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CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

BOOK 29 CHAPTER 3

SPRING 2003

APRIL/MAY/JUNE

Hello, Out There in Radioland!

Beginning with this issue, the *Nostalgia Digest* is being published QUARTERLY -- that's four times a year -- following the seasons of the year.

It has been expanded to include many more pages and features than ever before. You'll notice that this *Digest* has 64 pages instead of the usual 40 pages as in our every-other-month issues. And this Spring *Digest* contains a complete *three-month* schedule for our *Those Were The Days* program instead of the usual two-month listings.

The *Nostalgia Digest* will be published four times a year instead of six times a year and you'll read just as many articles from and about the past as before. And, for each one-year subscription, you'll still get *TWTD* program listings for a twelve-month period. Subscribers will note that the subscription expiration date on the back cover now reflects the new quarterly schedule.

Why switch to a quarterly? There are a couple of reasons.

Over the past five or six years the cost of publishing this magazine has steadily climbed. Postage and printing costs and fees for related services have all gone up. But we don't want to raise the price of a subscription to the *Nostalgia Digest*. A quarterly publication schedule allows us to reduce our expenses to the point where we do not need to increase our rates.

Another reason for making this change in our *Digest* is more personal.

Back in the mid-1990s, after broadcasting as much as six or seven times a week for twenty-five years, and publishing this magazine for twenty of those years, we decided to reduce our radio activity. We loved what we had been doing but wanted to spend a little more time traveling, relaxing and with our family. So, we ended our seven-nights-a-week *Old Time Radio Classics* program on WBBM, cut back on speaking engagements and sold our interest in Metro Golden Memories.

What is left? Our Saturday afternoon *Those Were The Days* radio program and our *Nostalgia Digest*.

We have no intention of ending either the radio show or the magazine. We don't ever want to do that. As long as we have a station and a listener, we'll continue with the show (which marks its 33rd anniversary on April 26). As long as there are readers and subscribers, we'll continue with the magazine (which is now in its 29th year).

Ken Alexander's participation in our broadcasts has allowed us to get away for some rest and relaxation a little more often. The willingness of *Digest* subscribers to accept a quarterly publication will allow us a little more time to prepare each of the four issues every year -- with a lot less "deadline" stress.

So that's the story. We hope you will enjoy this first quarterly issue of the *Nostalgia Digest* and that you will continue to enjoy the work of all its contributors.

Thanks for listening and thanks for your support.

▲ --Chuck Schaden

Actor, Gentleman

Les Tremayne at 90

BY GARDNER KISSACK

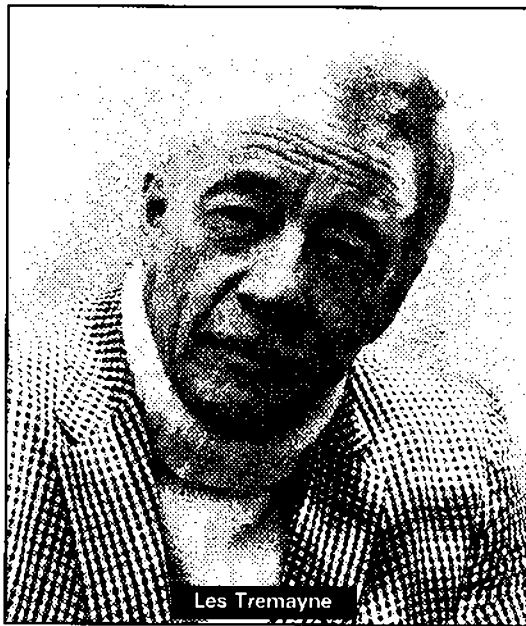
If ever there was a voice meant to be heard by millions of people—and *was* heard by millions—it is the voice of Les Tremayne, actor, broadcast historian, gentleman.

Few, if any, voices have been heard by so many, over so many years, in so many roles on radio and television, in films, the theatre, commercials, and documentaries.

His confident dulcet tones can be soothing or crisp and while difficult to describe accurately, once heard they are not forgotten and are easily recognized. In fact, early in the 1940s, his voice was selected one of the three most distinctive and recognizable in the coun-

try, along with those of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Bing Crosby. Some company.

Les Tremayne was born in London, April 16, 1913, and emigrated from England to the United States in 1917 when he was four. His family eventually settled in Chicago and he attended Lake View High School before enrolling at Northwestern University and later at Columbia in New York City and UCLA, where he studied, at various times, drama,



Les Tremayne

LES TREMAYNE COLLECTION

Greek drama, and archacology.

After high school graduation, and despite his father's reluctance and scepticism, Les applied for an audition at WGN radio. He made the audition, did well, and began to get jobs. His first pay raise, he recalls, was \$2 per show "which was up from nothing per show." Later, the salary for his first network show (*Fu Manchu*) was \$15. His career in broadcasting had begun. He was on his way.

Gardner Kissack of Chicago Heights, Illinois is a volunteer tour guide for the Museum of Broadcast Communications, a member of the Those Were The Days support staff and a collector of vintage radio and television receivers.



H. Lester Tremayne
Early postal card photo for fans.

Still in his early twenties, he appeared on some of the most popular radio programs ever aired, including *First Nighter* (often referred to as "The Little Theatre Off Times Square") which came from Chicago and later the West Coast, but never from Manhattan. For that program he wore, on occasion, an elegant tuxedo and top hat for the studio audience, to complement the glamour of an evening at a Broadway opening, imagined as it was.

On February 18, 1939 he was featured with close friend and *First Nighter* co-star Barbara Luddy on the cover of *Radio Guide* magazine.

Some of his other programs were *Grand Hotel*, *The Thin Man*, *Betty and Bob*, *The Falcon*, and *The Romance of Helen Trent*, where he portrayed the original leading man, Grant Douglas (in the early 1930s).

He hosted *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, and with wife Alice Reinhart, produced, wrote, and performed *The Tremaynes in New York City*, a half-hour show broadcast six days a week covering a wide variety of topics and activities. Other radio work included *Lux Radio Theater*; *Ma Perkins*; *Burns and Allen*; *Jack Armstrong*; *Chandu, the Magician*; *The Woman in My House*; *Grand Central Station*; *Inner Sanctum*; *Life Can Be Beautiful*; *Flash Gordon*; *I Love a Mystery*; *The Big Story*; *Mary Marlin*; *The Whistler* and dozens more, some 30,000 performances on radio, by one estimate.

At one point, for three years in Chicago in the late 1930s and early '40s, he was doing forty-five radio shows a week.

"It was the greatest training for actors that ever existed," he has said, sometimes going on the air without benefit of rehearsal. "You'd arrive at the studio, they'd hand you a script, and it was air time. You just hoped you'd get the voices right and you had to figure out ways of getting from one [studio] to another as quickly as you



Lester Tremayne and Barbara Luddy
The First Nighter Program (1936-43)

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Les Tremayne as Mike Waring
Adventures of the Falcon (1948-51)

PHOTOFEST

could." There was always the problem of the bridges over the Chicago River being up when actors were trying to get to a studio north or south of the river. Fortunately, the Merchandise Mart (NBC) and the Wrigley Building (CBS) were both north of the river—but there were other studios and stations south of the river.

(There was, in fact, a "Bridge-Is-Up Club," whose "members" had experiences trying to get to a station on time only to be delayed by bouts in the river causing the Michigan Avenue or Wells Street or State Street or Dearborn Street bridge to be raised, halting auto and pedestrian traffic until the vessels, with their traditional navigational rights, panned by, as many Chicago radio actors can attest. The excuse of the bridge being up was also used to cover other reasons for being tardy to a rehearsal or broadcast!)

First Nighter was but one of the programs Les Tremayne especially

relished doing (from 1936-'43).

He starred in the title role as *The Falcon* in the late 1940s (a role played in the early '50s by Les Damon), and teamed with Alice Hill for the *Betty and Bob* series.

By 1943 he had left Chicago for Hollywood and New York City, where for several years he was so busy that he had no time for vacation or leisure travel. One day, at his wife's urging, "I took off across country in my (1949) MG TC" — his prized and cherished car — for a "most memorable trip." A few years later, for relaxation, he bought a "little ranch" in northern California, where "you can wash your soul."

His television work, merely several hundred programs (although one source suggested some 3,000 appearances), started in 1939 in Chicago on W9XYZ, the Zenith experimental station. He was a video pioneer at a time when few people



LES TREMAYNE COLLECTION



Les Tremayne and Alice Reinheart
The Tremaynes in New York City (1940s)

had ever seen a television set and even fewer had them. (There were but 6,000 TV receivers made in the U.S. during the entire decade of the 1930s, most for research labs and homes in narrow broadcast lanes in the East.) He later starred in three TV series: *Ellery Queen* (1958-59) as Ellery's father, inspector Richard Queen; *One Man's Family* and *Shazam*, a program for youngsters based on the "Captain Marvel" comic book. He guest-starred on *Lux Video Theatre*, *Red Skelton*, *Perry Mason*, *The Rifleman*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Bonanza*, *Hunter* and dozens more. And for a little variety, he was Big Daddy, Boss Hogg's father on *Dukes of Hazzard*.

He has been an active speaker and lecturer at nostalgia conventions and meetings from coast-to-coast. As a charter member of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, he was a delegate

and bronze medal recipient at the union's 50th anniversary meeting in 1987.

Certainly one of his proudest achievements came in the mid-1980s when he co-hosted and co-produced *Please Stand By: A History of Radio* for the Southern California Consortium of Community Colleges, an accredited course of thirty half-hour programs. It has been called the most compelling and comprehensive, important and instructive, enjoyable and entertaining audio radio history ever aired.

Also important to him is his work at the Braille Institute for the Blind, where he conducted weekly seminars on the golden days of radio. He is, naturally, a life member of the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, as he was one of the original founders of that organization in California.

Some of his (at least) thirty motion pictures have been *North By Northwest*, *The*



Donald O'Connor and Les Tremayne
I Love Melvin (1953)



Donald O'Connor and Les Tremayne
Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters meeting (1991)

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MARGARET WARHLIN PHOTO

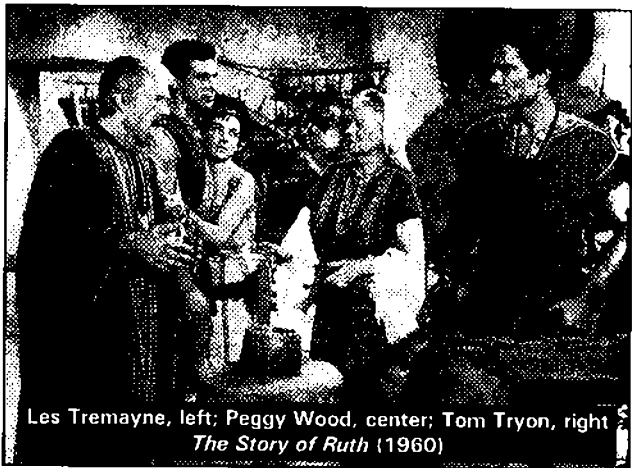
Perfect Furlough, Goldfinger, The War of the Worlds, Francis Goes to West Point, The Fortune Cookie, A Man Called Peter, I Love Melvin, The Story of Ruth, Say One For Me, The Slime People, The Lieutenant Wore Skirts, Susan Slept Here, and The Angry Red Planet.

He has announced for such TV shows as *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Medical Center*, and has been spokesman for Lincoln Continental, Sunbeam, McDonald's, and Chevrolet, among others.

Away from the radio microphones and television and movie cameras, he has participated in archaeological digs in the U.S. and Mexico, serving as official photographer, and he has lectured on Mayan and Aztec history numerous times.

Les enjoys telling a formerly little-known tale from years ago when he bought a house in a Hollywood neighborhood of family homes where everyone knew everyone else.

Shortly after he moved in, one of his new neighbors asked a friend who Les was and what he did. "Oh, he's in TV," the friend



Les Tremayne, left; Peggy Wood, center; Tom Tryon, right
The Story of Ruth (1960)

PHOTOFEST

explained. A few weeks later when the new neighbor's television set went out, she thought it handy to have a TV man close and called Les to fix her set. Les, amused, took some tools and went to the neighbor's, turned a few screws and knobs and "fixed" the set. Later, he recounts gleefully, her vacuum cleaner broke so she called him again and he, of course, attempted another repair, still reluctant to explain how he was "in TV."

Margaret Warren of the Midwest Broadcast Pioneers, who met Les in California years ago, remembers his visit back to Chicago when he was inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame in November 1995 — an evening when he met friends and fans,

graciously and warmly, at every turn. "It was an elegant, black-tie event, giving Les a well-deserved honor that he has truly cherished. The next day I took Les and his wife Joan in my car all around the North Side (of Chicago) and the North Shore searching out apartments where Les had lived and schools he had attended. Even though he was born



Sheree North and Les Tremayne
The Lieutenant Wore Skirts (1956)

PHOTOFEST

in England, much of his growing up was done in Chicago, where his broadcast career began.

"He would notice a school or apartment building, hop out of the car, snap a picture, and recall what he remembered from earlier times. We topped off that tour feasting on burgers at Hackney's in Glenview."

On an earlier visit to Chicago in 1990 he stopped by *Those Were The Days* one Saturday afternoon, then broadcasting from the Museum of Broadcast Communications in River City. Fellow future-Hall of Famer Chuck Schaden devoted the entire program to him and conducted a Tremayne seminar, during which Les recalled meeting Edgar Bergen on the West Coast in the 1940s and discovering they both had attended Lake View High School —although not at the same time, Bergen being ten years older.

Once, when Chicago radio's Wally Phillips was asked about his favorite films, he included *North By Northwest*, and when Les Tremayne's name was mentioned, Wally immediately responded with, "Thirteen hundred, do I hear thirteen hundred dollars?"...Les' lines as the auctioneer in



Les Tremayne and Grant Williams
The Monolith Monsters (1957)

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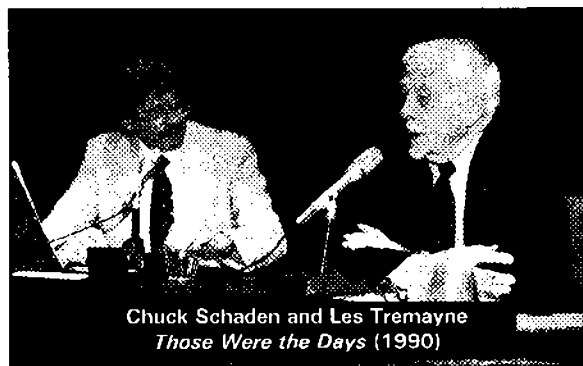
the *North By Northwest* scene where Cary Grant tries to get arrested for his own safety. The 1959 film, shown often and still popular, ranks as one of Hitchcock's finest films.

Today Les still attends some West Coast radio fan conventions in spite of the health problems he has had over the past several years and he keeps busy working with his wife on his autobiography.

This, then, is a glimpse of Les Tremayne at 90, the star of radio, television, film, and theatre; the broadcast historian, archaeologist, and gentleman —not merely a man for all seasons or a Renaissance man— but a down-to-earth English-American whose talent and experience and good deeds have made him a guiding light in a field of many bright lights — the distinctive and distinguished, generous and genuine, unforgettable Les Tremayne. ■

Readers who would like to send a card or letter to Les Tremayne on his 90th birthday, may write to him c/o Nostalgia Digest, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053.

Tune in TWFD April 12 for a salute to Les Tremayne.



Chuck Schaden and Les Tremayne
Those Were the Days (1990)

MARGARET WARREN PHOTO

Ozzie and Harriet

BY RICHARD W. O'DONNELL

The success of one radio show in particular has always puzzled me. I could never figure out why it turned out to be such a long-running hit.

The program was *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. Ozzie Nelson was a stay-at-home husband. If he had a job, it remains a mystery to this day.

As for his wife, Harriet Hilliard, she was always in the kitchen chopping away at some vegetables, or happily ironing away. She was neat and proper and, on

radio, probably wore that crisp and dainty apron she later donned on television.

Later on, David and Ricky came along and they were too cute to be true. The humor was low-key, for the most part, and you had to listen closely if you wanted to have a chuckle. The family was perfect. They had no serious problems, yet somehow they managed to be funny.

Radio veteran John Brown, one of the best, played Thorny, the Nelsons' wise-cracking neighbor. He had a spark of life in him and added a touch of zest to the show, as did Janet Waldo as Emmy Lou, an annoying teen-ager, and Lurcne Tuttle as Ozzie's mother-in-law. All three of these radio veterans sparkled on countless other

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

radio shows over the years. They certainly helped make *Ozzie and Harriet* a hit.

Now don't get me wrong on this. The Nelson clan had a lively sense of humor and I enjoyed the program, especially on Sundays when it was on prior to Jack Benny. The gentle humor of the Nelsons

was quite a contrast when compared with the crazy comedy Benny featured.

Harriet's real name was Peggy Lou Snyder. She came from Des Moines, Iowa. She

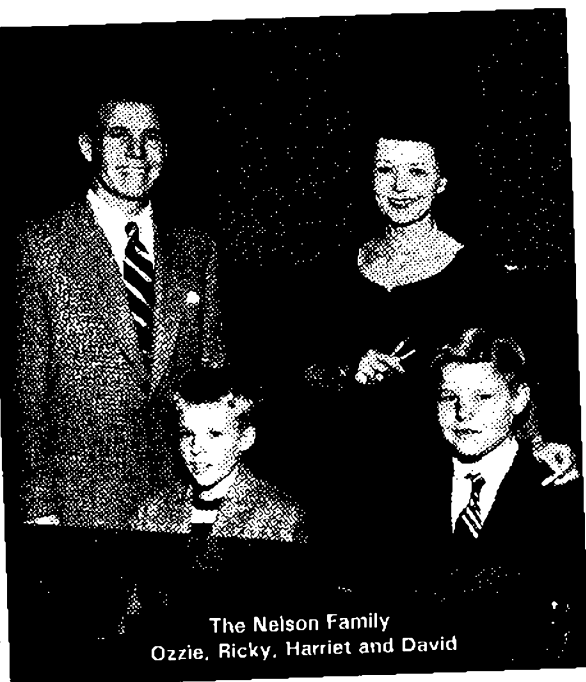
was "born in a trunk" because her parents were actors constantly on the move with stock companies. It was only natural that she would seek a show business career, and she did. She changed her name to Harriet Hilliard, started singing, and achieved reasonable success on the fading vaudeville circuits.

As for Ozzie, a New Jersey native and Rutgers University grad, he planned to be a lawyer. But an orchestra he organized when he was a teen-ager got in the way. He was making too much money and he never did get around to hanging up a shingle.

Along the way, during the early 1930s, they met. He hired her to sing with his band, they fell in love and married. The rest is a slice of show business history.

Next came a radio show featuring co-





The Nelson Family
Ozzie, Ricky, Harriet and David

stuck with them. In 1949 David and Ricky joined the cast as regulars, replacing the young actors who had portrayed them on the air.

It was a delightful family affair. David was the sensible son, Ricky was the wise-cracker and they added to the success of the show.

Over the years, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* had a variety of sponsors, the most famous being International Silver Company, which footed the bills when the show made its radio debut on October 8, 1944.

In 1954, the family left radio and moved exclusively to television, where they had

started producing their filmed series in 1952. The Nelson sons grew up on TV and the successful video series continued until 1966.

Tune in TWTD May 17 to hear Ozzie and Harriet on radio.

median Joe Penner, a great talent who died at a young age. After that came a stint with the *Red Skelton Show*, but that ended when Red got drafted during the Second World War. It should be mentioned that while all this was going on, David and Ricky were born in 1936 and 1940, respectively.

Once Skelton was off the air, the Nelsons were jobless. They still had their band, but they favored the settled life, now that they had a family.

Ozzie was a sharp businessman and he had grown fond of radio. Why, he reasoned, work for somebody else? Why not have your own show? Thus *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* was born. Nobody really thought the show would work. But it did. Millions tuned in and loved what they heard. The show was clean, wholesome and worth a listen.

Ozzie and Harriet, once established as a top radio situation comedy, was on CBS on Sundays from 1944 to 1947, when it switched to Friday nights. Their gentle humor had captured a large audience that



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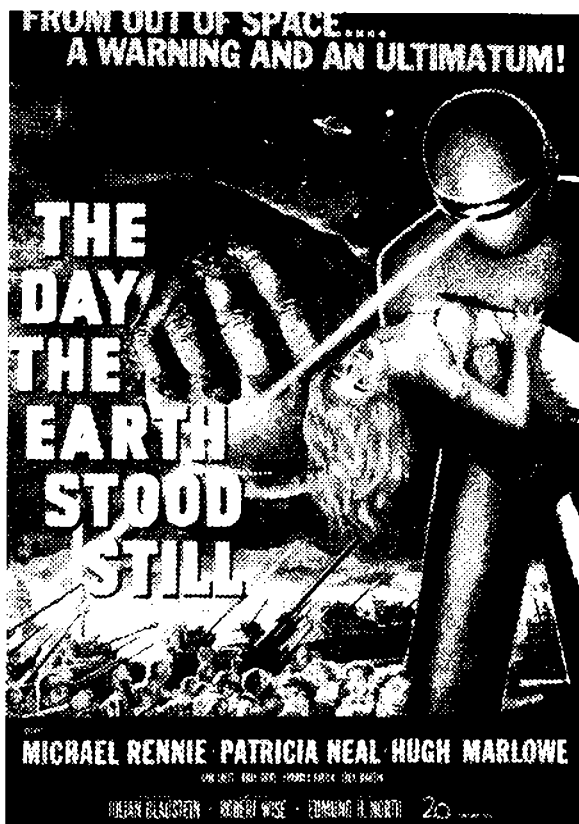
KLAATU BARADA NIKTO

BY MATTHEW C.
HOFFMAN

With every corner of our planet filled with violence, with nations devising new methods of mass destruction, I sometimes wonder what it would be like if it all stopped for a few moments, if we stopped and contemplated the path we're on. Imagine if all the distractions in our lives just went silent. If all the televisions turned off and the cell phones died off and all the millions of cars came to a quiet halt. And in the stillness we listened to an outside force that pointed the way.

