack Rodin (novelty entertainer: spoons, bicycle pump, etc.)
4. Dick Chaplin (boy soprano)
5. Roberta Liming (classical violinist)
6. Carol Kane (cowgirl yodeler)
7. The Harmonica Jitterbugs (popular harmonica trio)
8. The Jump Swinging Six (popular vocal/instrumental group)
9. Olga Stepanova (classical Russian soprano)
10. Tom Farrelly (Irish step-dancer)
11. Alfred Marino (popular baritone)
12. Dick Weatherson (whistler)
13. The Oklahoma Roamers (cowboy band)

As the night's "honor city," Waco was the recipient of a two-minute salute, which Major Bowes presented to the audience immediately after the first act, The Garris Sextet. The commentary, authored by Bowes himself (with the enthusiastic assistance of the Waco Chamber of Commerce), went like this:

The ears of twenty-seven million listeners are literally upon Texas tonight. Our Chrysler Motorcade moves briskly to the geographical center of the nation's largest state. There, on the Brazos de Dios River, we pay tribute to the city of Waco.


Once the idyllic Indian village of the Waco tribes, legend has it that the Wacos chose this spot because the region was immune from the furies of the elements. White men first saw Waco back in 1542 when De Soto's surviving company tried to cross Texas.

Years passed, and the next adventurer was Philip Nolan and his band of horse traders.

It was the Texas Rangers, however, in 1837, who first attempted to settle

Hear Major Bowes  
HONOR WACO  
THURSDAY NIGHT  
WITH A NEW 1940

**RCA Victor**  
RADIO



Designed for use with RCA Victor  
**TELEVISION ATTACHMENT**  
It now makes possible the use of the RCA Victor radio as a television receiver. The television attachment is a separate unit which is connected to the radio by a special cable. It is a sensational invention which will revolutionize the home entertainment field. The television attachment is a sensational invention which will revolutionize the home entertainment field. The television attachment is a sensational invention which will revolutionize the home entertainment field.

**Model K-80**  
The RCA Victor Model K-80 is a sensational invention which will revolutionize the home entertainment field. It is a sensational invention which will revolutionize the home entertainment field. It is a sensational invention which will revolutionize the home entertainment field.

**R.T. Dennis & Co.**  
INCORPORATED

ON THIS OF ALL NIGHTS, who could blame Waco's R.T. Dennis & Company for wanting to cash in on the *Amateur Hour* craze? An interesting model for 1939 was the RCA Victor K-80: prematurely equipped for that "sensational invention" called television.

Waco. After three weeks their effort failed, but one of them — Major George Barnard Erath — remembered its strategic location, and twelve years later returned to participate with Jacob de Cordova in founding and laying out the city.

Another Ranger, Captain Shapley P. Ross, moved to Waco at this time and became her first permanent settler. Once started, Waco grew like magic. All about her, plantations sprang up. Immense cotton fields were cultivated and people poured in from everywhere.

Situated in the heart of one of the most fertile and productive farming regions in the southwest, she ranks today also as one of the country's industrial centers.

The ports of the whole world

receive her products: cotton goods, dairy products, sash and doors, furniture, mill work, cement, cottonseed products, laundry machinery, tents and awnings, clothing, and medicines.

Waco has many fine schools, among them Paul Quinn College and Baylor University — oldest institution of higher learning in Texas, world-famous for its magnificent Browning collection.

Famous for her friendliness and real southern hospitality, modern and young, with the energetic spirit of the great southwest, we send salutations to the "Hub of Texas," the metropolitan city of Waco.

A moment later, it was Joseph Hester's turn in the spotlight. Though the great majority of Hester's Central Texas supporters probably were not even aware of the existence of an opera called *Tannhäuser* — and would have quickly switched stations had they heard "O du, mein holder Abendstern" sung by anyone else — on this particular *Amateur Hour*, it was a case of Waco against the world. Virtually the entire city was rooting for young Hester, still three weeks short of his 24th birthday, to upset the New Yorkers at their own game.

The Waco native did not disappoint his supporters, either conversationally or musically. As Hester approached the CBS microphone, Major Bowes made the introductions: "And from our honor city — from Waco, Texas — comes Joseph Hester, bass singer, 'Evening Star.' Born in Waco, Joseph?"

"Yes, that's right, Major. My father, grandparents, and relatives, are now listening in, in Waco."

"Have you had voice training?"

"Yes, six years. I was born a bass singer."

As the audience chuckled at Hester's remark, Bowes quipped, "Imagine a baby crying for his bottle in a bass voice: 'Mama, I want my bottle! What is your work?'"

"Right now I'm selling musical instru-





**JOSEPH HESTER (left) poses with Major Edward Bowes in the CBS Radio Playhouse, immediately following the *Amateur Hour* program of July 27, 1939. His performance was one of the hits of the show.**

National Bank of Waco, and Leslie B. Gardner, president of the Waco Chamber of Commerce. They all agreed that every minute of publicity the city received would have the long-term effect of boosting the local economy.

The Major's words were still fresh in their minds, and they savored every syllable: "One of the country's industrial centers ... the metropolitan city of Waco."

Young Joseph Hester returned to Waco in triumph. For the first week of August, while visiting his parents, he was treated by the press as an authentic national celebrity. He told local journalists that he planned to travel back to New York City soon, to resume his studies toward a singing career. A *News-Tribune* reporter disclosed that Hester was "not interested in any position which might possibly be tendered him as a result of his appearance on the radio program."

The Hester family was together in front of the radio on Thursday night, August 3,

for the next *Amateur Hour* broadcast — when the nationwide results of the previous week's show were revealed. Fifteen minutes into the program, Major Bowes made the official announcement: "Here's a report of last week's voting: Joseph Hester, Alfred Marino, Tom Farrelly, Carol Kane, Jack Rodin, the Garris Sextette, the Oklahoma Roamers, Dick Weatherson, Olga Stepanova, and the Harmonica Jitterbugs." Joseph Hester had won national honors.

Three days later, on the Sunday before his train departed for the East, Hester again performed on the air. This time, however, the circumstances were much more modest. He sang one sacred number at 7:30 a.m. on the Temple station, KTEM, and then another at 12:45 p.m. over WACO. Curiously, the featured speaker on each of these quarter-hour programs was Pastor A. Reilly Copeland — the very person whom Major Bowes had acknowledged ten days earlier as the first local citizen to cast a vote.

Soon after his two brief Sunday radio appearances, Hester quietly left Waco for New York City. With the network furor finally subsided, his subsequent trips back to Central Texas attracted no special media attention.

As for *Major Bowes and His Original Amateur Hour*, the popular show maintained its strength through the 1942-43 season, but then its ratings dropped noticeably the following year and plummeted the year after that. Its CBS contract was not renewed for the fall of 1945. Major Edward E. Bowes died at his estate in Rumson, New Jersey, on June 13, 1946, just a couple of hours before his 72nd birthday.

Joseph C. Hester graduated from Columbia University after the war and settled in South Carolina. He died there on October 22, 1989, at the age of 74. ■

**(ED. NOTE — Tune to *Those Were The Days* on WNIB, January 21, 1995 to hear a rebroadcast of *Major Bowes Original Amateur Hour* from July 27, 1939.)**

# DECEMBER 1994

## Old Time Radio Classics -- WBBM-AM 78 SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> Due to WBBM's commitment to news, <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> may be preempted occasionally for late-breaking news of local or national importance. In this event, vintage shows scheduled for <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> will be rescheduled to a later date. All of the programs we present on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are syndicated rebroadcasts. We are not able to obtain advance information about storylines of these shows so that we might include more details in our <i>Radio Guide</i>. However, this easy-to-read calendar lists the programs in the order we will broadcast them. Programs on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. This schedule is subject to change without notice.</p>				<b>1</b> Black Museum Cinnamon Bear # 14	<b>2</b> Horatio Hornblower Cinnamon Bear # 15	<b>3</b> Dragnet Superman
<b>4</b> Boston Blackie Lum and Abner	<b>5</b> Abbott and Costello Cinnamon Bear # 16	<b>6</b> Hiddan Truth Cinnamon Bear # 17	<b>7</b> Box Thirteen Cinnamon Bear # 18	<b>8</b> The Clock Cinnamon Bear # 19	<b>9</b> Famous Jury Trials Cinnamon Bear # 20	<b>10</b> Life of Riley Superman
<b>11</b> Escape Bob and Ray	<b>12</b> Fibber McGee & Molly Cinnamon Bear # 21	<b>13</b> Nick Carter Cinnamon Bear # 22	<b>14</b> Big Town Cinnamon Bear # 23	<b>15</b> Great Gildersleeve Cinnamon Bear # 24	<b>16</b> Ozzie and Harriet Cinnamon Bear # 25	<b>17</b> Six Shooter Hope & Sinatra
<b>18</b> Christmas Shopping with Jack Benny	<b>19</b> Roy Rogers Cinnamon Bear # 26 (Conclusion)	<b>20</b> Red Skelton Jack Benny	<b>21</b> Directors' Playhouse Jack Benny	<b>22</b> Grand Central Station Jack Benny	<b>23</b> First Nighter Fred Allen	<b>24</b> Christmas Eve With Bing Crosby
<b>25</b> Dragnet Lone Ranger	<b>26</b> Pate Kelly's Blues Johnny Dollar-Part 1	<b>27</b> Lone Ranger Johnny Dollar-Part 2	<b>28</b> Big Town Johnny Dollar-Part 3	<b>29</b> Red Skelton Johnny Dollar-Part 4	<b>30</b> Phillip Marlowe Johnny Dollar-Part 5 (Conclusion)	<b>31</b> Red Skelton Fibber McGee

