

THE

# GREAT GILDERSLEEVE

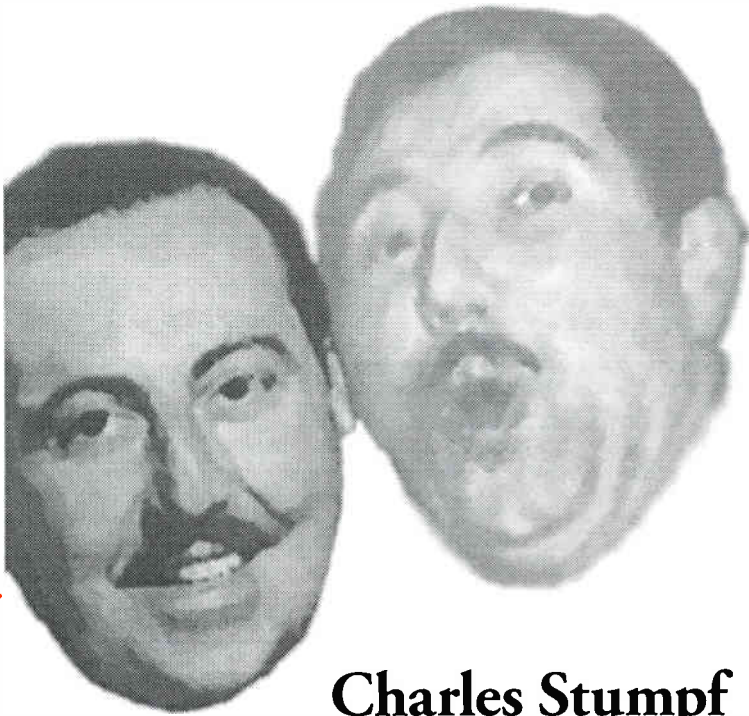


Charles Stumpf  
Ben Ohmart

Introduction by Shirley Mitchell



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Ben Ohmart

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*To Hal Peary, Willard Waterman and  
the talented cast and crew of The Great  
Gildersleeve. A show that will outlive us all.*

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## Introduction

*by Shirley Mitchell*

When I was very, very young, about eight years old, I was a crazy movie-goer. My mother used to take my brother and me to the movies while she went to help my father at work. So having been at the movies from maybe twelve noon until eight at night, that was our babysitter. And I could imitate everything that I had seen.

I actually started winning amateur contests when I was eight years old. I won *The Children's Hour* with Jules Blair in Toledo, Ohio. I would do Garbo and Una Merkel and Katherine Hepburn, and that's how I started doing the southern belle. Leila, Gildersleeve's girlfriend, is probably a little part of all those actresses I watched.

I did about eight shows a week during *The Great Gildersleeve*. The Bob Crosby *Old Gold Show*, *Fibber McGee & Molly*, *The Jack Carson Show*, *Red Skelton*, and a bunch of CBS shows like *Suspense*. Sometimes I would have two and three shows a day! There were a small group of us who did that. I was probably the busiest actress who played everyone's sweetheart during those years.

Being so much in demand, I just loved working. I was very young and it was a ball. I would finish a show at CBS and I would have page boys holding certain doors open for me, so I could run from CBS to NBC, and Frank Pittman would hand me my script, and I would go on the air! It was magic time.

Radio is my favorite medium. You didn't have to put makeup on, you didn't have to get dressed, you didn't have to audition that much: the director handed you the script and you read. It was a lot simpler. We all stole the money and we knew it.

And of all the shows I did at that time, *The Great Gildersleeve* was certainly my favorite. Working with Hal, you had to learn so much, he was such a pro. And we had the right chemistry. At the beginning he scared me to death! Because he'd been a very successful actor on *Fibber*. But there wasn't anyone on *Gildersleeve* you couldn't like, except maybe Earle Ross because he played Judge Hooker, and he played him so brilliantly that you thought of him as being obnoxious! He was perfect.

Hal was a genius with the Gildersleeve character. In fact, Hal was that man. And NBC had always had Willard Waterman in the background because he was a perfect imitation of Hal. The difference between the two men I think is that Willard was a more self-effacing man. He was this tall, gentle giant. He was 6' 4" or 6' 5". He was dear and sweet and kind. Hal really was Gildersleeve. Willard was kind of laid back, and pretended to be Gildersleeve. He was wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. He never tried to imitate the voice, it was always there. But as a performer, Hal was *so* Gildersleeve. He was so perfect for it. He was rather short and chubby and I always had the feeling that he needed to prove himself a little, but I never had that feeling with Willard.

Leila was this typically southern (and in this day and age, I don't think she'd be accepted as much as she was then) helpless (pretended to be!), outrageous woman. She was totally dishonest, but she was so smart with her feminine wiles. The most intelligent female I have ever known! Anything she wanted, whether she told you the truth or not, you bought it. Because she was so charming. In a sense naïve, but street smart. It was a sublime pleasure playing her.

I think she was really in love with Gildersleeve, but she was also playing with him. She wanted to get him. He had a big house, and he was a "dahlin'."



I remember when Gildersleeve was supposed to marry Leila, I went to a florist and got a bouquet, and I got a little silk dress, and we dressed for the audience. And when I was leaving the show to get married, Hal came out with a bouquet of flowers, and I started to cry. I just couldn't stop.

There weren't too many backstage escapades or stories. You worked too hard! We would come in at 9 AM in the morning on a Sunday and rehearse until noon and then go home and change because we were always in pants and whatever. At 2 PM we were back at NBC, dressed, where we started to rehearse and at 4 we did the show for the east coast. Then we broke and went to the Brown Derby to have dinner, then at 8 we did the second show. There wasn't that much slack time.

We were so immersed in the show. I clothed myself in the character of Leila. It just rolled off me. When I came out on stage the audience would scream because I was so much younger than what they expected. That was the show I loved most of anything I've done.

And I'm still getting fan mail from it, and from my roles on *Lucy* and *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*. It's incredible! I feel so lucky to have been a part of such a wonderful show and cast. They truly were the Golden Days.

# THE GREAT GILDERSLEEVE





Radio's first spin-off series was *The Great Gildersleeve* that premiered over the NBC network on Sunday evening, August 31, 1941 at 6:30 PM. "Spin-off" is the term used when a radio or television series is centered around a character who was introduced in a previous series.

Don Quinn was a former cartoonist, turned writer who created a character named "Gildersleeve" on the *Fibber McGee and Molly* program in 1936. Quinn apparently felt that the name had a humorous connotation. However, the name was not just a figment of his imagination. It was an authentic family name that can be traced back to 13<sup>th</sup> Century England. Originally spelled Gyldersleve, its meaning is "sleeve trimmed with gold." There are two listings of the name in Webster's Biographical Dictionary:

Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, American classical scholar. Born 1831 he served in the Confederate Army and became a professor of Greek at the University of Virginia in 1885. Four years later he founded and edited the *American Journal of Philology*. In 1867 he authored the text book, *The Latin Grammar*.

Virginia Chrocheron Gildersleeve, American educator born in 1877. In 1900 she was a teacher of English at Barnard College where she became dean in 1911.

There have doubtlessly been other notable Gildersleeves.

Writer Quinn first used the name in the script for the McGee broadcast of April 13, 1936. The first actor to play the role was Cliff Arquette. The same character reappeared on the broadcast of May 4<sup>th</sup> when he was given the first name of Cliff.

More than four years elapsed before Quinn used the name once more on September 20, 1938. This time around the character was called Widdicomb P. Gildersleeve and he was the president of a baby carriage factory and the role was played by a different actor, Hal Peary. Then on April 25, 1939 Peary was heard as optometrist, Dr. Donald Gildersleeve. The character then underwent a change of occupation and when he was heard from again on June 20<sup>th</sup> he became a dentist, Dr. Leo Gildersleeve.

