

CHUCK SCHADEN'S

NOSTALGIA DIGEST

AND
RADIO
GUIDE

JUNE/JULY, 1999



Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden

AMOS 'N' ANDY

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CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK TWENTY-FIVE

CHAPTER FOUR

JUNE/JULY 1999

Hello, Out There in Radioland!

In the *Chicago Tribune* of April 18, 1974, radio-TV columnist Gary Deeb wrote:

Chuck Schaden was scared. Here he was --the King of Oldtime Radio. The Guru of Nostalgia. The man who parlayed his longing for the past into some measure of fame and good fortune. And yet he was having a problem holding off the shakes while taping a radio program.

"I never have any trouble being myself on WLTD," said Chuck. "But being myself in Fibber McGee's living room is another story. I was dumbfounded and awestruck by him. But I just dug my fingernails into the table and somehow pulled thru."

Sharing the microphone with the 77-year-old Jim Jordan, the man millions knew as Fibber McGee for a quarter-century, was pretty frightening all right. ...but, Guru of Nostalgia or not, Schaden still felt woozy when he actually sat down with Jim Jordan in Hollywood this past winter to put together "Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio."

"Actually, I play myself," recalled Chuck. "So I'm not really acting, and if you listen to it you KNOW I'm no actor. The plot's very simple: I'm a student of oldtime radio, and I find myself visiting Fibber McGee at his house at 79 Wistful Vista. McGee has an old 1934 Superhetrodyne radio that has the ability to pull in all the old shows. And basically that's the whole bit."

A pretty threadbare concept, to be sure. But the idea does give Jordan and Schaden an excuse to reminisce and trade trivia as they eavesdrop on dozens of vintage radio programs, most of which were culled from Chuck's personal collection of 16,000 shows.

In Chicago, the seven-week series is broadcast over WGN at 8:05 Sunday nights starting April 28. Schaden produced the programs, and Phil Leslie, an ex-writer for Fibber McGee, did the scripts.

Luckily, the corny words stuffed into the mouths of Jordan and Schaden are more than compensated for by the richness of the old radio shows. The premiere segment features some rollicking comedy with Jack Benny & Co. and a lengthy, chilling excerpt from the 1938 "War of the Worlds" shocker.

* * *

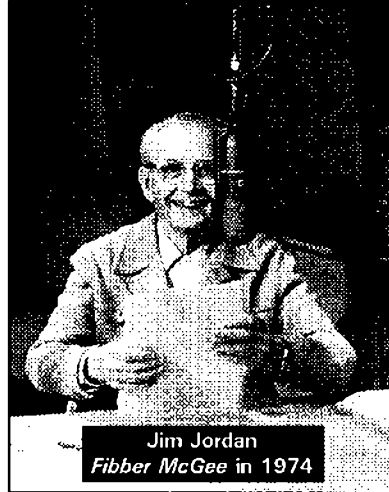
In the *Chicago Daily News* of May 10, 1974, marketing columnist Joe Cappo wrote:

What started out as a hobby for Chuck Schaden has turned into a full-time business, and then some.

The hobby was old-time radio, and it was enough to pluck Schaden from his job at a savings and loan association and drop him into the world of show business and advertising.

About four years ago, as a radio buff, Schaden put together a program featuring recordings from old-time radio and got a spot on WLTD in Evanston. Last year, Schaden was made general manager of the station, which has since switched its format from good music to a combination of talk and nostalgia.

→ →





FIBBER MC GEE and the GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (1974)

From left: Larry Thor, announcer; Todd Kaiser, producer; Chuck Schaden, radio fan; Jim Dolan, director; Jim Jordan, star; Phil Leslie, writer; Bill Watson, advertising agency.

Recently, Schaden hooked up with Todd W. Kaiser, formerly with Needham, Harper & Steers, to start Radioland Productions, Inc. Kaiser had worked on the S. C. Johnson account when it was at NH&S. One of his last duties was getting Jim Jordan, radio's Fibber McGee, to cut some (apparently unsuccessful) TV commercials for Johnson.

This is the idea behind Radioland Productions, Inc. Its first job is a national effort for Chrysler Airtemp, represented by Buchen Advertising, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

Radioland has produced a series of seven one-hour specials that features Schaden (playing himself, a radio buff) reminiscing with Fibber McGee. Each show is devoted to a day of the week, with excerpts from the famous radio programs that were aired on those days. The shows are running in 50 major markets (including WGN in Chicago).

Schaden recreated the old Fibber McGee & Molly sound as closely as possible. Besides enticing the 77-year-old Jordan out of retirement, he also got original cast members Hal Peary and Gale Gordon to play cameo roles of their original characters, Gildersleeve and Mayor LaTrivia.

Schaden even found one of the writers of the original show, Phil Leslie, and hired him to turn out the scripts.

While the new business has yet to produce vast profits, Schaden says he has acquired "ten billion dollars worth of experience... And it was a kick. Can you imagine, sitting there, talking with Fibber McGee? Wow!"

* * *

This year, 1999, marks the 25th anniversary of *Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio*. Working on that project with Jim Jordan and the others was one of the greatest experiences in our broadcast career.

We will present all seven episodes in the series during June and July on our *Those Were The Days* program on WNIB. We hope you'll tune in and enjoy it.

--Chuck Schaden

The Roots of a Radio Legend

AMOS 'N' ANDY EXAMINED

BY ELIZABETH MC LEOD

There is a radio program that was possibly the most influential in the history of American broadcasting.



This program was the first original serial to be devised for the broadcast medium.

This program was the first program to be distributed by syndication.

This program captured the attention of more than forty million Americans, six nights a week, at the peak of its success — nearly one-third of the nation's total population at that time.

And today, seventy years after its premiere, few programs make historians more uncomfortable.

Few programs are more worthy of serious analysis and yet many — even most — historians find it impossible to discuss this program objectively.

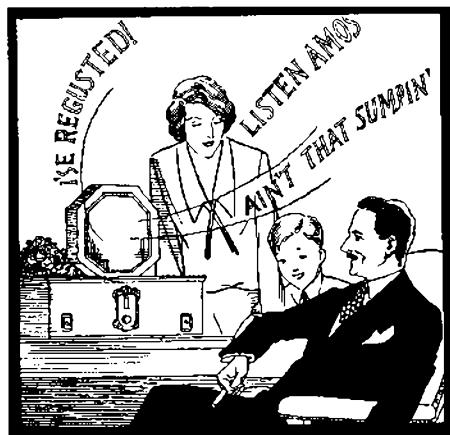
That program was *Amos 'n' Andy*.

The modern-day view of this series was summed up as early as 1972 by author William Manchester, who dismissed the program as "a nightly racial slur," and used its Depression-era popularity to illustrate the casual racism which pervaded that time.

Elizabeth McLeod is a radio journalist and broadcast historian who lives in Rockland, Maine. She has specialized in the documentation of early 1930s radio for more than 20 years, and is currently co-writer of the CBS Radio Network program Sound-Bytes.

Since then, a popular view of *Amos 'n' Andy* has grown up which has little to do with the reality of the program itself. The very title has become a synonym for the excesses of burnt-cork minstrelsy, a catch-all term used to describe any foot-shuffling blackface stereotypes.

Amos 'n' Andy, in its original form, was none of those things.



History is not well served by the modern tendency to reshape the facts to fit modern perceptions, to interpret the past according to modern sensibilities. And yet, this is exactly what has occurred in most discussions of *Amos 'n' Andy* since the 1960s. Misperceptions and misinterpretations have been picked up by writer after writer, and incorrect conclusions are repeatedly drawn by commentators who know virtually nothing about the original series.

Clearly, a reevaluation of *Amos 'n' Andy* is needed — one which puts aside the emo-

AMOS 'N' ANDY EXAMINED

tional baggage the show has accumulated in recent decades, and which examines what, exactly, that Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll were trying to do.

A key point of misunderstanding in considering *Amos 'n' Andy* is the assumption that it is merely an elaboration on the themes of the old minstrel show. While Gosden and Correll had both appeared in amateur minstrel shows, neither man came out of an extended background of professional minstrelsy.

Freeman Fisher Gosden was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1899, the son of a Civil War veteran with a distinguished military record. Walter Gosden had served as one of Moseby's Rangers, a Confederate army unit of near-mythic reputation — but his later years were decidedly more placid — he spent the last quarter-century of his life as a bookkeeper. The Gosdens were not wealthy, and lived in simple middle-class style in a rented house just a short walk from Richmond's black district. The family was repeatedly touched by tragedy: Freeman's older brother Willie became addicted to drugs, and died of a morphine overdose on his nineteenth birthday, Walter Gosden died after a long illness in 1911, and in 1917 came an emotional blow that

would scar Freeman for the rest of his life — his mother and sister were killed in an auto accident.

Young Freeman known as "Curly" to his friends sought refuge from his family's tragedies in local theatres: from an early age he was an enthusiastic patron of Richmond's small-time vaudeville houses, and quickly developed an interest in putting on shows of his own. In this he was aided by his closest childhood friend, a black youth named Garrett Brown.

Garrett lived with the Gosden family. By one account, his mother had been the family maid, and when she died, the Gosdens took on the responsibility of raising her son. He was probably a bit older than Freeman, but they shared similar personality traits: both were intelligent, quick-witted, and skilled observers of the people around them. Both were excellent mimics, and enjoyed imitating the various dialects heard around the Richmond streets and they took special pleasure in putting on impromptu shows for the entertainment of Freeman's ailing father. Often these performances took the form of minstrel shows with Garrett as end man, and Freeman as interlocutor. The boys swapped wisecracking comedy lines and told dialect jokes. Such collaborations continued until Garrett moved out on his own at the age of sixteen.

Freeman went on to gain a reputation as a budding entertainer, and occasionally appeared in amateur-night shows in Richmond theatres. On at least one occasion he moved from verbal to visual mimicry, and appeared as a Charlie Chaplin impersonator. On other occasions, he did eccentric dances in benefit shows. Despite his

Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll



youth, Freeman was developing into a well-rounded entertainer, and when he joined the Navy in 1917, he became a frequent performer in shows put on by his fellow sailors.

Following his discharge in 1919, and following two unhappy stints as a salesman, Freeman decided to pursue his interest in show business but in a behind-the-scenes capacity, joining the Joe Bren Company as a producer and director. The Bren company specialized in presenting local benefit shows in small towns and cities all over the East, South, and Midwest, usually in cooperation with local fraternal or civic groups. The local sponsors provided the talent, and the Bren company provided scripts, music, and production savvy. It was a busy job, and Freeman was constantly on the road.

It was in Durham, North Carolina in 1920 that Gosden met another Bren representative while putting on a show for the Durham Elks. Charlie Correll had been working for the company since 1918, and Gosden was assigned to work under Correll to get the hang of directing. It was a partnership that would last a lifetime.

Charles J. Correll was born in Peoria, Illinois in 1890. His father was a bricklayer, and the family was securely working-class. Like young Freeman Gosden, Charles Correll spent much of his boyhood soaking up smalltime vaudeville shows, and as a teenager earned a highly-prized job as an usher in a neighborhood theatre. He also studied piano, taking a few months' worth of lessons, and then learned to play quite well by ear.

After completing high school, Charles spent a year working as a stenographer



he had learned shorthand as part of his school's "commercial" course — and then devoted several years to learning his father's trade. While working in the construction business, however, Charles maintained an interest in the stage. He appeared in amateur shows, provided piano accompaniment for motion pictures, and became a member of a vocal quartet. He was performing in a benefit show organized by the Bren Company in Davenport, Iowa in 1918 when he came to the attention of the Bren representative who recognized both Correll's talent and his friendly way with people, and offered him a job.

When they first met in that Durham rehearsal hall in 1920, "Gos" and Charlie hit it off immediately. They soon began rooming together, and would often augment the local talent in the shows they produced by appearing on stage. Correll played the piano, and Gosden the ukulele as the pair harmonized on popular tunes of the day, supplemented by a bit of eccentric dancing from Gosden. Often these benefits were minstrel shows, and occasionally Gosden and Correll would include bits of blackface comic patter in their routines.

Correll and Gosden made an unusually well-matched team. Gosden was tall and lean, Correll was short and stocky. Gosden was rather shy around strangers, and spoke with a bit of a stammer, while Correll was outgoing, jovial, and loved to talk. And

AMOS 'N' ANDY EXAMINED

where Gosden was an intense, driven bundle of nervous energy, whose family tragedies had left him with an overwhelming need to control his environment, Correll was almost always calm and relaxed. Gosden soon became the dominant, innovative member of the team, while Correll provided a steady, stabilizing influence. Thanks to their complimentary personalities, the two quickly became fast friends — and ideal collaborators.

By 1925, Correll and Gosden had been transferred to the Bren Company's Chicago office, and their careers really began to move. While still working for Bren, they began performing on the side — parlaying occasional song-and-patter appearances on Chicago

radio stations into a regular time slot on the Edgewater Beach Hotel's station WEBH. The pair hoped their radio work would lead to the stage — and indeed, they were able to sell a collection of some of their best material to popular Chicago bandleader/entertainer Paul Ash. The resulting revue, "Red Hot," gave Correll and Gosden their first taste of big time success.