# JANUARY 1995

## Old Time Radio Classics -- WBBM-AM 78 SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> The Shadow Jack Benny	<b>2</b> Suspense Ma Perkins	<b>3</b> Charlie McCarthy Third Man	<b>4</b> Abbott and Costello Theatre Royale	<b>5</b> Burns and Allen Horatio Hornblower	<b>6</b> Directors' Playhouse Lum and Abner	<b>7</b> Hopalong Cassidy Superman
<b>8</b> X Minus One Theatre Royale	<b>9</b> Jack Benny Fibber McGee & Molly	<b>10</b> Third Man Charlie McCarthy	<b>11</b> The Clock Theatre Royale	<b>12</b> Horatio Hornblower Burns and Allen	<b>13</b> Suspense The Bickersons	<b>14</b> Red Ryder Superman
<b>15</b> Fred Allen Abbott and Costello	<b>16</b> Great Gildersleeve Bill Stern's Newsreel	<b>17</b> Third Man Charlie McCarthy	<b>18</b> Black Museum Theatre Royale	<b>19</b> Burns and Allen Horatio Hornblower	<b>20</b> Fibber McGee & Molly Fred Allen	<b>21</b> Sealed Book Superman
<b>22</b> Haunting Hour Easy Aces	<b>23</b> Johnny Dollar Adventures in Research	<b>24</b> Charlie McCarthy Third Man	<b>25</b> Dragnet Theatre Royale	<b>26</b> Horatio Hornblower Burns and Allen	<b>27</b> Academy Award Lum and Abner	<b>28</b> Abbott and Costello Superman
<b>29</b> The Bickersons Theatre Five	<b>30</b> Fred Allen Fibber McGee & Molly	<b>31</b> Third Man Charlie McCarthy	<b>Feb. 1</b> Duffy's Tavern Parry Mason	<b>Feb. 2</b> Famous Jury Trials Theatre Royale	<b>Feb. 3</b> Jack Benny Special Part 1 of 12	<b>Feb. 4</b> Sherlock Holmes Superman

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

## DECEMBER 1994

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3rd RADIO TO PLAN YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST BY

★ **THE HOME FRONT** (1982) The final program in the highly acclaimed eight part radio documentary written and narrated by Edward Brown, Frank Gorin and William B. Williams, bringing together the complex events of World War II. Part 8: Victory — 1945. *Doodle Bugs and the V-2's strike Britain ... the Bomb nears completion in the U.S. ... The push to Berlin ... Yalta ... President Roosevelt dies ... The nation mourns ... Lord Haw Haw in Germany ... Hitler dies in his bunker ... Berlin falls ... V-E Day ... Iwo Jima and Okinawa ... the Atomic Bomb ... V-J Day ... The boys come home ... End of the "long night of barbarism" ... New era begins.* (43:00)

★ **CHARLIE MC CARTHY SHOW** (12-24-44) Edgar Bergen presents Don Ameche, Joan Merrill, Ray Noble and the orchestra. Charlie asks Ameche to help him memorize "The Night Before Christmas." The thousand-voice U.S. Navy choir sings Christmas Carols, and Don Ameche reads "The American Prayer." AFRS Rebroadcast. (28:50)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (12-3-44) Douglas Edwards and CBS correspondents world wide with a look at the events of the week. "The B-29s were over Tokyo again today, dropping their huge bomb loads on Jap industry. It was the fourth raid in ten days. The Japs say about seventy of the big planes made the flight and they, of course, say damage was light. But dispatch from Saipan reports there are indications the attack was the most successful so far. ... In Europe, the Americans have crossed the Czar River." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:55)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (12-5-44) Jim and Marian Jordan star with Arthur Q. Brian, Shirley Mitchell, Marlin Hurt, Harlow Wilcox, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Fibber doesn't want to pay sixty five cents to have his suit pressed, so he decides to press it himself. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:49)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (12-5-44) "Guys On the Ground" starring Frank Lovejoy, Lawson Zerbe, James Monks, Bill Quinn. Captain

Alfred Friendly's WWII story of the guys who never leave the ground — the men who furnish and fix the planes. Sustaining, NBC. (29:10)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10th RADIO TO ADDRESS CHRISTMAS CARDS BY

★ **LIFE OF RILEY** (12-24-44) William Bendix stars as Chester A. Riley who invites his boss' son to spend Christmas with the Riley family. The boy doesn't have any interest in Christmas, so Riley reads "A Christmas Carol." American Meat Institute, NBC. (30:35)

★ **LUX RADIO THEATRE** (12-7-54) "Battle-ground" starring Van Johnson and George Murphy repeating their screen roles in the radio version of the 1949 film, presented in honor of the tenth anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Cast features Parley Baer and William Conrad. AFRS rebroadcast. (18:06; 18:15; 16:56)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (12-12-44) Fibber faces the wartime cigarette shortage when he tries to find some for Doc Gamble. So he goes on the radio show, "Smokes for Folks." Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:36)

**LUM AND ABNER** (12-25-44) Chester Lauck and Norris Goff as Lum Edwards and Abner Peabody in their annual Christmas story, first presented in 1933. The scene is Pine Ridge on Christmas Eve. Lum, Abner and Grandpappy Spears are headed east out of town to bring supplies to a young couple, Joe and Mary, staying the night in a barn. One-A-Day Vitamins, BLUE Network. (14:30)

**THIS IS MY BEST** (12-19-44) "The Plot to Overthrow Christmas" by Norman Corwin. Orson Welles stars as Nero, who proposes "jazzing up" Christmas carols to do away with goodwill at Christmastime. All the baddies in Hell vote to poison Santa Claus (Ray Collins) and Nero is elected to travel to the North Pole to do the deed! John Brown appears as the Devil. Cresta Blanca, CBS. (29:07)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17th RADIO TO WRAP, BAKE AND DECORATE BY

★ **GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (12-24-44) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve with Lillian Randolph as Birdie, Walter Tetley as Leroy, Shirley Mitchell as Leila Ransom. Gildy is feeling blue at Christmastime because he is being sued for breach of promise. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30:00)

**KRAFT MUSIC HALL** (12-14-44) Bing Crosby stars with Eugenie Baird, the Kraft Choir, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, and guest Jerry Colonna. Bing sings "White Christmas." Kraft Foods, NBC. (30:00)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (12-26-44) "Scapegoats of History," a Christmas story about bigotry and persecution. Sustaining, NBC. (27:33)

**KATE SMITH SHOW** (12-24-44) Kate presents The Aldrich Family in a Christmastime sketch. Henry has lost his watch, a gift from Aunt Harriet. Plus guest Jackie Gleason offers impersonations and tells about his love affair with a juke box. AFRS rebroadcast. (29:08)

★ **CAVALCADE OF AMERICA** (12-25-44) "America For Christmas" starring Walter Huston in a patriotic wartime show for the holiday. A group of U.S. Servicemen celebrates Christmas on a small island in the Pacific as a USO troupe entertains. Dupont, NBC. (28:50)

★ **JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (12-24-44) Jack and the gang: Don Wilson, Mary Livingstone, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Phil Harris, Larry Stevens, Andy Devine. A short circuit gives Jack problems as he and Mary trim the Christmas tree. Jack offers a touching Holiday message to our servicemen overseas. AFRS rebroadcast. (27:30)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24th MERRY CHRISTMAS

★ **COMMAND PERFORMANCE** (12-24-44) As World War II continues, Armed Forces Radio broadcasts its third Christmas special, a two-hour extravaganza with an outstanding cast of stars from stage, screen and radio: Bob Hope, Xavier Cugat and the orchestra, Jerry Colonna, Virginia O'Brien, Spike Jones and his City Slickers, Ginny Simms, Jimmy Durante, Dinah Shore, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Kay Kysar, Frances Langford, Dorothy Lamour, Johnny Mercer, Danny Kaye, W. C. Fields, Judy Garland, Spencer Tracy and Lee J. Cobb. AFRS. (35:20; 23:36; 24:46; 23:10)

**MAYOR OF THE TOWN** (12-23-44) Lionel Barrymore stars for the ninth time as

Ebenezer Scrooge in his annual radio presentation of the classic Charles Dickens' story, pre-empting his usual family situation comedy, The Mayor of the Town. AFRS rebroadcast. (29:35)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (12-19-44) Jim and Marian Jordan as the McGees of Wistful Vista. McGee snoops for Christmas gifts in the hall closet. Teeney and the kids sing "'Twas the Night Before Christmas." Johnson's Wax, NBC. (12-19-44)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31st HAPPY NEW YEAR!