Finally on October 17, 1939 which was the 219<sup>th</sup> broadcast of the McGee program, the character's name became Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. As Fibber's pompous neighbor he was a perfect foil for the Wistful Vista windbag.

Actor Peary had a hand in helping to develop the character. The name Throckmorton was borrowed from his street address in Chicago. The actor also stated that the middle initial "P" represented Peary. Other sources have claimed that the P stood for Philharmonic. Be what may, suffice it say that Throckmorton's middle initial was P.

Once he settled into the role, Peary's distinctive voice became so closely associated with the character that he could no longer double in other roles. Hal Peary's first love had always been music and as the bombastic Gildersleeve he would have no opportunity to sing on the McGee program. After nearly three years of such confinement he felt he was badly in need of a change and considered giving up the role. But the character of Gildersleeve had become such a major part of the McGee format that both the sponsor and the network did not want to run the risk of losing Peary's services. He was offered a show of his own which would be called *The Great Gildersleeve*. The versatile actor/musician realized that if he were to star on his own show he would somehow be able to work some music into the

format. The network's offer was one he could not resist and he happily accepted.

Leonard L. Levinson was a staff writer for the network. He had worked as an assistant to Don Quinn and was given the assignment to write the new Gildersleeve show. Peary also assisted in creating a story line, situations and a supporting cast of characters.

For the new show Gildersleeve would move away from Wistful Vista and settle in a new locality. A colorful cast of supporting players was carefully cast, and an audition script was prepared. It had been presumed that the Johnson Wax company who had sponsored the McGee program for 15 years would want to continue with the new show. Announcer Harlow Wilcox was on hand at the audition to deliver the sponsor's message and the Billy Mills orchestra provided the music.

The audition was presented on May 14, 1941 in the NBC studios before a live audience who reacted favorably in all of the right places. Everyone involved felt that the audition had gone extremely well. However, the Johnson Co. declined sponsorship. Instead they chose to sponsor a new comedy series to be written by and starring comedian Ransom Sherman. The show was called *Hap Hazard* and centered around the perplexed proprietor of a ramshackle hotel called Crestfallen Manor where all of the water faucets dripped and squeak-



ing doors would not stay closed. The show premiered on July 1, 1941.

Hal Peary was greatly disappointed and upset by the fact that Johnson's Wax had not picked up the show, but another sponsor, Kraft Foods quickly took over.

*The Great Gildersleeve* program premiered on August 31<sup>st</sup>. The first episode was a masterful transition of the central character from the McGee show. The opening scene took place at the Wistful Vista train depot where the president of the Gildersleeve Girdle Works was departing on an overnight trip to Summerfield, a town at the other end of the line.

On that fateful trip several very important changes effected Gildersleeve's character. He left behind not only his wife and nagging mother-in-law, but also a very prosperous business. His marital status was reversed and he re-entered the blissful state of bachelorhood. His mission to Summerfield was necessitated by the fact that he was going to oversee the estate of his deceased young sister and her late husband Charles Forrester, and supervise the upbringing of their orphaned children, a niece and nephew.

Who is Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve? His nephew Leroy summed it up perfectly when he exclaimed, "What a character!" What a character indeed.

Throckmorton was born under the sign of Scorpio one October 22<sup>nd</sup> in a small ocean-front fishing village. He was given his unusual name in honor of his paternal great grandfather, a sea-faring hero who captured pirate ships during the War of 1812. The only time the boy's sea-faring instincts came to the fore was when he attempted to build a ship in a bottle. The project quickly sank.

In a childhood effort to earn money to buy a pony, he tended to lobster pots. The black-haired boy with the flashing dark eyes was musically inclined and often raised his youthful voice in song as he strolled along the shore. Sometimes he had to shout to be heard above the sound of the wind and the ocean's lapping waves. He was an obedient son and cheerfully helped with the household chores. All of his free time was spent practicing on the family's old piano. Daily, his chubby fingers ran up and down the musical scale, as he sang along. He learned all of the popular songs of the day, as well as the old ballads and even a salty sea chanty, or two. Throckmorton enjoyed the sound of his own voice and when he was not singing, he was never at a loss for something to talk about. The active boy had a robust appetite and a propensity for gaining excess poundage.

As a young man Throckmorton was excessively polite, especially to older ladies who liked to chuck him under his cherubic chin, as they praised

his angelic singing voice. In addition to playing the piano he was also proficient at strumming a ukulele.

At school the girls flocked around him and affectionately called him ‘Tubby.’ While the boys were all envious and thought of him as being pompous and vain, and a terrible show-off. They taunted him with cruel calls of ‘Hey, Fatso.’ His teachers all liked the well-mannered boy and he got very good grades, excelling in music and school politics. He was a member of the glee club and during his senior year he was elected president of the Ukulele Club. Tubby liked to serenade his many girlfriends as he strummed his ‘poor excuse for a guitar.’ He was smart enough to realize that the boys did not like him so he made a half-hearted effort to gain their favor. He had no particular interest in sports and displayed no athletic prowess, nevertheless he reluctantly volunteered to take part in their rowdy activities. Fatso’s movements on a baseball or football field, or on a basketball or tennis court, were all clumsy and comedic. None of the guys wanted him on their team. He even tried out to become a cheerleader for the Junior Varsity, but they also rejected him. In desperation he tried to strike up many conversations and even offered to lend them a helping hand, but they all continued to avoid him. It took a very long time and a lot of conscientious effort on his part, but through

many good deeds and amicable actions, he eventually made many lasting male friendships. It gave him great personal satisfaction to know that he was finally accepted as a 'regular guy.'

During his college days at Princeton the weighty windbag wrote a number of musical plays that he directed and starred in before graduating with the class of 1914.

All of these varied life's experiences contributed to the development of his complex personality, that combined vanity with a tendency towards pomposity, well hidden beneath a veneer of genuine civic-mindedness and a commitment to traditional values.

Throckmorton's paradoxical personality was a strange contradiction. Although he was destined to remain a perennial bachelor, he was nevertheless a relentless romantic. He serenaded and flattered every female who came within hearing distance. The portly would-be Romeo was involved in more matters of the heart than a cardiologist. His first major adult romantic encounter occurred while he was in the army in 1918, stationed in France. The object of his ardent affection was a rather mature and flirtatious mademoiselle named Mimi.

His most outstanding characteristic was his easily recognizable voice and especially his distinctive laugh that could convey every conceivable emotion and nuance. It combined a calliope

of sounds, combining a chortle, chuckle, giggle, guffaw and growl, along with the clang of a bell, flutter of a flute, toot of a whistle and sweeping slide of a xylophone, as his versatile voice ran up and down the musical scale.

Writer Clair Schulz summed up Gildersleeve's character as being "an entertaining mixture of moonstruck procrastinator and blustering bungler."

Gildersleeve's age and waistline when he arrived in Summerfield in August 1941 were both the same – 42. He had a new mission in life and did not want to become an unctuous uncle. He was determined that he would deal with his young wards with honesty and candor.

For the audition the niece had been called "Evelyn" but when the series got underway her name was changed to "Marjorie." The fact that margarine was the main product being promoted by the new sponsor may have had something to do with the change in names. Marjorie – margarine? Perhaps it was strictly coincidental. Commercials for Kraft Foods promoted Parkay Margarine.