The success of "Red Hot" propelled Gosden and Correll to greater heights of popularity on radio, and in the fall of 1925, the boys were offered a staff position at WGN, the powerful Chicago Tribune station. This job enabled them to quit their positions at the Bren company, and for the first time they devoted their full attention to broadcasting.

At first, they were general utility men at

WGN — they performed their harmony act five nights a week, and filled in wherever else they might be needed. But they hadn't been at the station long before they were approached with a proposition that would change their lives forever.

During the 1920s, the newspaper comic strip was in its golden age — and beginning with Sidney Smith's "The Gumps" in 1919, a craze for continuity strips swept the nation. "The Gumps" was syndicated by the Tribune and WGN executive Ben McCanna began to think that what worked in print could work equally well on radio. The idea

was revolutionary: radio drama was still in its infancy, and no one had ever tried what McCanna was suggesting: a continuing dramatization, to be aired six nights a week. Knowing of Gosden and Correll's skill



with dialogue, McCanna approached them with the idea of adapting the strip for the air.

A word here would be in order about "The Gumps" and its place in the *Amos 'n' Andy* story. "The Gumps" was perhaps the first comic strip to use continuity in order to tell a dramatic story — and the themes treated in this strip and even its storytelling style would be echoed in later years by Gosden and Correll.

The strip was an acid-etched look at bourgeois America. Andy Gump, the chinless patriarch of the Gump family, was a grasping, amoral character always involved in petty scheming, and always striving to climb beyond his lower-middle-class station. His speech was bombastic and self-important, and his self-confidence seemed

boundless, even when faced with the failure of his latest venture — and this tendency often made him an easy target for bunco artists. The storylines in “The Gumps” carried on for weeks at a time, with readers hanging on every panel, anxious, say, to learn whether the fabulously wealthy Uncle Bim would be enticed into an ill-advised marriage with the scheming Widow Zander.

Gosden and Correll quickly realized that adapting such a strip would be too much for them to handle. For one thing, female characters like Andy’s wife Min, Tilda the Maid, and the Widow Zander were beyond their ability to portray. And neither man felt comfortable with the middle-class setting of the strip.

Instead, they decided to take the basic themes of “The Gumps” and

adapt them to a storyline about “a couple of colored characters.” This is not as arbitrary a choice as it might sound, and neither can it be explained simply by the fact that Gosden and Correll were familiar with blackface dialect. There were deeper, more topical reasons for their decision.

Since the World War, Chicago’s black population had increased dramatically, as black men moved North in significant numbers, lured by the promise of industrial jobs. The “Great Migration” had been the topic of much discussion, and a vibrant

black community had coalesced on Chicago’s South Side. Gosden and Correll were intrigued by the dramatic possibilities offered by a story set in this community — the story of two young black men from the rural south seeking their fortunes in the big city. The serial format proposed by WGN seemed well-suited to telling such a story.



On the surface it might seem that this idea had taken Gosden and Correll a long way from “The Gumps.” But by the time their first series, *Sam ‘n’ Henry* went on the air in January 1926, they had managed to work a lot of what had made the strip popular into their own creation.

Like “The Gumps,” *Sam ‘n’ Henry* most often revolved its plots around money: how to get it and how to hold onto

it. Like Andy Gump, Sam Smith and Henry Johnson often became involved with petty chisellers and confidence men, notably a fellow identified only as “The Most Precious Diamond,” the head of a fraternal order called “The Jewels Of The Crown.” And most of all, the character of Henry, played by Correll was very similar in personality to Andy Gump himself. Both were conceited windbags who didn’t know as much as they thought they did. They talked big but could seldom live up to their boasting. While this characterization is a stock fig-

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ure in much popular comedy, it seems very likely that the similarity between Andy Gump and Henry Johnson was not a coincidence. The similarity was well disguised by the setting of the radio program but is nevertheless quite obvious to anyone familiar with the comic character.

The Andy Gump/Henry Johnson/Andy Brown similarity is helpful in seeing that much of *Sam 'n' Henry/Amos 'n' Andy* had nothing to do with race. Most of the things that happened to Andy Brown could have happened just as easily to Andy Gump — or to any other bombastic, self-important fellow in the comics, in fiction, or in real life. And this is the essential point: the program wasn't about *what* Sam and Henry, and later Amos and Andy, were — but rather, about *who* they were. Gosden and Correll had gone beyond the burnt-cork caricatures of the minstrel stage to create characters who were living, breathing people — and this was the real secret of their success.

Sam 'n' Henry gripped the attention of radio listeners all over the midwest from its debut in January 1926. No radio program in the medium's short history had become so popular in so short a time. Gosden and Correll poured themselves into the show — writing all the scripts, playing all the characters, and squeezing in a grueling schedule of personal appearances to promote the program. They were unqualified hits and it didn't take the ever-innovative Gosden long to realize that what worked in Chicago could just as easily work all over the country.

To achieve this, Gosden suggested to WGN management that the show be recorded on phonograph discs which could then be leased to other stations. But WGN turned down the idea, fearing that the station would end up competing with itself.

Sam 'n' Henry, by contract, was an exclusive WGN feature, and the company was determined to keep it that way. Correll and Gosden chafed at the dismissal of this idea which could have brought them considerably more exposure and, in turn, more money from personal appearances. But they were under contract thru the end of 1927, so there was little they could do but wait.

The contract ended in December 1927, and for all intents and purposes, so did *Sam 'n' Henry*. Gosden and Correll left WGN, and began a personal appearance tour of the midwest, doing their song and patter routine. Although they could no longer perform as "Sam 'n' Henry," they were able to weave bits of character dialogue into their stage appearances — just so long as the names weren't used.

This limbo wouldn't last long. The team quickly negotiated a deal with the rival station WMAQ, owned by the Chicago Daily News, agreeing to do a similar serial show at a higher salary, and with the right to distribute recordings by syndication. The new series would premiere in March of 1928 and Correll and Gosden spent much of February preparing. From the beginning it was clear that the show would take the same approach that had made *Sam 'n' Henry* so popular: character-driven drama with a humorous undertone. There were subtle changes but to anyone's ears it was clearly the same program that had been so popular at WGN.

The names proved the most difficult aspect of the new series. As originally written, the first two episodes told the story of "Jim Jones" and "Charley Brown." These names didn't quite fit, and episodes three and four changed "Jim 'n' Charley" to "Tom 'n' Harry." But Gosden still wasn't happy. To his painstaking ear for detail, the names just didn't work, didn't give precisely right impressions of the characters.



As the team worked on the script for episode number five, Gosden began riffing thru the Chicago phone book and hit upon a listing for a man named "Amos." Immediately, he knew this was the name he wanted — it summed up in four simple letters the essence of the character. And then it didn't take long to name Amos's friend. "Andy" sounded just right for a big, deep-voiced, "round and juicy" sort of character. Grabbing the first four scripts, Gosden scratched out "Jim" and "Charley" and "Tom" and "Harry." *Amos 'n' Andy* were on their way.

The new series started from the beginning. Amos Jones and Andy Brown were hired hands on a farm outside Atlanta, Georgia, working for a man named Hopkins, and the first week's worth of episodes found them looking ahead to their plans for a new life in Chicago. Amos was portrayed as a naive young man, plagued by self-doubts, and worried about being able to find work in the North while Andy

was older, more worldly, and absolutely convinced that he had the answers to everything. Even when a friend warned the pair about the difficulties of finding good jobs, the cold weather, the high price of food and lodging, and all the other pitfalls that awaited, Andy remained determined to push forward. Finally, with twenty-four dollars in their pockets and four ham and cheese sandwiches to see them thru the trip, Amos and Andy said goodbye to their friends and their old life and boarded a train for Chicago.

So began an epic that would continue night after night for the next fifteen years — first over WMAQ and thirty stations by transcription, and then over a nationwide NBC network. Amos and Andy would find rough times in Chicago, until they met a young man named Sylvester, a soft-spoken but in-

telligent youth who worked as a garage mechanic, and was directly based, according to Gosden, on his childhood friend Garrett Brown. Sylvester would help Amos and Andy find lodgings in the big city, and would help them get started with their own business, "The Fresh Air Taxicab Company Of America, Incorporated." Most importantly, Sylvester would introduce Amos and Andy to his employer, a prosperous businessman named Taylor — who had a bright, attractive daughter named Ruby.

The romance of Ruby Taylor and Amos Jones was the linchpin of the series during most of its first decade even though seven years went by before Ruby ever spoke a word on the air. This simple love story brought out the best in Gosden and Correll's characters. Amos, fighting back his natural shyness to stammer out his feelings in one-sided phone conversations, while Andy stood by muttering sarcastic asides, which by their very tone revealed his own loneliness. Probably no

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writers in all of radio were more skilled at expressing basic human emotion in their scripts. When Ruby contracted pneumonia and nearly died in May 1931, Amos was heard quietly weeping in her hospital room and was then led away by Andy. The sincerity of the writing and Gosden's and Correll's extraordinary skill as radio actors made this scene work, with one radio critic calling it "the finest bit of drama we have ever heard."

Andy, meanwhile, struggled in his romantic life — his blustering self-confidence leading him thru a string of disappointments. His entanglement with the Widow Parker in 1928 led to a breach-of-promise suit and when Amos and Andy and several of their friends moved from Chicago to Harlem in the summer of 1929, the stage was set for that scenario to repeat itself, with the advent of the formidable Madame Queen. This aggressive Harlem beautician and Andy carried on a whirlwind romance thru most of 1930 and, late that year, when Andy tried to back out of his ill-advised marriage proposal, he wound up, once more, in court. The lawsuit carried on most of that winter, in a spectacular storyline that ran from November 1930 to March of 1931, gripping the attention of the nation like no radio production before or after. By this point, Correll and Gosden had become masters of the cliffhanger ending, wringing the last drop of suspense out of every script and when they finally snapped the story to its climax by revealing that Madame Queen's first husband — presumed lost at sea — was still alive, forty million listeners sank back in their chairs with relief.

And so it went. Gosden and Correll weaved a rich dramatic tapestry around their characters, night after night, year after year. Hundreds of characters came and



Freeman Gosden as "Amos Jones"

went — some important, like George "Kingfish" Stevens, who showed up in May of 1928 as the successor to *Sam 'n' Henry's* "Most Precious Diamond," or Frederick Montgomery Gwindell, a go-getting young achiever who wound up as a reporter for a Harlem newspaper, or Henry Van Porter, an insurance salesman who served as treasurer of the Mystic Knights of the Sea lodge, or Brother Crawford, a henpecked little fellow who managed the O-K Hotel. Other characters filled in the background, appearing in a few episodes here and there, only to be forgotten. All these roles were played by either Gosden or Correll, and most of them by Gosden — whose skill in multiple-voice characterizations may have been unequalled in all of radio.

Most importantly, the characters grew and changed over the years. Amos, especially, emerged as a complex, fascinating personality. Though he seemed naive and timid on the surface, he was basically a strong person, willing to stand up for what he believed in. He could only be pushed so far by Andy, by the Kingfish, or by anyone else, before he'd fight back. While he



Charles Correll as "Andy Brown"

was by nature a kind and gentle person, he was perfectly capable of taking a sock at someone who threatened him — and did so, on more than one occasion. Most of all, Amos worked hard, saved his money, and eventually matured into the happy, confident man who married Ruby Taylor in 1935. When their daughter Arbadella was born in October 1936, millions of listeners shared their joy — and Amos' tender Christmas Eve explanation of the Lord's Prayer at Arbadella's bedside, first heard in 1940, may have been the program's finest moment. Even today, listening to Gosden's sincere reading of Amos's plea for everyday human kindness emphasizes just how different "Amos 'n' Andy" was from traditional "blackface" entertainment.

There's no disputing, however, that the question of race cannot be avoided in considering *Amos 'n' Andy*. And the essential question of purpose looms even larger: What sort of impression were Gosden and Correll trying to create?

Gosden and Correll set themselves apart from the "blackface" tradition early in their radio careers by deliberately avoiding

"joke" comedy, and constructing their program on a foundation of solid characterization. This was a complete break from the minstrel tradition, with its interchangeable burnt-cork caricatures. Amos, Andy and their friends were distinctive personalities who experienced a full range of emotions. This in itself was a rarity in American popular fiction, which usually relegated black characters to faceless servant roles or used them to broadly parody the conventions of the white world.

The performers also set themselves apart from their minstrel predecessors by actively seeking the endorsement of black leaders. Even in their earliest days in Chicago, the team made a point of maintaining a cordial relationship with such organizations as the Chicago Urban League and the DuSable Club, the latter the city's leading organization of black business and professional men. Their efforts on behalf of black charities were noted with approval by the *Chicago Defender*, a prominent weekly newspaper catering to the African-American community. The team clearly valued the support of such organizations.

One might draw the conclusion from these efforts that Gosden and Correll were doing their good works out of self-interest, conscious as they were of the need for good publicity. But the fact remains that no other "blackface" entertainers of the day ever even tried to do that much: for such personalities to even recognize the existence of the black community was unprecedented.