★ **EDDIE CANTOR SHOW** (12-27-44) Eddie and announcer Harry Von Zell discuss plans for the New Year's Eve show at the Hollywood Canteen. Bert Gordon, Nora Martin, Leonard Sues. Sal Hepatica, Trushay, NBC. (29:50)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (12-26-44) Fibber is having a bad day but when Molly starts to cry, he resolves to control his temper, no matter what! Jim and Marian Jordan star. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:42)

★ **SWING AROUND THE CLOCK** (12-31-44) Don Wilson is master of ceremonies for an all-star Armed Forces Radio swing around the country to hear the big bands and the big singers from various military installations. Featured are Jimmy Dorsey, Ella Mae Morse, Louis Jordan Timpani Five, Harry James, Kay Kyser, Lena Horne, Benny Goodman, Bing Crosby, Ginny Simms, Woody Herman, Tommy Dorsey, Gene Krupa, Johnny Mercer and the Pied Pipers, Vaughn Monroe, GI Jill with Major Meredith Willson and the AFRS Orchestra, Spike Jones, and Count Basie. AFRS. (14:00; 15:00; 14:55; 15:00)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (12-31-44) Douglas Edwards and CBS correspondents with a New Year's Eve broadcast of the long-running Sunday afternoon news program. "On the Western Front today the Germans have failed in their latest effort to close the relief corridor to the highway town of Bastogne. ... American and British planes have continued their attack on German supply points and 52 German fighters were shot down in air battles today." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:40)

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (12-31-44) Harold Peary as Gildersleeve, who seems to have forgotten about the breach of promise suit filed by Dolores DelRey and arranges to take Leila Ransom to the New Year's Eve dance. Kraft Foods, NBC. (29:30)

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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

## JANUARY 1995

PLEASE NOTE: The numerals following each program listing for *Those Were The Days* represents the length of time for each particular show: (28:50) means the program will run 28 minutes and 50 seconds. This may be of help to those who tape the programs for their own collection. ALSO NOTE: A ★ before a listing indicates the vintage broadcast is of special interest during the 50th anniversary of World War II.

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 7th

**FLYWHEEL, SHYSTER AND FLYWHEEL** (1993) Program number 12, the final program, in the series of re-enactments of the 1932 Marx Brothers radio show. Cast features Michael Roberts as Groucho Marx as Waldorf T. Flywheel and Frank Lazaras as Chico Marx as Emanuel Ravelli, with Lorelei King as Miss Dimple. BBC. (26:57)

★ **FIRESIDE CHAT** (1-6-45) President Franklin D. Roosevelt reports to the nation in what would be his last Fireside Chat. FDR talks about the State of the Union message he sent earlier in the day to Congress, asking for authorization to mobilize, for war-related work, over four million men classified as unfit to serve in the military. He suggests the "drafting" of registered nurses into the Armed Forces. ALL NETWORKS. (26:15)

★ **JUNGLE JIM** (4-23-44) Episode 444. This is the first of four selected episodes from the series dealing with World War II adventures in Japanese occupied Malaya. Jungle Jim Bradley is on a special assignment to lead a U.N. Commando Unit behind Imperial Japanese lines in Southeast Asia. Jim, portrayed by Matt Crowley, and his faithful Malay companion Kolu, played by Juano Hernandez, have first-hand knowledge of the country and that's why they have been selected for this mission to search and destroy Japanese military installations and to aid the Allied cause. See the article about Jungle Jim on page 6 of this issue of the *Nostalgia Digest*. Hearst Comic Weekly, Syndicated. (12:00)

★ **JUNGLE JIM** (4-30-44) Episode 445. Hearst Comic Weekly, Syndicated. (12:00)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (1-2-45) Jim and Marian Jordan star with Shirley Mitchell, Marlin Hurt, Harlow Wilcox, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. McGee isn't too fond of Aunt Sarah until she sends a diamond stick pin. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:34)

★ **JUNGLE JIM** (5-7-44) Episode 446. The adventure of the Commandoes in Malaya continues. Hearst Comic Weekly, Syndicated. (11:50)

★ **JUNGLE JIM** (5-14-44) Episode 447. Hearst Comic Weekly, Syndicated. (12:35)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (1-7-45) Douglas Edwards and CBS correspondents worldwide, including Charles Colingwood and Richard C. Hotalet. "The American First Army has gained three miles on the northern flank of the Belgium Bulge and has cut one of the two main roads supplying the Germans on that Front. To the south, the enemy is increasing pressure on the American Seventh Army. ...In the Pacific, the Japanese say Allied warships are shelling the coast of Luzon." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:40)

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 14th

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (1-9-45) "Borrowed Night" with Louis Van Rooten and Peter Kapell in the story of an Alsatian soldier who escapes from the German army by malingering. Sustaining. NBC. (27:50)

**SPEAKING OF RADIO** (1-14-95) **The Jack Benny Program.** The conclusion of the 12-part series. In this final segment: *Jack introduces the Sportsmen; Sportsmen sing "Old Jack Benny Had a Farm;" Jack plays violin with the Sportsmen; Special Quartet: Bing Crosby, Andy Russell, Dick Haymes, Dennis Day; Si, Sy routines; Cimmaron Rolls sequence; Birthday surprise for Jack; Radio honors.* Comments by Don Wilson, George Balzer, Dennis Day, Jack Benny and Joan Benny. (36:15)

★ **LUX RADIO THEATRE** (1-15-45) "The Master Race" starring George Coulouris, Nancy Gates, Stanley Ridges and Helen Beverly repeating their original screen roles in this radio version of the 1944 film. After D-Day, Nazi collaborators of a crumbling Third Reich devise a plan to go into hiding while the Allies

sweep into Germany, in hopes to regroup later to bring back a new and stronger Master Race. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (24:30; 16:46; 17:25)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (1-9-45) Fibber brings home mushrooms and invites all his friends over for a tasty steak and mushroom dinner. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:38)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (1-14-45) Douglas Edwards and CBS correspondents worldwide. "Allied armies are hammering the German salient (*the Bulge*) in Belgium from three directions today and the Third American Armored Division has cut the Nazi's last escape road. Three strong enemy counter-attacks in the area have been thrown back. In the Pacific, ...on Luzon, the Americans are twenty miles inland and looking for a battle with the Japs." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:55)

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 21st

**ORIGINAL AMATEUR HOUR** (7-27-39) "Around and around she goes, and where she stops nobody knows." Major Edward Bowes spins the wheel of fortune as amateurs from all parts of the country take their turn in the spotlight of fame. Thirteen aspiring entertainers are showcased on this show, including a classical bass singer, a boy soprano, a cow-girl yodeler, an Irish step-dancer, a whistler, and a cowboy band. "Honor City" for this broadcast is Waco, Texas. (See the article beginning on page 12 of this issue of the *Nostalgia Digest*.) Ralph Edwards announces. Chrysler Motors, CBS. (60:00)

★ **THE AFRS STORY** (1950) Bill Woodson narrates the story of the Armed Forces Radio Service, from its birth in World War II to the present (1950). Presented in a "March of Time" documentary style, with audio clips of AFRS programs and personalities including Dinah Shore, Claire Trevor, Knox Manning, Forest Tucker, Julie Bennett, Herb Ellis, Bill Foreman, Art Ballinger. AFRS. (30:00)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is Martin Halperin, director of acquisitions for the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters and a former broadcast engineer and technician with the Armed Forces Radio Service. He will talk about his career with AFRS and describe how many of the state-side broadcasts as well as special programs were presented to military listeners around the world during World War II and after. Conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded May 28, 1994 in Hollywood, California. (31:00)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (1-16-45) Fibber is upset that the barber charges six bits for a shampoo, so he decides to the job himself at home. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:42)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (1-23-45) "Story of a Secret State," an eyewitness account of the Polish Underground, beginning the day before the German invasion of Poland. Sustaining, NBC. (28:26)

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 28th

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (1-23-45) Fibber has a lot of pent up energy and wants to work on something constructive, so he decides to build some playground equipment for Teeney (played by Marian Jordan). Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:34)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE** (9-22-47) "Two Years Before the Mast" starring Alan Ladd and Howard DaSilva in the radio version of the 1946 movie about a ruthless sea captain bent on breaking a record. Cast includes Macdonald Carey and Wanda Hendrix. William Keighley is host. Lux Soap, CBS. (22:20; 16:40; 20:35)

**PHILO VANCE** (1940s) starring Jackson Beck as the detective created by S. S. Van Dine. Vance is called upon to investigate the murder of an astronomer. Syndicated. (25:15)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (1-28-45) On the eve of the Big Three conference in Yalta, Douglas Edwards and CBS newsmen report. "The Americans began an attack towards the Siegfried line at four this morning in a heavy snow storm. American and British Navy bombers...struck two great blows today at Germany's war industry." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:50)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (1-30-45) In a show dedicated to the U.S. Merchant Marines, Fibber and Molly meet a young Merchant Marine who needs a place to stay for the night. They invite him to 79 Wistful Vista. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (28:45)

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# THEM GREMLINS OF WW II

BY CURTIS L. KATZ

**SUMMER 1942, SOMEWHERE OVER THE NORTH SEA:** From his turret on the Flying Fortress *Big Punk*, Sergeant Gunner Z. E. White of Dallas, Texas spotted the Focke Wulf 190 and quickly got him in his sights. This would be a piece of cake. White confidently squeezed the trigger and ... What the ... ?! His guns had jammed! The German plane quickly slipped away. When White reported this incident, his pilot, RAF veteran Oscar Coen, realized immediately what ... or who ... was responsible, and knew it was time the Americans learned about ... *THEM*.