Marjorie was an attractive redhead approaching the age of 20. The young lady had aspirations of becoming either an actress or a ballet dancer. The nephew, Leroy, was a mischievous wise-cracking 12-year old. Arriving at the Forrester

home at 747 Parkside Avenue, Gildersleeve met his wards whom he had not seen for a number of years. Seriously-minded Marjorie reacted quite formally towards her newly arrived guardian and addressed him as "Uncle Throckmorton." Leroy, however, in his typical relaxed manner did not hesitate to address the newcomer as "Uncle Mort." Within a short time the name was shortened even further to an affectionate "Unk." As the relationship grew, Marjorie also began to address him as "Uncle Mort," which later became "Unkie." Gildersleeve always referred to her as "Marjorie," while her bratty brother called her "Marge." Birdie, the devoted housekeeper called the young lady "Miss Marjorie," and in tender moments, "Margie."

Gildersleeve quickly grew very fond of his wards. The responsibility of a family brought out a warmth of character that had not been evidenced previously. He beamed with parental pride as he called Leroy "My boy," and when especially pleased with the boy's behavior he would smile approval and say, "You're a bright boy, Leroy!" But when the adolescent got out of hand, which was frequently the case, his uncle would chastise him with a firm, "Le-roy!!" In return, when the 12-year old caught his guardian boasting or procrastinating, which was often the case, he would pipe up with "What a character!" Another of the youth's favorite quizzical expressions was, "Are you kiddin'?"

Marjorie gave her adoring guardian little cause for consternation except for the number of boyfriends she so easily accumulated, and the rare instance when she attended a costume party scantily clad as a bareback rider.

The household pets varied from time to time, and most had unseemly names. The cat was called Aesop and one of the dogs was named Senator. For a time there was a canary named Napoleon, and Leroy had a quartet of pet rabbits called Eeny, Meeny, Miney and Moe. He also had an unnamed turtle that he often carried around in his pocket.

When the series first began Marjorie had a romantic interest in Ted Wills, the handsome young attorney who was a junior member of the law firm representing the Forrester estate. Another of her acquaintances was a hopeless hypochondriac named Oliver Honeywell. Eccentric and unpredictable, Oliver once asked for permission to spend the night because it had begun to rain and he had come away without his raincoat, and he did not want to run the risk of taking a chill on the streetcar. On another occasion he was stranded up on the roof. It soon became apparent that Oliver was not a serious contender in the romance department because of his many phobias and complexes, and the character was dropped after a few appearances. The role had been played by a young-sounding Hans Conried.

Marjorie's next beau was Ben Waterford whom everyone quickly dubbed "Bashful Ben." He had mechanical abilities and Gildersleeve often sought his help in making necessary auto repairs. When WW II broke out, Ben joined the Navy, which brought a temporary end to the romance. Later he returned to Summerfield and operated a gas station, and remained a friend of the family.

As the series continued to develop Marjorie's age was altered and she became more of a typical teenager. She celebrated her Sweet 16 birthday. For a time, much to her uncle's chagrin, she became interested in Marshall Bullard, the son of wealthy but obnoxious neighbor, Rumson Bullard. Marshall's father was not pleased with the relationship either, and the young man was sent off to an elite prep school back east.

Her other would-be suitors included the fast-talking high-schooler, Wally Hawks, who was much more interested in dancing the jitterbug and driving fast cars than he was in his studies. She also had an ardent admirer named Doug who was an amateur pilot and invoked his uncle's immediate ire by buzzing around the house with his plane. Then along came the brash son of one of Gildersleeve's college chums named Larry 'Brink' Brinkerhoff. Marjorie found him much too forward though and he soon disappeared from the scene.

After World War II broke out four months



into the series, Marjorie was missing from a number of broadcasts. Her absence was explained by saying that she was attending classes at a Red Cross training school. During one of her absences her uncle and Leroy decided to surprise her by having her bedroom redecorated. They traded in her antique four-poster bed for a more modern model. Little did they realize that she had hidden a valuable pearl necklace in one of the bedposts. After much difficulty, the helpful pair was able to retrieve the old bed, and all ended well.

Leroy's behavior, however, was another matter. He often had to be reminded to wash his hands and face, comb his unruly hair, tuck in his shirttail, as well as *not* to slam the door. He usually wore a combined expression of a smile, smirk and a sneer. He was rough and tumble and capable of getting into fights with his friends. Leroy was young enough to be afraid of Schneider, the neighborhood bully, and he combined the innocence of youth with the rebellion of adolescence. He possessed a ready wit and was always ready with a smart-alecky remark or wise crack, but had an easy-going way about him. He could be an aggravating brat, but soon he became his uncle's pal, despite the fact that the boy delighted in deflating the older man's expansive ego. Leroy constantly displayed his desire to be independent, but he needed and wanted his uncle's help and advice. At times he could express

understanding and compassion, beyond his years.

Leroy spent most of his weekly allowance at Peavey's drugstore and especially at its soda fountain. He also liked to check out the comic books at the magazine stand. When he had exceeded his allowance, which was frequently the case, he would try to open a charge account in his uncle's name.

Early in the series Leroy's trouble-making pal, Piggy Banks made him a gift of a dog named "Tiny." But the dog turned out to be much larger than its name, and proved to be more trouble than they could handle. Gildersleeve attempted to give the dog to Judge Hooker, but he refused because of the dog's size and ferocious nature. In desperation, Tiny was given to the egg man to live on his farm. But then the dog's picture appeared in the newspaper and disclosed the fact that he was a valuable rare breed "Saskatchewan Moosehound," and that his rightful owner was Cecil P. Upshaw, the president of the Summerfield National Bank. After many exasperating events the dog was returned to Mr. Upshaw, who gave the reward of yet another Saskatchewan Moosehound.

On another broadcast Leroy and Piggy built a treehouse which Gildersleeve climbed up to inspect, and fell through a secret trapdoor, landing in the victory garden.

When the boy needed twenty dollars to buy a new motor for his model plane, he took

a job delivering newspapers for the Summerfield Indicator-Vindicator. But it only lasted a single day. Then, for a time, he had a part time job at Peavey's store, but that also ended with disastrous results.

Leroy attended the P. J. Fluegelhammer Junior High School. After he overheard his uncle and Judge Hooker discussing some of the pranks they had played during their school days, Birdie the housekeeper's best green and purple size 42 dress was kidnapped off the clothesline. It was soon discovered, stuffed and hung out of a second floor window of the school. Naturally Leroy fell under suspicion, but it turned out to be the work of his prank-prone pal, Piggy Banks. Nevertheless, Leroy was instructed to pay closer attention to his studies. But soon thereafter the statue of P. J. Fluegelhammer that stood in front of the school was discovered dressed in an overcoat, long underwear and a corset. In an effort to protect Leroy, his uncle and Judge Hooker went to the schoolyard after dark to retrieve the items. But they were apprehended by the school principal, Mr. Proctor who informed them that the clothing contained labels bearing the name Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve and that it was fortunate that Leroy was a relative, as he was about to be awarded a medal of honor of academic achievement. Otherwise, the trespassing pair would have been in serious trouble.

After his arrival in Summerfield it did not take long before everyone started referring to the Forrester home as “Gildersleeve’s house.”

The fourth member of the household was the efficient and devoted housekeeper, Birdie Lee Coggins. She had her own room and drove an old jalopy. She was a cook extraordinaire and attended meetings of a Lodge know as “The Mysterious and Bewildering Order of the Daughters of Cleopatra.” Birdie had gained her education by living life, rather than from books. She had her own opinions and let her voice be heard, but never without respect. From whatever part of the house Birdie was in, whenever the phone rang or someone was at the door, she would enthusiastically call out, “I’ll get it!” but someone else usually beat her to it. By nature she was nurturing and her hands were strong, but gentle. She had an energetic reassuring embrace that could instantly drive away any feeling of self-doubt. Birdie had looked after Marjorie and Leroy practically from the time they were born, and tenderly tended to their needs. Their prosperous father Charles Forrester had managed real estate, as well as an automobile agency, and they were used to many advantages in life. They may have been slightly spoiled, but that was none of Birdie’s doing. Kindhearted and ever cheerful, Birdie was a beloved and respected member of the family. She had a rollicking laugh that could rattle the rafters.