Even in the program's own time, black listeners were divided over *Amos 'n' Andy*. As early as 1931, at the peak of the program's popularity, journalist Robert Vann of the *Pittsburgh Courier* took a strong editorial stand against the program — a stand which particularly targeted the lower-class background of the series. Although Vann fell far short in his effort to

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gather a million petition signatures against the program — and although the campaign was ridiculed in the pages of the *Chicago Defender*, which was, at the time, a strong supporter of “Amos ‘n’ Andy” — it was clear even that early that the racial legacy of the program would be ambiguous at best.

Today, seventy years after *Amos ‘n’ Andy’s* debut, it is impossible for many historians to view the program in its own context. Years of emotional debate have clouded the memory of what the program actually was and what its creators had intended it to be.

Most discussions revolve around the ill-fated 1950s television adaptation of the program, or the post-1943 half-hour radio sitcom: programs very, very different from Gosden and Correll’s original vision for the series.

In the end, one sees in *Amos ‘n’ Andy* what one has been conditioned to see



Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll

PHOTOQUEST

and that conditioning may involve racial issues which go far beyond a simple fifteen minute radio program. But perhaps, someday, we’ll have come far enough as a society to examine the series — and its legacy — with a truly open mind. ■

FOR MORE ON AMOS 'N' ANDY...

Melvin Patrick Ely’s 1991 book “The Adventures Of Amos ‘n’ Andy: A Social History Of An American Phenomenon” (published by Free Press) is the definitive historical study of Gosden and Correll’s accomplishments, both pro and con — offering a detailed analysis of points only touched upon here. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in racial issues in American popular culture, and offers the most even-handed treatment yet of *Amos ‘n’ Andy* in all its variations.

The original scripts of *Amos ‘n’ Andy* are available to scholars in the Gosden-Correll Collection at the Doheny Library of the University of Southern California. Microfilm copies of scripts from 1928-37 are available in the Manuscript Division of the Library Of Congress. Selected scripts from the first eight weeks of the show were published in book form by Long and Smith of New York in 1931, under the title “Here They Are: Amos ‘n’ Andy.”

Few recordings are known to exist from the classic serial years of *Amos ‘n’ Andy*. Less than two dozen of the 1928-29 syndication recordings are known to survive, and even fewer episodes have surfaced from the 1929-43 network run. The loss of these episodes may be Old Time Radio’s single greatest tragedy.

--ELIZABETH MC LEOD

CHICAGO INVENTS HOLLYWOOD

BY WAYNE KLATT

At the turn of the century, what we know as Hollywood was a fig orchard outside Los Angeles.

The fig orchard's owner's wife, Mrs. Dacida Wilcox, was taking a train East when she struck up a conversation with Mary Peck, who spoke of her summer home near Brookfield, Illinois which she called "Hollywood."

Mrs. Wilcox returned home with a name for her property, which was later adopted by the developer for the rapidly growing subdivision. The other name that was considered, according to a preservationist group called "Hollywood Heritage," was "Figtown."

Even before Thomas Edison was making film in a New Jersey shed called the Black Maria, what is regarded as the world's first commercial movie studio was set up by former magician William Selig on Chicago's North Side red light district in 1897. Selig is the forgotten pioneer of films. His Polyscope company was always trying to expand the limits of the medium by filming action and fantasy. At the time, movie houses were spreading rapidly across the country, partly because of the portable projector invented by Chicagoan Herman DeVry in 1913.

By 1915, Selig had left his studio near Rush Street and was filming costume dramas on outdoor stages at Western Avenue and Irving Park Boulevard. His talent scouts discovered Oklahoma trick rider Tom Mix and used him for more than one hundred short films. Selig had Mix battle

"Bedouins" in the desert of the Indian sand dunes. Since the sand filmed white, the dunes doubled for icebergs in a sinking of the Titanic. A Selig crew also went to Jackson Park to film the discovery of America, using Spanish-made ship replicas left over from the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

Always looking for a place that had both year 'round sunshine and little urban sprawl, Selig found it in the subdivision northwest of Los Angeles. Before long, Selig filmed the first all-Hollywood movie, *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He loved California so much he did not seem concerned when his Chicago unit eventually burned down.

Selig was always interested in films about animals, so he kept a studio menagerie. When a Civil War epic nearly broke him, he sold his lion to become the roaring symbol of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

The symbol of Selig's Chicago rival, Essanay Studios, was the head of an Indian chief. The company name came from the names of its two founders, Waukegan Opera House owner George Spoor and cowboy William "Broncho Billy" Anderson (S and A). If you go to the library of St. Augustine College at 1333 W. Argyle Street, you will still see the Indian symbol on the front door casing.

Rather than innovating, Essanay made a name for itself by hiring established talent. It was in this ordinary former factory that cross-eyed comedian Ben Turpin, beely Wallace Beery, and heartthrob Francis X. Bushman made two-reelers. Fifteen-year-old Gloria Swanson was hired as an extra, and one of the script girls was Louella Parsons, future Hollywood gossip columnist.



Wayne Klatt is Broadcast Editor at City News Bureau, Chicago and a free-lance writer.

CHICAGO INVENTS HOLLYWOOD

Essanay scored a coup by hiring Charlie Chaplin away from Keystone in California. Chaplin made a single film in Chicago, *His First Job*, but hated working in a cramped building. From then on, all of Chaplin's Essanay films were shot at its San Francisco unit. The Chicago studio closed down in 1918.

Selig and Essanay were not the only members of the Chicago delegation in Hollywood. Paramount Pictures president Barney Balaban came from the Windy City.

Although all the famous gangster movies of the 1930s took place in New York, most of the stories were based on Chicago. Chicago newsman Ben Hecht wrote the silent movie *Underworld* and his talkie *Scarface* was obviously based on Al Capone. And who played *Scarface*? Paul Muni of Chicago's Maxwell Street.

Hecht and Charles MacArthur based their play *The Front Page* on the escape of cop killer Terrible Tommy O'Connor from the Cook County Jail.

Chicago soda shop owner Kubec Glasmon and his former soda jerk John Bright burned the insured shop down to finance their trip to Hollywood, where they wrote Jimmy Cagney's grapefruit-in-the-face film *Public Enemy*. The death of gangster Humphrey Bogart outside a church in *The Big Shot* supposedly was inspired by a shooting outside Holy Name Cathedral at State Street and Chicago Avenue.

The movies' most convincing Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller, was a hero in real life. My father knew Weissmuller when the future actor was a lifeguard at North Avenue Beach. When an excursion ship sank a few hundred yards off shore, Weissmuller made several trips to rescue drowning victims. The one-time altar boy had developed his incredible yell as a boy working for a street vendor.

Among the people reared in Chicago who went to Hollywood in hopes of making a name for themselves was Walt Disney, creator of Mickey Mouse.

In the 1940s, 20th Century Fox wanted to dramatize the story of two Chicago Daily News reporters who had noticed a mother's reward offer in the classified column to free her innocent son from a murder conviction. Jimmy Stewart played the combined role in Hollywood, but a second unit came down to the Bucktown neighborhood and knocked on doors. Whoever opened up was given \$5 or \$10 for permission to be filmed.

The William Holden thriller *Union Station* was supposed to take place in Chicago. A crew had already taken footage of the freight tunnel under the Loop and the stockyards. But apparently when city officials learned that railroad police in the story threaten to kill a kidnapper, a line was inserted in the dialogue to make it clear that the location was anywhere but Chicago. In fact, the license plate of the villain's car has no identifying state on it.

After Richard J. Daley died, mayors were more receptive to film crews to bolster the city economy. When you see a Chicago rapid transit station in a film, it is almost always a Ravenswood/Brown Line train chartered on a Sunday, when the line otherwise ends at Belmont Avenue. The most likely place to see a film crew is on Wacker Drive just west of Wabash Avenue, but they can be anywhere.

Hollywood has been good to Chicago. Last year the city attracted \$104 million in revenue from 41 movies and television productions. But Chicago has also been good to Hollywood. What would movies be like if the motion picture capital of the world were called Figtown and filmdom were without MGM's lion, gangster films, talkies, Tarzan and Mickey Mouse? ■

FRANK'S WILD YEARS

BY STEVE DARNALL

When Frank Sinatra entered 1950, his career trajectory suggested he had more to look back upon than to look forward to.

His public image had taken a severe beating over the last few years, first when newspaper columnists tried to label him a Communist, and more recently when he left his wife to marry actress Ava Gardner. (There were also allegations about Sinatra's connections to organized crime, but as he pointed out, it was nearly impossible to sing in nightclubs back then and *not* know the occasional mobster.) Around the same time as his divorce, he made a careless remark about MGM studio head Louis B. Mayer which led to the cancellation of his contract there.

To compound matters further, the era of the Big Band was over, and not even a man



Frank Sinatra as Maggio
From Here to Eternity (1953)

PHOTOFEET

of Sinatra's talent was guaranteed a hit — and Mitch Miller, Columbia's new artist-and-repertoire man, seemed like the sort who would pursue a hit record at any cost. (Certainly there's no other way to explain Sinatra's "Mama Will Bark," in which the singer found himself singing a duet with television hostess Dagmar.) There was even one terrifying night in early 1950 when Sinatra opened his mouth and the voice didn't work.

So when Sinatra signed with Capitol Records in early 1953, there was no reason to assume that it would be the start of a comeback that would not only transform Sinatra, but all of pop culture.

Which goes to prove, as Frank himself sang, how little we know.

The Frank Sinatra of 1953 seemed

Steve Darnall is a free-lance writer from Chicago who remembers hearing "That's Life" at the age of three.



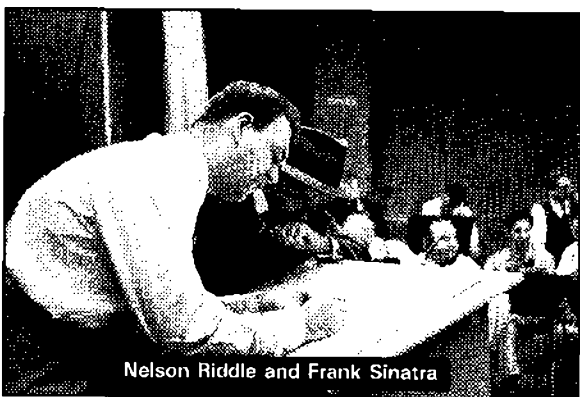
Frank Sinatra
NBC Radio (1953-54)

FRANK'S WILD YEARS

light years removed from the singer of a decade before. The throat hemorrhage that caused him to lose his voice in 1950 also forced him to lower his vocal range. No longer a skinny kid singing dreamy ballads in a light baritone, he was not a full-fledged baritone. More than that, he was a singer who had been forced to bear many of his scars before his public — one of the first singers to sing his lyrics as though each one was quite personal.

A lot more about Sinatra's music would change before 1953 was through. The biggest development involved the departure of longtime arranger/conductor Axel Stordahl. Stordahl had been Sinatra's chief arranger/conductor throughout the 1940s, and Sinatra was loathe to part with someone he'd known for so long. But he also understood that Capitol wanted him to make hit records — something he and Stordahl hadn't had much doing of late.

Enter Nelson Riddle, who had made a



Nelson Riddle and Frank Sinatra

name for himself with Billy Eckstine and Nat "King" Cole. With the 1954 release of *Songs for Young Lovers* and *Swing Easy*, Sinatra's first "albums" (each one a ten-inch, eight-song affair), it was obvious Sinatra and Riddle were a pair to be reckoned with. Riddle's arrangements were lush, sophisticated and, when the situation called for it — as it did on songs like "I Get a Kick Out of You" (in which Sinatra proclaims, "You...give me a *boot*) — downright playful. (Not that the pair couldn't get serious, as was evidenced by Sinatra's tender reading of "My Funny Valentine.") By 1954, Sinatra would even find himself back

on the pop charts with "Young at Heart." Clearly, this new direction was a good one.

But Sinatra didn't limit his triumphs to the recording studio; he also proved himself to be an outstanding actor. When he heard that Columbia Pictures was planning to film the best-selling novel *From Here to Eternity*, he practically begged studio head Harry Cohn to



Montgomery Clift and Frank Sinatra
From Here to Eternity (1953)

PHOTOFEET

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Frank Sinatra and Donna Reed
From *Here to Eternity* (1953)

let him play the role of Maggio, the hapless bugle-playing soldier who dies just before the start of World War II. Although competition for the role was fierce (Sinatra almost gave up when he learned Eli Wallach was up for the part), Frank — with help of soon-to-be-ex-wife Ava Gardner — persisted and he won the role.

Just as well, too: the only other dramatic work Sinatra got in 1953 was the NBC radio series *Rocky Fortune*. Sinatra was fine as Rocky, the “foot-loose and fancy-free young man” who routinely stumbled into danger and adventure, but it certainly wasn’t the best dramatic showcase he could have received. (His radio career was better served by the twice-a-week musical show *To Be Perfectly Frank*.)

Playing Maggio in *Eternity* was a vital

part of Sinatra’s comeback. With very few exceptions, Sinatra’s film career had been dominated by lighthearted froth like *On The Town* and *Higher and Higher*. If Sinatra’s Capitol recordings were proof that the singer could translate his personal travails into beautiful music, *Eternity* was proof that Sinatra could do the same in front of a camera — especially when he won the Best Supporting Oscar.