Long before UFO's, long before E.T.'s, long before Elvis sightings, there were *gremlins*, the mythical aerial imps to whose mischief was imputed all otherwise unaccountable malfunctions in aircraft.

Though closely associated with World War II aviation, gremlins were first brought to notice by British aviators who told stories of their antics possibly as far back as World War I, but definitely as early as the 1920's. World War II brought them to public attention, which became especially widespread in 1942 when America first learned of gremlins following the initial contact of American airmen with their



**GREMLIN** typical of those which appeared in *Time* and *Life* magazines, Autumn, 1942.

colleagues in the Royal Air Force.

The *London Observer* described the gremlin as "an imp of bad luck to whom disasters are attributed in the roaring kingdom of the wartime sky." Though creatures of the Air Age, gremlins are squarely in the tradition of the fairies, or "Little

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*Curtis L. Katz is a free-lance writer, cartoonist, comedian and Ranger of the Rails. He was a finalist in the 1994 Jack Benny Sound-Alike contest, and is an authority on the art of motion picture animation.*

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**A DISNEY GREMLIN**, from Roald Dahl's book, *The Gremlins*, Spring, 1943.

People." of British folklore, the most famous of whom to Americans are the Irish leprechauns. Official RAF information described gremlins as standing about a foot tall and clothed in "soft, pointed suede shoes (occasionally spats), tight green breeches, red jackets with a ruffle at the neck and stocking caps," but of course this description was subject to debate. After all, gremlins are invisible most of the time. Another subject of debate among aviators was the origin of gremlins: were they indigenous to the air, or were they terrestrial fairies who were slighted when their woodlands were destroyed to make way for an airfield or an aircraft factory? The means by which gremlins travel through the air, and their mating habits, were also objects of speculation.

The origin of the word *gremlin* is as elusive as the nature of gremlins themselves. Wartime sources suggested *gremlin* derived from the Old English word *greme*: to vex. Later experts invoke the French *grimelin*: a schoolboy brat, or the Irish *gruaimin*: an ill-natured runt, as the word's source. Today's dictionaries favor

the Irish, or that ubiquitous source, "Unknown." A persistent story is that the word *gremlin* derived from the name *Fremlin*, a popular British bottled beer, consumption of which presumable enhanced one's ability to see gremlins ... or at least contributed to such accidents as were blamed on them.

Of *no* debate was the evidence and nature of gremlin activity. Like all fairies, they were pranksters. Their mischief was sometimes humorous, sometimes spiteful, and sometimes intended to teach a lesson. They rattled ailerons and flaps, poked long fingers in carburetor jets to make engines sound like they would quit, and into wings they bored holes that looked suspiciously like bullet holes. They climbed into gun barrels to deflect shots from hitting easy targets, and drank gasoline (their favorite beverage) so that pilots would worry if they had enough fuel to get them home. Their young teethed on wires and control cables.

Of course, there were people who believed that "gremlins" were just an alibi for pilot error and ground crew negligence, but airmen distanced themselves from such skeptics. Like all fairies, gremlins are not kind to people who doubt their existence. And like all things British, gremlins have their own protocol: gremlins insist on being referred to as *them*, as in "them gremlins," rather than *they*, *it*, *he*, or *she*, because *them* conveys a feeling of the gremlin's "immanence and nameless power."

It is perhaps appropriate that Walt Disney should have a hand in introducing such a wartime whimsy as gremlins to America. On July 1, 1942, shortly before the first tentative wire service reports about gremlins reached our shores, Walt Disney was shown a copy of *Gremlin Lore*, an unpublished manuscript by RAF pilot Roald Dahl, who at the time was serving as an air attaché at the British embassy in Washington. Disney purchased the rights to the story, and laid plans to produce it as an animated feature film. This would be the first brush with Hollywood for Dahl, who

## THEM GREMLINS

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by the 1960's would be famous as an author and screenwriter. In acquiring the rights to *Gremlin Lore*, Walt Disney assumed he had acquired the exclusive rights to the entire gremlin concept. But "them gremlins" were not about to be owned by anybody . . .

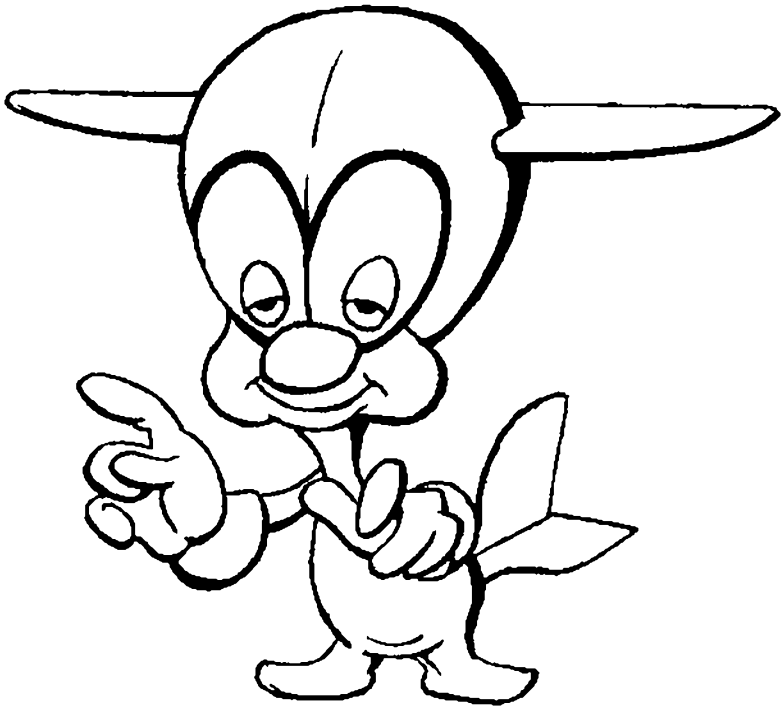
In its issue of September 7, 1942, *Newsweek* magazine ran a brief article about gremlins. One week later, that magazine's arch rival, *Time* ran a more extensive gremlin article with an illustration. This was the sort of publicity not even a leprechaun's gold could buy. Before September was over, Britain's gremlins had become an American fad which lasted the rest of the year and on through the 1942-'43 holiday season. National periodicals ranging from *Life* to *The Christian Science Monitor* carried feature stories about gremlins. Gremlin books and short stories appeared. Band leader Raymond Scott proposed writing a gremlin ballet. Boeing flight test engineers in Seattle claimed to have discovered stratogremlins, which exist only at extreme altitudes above 35,000 feet. Disney, not to be left in the fairy dust, publicized his plans for a gremlin movie, commissioned the manufacture of gremlin character dolls, and arranged for Roald Dahl to write, under the pseudonym "Pegasus," a gremlin short story which, with Disney Studio illustrations, was published in the December 1942 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. This story became the basis for the book, *Walt Disney: The Gremlins (A Royal Air Force Story by Flight Lieutenant Roald Dahl)*, published by Random House in the spring of 1943. It was the first of Dahl's many books.

By early 1943, the gremlin craze subsided as gremlins passed out of the headlines and into daily life. Gremlins quickly made the transition from bedeviling aviators to causing malfunctions in all technologies to being assigned responsibility for all inex-

pliable commonplace vexations. Newspaper editors blamed gremlins for typos, sportscasters blamed them for football fumbles, while a letter-writer to the *New York Times* suggested that gremlins had vanished from the news because they were having a secret convention at Washington, D.C. in the laps of tax legislators.

All this national attention to gremlins was good publicity for Walt Disney's gremlin movie, but at the same time it threatened his claim of exclusivity on gremlins, a claim that was being eroded on other fronts as well. Several people claimed prior rights to the gremlin idea, notably British author Charles Graves, and RAF pilot Douglas Bisgood. Graves claimed to be the first person to mention gremlins in print, having included gremlin stories in his book about the RAF, *The Thin Blue Line*, published in April 1941. Bisgood, an acquaintance of Roald Dahl, claimed to be the source of much of Dahl's knowledge about gremlins. Both men wanted money. Disney tried to mollify these people by noting that all proceed from tie-in merchandise for the gremlin movie would go to the RAF Benevolent Fund, but Graves especially was persistent, and backed down only after a tough rebuke from the British Air Ministry.