The loving housekeeper offered motherly advice to Marjorie and steered her through many teenage romances. She also guided Leroy, but with a much firmer hand. Although the relationship was always affectionate, when the boy became unruly or rambunctious Birdie could put him in his place without raising her voice. She had wisely theorized, “What that boy needs is a hand to guide him – and slap him down when he needs it.” She could soothe his hurt feelings or calm his worse fears when he came running home wailing that Schneider the bully had struck him. “He punched me in the nose – the dirty guy!” With a few kind words and a generous slice of chocolate cake and a tall glass of cold milk, the boy was ready to face the world anew.

At times Birdie would raise her voice in song, singing something appropriate to the season at Christmas and Easter time. When the Summerfield Little Theatre League presented a re-staging of Gildersleeve’s college-day play, *Deep in the Heart of Maryland*, Gildy played kindly old Uncle Rufus and Birdie was heard as his wife, Auntie Freesia. Together, they sang a rousing rendition of the old minstrel favorite, “What You Gonna Do When the Rent Comes ‘Round?” She also joined the Jolly Boys quintet in a jangling version of “Jingle Bells.”

One of Birdie’s more affluent gentlemen friends gifted her with a certificate good for

mambo lessons from Professor Stonewall Jackson Guadalupe's studio. When she was alone in the house she would use a mop or a broom for a mambo partner.

For the audition script a situation was created that would give Gildersleeve his introduction to Summerfield, his new home, by way of a very unpleasant encounter with a cranky old codger, Judge Hooker who, as fate would have it, would oversee the duties he was about to perform for the estate. The unlikely pair disliked each other practically from first glance. On the overnight train ride the only available seat in the crowded dining car was that opposite the sour-looking judge. Insults were exchanged and there was a number of references to Gildersleeve's expansive waistline. And of course, the only available berth in the sleeping car was the one above the disagreeable judge.

During the night the weary traveler was kept awake by loud snoring from the berth below. In desperation he emptied a cup full of ice water into the face of the sound sleeper. The train lurched and he slipped and fell on top of the judge which led to near violence. Judge Hooker was not only a cantankerous old coot, he was ill-tempered and mean-spirited, to the point of being despicable. Both men were hard-headed and quick to wrath and the animosity between them budded into enmity.

The same script, with some alterations was used for the opening episode of the series. The unpleasantness between Gildersleeve and Judge Hooker may have been considered too negative an aspect for introducing a comedy series, thus the wax company's pass on sponsorship.

Sensing the problem, the writers and actors worked hard to soften the characters and remove the vexing veneer that had been set up. Some conflict remained in the scripts, but the situations in future shows were less heated.

Initially the judge's full name was given as "George Horace Hooker," then it was changed to "Judge Horace W. Hooker," and later settled into "Judge Horace Greeley Hooker." He had taken office in 1922. Sometimes, under his breath, Gildersleeve would refer to him as "the fury of the jury" and "the stench of the bench." But as their relationship mellowed, he called him "Hooker," or "the Judge," but rarely "Your Honor." Because of the Judge's derisive chortle and bleating laugh, Gildersleeve often referred to him as "the old goat." The odd pair shared expansive egos, as well as the roar of a lion. But Hooker's bark was much worse than his bite. Deep down they were both nice old pussycats and became the friendliest of enemies. If the chips were down, either would hasten to the rescue of the other. Their pseudo-feud continued.

The Judge began to call his rival "Gildy." And when he became interested in an attractive woman, which was frequently the case, the irascible Hooker would also begin to pay a great deal of attention to her. Once the Judge got a taste of Birdie's expert cooking, he often finagled an invitation to dinner, with ulterior motives in mind. More than once he tried to lure her away to work for him, offering less hours and more pay. When the irate host learned of this he would fume, "That crook of a Hooker tried to hook our cook again!"

When the Judge's house needed fumigation to get rid of ants that had invaded the pantry, and some silver fish had taken up residence in the upstairs closet, Gildy came to the rescue by offering use of his guest room. The Judge jumped at the opportunity and moved in bag and baggage, bringing along with him a squeaking old rowing machine that he used for an hour, early every morning. Then to make matters worse he spent another hour in the only upstairs bathroom, using up the entire supply of hot water. Meanwhile Gildy was left to attempt to sleep on a lumpy old horsehair sofa. Hooker's presence completely disrupted the household. Birdie had been given special instructions by Hooker to adhere to his health diet. The daily menu was drastically altered, and the usual sumptuous evening meal was reduced to a medium size bowl of broth. Gildersleeve's great



hospitality was badly taken advantage of. The Judge felt so much at home that he decided to keep his own house closed an additional three days to have it repainted.

For the most part, residents of Summerfield were law abiding and Hooker, who bore the same last name as a famous Civil War general, had very few legal matters to attend to. His duties were mainly confined to such minor offices as serving as temporary truant officer, or pretending to arrest a hooky-player for fishing without a license, or apprehending a would-be apple thief in someone else's tree. There was little reason for him to don a judicial garb, but there were two, well-pressed robes hanging in the rear of his closet.

One of Summerfield's most interesting landmarks was Peavey's drug store which was located on the corner of State Street and Parkside Avenue. It had opened its doors for business in February 1921 by the kindly and mild-mannered pharmacist, Richard Quincy Peavey. He was slight of build and had thinning hair. He wore thick spectacles which were usually perched on the end of his thin nose. When a customer asked for one of his wares, his comment was always the same. "Any particular kind you had in mind?" Often they stopped by merely to seek his philosophical advice.

The window display had not changed much

during the years. There was an assortment of apothecary jars of various sizes and colors, as well as a large hand-lettered RX sign. In the center of the display was an oversized ceramic replica of a pestle and mortar.

As customers entered the shop they were greeted by the friendly tinkling of sleigh bells, dangling on the door. In the spring of 1943 during some "modern improvements" to the shop, the sleigh bells were replaced by electric chimes.

The wall shelves were well-stocked with economy size bottles of hair tonic, mouthwash and assorted oils such as camphorated, castor, cod liver, mineral and wintergreen. There was also a wide selection of aspirin, headache remedies, cough syrup and vitamins. Peavey's drug store featured his own brand of hand-mixed lotions, potions and medicinal elixirs.

The store's old oak display cases contained neatly arranged rows of cigars, candy bars, breath mints, cough drops and sundries such as shoe laces and hairpins. The proprietor frequently wiped the cases free of all smudges and fingerprints with the sleeve of his immaculately white pharmacist's jacket.

The popular soda fountain accounted for a goodly share of the store's moderate profit. The seats of the counter stools of imitation leather were well worn. Whenever Peavey took an empty glass or ice

cream dish off the shelf, he carefully wiped it with a clean dish towel. He kept the ice cream dipper in a pitcher of clean water that he changed several times each day, whether or not it had been used.

The clientele of the pharmacy was greatly diversified. . . almost everyone stopped by at one time or another. Two of its most frequent patrons were Gildersleeve and his nephew Leroy. Sometimes Judge Hooker stopped by for a strawberry sundae and a Coke or, if his mood warranted it, a hand-mixed “lemon-lime phosphate.”

On the mirrored wall behind the fountain there were some sun-faded cardboard cutouts of a gigantic triple-deck ice cream cone, as well as various kinds of sundaes, and a huge frosted glass of Coke.