Sinatra followed up *Eternity* with two very different films: *Suddenly* and *Young At Heart*. The former featured Sinatra as a cold-blooded killer who had

been hired to assassinate the President; the latter had him in the role of a cynical musician who comes to a small town and finds love and hope with Doris Day and her family.

Although Sinatra had a hit with Nelson Riddle’s arrangement of “Young at Heart,” the musical high point of the film is Sinatra’s rendition of “One For My Baby,” performed in a smoky nightclub to a largely inattentive audience. When he finally re-



Frank Sinatra, Nancy Gates, Sterling Hayden
From *Suddenly* (1954)

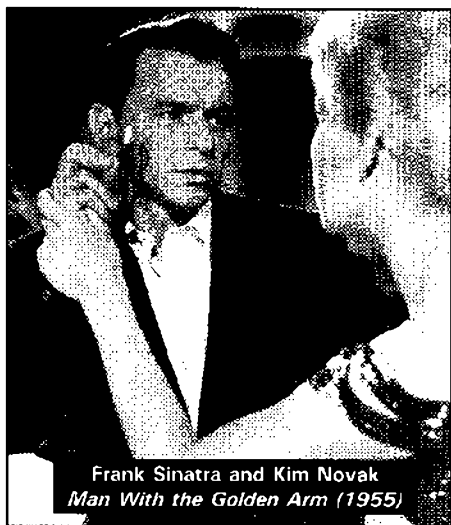
FRANK'S WILD YEARS

corded the song for his 1958 album *Frank Sinatra Sings For Only The Lonely*, it became one of his most famous recordings.

When 1955 rolled around, Sinatra had already established (or re-established if you will, his artistry, but no one was prepared for the heights he would reach before the year was over. His work on *Eternity*, *Suddenly* and *Young at Heart* had proven him to be a capable, versatile actor.

Before the year was over, he would prove it four more times. There was a medical melodrama (*Not As a Stranger* with Robert Mitchum and Olivia deHaviland), a romantic comedy (*The Tender Trap*, with a theme song that became an instant classic in Sinatra's hands), a Broadway musical (the strange yet successful *Guys and Dolls*, starring the not-especially-musical Marlon Brando), and Otto Preminger's masterful *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

Sinatra often said that he'd rather have won his Oscar for *Arm* than for *Eternity*, and it's easy to understand why. The subject matter may have been controversial for 1955, but Sinatra's performance — as a junkie trying to kick his addiction once and for all — was both riveting and harrowing.



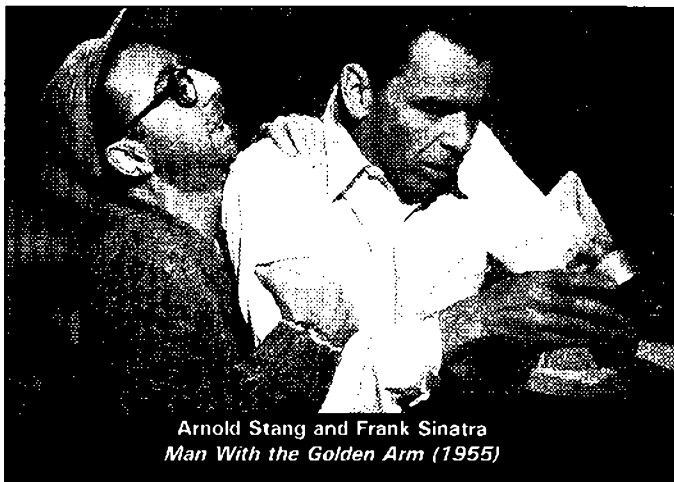
Frank Sinatra and Kim Novak
Man With the Golden Arm (1955)

Able support was provided by Kim Novak, Darren McGavin, Eleanor Parker and Arnold Stang (who, like Sinatra, had little experience with such dramas: he was best known as Gerard on *The Henry Morgan Show*).

That's not to say Sinatra was inactive musically; far from it. In July, he recorded four songs for NBC-TV's musical version of the Thornton Wilder play *Our Town*. (One of those songs, "Love and Marriage," was later used as the theme song for the TV series *Married with Children*) By this

time, however, he'd already made good on the musical promise of 1954 with one of the most legendary recordings ever.

Sinatra was famous for making albums linked by a common theme, be it *Swing and Dance with Frank Sinatra* or *Songs for Young Lovers*. The new 12-inch, 33 RPM albums meant Sinatra could produce a work



Arnold Stang and Frank Sinatra
Man With the Golden Arm (1955)

PHOTOFEEST

that would explore a given theme in greater detail than the "albums" of old (which were usually packages consisting of two-sided 78s.)

The result was *In The Wee Small Hours*, a 50-minute meditation on loneliness and loss that ranks not only as one of Sinatra's finest moments, but as one of the most powerful recordings of the 20th century.

Beginning with the heart-breaking title track (written by Sinatra pals Dave Mann and Bob Hilliard), Sinatra and Riddle created a vivid sound picture of the darkest, quietest part of a lonely night, with songs by Duke Ellington ("Mood Indigo"), Hoagy Carmichael ("I Get Along Without you Very Well"), Cole Porter ("What Is This Thing Called Love?") and Rodgers & Hart ("Glad to be Unhappy"). Throughout the album's sixteen songs, the mood is powerful and moving without being maudlin. (It helped considerably that Sinatra and Riddle ended the album with "This Love of Mine," which offered a glimmer of hope after the hour of darkness.) If Sinatra sang his songs as though he was acting out stories, then *Wee Small Hours* may be the best radio drama that never was.

And there was more on the horizon. In 1956, Sinatra and Riddle recorded *Songs for Swinging Lovers*. If *Wee Small Hours* had cemented Sinatra's reputation as an outstanding balladeer, *Songs for Swinging Lovers* would prove that he understood joy as well as sadness. (For sheer delight, it's hard to top Sinatra's readings of "You Make Me Feel So Young" and "I've Got You Under My Skin.") And there would be other great albums: *Come Dance With Me*, *Only The Lonely*, *Come Fly With Me*. Si-



Frank Sinatra and Nelson Riddle
with director Bud Yorkin
Come Blow Your Horn (1963)

natra and Strings. There would be more albums with Nelson Riddle, plus sessions with equally legendary arrangers: Billy May, Gordon Jenkins, Neil Hefti. There would be collaborations with Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Antonio Carlos Jobim—even latter-day stars like Bono from the group U2.

There were more films, many of them great ones: *High Society* (marking Sinatra's return to MGM), *Ocean's 11*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Von Ryan's Express*. There were high times, legendary times in Las Vegas with Dean Martin and Sammy Davis, Jr. There were meetings with Presidents and heads of state. There were songs like "High Hopes," "Angel Eyes," "Strangers in the Night," "That's Life," "My Way"—songs that became classics in the mouth of Sinatra.

In fact, not wanting to discount that which had gone before, one might venture to say that the best was yet to come.

Baby, wasn't it fine? ■

OLD TIME
RADIO

IN THE
20TH

CENTURY

Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

JUNE 1999

SATURDAY, JUNE 5th



Jim Jordan

FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (4-28-74) Jim Jordan stars as Fibber McGee, with Chuck Schaden as a fan of old-time radio. For the first program in this seven-part series Fibber tunes in to his 1934 Superheterodyne radio to listen to some Sunday programs from radio's Golden Age: Jack Benny; The Shadow; War of the Worlds; Charlie McCarthy; Will Rogers; The Bickersons. Larry Thor announces. Chrysler Airtemp Air Conditioning. (54 min in two segments)

Read about Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio on page 1.

SUSPENSE (5-22-47) "Her Knight Comes Riding" starring Virginia Bruce as a woman who suspects her husband is a murderer. Cast includes Joe Kearns, Howard Duff, Wally Maher. Roma Wines, CBS. (28 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (12-13-73) Writer **Phil Leslie**, co-writer (1943-56) of *Fibber McGee and Molly*, talks about his broadcasting career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Hollywood, California. Phil Leslie died in 1988 at the age of 79. (43 min)

THE PASSING PARADE (1942) Storyteller John Nesbitt presents "the procession of rich men, poor men, beggar men, thieves... the Passing Parade." Stories about a hero, a queen and a doctor: Sgt. Alvin C. York, Cleopatra,

Dr. Clippen. Nesbitt's California Orange Drink, Syndicated. (14 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (10-17-56) Ed Herlihy hosts program 15 in this 33-part series commemorating NBC's 30th anniversary: Fanny Brice; Joe Penner; Ginger Rogers; Mickey Rooney; Bob Hope with Brenda and Cobina; Judy Garland in her first radio appearance. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

SATURDAY, JUNE 12th

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (10-24-56) Program 16: Sophie Tucker; Vic and Sade; Al Jolson; Ben Bernie; Bill "Bojangles" Robinson; Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

FBI IN PEACE AND WAR (3-17-54) "Help Wanted" with Robert Dryden, **Alice Frost**, and Anne Seymour. The FBI investigates a series of burglaries of fashionable homes. Lava Soap, CBS. (29 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (8-10-76) Actress



Alice Frost

Alice Frost recalls her radio career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden in Miss Frost's home in Studio City, California. Alice Frost died in 1998 at the age of 92. (22 min)

MR. AND MRS. NORTH (1940s) "Fool's Gold" starring Alice Frost and

Joseph Curtin as Pam and Jerry North in an adventure concerning a bribe and a hung jury. Adler Sewing Machines, CBS. (30 min)

FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (5-5-74) Jim Jordan as Fibber McGee and Chuck Schaden tune in to the Monday programs from radio's Golden Age: Lux Radio Theatre; Blondie; Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar; Superman; Suspense; Burns and Allen. Chrysler Airtemp. (53 min in two segments)

SATURDAY, JUNE 19TH
REMEMBERING JERRY COLONNA

BOB HOPE SHOW (3-5-46) From the campus of the University of Nevada at Reno, guest David Niven joins Bob and the regulars, Frances Langford, **Jerry Colonna**, Skinnay Ennis and the orchestra, announcer Ken Niles. Colonna sings "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows." AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)

REQUEST PERFORMANCE (2-24-46) This is the program "where the stars you request do the things you request." Host Rudy Vallee sings "Vagabond Lover" and "The Stein Song." Singer-comedienne Cass Daley and comic **Jerry Colonna** sing "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby." Actor Edward Arnold presents: "How to Lose Money Running a Nightclub." Daley and Arnold in a sketch, "One for the Money." Colonna sings and plays the trombone at the same time. Campbell Soups, CBS. (29 min)

IRV KUPCINET SHOW (1950) *Excerpt.* The Chicago Sun-Times columnist interviews **Jerry Colonna** and singer Johnny Johnston. WMAQ. (6 min)

GINNY SIMMS SHOW (2-8-46) Guest **Jerry Colonna** spices up this musical show when he sings "Your Father's Mustache." Frank DuVol and the orchestra, announcer Don Wilson. Borden's Products, CBS. (28 min)

PHILCO RADIO TIME (12-11-46) Bing Crosby welcomes guests Peggy Lee and **Jerry Colonna**. Colonna sings "Why, Oh Why, Did I Ever Leave Wyoming." Peggy takes Jerry to see Santa Claus. Bing sings "Old Buttermilk Sky." Philco Radios, ABC. (30 min)

SPOTLIGHT REVUE (11-5-48) Spike Jones and the City Slickers co-star with Dorothy Shay, the "Park Avenue Hillbilly" in a comic-variety show featuring George Rock, Doodles Weaver and guest **Jerry Colonna**. The Slickers offer Spike's version of "The Barber of Seville." Dorothy sings "I Still Get a Thrill Thinking of You," and Colonna sings "The Life of a Sailor for Me." Coca-Cola, CBS. (30 min)

SATURDAY, JUNE 26th

SONGS BY SINATRA (4-23-47) Frank Sinatra salutes guest Irving Berlin on his 40th anniversary as a song writer in this program that features music written by Berlin. Jane Powell, the Pied Pipers, Axel Stordahl and the orchestra. Tunes include "Blue Skies," "Heat Wave," "Always," "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody."