An additional challenge to Disney's exclusivity came from other animation studios, who recognized in gremlins the ideal wartime cartoon subject, and began registering titles for proposed gremlin animated short subjects. To Walt Disney's brother and business manager Roy fell the unenviable task of pressuring virtually every cartoon producer in Hollywood to desist from making gremlin cartoons. All consented except Leon Schlesinger at Warner Bros., who claimed to have two gremlin cartoons too far along in production to cancel, but who agreed to remove any reference to gremlins from the films' titles. The first of these films, released at the end of October 1943, was *Falling Hare*, in which Bugs Bunny is vexed by a gremlin who takes him on a wild plane ride that culminates in



**BOB CLAMPETT's gremlin from the Warner Bros. Bugs Bunny cartoon *Falling Hare*, Autumn, 1943: "These blockbuster bombs don't go off unless you hit them juuust right." Gremlin illustrations for this article by the author, Curtis L. Katz.**

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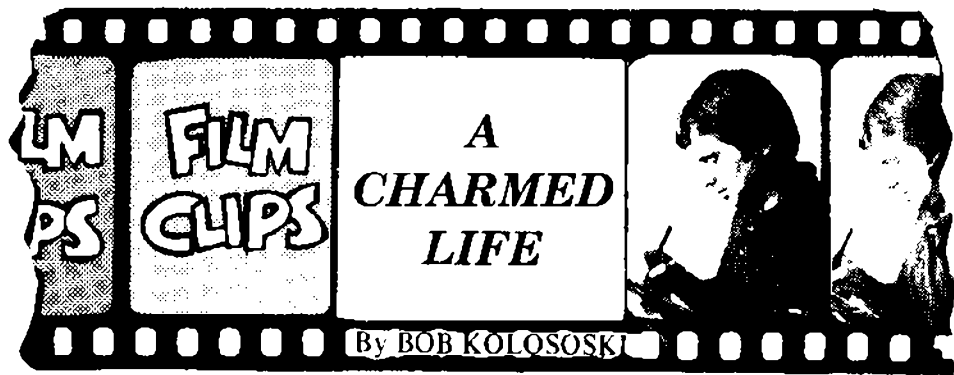
an interminable nose-dive. In *Russian Rhapsody*, released in May 1944, Hitler himself pilots a bomber to attack Moscow, only to have the plane and his nerves picked apart by "The Gremlins From The Kremlin" (the cartoon's original title). The gremlins, each one a different color, are elfish caricatures of artists at the Warner Bros. cartoon studio.

*Falling Hare* and *Russian Rhapsody* would be the war's only gremlin cartoons. After a year of struggle, two scripts, the expenditure of \$50,000, and not a foot of film to show for it, Walt Disney quietly abandoned his gremlin picture. The project was plagued, it would seem, by too many gremlins.

Meanwhile, back on the fighting front, it is interesting to note that there are no records of gremlin activity among Nazi

aviators. But of course, the sort of giddy charm and whimsy at the heart of gremlin lore is something that, as *Time* magazine observed, "Herr Goebbels in Berlin would not understand."

Why are *authentic* gremlins so seldom seen today? Perhaps a hint can be found in this assessment of gremlins written in 1958: "He was just some sort of goblin who resented man's use of the air for the waging of warfare." If we no longer see gremlins because our skys are at peace, at least as compared with the dark days of World War II, then it is well. But, remembering their "immanence and nameless power," I would be remiss if I did not conclude by saluting the unsung heroes of World War II who preserved humor and whimsy against the forces of tyranny: them gremlins. ■



Most people become upset when someone "puts words in my mouth." However, actors need someone to put words in their mouths or they are out of work. In the 1930's and 1940's one of the best wordsmiths in Hollywood was Anita Loos. For 18 years, beginning in 1931 at MGM, her dialogue was spoken by some of the best talent in the business.

Some of her scripts include *SAN FRANCISCO*, *SARATOGA*, *THE WOMEN*, and *SUSAN AND GOD*. Even though she is better known as the author of the novel, "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," she created a solid reputation as a script doctor and all around witty person.

The success of her 1925 novel allowed her to become something of a social butterfly. She was fortunate enough to form friendships with H.L. Mencken, Tallulah Bankhead, Adele Astaire, and dozens of other celebrities and intellectuals who roamed the planet in the 1920's. She was pursued by an English Lord (even though she was married), and met Queen Alexandra-who-loved "B" westerns. Not bad for a relatively uneducated girl from San Francisco who began her professional career in her teens writing scripts for D.W. Griffith silent movies.

She wanted to be an actress but, lacking the stature (she was only 4 foot 11 inches tall) or talent to act, she turned to writing. The first script she submitted to D.W. Griffith was titled *THE FATAL GLASS OF BEER*. Even though Griffith didn't

think he could film it, he paid the young Miss Loos twenty five dollars for the story because it amused him.

Eventually her scripts were accepted and filmed. In 1914 she wrote a script for a young actor named Douglas Fairbanks, and devised the use of subtitles to convey her witty dialogue. This was never done before, and Griffith balked at the finished film. He decided not to release the movie; but it was sent to New York's Roxy theater by mistake, and it made Fairbanks a star. She became Fairbank's exclusive scenarist and married John Emerson, the director of Fairbank's early films. Anita and John worked in the silents until the early 1920's when they decided that they needed to experience New York society.

The royalties from Anita's book allowed them to travel and enjoy the company of other authors including F. Scott Fitzgerald. Anita often went to Broadway plays with Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda. One evening when Anita arrived at the Fitzgerald apartment their infant son was crying up a storm. Afraid that the child would be up all night crying, Zelda mixed warm water, sugar, and a dash of gin in a nursing bottle and fed it to the unsuspecting infant. Soon the baby was asleep and the trio went out to the play.

When the stockmarket crashed in 1929 the finances of Anita and John took an uncomfortable nosedive. He felt that the solution to their problems would be for Anita to find a job. Irving Thalberg heard

she was available and summoned her back to Hollywood in 1931 while John stayed in New York to "keep an eye" on his investments.

Thalberg offered her \$3500 per week to fix the script to a movie titled *RED HEADED WOMEN*. Anita tackled the assignment with enthusiasm, and one day was hard at work on the scenario when she was called to Thalberg's office. He had set up an interview with a young actress he felt was perfect for the starring role. Although the actress, Jean Harlow, had little experience, her sense of humor impressed Thalberg and Loos. When asked if she could make an audience laugh, her reply was "With me or at me?" "At you!" answered Thalberg. Harlow returned "Why not? People have been laughing at me all my life". She won the part and the film was a big hit, and so was Harlow, and so was a French actor who had a bit part as a chauffeur. His name was Charles Boyer.

Anita fit right in at MGM and at the writer's building she became "one of the boys." Her co-workers included Maxwell Anderson, Vicki Baum, Robert Benchley, Robert Flaherty, Moss Hart, Ben Hecht, Sidney Howard, Charles McArthur, Dorothy Parker, Christopher Isherwood, and an impressive list of distinguished literary figures.

She was also able to rub elbows with some of Hollywood's greatest stars. Clark Gable often dropped by her office to see what she "had cooking." At one of the studio's Christmas parties Gable took out his dentures and with a big toothless smile shouted "Look! America's sweetheart." She once spent an evening trying to convince Mac West to do an MGM film with Clark Gable about a professional hockey player. Mac politely refused.

Her constant collaborator on stories was Robert "Hoppie" Hopkins. Hoppie was an idea man, and it was rumored he never picked up a writing instrument or sat down at a typewriter. One day he burst

into Anita's office with an idea about a movie with Gable portraying a black-hearted gambler in old San Francisco. His best friend is a priest, and they both want to help a beautiful young singer. The priest wants to save her soul but the gambler's goal is not as noble. A big earthquake humbles the gambler and he vows to change his ways. Anita and Hoppie took the idea to Irving Thalberg, who loved the outline and gave them the go-ahead to write a script for *SAN FRANCISCO* (1936).

A year later the team of Hopkins and Loos wrote the script for *SARATOGA* which starred Jean Harlow and Clark Gable. Harlow died before the film was finished; forcing Loos to do some doctoring to the script and the director to shoot scenes with a Harlow double.

Anita was once loaned to Columbia to work on a script for Harry Cohn. Cohn's use of foul language and harassment of employees made Anita work double time to leave Columbia for the safety of MGM. Her husband once thought she would be better appreciated at the Sam Goldwyn studio; he also managed to be hired in a two-for-one sale. Goldwyn, who told Anita, "I want you to know that a Goldwyn comedy is nothing to laugh at," was a screamer and routinely would fire Anita and John and then rehire them the same day. One day when she was fired she ran to her office picked up her belongings and scooted back to Metro and begged to be rehired. She was, and there she stayed until the early 1950's.

Anita Loos was a woman of wit and charm who lived a life that could fill a couple volumes. She was a well respected member of the Hollywood community, New York society, and the international set. Her talent was undeniable and her ego minimal-which was rare in Hollywood. Most movie patrons in the golden-age of films never realized that without writers like Anita Loos, their favorite stars would have been speechless. ■

## Remembering World War II

# *Liberty Ships*

BY FR. KEVIN SHANLEY, O.CARM

They were called the "ugly ducklings" of World War II but the 2,750 Liberty Ships helped to keep open the vital life-lines that enabled the U.S. to supply the vast Armed Forces around the globe and eventually emerge victorious over the Axis Powers.