One simmering summer day a trio of Summerfield’s socialites, consisting of Mrs. Salisbury Twitchell, Mrs. Guernsey and Dr. Pettibone’s bossy wife, smugly strolled into the shop. The ladies all had lavender-hued hair and wore fashionable frocks of floral print chiffon. Their flabby arms were heavily-laden with tiers of jangling charm bracelets. The hoity-toity highbrows had come in quest of some sweet smelling sachet and some rhinestone-studded hairpins. Peavey was nonplussed and greeted them politely. After making their purchases the trio jangled their way over to the fountain. Fussy Mrs. Twitchell used

her elegant lace-edged handkerchief to carefully dust off the seats of three stools upon which they perched precariously. Mrs. Guernsey requested a menu, which Mrs. Twitchell wiped clean with her handkerchief, and they proceeded to ponder over it for a few minutes. Mrs. Pettibone, in her exaggerated precise diction, placed an order for “three cherry Cokes, no ice please.” In cold silence the ladies lingered over their cold drinks. Then after Mrs. Twitchell discreetly placed a ten cent tip alongside her empty glass, Mrs. Guernsey paid the bill and they went outside to their luxury limousine driven by a uniformed chauffeur named Chauncey.

Peavey smiled to himself, thinking of his domineering wife whose maiden name was “Horsefall.” They had met at a community picnic back in the days when he was employed as a salesman for a wholesale drug firm. It was, more or less, a case of “admiration” at first sight. Some months later when he proposed marriage, she immediately accepted, but then quickly added, “but not until you own your own drugstore, Mr. Peavey.” Her father had been opposed to the match so the carefree couple eloped in his Stutz-Bearcat. In later years it was replaced by a classy Essex. Mrs. Peavey made the gentle pharmacist a most formidable wife. She phoned him at the drugstore every day. He would patiently answer by saying, “Oh, hello Mrs. Peavey – this is Mr. Peavey.” At home she kept an

equally formidable parrot that spoke only French. Unexpectedly, in the spring of 1947 he ran away from home because Mrs. Peavey kept the talkative bird in the bedroom at night and it kept him from getting any sleep. One of the bird's frequent and favorite expressions was also Peavey's: "Well, now, I wouldn't say that."

Floyd Munson's barber shop across the street was more of an eyesore than a landmark. In the shop window stood a couple of dried out African violets and the remnants of an old poinsettia. The window itself was badly in need of cleaning and the shade was usually pulled halfway down.

The barber chair stood in the center of the shop, with a well-worn old razor strap dangling from the right arm, that was loose, and creaked. Whenever a customer requested a shave, Floyd would attach a banjo-shaped headrest to the chair. His motto was "Never put off 'till tomorrow – what you can do a week from today." There was usually a week's sweepings of clipped hair deposited in a dark corner, and an unused, antique brass cuspidor stood near the door. Despite the shop's unkempt appearance, the barber himself was always neatly attired with his shirttail intact, and his shoes well shined. His fingernails were clean and trimmed.

As customers entered the shop they were greeted by a mixture of aromas, the pungent smell of

bay rum, the sickening sweet smell of lilac and rose talcum powder, and stale cigar smoke. At the rear of the shop stood a wobbly wooden clothes tree and umbrella stand. On an oval-shaped table along the rear wall stood an early model electric revolving fan and an old radio, neither of which “swayed or played.” The radio had been Floyd’s pride and joy. It was a 1931 five-tube Crossley that measured 14½ inches high, 11½ inches wide, and 9 and ⅝ inches deep. The advertisement for this particular model had referred to it as a “performing midget – where kings of jazz play catchy toe-tickers.” Floyd had always kept the volume at full level and his wife Lovey complained that it made far too much noise, and refused to let him keep it at home. The radio had cost \$39.75 with a small down payment and the remainder in easy monthly installments. Floyd’s “Performing Midget” had blown all five of its tubes before it was paid for. He refused to throw it away and kept it in the shop as a conversation piece.

Above the table hung a large framed picture of a gigantic St. Bernard clutching the handle of a huge wicker basket in its mighty jaws. Inside the basket was a pair of twins, one smiling contentedly, and the other howling.

On a shelf behind the barber chair was a rack filled with a collection of old shaving mugs. Most of the mugs were cracked and/or chipped, and their only value was strictly sentimental.

On the floor, between the dual deacon benches, where customers waited and/or loitered, lay a staggering stack of out-dated magazines and pamphlets.

The barber's wife had once decided to redecorate the shop for him, and decided to add the feminine touch of wallpaper. But she could not make up her mind as to what design to use. She talked the owner of the wallpaper store into giving her three sample rolls with three different designs. After much deliberation, one wall was finally covered with a design of red and green wide diagonal stripes, another wall was covered in a large floral print that had been applied upside down, with the stems reaching skyward. A third wall was papered in a design obviously intended for a child's room – teddy bears, baby buggies, miniature rocking chairs and toy sailboats. At that point Lovey had run out of sample rolls of wallpaper, so she painted the remaining wall with some bilious-green enamel that had been left over from painting some flower pots and an old plant stand. To add a touch of color to the drab wall, she pasted up some colorful pictures she had cut from some old magazines and seed catalogs.

Although Floyd had been married only once, he referred to his wife, Lovey, as “my present wife.” When Gildersleeve became Water Commissioner he called him “the Commish” and he called the druggist, “the Peave.” He delighted in re-telling the same old jokes and was an incessant chatterer.

Floyd was also known to be a bit of a gossip and Gildersleeve once commented, "Sharing a secret with Floyd is the same as placing a full-page ad in the newspaper."

Above the barber shop was an empty room, except for a few folding wooden chairs and an old upright piano, slightly out of tune. It was there that the group known as the Jolly Boys held their meetings and frequent songfests.

When Gildersleeve first settled in Summerfield the big house next door had been vacant. In the spring of 1942 new neighbors moved in. There was a dotty 17-year old daughter named Dottie who constantly asked to borrow scarce items, such as sugar. Her aptly named brother "Tuffy," was a bully who menaced Leroy. Their father, Mr. Dobson was an uncouth part-time wrestler known as "Philadelphia Phil." To make matters worse, they had a bothersome dog that had been trained to borrow the neighbor's newspaper. When the Dobsons moved away after a few months no one was really sorry to see them leave. The big house remained vacant for a while.

Then in September fate took a hand, and a major change came into Gildy's life, when a winsome widow by the name of Leila Ransom moved in. Leila is an Arabic name meaning "dark beauty." The widow was fair and blonde, and was a beauti-



ful belle from Savannah who doused herself with expensive Shalomar perfume. She spoke with a drawl that smacked of magnolias and moonlight and used expressions such as “you-all,” “poor little ole me,” “mercy me,” and “gracious!” When she walked her slim hips moved like the front porch swing. The syrupy siren was outrageously flirtatious as she cooed endearments like “Do be a lamb,” and “Thank you, lambie pie.” Gildersleeve was gleefully gullible to her goo. When she sighed, “Oh, Throck-mor-ton, you are so ro-man-tic and man-ly,” her seductive drawl came close to scorching the microphone. Listeners could almost envision her tantalizing tonsils, fluttering in time to her eyelashes, heavily laden with mascara. Peavey once described Leila as, “a very well-preserved southern Lady.”

The introduction of Leila’s character into the story line brought with it plenty of opportunities for Gildersleeve to raise his voice in songs of romance. The widow Ransom played the piano and coyly confided to her admiring neighbor that her favorite song in the whole world was “Speak to Me of Love,” and she frequently induced Throckmorton to sing it to her. The courtship of the coquettish widow by her portly paramour became a game. He crooned and she swooned.