Over fifty years ago a science fiction movie sought to awaken our senses and open our eyes with such a scenario. In an atomic decade that gave us colossal men and shrinking men, xenomorphs from outer space and dinosaurs from beneath the sea, no film seemed quite as important as Robert Wise's *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. What was relevant in 1951 is relevant in 2003. Few films have addressed the issue of man's race to self-destruction-- and the violence we do to one another—better than *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. A half-century later it remains a beacon of light.

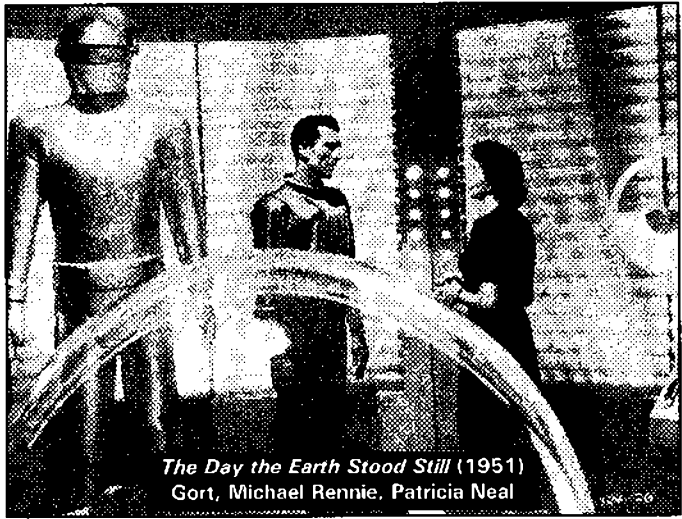
Matthew C. Hoffman is a film historian, curator and manager of LaSalle Bank's Classic Film Series.



Part of the attraction is that this cautionary tale is more than just a “message film.” It’s an entertaining and exceedingly well-crafted film—one of the few, if not the first, to depict a sympathetic ‘alien.’ Michael Rennie plays Klaatu, an emissary from an organization of planets who comes to Earth to promote world peace; his own world will be threatened by man’s destructive future. Accompanied by his nine-foot robot, Gort, Klaatu arrives in a flying saucer in Washington, D.C. and is greeted by a bullet from a nervous Army soldier. Gort retaliates against the aggressors but is given the command to stop. Klaatu survives, and despite the fear from others, he is not deterred from his mission. After a mysterious escape from a hospital room, he finds shelter at a boarding house, identifying himself as “Mr. Carpenter.” Being a humanoid alien, he is not

suspected of being the one who came from the stars.

During his brief stay, Carpenter learns more about Mankind through his interaction with a young boy, Bobby (Billy Gray), and his single mother, Mrs. Helen Benson (Patricia Neal.) This leads to a humanization of Klaatu's character. His trip with Bobby to the Lincoln Memorial



The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Gort, Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal

MATTHEW HOFFMAN COLLECTION

gives Klaatu a measure of hope for our race. Reading the words of Lincoln beside the seated statue, Carpenter remarks, "He must've been a great man." Indeed, there have been wise voices in the past to steer us right, voices we have become deaf to. The scene appeals to the better angels of our nature, for in it is the implicit idea that *collectively* we can be great. The concept of peace doesn't have to be a naïve dream.

Klaatu will need help in getting his statement out to all the nations at the same time, so he asks Bobby who is now the greatest man in America. The boy responds with the name of a scientist—not a warmongering politician or soldier—but a savant named Professor Jacob Barnhardt. This role is fittingly played by Sam Jaffe, the High Lama of *Lost Horizon*. The wild-haired Jaffe once again projects an aura of wisdom and open-mindedness. He is visited by the spaceman, and a 'little' demonstration is agreed upon. So that the planet will listen, a dramatic display of power is in order. For thirty minutes, Klaatu will have the world come to a figurative standstill by way of an electrical anomaly. However, when life returns to 'normalcy,' the military sees things differently and be-

comes more determined to find and eliminate the fugitive.

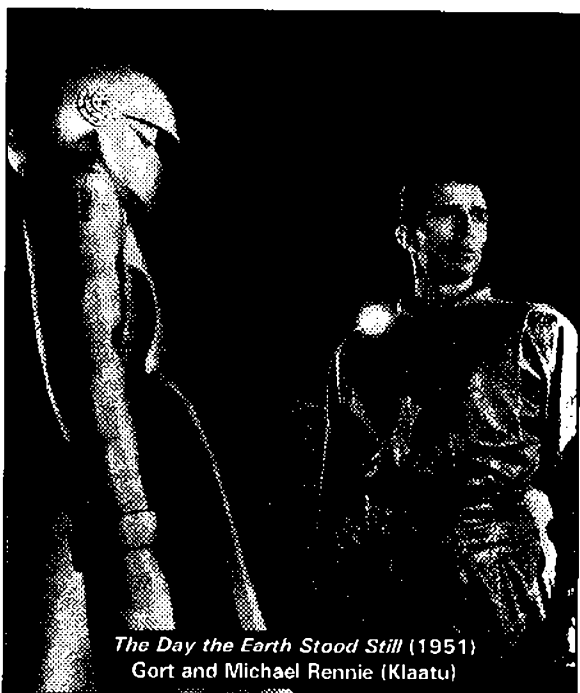
Klaatu is eventually gunned down in the streets during a military dragnet, but in his dying breath he tells Helen to find Gort, his police force. In one of the film's most frightening moments, Helen returns to the park at night and confronts the threatening frame of the robot with the now famous message, *Klaatu barada nikto*. These words send Gort into a course of action, and its intercession ultimately saves the day, leading to Klaatu's re-animation—or resurrection—and the fulfillment of his plan. Restored to his former splendor, the spaceman reveals to the world that his people have brought balance to the universe by way of enforced peace.

The Day the Earth Stood Still is one of the most respected sci-fi entries even though it's not the most scientific. In fact, writer Edmund H. North, who took the story from Harry Bates' "Farewell to the Master," seemed more attuned to the allegorical aspects of the screenplay, hinting that Carpenter is an intergalactic savior. The character is certainly a mystical being, able to escape through locked doors and rise again after death. The wonderful

poster artwork for the film suggests a guiding force behind the great plan with a giant hand from out of the depths of space holding Earth in place. Though there have been theological readings into the story, Klaatu is in no way omnipotent. After Gort brings him back to life in the spacecraft, Helen asks about the power over life and death. "That power is reserved to the Almighty Spirit," he tells her.

Though North's story at times tests the bounds of credulity—e.g., Gort carries the lifeless Klaatu back to the ship without *any* military interference—the film succeeds with its intentions for three main reasons: the evocative musical score, the performance of its star, and the atmospheric direction of Robert Wise. Director Wise excelled in all genres of moviemaking and proved adept with science fiction, treating the material realistically and intelligently and infusing the film with a moral. "I feel very strongly in favor of what the movie says," Wise was quoted as saying. "It's very much of a forerunner in its warning about atomic warfare, and it shows that we must all learn to get along together."

There are no lulls in this tightly edited and fast-moving production. We're immediately entranced by the images of space at the outset, which seamlessly blend into the U.F.O.'s entrance into our nation's capital. The radio coverage of the arrival is particularly effective. The film maintains this tense and brisk pace throughout its 92-minute running time. And with so many of today's overlong, soulless genre films going for visual overkill, it's a testament to Robert Wise that he could make small



The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Gort and Michael Rennie (Klaatu)

PHOTOPOST

moments seem so memorable. As a young viewer I was as scared as Bobby when Klaatu signals Gort with the flashlight and we see this huge iron head turn toward the camera. Baby boomers shudder to recall their own memories of the immobile Gort coming to life, its visor slowly rising up to reveal the darkness within. It's a moment all the more haunting with Bernard Herrmann's music.

Herrmann was one of the most talented composers in the 20th century. He began in radio, scoring such broadcasts as Orson Welles' adaptation of "The War of the Worlds" for the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* in 1938. But his scores for film remain some of the best ever composed during Hollywood's golden age. His obsessive, brooding melodies were especially suited to Alfred Hitchcock's sensibilities, resulting in one of cinema's most fruitful collaborations between director and composer, which would begin in 1955 with *The Trouble With Harry*. For Robert Wise, he

brought similar dark qualities, creating a soundtrack that resonates in the memory like few others. It's the quintessential '50s sci-fi film score with the usage of the theremin that most unorthodox of instruments with its distinct, electronic-sounding tones. The sound became a staple of '50s sci-fi. Herrmann captured the essence of the genre, evoking the mystery of space, the weirdness of the spaceman's journey, and the intangibles of Carpenter's presence.

Michael Rennie was perfect as Klaatu, the harbinger with a warning and an ultimatum. It was his first American film, and it is the one for which he is best remembered. Claude Rains was one of those considered for the part—a dignified actor who embodied the qualities of man's potential—but Rennie was not as recognizable a name and perhaps better suited because of it. In addition, he had more otherworldliness about him. He was a tall, lean figure with striking features able to be both intellectually and physically intimidating. He could be quite aloof and yet so very human. In this role Rennie projected so much without being theatrical. A knowing smile to himself or a farewell gesture to Helen could convey far more meaning than words. But most importantly, he brought to life a character we *want* to believe in, and a character every ten-year-old would like to have for a buddy. Rennie would reprise the role in 1954 for *Lux Radio Theatre*.

With such talent involved it's no mystery that *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is a profound work that remains absorbing to this day. ■

Tune in TWTD April 5 for the Lux Radio Theatre version of The Day the Earth Stood Still and see the actual film at 8 p.m. on April 12 in an exclusive big screen showing at the LaSalle (Bank) Theatre, 4901 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago. For more information, call (312) 904-9442.

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That was one of the most stirring pronouncements delivered weekly during radio's golden age. It occurred at the inception of a popular prime time series on keeping law and order in America.

The FBI in Peace and War, an anthology of mythical tales about bad guys vs. good guys, could be validated as unique in the annals of aural broadcasting on at least a quartet of grounds: in a word catch, they are durability, theme, sponsor and producer.

Without question *Peace and War* was one of the longest running crime dramas on the ether. Beginning on November 25, 1944, it persevered until September 28, 1958 with only an occasional summertime respite. With 14 continuous years to its credit the program was one of the very last evening dramatic series still airing as the networks began a final push to wipe their slates clean of virtually all scheduled programming. *Peace and War* was launched over CBS and, unlike most competing shows, never left its premiering chain.

If the millions who tuned in to that se-



Martin Blaine as Field Agent Sheppard
The FBI in Peace and War

ries didn't particularly connect with its longevity, they certainly did with its theme song. Sergei Prokofiev's classical march from "Love for Three Oranges" became one of the most memorable tunes in broadcast history. ("One of radio's best-loved signatures," claimed a critic.) Fans of the radio series who hear it today still instantly associate the music with the program they listened to so many years ago. Offered with full orchestra accompaniment while on the air ("a sassy treatment," according to one journalist), it is easily one of the most identifiable classical melodies ever penned.

Closely aligned to *Peace and War's* highly recognized theme song was an absolutely ingenious deliverance while tying the show's sponsor to that evocative tune. From out of an echo chamber a deep male voice accompanied by a bass drum bellowed rhythmically: "L-A-V-A! L-A-V-A!" Following a

Jim Cox is the author of "Radio Crime Fighters," a complete, unabridged encyclopedia of spine-tingling aural hero thrillers featuring more than 300 shows about radio detectives, police dramas and federal agents, westerns and juvenile adventure series. McFarland & Company, hardcover with photos, \$45. To order, call 800/253-2187.

philly introductory spiel delivered by the program's announcer, an orchestra struck up the march from "Love for Three Oranges." It was an incredible opening, equal to and possibly better than the dramatic fare that was to follow.

The commercials "became as well-known as the show itself," said a pundit. The fact that the same music aired on nearly 700 broadcasts for so many years reinforced the sponsor's product moniker in the public's mind, even long after the advertiser withdrew its



The FBI in Peace and War (1944-58)

Producer-director Max Marcini, extreme left, silences part of his cast as he cues maestro Vladimir Selinsky.

PHOTOFLSI

financial support for the show. Millions may have added the jingle to their everyday vernacular. Could a sponsor have asked for more? That inspired marketing strategy was one of the most remarkable to waft across the ether.

Finally, the first woman to occupy the highly influential capacity of producer of a major prime time crime drama occurred on *Peace and War*. During the final decade of the show's existence Betty Mandeville was the original feminine producer of any such series. While her legacy was not lengthy (she is known to have produced only one other program, the quiz show *Take It or Leave It*), as the first of her gender she broke new ground and obviously did so reliably for nearly 10 years. In her tradition many other women followed, as recalled in the chronicles of broadcast history. But she initiated the movement's success. Mandeville died, in-

identally, in contemporary times. She was 90 when she passed on June 14, 2001.

The drama itself, *The FBI in Peace and War*, glorified the work of the men and women of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A media reviewer noted that the officers were "by-the-book, humorless, heavy-footed, hard-nosed, unromantic federal agents." Yet the series inevitably cast those officials in a decidedly favorable light.

While the show was never an authentic progression of that agency's work, and in fact routinely acknowledged that its tales were fabricated, it drew a strong following that may have ignored the disclaimer and reveled in the chase. The narrative was usually revealed from the criminal's perspective, alternating with the G-men in hot pursuit.

The action frequently shifted from the skullduggery of the offenders to tracking by the FBI. Changes of scene were

denoted by the rapid clicking of teletype machines as all-points bulletins were dispatched.

The culprits usually weren't run-of-the-mill sorts who pulled gas station stickups, knocked over an occasional bank or abused a spouse in an act of domestic violence. Rather, the *Peace and War* anthologies were populated with con artists, swindlers, racketeers,

drug traffickers and corrupt officials of myriad persuasions who may have operated in the slimy shadows undetected for a while. The concluding epilogue expressed perspectives into both the show's premise and focus:

"The radio dramatizations of *The FBI in Peace and War* are written by Louis Pelletier and Jacques Finke. These programs are produced and directed by Betty Mandeville. All names and characters used on the program are fictitious. Any similarity to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. [*That embedded tagline, coincidentally, was adopted by numerous crime shows. Even the long sentences meted out to the guilty, announced at the close of each drama, tended to make the 'reenactments' appear as both highly appealing and authentic to the millions who tuned in regularly.*] This program is based on Frederick L. Collins' copyrighted book, *The FBI in Peace and War*, and the broadcast does not imply endorsement, authorization or approval of the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

Indeed, agency director J. Edgar Hoover reportedly considered the series an abomination, according to several published ac-



Harold Huber, Bob Sloane, Martin Blaine
The FBI in Peace and War

PHOTOGRAPH BY

counts. While an autocratic, heavy-handed, allegedly opinionated Hoover frequently expressed his displeasure over matters with which he was at odds, there has been little to substantiate his conspicuous distaste for a radio series that hyped his staff and work while nullifying the criminal at every turn.

Apparently the rift stemmed initially from Collins' book and what became of it. According to longtime trivia buff Jack French, who himself is a retired FBI agent, the bureau cooperated fully with the author in preparing the volume and was highly gratified upon its release. It seems a formal agreement that the agency signed with Collins before he produced the book pertained to it alone, however, and not to any subsequent use he might make of the information acquired.

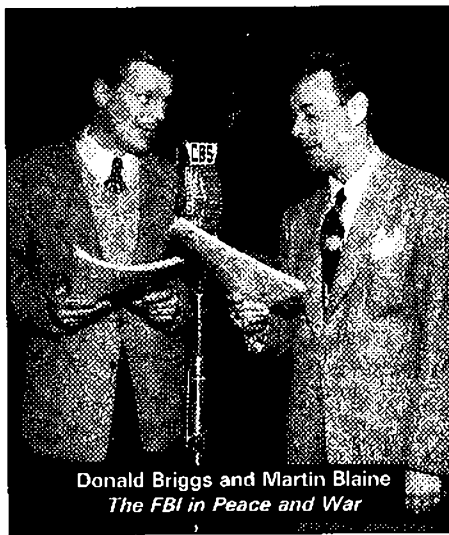
Later, when the feds learned that Collins was negotiating with CBS to sell the rights for a subsequent radio series, Hoover and company were not happy. If this went through, they reasoned, the show would go on without the slightest FBI oversight and mistakes could occur. To prevent that from happening the bureau appealed to the U.S. Attorney General with a request that Collins be denied from selling the rights

to his book to CBS. Their claim was based on the fact that the agency's original agreement with Collins covered only the book, not radio, movie or other rights for use of the bureau's name and cases. The Attorney General, however, declined to intercede and the transaction went forward, much to the bureau's distress.

Many years afterward at an old time radio convention Jack French engaged *Peace and War* producer Betty Mandeville in an exchange concerning the transaction and its aftermath. She acknowledged that Collins had absolutely nothing to do with the radio series, and never wrote a word of the scripts. "CBS was happy to pay him handsome royalties for the use of his name and the book's title," she confirmed, "but everything was created by our own writers." Radio producer Phillips H. Lord, who was responsible for bringing to the airwaves numerous crimefighting shows—notably *Counterspy*, *Gangbusters*, *G-Men*, *Mr. District Attorney*, *Policewoman* and *Treasury Agent*—had already experienced Hoover's wrath for his own aberrations. Hoover was never very happy with Lord's portrayal of his officers and counterintelligence missions and stated it.

Lord's use of frequent gunplay as opposed to stable investigative activity while bringing criminals to justice was a major bone of contention between the pair. On another front, Hoover was chagrined by an expression that introduced *The Green Hornet*, produced by George W. Trendle, to that show's audiences: "He hunts the biggest of all game, public enemies that even the G-Men cannot reach." In 1939 the phrase was altered to pacify Hoover: "... public enemies who try to destroy our America!"

The feds eventually received their comeuppance by introducing their own publicly endorsed feature, *This Is Your FBI*, which ran over ABC from April 6, 1945 through January 30, 1953.



Donald Briggs and Martin Blaine
The FBI in Peace and War

So enamored with the prospect of this series was Hoover that, at its debut, he offered an effusive discourse in which he lauded the FBI, the U.S. troops fighting overseas and even the show's sponsor. He further emphasized a link between detective radio drama and life: "It is my sincere hope that the broadcasts will enable you to know more about how to cooperate with your local police officials and every branch of law enforcement in your community. I also hope that you will come to know your FBI as a group of men and women who seek no personal glory, and who are part of a great team serving you, your family and the nation."

As several radio historiographers have noted, however, that program never achieved the prestige, popularity or respect enjoyed by a trio of "unofficial" dramas that had reached the ether before it. The fans, it seemed, preferred *Counterspy*, *Gangbusters* and *The FBI in Peace and War* to the "authorized" version, at least according to the published ratings. On those, the work of the FBI and its counterparts had obviously already been revealed and won the approval of the listening masses.

Titles of *Peace and War* episodes were

invariably intriguing. They included such fanciful labels as "The Fence," "Room for Improvement," "The Windfall," "The Executive Type," "The Smoke Ring," "The Eighty Grand Exit," "The Target," "The Scientific Touch," "The Good Boy," "The Scrious Type," "The Traveling Man," "The Fixer," "Unfinished Business," "Top Man," "No Insurance," "Help Wanted," "The Bungler" and "Retirement Plan." Each hinted at all sorts of stimulating possibilities as it was announced at the conclusion of each week's episode for the succeeding installment.

Lava, the original and sole sponsor of *Peace and War* during its first six years, was touted as "the soap that gets grimy hands cleaner faster than ordinary soaps ever can." As radio's fortunes began to ebb in the 1950s and listeners turned their attention to television, longtime sponsors that had exclusively underwritten shows for years began to shift their advertising dollars elsewhere. A new pattern of supporting radio fare emerged, that of multiple or participating sponsorship. Instead of a single organization buying a whole series, several firms purchased segments. This allowed smaller manufacturers and service providers—many that would have been strapped financially if they had attempted to underwrite an entire series—to participate competitively in the marketplace.

Thus, beginning with the broadcast of January 4, 1951, *The FBI in Peace and War* was offered to assorted advertisers. For a while Procter & Gamble purchased a third of each half-hour on behalf of Lava. Other commodities that bought in included Bryceem and Wildroot Cream Oil hair grooming preparations, Nescafe instant coffee, Lucky Strike cigarettes, Wrigley's chewing gum, Wheaties cereal and CBS Radio, the latter on a sustained basis. Even when Lava was totally washed up, the melody and the suds had become so inter-

twined in faithful listeners' psyches that they could hardly separate the two.

Today, incidentally, the ubiquitous Lava gray bar is gone. It has been replaced on supermarket shelves by an uncharacteristically green surrogate that doesn't begin to resemble the familiar battleship gray pumice-ensconced emulsifying agent that for decades American hands depended upon to cut grease and grime in half the time.

Lava is one of those brands Procter & Gamble unloaded a few years ago after sales fell below expectations. Now the less-than-decipherable green bar (alongside a new liquid dispenser) is manufactured by the WD-40 Company of San Diego. Those are the same folks who have been making squeaks in door hinges and other odd places disappear for years. The powerful marketing efforts that P&G executed so successfully at mid-twentieth century—and, need we say it?—a very large measure of that directly attributable to the memorable commercials on *Peace and War*—couldn't salvage the soapmaker's principal product for dirty hands a half-century later. Perhaps as much as anything else, a cadre of Americans who built up an affinity for the commodity in that era—and many of those as a result of the radio commercials—continue to buy it, even in its foreign-looking form. In Lava's defense, it obviously still does the job for which it was long ago intended.