As a young boy I remember the building and launching of the Liberty Ships at the Federal Shipbuilding and Drydock Company in Kearny, N.J. Later on, sailing up the Hudson River on excursion boats to Bear Mountain, we passed large groups of them moored together in the ghostly spectres of the "mothball" fleet.

And now the ships, mass-produced between 1941-45, are all gone except for the "Jeremiah O'Brien" which was refurbished and saved for posterity on the waterfront of San Francisco Bay. The "Jeremiah O'Brien" has become both a national monument and a museum to commemorate the largest merchant ship-building program in naval history.

But why was the "Jeremiah O'Brien" selected? The answer is simply part luck and part determination. Thomas Patterson, Jr., regional director of the U.S. Maritime Administration in San Francisco, founded the National Liberty Ship Memorial group to dedicate some type of monument to the builders, seaman, troops, and all those who were part of the Liberty

Ship saga during and after World War II.

Enough is known about the "Jeremiah O'Brien" to insure that it is a fitting symbol to represent all the Liberty Ships. Built in 1943 by the New England Ship Building Corporation in Maine, it hasn't been changed in any way since the day it was launched. Its ship log shows that the "Jeremiah O'Brien" served in both the European and Asian theaters, even participating in the D-Day Invasion at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France on June 6, 1944.

With the surrender of Japan in 1945, there was less need for the famous Liberty Ships, and the "Jeremiah O'Brien" and many others were assigned to the Reserve Fleet at Suisun Bay in California.

As the Liberties were sent one by one to the scrap heap, Patterson and others decided to select one Liberty as a historical reminder of a great period in U.S. Naval History. The "Jeremiah O'Brien" was chosen because, as far as it could be known, it is the last stock Liberty, with no alteration or modification of its original design.

But who was the original Jeremiah O'Brien after whom the ship was named? Although much praise is deservedly given to John Barry as the "father of the American Navy," the honor of leading the first ships into battle must go to Jeremiah O'Brien, even before the American Revolution had formally started.

The son of a Corkman, Jeremiah O'Brien and his five intrepid sons were fisherman in Maine. On June 12, 1775, off the coast of Machias, Maine, Jeremiah led his sons and other local patriots in their fishing boats to capture the British

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*Rev. Kevin Shanley is a Carmelite Priest who works at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, Illinois. He is also an active member of the Those Were The Days Radio Players.*

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schooner "Margaretta" as the first "prize" of war.

When two British warships were sent out from Boston to punish the rebel upstarts and re-take the "Margaretta," Jeremiah O'Brien and his navy obliged by capturing them too!

It was actually President Roosevelt who dubbed the ships "ugly ducklings." Although the ships were not beautiful in a design sense, they were sturdy and dependable. With an overall length of 441 feet, 6 inches, a beam of 57 feet, a depth of 37 feet, 4 inches, the Libertys had a total displacement of 14,000 tons and could carry nearly 10,000 tons of cargo. To effect mass production, the ships were welded rather than riveted.

The first Liberty Ship, the "Patrick Henry," was launched in Baltimore, M.D., on Sept. 27, 1941, as the American answer

to the Nazi U-boats which were sinking cargo ships faster than they could be built.

Within a year Liberty Ships were being built in three and a half months, and by 1943 three Liberty Ships a day were being completed. The battle of the sealanes in World War II was won by the Libertys and the men who built and sailed them.

And now there is only the "Jeremiah O'Brien" left to represent the saga of the Liberty Ships of that era. The National Park Service planned a site for the "Jeremiah O'Brien" in the new Golden Gate National Recreation area in San Francisco. Piers will be constructed between Fisherman's Wharf and Fort Mason as a fitting shrine to a great ship that represents so many others.

By any measurement, the Liberty Ship program was an extraordinary feat in a time of great need. It is more than fitting that the ship should bear a hero's name. ■

## M-M-M-Mmm Good!

# *The Subject Was Candy*

BY GINO LUCCHETTI

Even though Fannie Mays or Godvias are being passed around, someone is bound to say something like, "Mmmm, these are good, but does anyone remember those little colored sugar beads on the adding machine tape we use to get when we were kids?" And the reminiscences of "the good old days" of penny candies and long-forgotten candy bars and goodies begins.

"I sure do," someone suggests, "they

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*Gino Lucchetti is an observer of the news of the day and his letters can often be found on the Op-Ed pages of Chicago newspapers. His memories of days gone by can often be found in the pages of the Nostalgia Digest.*

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were called Dots. I also remember those little wax bottles with colored liquid inside." And another's sure to add, "And it didn't matter what the color was, it was all the same flavor!"

"And when you drank that little bit of that sweet, colored water, you could chew the wax 'til your jaws ached," another recalls. "Maybe at least the chewing exercise was good for you."

A new voice is heard: "How about those little candy pies in the fluted tin plates with the tiny tin spoon that bent when you tried to dig out the sugary center. You usually wound up digging the stuff out with your teeth and then licking the tin plate. You guys remember them?"

## CANDY

Everybody sure did, and the contributions to the candy memory-test continued: "I used to love those yellow, hard caramels with peanut butter inside."

"Those were Mary Janes. How many'd we get for a penny, three or four?" "They were a bargain at any price," another Mary Jane fan ventured.

"Those were OK," another sweet-tooth victim asserted, "but my favorites were Bull's Eyes and you also got a least two or three of them for a penny. You could chew them after you punched out the sugar 'eye' with your tongue. Now that I recall, it was quite sensuous."

"Or maybe grisly, when you put it like that," was a rejoinder.

"I liked to get my money's worth, so I'd get a Holloway All Day Sucker. With careful licking it'd last at least a half hour."

"For my money, I'd choose a Charleston Chew, even if it could pluck a filling out now and then. When they said 'chew,' they meant chew!"

"Hey, you guys must've been rich. I used to find freshly poured tar when streets were repaired and chew it. We used to say it was good for the teeth; cleaned and whitened them — if you didn't lose 'em first!" That evoked both groans and laughs.

"Maybe you guys had good teeth or could afford a dentist better than I could. I stuck to good old two-for-a-cent Malteser Balls. I'd let the chocolate coating melt in my mouth until that spongy center was left. I always thought the center tasted like it was made from Ovaltine. Anyone else think so?" After a short thought about it, a couple admitted that they did taste like Ovaltine. Some Malteser fans were biters-in-half before letting 'em melt, while others just crunched the whole thing, filling their mouths with the heavenly flavor.

"Maltesers and street tar? I'll take Greenleafs or yellow Circus Peanuts or toasted coconut marshmallows."

"Or Boston Baked Beans and molasses sponge candy," another penny candy connoisseur added, "and Root Beer Barrels and Necco wafers and Red Devils. Those little 'devils' would burn a hole in your tongue, if you didn't move 'em around. The candy store man used to scoop them up in a small wood cup, and he'd pour them in a small brown bag along with the other stuff you'd buy. A nickel bought a whole bagful of penny stuff."

Yeh, the same way with the little candy hearts around St. Valentine's Day, with the sentiments printed on them that were sweeter than the candy!" "And maybe you'd sneak one to someone that looked especially sweet to you, and if you were lucky you'd get one in return. That was 'getting lucky' in those days! It certainly was a much different time."

Sure, you could even tell what season it was by candy. Around Thanksgiving there'd be the Brach candy corn, pumpkins, black cats and witches and corn shocks. And at Christmas the hard candies with the Christmas trees mysteriously running through them when you looked at them endwise."

"To me," a chocaholic pipes up, "it wasn't candy if it wasn't chocolate. I remember buying that broken chocolate in chunks on display in the sloping showcase in the five-and tens. A nickel or a dime got you a few chunks."

"A quarter was enough to give you a chocolate high! I should know, I'd gorge myself on it," another choco-addict confessed.

Someone's sure to bring up the question a lot of people must have thought about many times: "Do you guys wonder if that was especially broken up chocolate, or leftovers?"

"We used to kid that they were swept off the floor at the end of the work shift." A round of unfavorable comments greeted that suggestions: "Ughs," and "Gross!" and distasteful faces.

"I say the best single piece of candy ever made was ..."

"... I know! I know! — Pippins!" a devotee of good stuff volunteered.

"You never forgot 'em either, huh? That creamy chocolate center on a round chocolate base, covered with milk chocolate. And pretty good size, too, at least double one of those Fannie Mays."

"But they may have been two cents each. You had to pay for quality and flavor even in those days." After a moment's thought: "I wonder what they'd cost today?"

"A half buck, easy," a voice guessed. "Well, they'd still be worth it." The Pippin fan commented.

"How many hours did any of you spend watching that taffy-making machine in the dime store that kept stretching and pulling that gooey, tough taffy on those rotating arms, working the stuff over and over and over, endlessly. I wonder if it was always the same stuff — just for display."

"Who knows, someone responds, "it was fascinating to us kids, although I never bought any. I judiciously invested in candy bars. Anyone want to guess what was the best five-cent candy bar in the world?"