Berlin sings his first song, "Marie from Sunny Italy." Old Gold Cigarettes, CBS. (28 min) *Read the article about Irving Berlin on page 31.*

FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (5-12-74) The Tuesday Shows: Bob Hope; Lum and Abner; Red Skelton; Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons; Fibber McGee and Molly. Third program in the seven-part series Chrysler Airtemp. (53 min in two segments)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (11-12-75) Singer **Kate Smith** recalls her career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Chicago while Miss Smith was appearing at the Mill Run Theatre. She died in 1986 at the age of 79. **Kate Smith will be inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame this year.** (25 min)



Kate Smith

KATE SMITH SHOW (4-11-46) Kate welcomes guests actress Dorothy Lamour and columnist Ed Sullivan. Kate sings "Here Comes Heaven Again" and Dorothy sings "Personality" from "Road to Utopia." Sullivan presents Kate with an award. Ted Collins announces. AFRS rebroadcast. (25 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (11-7-56) Program 17 in the 33-part series: Tallulah Bankhead; George M. Cohan; American Album of Familiar Music; Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink; FDR Declaration of War; Marine landing at Iwo Jima; Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, Kate Smith. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

KATE SMITH SPEAKS (8-7-47) Kate talks about public opinion polls; her favorite person; a new book for children; and crime in the cities. Ted Collins with news headlines Sweetheart Soap, MBS. (13 min)

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WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

JULY 1999

SATURDAY, JULY 3rd

SAVINGS BOND SHOW (1949) Actor Alan Ladd presents an all-star group of performers supporting the 1949 United States Savings Bond Drive: Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Irene Dunne, Lionel Barrymore, Jo Stafford, Al Jolson, Roy Rogers and the Riders of the Purple Sage, Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, Edward G. Robinson, Jack Benny, Rochester, Edward Arnold, Frank Sinatra, Esther Williams, Gene Kelly, Berry Garrett, Jules Munchen, Red Skelton, Verna Felton, Robert Armbruster and the orchestra, John Snyder, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the President of the United States, Harry Truman. Ken Carpenter announces. Treasury Department, ABC. (61 minutes in two segments)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (11-14-56) Host Ed Herlihy presents program number 18 in this 33-part series commemorating NBC's 30th anniversary: Shell Chateau with Wallace Beery and Judy Garland; Rudy Vallee introduces Bergen and McCarthy for the first time on radio; Jean Sablon; Sigmund Spaeth, the Tune Detective; John McCormack. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (4-28-71) Actor **Hal Peary** recalls his days on the air as "The Great Gildersleeve" and other aspects of his career in a recorded telephone conversation with Chuck Schaden. Hal Peary died in 1985 at the age of 80. (19 min)



Hal Peary

FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (5-19-74) Jim Jordan stars as Fibber McGee with Chuck Schaden as a radio fan in the fourth program in this seven-part series. Special guest is **Hal Peary** who appears as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. The Wednesday Programs: Duffy's Tavern; Gangbusters; Kay Kyser; Mr. District

Attorney; Eddie Cantor; The Great Gildersleeve. Larry Thor announces. Chrysler Airtemp Air Conditioning. (54 min in two segments)

MOUNTAIN THEATER (1942) Music and fun in the morning with the Prairie Ramblers: Chick Hurt, Jack Taylor, Salty Holmes, Alan Crockett. Jack Stillwell announces. Sketch: "Seven Keys to Bald Plate." Dr. Caldwell's Laxitive, WLS, Chicago (11 min)

SATURDAY, JULY 10th
BIG BANDS ON RADIO
DURING THE 20th CENTURY

CAMEL CARAVAN (1-31-39) Benny Goodman and his orchestra with Johnny Mercer and Martha Tilton. Guests are Jack Teagarden and boogie woogie pianist Pete Johnson. Martha Tilton sings Mercer's new lyrics for Ziggy Elman's "And the Angels Sing." Teagarden sings and plays "Basin Street Blues." The Goodman Quartet plays "The Umbrella Man." Camel Cigarettes, CBS. (27 min)

YOUR ALL-TIME HIT PARADE (7-23-44) Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra with vocalists Bob Allen, Bonnie Lou Williams and the Sentimentalists in a program featuring the greatest "all-time" hits. Guest is Al Jolson who sings the first song he sang in public, "My Blushin' Rosie" plus "April Showers." The band plays "Little White Lies" and Tommy offers a solo on "Body and Soul." Announcer is Harry Von Zell. This program features an interesting commercial about Charles Dickens visiting a tobacco plantation in 1842. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)

MOONLIGHT SERENADE (5-2-40) Glenn Miller and his orchestra broadcast from the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. with vocalists Marion Hutton, Ray Eberle and Tex Beneke. The band opens with "Sunrise Serenade;" Marion and Tex sing "Cowboy from Brooklyn;" Ray sings "Sierra Sue;" and the band

closes with "In the Mood." Chesterfield Cigarettes, CBS. (14 min)

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA (3-18-37) Remote broadcast from the Cotton Club in New York City. Band plays "Harlem Speaks," "Caravan," and "Sophisticated Lady;" vocalist Ivy Anderson sings "One, Two, Button Your Shoe," "Pennies from Heaven," and "Mexicali Rose." Roger Lyons announces. Sustaining, MBS. (30 min)

HAL KEMP AND HIS ORCHESTRA (4-7-40) Remote broadcast from the Empire Room of the Palmer House in Chicago with vocals by Janet Blair and Bob Allen. Selections include "Say Si Si," "I Concentrate on You," "I've Got No Strings," and "In Dutch with the Duchess." Sustaining, WGN/MBS. (30 min)

OUR SPECIAL GUEST is Big Band Historian **Karl Pearson** who will talk about the important part that the big bands played on radio in the 20th Century.

SATURDAY, JULY 17th

FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (5-26-74) Fifth show in the seven-part series. The Thursday Programs: Abbott and Costello; Baron Munchausen; Kraft Music Hall; Aldrich Family; Rudy Vallee; Just Plain Bill and other soap operas; Green Hornet; Bing Crosby. Chrysler Airtemp. (53 min in two segments)

ROCKY FORTUNE (3-23-54) Frank Sinatra stars as Fortune, "that footloose and fancy free young gentleman" whose employment agency gets him a position with an experimental concern called the Zenith Foundation for the Promotion of Interplanetary Travel. Cast includes Howard Culver, Don Diamond, Dan Risk. AFRTS rebroadcast. (24 min)

TO BE PERFECTLY FRANK (4-6-54) Frank Sinatra's transcribed quarter-hour program during which he sings and plays records. Sustaining, NBC. (14 min)

Read the article about Frank Sinatra's Wild Years on page 15.

SPEAKING OF RADIO (5-7-79) Musician **Leon Lichtenfeld** recalls his work during the early days of radio in Chicago in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in the *Those Were The Days* studio. Mr. Lichtenfeld died in 1989 at the age of 94. (40 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (11-21-56) Program 19: Fred Allen and Jack Benny; Helen Kane; "Jumbo" on the Rudy Vallee Show; Fred MacMurray and Dorothy Lamour. Sustaining, NBC. (24 min)

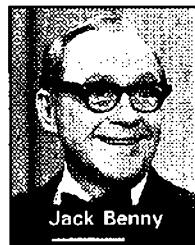
PHILCO RADIO TIME (5-7-47) Bing Crosby welcomes guests Al Jolson and Irving Berlin. Bing sings "Country Style;" Al sings "Lazy;" Berlin sings "Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." Crosby and Jolson sing Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band." John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Ken Carpenter announces. *Read the article about Irving Berlin on page 31.*

SATURDAY, JULY 24th

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (3-22-42) Jack and the gang are feeling great because it's Spring! Cast includes Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Don Wilson, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson. Mary tells what happened when Jack and Phil played golf together. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY (12-5-56) Host Ed Herlihy with program 20 in the 33-part series: Kaltenmeyer's Kindergarten (from December, 1936); Fanny Brice as Baby Snooks; The Singing Lady; Dr. Walter Damrosch and his Music Appreciation Hour. Sustaining, NBC. (19 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (9-3-70) Comedian



Jack Benny

Jack Benny recalls his career in a conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded backstage at the Mill Run Theatre in Niles, Illinois. Jack Benny died in 1974 at the age of 80. (15 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-10-46) From Palm Springs, California, guest Eddie Cantor joins Jack, Mary, Phil, Rochester, Don, Larry Stevens, Artie Auerback (Mr. Kitzel) and Frank Nelson. Jack is staying at Cantor's house while in Palm Springs... and we hear the story of how that happened. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (29 min)

SUSPENSE (5-29-47) "A Thing of Beauty" starring Angela Lansbury with Cathy Lewis, Joe Kearns, Elliott Lewis. A beautiful, up and coming young actress threatens to kill a famous actress after an argument in front of a dozen people. Roma Wines, CBS. (29 min)

FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (6-2-74) Sixth show in the seven-part series. Fibber and Chuck tune in to the Friday Programs: Lone Ranger; Can You Top This?; First Nighter; Bill Stern; Challenge of the Yukon; You Bet Your Life. Chrysler Airtemp. (53 min in two segments)



Chuck Schaden's

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

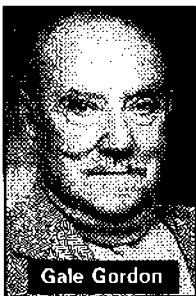
WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM

JULY 1999

SATURDAY, JULY 31st

BROADWAY IS MY BEAT (1950s) Larry Thor stars as New York Police Detective Danny Clover who inspects a burglar alarm at a florist shop and finds a body in a bed of flowers. Charles Calvert is Sgt. Gino Tartaglia and the cast includes Irene Tedrow, Jerry Hausner, Howard McNear, Edgar Barrier, Herb Vigran, Jack Krushen. AFRS rebroadcast. (28 min) *Larry Thor is the Chrysler Airtemp announcer on Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio.*

FIBBER MC GEE AND THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF RADIO (6-9-74) Jim Jordan who stars as Fibber McGee and Chuck Schaden, who plays himself as a fan of radio, are joined by **Gale Gordon** who recreates his role of Mayor LaTrivia in the final program in this seven-part series. The Saturday Programs: Let's Pretend; Judy Canova; Grand Central Station; Life of Riley; Truth or Conse-



Gale Gordon

quences. Larry Thor announces. Chrysler Airtemp Air Conditioning. (50 min in two segments)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (2-15-74) Actors **Jim Jordan**, **Hal Peary**, **Gale Gordon** and writer **Phil Leslie** recall the Fibber McGee and Molly program in a roundtable conversation with Chuck Schaden recorded in Hollywood, California following the taping of the final episode of *Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio*. Jim Jordan died in 1988 at the age of 91; Hal Peary died in 1985 at the age of 80; Gale Gordon died in 1995 at the age of 89; Phil Leslie died in 1988 at the age of 79. (29 min)

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (12-26-39) Molly's old boyfriend Otis Cadwallader (**Gale Gordon**) visits Wistful Vista. To impress him, Fibber has Gildersleeve (**Hal Peary**) act as the McGee's butler. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min) *Jim Jordan calls this his favorite McGee show.* **RECOLLECTIONS AT THIRTY** (12-12-56) Program 21: Lanny Ross; Baron Munchausen and Rudy Vallee; Floyd Gibbons; Carmen Miranda; Art Tatum; Bergen and McCarthy with John Barrymore. Sustaining, NBC. (26 min)

...and for more good listening...

ART HELLYER SHOW-- Music of the big bands and the big singers with lots of knowledgeable commentary and fun from one of radio's legendary personalities, now in his 52nd year on the air! *WJOL, 1340 AM, Saturday, 11am-2 pm.*

DICK LAWRENCE REVUE-- A treasure trove of rare and vintage recordings with spoken memories from the never to be forgotten past. *WNIB, 97.1 FM, Saturday, 8-9 pm.*

WHEN RADIO WAS-- Carl Amari hosts a weekend edition of the popular series featuring old time radio shows and interviews. *WMAQ, 670 AM, Saturday and Sunday, 10pm-midnight.*

SATURDAY SWING SHIFT-- Bruce Oscar is host for this two-hour show featuring swing music on record performed by the big bands, pop singers and small groups. *WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 10 am-Noon.*

IMAGINATION THEATRE-- This series is broadcast weekly in many cities across the country. For the station in your area, call Tim McDonald at TransMedia Productions at 1-800-229-7234. For a list of stations carrying the program and an **episode guide**, the Internet address is: tmedia@aimnet.com

"When Radio Was" -- WMAQ-AM 670

Monday thru Friday Midnight to 1 a.m. Host Stan Freberg

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
June, 1999 Schedule				
	1 Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Molle Mystery Theatre	2 Dr. Sixgun Blondie Pt 1	3 Blondie Pt 2 Sherlock Holmes	4 Suspense Superman
7 Green Hornet Phil Harris-Alice Faye 1	8 Phil Harris-Alice Faye 2 Screen Directors Plyhse	9 Lone Ranger Burns & Allen Pt 1	10 Burns & Allen Pt 2 Crime Photographer	11 The Shadow Superman
14 Escape Fibber McGee Pt 1	15 Fibber McGee Pt 2 Tales of Texas Rangers	16 Sergeant Preston My Favorite Husband 1	17 My Favorite Husband 2 Richard Diamond	18 Suspense Superman
21 Gunsmoke Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	22 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 Boston Blackie	23 Dragnet Jack Benny Pt 1	24 Jack Benny Pt 2 Dimension X	25 The Shadow Superman
28 Have Gun, Will Travel Fred Allen Pt 1	29 Fred Allen Pt 2 Fort Laramie	30 The Falcon Abbott & Costello Pt 1		
July, 1999 Schedule				
OUT OF AREA LISTENERS PLEASE NOTE If WMAQ Chicago is out of your reception area, "When Radio Was" is heard on a great many other stations throughout the country. For a complete station listing, plus more detailed program information, and a steady audio stream on the Internet, visit www.radiospirits.com			1 Abbott & Costello Pt 2 Philip Marlowe	2 Suspense Superman
5 Broadway Is My Beat Life with Luigi Pt 1	6 Life with Luigi Pt 2 Gangbusters	7 The Whistler Phil Harris-Alice Faye 1	8 Phil Harris-Alice Faye 2 Green Hornet	9 The Shadow Superman
12 Johnny Dollar Burns & Allen Pt 1	13 Burns & Allen Pt 2 Screen Directors Plyhse	14 Lone Ranger Fibber McGee Pt 1	15 Fibber McGee Pt 2 Philo Vance	16 Suspense Superman
19 Tales of Texas Rangers My Favorite Husband 1	20 My Favorite Husband 2 Richard Diamond	21 Escape Great Gildersleeve Pt 1	22 Great Gildersleeve Pt 2 X Minus One	23 The Shadow Superman
26 Dragnet Jack Benny Pt 1	27 Jack Benny Pt 2 Gunsmoke	28 Boston Blackie Fred Allen Pt 1	29 Fred Allen Pt 2 Have Gun, Will Travel	30 Suspense Superman

THE REALLY NUTTY PROFESSOR

BY CLAIR SCHULZ

Imagine a professor who, during an evaluation by his employers, exclaimed, "I don't ask questions; I just have fun!" Then picture the bosses saying, "Fine. That's just what we want you to do."