The two men whose voices were most familiar to *Peace and War* audiences were both venerable soap opera actors. Martin Blaine, who played field agent Adam Sheppard, and his superior, Andrews—in real life actor Donald Briggs—were virtually incurable veterans of the daytime saga. Each man turned up regularly in a plethora of matinee misery.

Blaine put in appearances in recurring roles on radio's *Katie's Daughter*. *The*



Martin Blaine and Lisa Loughlin
The FBI in Peace and War

PHOTOFEST

Open Door, The Strange Romance of Evelyn Winters, Valiant Lady and Young Doctor Malone. He portrayed the male lead in three of that quintet. In addition, he reprised his *Young Doctor Malone* stint in the televised series that outlived radio, from 1959 until the series left the tube in 1963. He also appeared in the supporting cast of radio's final crime investigative series, *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*, which departed the air for the last time in 1962. The man with the confident, reassuring voice that tracked criminals in the field on *Peace and War* died at age 75 on January 19, 1989.

The other recurring *Peace and War* presence, agent Sheppard's superior, FBI field agent supervisor Andrews, played by Donald Briggs, had an even more active "other life" in soap opera. His list of credits includes *Betty and Bob, David Harum, Girl Alone, Hilltop House, Perry Mason, Portia Faces Life* and *The Story of Bess Johnson*. In a couple of those he played the male lead. He also won lead roles on the crime dramas *The Adventures of the Abbotts* and *City Desk*, the juvenile series *The Adventures of Frank Merriwell* and the western adventure drama *The Sheriff*. Briggs was a guest or supporting cast mem-

ber on *The Cavalcade of America, Dick Darling's Adventures, First Nighter, Grand Hotel* and *Welcome Valley*. On TV's *What's My Line?* he was the announcer. Briggs lived to age 75, too, and died February 3, 1986.

A large cast of supporting actors appeared in the *Peace and War* dramas from week to week includ-

ing Edith Arnold, Charita Bauer, Jackson Beck, Ralph Bell, Joe DeSantis, Robert Dryden, Elspeth Eric, Walter Greaza, Larry Haines, Pat Hosley, Harold Huber, John M. James, Paul McGrath, George Petrie, Frank Readick, Rosemary Rice, Grant Richards, Bob Sloane, William J. Smith and Luis Van Rooten.

Peace and War's announcers were Andre Baruch, Hugh Holder, Dick Noel, Len Sterling and possibly the best remembered, Warren Sweeney.

Others connected with the program not previously named included Max Marcin, who preceded Betty Mandeville as producer; writer Ed Adamson; music director Vladimir Selinsky, and sound effects technicians Ed Blainey, Al Hogan and Byron Wingett.

The FBI in Peace and War may not have received the official endorsement of the federal organization that it sought to portray. But to its listeners, the tales were every bit as authentic as if they had actually happened. And from that vantage point the series unmistakably had success written all over it. ■

Tune in TWTD April 5 and June 14 to hear episodes of This is Your FBI.

The life story of Joan Crawford is the real Cinderella story of Hollywood. Few people, and no other screen star, have gone so far from such a difficult beginning.

Miss Crawford was born on March 23rd in San Antonio, Texas. Fate threw the young lady her first curve when her parents separated shortly after her birth. Her mother later married Henry Cassin, a theater owner in Lawton, Oklahoma. It was there she became known as Billie Cassin, and she used the two names interchangeably until she started work in Hollywood.

In Lawton, Joan, received her first taste of theatrical life by watching the performers in her stepfather's theaters and by making up and playing various dramas of her own in the warehouse where scenery was stored. A serious foot injury threatened to cripple her during this period, but the courage that has marked Joan Crawford throughout life refused to accept what the doctors thought inevitable. She learned to walk and dance again.

This is the official Warner Bros. biography of Joan Crawford issued on January 19, 1948. Joan Crawford died May 10, 1977 at age 69.

While she was still a child, her family moved to Kansas City, where the mother and stepfather separated. Joan's mother secured employment in a department store, and Joan paid her way in school by working in the kitchen and dining room. Her

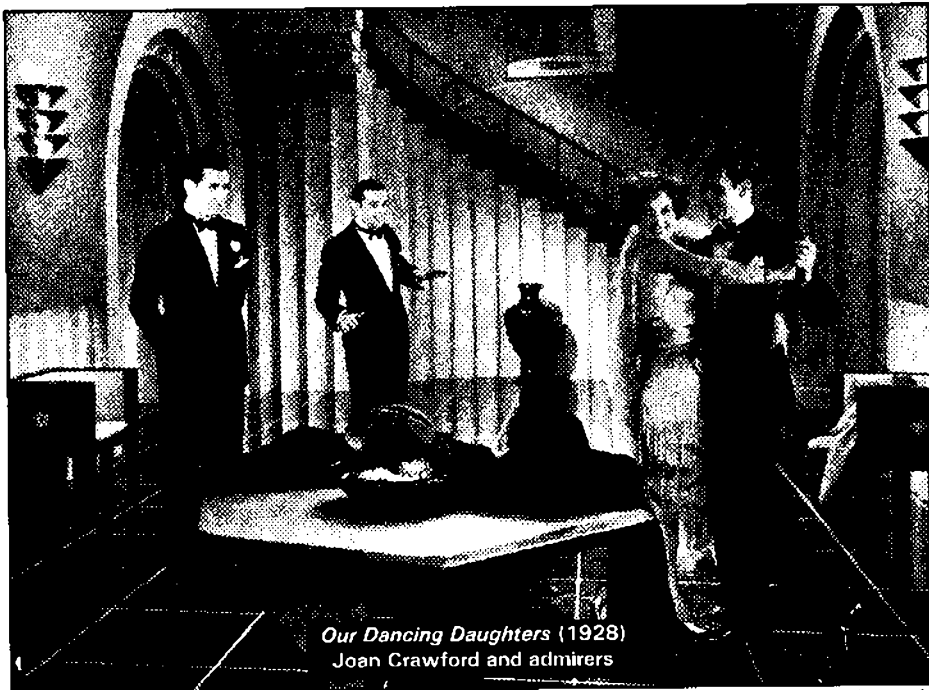


PHOTO FEST

interest in dancing never flagged, and it was not long before she won her first dancing contest at the Jack O'Lantern cafe. It was the first of many awards that Joan was to win during ensuing years.

At her mother's insistence, Joan attended Stevens College at Columbia, Missouri, where it was arranged for her to pay her tuition, board and room by serving as a waitress. She danced at every opportunity and eventually decided that her dancing might lead to an easier life than she enjoyed at college. She went back to Kansas City and worked as a clerk in a department store for \$15 per week. Her earnings, together with the discount allowed her as an employee of the store, enabled Joan to build a small but effective wardrobe.

Armed with her hard-earned finery, Joan applied to a theatrical agent for work. He found the teen-aged girl a place in the chorus of a road company at Springfield, Mis-



Our Dancing Daughters (1928)
Joan Crawford and admirers

PHOTOFLS1

souri. On the way to that city Joan changed her name to Lucille LeSueur. Even with the new name, her bad luck held, and within two weeks the show closed. She returned to Kansas City and the department store to rebuild her finances for another try. This time she went to Chicago, hoping to get a start through the influence of the leading lady of the recently folded show. But the actress was on the road with another company and Joan's purse contained only two dollars and no return ticket.

She remembered hearing other members of the Springfield cast mention an agent, Ernie Young, in Chicago. She found his name in the telephone directory and went to his office where he was interviewing girls for cabaret revues. She stood in line so long she thought she would faint, then decided to faint, if at all, in the presence of the man she was trying to see. She rushed ahead of the others into his office.

But Joan didn't faint. Instead, she gave one of her first real dramatic performances.

The result was a job in a cafe revue where she danced with the company for a week. Then, with the same small company, she went to Detroit. After eight weeks in the back line, she was promoted to the end position, then front line.

The night Joan made the front line, a fairy godfather was there, in the person of J. J. Shubert, who was trying out a new musical comedy, *Innocent Eyes*. He offered Joan a place in the chorus. Within three months after her lonely arrival in Chicago, Joan, as Lucille LeSueur was dancing on Broadway.

When *Innocent Eyes* neared the end of its run, Joan planned a visit to Kansas City to "show the folks back home." At this crucial moment a Hollywood producer offered the girl a chance to make a screen test. Anxious to get away on her trip, she first refused, then relented and made the test. But she caught the first train to Kansas City as soon as it was completed.

Three days later, at her mother's Kansas

City apartment, Joan received a telegram. It offered her a screen contract with MGM and urged her to entrain for Hollywood immediately. She did, starting on New Year's Day.

The Hollywood reception was not at all what she had anticipated, no red carpets were rolled out for her, and she was given only an extra role in *Pretty Ladies*. After a few more brief bits, she was given a better part in *Old Clothes*. During this time the publicity department was making good use of the pretty, shapely girl in still pictures. Joan still feels she learned many valuable lessons from the days when she was featured in the department's "leg art".

Miss LeSeuer set her heart on playing a role in a scheduled picture, *Sally, Irene and Mary*, in which one of the girls was a dancer. She finally won the role of "Irene" and a long-term contract. At this time, the studio decided to change her name. A magazine contest was promoted, and the resulting name was Joan Crawford.

From that moment on, Joan Crawford became one of the studio's leading players. When, in 1929, a new and better contract was submitted to take the place of the original one, Joan became a star in her own right. In fact, she at once started building a home — the one she always hoped to have, and the one in which she still lives, in Brentwood.

As a star, Joan has made many sensation-ally successful pictures. A few of them are *Our Dancing Daughters*, *The Duke Steps Out*, *Our Modern Maidens*, *Our Blushing Brides*, *This Modern Age*, *Rain*, *Letty Lynton*, *Mannequin*, *The Women*, *Susan and God*, *A Woman's Face* and *When Ladies Meet*. These built a tremendous fan following, yet most of them were not the substantial roles which she now felt capable of handling. Joan left MGM determined that she would not do another picture until she found a story that satisfied her in every respect.



Humoresque (1946)
Joan Crawford and John Garfield

PHOTO LSI

For two years she read and rejected dozens of scripts that were submitted to her. It was not until Warner Bros. sent her a script of the James Cain story *Mildred Pierce* that she agreed to return to the screen.

Her performance in the role of Mildred brought to picture-goers a new, mature Crawford. And it brought to Joan Crawford the motion picture industry's highest tribute, an Academy Award for being the best actress of 1945.

Following this Miss Crawford starred in *Humoresque* and *Possessed*, the latter performance placing her among the nominees for the 1947 Academy Award. There followed *Daisy Kenyon* at 20th-Century Fox. Then Miss Crawford returned to Warner Bros. for *Flamingo Road*, a Michael Curtiz production. This film reunites Crawford, Michael Curtiz, Jerry Wald and Zachary Scott — star, director, producer and co-star of the eminently successful *Mildred Pierce*.

She never drinks coffee, is a chain smoker, loves to dance and is considered one of the best dancers in the Hollywood colony. Calls everybody "honey." She declares she is a walking case of telephinitis.

Always on the telephone. Even has one in her set dressing room.

Miss Crawford knits almost constantly — on the set, at parties, even while seeing motion pictures. Knitting, she explains, is the best relaxation she knows and she always advises friends who are nervous or who smoke too much to

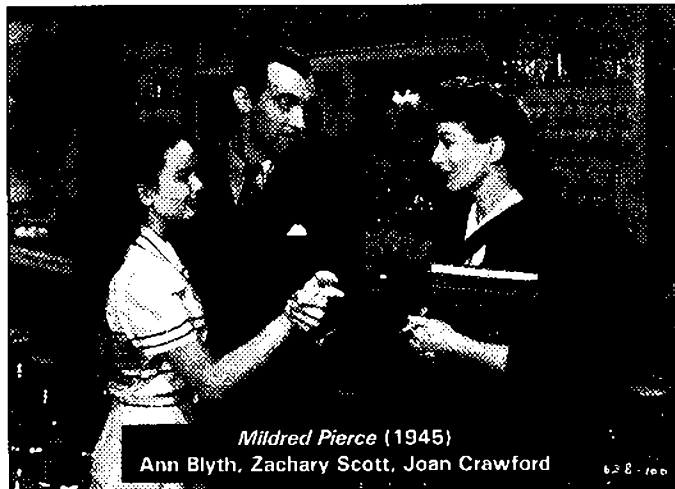
take it up. According to Miss Crawford, it is her pals who suffer most from her devotion to knitting. They have to wear the socks and sweaters she produces ceaselessly.

An enthusiastic movie fan, she sees all pictures, usually running them in her own garden theater. Miss Crawford is a typical fan in her reception to pictures — she groans with anguish when the villain is triumphing, sighs during love scenes and advises the hero what to do when he's faced with a dilemma. Her favorite actress is Greta Garbo.

Miss Crawford is extremely loyal to old friends and expects loyalty in return. When friends disappoint her in this respect, she never says anything but she never trusts that person again.

She considers the motion picture business the greatest of the entertainment media, believing that it has never explored its own possibilities. She goes to New York once a year to see the shows but admits she'd be too frightened to work in the theater although she's had repeated offers. Radio also scares her, so she politely but firmly turns down all bids to step in front of the microphone

Miss Crawford owns a French poodle



Mildred Pierce (1945)
Ann Blyth, Zachary Scott, Joan Crawford

628-100
PHOTOFEST

named Cliquot Crawford, calling him by his full name. She likes to give small dinner parties for close friends. She loves flowers, always has them around her. She never eats candy. When it comes to food, Miss Crawford eats everything. She never diets. She's also a confirmed radio listener, with the Sunday musical programs her favorite although she gets worked up by quiz sessions.

Miss Crawford owns two cars: Cadillacs. She always drives herself. She is an able tennis and badminton player and swims daily in her own pool.

When she works, she goes to bed at nine, arising at five. She doesn't breakfast until she arrives at the studio where she prepares bacon and eggs and coffee in the kitchen of her dressing room for herself, hairdresser and makeup man. She is beloved by crew and co-workers. Her vitality and warm friendliness set the pace on the set. She always knows her lines and how she's going to play scenes although she's the first to take direction, wrings her hands and paces when tears don't come to her eyes immediately for emotional scenes. She chews gum avidly.

At home, she has a staff of servants although she takes personal supervision of



Flamingo Road (1949)
Sidney Greenstreet and Joan Crawford

PHOTOFEST

constantly and everything, not only for enjoyment but in the hope that she will find material for a possible picture.

She is one of Hollywood's best-dressed women. Miss Crawford feels this a "must" because people see her that way on screen and expect it of her "in person." She is very clothes-conscious and

running the establishment. She is a meticulous housekeeper. Can cook like a dream, and does. Does her own spring cleaning, pitching right in to work, with a dust cloth wrapped around her hair. She is extremely careful about correspondence, is punctual and expects others to be on time. Miss Crawford is used to discipline and hard work, never shirking responsibilities. She programs her day.

Miss Crawford, her friends say, has the memory of an elephant. She can recall conversations from years back and quote same word by word. She has great physical courage; her only fear is flying, however. She flew once years ago from Catalina to the mainland and never again. When she travels, it is always on trains, taking with her cases full of scripts and books. She reads

clothes-wise, usually patronizing Adrian's and John Frederics.

Miss Crawford believes in personal friendship with her fans. "If you ignore them, they'll ignore you, and should," she said. "I am extremely grateful to the public. They've put me where I am today."

Miss Crawford has been married to Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Franchot Tone and Phillip Terry. She has four adopted children; Christina (8), Christopher (6), Cathy and Cynthia, the latter two 21 months old.

Miss Crawford says her whole life has been changed by her youngsters. She adds that she doesn't know how a woman can live without children. It is her hope to one day adopt two more babies. ■

Tune in TWTD May 17 to hear Joan Crawford on radio.

RE-ENACTMENTS OF OLD TIME RADIO BROADCASTS



presented by the *Those Were The Days Radio Players*
at the **Museum of Broadcast Communications**



Radio Hall of Fame Studio, Chicago Cultural Center
Michigan Avenue between Randolph and Washington

2 pm Sunday, April 13

2 pm Sunday, May 18

2 pm Sunday June 15

No Charge -- Limited Seating

Museum opens at 12 Noon

Radio Studio opens at 1:30 pm

BORDER BLASTER STATIONS LEFT LASTING IMPRESSION

BY BILL RYAN

Anyone who spent much time with a radio in the 1940s and '50s may have run across one or more of the Mexican stations that begged listeners to send money for items ranging from cures for impotence to religious relics.

These were the "border-blasters" stations such as XELO, XERF and XERB. Most were located just across the Rio Grande from Texas towns. Others were near the Arizona and California borders, while some were in interior Mexico. Many were developed by renegade Americans who wanted to escape the broadcasting regulations of the U.S. government.

The stations, licensed by the Mexican government, operated on clear channels, which meant that no other station in the U.S., Mexico or Canada could broadcast on that frequency. Many of the "X" stations were on the lower frequencies such as 780 kilocycles (pre-kilohertz) or 860 kc.

"They built the stations just across the border, in Mexican territory, and worked out special licensing arrangements with the broadcasting authorities in Mexico City, whom they found to be much more agreeable than the stuffed shirts at the Federal Radio Commission," wrote Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford in "Border Radio," a 1987 book published by Texas Monthly Press.

Bill Ryan is a retired journalist who spent 17 years with United Press International. He also was a college teacher and administrator. This article first appeared in Radio World, a product of IMAS Publishing (USA) Inc., of Falls Church Va.

*I'm talkin' 'bout that outlaw X
It's cuttin' ' though the air...
I heard it, I heard it,
I heard it on the X*

—"Heard It on the X," by
Gibbons, Hill and Beard, and
recorded by ZZ Top.
Hamstein Music Co./BMI

"The sky wave, or ozone skip effect, enabled the signals of these super-power stations to travel incredible distances. Thus, over the years, border radio developed an international reputation, and the sounds of the big X stations became familiar to listeners in Ulysses, Kansas, as well as Uppsala, Sweden."

Although the most powerful American AM stations were limited to 50,000 watts, the border stations could run at twice that power, or even up to 500,000 watts.

One can only imagine the folklore that originated with nearby citizens picking up a station 24 hours a day in tooth fillings and bedsprings and the kitchen stove.

A major user of the "X" stations was Dr. J.R. Brinkley, a physician who ran afoul of the law in his native Kansas by promoting his special cure for impotence. Dr. Brinkley's XERA broadcasts pleaded with men whose vitality was lagging to travel to Del Rio, where he or one of his assistants would implant the sexual glands of a goat into the sufferer's body.

Brinkley found huge success by boasting that his goat-gland operation "made men who were living like geldings into active stallions."

Another big advertiser was Dallas insurance baron Can Collins. His Crazy Water

Crystals helped build the economy of Mineral Wells, Texas, through intense advertising on XEAW. The "Make You Feel Better" crystals were actually a powerful laxative.

Harry M. Hoxsey pushed a cure for cancer that he said had been developed by his great grandfather. He begged cancer victims to visit one of his clinics for surefire relief.

There was a plethora of religion on the stations, with constant pleas from preachers to send money for special favors from God. They offered trinkets ranging from prayer shawls to the famous figure of Jesus that glowed in the dark. This could be obtained by mailing a check or money order to a post office box in Clint, Texas, the drop for XELO.

There were fortunetellers who claimed they could see into your future and would do so on the air in return for your mailing a dollar.

On the entertainment side, the hugely successful stations were a refuge for country singers and bands.

Cowboy singer Slim Whitman cheerfully acknowledged that he became famous on the Mexican stations. Others who benefited include Patsy Montana, the Carter Family, Hank Snow and Ernest Tubb. There was no need for the speakers and performers to travel to Mexico to be heard. Recording studios in Dallas and other cities prospered by cutting half-hour disks for anyone who had bought time on the "X" stations. The result was thousands of money-bearing letters each week.

The border blasters, according to Fowler and Crawford, "were among the first to experiment with the programming creation that was to save radio in the television age: the disc jockey. The smooth voices introduced Webb Pierce, Lefty Frizzell, Johnny Cash and dozens of other country performers to national audiences in the '50s and

early '60s."

Wolfman Jack developed his shtick in the early 1960s while working as a rock 'n' roll DJ at 250,000 watt XERF. His howl and banter led to greater fame when he was hired by Hollywood and later New York stations.

Fowler and Crawford list the major stations as XED and XEAW in Reynosa, across the Rio Grande from McAllen, Texas; XENT and XEXO in Nueva Laredo, adjacent to Laredo, Texas; XEPN and XELO in Piedras Negras, across from Eagle Pass, Texas; XER, XERA and XERI in Ciudad Acuna, a bridge hop from Del Rio, Texas.

XELO was also located at Ciudad Juarez, within sight of El Paso. Others were at Nogales, in the Mexican state of Sonora, within spitting distance of Nogales, Ariz., and at Rosarita Beach, near Tijuana and San Diego, Calif.

Although built by Americans, the studio equipment and the huge transmitters tended to be maintained by Mexican engineers.

Fowler and Crawford say, "The super-powered border stations were broadcasting laboratories where some of the most talented engineers in North America ... experimented with high-powered, long-range broadcasts."

For example, the late Jim Weldon, an engineer who designed many of the super-power transmitters, became an expert in the field of radio wave propagation and characteristics. He helped found Continental Electronics Inc. in Dallas and designed the original Voice of America transmitters. Weldon was called on to raise the power of XER. His transmitter additions upped it from 50 kw to 250 kw in 1935 and up to 500 kw in 1938, according to Continental's Connie Hartin.

American broadcasters and the FCC had complained for years that the Mexican sta-

tions, all on AM frequencies between 550 and 1600 kc, were drowning out U.S. stations. Agreements between the countries on frequency allocations were approved and signed as early as 1941, but the broadcasts from south of the border continued.

"A new agreement was signed in 1957 and ratified in 1961, with one U.S. negotiator warning the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that without such an agreement, 'chaotic interference would be bound to result as a radio wave does not respect international boundaries,'" Fowler and Crawford report.