"I know! I know!" a candy bar expert bouncing up and down like a school kid answering a teacher blurted out, "Tangos! Creamy marshmallow on a maple sugar wafer coated with dark chocolate with nuts. Right?"

"Give that person \$64 dollars and a box of Snickers," as the questioner acknowledged his agreement, incidentally stealing a line from that old radio quiz master, Phil Baker, on the "Take It or Leave It" program.

"Man — or woman, to be politically correct these days — does not live by candy alone. Remember there are other things — like chewing-gum. Who ever chomped Black Jack gum?"

A gum person asserts that he not only remembers it, but counters with a reminiscence of Yucatan gum and the possibility that it was concocted from old melted down tires. A consensus was reached that those two gums assured Fleer's Bubble Gum and P.K. Wrigley's permanent pre-

eminence in the chewing-gum field.

"Remember," one aficionado of long-gone goodies reminded all, "if the mountain won't come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. I mean of course if you couldn't get to that school candy store, it came to you in the form of the kindly old itinerant gentlemen with his glass-sided, horse-drawn wagon selling nickel popcorn, powdered waffles for a penny, and usually cotton candy and Green River, that pop was as prevalent as Coke or Pepsi today."

"Who could forget him? — and those fresh-made waffles dusted with powdered sugar that would get all over you. He actually popped the corn over a flame right in the cart and sprinkled real butter over it from what looked like a little metal teapot. The bag usually was soaked with it." A dreamy look came over the speaker as he thought about it.

"Well, we'll just have to make do with these Fannie Mays, I suppose."

"Or maybe a Godiva this time," some suggests.

"Ah, but still, those were the days," the candy wagon dreamer sighs.

"Amen" the rest of the group solemnly concedes, as they settle for more Fannie Mays and Godivas. ■

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# LETTERS...WE GET LETTERS

**GENEVA, IL**— I enjoy your magazine and look forward to each issue. I have a few questions. 1) Was Jim Jordan (Fibber McGee) ever in Vaudeville with a man named Fred Nitney? 2) Did Jim Jordan ever play minor league baseball? 3) What happened to Harold Peary (the Great Gildersleeve)? Did he die or retire after his last show on June 14, 1950? He indicated on his last show that he would be back in the fall, but he never came back. — **DON DE FOY**

**(ED. NOTE)**-- *Fibber McGee* was in Vaudeville with Fred Nitney, but *Jim Jordan* never was. Mr. Jordan once said, "There never was a Fred Nitney, not was there ever a person in my life like him." There's no evidence of Jim Jordan ever playing minor league baseball, but while he was in high school in Peoria, he played basketball with a friend by the name of "Spike" Sheen, who in later years became known to the world as Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. Harold Peary gave up his role as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve at the end of the 1949-50 season when the sponsors wouldn't give him a part ownership in the character or the show. Willard Waterman, another fine radio actor with a deep Gildy-like voice stepped into the role at the beginning of the 1950-51 season and played the part to the end of the series in 1958. Peary went on to star in a short-lived series called *Honest Harold* and continued a career in various performances on radio and television. The Gildersleeve character, as you probably know, was originally introduced to radio audiences on the *Fibber McGee and Molly* program. Much of this information can be found in an excellent book about the McGee show, "Heavenly Days" by Charles Stumpf and Tom Price. The book is available for \$14.95 at Metro Golden Memories in Chicago.)

**ELMORE, ALABAMA**— Your *Old Time Radio Classics* show comes to me at Draper Prison in Alabama. You are quite a bright spot in my otherwise drab days of incarceration. I began listening to you on weekends from 8 to 10 pm, but since you've gone to midnights only, I find it very hard to remain awake to catch my favorite radio show.

Lights out here is 10:30 pm and the work day begins with breakfast at 3:30 am. — **J.B.B.**

**NORTH AUGUSTA, SOUTH CAROLINA** — I visited the Museum of Broadcast Communications at the old public library in Chicago. There was not one mention of Bing Crosby. What gives? He was the first singer in the history of radio to have a sponsor. His Kraft Music Hall was number one in the polls in several years and always among the top ten. He was the last major radio star to remain in the medium. And it was Bing, through the force of his popularity, that made the industry accept taped broadcasts. Any one of these accomplishments should give him a place in the Museum. There was a time that there was not a minute of the day that one of his records wasn't being played somewhere on radio. Maybe you could suggest to the Board at the Museum, "Hey, how about Bing?" The June-July *Nostalgia Digest* had a very good article on Bing by Karl Pearson. Thanks. — **PETER CAKANIC**

**(ED. NOTE)**— Your comments about Bing Crosby — one of our favorites, too — are well taken. We agree that he should be inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame. Others who agree might wish to send their comments to us and we'll pass them along to the Radio Hall of Fame nominating committee.)

**WARRENVILLE, IL**— As much as I like Red Skelton, I voted for Les Tremayne (for induction into the Radio Hall of Fame) because he did a lot more radio work and is still very much involved. I think Les should have been inducted. Most people, however, know Red better than Les, I guess. — **CHUCK HUCK**

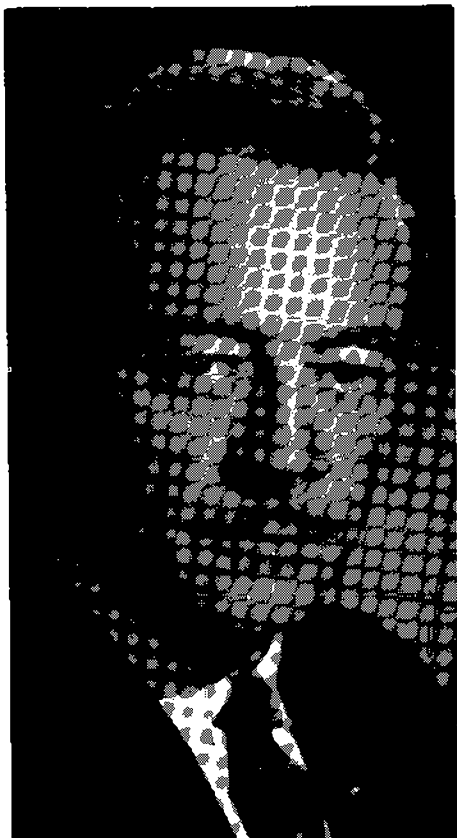
**JEFFERSON, LOUISIANA** — I live here near New Orleans, found WBBM at Midnight one winter's night and got hooked on vintage radio! I have since installed a special outdoor antenna and I am now able to enjoy the show almost every day of the year. Thanks for the fine entertainment. I especially enjoy *Fibber McGee and Molly* and the Great Gildersleeve. — **GARY J. MEIBAUM**



**BING CROSBY**

**PHOENIX, ARIZONA**— Sure miss Chicago and your broadcasts. Having spent 68 out of my 70 years there, I guess that's natural. The *Nostalgia Digest* revives memories of things and events so many miles and years away. Those *were* the days, and nothing imparts the flavor and feeling of those times better than your programs and magazine. Have a nice winter! —**JANICE AND FRANK BRAUN**

**PEORIA, IL**— The October-November *Digest* was great as always, but I was surprised to see Harry S Truman's name wrongly written several times. There was no period used by him after the S because he had no middle name. He stuck the S in when it was once insisted he had to have a middle initial. — **(VERY REV.) ROBERT A. L'HOMME**  
**(ED. NOTE**— According to David McCullough in his prize-winning biography of the president, Mr. Truman's parents were in a quandry over a middle name for their newborn son. They "were undecided whether to honor her father or his. In the end they compromised with the letter S. It could be taken to stand for Solomon or Shipp, but actually stood for nothing, a practice not unknown among the Scotch-Irish, even for first names. The baby's first name was Harry, after his Uncle Harrison." Throughout his 1,000 page book. McCullough always used a period after Truman's middle initial, and so we thought we would do the same.)