Such a scene wouldn't happen on a college campus, but in the wacky world of radio anything was possible when "Professor" Jerry Colonna came on the air.

People sitting in a classroom or in a studio could not be blamed for having fun as soon as they saw that head that might have been stolen from a carnival poster with those pop-eyes that made Eddie

Cantor look like a sleepwalker, a mouth that, when opened, resembled the entrance to a tunnel of love, and a walrus mustache which seemed to have a life of its own when Colonna would bellow notes of such volume and duration he could have made boilermakers think the noon whistle had just blown.

Gerard Luigi Colonna first opened those peepers and that mouth on October 17, 1904 in Boston. He had a chance to exercise his muscles and lungs as a longshoreman, but he saved most of his wind for af-

Clair Schulz is Archives Director/Librarian for the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago. He is also a freelance writer who contributes regularly to this publication.



"Professor" Jerry Colonna

ter hours when he practiced on the trombone, the perfect musical instrument for the extrovert.

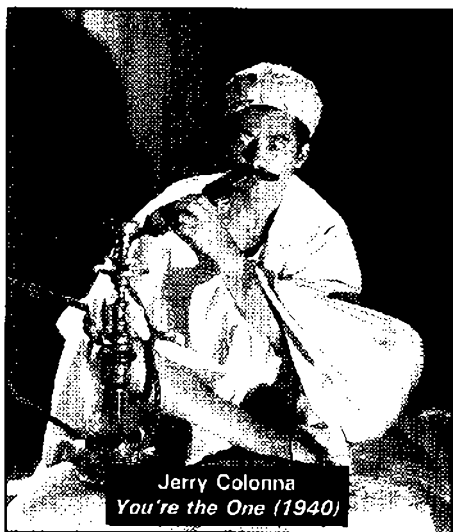
During the 1930s Colonna played in the bands of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, the Dorsey Brothers, and Ozzie Nelson. No one ever labeled him a poor trombonist, but it became clear when he began hamming it up with eye-rolling and flamboyant manipulation of the slide to amuse his colleagues and audiences that he belonged closer to the spotlight in front of the bandstand. Those not enamored with his mugging might have commented disdainfully, "As a musician, Colonna was a great comedian."

Bing Crosby brought Jerry out from the brass section for a few laughs on his radio program in 1937 and Fred Allen also used

him to put over some gags. But it was not until Bob Hope began his Pepsodent show on NBC in the fall of 1938 that Americans realized that Jerry Colonna wasn't something to be purchased at the cosmetics counter of a department store.

Colonna quickly became Hope's sidekick in an odd sort of way: the star became the straight man and the second banana got all the good lines. Bert Gordon's "Mad Russian" assumed a similar role on Eddie Cantor's program, but he was positively sedate compared to the "Wild Italian" who could, apropos of nothing, burst into ear-popping song, interrupt the proceedings just to say one or two words, or engage in other manic behavior which must have caused listening audiences to wonder if he was wreaking havoc with a seltzer bottle.

Although the exchanges between Hope and Colonna gave Jerry the punch lines (e.g. Hope: You're an idiot's idiot. Colonna: I didn't know you cared.), much of the humor he brought to the program derived strictly from this "character" Jerry Colonna who would do madcap things like calling Hope from a pay telephone talking



backwards because "I put the nickel in upside down."

Given his relatively small contribution to the show (frequently a bit with Hope and perhaps a part in a sketch), Colonna's influence upon the colloquial language of the era is significant. The "hip" crowd began saluting each other with "Greetings, Gate" after Jerry used the phrase as his weekly sign-on. "Whatsa Matter? You crazy or something?" became a sure laugh-getter in just about any situation. Nearly everyone who heard the name of violinist Yehudi Menuhin could not help posing the question that Jerry and the entire country kept asking for months: "Who's Yehudi?" At that time he could have done a switch on his favorite catch phrase by saying, "I do ask questions— and I still have fun!"

It is no wonder that one of his routines in which he would say, "Hello," pause a beat, add "Good-bye," and top it off with "Short day, wasn't it?" became a playground fodder for hordes of schoolchildren. His humor was simple (cynics would say simple-minded), and that appealed to the child in everyone hearing his voice.

It was perhaps best that he appeared in bits and pieces on the Hope program be-



THE REALLY NUTTY PROFESSOR

cause his zany act could grow tiresome if doled out in larger portions. The failure of his own television show, which did not even last six months in 1951, demonstrated that he could not carry a program as a headliner. With Jerry Colonna, a little went a long way.

And, as part of Bob Hope's traveling show during World War II and after, Colonna *did* go a long way. In 1946 he recounted some of his escapades while entertaining troops in the South Pacific in his book *Who Threw That Coconut?*

By the time Hope opened his 1948-49 season Colonna had been dropped from the cast. He had become Jerry One-Note and no matter how loud he sang it or how long he strung it out it was a monotone that had truly become monotonous.

He kept busy by doing personal appearances both in the states and in Great Britain, where he met some success, perhaps because he was viewed as another gap-toothed, mustachioed eccentric like Terry-Thomas. During the 1950s Colonna could be seen occasionally on television comedy and variety shows as well as the syndicated *Super Circus* series.

Over the years he recorded his peculiar versions of songs such as "Down by the Old Mill Stream," "You're My Everything," "The Yogi Who Lost His Will Power," "Where is My Wandering Boy Soprano Tonight?," "Hector the Garbage Collector,"

and a rendition of "Sweet Adeline" that might have driven people *away* from drink. Some of his best (or worst) warbling was gathered together in a Decca album aptly entitled *Music for Screaming*.

Producers and directors followed the dictum of *The Bob Hope Show*: a little dab of Colonna will do ya. Therefore moviegoers saw little more than cameos as Colonna would act quickly as a psychiatrist in Fred Allen's *It's in the Bag*, ride in on horseback at the anticlimax of Hope and Crosby's *Road to Rio*,



Jerry Colonna and friend
It's in the Bag (1945)

or rise out of a bubble bath for a sight gag in *Sis Hopkins*. Even if he generated a laugh, his contribution to the plot was minimal and his performance largely forgotten by the time audiences left their seats.

Bob Hope never forgot the man he called a "very dear friend" and included him on his trips to entertain the troops until Colonna suffered a stroke in 1966 which virtually ended his career as a performer. His few appearances with Hope thereafter showed that his playful spirit was willing but his flesh was weakening. The once-booming voice of Jerry Colonna was silenced on November 21, 1986.

What lasting lesson Colonna had to teach is hard to fathom, but, who knows, perhaps his spirit is passing from land to land as the Ancient Professor confounding students with his strange power of speech: "Greetings, mates." Pause. "Class dismissed." Pause. "Short semester, wasn't it?" ■

RADIO YOUTH

BY ANDY OOMS

Sometimes I wonder why I subscribe to about a dozen radio-related magazines, listen to a lot of short wave, and have more than an average interest in station formats,



AM distance reception, broadcasting history, station history, and pre-solid state receivers.

It is not because my career has been radio-related, or that I am technically skilled or knowledgeable in electronics theory. Al-

though I am interested in antique radio collecting, I don't describe myself as a collector. Yet I have a lot of interest in radio, and would much prefer a world without television than one without radio.

Until I graduated from high school in 1956, I lived in the relative isolation of a farming community on the prairie and had never lived in a city of any size or had any access to television. I grew up in the '40s and '50s in a town of less than 500 people in South Dakota. As late as 1956, only two or three TV sets existed in my hometown of Corsica, and tow-

Andy Ooms of Pine, Arizona is a member of the Arizona Antique Radio Club, a retired human resources/labor relations manager, part-time junior high math teacher, and lifetime radio fanatic.

ers about 100 feet tall were required for sporadic snowy reception from Sioux City, Iowa or Omaha, Nebraska. So for as long as I lived there radio was an exotic link to a far off rest-of-the-world, and my inquisitive mind could hardly get too much of it.

How isolated were we in Corsica? It was, and is, a great town to grow up in, but not because it was in the mainstream of national cultural trends (not even then necessarily a bad thing). It had no traffic signals, but that was not particularly unique in small town America. I never used a dial telephone while living there; we told Cen-

tral which number we wanted her to connect us to. And when I got to a city in Michigan to attend college at the age of 17, I heard of the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, and the National Hockey League for the first

time. I don't believe that any of my 21 co-grads of the Class of '56 knew of those professional sports leagues either.

We knew a lot about major league baseball however, even though the nearest team then was 700 miles distant, primarily because of Mutual's Game of the Day broadcast every summer day to those areas of the country not near any major league team, secondarily because of pictures of players like Stan Musial and Bob Feller on Wheaties boxes. Also, our high school

"Our high school classes were suspended while we gathered in study hall to listen to each World Series game played on a school day."

RADIO YOUTH

classes were suspended each year while we all gathered in study hall to listen to each World Series game played on a school day, as they were then scheduled for afternoons. In 1955, the Philadelphia Athletics moved to Kansas City, and some of their games were carried on a South Dakota station, but they never caught on as a local team for that area.

More on sports: for a short time in the 50's, CBS broadcast a Saturday afternoon radio program, *College Football Roundup*. It carried about 10 minutes of live action from each of several high-profile schools of that era. In addition to current powerhouses like Notre Dame, Texas, Oklahoma, and Michigan, teams like Navy and Harvard were included. Almost the only other sportscasts were state high school basketball tournaments, state junior league baseball tournaments, minor league pro baseball (Northern League teams Aberdeen Pheasants and Sioux Falls Canaries) and some University of South Dakota and South Dakota State football and basketball games. These were, and are, Division II teams then having limited fan interest in a farm community with few college graduates. Not that any of us knew of the NCAA or its divisional status rules. South Dakota even today is the only state without at least one Division I team in any sport. North Dakota has one Division I team (hockey) and Alaska is blessed with two Division I teams, also hockey.

Last on sports: broadcasts of the Indianapolis 500 and heavyweight boxing, particularly if Joe Lewis was involved, were enjoyed by my father and me.

"My mother discouraged radio listening to some extent... on the basis that it could be a waste of time."

Although my sisters educated me that small people were not talking and making music in our Zenith console (probably after having given me the idea), I nevertheless obviously found the signals themselves to be fascinating.

My mother discouraged radio listening to some extent, (at least the amount I was eager to do) on the basis that it could be a waste of time. that someone my age was

not likely to sort quality programming from the more abundant type of programming, and that active mental and physical skills were more valuable than passive habits. On the same grounds, she greatly

encouraged non-fiction reading instead of fiction.

She also believed that radio programs with a lot of action or emotion could lead to nightmares, fear of the dark, restlessness, or other symptoms of anxiety in children. The term "hyperactivity" was not much in use then, but that is the syndrome she described. She did introduce me to programs she deemed worthwhile (actually they would be classified as worthwhile by almost anyone): the Texaco-sponsored *Metropolitan Opera* on Saturdays (still presented by Texaco on NPR), and on Monday evenings, *The Cities Service Band of America*, conducted by Paul Lavalle, *The Telephone Hour*, *The Railroad Hour*, and *The Voice of Firestone*. Yes, even at an early age, I detected a programming trend there.

My father worked in his general store all day six days a week and usually had a radio on there, so he was inclined to read without radio when he was home, although we all listened to *Fibber McGee and Molly* on Tuesday, and I listened with him to *Drew*

Pearson and Walter Winchell on Sunday. Fibber and Molly have ever since been my favorite type of comedy. And why do I still remember they were sponsored by Johnson's Wax, Pearson by Adams Hats, and Winchell by Jurgens Lotion?

On Sundays, our family also listened regularly to *The Back to God Hour*, frequently to *The Lutheran Hour*, and *The Hour of Decision* (with Billy Graham), and the music portion of *The Old-fashioned Revival Hour*. I don't know about the last one, but the other three are still being broadcast 50 or more years later with pretty much the same format now as then. *The Back to God Hour* has yet to make its first request for contributions on the air, making it unusual, if not unique, in the history of religious broadcasting. *The Hour of Decision* still has Rev. Graham preaching, George Beverly Shea singing, and Cliff Barrows announcing.