Leila often spoke of the family and friends she had left back home. She had an adoring brother

named Marvin, and a sister Winifred who everyone fondly called "Winnie." The southern sisters had many beaux who smiled when they called them "the Heavenly Twins." Winnie and Leila were belles who never told. Eventually Winnie married a Yankee engineer from up North. They had an overly polite son named Michael.

Leila also told fascinating tales about her hometown girlfriend named Lou-Lee Jean. To round out the conversation, she made frequent mentions of her old beaux such as "Lightfoot Duprez" who was in the cotton business, as well as her late husband Beauregard Ransom, a true southern gentleman.

The helpless Gildy fell hopelessly in love with her and it was inevitable that they would become betrothed. When plans to marry were announced, Marjorie planned a wedding shower for them. The date was set as June 6, 1943 and Judge Hooker was asked to serve as best man.

For reasons unknown, the addle-pated southern belle had seemed to forget that Beauregard might still be alive. He was, and just as the minister was about to pronounce Gildy and Leila "man and wife," Beauregard appeared in the church and the wedding was called off. Leila headed back down south with Beauregard. Gildy was left in the lurch, alone in the church. He tearfully slipped the unused wedding ring into the vest

pocket of his tuxedo, and went home to nurse his broken heart.

His damaged heart had barely had a chance to begin to mend before word was received from Savannah that Leila was *officially* “the widow Ransom,” as Beauregard had been fatally kicked in the head by a mule. Still dressed in black chiffon, the widow hurried back to Summerfield and the old romance blossomed anew.

In their mind’s eye listeners may have envisioned Summerfield as a small slice of rural Americana. But it was, in fact, much larger than one might have imagined.

The village was founded by one Homer Quink who started out with a farm and later opened a blacksmith shop. Homer was an amiable man and soon attracted neighbors. It was a pleasant place where pleasant people smiled and said hello as you walked down the street. A town square sprouted up as well as a picturesque community park with a bandshell where weekly concerts were presented by the town’s band every Sunday afternoon.

Summerfield was comprised mainly of modest-sized houses that were comfortable and well kept. Many had picket fences, green lawns, lilac bushes and a rainbow profusion of fragrant flowers. In sunlight the gardens were visited by colorful

butterflies. After dark, fireflies lit up the night sky. The town's old-timers referred to the glowing insects as 'lightning bugs' and energetic youngsters tried to catch them in canning jars, for closer inspection.

The quiet streets were tree-lined and shady, with a number of inviting benches where a weary body could rest, enjoy the cooling breeze and while away the hours. The most impressive residences were the rambling old house on State Street where Judge Hooker lived and the dilapidated old Burton mansion on the outskirts of town that had been deserted for many years. The latter was rumored to be 'haunted' because its original owner had murdered his wife there.

As the years quickly passed, more and more people decided to settle there. The area grew and in time became a city. In 1913 Summerfield's population was listed as 14,967 and the rate of property tax was set at a modest 3 mills.

Among the larger buildings was City Hall and the Summerfield National Bank. A hospital was established, as well as schools and the office building of the local newspaper *The Summerfield Indicator-Vindicator*. The town also had two radio stations – WVU and KQQQ.

One of the most prosperous businesses was the Hogan Brothers department store. There were also a plentiful number of busy restau-

rants, the most popular being The Summerfield Grill. Smaller, but well-patronized establishments included Peavey's Drug Store located on State Street and Parkside Avenue, and Floyd Munson's barber shop across the street. Miraculously the city managed to maintain its 'small town spirit.'

Summerfield's main landmark was a large reservoir with its weathered water tower and pump house. A bottling works was later established. Nearby, was Grass Lake and the neighboring towns of Fairview, Millville, Jacksonburg and Waterton.

The locale of the Gildersleeve radio series was centered within an eight block area of Summerfield.

During the 1947 broadcasting season there was a summer replacement show called *Summerfield Bandstand* that aired from June 11th through September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Gildersleeve and Leroy, as well as other Summerfield residents appeared on the show sporadically.

Gildersleeve became involved in local politics and in the fall of 1942 he competed against Water Commissioner Clanahan for the office, and won. Becoming Commissioner was an ideal position for a pompous man who wanted a title, with few responsibilities. He took over as of October 24<sup>th</sup> and was paid a modest \$4,200 annually. He was

given an office in City Hall. Both Marjorie and Leila wanted to remodel the office for him, but his formidable secretary Miss Fitch flatly refused. Her father had been the city's first water commissioner and a larger-than-life imposing portrait of him hung in a prominent position on the wall behind the desk. Miss Fitch had been on the city payroll for many years. Somehow Gildersleeve managed to have her replaced by a younger and prettier new secretary, Bessie. The first actress to play the role was Pauline Drake, and in December 1945 Gloria Holliday became the new Bessie. The following year Miss Holliday became the real life wife of Hal Peary.

The supervisor at the Summerfield pump house was an old codger named Charlie Anderson. He constantly complained about a faulty snifter valve in the pump house, but the new commissioner repeatedly forgot to requisition a new part, and several times the area's water supply was threatened. Once Charlie came to the rescue by hastily making some vital repairs using some parts off an old coffee grinder.

In the fall of 1944 Mayor Terwillinger saw some eels crossing the road near the reservoir and rumor soon spread that it was about to dry up. Gildy quickly hired an expert named Professor Luther Teaberry to use his magical electronic "rain-maker" device to solve the problem. The scheme

failed and Gildy was temporarily fired. Back on the job, he made other mistakes, like the time he had hired a devious-looking gentleman named Lucifer Lewellyn as bookkeeper whom he had to fire him the next day. Prankster Floyd Munson, the barber with the hair-brained schemes once told Commissioner Gildersleeve that all he had to do to increase the profit of the water company was to “dilute the water.”

The reservoir held special memories for some of Summerfield’s residents. Romantic young couples would park nearby on moonlit nights to watch the moon reflected in its still waters. Leila and Gildy were known to have parked there on a number of occasions. Others had different kinds of memories involving the reservoir. Leroy and his pal Piggy once were caught skinny dipping there.

At the end of the broadcast of March 29, 1950 an announcement was made that Gildersleeve had been named “Honorary Water Commissioner” of several towns across America.

Back in the spring of 1942, a revolting situation arose when “the old goat” and Gildy both had local radio programs aired at the same time, over rival stations. On the Judge’s program he offered a bachelor’s advice on child rearing. While on his rival’s show, Gildy’s true identity was not revealed on the musical program where he

was a “mystery singing voice” identified only as “Ricardo, the Brazilian Baritone – the Romeo from Rio.” He used a song titled “Rosita” for his musical theme, and sang songs of romance such as “Sweet Girl of My Dreams.” Competition between the rivaling shows continued until both programs left the air.

In the spring of the following year there was more trouble when the water commissioner hurriedly backed out of his driveway without looking first, and accidentally his fender dented the judicial bumper. Hooker threatened to sue and even take it to the Supreme Court. But two months later they made up when the Judge was asked to serve as Gildy’s best man.

Meanwhile, they had joined forces with Peavey and Floyd, as well as Police Chief Tom Gates to organize a musical aggregation (or “musical aggravation” as Floyd termed it). The group was called “The Jolly Boys” and they rehearsed in the room above the barber shop where Floyd presided at the piano. Gildersleeve sang lead and Chief Gates used his booming voice to sing bass and maintain order when an argument disrupted the singing. “Fellas, fellas,” he would plead. “Let’s all be Jolly Boys.”

Gildersleeve’s romance with Leila did not always run smoothly. The southern belle often



developed a fleeting fancy for some other handsome male, such as Dr. Arthur Hargreve. She would be absent from Summerfield for weeks, even months, at a time. Then suddenly, she'd pop up again.