"President Richard Nixon supported the ratification of a further agreement in 1969, assuring the wary Senate that the agreement was 'generally satisfactory to broadcasting interests in the U.S.'"

Eventually, in 1986, a North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement dramatically altered the clear-channel allocations and "dealt a crippling blow to the power of the other country's clear-channel frequencies for low-powered stations in the evening. That meant that the signals of the border stations would be drowned out in many communities by local broadcasts,

effectively putting an end to the era of high-powered, far-ranging radio."

Despite screams of fury from the station owners and the advertisers, the U.S. and Mexican governments held firm. The stations were forced to drop to 50,000 watts or below, meaning their messages could no longer be heard over such a vast area. Many, like the Tijuana stations, switched to new formats or to Spanish and gained new audiences.

"The broadcasters who moved to the border frontier helped to define the American broadcasting industry by proving the effectiveness of broadcasting advertising. While network officials decried the hucksterism on border radio and took public actions to promote broadcast standards, they realized what the border radio operators knew all along, that nothing makes money like a hard sell," Fowler and Crawford said in summing it up.

But those of us who remember the border blasters see them as pure audio nostalgia, reflecting the programs and the commercial pitches of that golden time. And we wish now we had ordered one of those glowing statues of Jesus. ■

Nostalgia Digest Audio Selection

Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio



As heard coast-to-coast during the Spring and Summer of 1974. Jim Jordan repeats his role as Fibber McGee with special guest appearances by Hal Peary and Gale Gordon as Gildersleeve and Mayor LaTrivia. Radio fan Chuck Schaden visits Fibber at 79 Wistful Vista and, using Mr. McGee's Super-Hetrodyne radio, they tune in to an entire week of sounds from the Golden Age, reminiscing about the shows and the stars. Seven hour-long programs, each devoted to a day of the week.

BONUS DISC: Chuck Schaden interviews Jim Jordan, Gale Gordon, Hal Peary and writer Phil Leslie. **PLUS** Jim Jordan's "favorite" McGee show (12-26-39).

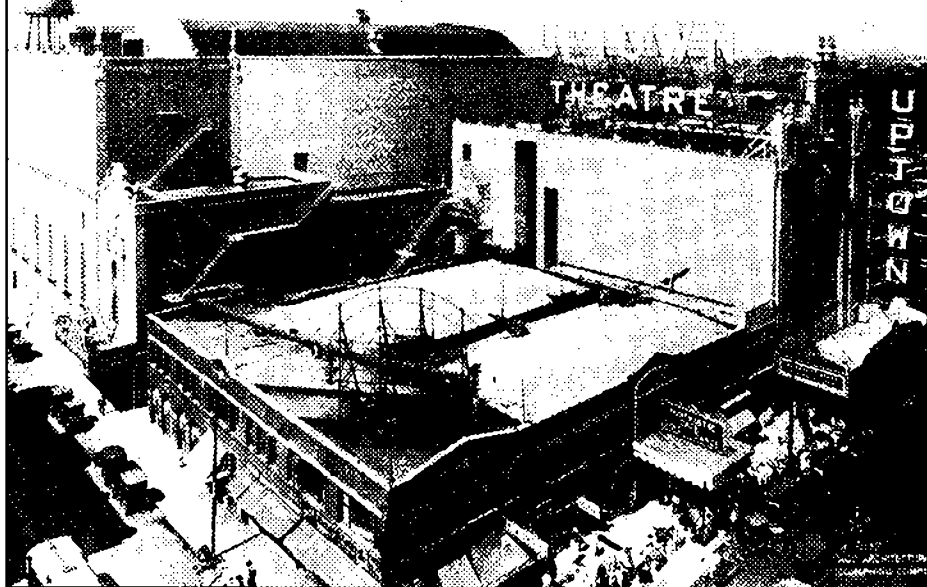
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Memories of the Uptown Theater

BY JO LEWINSKI



Every day of my life for 17 years I could look down the street from my gray wooden porch and see the Uptown Theater in Chicago. I used to think that the sun rose and set over its huge rounded roof. The Uptown Theater, at Lawrence and Broadway, was part of the landscape of my childhood. Its glorious decor and double feature movies fueled my imagination, decorated my dreams, enriched my life. There was nothing so magical as the lights of the marquee beckoning and enticing in the night — hundreds of mesmerizing little globes strobing seductively, come hither.

My parents took my sisters and me to the theater almost every week. On hot sum-

Jo Lewinski is a free-lance writer from Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Photos courtesy Theatre Historical Society of America, York Theatre Building, 152 N. York Street, Elmhurst, Illinois 60126. www.historictheatres.org

mer afternoons we would open the heavy glass and brass doors that were marked with a pale blue sign — a penguin announcing, “Cool Inside.” A blast of cold air laced heavily with the perfume of hot popcorn enveloped and transported us. To walk into the grand lobby of the Uptown Theater seemed to me like passing through the looking glass. We were in a Wonderland. The chandeliers glittered, the floor sparkled, the brass glowed and oh those magnificent red-carpeted double staircases that curved toward us from the mezzanine like two great arms gesturing a welcoming embrace.

The staircases were usually blocked by red velvet ropes and a big sign that firmly stated, “Balcony is Closed.” This never stopped my father. He would march up to the sign and in swift smooth movements he clicked open the clasp of the rope, swung it behind him and stepped back to let his brood march past. Then in a motion

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UPTOWN

Dr. 1:30—CLARK GABLE—LANA TURNER
 "Somewhere, I'll Find You"
 Plus DIANA BARRYMORE—ROBT CUMMINGS,
 MAY FRANKL "Between Us Girls"
 JOHN BOLER

choreographed by experience, he fastened the rope without even looking at it. I always admired that authoritative efficiency of motion. The young ushers smartly dressed in their gold-trimmed maroon uniforms did not dare to stop this stern-faced father from providing his family with the best seats in the house.

We bought candy from the candy girls in their yellow dresses and scuffled through our box of popcorn in economizing fistfuls so that it lasted the double feature. In our "reserved" seats we had a full uninterrupted view of the sweeping scope of the theater, its endless curves of plush seats,

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UPTOWN

Open 1:30
 King GROSSBY—Fred ASTAIRE
 In IRVING BERLIN'S "HOLIDAY INN"
 Plus WALLACE BEERY—MARJORIE MAIN in
 JACKASS MAIL A Get In The Road

BALABAN & KATZ
UPTOWN



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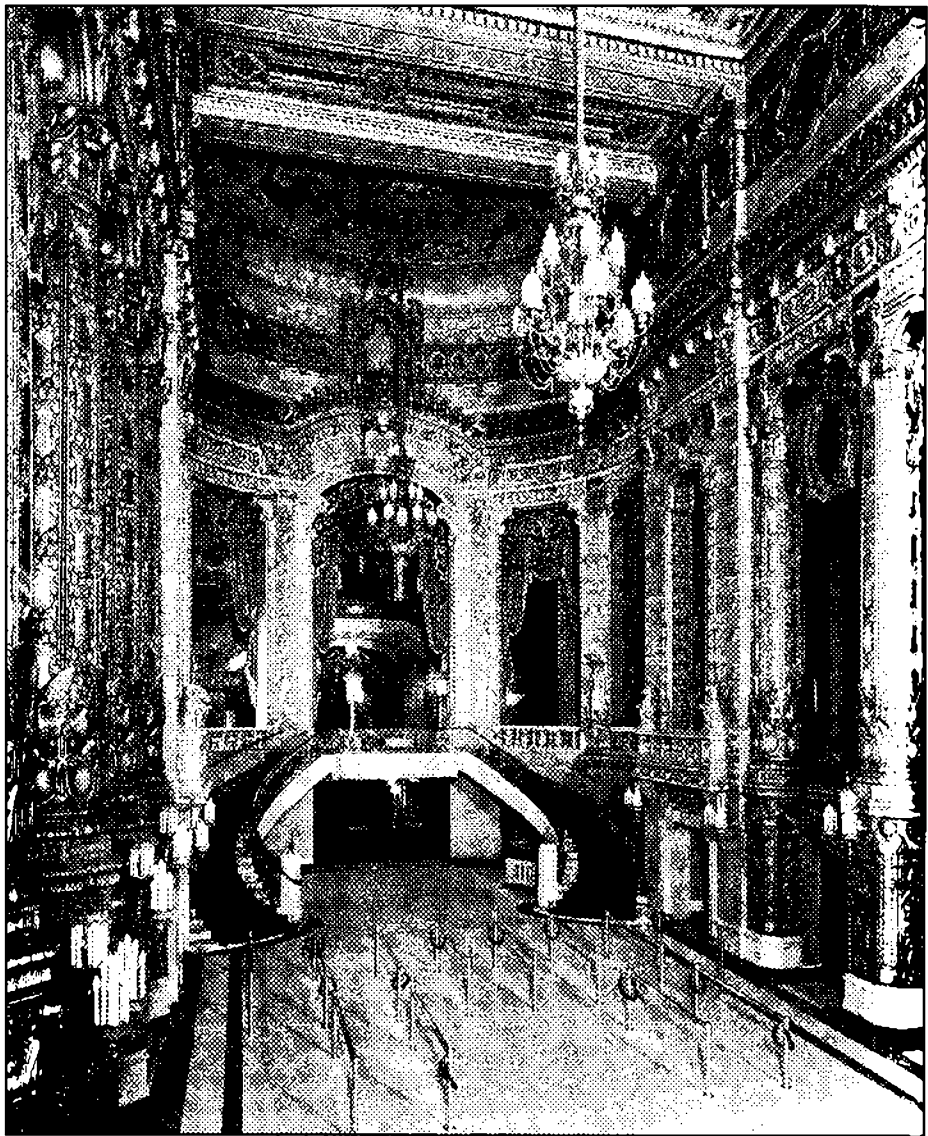
UPTOWN
 Early Seated by Street Car

INTIMATE as your own secret love!
BETTE DAVIS
PAUL HENREID
 "Now, Voyager"
 Claude Rains

THUNDER crashing out of the skies!
GENE PRESTON **JOHN TIERNEY**
FOSTER **SUTTON**
"THUNDER BIRDS"
 In breath-taking Technicolor!

its elaborate domed ceiling lit from the great beyond by hidden lights. The heavy luxurious gold curtains were drawn across the screen on the expansive stage. I remember clearly the crackle of the speakers before the movie began, the distorted images that were projected onto the folds of the curtains as they began to pull back in a ceremoniously slow dignity. We were a hushed and reverent audience poised and ready for the first pops of the speakers and chords of the Gilbert and Sullivan music that told us of refreshments in the lobby.

On the main floor there was a pristine white statue standing over a black marble pond. There were always goldfish swimming back and forth and pennies carrying many wishes dotting the bottom of the shallow pond. Off to the side in the lobby the velvety red carpeted floor slanted, making for a wonderful place for children to run and gather up the speed of a flowing-maned black stallion until the ushers rounded us up and



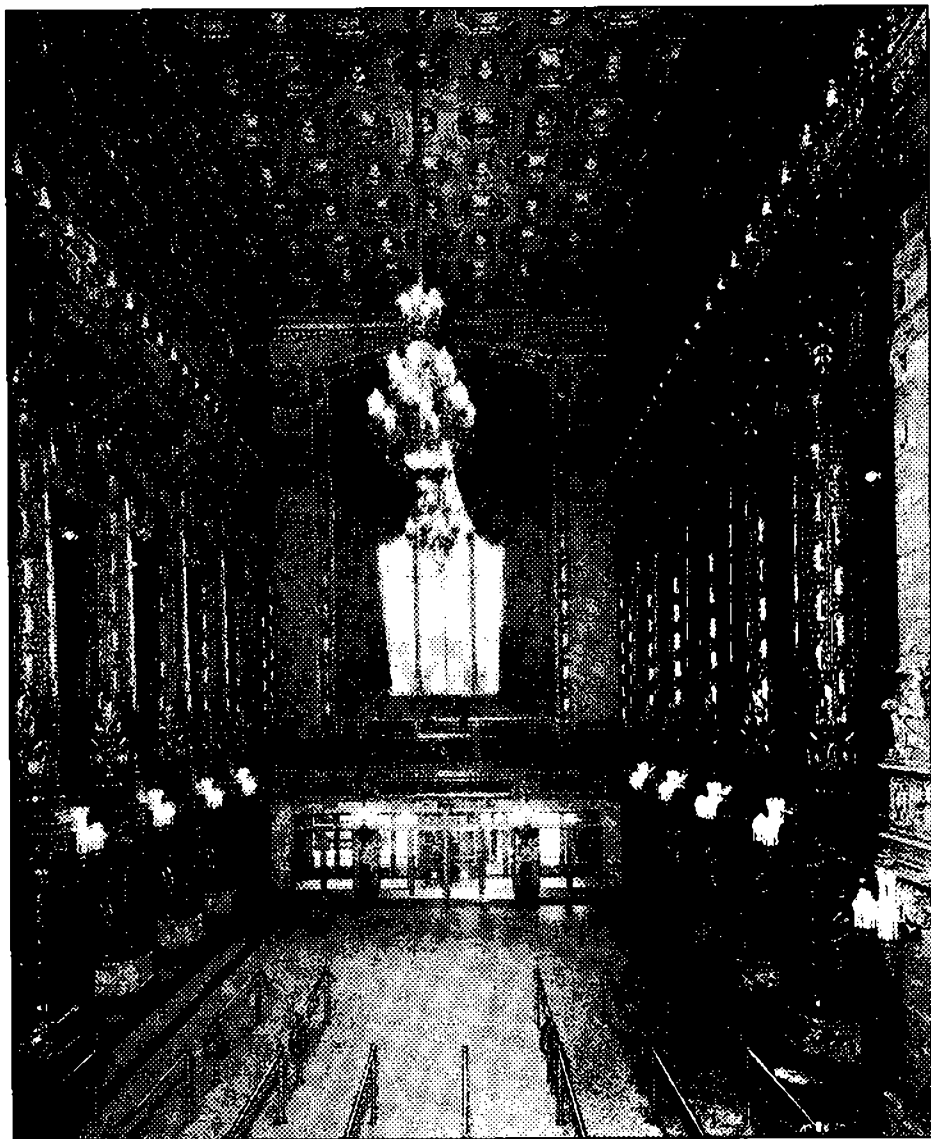
herded us back to our parents and reality.

There were rows of doors that led to the auditorium seats. These doors were also glass and brass and each was covered with an elaborate lace curtain. On the walls between the doors were elegant sconces casting a honey glow on the intricate gilded adornments too bountiful to absorb in a lifetime.

There were secret passageways in the

balcony area that led to little hidden pockets of seats. There were paintings softly glowing under spotlights. It was all too much to take in. It could never be completely explored or familiar. The Uptown Theater offered up its magic and its nuances abundantly but its mysteries in careful measure.

Yet, the theater belonged to me. I would enter it a little girl and leave it as a prance



ing horse, beautiful princess or toughened cowboy, whatever the occasion called for.

The Uptown's doors opened on Broadway in 1925 and have been boarded up since 1981. It will take a huge pot of gold to fund the gilded dream of bringing it back to life. I hope that someone or a committee of someones will find a way to breathe life back into this grand palace.

One day I hope its acre of seats will be

filled with people who will treasure the Uptown Theater and forever be enriched by its presence.

If I could, I would go to that white statue that is probably still standing over the empty black marble pond. I would take the shiniest penny I have and make a wish that the Uptown Theater could come back to life and always be there to cast its magical spell. ■



Chuck Schaden's

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APRIL 2003

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST

SATURDAY, APRIL 5

FBI IN PEACE AND WAR (6-10-53) "The Traveling Man" with Martin Blaine and Donald Briggs. A runner delivering stolen cars to a fence in Florida decides to go in business for himself. Cast includes Robert Readick and Rosemary Rice. Brylcreem, Lava Soap, Nescafe, CBS. (30 min) *Read the article about this series on page 14.*

OUR MISS BROOKS (10-31-48) Eve Arden stars as school teacher Connie Brooks, who is driving biology teacher Mr. Boynton (Jeff Chandler) to the big football game in Clay City. Complications arise when student Walter Denton (Richard Crenna) and principal Osgood Conklin (Gale Gordon) hitch a ride. Palmolive, Lustre Creme, CBS. (30 min)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (1-4-54) "The Day the Earth Stood Still" starring Michael Rennie and Jean Peters in the radio version of the 1951

film. An alien from Outer Space comes to Earth to deliver an anti-nuclear warning. Cast includes Paul Frees, Herb Butterfield, Lamont Johnson, Tudor Owen, Billy Gray, William Conrad, Tyler McVey. Irving Cummings hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (18 min & 17 min & 14 min) *Read the article about this film on page 10.*

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (9-21-52) Jack and the gang have lunch at the drugstore, where waitress Iris Adrian gives them a hard time. Later, at rehearsal, Jack recalls his summer time trip to the British Isles. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (24 min)

SUSPENSE (2-2-53) "Plan X" starring Jack Benny as a Martian in the year 2053, who is chosen to deal with the "invasion rocket" from Planet Earth. Cast includes Joe Kearns, William Conrad, Howard McNear, Jack Kruschen, Mary Jane Croft, Stuffie Singer. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite, CBS. (29 min)

SATURDAY, APRIL 12 HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY LES TREMAYNE

Les Tremayne was born April 16, 1913.

HEARTBEAT THEATRE (10-27-63) "The Journey" starring Les Tremayne as Major Farrington of the Salvation Army, who meets a family on a train and wonders why they have no interest in religion. Cast includes Dick Beals, Peter Forester, Lynn Allen and Victor Rodman. Salvation Army Syndication. (25 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (10-6-90) Les Tremayne talks about his career in this *excerpt* of a conversation with Chuck Schaden during a *Those Were The Days* broadcast. Les recalls the *First Nighter* program and his radio days in Chicago. WNIB, Chicago. (27 min)

FIRST NIGHTER PROGRAM (10-25-40) "Three Who Faced Death" starring Barbara Luddy and Les Tremayne in the story of an amnesia victim who is accused of murder.

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Campana products, NBC. (24 min)

★ **AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE** (10-7-42) "A Flight to Arras" starring **Les Tremayne** in a stirring account of France at war. The drama is set in June 1940, "fateful days for France and the whole world." Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)

RADIO GOSSIP CLUB (6-16-37) Eddie and Fannie Cavanaugh welcome guest **Lester Tremayne** to their Crystal Studio in the Chicago Theatre. Broadcast Corned Beef Hash, WBBM, Chicago. (15 min)

MGM THEATRE OF THE AIR (4-6-51) "Love is a Headache" starring Joan Bennett and **Les Tremayne** with John Gibson. Romantic comedy about a beautiful actress and a Broadway columnist and their differences. Host is MGM studios vice president Howard Dietz. Syndicated, WMGM, New York. (20 min & 19 min & 16 min)

Read our cover story about *Les Tremayne* on page 2.

SATURDAY, APRIL 19

LIFE WITH LUIGI (4-8-52) Luigi writes his mother in Italy of his plans for Easter: he's inviting his night school class to dinner. J. Carrol Naish stars with Alan Reed, Hans Conried, Jody Gilbert, Mary Shipp. Wrigley's Gum, CBS. (31 min)

BOX THIRTEEN (9-19-48) "Extra, Extra" stars Alan Ladd as Dan Holiday, former newspaperman, now a fiction writer. A young newspaper boy hires Holiday to get his father out of jail. Sylvia Picker as Suzy, Dan's secretary. Syndicated, MBS. (27 min)

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE (6-16-36) *Isolated episode.* Shirley Bell stars as Annie. While Mr. Bond tells Annie and Joe the story of the Wright Brothers and their airplane, lots of mysterious things are happening in Simmons Corners. Pierre Andre announces. Ovaltine, NBC BLUE. (15 min)

★ **CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT** (12-2-43) *Isolated episode.* Ed Prentiss stars as Captain Midnight in a chapter in the sequence known as "Signal from the Sky." In New Guinea during World War II, Captain Midnight and Ichabod Mudd come upon a squad of Japanese soldiers terrorizing a missionary. Pierre Andre announces and gives a secret Code-O-Graph message about the next adventure. Ovaltine, BLUE NETWORK. (15 min)

★ **VIC AND SADE** (1-24-44) Sade is annoyed that Vic is sleeping on the couch while Uncle

Fletcher visits. Vic: Art Van Harvey; Sade: Bernardine Flynn; Fletcher: Clarence Hartzell; Russell: David Whitehouse. Announcer is Ed Roberts. Written by Paul Rhymer. Crisco, NBC. (13 min)

PHILCO RADIO TIME (12-3-47) Bing Crosby welcomes guest Al Jolson and the two of them have a great time joking and singing together. Rhythmaires, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, Ken Carpenter. Philco Radios, ABC. (30 min)

OUR SPECIAL GUESTS are Harlan Zinck and Karl Pearson of the First Generation Radio Archives, who will talk about the restoration and preservation work being done by their organization. Read the article on page 47.

SATURDAY, APRIL 26 33rd ANNIVERSARY BROADCAST



"Thanks for Listening"

As we celebrate our thirty-third broadcast anniversary today, we'll share some memories from previous *TWTD* programs including, from 1970, some of our very first interviews with radio performers.

We'll also remember a day in 1976 when we spoke on the air with listeners about Riverview, "the world's largest amusement park" in Chicago.

And, from 1980, we'll take you on an alphabetical tour of "Radio from A to Z."

It's our annual opportunity to reminisce about our *Those Were The Days* Radio Days and express our appreciation to you and others who have made it all possible.

Don't miss it if you can!