Due to my mother's rules, I was not allowed to listen to afternoon programming aimed at elementary school students. Naturally, I was keenly interested in those programs, and would find out the next day what had happened the afternoon before

from those who did listen, or listen at other homes when I was allowed to visit, and would try to be as knowledgeable about the programs as those who listened regularly. Examples of after-school or early evening programs I remember: *The Lone Ranger* (Cheerios); *Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy* (Wheaties); *Sky King* (Peter Pan peanut butter, or was it Skippy?); *Straight Arrow* (Nabisco Shredded Wheat); *Wild Bill Hickok* (Kellogg's Sugar Corn Pops); *Terry and the Pirates*; and *Sergeant*

Preston of the Yukon (Quaker Puffed Wheat). Another trend is exposed: cereal serial sponsorship.

Do you remember when there were four major networks (ABC, CBS, MBS, NBC) and they were identified in oratorical tones, pronounced in full: "This is the Columbia Broadcasting System," almost never "this is CBS"? Those were the days of primarily full service stations—a variety of recorded music (live music frequently at major stations), network comedy, drama, quiz, and commentary programs, news, weather, and community announcements. Narrowcasting as practiced today with one type of music for a demographically defined market was unknown. Newscasts were not every hour, but when they were broadcast, about four times daily, they ran for 15 or 30 minutes. Another statement once familiar but unheard today: "And now we bring you an interlude of recorded music for your listening pleasure." This was

used to fill-in programming gaps, and to cover local or network technical difficulties. Full time news, sports, talk stations? Not until a few New York, Chicago, Los Angeles stations initiated that format in a daring

**"Kids listened to
adventure programs
until about high school
age, then
to stations that played
popular music."**

move in the 1960s.

Kids listened to adventure programs until about high school age, then segued toward stations that played popular music, switching stations during the day as most stations varied their programming. Very little broadcasting was directed at the teenage market, probably because teen income was practically non-existent, at that time (except for the essentials: cars, gas, tires). Some experimenters, as I did, scanned the dial trying for distant signals, or unique or

RADIO YOUTH

obscure programming, from several states --program content being more interesting than audio quality. Adults were considered to be the basic market, and 95 per cent of them in my area had their radio needs met by three stations: WNAX, KSOO, and KORN.

WNAX, Yankton, SD had a booming signal (when I became more knowledgeable about details, I was amazed to find that it was only 5000 watts; it sounded like 50,000 to me living about 75 miles away). It covered major portions of five large states, and I heard its signal hundreds of miles from my home, when traveling various directions. Proud of its power, it always gave separate weather reports for each of the five states covered. Like many stations of that time, it was owned by a plant nursery-seed company. It was the only signal we could get any time of the day, night, or year in Corsica, except during severe thunderstorms in the summer. And like most stations, it signed off at midnight. It was popular for its farm news, regional livestock market and grain price reports, accurate weather reporting, local news, ABC (CBS after

1950) nighttime programming, and a long string of soap operas daily interspersed with *Arthur Godfrey Time*, in the morning, extensive farm market news at noon, and *Your Neighbor Lady* in mid-afternoon with recipes and neighborly chat. I was astounded in October, 1998 to find out from the Internet that *Your Neighbor Lady*, Wynn Speece, is still actively broadcasting, 42 years after I moved away from the sound of her voice. I didn't really listen to her, as I was not her intended audience, but she

was respected a lot, and many is the time I heard her voice throughout my youth in various homes, and passing car radios. She is approaching 60 years on the air.

WNAX is an old station, having obtained its call letters before stations beginning with W were reserved for east of the Mississippi locations, and therefore has always been the only South Dakota station not beginning with K. Because of its far-flung signal, its commercials were for national products. Its non-network sponsors (like most major farm-country stations) were fencing materials, pesticides, herbicides, rat poisons, farm equipment, livestock medications and feed, and seed corn.

Do you remember when big city stations had their own instrumental and vocal musicians? WNAX had several, including the Tunecrackers who would attempt to play songs suggested by listeners, and the WNAX Bohemian Band, which played polkas and waltzes at various locations live, some nights for fifteen minutes after the 6 p.m. news, and for about four hours, along

with guest or regular country musicians, on the live weekly broadcasts of the *WNAX Saturday Night Barn Dance*.

KSOO, Sioux Falls, SD was listened to because

Sioux Falls was the major city in the state (about 100 miles away and traveled to frequently for shopping), and it had good news and farm markets programming. Its sponsors tended to be farm products or Sioux Falls retailers. It was not network-affiliated for some time and signed off at sunset so its influence was limited compared to WNAX.

KORN, Mitchell, SD, a 250 watt Mutual affiliate 40 miles away, was big in our town. The call letters were appropriate as

"WNAX is an old station, and has always been the only South Dakota station not beginning with K."

Mitchell is the home of the world famous one and only Corn Palace. Mitchell's adult amateur baseball team was the Cobs; the junior team was the Kernels; its radio station was, and is, KORN. The station had news, sports, and weather that covered our area. Being Mutual, it carried *Queen for a Day*, the daily major baseball game in the summer, the after-school adventures of *Wild Bill Hickok*, and *Straight Arrow*, and later, *Bob and Ray*. On Sunday, it had the afternoon suspense and adventure programming lineup that included *The Green Hornet*, and *The Shadow*. It had primarily local sponsors so its supermarket specials caused some to drive to Mitchell for grocery shopping (not enthusiastically appreciated by our grocer's family). And being Mutual, it had no all-day lineup of soap operas, so it had a lot of local recorded pop music (with, among others, later-to-be-famous on *Laugh-In* disk jockey, Gary Owens). It had music all afternoon, the prosaically named *1490 Club* (it was at 1490 on the dial) and in the morning it broadcast *Requestfully Yours*, which carried dedications of the latest songs ("Goodnight Irene," "On Top of Old Smoky," "How Much is That Doggie in the Window?") from people we might know to other people we might know celebrating birthdays or anniversaries. It was the only station the radio in our store could get due to fluorescent light interference, and since I worked in that store almost full-time after I started high school, it was a large part of my life. Due to its low power, it was not usually listenable after sunset. When the Mutual broadcast of the commentary of Fulton Lewis came on KORN at 6:15 p.m., it was time to start turning off

"Nighttime listening was a different matter. We could usually hear good signals from several Chicago stations."

the lights and close up and head home for the night, except on Saturday night which was too busy for radio listening for us anyway.

Regional stations for us included ones in Minneapolis, MN, Sioux City, IA, Omaha, NE, Jamestown, Fargo, and Bismarck in North Dakota plus several other smaller city signals in those adjoining states. I listened to almost all of them to some degree; few others did as it was a little work to find them, and naturally their signals were relatively weak compared to the South Dakota ones.

Daytime listening really was rather limited compared to that available to people in large cities, due to a scarcity of stations, the distance between towns with stations, and the number of small powered stations, as appropriate for small towns. Although daytime only stations still exist on the medium wave (AM) band, there seemed to be many more of them then, and I always found them quaintly interesting. Their end of day programs called for creative scheduling as the end of day could come anywhere from about 4:00 to about 8:30 p.m.

Nighttime listening was a different matter, of course. WNAX was the only South Dakota station available as the others signed off at sunset, or didn't have enough power to send a clear signal to our town. But at night, we could usually hear good signals from several Chicago stations (more about them coming up) plus WWL, New Orleans; KSL, Salt Lake City; KOB, Albuquerque; KXEL, Waterloo; KVOO, Tulsa; KOMA, Oklahoma City; KOA, Denver; KRID, Dallas; WOAI, San Antonio; WBAP, Fort Worth; and the exotic

RADIO YOUTH

(to me) Mexican stations, XERF, with a Del Rio mailing address, and XELO, across the border from El Paso. The Mexicans were 150,000 watters, three times the United States stations' allowable power, so they broadcast in English with a northward directed antenna pattern and I am told could be heard to some extent in all the lower 48 states and some of the Canadian provinces.

Never did I get stations west of Salt Lake City, or east of WLW, Cincinnati: no Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, or New York sounds. Even the other two states sharing part of a border with South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana, were never heard in my far eastern part of the state. And surprisingly, although I caught Mexico about every night I tried, I never got a Canadian station.

My research was exhaustive, if not exhausting. The majority of stations, even if broadcasting at night, signed off at midnight or close to it, and signed on around 6:00 a.m., (remember the "Star Spangled Banner" and sonorous announcements accompanying it at sign-off and sign-on? remember some stations having a sermonette, prayer, or Scripture reading at the beginning or end of the broadcast day?) so the midnight to dawn stretch was great for clear signals from the few but powerful all night stations. Most mornings I was awake and listening at 5:00 catching the farm reports and wake-up music from around the middle states, waiting for the rational members of the family and the rest of the town to wake up, (although the farm kids were mostly up and milking by then, unable to understand someone voluntarily getting up that

early). Some nights, I was awake an hour or two during the night listening to far-off signals.

When I was 11 or 12, I ran into a White's Radio Log. I immediately memorized the call letters, frequency, power, affiliation, and schedule of all the South Dakota stations. All 15 of them. Some I never did hear due to distance and low power. Only one, WNAX, could be counted on to have

"My 11 year old mind presumed that the number of networks was permanently established."

a listenable night time signal to my town.

I also developed an interest in network programming, and generally tried to keep track of which programs were on each of the four majors, whether or not I could get them locally. Night programming was fairly well known to most people, due to magazine and newspaper references and word of mouth. But I was interested in daytime programming as well. In addition to the huge line-up of soaps on CBS and NBC, including the unique dynastydom of *One Man's Family*, do you remember *Grand Central Station*, *Arthur Godfrey Time*, *Arl Linkletter's House Party* and the *Breakfast Club* with Don McNeil?

My 11 year old mind presumed that the number of networks was permanently established, and that four was the appropriate number, but one day scanning the dial, I heard a fifth network—Liberty Broadcasting System. I only heard it on one small station in Sioux Falls, and it disappeared after a year or two, but it was a cheerful surprise to me when I first heard it soon after it was born. It shamelessly imitated Mutual with a baseball game of the day, and did so with a teletype game report to an announcer in a studio, but on the theory that two of a good thing is better than one of a good thing, I didn't mind at all. It did

exist in the early 1950s, but running across people who remember it is a seldom occurrence. I don't know what programming it had beside baseball; the only other program I ever heard on it was a network disc jockey, in itself a rare occurrence as disc jockey programs were usually local.

NPR did not exist. But we could get good and unique programming from stations owned by the University of South Dakota, and Iowa State University.

Who would have dreamed that one day the NBC, CBS, and Mutual networks would all be the same company, as they are today owned by Westwood? (General Electric owns NBC television, but sold its radio business to Westwood; Westinghouse bought CBS, changed its name to CBS, and sold its radio properties to Westwood, which has owned Mutual for a long time).

Why some stations carried mostly commercials for national products (Oxydol, Duz, Johnson's Wax) and others usually carried ads for local grocery stores and other businesses intrigued me. Only recently have I figured out that the major factor was strength of signal—a store's management would not want to pay the higher rates a more powerful station can command to advertise its specials and services to an audience 300 miles away.

In the days before demographics and narrowcasting, most stations were full-service, which means that they had a lot more programming variety, and were mostly adult oriented, except for an hour or two after school. Network and local programming was dominated by religious broadcasts until at least noon on Sunday. To broadcast a secular program too early in the day Sunday was considered sacrile-

gious. Interestingly even now, some Central American countries (Dominican Republic is one) prohibit rock and roll broadcasting during the week before Easter. Some rock stations there switch to ballads, classical, or religious music; others sign-off for the week.

At about noon on Sundays, stations here switched from religion to news, interview, commentary, and classical music, (both CBS and NBC had their own orchestras of excellent caliber and reputation); programs considered to be serious, worthwhile. Later in the day, (earlier in the day as time went on), Sunday programming became as secular as weekdays, with comedy, drama, and game programs.

And although they were not of much interest to me, I remember that from 10:30 p.m. till midnight every weekday night, the networks carried live dance bands from various ballrooms and hotels, such as the Copacabana, the Waldorf Astoria, the Coconut Grove, and other Statlers and Hiltons

in large cities. It seems like for years and years Vincent Lopez and his orchestra were on Mutual every night from I don't know where. The other networks had a little more va-

"At night I could usually get the big Chicago stations-- WGN, WMAQ, WBBM and WENR/WLS."

riety, it seems to me. I don't remember ever hearing of Vincent Lopez before or after or in any other context.

About Chicago: my grandmother and many uncles, aunts, and cousins lived there. So we usually spent one week there each summer, and although I spent most of my time with relatives being royally entertained with visits to museums and zoos, I had time to notice a few details about the Chicago version of big city radio. At night at home, I could usually get the big ones—WGN, WMAQ, WBBM, and WENR/

WLS.

But being live in Chicago, I also encountered for the first time ethnic broadcasting (1240 on the AM dial probably broadcast 12 languages a week, primarily European), and the unusual concept of a full-time Christian station (WMBI, owned by the Moody Bible Institute). Most religious broadcasts in radio's early days were part of secular stations' programming.