During one of her many absences someone new came into Gildy's life. Eve Goodwin, the principal of Leroy's school, came to the house to discuss the boy's poor grades. Gildy was intrigued by her concern and was instantly attracted to her. Miss Goodwin was quite unlike most of the other lovely ladies who had caught his eye. She was not glamour-conscious, or giddy. Instead, she was articulate, soft-spoken and sophisticated. Although she enjoyed his flattery, she was not coy or coquettish and never deliberately led him on. Things were getting on fine when suddenly Leila came back to town. One look at Miss Goodwin and she was instantly jealous, and resumed her vampish ways. Poor Gildy was torn in two directions at the same time.

After many years of being unused, a performance of a touring opera company was scheduled for the Summerfield Opera House. A gala formal event was planned. Although opera was not their favorite kind of entertainment, the town's residents donned their Sunday best and filled the hall. Leila was out of town at the time so Gildy invited Eve Goodwin to accompany him. He dug his old

tuxedo out of moth balls and had Birdie air it and press it for him. Eve looked radiant in an elegant gown, and Judge Hooker wore his long evening cape. When they met in the lobby the judge tipped his high hat and made a sweeping bow. Floyd and his wife Lovey came dressed in their best bowling outfits. The performance was nearly three hours long and very loud, but Floyd fell asleep and his loud snoring annoyed the diva during her aria.

After the performance, as the audience passed through the lobby there were a number of disparaging remarks. Gildy, being a lover of fine music, gallantly defended the majesty of the opera. Later when he took Eve home she told him she was very proud of the way he had spoken up for the opera. She also confided that she thought he had a very fine singing voice. It was sweet music to his ears.

When he was candidate for Mayor of Summerfield, Gildy mistook a casual remark Eve made when she jokingly told him she would marry him – *if* he won the election. For a time he thought she was serious. But then her difficult mother came for a visit. Although Gildy tried his best to please her, she turned a deaf ear to his constant compliments and placed many obstacles in his path to romance. He planned to host a dinner party in her honor. Birdie's expert cooking skills were challenged by the many dietary limitations and dislikes and allergies of the guest of honor. After much

careful deliberation the cook decided to serve bouillon and poached eggs on toast. But that plan was abandoned when Gildy remembered that fussy Mrs. Goodwin was allergic to eggs.

Somehow they got through the dinner. A few days later Eve received a telegram from her brother Fred informing her that he had joined the Seabees and their mother would have to spend the duration of the war in Summerfield. Gildy and Eve had a serious talk and both decided they didn't really want to get married, but remained very good friends.

In the spring of 1945 wealthy and snobbish Rumson Bullard moved to Summerfield and took up residence in a large showy house near Gildersleeve. The new neighbor was vainglorious and it was obvious that he considered himself better than anyone else. Bullard looked down his nose at everyone, especially Gildy. He was a swaggering peacock who was never seen not wearing an expensive double-breasted suit, with starched white shirt and silk cravat with an expensive diamond stud. The flamboyant fop enjoyed showing off by driving around in one of several flashy cars. Gildy resented his high-hatted antics and the pair quickly became adversaries. A private war erupted that might best be described as The Clash of the Titan EGOS!

Bullard had two sons, Marshall, a teenager, and Craig, a boy nearer Leroy's age. Neither

of them was class-conscious like their pompous parent. Marshall became attracted to Marjorie and they dated a few times. When it looked like a serious relationship might develop, there was plenty of strong family objections on both sides. But there was no real reason for anyone to worry, for impressionable Marjorie had her heart set on becoming a famous ballet dancer. She was in no particular hurry to marry, nor was Marshall. They discussed the matter and decided to wait until they were both at least 35 years old.

The first actor to portray Bullard was Ed Max. He was succeeded by Gale Gordon who was renown for his portrayal of haughty roles. He was perfect in the role, but conflicting rehearsal schedules forced him to give up the part. Jim Backus sometimes substituted. In addition, Willard Waterman also recalled that sometime before 1950 he had played the role once or twice.

In February 1948 a new love interest entered Gildy's life. Leila Ransom had returned to the south and her cousin, Miss Adeline Deveraux Fairchild moved in next door. She was a dainty and demure matron with a charming southern accent. Adeline was less addled than her capricious and coquettish relative. When Gildy first met her, he immediately began using his flattering ways. She flirted in return by saying, "Mercy, imagine little ole lonesome me, living all alone in that big ole

house, all by my little old self.” Gildy then complimented her on her dress and she coyly replied, “Why, thank you, sir. It’s just a little ole organdy gown I’ve had hanging in the closet for years.”

Next, he sang a romantic serenade while he accompanied himself on his ukulele, and she played the piano. “You, sir are a gorgeous singer. You sound just like Lawrence Tibbet.” Love had bloomed once again. Adeline confided that she had come to Summerfield “to flee the memory of a romance that flowered – and died.” Back in Savannah she had been engaged for 15 years to a cad called Cecil.

When one of his cronies mentioned that Miss Fairchild resembled actress Ingrid Bergman, Gildy slyly replied, “She looks more like Una Merkel to me.” The role of Adeline was played by Una Merkel who had worked previously with actor Hal Peary, both in films and radio.

Early in the fall of 1948 a baby girl was left in the back seat of Gildy’s old Studebaker. Not knowing what else to do, he took the infant back to his house. When no one claimed the baby, the family decided they would keep her. Judge Hooker cautiously pointed out that they would first have to make arrangements for adoption. Being a bachelor ruled out Gildy’s eligibility for adoption, so he seriously considered asking Adeline to marry him so that they could become the infant’s parents. That

plan failed, so Marjorie decided that she would take the matter into her own hands and announced that she would ask her boyfriend Ben to marry her. Her uncle would not hear of such a plan. The main matter at hand was to give the baby girl a name.

On September 22 a "Name the Baby" contest was launched. Kraft Foods announced a total of 721 prizes worth \$50,000 for the winning entry. For the next five weeks listeners were invited to submit names. Weekly prizes included table radios, pop-up toasters and automatic coffee makers, as well as the top prize of a brand new 1949 Ford sedan. In addition, the grand winner would receive a cash bonus.

In the meantime Aunt Harriet Forrester came to visit in order to see the baby. During her week's stay she tried to rearrange the entire family's daily routine. She set little "daily missions" for everyone. Her interference became a terrible nuisance and she quickly outstayed her welcome. Good neighbor Adeline came up with a solution by sending an anonymous telegram to Aunt Harriet asking her to come home at once. The dilemma was resolved when the baby's real father appeared and took the child back.

A full romance never developed between Gildy and Adeline, but they remained the best of friends. The fashionable southern belle tried her dainty hand at operating a hat shoppe. The business failed and she returned to Savannah.

Gildy turned his romantic gaze elsewhere and took notice of pretty brunette nurse Kathryn Milford who worked mostly night duty at the Summerfield hospital. He always admired a girl in uniform, and her sparkling white uniform highlighted her dark hair. He signed up for samba lessons and invited Kathryn to a “Latin Night Dance” at the country club. Miss Milford was dedicated to her profession and rarely had any free time for dating. The saddened swain soon realized she was unattainable.

Nurse Milford was not Gildy’s last heart throb, there had been many others before her, and more still to come. Included on Gildy’s long list of lovely ladies were such names as the exotic Dolores Del Rey, Mae Kelly, Paula Winthrop, Grace Tuttle, pretty Mary Easton and June Stedman.

Meanwhile, Marjorie met a handsome young man by the name of “Bronco.” His full given name was Walter J. Thompson and his father operated a bookshop. Bronco was not quite as rugged as his name might imply. He was good natured and easy going, and he was also quite shy, and it took some time before he could work up enough nerve to ask Marjorie for a date...