**OLD TIME
RADIO**



CENTURY

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MAY 2003

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST

SATURDAY, MAY 3 RADIO AND WORLD WAR II Spring, 1943

★ **GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (4-4-43) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, whose pre-war automobile has been "acting up" and is in need of repairs. Cast includes Walter Tetley, Lillian Randolph, Lurene Tuttle, Ben Alexander, Earle Ross, Dick LeGrand. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30 min)

★ **PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** (4-13-43) *Excerpt.* The president, in the midst of wartime, dedicates the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. All networks. (5 min)

★ **HITLER'S MOCK BIRTHDAY PARTY** (4-20-43) From Times Square in New York City Walter O'Keefe is emcee for a "monster celebration" of Adolf Hitler's birthday. Appearing in support of war bond sales are John Garfield, Jerry Lester, Martha O'Driscoll, Dick Stabile and the orchestra. U.S. Treasury Department, WOR/MBS. (15 min)

★ **SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS** (4-26-43) "Casablanca" starring Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henreid in a radio version of the 1942 film. Classic story set in war-torn Morocco with nightclub owner Rick finding an old flame and her husband, an underground leader. As time goes by, this story gets even better. Lady Esther products, CBS. (29 min)

★ **CAVALCADE OF UNITED NATIONS** (5-12-43) A "salute to the allies of our country" with a word picture of the war. This episode is devoted to Poland, with news of the assassination of Gestapo Chief Wilhelm Krueger and an interview with a doctor who is a refugee of occupied Poland. WINS, New York. (15 min)

★ **NEWS AND COMMENTARY** (6-21-43) Paul Schubert reports. "Only a desperate, fractional remnant of the Axis forces in North Africa remains to fight a last-stand battle in the Cap Bon Peninsula... Today the enemy troops at the southern part of the front gave up in surrender... The number of prisoners is now somewhere between the 75,000 and 100,000 mark and it is reported that more prisoners are giving themselves up at the rate of about a thousand an hour." Virginia Rounds Cigarettes. MBS. (15 min)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (6-22-43) The McGees, making plans for their summer vacation, decide to go camping at nearby Dugan's Lake at the edge of Wistful Vista. This way they can take the streetcar and avoid train and auto travel, the patriotic thing to do



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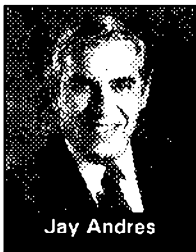
during wartime. Jim and Marian Jordan star with Bill Thompson, Isabel Randolph, Arthur Q. Brian, Gale Gordon, Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Last show of the 1942-43 season. *The voice of Myrt, the telephone operator, is heard for the first and only time.* Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (6-24-43) The first program in the WW II series of war stories based on the most important books to come out of the war, "told by the men and women who have seen them happen. A living record of this war and the things for which we fight." "Combined Operation" is the story of one of the most successful British commando raids as described in the book by Hilary St. George Sanders. Cast includes Les Damon, Jackson Beck, Walter Kinsella, Ian McAllister, Roger DeKoven. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min)

SATURDAY, MAY 10

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-19-46) Jack is in New York City with Don Wilson, Mary Livingston, Dennis Day, Phil Harris, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Artie "Kitzel" Auerbach. Guest Fred Allen asks Jack to be a guest on his program. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)

TRIBUTE TO JAY ANDRES — Honoring the legendary Chicago broadcaster with selected excerpts from his long on-air career including clips from *Music 'Til Dawn* (WBBM), *Great Music from Chicago* (WGN), *Morning Song* (WNIB), *Sounds Overheard* (WDCB) and from his early days in radio on station WMAW, Milwaukee. Jay recalls his career in a *Those Were The Days* (10-18-88) conversation with Chuck Schaden. (35 min & 33 min & 37 min)



Jay Andres

MAYOR OF THE TOWN (1940s) Lionel Barrymore stars as the mayor of Springdale, with Agnes Moorehead as housekeeper Marilly and Conrad Binyon as Butch, the mayor's ward. When Marilly has a horse and its owner arrested, His Honor intervenes. AFRS rebroadcast. (19 min)

HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE (5-5-49) "Mother" starring Linda Darnell with Verna Felton. A warm-hearted story (for Mother's Day) of the relationship between a mother and her daughter. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (30 min)

SATURDAY, MAY 17

ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET (3-6-49) The Nelsons go to an auction and purchase a package containing what appears to be a crystal ball. Ozzie tries to use it, but he gets no results. Cast includes John Brown, Janet Waldo, Marvin Miller, Joe Kearns and *the first radio appearance* of Ozzie and Harriet's two sons, David and Ricky Nelson. Vern Smith announces. International Silver Company, NBC. (30 min)

SUSPENSE (11-23-50) "Going, Going, Gone" starring Ozzie and Harriet Nelson in a rare dramatic appearance. At an auction, a woman buys an old trunk for three dollars, after which a man offers to buy it from her for a hundred dollars. Cast includes Joe Kearns, Herb Butterfield, Howard McNear. Harlow Wilcox announces. AutoLite, CBS. (30 min)

Read the article about Ozzie and Harriet on page 8.

LUX RADIO THEATRE (7-27-36) "Chained" starring Joan Crawford and Franchot Tone in a radio version of the 1934 film. A young married woman falls in love with a young man but doesn't want to hurt her affectionate older husband. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Cast includes Gilbert Emery, Wally Maher, Lou Merrill, Frank Nelson. Lux Soap, CBS. (20 min & 17 min & 22 min)

LOUELLA PARSONS (11-9-47) The Hollywood gossip columnist's featured guest is Joan Crawford, who talks about being a career woman. Louella's news items concern Frank and Nancy Sinatra, Lena Horne, Charles Correll, Lana Turner and Tyrone Power, Charlie Spivak and Humphrey Bogart. Woodbury Soap, ABC. (14 min)

SUSPENSE (3-22-51) "Three Lethal Words" starring Joan Crawford. A Hollywood screen writer tells the story of a middle-aged woman whose younger boyfriend leaves her for a younger woman. Cast includes Bea Benaderet, Hy Averback, Lillian Buyett, Joe Kearns, Ted DeCorsia, Sylvia Sims. AutoLite, CBS. (29 min)

Read the studio biography of Joan Crawford on page 20.

BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW (10-18-45) George and Gracie star with Bill Goodwin, Les Paul Trio, Meredith Willson and the orchestra and Mel Blanc as the "happy postman," who tells Gracie that Meredith plans to get married. Gracie, of course, counsels Meredith on how to handle women. Maxwell House Coffee, NBC. (29 min)



Chuck Schaden's
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MAY - JUNE 2003

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST

SATURDAY, MAY 24
BOB HOPE CENTENNIAL 1903 — 2003
Bob Hope and World War II

★ **MAIL CALL** (1944) Film starlet Jane Nye is "Skipper" for this program beamed to military audiences. **Bob Hope**, Humphrey Bogart, Betty Grable, Dick Haymes and the King Sisters provide the entertainment. Announcer Don Wilson sets the scene for a sketch based on Hope's latest film, "The Princess and the Pirate." AFRS. (28 min)

★ **GI JOURNAL #42** (4-29-44) **Bob Hope** is the editor-in-chief for this edition and his staff includes Jerry Colonna, Betty Grable, Mel Blanc (as Pvt. Sad Sack), Arthur Q. Brian, Ransom Sherman, and Glenn Miller and his orchestra. Hope and Grable appear in a radio spoof based on advice programs. Later it's "The Life of Sad Sack." AFRS. (28 min)

★ **BOB HOPE SHOW** (9-12-44) Broadcasting from Camp Borden, Canada it's **Bob Hope** with Jerry Colonna, Vera Vague, Frances Langford, Skinnay Ennis and the orchestra, and guest world traveler and war correspondent Quentin Reynolds. Colonna calls from Niagara Falls, going over in a barrel. Bob and Reynolds talk about the war and Hope's book, "I Never Left Home." AFRS rebroadcast. (28 min)

★ **LUX RADIO THEATRE** (1-8-45) "I Never Left Home," a radio dramatization of **Bob Hope's** book telling about his personal experiences entertaining servicemen overseas during World War II. Cecil B. DeMille hosts Hope, Frances Langford, Jerry Colonna,

Tony Romano, all from the USO troupe. Others in the cast are Howard McNear, Eddie Marr, Ken Christy. Lux Soap, CBS. (18 min & 17 min & 25 min)

★ **COMMAND PERFORMANCE #154** (12-16-44) Co-emcees for this major military variety program are **Bob Hope** and Bing Crosby, who welcome guests Lauren Bacall, the Andrews Sisters and Stan Kenton and the orchestra with singer Anita O'Day. Hope and Crosby try to date Bacall. AFRS. (28 min)



Bob Hope

**SATURDAY, MAY 31
BIG BANDS IN 1943**

★ **ONE NIGHT STAND #45** (11-9-43) Benny Goodman and his orchestra broadcasting from the Terrace Room of the Hotel New Yorker in New York City. Vocals by Ray Dorey, Carol Kaye and Benny Goodman. Selections include "Dinah," "Do Nothing 'Til You Hear from Me," "My Heart Tells Me" and a nine-minute version of "Sing, Sing, Sing." AFRS. (30 min)

★ **VICTORY PARADE OF SPOTLIGHT BANDS #280** (8-12-43) Jerry Wald and his orchestra broadcasting from the Army Ordnance Proving Ground, Aberdeen, Maryland. Selections include "Canteen Bounce," "All or Nothing at All," "Sunny Side of the Street" and "Poinciana." Coca Cola, BLUE NETWORK. (24 min)

DUKE ELLINGTON'S PASTEL PERIOD (6-20-43) Duke Ellington and his orchestra broadcasting from the Hurricane Club on Broadway in New York City. Selections include "Black Beauty," "Could It Be You?," "Time on My Hands," "Blue Bells of Harlem" and "Don't Get Around Much Anymore." Sustaining, MBS. (28 min)

★ **JUBILEE #37** (8-9-43) Ernie "Bubbles" Whitman hosts a program for military listeners featuring Lucky Millinder, Sister Rosetta Thorpe, the Delta Rhythm Boys, comedians Johnny Mason and Johnny Vigal. Bob Anderson announces. Musical numbers include "Jitters," "Rigoletto," "After You've Gone" and "Rustle of Spring." AFRS. (30 min)

★ **VICTORY PARADE OF SPOTLIGHT BANDS #312** (9-18-43) Ina Rae Hutton and her orchestra with guest vocalist Morton Downey broadcasting from Doler Die Casting Company in Batavia, New York. Music includes "Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey"; "In My Arms"; and "King Porter Stomp." Gil Newsome announces. Coca Cola, BLUE NETWORK. (16 min)

★ **I SUSTAIN THE WINGS** (9-25-43) Captain Glenn Miller and his Band of the Army Air Forces Technical School at Yale University. This program salutes the AAF Technical School at Lowry Field in Denver, Colorado. Vocals by PFC Art Malvin, the Crew Chiefs. Music includes "Caribbean Clipper," "Tuxedo Junction," "Star Dust" and "Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey." Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)

OUR SPECIAL GUEST is big band historian **Karl Pearson**, who will present a number of musical clips and excerpts from broadcasts and talk about the role of the big bands in 1943.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 7
RADIO RIDES THE RAILS**

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Illinois Railway Museum in Union, Illinois, where today's program will originate "live."

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (8-3-34) *Excerpt.* Jack stars with Mary Livingstone, Don Wilson, Frank Parker, Sam Hearn (as Schleppeyman, *making his debut* on the Benny show) and Don Bestor's orchestra. The program takes place on the Twentieth Century Limited as the gang returns to New York from Hollywood. General Tire Co., NBC. (17 min)

BOB ELSON ON BOARD THE CENTURY (1947) Sportscaster Bob Elson greets Twentieth Century Limited travelers at Chicago's LaSalle Street Station. Guests on this program are George Rector, world-famous chef who owned Rector's in New York City; Rudolph Ganz, famous symphony conductor and actor Victor Mature. Announcer is Claude Kirschner. Kranks Shave Cream, MBS. (13 min)

THE MEANING OF AMERICA (10-3-52) "Railroads of America." Host is Martin Maloney of the School of Speech at Northwestern University and announcer/narrator Bill Griskey, who offer descriptive pieces about railroads and railroading, including items about Casey Jones, John Henry and the Railroad Robber Barons. Songs sung by Win Stracke. Sustaining, WMAQ, Chicago. (30 min)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (2-20-45) The McGees have gone to the Wistful Vista train station rushing to catch "The Squaw," the de luxe train to San Francisco. Arthur Q. Brian, Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

EMPIRE BUILDERS (1-5-31) Early dramatic series from Chicago centered around the Empire Builder train. In this Depression-era episode, the entire story takes place aboard the train as the "Old Timer," the chief character in the series, meets a friend who is planning to fire half of the employees of his lumber mill "because times are bad." Great Northern Railway, NBC BLUE. (29 min)

COLUMBIA PRESENTS CORWIN (3-21-44) "The Lonesome Train," produced and directed by Norman Corwin. Premiere performance of the folk cantata telling the story of the Abraham Lincoln Funeral train traveling from Washington D.C. to Springfield, Illinois. Written and narrated by Earl Robinson, songs performed by Burl Ives. Raymond Massey stars in the role of Lincoln. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)



Chuck Schaden's
THOSE WERE THE DAYS
WDCB • 90.9 FM • SATURDAY 1 - 5 PM
WORLD-WIDE ON THE INTERNET: www.wdcb.org

JUNE 2003

SATURDAY, JUNE 14

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (1-16-49)

Phil is unhappy that his band hasn't been invited to play at President Harry Truman's Inaugural Ball. Elliott Lewis, Walter Tetley, Robert North, Frank Lovejoy. Alice sings "We're Just Wild About Harry." *First of two consecutive and related programs to be presented today.* Rexall, NBC. (29 min)

INNER SANCTUM (11-12-45)

"The Wailing Wall" starring Boris Karloff as a man who murders his wife and seals her in the wall of their home. Then he becomes tormented by unnatural sounds from the hidden tomb. Cast includes Jackson Beck. AFRS rebroadcast. (26 min)

HENRY MORGAN SHOW (8-10-49)

"Good evening anybody, here's Morgan!" The radio satirist stars with Arnold Stang, Kenny Delmar, singers Betty Harris and Jeff Clark, Milton Katims and the orchestra. Ben Grauer announces. Morgan discusses Fall fashions with Gerard (Stang), presents a French radio version of "Jack and the Beanstalk" and offers a history lesson in the form of a late-afternoon kids' program. Bristol Myers, NBC. (30 min)

FBI IN PEACE AND WAR (3-17-54)

"Help Wanted" stars Martin Blaine and Donald Briggs with Bob Dryden, Alice Frost and Ann Seymour. The FBI investigates a series of burglaries of fashionable homes. Lava Soap, CBS. (29 min) *Read the article about this series on page 14.*

PHIL HARRIS-ALICE FAYE SHOW (1-23-49)

Phil and his family visit Washington, D.C. to attend the Presidential Inaugural Ball. Remley doesn't have an invitation and Phil doesn't have a tuxedo, so he tries to borrow one from Fred Allen. *Second of two consecutive and related programs.* Rexall, NBC. (29:01)

OUR SPECIAL GUEST is author **Christopher Lynch**, who will speak about his new book, "Chicago's Midway Airport."

An excerpt from his book begins on page 57.

GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (10-18-50) Willard Waterman stars as Gildy, who buys himself a spiffy new suit. Cast features Walter Tetley (Leroy), Lillian Randolph (Birdie), Mary Lee Robb (Marjorie), Richard Crenna (Bronco). Kraft Foods, NBC. (30 min)

ESCAPE (7-7-47) "The Man Who Would Be King" is the premiere show in the series. Rudyard Kipling's famous story of two soldiers of fortune. Sustaining, CBS. (30 min)

SPEAKING OF RADIO (4-23-95) **Fred Foy**, longtime announcer for *The Lone Ranger*, talks about his career in a brief conversation with Chuck Schaden during a *Those Were The Days* anniversary program. Fred remembers the one and only time he actually got to portray the Masked Man on the air. (7 min) *Read the article about Fred Foy on page 51.*

LONE RANGER (3-29-54) Announcer **Fred Foy** substitutes at the last minute as the Lone Ranger due to the laryngitis of star Brace Beemer. Syndicated. (29 min)

LONE RANGER RE-ENACTMENT (4-23-95)

Fred Foy joins members of the *Those Were The Days Radio Players* for a re-enactment of the series' origin story, performed at Chicago's Swissotel during the *TWTD* 25th Anniversary program. The Butch Cavendish gang ambushes a group of Texas Rangers. (12 min)

MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER (7-27-47) "The Man the Insects Hated" featuring Maurice Tarplin, Eric Dressler, Helen Shields, Robert Dryden. A man who lives in a mansion near the swamps by the bayou is obsessed with inventing a formula for a "perfect insect killer." Sustaining, MBS. (30 min)

AMERICAN FAMILY NEWS (6-4-46) John Harrington reports on the LaSalle Hotel fire, "Chicago's worst hotel fire." Many stories of fire victims. Bob Cunningham gets an eyewitness account from a woman who was able to escape from the hotel. *American Family Flakes*, WBBM, Chicago. (14:33) *Read the "We Get Mail" letter and answer on page 62.*

SATURDAY, JUNE 28 WAUKEGAN SALUTES JACK BENNY

Repeating program material, ceremonies and interviews from our June 8, 2002 broadcast during the dedication of the Jack Benny statue in Waukegan, Illinois:

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (3-21-37) Broadcasting from the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Pierre in New York City, Jack and the gang welcome Jack's boyhood friend, Mancel Talcott, Mayor of the City of Waukegan, Illinois. In a sketch about Jack's boyhood in Waukegan, Jack plays his own father. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)

BENNY BIRTHDAY BASH (2-13-94) A special event celebrating the 61st anniversary of Jack Benny's 39th birthday, sponsored by the Museum of Broadcast Communications. Ken Alexander wrote the script, "A Surprise for Jack," based upon characters and situations created during the twenty-three year run of one of the most successful programs in the history of radio. Our *TWTD Radio Players* brought the script to life. John Sebert, win-

ner of a Jack Benny sound-alike contest, portrayed Jack. Special guest Joan Benny, Jack's daughter, portrayed Mary Livingstone. Weatherman Harry Volkman appeared as Dennis Day and Ken Alexander was Professor LeBlanc. Jack's grandson, Bobby Blumofe, took on a special role. (35 min & 26 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (6-18-39) On this next-to-last show of the 1938-39 season, Jack and the gang are planning a trip to Jack's hometown of Waukegan, Illinois. They meet at the railroad station. Jell-O, NBC. (28 min)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (6-25-39) Jack, Mary, Phil, Rochester, Don and Andy Devine broadcast from the Genesee Theatre in Waukegan, Illinois, to celebrate the World Premiere of his new film, "Man About Town." Mayor Mancel Talcott extends a welcome. Jack and

Mary sing "The Lady's in Love with You" and Jack plays "Glow Worm" on the violin. Jell-O, NBC. (29 min)



Jack Benny

...and for more good listening...

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, 11 am-1 pm.*

MIDWEST BALLROOM-- John Russell hosts a big band program featuring Chicago area orchestras and dance bands. *WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 5-6 pm.*

"When Radio Was" -- WBBM-AM 780

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

WHEN RADIO WAS-- Stan Freberg hosts an hour of vintage radio programs from the golden age. *In Chicago, tune to WBBM-AM, 780 AM, Monday thru Friday, Midnight-1 a.m.* The series is also heard on a great many other stations throughout the United States.

**PLEASE
NOTE**

MONTHLY LISTINGS FOR "When Radio Was" ARE NO LONGER READILY AVAILABLE to us and we are unable to include the program's calendar in the Nostalgia Digest. HOWEVER, the complete program schedule and list of stations carrying the series, as well as streaming audio for "When Radio

Was" may be found on the Internet at www.RadioSpirits.com Click on "On the Radio" for the daily and monthly broadcast schedules and archived programs.

MR. TELEVISION

BY WAYNE KLATT

"There was a guy who was hunting elephants and got a hernia from carrying the decoys"

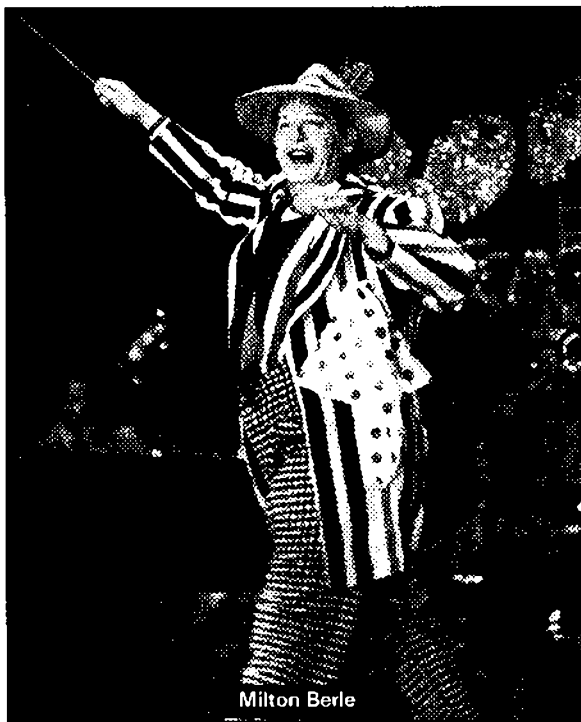
"I once got a black eye for fighting over a girl's honor. She wanted to keep it."

These are the kind of endless jokes Milton Berle was delivering at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago the afternoon my wife and I signed up. We had no idea he would be there and could hardly believe our luck. With all the seats taken, we stood just a few feet from him. Without the distraction of live cameras, Berle was even better than when his show sold more television sets than Zenith.

Even when his jokes weren't funny, he made them funny. Who would have thought that in this large, seemingly confident man — this institution — was someone whose entire life had been dominated by his mother?