**LES TREMAYNE**

**HINSDALE, IL**— What an extraordinary program (on the 1944 Democratic National Convention, *TWTD*, July 16)! I've watched a lot of old newsreels of the Roosevelt era conventions, but they provide only brief glimpses. Your comprehensive treatment of the '44 convention made it possible to feel the excitement of history in the making. — **STEVE NEAL**

**PADUCAH, KENTUCKY**— I am able to listen to your broadcast on WBBM. It's like listening when I was a kid. The signal goes in and out, but I listen real hard and can get most of the programs. — **HENRY A. FAUGNO**

**TINLEY PARK, IL**— I discovered your show last year. I'm 28 years old and I'm listening to these great old shows for the first time. I recently found a 1948 Breakfast Club yearbook at an antique shop. After reading the yearbook, I now have a great urge to

## WE GET LETTERS

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listen to a Breakfast Club broadcast. I just thought I'd toss this into the "suggestion box" for the coming months. —**GARY BLATT**

**PORTLAND, INDIANA**— I enjoy your Mighty Metro Art Players commercials almost as much as the old shows! —**MARY MILLIGAN**

**CHICAGO**— In the *Nostalgia Digest* listing for September 17 for World News Today (9-10-44) it mentions that "50,000 radio and radar workers will be honored at Wrigley Field in Chicago." I was wondering if my dad was one of those in attendance. He worked in both radio and radar manufacture during WW II. He worked for Seeburg. I believe they received the Army/Navy "E" award. He talked about going out in the morning before it was light and not coming home until way after dark. My mom also talked of some of these things. Both my dad and mom are dead but I still have some of the mementoes from those times. You brought back some memories. I wasn't old enough to have enjoyed most of the radio shows when they were first broadcast but with your program I've been able to enjoy many of the ones you've played. Thank you for your dedication to old time radio. —

**RICHARD SIMMONS**

**VILLA PARK, IL**— Can you verify for me the following program was on radio in 1937-38: "Professor Kattleborn and his School for Kindergotten." —**WILLIAM C. ZIMMERMAN (ED. NOTE**— "Kaltenmeyer's Kindergarten" was on radio beginning in 1932. Bruce Kamman played Professor August Kaltenmeyer D.U.N. (Doctor of Utter Nonsense). It was primarily a program for kids, but lots of grown-ups tuned in, too. Among the professor's students on the air were Izzy Finkelstein, Yohnny Yohnson, Percy Van Schuyler, "Tough Guy" Cornelius Callahan, Gertie Glump, and Mickey Donovan. Gertie and Mickey, incidentally, were played by Marian and Jim Jordan — some time before they became Fibber McGee and Molly. In 1940 the program's name was changed to "Kindergarten Kapers" and Kaltenmeyer's name was changed to Professor Ulysses S. Applegate, no doubt reflecting anti-German feelings in the U.S. at the time.)

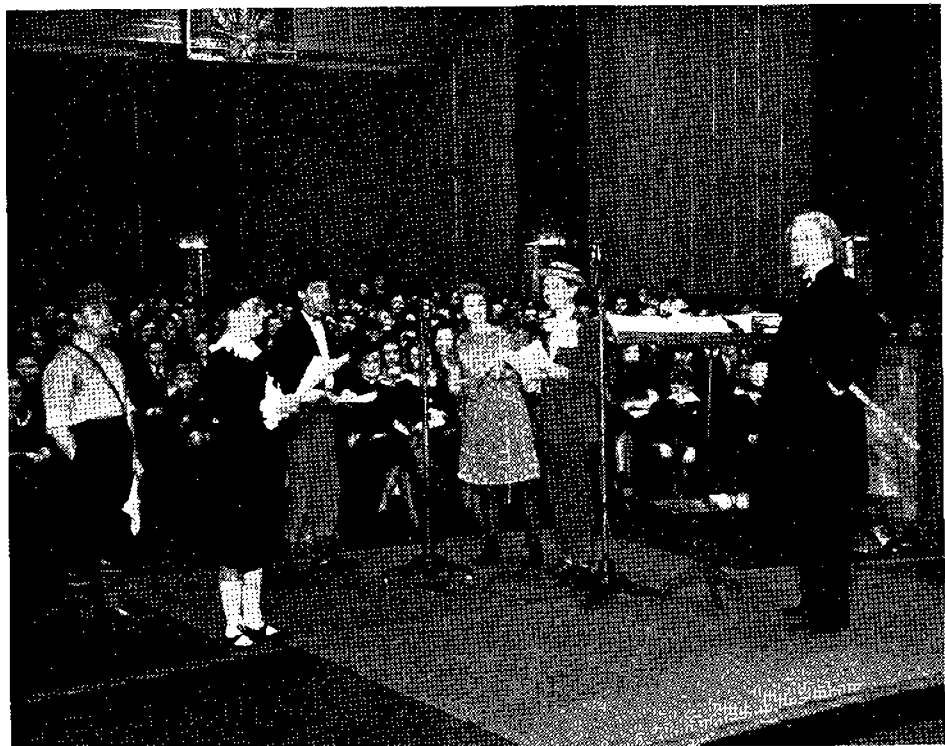
**CRYSTAL LAKE, IL**— For the past several years most of the Saturday programs have, to me, been very boring. I was 12 years old when we entered the war, so I've been there. Back in the 40s I did not listen to a lot of the programs you are currently playing. I had to listen to what my mother and father wanted, and still don't care for them.

Since December of 1991, I think of you as Professor Schaden, teaching History 201, and I took the course already. My father was a Democrat through and through, and listened to every word of the convention, in the evening, gavel to gavel. So far as he was concerned Roosevelt could have gone for a fifth term. The convention put me to sleep in July of 1944 and it still put me to sleep in 1994. —**FRANK A.**

**MC GURN, JR.**

**MT. PROSPECT, IL**— I'm amazed how quickly the last four years have gone by. Your idea of following WW II 50 years later was superb. I was born in 1938; I remember from about 1943 onward. We went to Douglas Airport (now O'Hare Field) in Orchard Place (hence ORD on bag tags) and saw them build C-54s. I saw fighters, bombers, air shows, etc. We lived at 3805 N. Oriole avenue, almost walking distance to the airport. I remember the blackouts, air raids. My dad was an air raid warden; I have his helmet and club. He was drafted in late 1943. You can't understand how my memory has been joggled by your 50 years WW II effort. I still have my ration book and the Japanese 9 mm rifle (with bayonet) my dad brought home. Thanks for all you're doing. —**BILL RITCHIE**

**YANKTON, SOUTH DAKOTA**— I listen to *Old Time Radio Classics* on WBBM every night, reception permitting. It is always the highlight of my day. What we now refer to as "old time radio," but which was once simply called "radio," is, in my opinion, the great lost art form of the 20th century. At 37 I am too young to have grown up with *real* radio, but was raised in a household rich in radio catch phrases. Whenever my mother would scold me for some mischief it was "Tain't funny, McGee!" When I asked her how she had learned of my misdeeds, it was never the "little bird" which had told her. No, the pat answer was, "The Shadow knows!" I feel a great sense of loss from the



**KALTENMEYER'S KINDERGARTEN** as broadcast from NBC studios in Chicago. Bruce Kamman, as Professor August Kaltenmeyer, is at far right. Sadly, no episodes of this program have been uncovered to this date.

passing of radio, though it was already dying even as I was being born. It was great! And this is coming from someone who didn't have the benefit of having it as part of their childhood. —**PHILIP H. FOSTER**

**CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA** — I am in the Regional Jail in West Virginia. And one night about three or four months ago I was laying in my bunk bed trying to find something on my headset radio when I caught a sound that took me back 40 years and I tried to pick up on it the best that I could. I got most of it but your station signal just kept on breaking up on me. But the next day I took the inside out of a bugler poke and made me a makeshift antenna, so now I pick up somewhat better. But can you in your mind's eye see me walking from one corner in my cell to the other trying to hold the signal as not to miss out on the punch line? Or laying on my back in bed holding my arm either straight out for a while or straight up? Well, I have got a lot of other people in

here involved in your show now and they are trying to come up with a better antenna. But you can bet on one thing. When I get out next year I will have me a player and a lot of your tapes. —**C. W.**

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Museum of Broadcast Communications

# museum pieces

Reported by Margaret Warren

How many box tops, labels, dimes and nickels did you send off for the newest, neatest magic gadget from Captain Midnight, Tom Mix or any of the other kid's shows? How many topless boxes of cereal languished on the shelf after you conned your mother into buying it so you could — "Be the first kid on your block...?" Whatever happened to all that stuff?

**Answer:** Some of it landed in the display cases at the Museum of Broadcast Communications. Come check it out. When you enter the Chicago Cultural



**JACK BENNY** invites a look at reminders of radio's Golden Age at the Museum of Broadcast Communications.

Center on Washington St., follow along to your left to the room with Charlie and Mortimer and the Benny and Fibber exhibits. Peer into the display cases and it'll take you back to those days when you watched for the mailman and waited for your nifty premium to arrive.

**Take a look** at the 1937 Orphan Annie Secret Decoder and the 1940 model of the same thing. And gaze upon the 1946 Capt. Midnight Decoder. (There must have been a lot of decoding to be done during those years!) You'll also see an Ovaltine Mug from, of course, Capt. Midnight. There is a Lone Ranger ring, a 1945 WLS Family Album, there are games, sheet music, booklets, all kinds of wonderful stuff with tie-ins to the great old shows.

**In the same room**, walk down the row of vintage radios. Look for the cathedrals from the 30's and the 1942 Montgomery Ward's Airline and the 1941 Sears Robuck Silvertone radio and phonograph combination. You probably had one like it.

**With the holidays** nearly upon us, remember Commercial Break, the Museum store for a great selection of broadcast-related items for the broadcast buffs on your list.

**For details** on an easy to please, needs-no-wrapping gift, treat yourself and your family and friends to a Museum membership. Call Katy at the Museum (312) 629-6014 for those details. Come, enjoy and be part of the Museum of Broadcast Communications.

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saluted the city of Waco, Texas on July 27, 1939. An account of the Major's Salute to Waco is detailed by Richard J. Veit of that city. Page 12.

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