I didn't take the time to listen to radio that much in Chicago, but I read the Tribune schedules and still remember the programming of WJND: instead of 15 minute soaps, it had 15 minute segments of recorded artists all day a quarter hour each of Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Jo Stafford, Rosemary Clooney and so on, the schedule repeated day after day. I still wonder how many times per week some of those songs were heard, although I know Sinatra probably had enough recordings to go for days without repetition, almost.

Another thing that intrigued me about Chicago radio was that it was there that I ran into my first examples of shared frequencies. WLS and WENR both at 890 on the dial; why two sets of call letters? It was many years later before I found out why that occurred. And the aforementioned 1240 on the dial: a real mind-blower to me, WSBC, WEDC, and WCRW and all broadcasting foreign languages almost all the time.

On one of my trips to Chicago, my uncle, proprietor of a radio shop, gave me a car trunk-full of working used radios to take back to South Dakota. About then farms

were getting wired for 110 volt AC electricity for the first time, so I began a modest used radio business, selling used radios, many of which were used in barns so farmers could hear markets, news, and weather while milking and doing other chores. I paid \$4.00 per year for a sign in the barber shop advertising my business. I did some minor repairs, (replacing tubes, soldering loose connections, exchanging speakers) and by the time I graduated from high school, our basement was pretty full of radios, phonographs, and parts.

"I did get a little personal air time as the announcer for *The Bread of Life* during my last year or two of high school."

I did get a little personal airtime exposure, as the announcer for our church's weekly taped broadcast of *The Bread of Life* on KORN during my last year or two of high school.

Then I left for college, didn't have time for hobbies due to school and the Army for seven years, transistors replaced tubes, and my career turned out to be unrelated to electronics, although I worked the control board weekends for WKI.W-FM, Grand Rapids, MI for a year or so while a student.

Why haven't I mentioned listening to FM? Well, there was not one FM station in South Dakota when I lived there, and I never missed it because, after all, I never got done listening to AM. I saw an FM antenna on my cousin's house in Illinois, but he couldn't satisfactorily explain its purpose to me, especially in a city with about two dozen AM stations.

Where did I get my extreme interest in radio along with an enjoyment of unsophisticated humor? Well, what can we expect of a lad literally growing up between WOW (Omaha, NE, 590 on the dial) and KORN (Mitchell, SD, 1490 on the dial)? ■

Irving Berlin's America

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

What was the most popular song ever introduced on radio? On American radio,



that is.

A clue: Irving Berlin wrote it.

If you said "White Christmas," you're wrong. That was first performed in the movie *Holiday Inn*.

Do you give up? It was "God Bless America."

This is the remarkable history of that great song.

Big brass bands will play Berlin's patriotic tune this Fourth of July, while marching proudly along Main Streets all across the nation. It will be featured at band concerts, on TV, and, of course, the radio.

Everybody knows the words, and many will sing "God Bless America" aloud this Independence Day. It is truly the theme song of the USA. In fact, there are those who believe it should be our national anthem.

Irving Berlin wasn't one of them. The song writer, who died in 1989 at the age of 100 in his New York home, was convinced "The Star Spangled Banner" was the perfect anthem for our country.

"We have a marvelous song as our national anthem," he once told an interviewer. "I am flattered there are those who feel my song deserves consideration for such a high honor. I wish such talk would stop. As far as I am concerned, 'The Star Spangled Banner' is our National Anthem. I hope it will always be our anthem."

Irving Berlin was born in Russia in 1888.

Richard W. O'Donnell is a free-lance writer from Port Richey, Florida.



Isadore Balin, as he was known back then, was brought to the United States when only an infant, and grew up in New York's lower East Side.

His formal education was limited, but he had a great love of music. One of his earliest jobs was as a singing waiter in a Chinese restaurant in New York's Chinatown.

In time, he turned to writing songs, and his fabulous career was launched. He was probably America's greatest songwriter. His hits include many tunes that are now an accepted part of our American way of life.

Bing Crosby's version of Berlin's "White Christmas" is the greatest selling record of all times. "Easter Parade" is another song America loves. "There's No Business Like Show Business" is the theme song of the entertainment world. He wrote "Blue Skies," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Always," and "Remember," to name a few of his classics. → →

IRVING BERLIN'S AMERICA

Of all the songs Berlin wrote, "God Bless America" is the one Americans love best.

In August, 1918, Irving Berlin, who was in the Army during the first world war, was given a special leave to produce a soldier show called "Yip, Yip, Yaphank." The composer wrote all of the songs in the show, including "Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." Twenty-four years later, during the second world war, Berlin would produce a second soldier show, "This is the Army." His two military shows were both tremendous hits.

"This is the Army" had a fair share of sentimental and stirring patriotic songs. "Yip, Yip, Yaphank" was a different type of show. Berlin's songs were all snappy, and in keeping with the musical mood of the nation.

During rehearsal, he composed "God Bless America" for "Yip, Yip, Yaphank." It didn't blend in with the other songs featured in the show. There wasn't a spot in the fast-moving military revue where it could be showcased.

In Berlin's home, there was a trunk where he stored songs he felt were not quite right, or that he could not market. He placed "God Bless America," which he liked, in that trunk. From time to time, he tried to find a spot for the tune, but things never worked out.

The song remained locked in the trunk, which was stored in an attic, for twenty years.

In 1938, Kate Smith was America's queen of the airwaves. Her show, Fridays on the Columbia network, attracted a tremendous audience, and helped launch the radio career of *The Aldrich Family*. Jackie Gleason first received national exposure on the *Kate Smith Show*. So did the comedy team of Abbott and Costello.

Ted Collins, the producer of Smith's ra-

dio show, received a call from Washington. At the time, the United States was at peace, but Hitler's Germany was rattling its weapons in Europe. Our leaders in Washington felt the nation would eventually become involved in a war and they wanted Kate Smith to introduce a new patriotic song that Americans would adopt as their own.

Producer Collins decided that Armistice Day — now known as Veterans Day — would be the ideal time to feature such a song. The problem was he was without a song for Kate to sing.

He called Berlin on the phone and asked for his help. The composer had just returned from Europe, was weary as a result of the trip, and was not at the top of his form. He spent endless hours trying to comply with a suitable song, but without success. He wanted to produce a song worthy of his adopted land.

After several attempts ended up in the waste basket, Berlin was about ready to toss in the towel. It was early November and the radio show was less than a week away.

Ironically, Collins, who doubled as the announcer for the Smith show, had informed the nation that the next broadcast would feature "a brand new song by the great Irving Berlin."

Berlin had no choice. He had to keep going. He tried, but was unable to get what he wanted. When the words were right, the music wasn't. When the music was right, the words didn't blend. Even for geniuses, and Berlin certainly was one, things didn't always go right.

It was then Berlin recalled the trunk in his attic. Was there something up there that might work? At that point, he recalled the stirring song he had written for "Yip, Yip, Yaphank." He went upstairs and rescued "God Bless America" from the trunk.

Berlin had always liked the tune. He checked the words and music, and a mes-

singer carried a copy of it over to CBS where the *Kate Smith Show* was already in rehearsal. The singer loved the "new song."

Kate Smith sang "God Bless America" for the first time on November 10, 1938, on the eve of Armistice Day.

The letters poured in. The song was a spectacular success. Kate sang the tune for fourteen straight weeks. Berlin had given her exclusive radio performance rights and she sang it for years on her show.

Record and sheet music sales were phenomenal. In 1940, Berlin established the God Bless America Fund, and gave all of his profits from the song to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America.

Kate Smith also donated all of the money she made from the song to worthy charities, including the fund Berlin had established.

In 1955, Irving Berlin was awarded a Medal of Honor by Congress. It was presented to the songwriter by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on February 18.

The inscription on the medal reads: "Presented to Irving Berlin by President Eisenhower in national recognition and appreciation of services in composing many popular songs, including 'God Bless America'." ■

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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Our Readers Write

WE GET LETTERS

MAYWOOD, IL-- How delighted I was with the feature on Vic and Sade (April-May, 1999). It surely brought back memories. My father, who was a pastor in Detroit, rarely missed a program. At the moment the program began, he made his way from his study to the living room where he could take a quarter-hour's respite from sermon preparation and church business to enter the zany world of the Gooks. What fun it was for all of us! --**CAROL R. THEISSEN**

DALLAS, TEXAS-- Although I always enjoy *Nostalgia Digest*, the latest issue was especially enjoyable because I was a big fan of Vic and Sade. I think Paul Rhymer had about the greatest sense of humor of any radio writer, then or now. When I lived in Chicago in the late 1970s, I had the pleasure of attending a comedy seminar at the University of Chicago at which Bill Idleson appeared. He talked about the practical jokes Paul would sometimes play. And, how he seldom finished a script more than a few minutes or hours before broadcast time. I certainly wish it were possible to hear your program here in Dallas. I was a regular listener during the time I lived in Chicago. --**GENE RANDOLPH**

HIGHLAND, INDIANA-- What a pleasure it is to renew this subscription and to hear your shows on Saturday afternoons. Just this evening, while reading the biography of Pamela Churchill, I remembered the rebroadcasts of the CBS World News Today you featured on the 50th anniversary of WWII. Thrilling!! Thank you so much, from a Baby Boomer. --**MARGARET HAGERMAN**

NORTHFIELD, IL-- Listening to the interview with Ken Carpenter (*TWTD*, March 6), I could not help remembering one certain Kraft Music Hall when they got very silly and invented a language, somewhat like Pig Latin, called the "arp" language. Before every vowel, you added "arp" to the word. Bing Crosby, for instance, was "Barping Carposby." Funny and silly enough, but Ken Carpenter became "Karpen



MORE LETTERS

Carparparpentarper." This has stayed with me FOREVER, and I think of it whenever you play a program with K. C. as the announcer. --MARY FRAN PURSE

LUDINGTON, MICHIGAN-- *Nostalgia Digest* is one of my most treasured magazines. I was born in 1934 so radio was my entertainment throughout childhood and young adulthood. I believe there was no better entertainment for a youngster than the radio programs of that day. I appreciate what you bring me through this magazine. --PAUL S. PETERSON

BELOIT, WISCONSIN-- Radio voices coming out of the past make me realize how lucky I've been to live through those days. What a great time I had listening to the radio and imagining what a great world is out there. Radio was a kind world. It was a world people nowadays can never reach. Our imagination made us stronger. How do you think we were ever able to grab strength enough to ever recover from Pearl Harbor? We gathered ourselves up, pulled together and beat the Axis. Thank God for the Lone Ranger, the Shadow, and even Fibber McGee and Molly. Deep down in our hearts we knew we'd win, 'cause our radio heroes never gave up. They fought the bad guys and stood up and did what had to be done. --PHYLLIS ANDERSON

CHICAGO-- Saturdays from 1 to 5 is a great time in my life. I get to rest and relax while I tune OUT the cares of today and tune IN the wonderful world of yesterday and listen to the sounds of yesteryear, the golden age that was radio. Keep up the good work. --JIM KRAMER

CHICAGO-- I started listening to your radio shows in the 1970s when you were on from 7 to 10 a.m. I've always enjoyed the interviews you have done with radio people. You made these people more real to me. For years my Saturday afternoons have been spent listening to four hours of old time radio programs. I've bought tapes from

Metro Golden Memories of the shows that I love. I'm moving soon and will not be able to hear your Saturday shows, so I will play my tapes. I may be gone from your radio audience, but I will not forget the years of listening. --LUCILLE COX

MUNSTER, INDIANA-- Many thanks for all the years that you have given to radio. So many people owe you a great deal for all the work you have done to keep all the great days alive. Please take care of yourself; we will never see the likes of you again. --CHRIS PLATIS

SCHAUMBURG, IL-- Really enjoyed Wayne Klatt's article about Logan Boulevard (Dec-'98-Jan'99). It brought back memories. He mentions that Logan Boulevard enjoyed its own streetcar. I asked several of my friends who also lived in the area and none of us have any recollection of such a streetcar. I further can't remember any car tracks on Park District boulevards. Wayne must have it confused with the Chicago Motor Coach Co. bus line that ran their buses on Logan Boulevard to Logan Square. Actually, the bus ran east from the Logan Square area, then northeast under the CNW viaduct at Western, past Budweiser to Diversey at the river, and then on to Diversey Parkway or Boulevard, east to Sheridan Road, then south thru the park onto Lake Shore Drive and then on to Michigan Avenue into downtown Chicago. It then made a return trip back to the Logan Square area.

I certainly don't agree with his comment that the stained glass windows at St. John Berchman's were shameful. As a student there from 1932 to 1941, all of us were awed by their beauty. Happy memories of those days as a young boy. --FRED J. MAKOSH

RACINE, WISCONSIN-- Is there any chance you will put your Saturday afternoon show on the Internet? I will be moving this summer and will not be able to pick up WNIB near the Twin Cities. Many stations and programs are on the Internet and it would be great for old time radio if your program would join them. --RICHARD LAW

{ED. NOTE-- At present, we have no plans to webcast our *Those Were The Days* program. But who knows? Maybe someday....!}

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← **JERRY COLONNA**

was radio's "Really Nutty Professor." Read Clair Schulz' article on page 26.

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