Mendle Berlinger — the "i-n-g-c-r" had to go so his name would fit marquees — was born on July 12, 1908, in New York City, the fourth of five children. His father, Moses, was a house painter, and his imposing mother, Sarah (later Sandra) was, of all things, a department store "detective." The busy family managed to have just enough to

Wayne Klatt is an editor at the City News Service of the Chicago Tribune and a free-lance writer.



Milton Berle

PHOTOHESI

scrimp by with only one eviction.

Sarah would put Mendle on her knee and say, "Make me laugh." So that was how he came to link acting silly with the feeling of being loved. Seeing the boy making faces in front of a mirror one day, his Uncle Joe said, "Get that damn kid away from the mirror, he's going to make himself an idiot."

Sarah found in the boy a way to revive her dreams that she could have been an actress if only her parents had not refused to let her go on the wicked stage. She guided him through modeling jobs for Buster Brown shoes and then in the role of a child thrown from a train in the movie serial *Perils of Pauline*. The stagestruck mother then packed their bags and took her favorite child to Hollywood. She didn't care that

she was paying less attention to (or neglecting) her four other children. As Berle would say, "She brought all her energies into me." She watched from behind the cameras as her boy was an extra in *Mark of Zorro* with Douglas Fairbanks and *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, which made Charlie Chaplin a star. When it was clear he would get nowhere in bit parts, he and his mother left California so he could join the vaudeville circuit, eventually appearing on the same bill with Eddie Cantor and Bing Crosby. When the 16-year-old comedian was successful, he confronted his Uncle Joe and said, "Meet the idiot."

When Sarah caught her son fighting in the street for money, she hit him on the head with a rolled-up newspaper. She was not going to let anyone spoil her dreams. Even without much schooling, it was clear Milton was not only funny but also bright. His mind was encyclopedic and what he really wanted was to write.

Sure he stole gags. But Berle needed to because he never developed the kind of

personality that connected with an audience. Mama was usually out in front, clapping wildly and shouting "More!" to stir up the audience. After a performance, she would go over his routine with him to work over jokes that hadn't come across. As for Sarah's personal drive, Berle said, "She made Gypsy Rose Lee's mother look like Mary Poppins."

After his vaudeville partner Elizabeth Kennedy left, he honed his delivery, and he was the master of ceremonies between films at the Capitol Theater in New York. In 1933 he thought he was "hot as a pistol" in Chicago, where Al Capone told him to stop being modest. Berle returned to New York and appeared in the *Ziegfeld Follies*. He started in radio in 1934 and in films with *New Faces of 1937*. But Berle never liked working in movies. He needed to hear the laughter and he reminded of his mother's "high, mounting giggle."

When World War II broke out, Berle gave thousands of performances for U.S. servicemen. Should you think that's an exaggeration, the Guinness Book of Records says he gave more benefit performances than any other entertainer in history.

Although a clown on stage, Berle was a "man about town" in his girl-chasing private life. (He would boast of having relationships with attractive evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson and pre-star Marilyn Monroe). Although never good looking, he had money to throw around and, my Lord, he could be funny. His carousing was the only part of his life that Sarah did not have a hand in. He loved his mother but found her confining. As he would say after her death, "I thought she had the feeling of owning me, of not wanting to be my mother but my wife." →



By 1941 he was the best known nightclub comedian in America. Late in that year he married pretty chorus girl Joyce Matthews, ending his bachelor days at age 34. By the way, his mother went on their honeymoon. (From Milton Berle's joke file: "My mother is so proud. I go to a psychiatrist five times a week and just talk about her.")

The public Berle was silly and brash, but when he wasn't "on" he was a good friend of practically everybody in show business. Comedians actually felt honored when Berle gave their jokes a new home. He also was a solid businessman. NBC did not go looking for him, Berle went to officials of Texaco, his radio show sponsor, and, against the advice of Jack Benny and George Burns, convinced them he could pull off an unprecedented one-hour TV show. His reason was that "We gotta go with progress."

But in those days when sponsors decided

programming, Texaco executives were skeptical and thought of rotating hosts, maybe with Morey Amsterdam and Henry Youngman. So when Berle hosted the first Texaco Star Theater show on September 21, 1948, he threw in everything he could to make sure no one took it from him. No one even tried.

The show would be non-stop, with singing service station men welcoming the audience and eventually ventriloquist Jimmy Nelson with wide-mouthed dummy Danny O'Day doing commercials. Word of mouth about this great entertainment package had people flocking to buy television sets, and they even watched it in crowds outside appliance store windows.

In his first season, Berle starred in a total of 78 live programs on radio and TV. Realizing that television would be bigger than most people imagined, he dropped radio. He was splashed on the cover of Newsweek in 1949 — dressed as Carmen Miranda. His weekly shows were ruining the sleeping habits of children everywhere. One night, Berle told the kids staying up to watch "Uncle Miltie" to go to bed on time. The name stuck, and whole families embraced him.

What would a Berle night be like? In some skits he wore a dress that with his broad face and toothy grin made him look hilariously repulsive (thanks to three seamstresses working simultaneously on him). Or he might cavort dressed like Howdy Doodie with a huge lollipop, and perhaps scrawny Arnold Stang would toss pies at him. Through it all, Berle threw out jokes and outrageous straight lines at his dumb



Milton Berle as Carmen Miranda

PHOTOFEEST



Buffalo Bob Smith, Howdy Doody and Milton Berle

PHOTOES

secretary Max (Ruth Gilbert), such as:

“Call me a cab.”

“You’re a cab!”

Or:

“Let’s kiss and make up.”

“Make up!” And a man in a white tunic would hit him in the face with a cloud of pancake-makeup dust.

Berle controlled every major aspect of his show, just as his mother ultimately controlled him. One of the later writers, Goodman Ace, said: “Our star, besides performing, conducted the orchestra, made countless little changes — like revamping the dances, rewriting and improvising one-liners and exit cues. Dress rehearsals were classic exercises in wild frenzy. He wore a traffic cop’s whistle around his neck and blew the show to so many stops that a rehearsal often lasted from noon until 10 minutes before air time.”

The show only looked effortless. Costume designer Grace Case said “show days” began at 7 a.m. when her cab pulled

up at the studio in Radio City, and the crew kept working to 2 or 3 the next morning, when the grateful star took everyone to Lindy’s restaurant unless they were too exhausted. Berle never was. For him, every show was a love fest.

Berle opened up television in ways never tried before, even having cameras follow him out of NBC’s Studio B and into the alley or street. Patronage at restaurants and movie theaters dwindled every Tuesday night as a fantastic 80 percent of the cathode tubes nationwide were glowing with Uncle Miltie. A study in Detroit showed that toilet flushing sharply increased from 9 p.m. to 9:05 p.m. Tuesday nights, immediately after his show was over.

The show was always fresh, even if not all the material was. In a reference to the film *Thief of Bagdad*, some wit called Berle “The Thief of Bad Gags,” and he loved it. As he said, he once saw a comedian who was so funny he almost dropped his pencil. Watching him pacing and quietly go-



Milton Berle and Gracie Fields

PHOTOFEEST

gest news events of 1951 came when Uncle Miltie signed an unprecedented 30-year contract with NBC. That meant \$200,000 a year whether he worked or not. But his show was getting too expensive for Texaco, so Buick signed him up.

His invalid mother died in 1953. During the service, Berle switched hats with a tiny uncle to give her one last laugh. Now on his own for the first time, he made some unfortunate decisions, such as abandoning his brash persona for that of a standard straight man to make himself more likable, and hosting the show only three out of four weeks. The first sign of trouble came when *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* overtook him in the ratings.

ing over his lines behind the curtain four minutes before each live show, Case realized that "comedians were the most serious people in show business!" His show even cost him his marriage with Joyce, who still loved him but could not stand being a part-time wife.

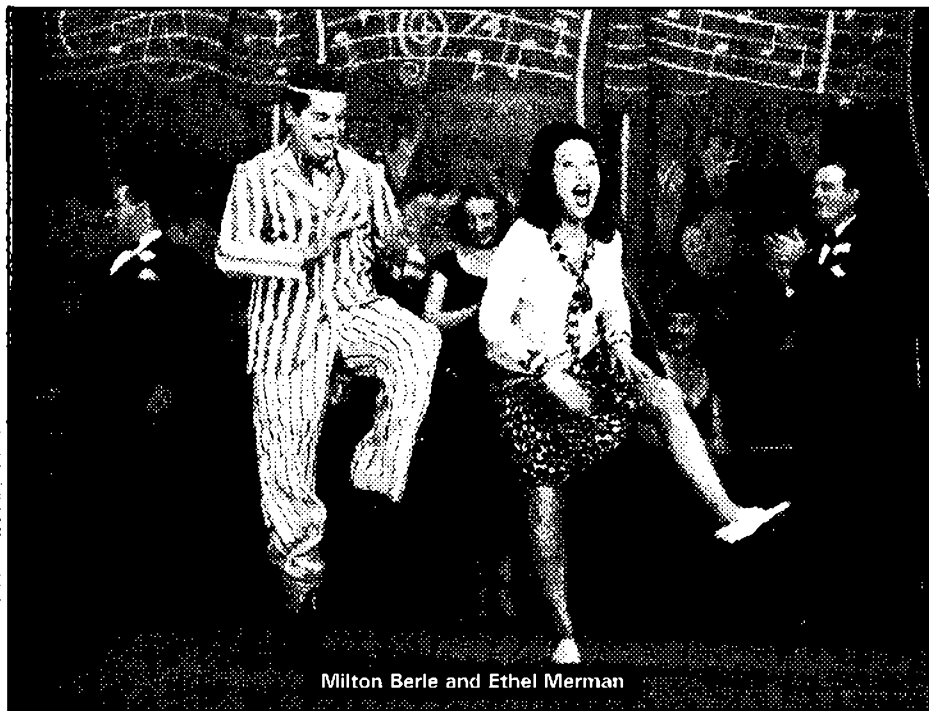
Apparently not busy enough with TV, Berle went to Hollywood in 1949 to star in a full-length feature film at Warner Bros. *Always Leave Them Laughing* had him co-starring with Virginia Mayo and Bert Lahr and typecast as a cocky comedian.

One of the big-

The laughs were getting fewer, so sometimes after the cameras were turned off Berle would slip out from under the thick curtain to tell a few more jokes before the studio audience went home. The amazing thing about Berle was his resiliency. Rather than being frazzled by his



Always Leave Them Laughing (1949)



Milton Berle and Ethel Merman

PHOTOFEST

weekly ratings decline, he took time for a personal evaluation. While remaining close to his Jewish roots, he became a Christian Scientist. He also wedded former publicist Ruth Cosgrove, a marriage that lasted to her death, and they adopted a son.

In fulfilling himself as a man, Berle was losing his manic edge. By the 1955 season, he was a has-been and Buick signed up Jackie Gleason. The last Berle show as we remember it aired that June 14. After that he did one season in color for Whirlpool and Sunbeam, and then his era was over.

There were a number of reasons. The one he usually cited was the popularity of *Life is Worth Living* with Bishop Fulton Sheen, who, ironically, was one of Berle's biggest fans. In fact, the bishop once began a program by saying, "Hello, this is Uncle Fultic." Sheen also said he and Berle worked for the same boss, "Sky Chief."

The other competition thrown in to

topple him was Red Skelton and Phil Silvers as Sgt. Bilko. Besides, with suburbanization his vaudeville humor seemed old fashioned and there were no likable characters on his show, unlike Freddie the Freeloader and Bilko's Doberman. Extended comedy skits and situation comedies were in.

Berle could have had a comfortable retirement, living off his earnings and his virtual lifetime contract. However, as he noted, he could live without money "but not working eats me up inside." He used his nervous leisure to write song lyrics, books about show business, and a novel called "The Earthquake." He also took a role in a Las Vegas play and starred in the first and best of the hour-long *I Love Lucy* specials.

After that, he accepted any TV opening he could, including *Jackpot Bowling* and the *Kraft Music Hall* in 1958. He made another fry at *The Milton Berle Show* in 1960.

Feeling confined by the 30-year contract, he worked out an agreement in 1965 to take a 40 percent cut for the freedom to appear on any network he wanted to. He wasn't after more money, just the opportunity to develop himself in an entertainment world that had changed to something unrecognizable.

You might have seen him in the cop shows *Mod Squad* and *Mannix*, or as Louie the Lilac in the tongue-in-cheek *Batman* series. He played a devil in the Anthony Newley film *Hieronymus Merkin* and appeared in modest comedy plays in Miami Beach and Chicago.

Over the years the public was catching on that this was someone in his prime who could adapt to any medium in show business, including occasional dramatic roles on TV and giving a restrained comedy performance in *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963).

Berle also generously donated to charities. Seeing that the public still loved him he was honored as "Man of the Year" by the National Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1959, and he was the first member of the Comedy Hall of Fame when it opened in 1992. Berle would go anywhere to make people laugh. His stamina and the quickness of his mind were astounding. "Too many young people simply give up too easily," he said. "Success is just one long street fight."

He was a fixture at the Friars Club in New York and after it moved to Beverly Hills, and he inspired Don Rickles, Buddy Hackett, and Flip Wilson's "Geraldine." As he wrote in his autobiography, "I guess I've made all the dreams Mama and I had come true, but I spent so many years chasing those dreams that I don't know how to stop running."

If he caught the act of a new comic who "died" on stage, as with former strip-joint comedian Bill Beckett, Berle would invite



him to sit down with him and his team of writers to suggest improvements. To fans, Berle was merely funny. To show business people, he was wonderful.

Even decades after Mama died, he could not shake off her hold on him. When Berle was in his late 80s, entertainment writer Bob Thomas asked if he ever dreamed about his mother. "All the time, all the time," Berle replied. "Reprimanding me, loving me, cuddling me, bawling me out, different moods."

Berle would have kept making appearances, but at the age of 90 his doctors told him it was time to retire. Still vigorous at 93, he would drop by the Friars Club to entertain his fellow entertainers. Then he died in his Los Angeles home on March 27, 2002, and a private service drew every vintage comedian and comedy writer who could make it.

It would slight Milton Berle to say he was in show business for more than 80 years.

For most of the twentieth century, he was show business. ■

In Search of Lost Transcriptions

BY HARLAN ZINCK

When you pop a cassette or CD into your player or tune in to hear an old-time radio program, do you ever wonder where that show originally came from and how it is that it happened to have been saved all these years?

Get a group of collectors together all at once and you'll be amazed to hear the stories they have to tell:

"...so I climbed up this rickety set of stairs and here, in a shed right on the roof, were at least 100 disks — all covered in about an inch of pigeon droppings."

"The lady had bought them at an auction of abandoned storage lockers. I had to spend twenty minutes hearing about her prejudices towards certain ethnic groups, but she ended up selling them to me for far less than I expected!"

"The week after her husband died, she asked me to clean out an old shed behind the house and there they were, stacked and

piled in every nook and cranny. Must have been a thousand of them..."

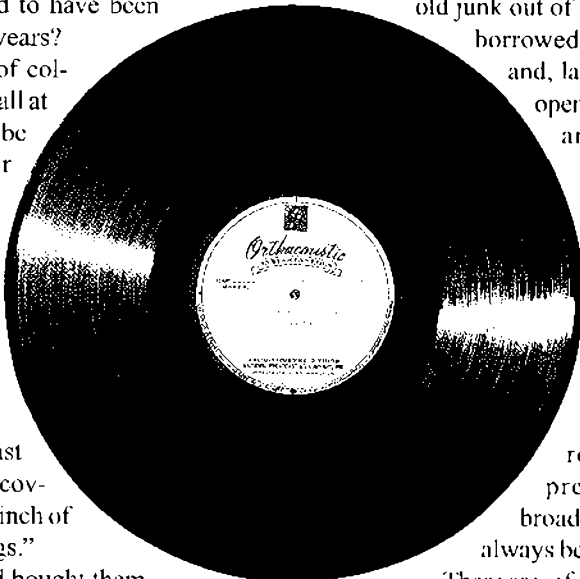
"We got a new station manager and the first thing he said was, "Clean all of that old junk out of the basement!" I

borrowed a pickup truck and, late that night, we opened the Dumpster and there were forty years' worth of the station's transcription disks ready to be trashed the next morning."

America's reputation for preserving its broadcast history has always been pretty spotty.

There are, of course, large collections of original radio transcription recordings housed in the Library of Congress, as well as many other institutions. But, over the years, literally hundreds of thousands of recordings — many of them the only audio record kept of a particular program — have been lost to the ages as a result of neglect, disregard, or simply because no one thought they were worth saving.

In my capacity as the Preservation Manager of the First Generation Radio Archives, part of my job over the past few years has been to seek out original disk recordings of old-time radio shows and get them safely transferred for preservation and restoration. Some of the shows in the Ar-



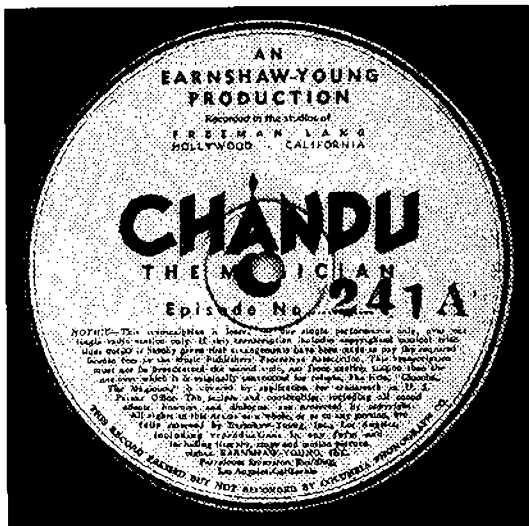
Harlan Zinck is the Preservation Manager for the First Generation Radio Archives, "Preserving Radio's Past for the Future" at www.radioarchives.org. If you have comments or questions — and particularly if you have ETs — contact him at preservation@radioarchives.org.

chives collection have come from obvious sources — long-time collectors and dealers, auction houses, used record stores — but some were found in some pretty unlikely places. In fact, hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't drop me an e-mail to say he's found some old recordings somewhere and wants to know more about them.

But before I go on, it would probably be a good thing to describe exactly what a radio transcription is.

Electrical transcriptions, also known as "ETs" for short, were the most common way of preserving radio broadcasts during radio's golden age. They were of various types and sizes, but the most common were sixteen inches in diameter -- making them easy to spot among the more common ten-inch and twelve-inch records produced at the same time.

ETs made after the mid-1930s were usually aluminum-based sixteen-inch disks coated with cellulose nitrate lacquer, a thick black compound similar to that used in automotive paint from the '20s thru the '50s. That's right. The same paint that was used on your grandfather's old Chrysler was also used to record sound. These shiny blank ETs, sometimes incorrectly called "acetates," were used to create what became known as "instantaneous recordings," records that could be played immediately after being recorded. A large record-cutting machine (essentially a phonograph with a heavy and precisely regulated turntable, coupled with a cutting-head mechanism and precision lathe screw drive) was used to cut a groove into the coating, creating an audio recording of the program. Sixteen-inch ETs were usually recorded at 33 1/3 RPM — the same speed as the long-playing records introduced for home use in the late 1940s -- and they generally run

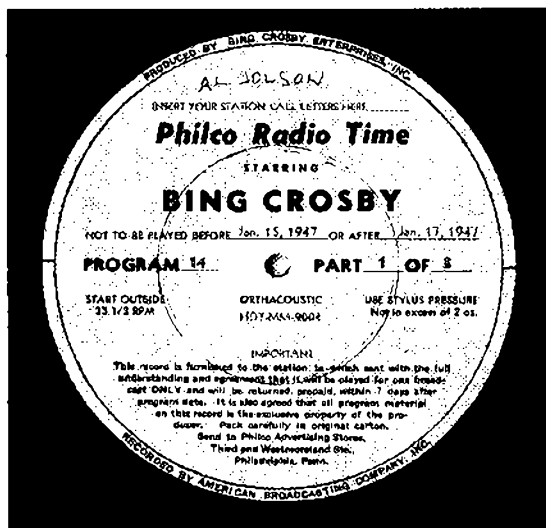


about 15 minutes per side. A half-hour program was commonly recorded on a single side of two separate ETs and, often, you'll find additional programming recorded on the other sides of the disks. (More on this later.)

Although sixteen inch ETs are the most well known way in which radio was recorded, other types and sizes of disk and other mechanisms were also used to preserve broadcasts. For example:

Until the mid-'30s, when lacquer-coated disks became the norm, programs were also recorded on disks of uncoated aluminum: thin, shiny records which vary in size between seven and sixteen inches in diameter. Although cutting a groove directly into bare aluminum would seem to be a rather primitive method of sound recording — especially in these days of tape and digital audio — the sound quality of these recordings could be quite remarkable.

Independent recording companies existed as early as 1930, offering radio networks, stations, and private individuals the opportunity to have broadcasts recorded for professional or private use. Since many of these businesses catered primarily to performers, network executives, and sponsors



casts available today which were originally recorded on home-recorded disks, recording wire, and magnetic tape.

Some ETs were made the same way as commercially released records: The network or recording studio created a master that was then used to create a “stamper” from which multiple copies of the same record could be made. These programs, usually made for syndication to stations nationwide, are commonly identified with printed labels that look similar to the labels of commercial releases. However, the vast majority of record-

who didn't have professional-grade phonographs in their homes or offices, quite a lot of broadcasts were recorded on seven-, ten-, and twelve-inch ETs which could be played on a standard home phonograph.

During World War II, aluminum was classified as a strategic material reserved almost exclusively for the war effort. As a result, very little was available for the manufacture of blank recording disks. Many other types of base material were tried as a substitute, including steel, cardboard, and a fiber-based composition material. None of these proved successful for professional use. As a result, glass — yes, glass like that found in home windowpanes — became the most commonly used base for ETs made and recorded between 1942 and 1945. Although fragile, this material did provide a satisfactory recording base — provided you didn't drop it before you had the chance to play it!

From the early 1930s, when RCA introduced a disk-cutting machine designed for home use, the technology has existed for individuals to record programs off the air in much the same way as we today record a radio show with our tape decks. As a result, there are quite a few excerpts of broad-

ings that exist today were made for radio networks and stations for purposes of archiving, delayed broadcast, or reference. Since they were not made for commercial release, their labeling can be very simple and basic. It's quite common, for example, to find sixteen-inch disks that have only a plain label, their content noted with typed or handwritten pencil notes. Likewise, some ETs are identified with writing in grease pencil on the bare lacquer or metal or by the titles etched directly into the coating of the ET. Some ETs have no labeling or markings at all, so there's no way of knowing content until the disk is played.

Now, in fairness, not all of the ETs that were saved and transferred to tape or CD have spent time in a dumpster or a pigeon roost; many were carefully preserved by radio performers, producers, directors, musicians, technicians, and even the networks themselves. In the early 1970s, when there was a revival of interest in old radio programs, a lot of long-forgotten disks came out of closets and basements and were donated to radio clubs, universities, and libraries. Additionally, many veteran dealers, collectors, and enthusiasts made concerted efforts to locate the whereabouts

of people who had such disks — and, in the process, gave new appreciation to a lot of individuals who had long-since retired from the industry and had thought themselves forgotten. (This soon led to a second career for many radio veterans: appearances at old-time radio conventions and on such early “nostalgia” shows as Chuck Schaden’s *Those Were the Days*.)

We can also thank our lucky stars that so many people who worked in radio were, basically, “pack rats,” carting home disks and equipment that would otherwise have been discarded. Many of these people — particularly technical engineers — spent years stashing away recordings in their basements and garages, unwilling to see perfectly good recordings consigned to the trash. (Since so many engineers were men, we can also thank the wives who put up with housing collections of such things for so many years!) Similarly, a great many daytime shows, soap operas, juvenile adventure shows, and newscasts were saved only because someone thought the shows on the *other sides* of the disks were worth saving. Thus, we’ll find a disk with a locally-produced show of little interest on one side, but a *Captain Midnight* or *One Man’s Family* show on the other!

There are numerous stories of disk “discoveries” through the years and I’m sure there will be many more in the future. With the growth of on-line Internet auctions, many more people are aware of what an ET is and are actively looking for them at auctions and at garage and estate sales, thrift shops, and — yes, still — Dumpsters. Where will we come across the next big find? It’s hard to say, but there are a few clues:

Back in 1964, when NBC moved out of its Hollywood studios to relocate in Burbank, they cleaned out their huge stash of disks — rooms and rooms of them. Some were donated to the City of Los An-

geles for a proposed Hollywood Museum project that never got off the ground, but most were sent to a landfill in Calabasas. To this day, there are California-based collectors who swear that, one day, armed with shovels and bulldozers, they will find a way to excavate the site and reclaim the disks.

In the mid-1970s, a radio station in eastern Canada downsized and its old building was sold to a development company for demolition. Rather than attempt to move or sell the large record library, housed in a basement vault, an agreement was made to leave it behind, fill in the rest of the basement with the rubble of the building, and then pave it all over for a parking lot. A long-time collector living nearby says that he drives by the site every day, knowing that at some time the site will come up for redevelopment and the lot will be torn up. When that day comes, he’ll be there “with a jackhammer and a really big truck.”

Finally, rumors have spread for years that the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service has copies of everything it recorded since its inception in 1942, housed in a huge facility somewhere in Europe. Up to now, despite constant badgering, these rumors have not been confirmed or denied by the military. But there are many enthusiasts who will simply not rest until they finally gain access to that legendary storehouse that may (or may not) exist.

Personally, I’m hoping for the day that someone will call or write me to say that he’s found a big pile of old records in an attic somewhere with something like *I Love a Mystery* written on the labels, wondering if I’d be interested.

Hey, it could happen — in fact, maybe it already has! Lemme check my e-mail... ■

Tune in TWTD April 19 to hear Harlan Zinck and Karl Pearson discuss transcription disk restoration and the preservation of vintage radio programs.

FRED FOY and a hearty 'Hi-yo Silver!'

or

'Who was that Masked Man's announcer?'

BY STEVE DARNALL

"A fiery horse with the speed of light. A cloud of dust and a hearty 'Hi-yo, Silver!'"

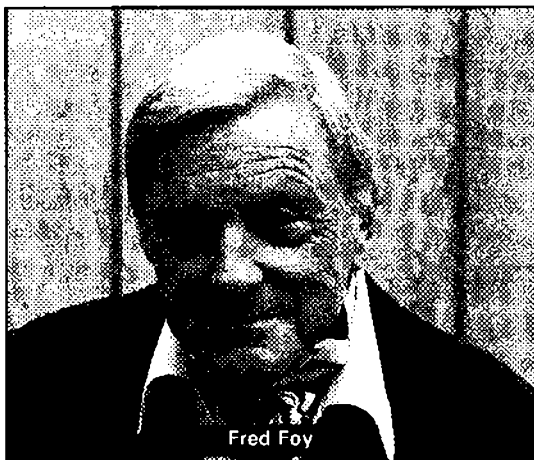
When accompanied by the final section of Rossini's "William Tell Overture," these words launch the most famous opening in radio history—an introduction so legendary that it's familiar even among those who've never heard a radio show in their lives. And for two decades, on radio and on television, Fred Foy's was the voice that brought it to life.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's go back a little bit

It's the late 1930s and a recent high-school graduate and amateur thespian named Fred Foy has taken a job for the holidays, working as an elevator operator at Kern's Department Store in downtown Detroit.

At this point, Foy is still a teenager, a young man who's spent his formative years listening to a relatively new phenomenon called radio. During the day, there were *Little Orphan Annie*; *Jack Armstrong*, *The All-American Boy* and *The Tom Mix Ralston Straightshooters*; at night, there were Jack Benny, *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Lux Ra-*

Steve Darnall is a freelance writer in Chicago whose credits include The Chicago Tribune and the Museum of Broadcast Communications.



FRED FOY COLLECTION

dio Theatre...and The Lone Ranger, a popular adventure show which originated from local station WXYZ.

For a young man interested in becoming an actor, radio—with its cornucopia of comedies and dramas—looked like the perfect place to start. Foy made an audition recording, using the liner notes from a Nelson Eddy record as his script. To his dismay, Foy found the ranks were closed tight for newcomers with no experience.

So, instead of standing at a microphone announcing musical numbers, young Fred Foy is at Kern's, announcing floor numbers. Then he receives a new assignment: during the Christmas season, he is to operate the store's "Lone Ranger Toyland Express." To add authenticity, Kern's has given Foy a costume to play the part of the Masked Man.

"That's right," Foy says with a laugh

some sixty years later. "I was picked to do that, and my God! I had listened to the show, of course, but little did I know that this was a harbinger of things to come."

Again, we're getting a little ahead of the story here. At this point, Foy hadn't worked on *The Lone Ranger*. He hadn't even worked in radio. That changed in 1939 when he joined local station WMBC.

"That was in the day when they would gladly call you in if you wanted to work for experience," he recalls. "You learned by doing." Before long, Foy was taking part in the station's drama group, playing the hero in a melodrama called *The Old Opry House* and narrating a show called *Time Turns Back*, "which in reality was *The March of Time* in reverse. They did events from the past."

Foy worked his way up to become the staff announcer on Sundays, his first job in that capacity. Eventually, he was offered a permanent job at the station. Now, he was drawing a salary —\$25.00 a week— and he was earning it.

"You did everything yourself," he says of his time at WMBC. "You wrote your

own copy, you pulled the news off the wire machine and put it all together. I really learned by doing.

"It was a wonderful experience," he says of those early days in Detroit radio, "slowly gaining more experience and polishing a little jewel, so to speak."

It wasn't long before Foy's glimmer caught the attention of WXYZ—the home of *The Lone Ranger*. When they hired Foy in 1941, he was convinced that big things were happening, and nothing was going to stand in his way.

Enter World War II.

With draft notice in hand, Foy joined the Army in 1942 and was soon transferred into the Special Services Department. Taking his radio training into account, the military sent Foy to Cairo, Egypt, where he delivered news on Egyptian State Broadcasting.

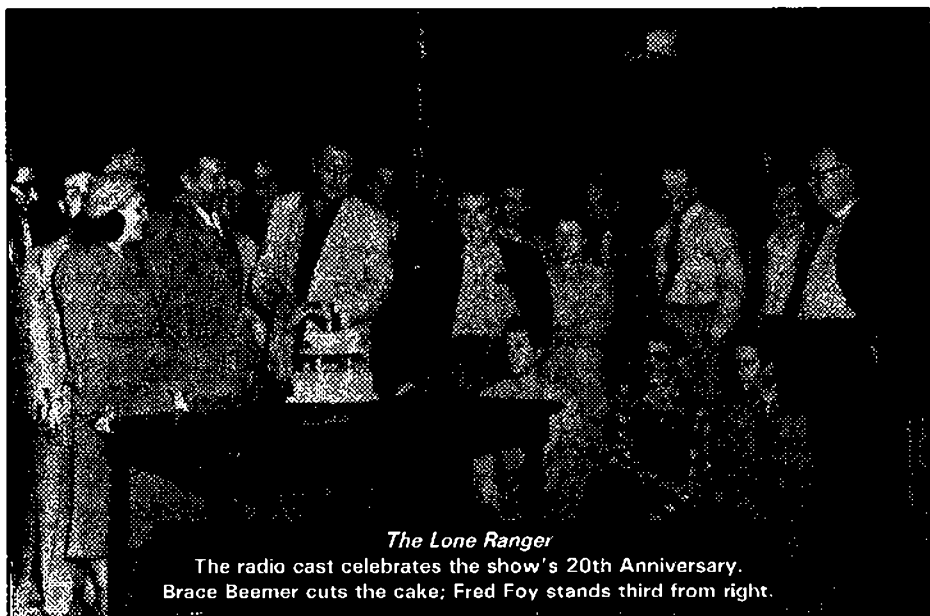
Working in Egypt had a side benefit for the young announcer: His performing and microphone experience made him a perfect choice to play host and emcee to visiting USO Tours. This led to Foy's sharing the stage with performers such as Lily



The Jack Benny Program

Jack, at left, and cast rehearse radio broadcast in Cairo, Egypt during WW II. Sgt. Fred Foy is second from right.

FRED FOY COLLECTION



The Lone Ranger

The radio cast celebrates the show's 20th Anniversary. Brace Beemer cuts the cake; Fred Foy stands third from right.

FRED FOY COLLECTION

Pons, Nelson Eddy (the same Nelson Eddy who had inspired Fred's audition record a few years earlier) and the great Jack Benny, where he found himself delivering straight lines in the manner of Benny announcer Don Wilson. "That was a thrill, believe me."

Foy left the Army in 1945 and found his job still waiting for him at WXYZ, which had become part of the fledgling ABC Radio Network. In the summer of 1948, Harry Golder—a WXYZ staff announcer whose duties included narrating *The Lone Ranger*—decided to leave Detroit and WXYZ.

"He was, I guess, following through on an opportunity to go out to the West Coast and work more in the news area with the ABC affiliate," Foy remembers. The staff announcers lined up for a chance to replace Golder on *The Lone Ranger* and, as Foy jokes, "They pulled my name out of the hat."

On July 2, 1948, Fred Foy stepped up to the mike and officially became part of *The Lone Ranger*. "That started a wonderful,

wonderful run for me with the Masked Man and Indian," he recalls. It also helped expand his workload: Before long, Foy could also be heard announcing WXYZ's other famous exports, *The Green Hornet* and *Challenge of the Yukon*.

Foy stayed with the *Ranger* through the end of his radio run in 1955. When *The Lone Ranger* moved to television (with Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels as the *Ranger* and Tonto), Foy could still be heard introducing the show.

Foy remembers his years on *The Lone Ranger* as "an exciting time. *The Lone Ranger* was live; we had no crutch of recording tape. We went on the air, and if anything happened during that period, you had to keep going. Someone would pick up and move along."

Foy recalls one particularly memorable instance in his audio-autobiography "Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch." He was narrating a *Challenge of the Yukon* story in which an actor, during a particularly dramatic showdown, was supposed to say "That's my dog!" Instead, the scene cli-

maxed with the actor proclaiming "That's my wife!" (Note to bachelors: there is no good context in which to make this mistake.) It fell to Foy not to break up laughing as the show soldiered onward.

With the advent of recording tape in the 1950s, Foy recalls, programs sometimes lacked "that immediacy. When we went on the air, you were on your toes until I said, 'This is the ABC Radio Network.' You were constantly aware, and I think your performance was 100 per cent better. You listen to those shows today and they're beautifully done productions."

As someone who was there, Foy has a different perspective on *The Lone Ranger* than those listeners for whom the show and character have assumed a mythical, almost eternal status. The Masked Man wasn't really a renowned champion of justice from the early days of the American West; rather, he was created in 1933 by the staff of WXYZ, a radio station that was flirting with bankruptcy.

Within five years, the show had achieved a national following, thanks to the newly formed Mutual Radio Network. Still, in the firmament of American legends, the Ranger was still a newcomer when Foy came on board in 1948. One suspects with a thrice-weekly production schedule and their additional station commitments, no one at WXYZ had time to be fully aware of the show's long-lasting impact.

"To us, it was a good, wonderful adventure show, but we never believed that it would become part of Americana, which it certainly has become," Foy admits. "It was just well done and well produced, and the characters were marvelous. We enjoyed what we were doing, but we never dreamed that it would become such an icon."

By the late 1950s, radio drama had more or less surrendered to the onslaught of television. Foy pondered his options — "I didn't feel I wanted to go back to a staff

job" — and decided to move to New York.

"It took a while," he recalls, "but I wound up on the staff at ABC Radio," and eventually became one of the network's main voices. (His duties included working as announcer on *Theatre Five*, the network's mid-60s gambit to revive radio drama.) He'd also made the rounds with agents and casting directors for the occasional commercial job. Here, he made an amazing discovery.

"When I was interviewed, I found that people were completely overwhelmed that I had worked on the *Ranger* show. You'd meet someone and they'd say, 'You were part of that show?' They were fascinated!"

A rising young comedian named Dick Cavett was among them. ABC television was about to give the smart, self-effacing Cavett his own late-night talk show, and an announcer was needed. Foy admits that "after the audition, [the *Lone Ranger* connection] sort of tipped the scale in my direction. He loved *The Lone Ranger*."

It's interesting to remember that this was the late 1960s, when the face of popular culture was changing in radical ways — ways that suggested the world had far more gray areas than *The Lone Ranger* show ever displayed — and *The Dick Cavett Show* reflected that. A typical Cavett program saw him speaking with the likes of Robert Young, Jimi Hendrix and Ralph Nader. A 1969 show featured musicians who had come to the studio right after leaving the Woodstock Music Festival.

Foy tries to be diplomatic about the sounds of the subsequent generation, but he has to concede that "for someone who was raised in the element of the marvelous dance bands and the great lyrics and great performers, you sort of frowned upon it."

Still, he says, "it was fascinating to see this modern turnaround. I remember one night [Cavett] had all of the major rock groups there and we taped a complete show



The Dick Cavett Show
Fred gets a "surprise" from Dick

FRED FOY COLLECTION

with Janis Joplin and all the others. It was quite a fascinating evening to see them all perform in one room at the same time."

Throughout the run of *The Dick Cavett Show*, Foy recalls, "My position was in the first row of the audience, where they had set up a mike for me. I would work with him if he called me up on stage, but I wasn't his 'right hand man,' so to speak."

Plenty of people in Foy's position might have held out for more camera time, but Foy was happy to be worked into the show whenever the opportunity arose. "I never really thought about whether I should be another Ed McMahon, because I was a part of the show without actually sitting next to him."

And of course, on several occasions, Cavett would tell viewers that his announcer had once worked on a well-known radio show, and followed that by asking if Fred wouldn't mind recreating that famous introduction. By the end of the 1960s, Foy realized that his former day job had become a cultural touchstone.

"I suddenly thought, 'Well, my Lord, it wasn't only in Detroit! Other people heard this!'" he says. "Then you began to realize that this show really had had an impact on the public."

Foy has his own explanations for why

that might be the case. "I suppose it's because of the type of show [that it was]. New generations and young people who hear the show suddenly have a hero; they have this wonderful masked figure who's always fighting for justice and helping the underdog. I think as people get acquainted with the

show, it goes on and on."

That's partly due to the editorial guidance provided by WXYZ station owner George W. Trendle and writer Fran Striker. Trendle requested a hero who would be "the embodiment of living prayer" and made it clear early on that the Ranger should not curse, smoke, drink, kiss women, or even drop his "g"s. If he had to shoot a gun, it would be to disarm, never to kill. Striker's thousands of scripts presented the Ranger's west in straightforward terms: There were good guys and bad guys and it was never really hard to pick them apart.

In today's jaded, less-enlightened times, the Lone Ranger's world might seem archaic, if not downright corny. Still, when actor Bruce Beemer stepped to the microphone as the title character, even the most cynical among us would believe that there was at least one truly decent person in this world.

"Isn't that right?" Foy says. "I agree with you wholeheartedly. And we had such a marvelous group of actors. I guess when we got in the studio and we did a show, everybody was ready to give their best, and it comes across—even today."

Fast forward to November, 2000. The scene is the Museum of Broadcast Com-

munications in Chicago. Tonight, Fred Foy—who admits to being “semi-retired, but still available”—will be inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame. Actor, director and longtime *Lone Ranger* fan Richard Benjamin introduces Foy by telling the crowd about the time he met a casting director named Nancy Foy. “I asked, ‘Are you any relation to Fred Foy?’” Benjamin recalls. “She said, ‘He’s my father.’ I said, ‘You’re hired.’”

Then Foy takes the stage, his powerful voice undiminished by the passing years or by the emotion of the moment. He thanks his many radio colleagues and especially those at WXYZ in Detroit. Then, he saves the best for last:

The “William Tell Overture” starts to play.

Some people in the crowd titter; is he really planning to...?

There is no script in Foy’s hand; for this, he doesn’t need one. He approaches the microphone and speaks the words which, in a very real sense, have brought him here tonight:

“A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty ‘Hi-yo, Silver!’ *The Lone Ranger!*”

A few people in the audience applaud,

the way you would when any master magician pulls out his greatest trick. The music plays on and Foy continues:

“With his faithful Indian companion Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early Western United States. Nowhere in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice! Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. From out of the past come the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse Silver. *The Lone Ranger rides again!*”

Then, for what may be the first and only time in his career, Foy ad-libs: “Come on Silver...let’s go big fella... *Hi-yo, Silver! Awaay!*”

The crowd leaps to its feet as one and erupts into a cheer. There may be other standing ovations before this night is over, but none will be as spontaneous or as joyous as this one. It doesn’t matter that it’s late autumn in Chicago. It isn’t important that there isn’t a stirrup or a buckskin in sight.

Right now, only one thing matters.

The Lone Ranger rides again. ■

Tune in TWTD June 21 to hear Fred Foy on radio.

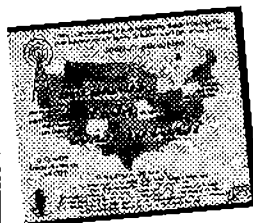
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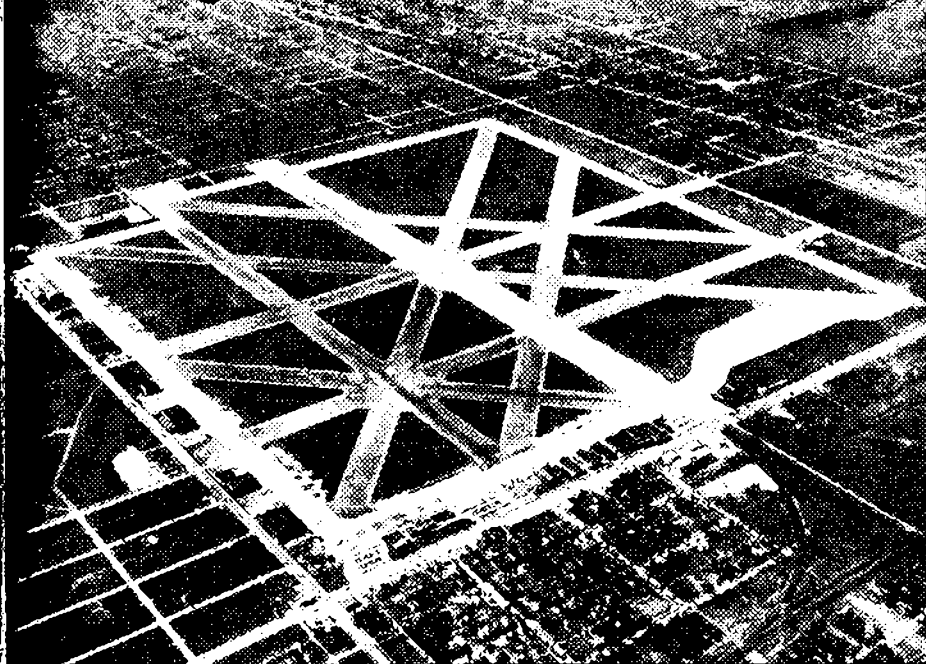
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Midway Airport and World War II



Chicago Municipal Airport, facing west, 1941

The new runways are complete on the north (right) side of the field, and a new east-west runway was paved over the railway bed that ran through the center of the field. With the longer runways, the airport was able to handle large military aircraft and traffic. Cicero Avenue is at the bottom of the photograph, while in the upper left hand corner, the Hale School can be seen right next to the tarmac.

LYNCH FAMILY COLLECTION

BY CHRISTOPHER LYNCH

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked, and [the following day] President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan.

Activity at Chicago Municipal Airport [now known as Midway Airport] increased as the military assumed supervision of air traffic control and took over the airline pi-

lots and mechanics, issuing them uniforms. Runways, such as one 6,519 feet long, were long enough to handle the largest aircraft at the time, including the B-17 "Flying Fortress."

For young navy pilots, Chicago was a place of carrier training first and parties second. Charles Downey, the youngest

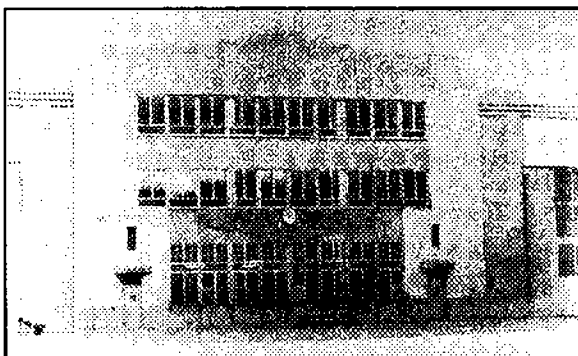


Christopher Lynch has spent most of his life around Midway Airport, where his family ran Monarch Air Service for more than six decades. He is the author of the new book Chicago's Midway Airport -- the First Seventy-five Years published by Lake Claremont Press (\$19.95 softcover, 201 pages, 205 photos), 773-583-7800. Excerpt printed with permission.

naval aviator of World War II, recalls: "They put me in Chicago in September of '43 for the first time. I learned all about the card game of Twenty-one; I learned about the bars in Chicago, a great place. We were here about four days to execute the training that you received elsewhere and to demonstrate to the navy that you could make eight landings and not kill yourself or crash an airplane. I did that on the USS

Wolverine and then went on to other squadron activity and combat on the USS *Ticonderoga* in the Pacific.

"The exercises took place in Lake Michigan. We had two Great Lakes passenger steamers converted to landing platforms by cutting off the top decks. They weren't in any sense a carrier; they were moving plat-

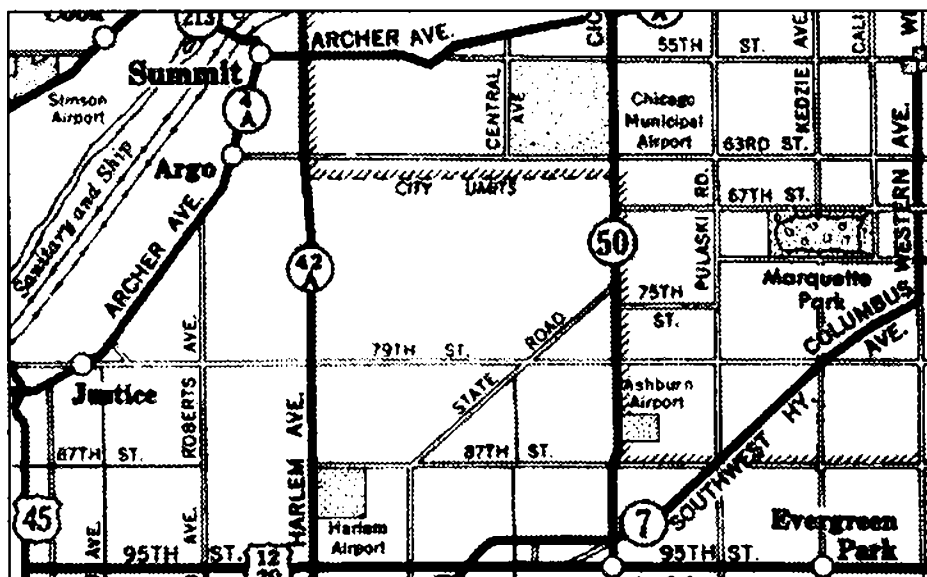


The Air National Hanger, built in 1935, seen from the tarmac at Chicago Municipal Airport

LYNCH FAMILY COLLECTION

forms to take off from and land on. One plane at a time would occupy the deck during the landing and takeoff sequence. About fifteen thousand naval aviators demonstrated their ability to land and take off from a moving deck."

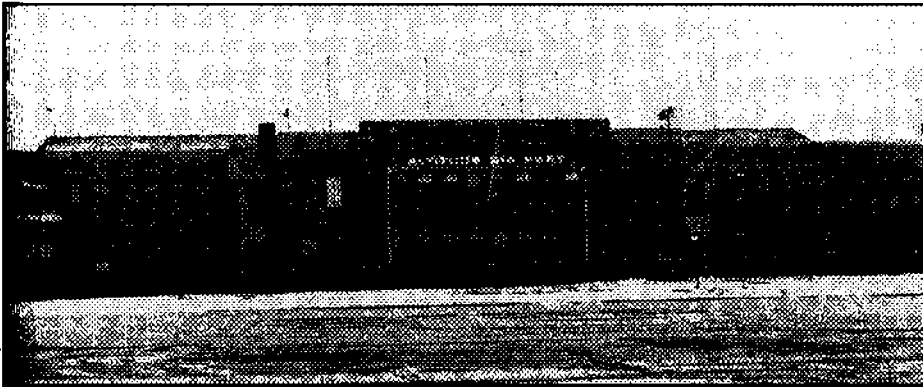
"There was quite an encampment of army aviation personnel on Central Av-



South Side Airports in the 1940s

There were still several smaller airports in the vicinity of Chicago Municipal Airport (top, center): Ashburn Airport (bottom, right), Harlem Airport (bottom, center) and Stinson Airport (top, left).

CROPPED FROM A MAP OF CHICAGO BY THE H. M. GOUSHA COMPANY, PRINTED IN *WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN CHICAGO: 1940 VISITORS' GUIDE* (CREATED BY IHL DRUVOORI HUJELI, COURTESY JOSHUA KOPPEL)



The U.S. Army hangar for transient aircraft at Central Avenue and 60th Place. During World War II, it was the center of much activity with military aircraft arriving and departing.

LYNCH FAMILY COLLECTION

venue," Robert Hill remembers. "Once they had a chow line out there with a big tub of boiling water with hot dogs for the troops. The kids would climb the fence and take one look at those army guys and fliers, and the fliers would just keep shooting these hot dogs through the fence until the teachers and patrol boys told the kids, 'Leave those army guys alone!'"

One of the pilots that knew Chicago Municipal well was Jimmy Doolittle, who would make an historic contribution to aviation when his Doolittle Raiders made

a raid on Tokyo shortly after the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.

"I wrote to Jimmy Doolittle a few years ago, and I thanked him for what he did," said Downey. "He was one of my heroes, along with Lindbergh."

Tom Goldthorpe places Doolittle in the pantheon of aviation's heroes: "You might say that of the top innovators—the Wright Brothers, Lindbergh, and Doolittle—it would be Doolittle that established a utility for air travel that heretofore had not been done. Doolittle didn't invent instru-

ments per se, but he established the technique of instrument flying. He was the first to virtually fly blind in clouds from point A to point B.

"He got in trouble many times. He was at Kelly Field in Texas in 1918 or 1919. He made a bet with another flying officer that he could, while in flight, climb out of the old biplane, go out on the wing and from there



James Doolittle, an air racer, visited the airport frequently. During the first few months of World War II, he led the "Doolittle Raiders" on their daring raid over Japan.

LYNCH FAMILY COLLECTION



A truck advertises war bonds at Chicago Municipal Airport during World War II

LYNCH FAMILY COLLECTION

onto the lower landing gear, squat on the axle, and hang on to the side braces while the other guy landed the plane. While acting out the \$5 wager, unbeknownst to Doolittle, Cecil B. DeMille and a film crew were shooting footage of army aircraft for a movie. DeMille saw Doolittle out on the axle and filmed the whole stunt. Later that evening, the rushes were shown to the base commander, and when he saw the young pilot in the distance clinging to the landing gear, he jumped up and screamed, 'Get me Doolittle!' When his adjutant said he was unclear who the officer was, the commander said, 'No one would pull a crazy stunt like that except Doolittle.'

"In his youth, Doolittle became famous as an air racer. During the 1930s, he was one of the few pilots who successfully flew the notorious Gee Bee, a tiny plane that had about eight hundred horsepower. It was

designed and built by the Granville Brothers out of Massachusetts, hence the name Gee Bee. It was a traitorous little plane and a lot of people got themselves killed in it. Doolittle flew it to victory, and afterwards reporters asked him why he chose to fly that airplane knowing its reputation as a man killer. Doolittle answered simply, 'Because it's the fastest!'"

After World War II, Chicago showed its appreciation for the soldiers and sailors who had fought so valiantly for their country by renaming Chicago Municipal Airport Chicago Midway Airport after the naval battle that practically turned the tide of the war in the Pacific. It was a gesture that meant a great deal to the returning GIs. ■

TUNE IN TWTD June 14 to hear Christopher Lynch discuss his book about Chicago's Midway Airport.

June 30, 1941

The airport, without a railroad bisecting it, is dedicated; a new east-west runway rests on the abandoned bed of the removed railway tracks. To celebrate the completion, an airshow is held, with over 350,000 in attendance.

December 7, 1941

Pearl Harbor is attacked, and America declares war. Activity at Midway increases as the military assumes supervision of air traffic control. Runways, such as one that is 6,519 feet long, are large enough to handle the largest aircraft of the era, including the B-17 "Flying Fortress."

1942

A B-17 crew member stationed at Municipal Airport in 1942 recalls that an aircraft based at the U.S. military's hangar for transient aircraft (60th Place and Central Avenue) was assigned to fly and pick up civilians at various air bases throughout the nation. What was unusual about these passengers was that their briefcases were handcuffed to their wrists as they were ferried by armed military escort from Municipal to the University of Chicago. The reason for these mysterious passengers became clear on December 2, 1942, when Enrico Fermi, Arthur Compton, and other scientists under Stagg Field unlocked the power of the atom with the first self-sustaining controlled nuclear reaction, giving birth to the Atomic Age.

June 30, 1942

Construction begins on Douglas Aircraft Corporation's newest plant, at Orchard Field, west of Chicago, which will build four-engine C-54s for the war effort. The runways, taxiways, and assembly plant are all completed by August 31, 1943. From 1943 to 1945, 655 C-54s are manufactured at this location.

1944-1945

Airline passenger traffic at Chicago Municipal Airport exceeds the one million mark. American, TWA, and Pan American Airlines are all certified to provide service to sev-

eral European cities. and Mayor Edward J. Kelly flies American Airlines' inaugural flight to London. The mayor uses this opportunity to lobby for the United Nations to establish itself in Chicago. Meanwhile, the neighborhoods around Midway continue to thrive with business and residential growth.

Women at Municipal Airport

During World War II, there was a shortage of men in many occupations at Chicago Municipal Airport. With the exception of the stewardesses, there were no women working in any official capacity in Chicago aviation, and airport officials felt the pressure to allow women to fill these vacant positions that were once the domain of men.

The first woman hired to work in the terminal was Valerie Foley, an immigrant from Ireland, for an entry-level position behind a counter.

A half-century later, Erin O'Donnell, whose father came from Donegal, Ireland, became the first woman to serve as Midway's airport manager.

Sara Walsh

Sara Walsh, an Irish immigrant from County Kerry, got her first job at Chicago Municipal Airport in 1941 working at an information booth, [where] she came into contact with many famous people over the years.

She remembers meeting Charles Lindbergh, who was flying on TWA (nicknamed, ironically enough, the Lindbergh Line). Sara also met Howard Hughes, the owner of TWA, who quizzed the young lady about the meaning of the initials of his airline. "Transcontinental and Western Air," she answered, which suited the multimillionaire.

Eleanor Roosevelt would often be in the terminal, according to Sara, sitting at a lunch counter, away from the crowd. She once saw a cockroach try to climb onto the First Lady's plate.

But most importantly to Sara, the airport allowed her to mingle in a cosmopolitan crowd and to learn to like coffee: "I learned to be an American, really."

Midway Airport 1941-45



OUR READERS/LISTENERS WRITE

WE GET MAIL

MC DONOUGH, GEORGIA — I can't tell you how happy I am that you are on the Internet. We listened to you in Villa Park, Illinois, for many years until we moved to Georgia. I kept trying to find WNIB on the Internet and one day I did. For a few months we were able to listen on Saturday afternoons as we had in Illinois. We were so happy that College of DuPage (my alma mater) picked up your program (after WNIB was sold) and put you back on the Internet. We love your show! — **JUDY ZBUKA**

PARK RIDGE, IL — Thanks for the wonderful work that you and your associates, especially Ken Alexander, do on WDCB. Over the past twenty years since I first discovered your program, you have brought me many hours of radio listening pleasure. — **STAN JOHNSON**

WILMETTE, IL — Loved your February/March issue... most especially the piece on my favorite movie, *Singin' in the Rain*, with which Adolph Green was closely associated — see *Necrology* for 2002, also in that issue. I notice in said *Necrology* that Adolph Green was married to Betty Comden, which will be a shock to his OTHER wife, Phyllis Newman. Understandable error, Chuck, because the team was so closely associated through their work. — **FRED BONDY**
(ED NOTE — Oooops! Right partner, wrong wife. Sorry.)

E-MAIL — *Queen for a Day* [broadcast on *TWTD* November 2, 2002] isn't really a program that I would put on my list of favorite OTR programs. But then I'm a man. It was, though, one of the programs as a kid you get stuck with listening to when sick at home and there is no chance to escape. It was then you ended up listening to it, like it or not, because it was what Mom tuned in. Actually, I enjoyed it. Keep up the great programming. — **HENRY SCHAPER**

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL — I'm thrilled that the WDCB tower is up because I work Saturday afternoons, I was unable to listen on-line so I missed many of your programs.

I was happy to read that you are repeating some of them. I hope one of the repeaters will be the Jack Benny Waukegan celebration. I have been a faithful listener since the 1980s and am still bemoaning the loss of WNIB. But WDCB is a worthy substitute, especially on Saturdays. I record all your shows on VHS. — **JANE MAC KENZIE**
(ED. NOTE — Check page 39 (what else?) of this issue and you'll be pleased to know that we're repeating most of the elements of the Benny Waukegan Tribute show on June 28.)

E-MAIL — I enjoy your program on Saturday afternoon. The other day a name popped into my head while I was listening: John Harrington. As I remember, he did a five-minute news spot at the top of the hour in the late '40s and early '50s. As I remember, he had a deep, rich voice that I enjoyed listening to. With a voice like that he had to be telling the truth. Am I correct on the name and person? — **BOB MALY**
(ED. NOTE — Yes. John Harrington was considered WBBM's "Broadcaster-at-large" and, in a 30-plus year career at the station, he did everything from newscasts to play-by-play sports to interviews and special events.

He was on WBBM throughout its pre-all-news heyday, announcing sports during the 1930s, even hosting a teen quiz program towards the end of the decade.

When World War II began, Harrington assumed the position of on-the-air leadership in the local news reporting field at WBBM, heading the news team with several quarter-hour newscasts every day. These regular morning and afternoon news reports continued after the war and Harrington found himself reporting on the LaSalle Hotel fire in 1946 and doing news and sports programs well into the 1960s.

In the "Talk of Chicago" period (1965-68) Harrington was anchorman for *Newsday*, a daily two-and-one-quarter-hour wrapup of local, national and international news, sports, weather, business and traffic reports, clearly a predecessor to the station's all-news format, which began in 1968 and

John Harrington

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continues to this day.

Harrington's deep, booming authoritative voice was stilled in the mid-1970s, but if you would like to hear one of his newscasts, tune in *TWTD* June 5.)

E-MAIL — I have enjoyed your broadcasts for, literally, thousands of hours. For years I taped you and have listened all over the good ol' USA, often times on my job as a food salesman traveling in Central Illinois. Now that I have retired, I listen to you live. I and no doubt many of your other fans were panicky when 97.1 sold out. Then I had to call 90.9 wondering when they were going to enhance their signal (working much better now). Much thanks for all the fun times you have re-created for me.
-- JACK REVORD

SOUTH HOLLAND, ILLINOIS-- I had to write and tell you about the best Christmas gift I have ever received. We have been listening to *TWTD* for over 20 years and were so upset and disappointed when the new owners of WNIB dropped the program and you moved to College of DuPage. We, like I'm sure many, many others in your South Suburban listening audience, could not get the signal at all from COD. We were able to listen to you through the web, but our computer is upstairs and we're generally downstairs. I can't tell you how yucky my Saturday afternoons have been since you moved.

This past Christmas my husband bought me a Bose radio as my Christmas gift. I

must say I wasn't so excited about getting a "radio," but he said it was no ordinary radio -- it was magic! He had heard from some friends that a Bose could pick up stations that no other radio could ever do -- and he was right. He bought it only after determining he could get the COD station -- and then not just "in" but clear with a solid signal that didn't move. Chuck, this radio is amazing. I tune in Saturday morning and listen to all the other good programming on COD and then totally enjoy *TWTD* with you guys! It's great. I stay on to listen to the big band music just after you go off and I can't tell you how much we enjoy it. We're on the "young" side (50s), and I had never heard of many of the old time radio shows you play, but now we love them -- even our 30-ish daughters enjoy the show when they're visiting -- they can't get it in Indiana, either.

I wrote a letter to Bose to tell them this story and to let them know what a great product you had. I know other [far away] listeners would run out and buy a Bose if they knew they could listen to your show again. We are not in any way connected to this company, although I wish I owned stock in it.--ANNE BLANK

E-MAIL — I have been a die-hard fan of *TWTD* for many years, and was so disheartened when WNIB "changed the format." I live in Northwest Indiana, about one hour southeast of Chicago and have been unable to tune you in. However, this afternoon [January 4, 2003] while cruising the radio dial I came upon *TWTD* again! The signal was intermittently strong, then weak, and a couple of times faded out all together, but I was able to listen to most of the program. The really weird thing was that the signal started getting weak about five minutes prior to the ending of the program, and quit altogether right at 5 p.m. I listen on a Bose radio and even sent for an extra antenna from Bose to try to get your show in, but to no avail. I can't tell you how thrilled I am to be able to hear your show again. I was in grade school in the 1950s, so some of the programs I don't remember, but I just love all of them. It's such a treat to sit and listen and let your mind imagine the scenes. I especially love your Jack Benny shows in February. --SUSAN KRAFT

IED. NOTE — If WDCB's signal drops somewhat at 5 p.m. Saturday (after perking up earlier at 1 p.m., just as we start *TWTD*)



MORE MAIL

especially in the fringe areas of the station's coverage, it is because none of the vintage programs we broadcast are in stereo and WDCB has agreed to drop the stereo signal during *Those Were The Days*. Broadcast engineers tell us that when the stereo signal is off, the regular broadcast signal reaches out farther. I don't understand it either, but we're grateful for big and small favors like that one. Chalk it up as one more reason to lend your financial support to Public Radio from the College of DuPage. And read on for another bit of help for listeners at the edges of our broadcast signal.)

SCHERERVILLE, INDIANA— A radio that I've run across that is worth mentioning to your audience is one made by the C. Crane Company. It is called the CCRadio Plus. While this radio is marketed for its exceptional AM broadcast reception, its FM reception is outstanding, too. It is a bit more pricey [\$159.95] than the GE SuperRadio, but I feel it is well worth it. Just to mention, this radio has separate bass and treble controls along with line-in and line-out jacks. This makes for excellent off-the-air recording! The Internet address for The Crane Company is www.ccrane.com. Their phone number is 1-800-522-8863. This radio has great audio as well as extra circuitry for pulling in those "not so strong" signals! —MARTY DZIK

VALPARAISO, INDIANA— Last [July] when you were playing "Sleigh Ride," [TWTD, "Christmas in July" 7-27-02] I was in Cicero, Illinois. While this song was playing, I came upon a horse-and-buggy. As I passed them I turned up the car radio and the driver began laughing. He understood the irony of the situation as well. It's not that seeing a carriage while hearing Christmas music is strange, but in July? Keep up the good work. By the way, I am able to pick up the WDCB signal (although somewhat scratchy) all the way east to I-65 and I-94. It steadily becomes more difficult to hear the farther east I go.

—RANDE DAWSON

(ED. NOTE— What really would have been

funny was if you had come upon a one-horse open sleigh last July!)

E-MAIL— In straightening out the attic after Christmas, I came across my old *Nostalgia Digests*. I moved back to the Chicago area in 1983. After my sister Chris told me about your program I was hooked and started saving the issues in 1984. I just can't seem to throw them out. I guess if I ever have to move to a retirement home, these *Digests* are coming with me. I brought them down from the attic so they wouldn't deteriorate. Now I'm going through them and reading the articles of interest to me. There is such a wealth of information in them. It's all new reading. It's interesting to see how the format had changed through the years. You were quite busy back there in 1984 when you were on almost every night. I have the anniversary issues starting with the fifteenth year. Those are works of art. In a 1985 issue I came across the first letter I wrote to you. I mentioned the Cinnamon Bear tapes and how much my daughter enjoyed them. She is now 25 years old and has those tapes, which she cherishes. I keep saying this, but it "bears" repeating: You have brought so much joy to so many people through all these years. —KATHY SMITH

(ED. NOTE — It warms my heart to know that you have enjoyed our magazine so much and that you have been such a good, loyal listener to our program. I hope it will be a long, long time before you and the magazines move to a retirement home!)

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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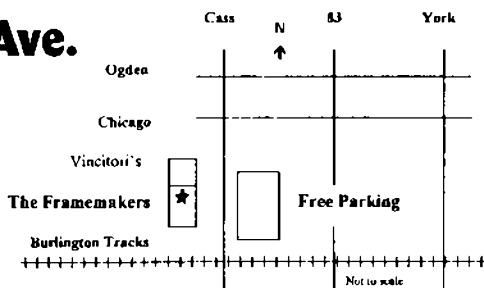
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← **MILTON BERLE**

was known as "Mr. Television" and "Uncle Milty" during the golden age of TV. Wayne Klatt's article begins on page 40.

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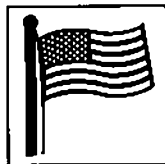
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