Uncle Mort took an instant liking to the young man and Leroy promptly announced “Broncho’s a really neat guy.” He began to spend a

lot of time around their home and Birdie enjoyed cooking dinner for his healthy young appetite.

In the fall of 1949 a prominent music publisher, Henry Krouse came to town to visit the Bullards. Thinking it could be a golden opportunity to have one of his old songs published, the Water Commissioner hurried up into his attic to dig through a trunk of old manuscripts. He dug out one for a lively tune he had written back in his college days, and made repeated attempts to sing the song for the publisher, without success. In desperation, he got the Jolly Boys involved in his get-rich-quick scheme. He worked up a lively arrangement and after some hurried rehearsals, the songsmith was lured into Floyd's barbershop. The crafty barber got the publisher trapped beneath a stack of steaming towels while the group sang Gildy's song for him. To everyone's surprise, Mr. Krouse was duly impressed and announced that he would be willing to publish the song, if they could come up with an appropriate title.

On September 21<sup>st</sup> a "Name My Song" contest was announced, offering \$50,000 in cash prizes. Listeners were invited to send in for a recording of Gildy singing his song, and then submit a title for it. It was a two-sided six inch red vinyl disc recorded at the 78 RPM speed. The contest closed at midnight on November 5<sup>th</sup> and the winning title was "Tug O' My Heart."



Enthusiasm for the Jolly Boys singing sessions began to ebb. Gildy was alarmed and decided to take some action to hold the group together. At the next Jolly Boys meeting he suggested that they form a band and volunteered to play the trombone that Leroy had failed to maintain interest in. He knew that Floyd was always more than willing to thump on the keys of the old piano, while Hooker tooted away on his screeching flute, and Peavey scraped away on his violin. Chief Gates was so enthusiastic at the announcement, he rushed home to dig out the broken bass drum he used to play.

Peavey surprised everyone when he announced that he had been secretly practicing the cello. Mrs. Peavey would not allow him to bring the instrument into the house, so each night after dark, he would sneak into the old Willoughby house that had been deserted for many years. When neighbors heard the eerie sounds emerging from the crumbling walls, they thought the place had been invaded by ghosts.

Gildy lost no time in hiring a music professor to make a very complicated arrangement of "The Waltz of the Flowers." But in the hands of the inept musicians it sounded more like "The Dirge of the Weeds." The quaint quintet did their very best to master the difficult arrangement but the great discord that resulted was loud and hard on the ears, and all members of the group were ready

to disband. But no one could decide who would be the first to walk out. A heated argument nearly came to blows. Harmony was eventually restored, and all the Jolly Boys joined in on a hearty blend of voices once again.

It was around this time that Gildy got a new neighbor, a second-rate clothing merchant by the name of Oliver T. P. Pearson. The Water Commissioner was impressed by the two middle initials until he learned that T. P. stood for "two pants." Pearson proved to be a pest and borrowed items ranging from light bulbs, to a mouse trap, pots and pans and an axe, all within the first week. After borrowing most of Birdie's cookware, pesky Pearson had the colossal nerve to ask her to cook his dinner on her stove. She reluctantly agreed, and in the process Gildy's lamb chops wound up in his neighbor's stew. Then, adding insult to injury, the nery neighbor used Gildy's phone to place a seven minute long distance call to his wife, back in South Dakota.

After a lengthy on-and-off-again romance, Marjorie agreed to become Bronco's wife. A date was set, but arrangements did not run smoothly. The groom-to-be's highly opinionated mother was soon at cross purposes with the bride-to-be's head-strong uncle. When Gildy suggested that the couple should be married at home in Summerfield, bossy Mrs. Thompson insisted the ceremony be held in

her more fashionable home in Broadmoor. The befuddled Mr. Thompson remained noncommittal. Bronco's parents were played by Jeanette Nolan and Joe Forte, later replaced by Joseph Kearns.

The disruptive in-laws could not agree on any of the other details of the wedding, such as the type of flowers to use, where the reception would be held, and even what style of gown the bride would wear. Marjorie finally prevailed by firmly stating that she wanted to wear the same dress her mother had worn at her wedding. It was one of the few instances when there was any reference to the deceased parents. The episode of April 19, 1950 contained some sentimental and dramatic moments.

The wedding took place on May 10<sup>th</sup> with Judge Hooker as best man. In publicity for the occasion, a church was rented where cast photographs were taken. A five-page article entitled "Gildersleeve Gives the Bride Away" appeared in the May 23<sup>rd</sup> issue of *Look* magazine.

After more family squabbling, the newlyweds took up residence at 747 Parkside Avenue. Gildy helped Bronco find a job selling real estate and his first and only sale, was a used houseboat on Grass Lake. It was purchased jointly by the Jolly Boys, with plans that they could share it for alternating vacations.

There was a great deal of excitement when the young couple broke the news that they were

to become parents. When the day arrived Bronco could not be found and Gildy and Leroy had much difficulty getting the mother-to-be to the hospital on time. The missing husband arrived in time for the news that he was the father of a baby boy – as well as a baby girl. Leroy nearly burst with pride as he announced, “Gee whiz, Unk, I’m a double uncle!”

It was a very happy household when the twins were brought home. Gildy gurgled with glee, reacting as if he were the twins’ grandfather. Birdie held them to her ample bosom as she sang them a tender lullaby.

Leroy became disgruntled when the new parents refused to let him baby-sit. “Gosh,” he complained, “you’d think they owned the twins, or something.” Once again Gildy and grandmother Thompson got into many heated discussions on the choice of names for the babies. On March 14, 1951 a “Name the Twins” contest was begun, offering listeners a list of prizes that included 20 brand new 1951 Ford Victoria sedans, as well as weekly prizes of portable dishwashers, triple-whip electric mixers, and various cash awards totaling \$89,500. The winning entry named the twins “Ronald Lynn” and “Rhonda Linda.”

Bullard’s widowed sister Ellen  
Knickerbocker and her pretty young daughter

Brenda came to Summerfield to live. As might be expected, Gildy found the widow extremely attractive, and when Leroy first laid eyes on Brenda, he too, was smitten, but was far too shy to speak out. She was effervescent and unaffected and soon had ways to ease his bashful inhibitions. Cupid beckoned and it was a classic case of puppy love.

Suddenly Leroy no longer had to be reminded to change his shirt or comb his hair. The pair began to spend a lot of time together and he started to call her "Babs." Despite her kinship to his nemesis, Gildy liked the girl. Babs had aspirations of becoming a singer with a swing band, so Leroy quickly announced that he would become a drummer with just such a band. He introduced her to Peavey's soda fountain. Being Bullard's niece, the girl naturally had expensive tastes, and without hesitation, she ordered the highest priced item on the menu. It took Peavey nearly five minutes to prepare his masterpiece that he called "The Strawberry Agony." The young pair had two of the elaborate sundae concoctions. Another of their favorite past times was to sit in one of Bullard's luxury automobiles and pretend they were driving to Niagara Falls on their honeymoon.

Later the fun-loving pair began to conduct jam sessions in the parlor. Gildy disapproved of the noise and tried to expose them to classical music and the finer things in life. He cleverly arranged

to have Dr. Pettibone's daughter Clara, who was a student at the Conservatory of Classical Music, bring her cello to the house. He was horrified when shortly after Clara arrived, she joined the others in a loud jazzy rendition of one of the popular hits of the day.

One of the main attractions at the 1939 New York World's Fair had been daily demonstrations of a phenomenal new means of communication – TELEVISION. More than 25 million international visitors caught their first glimpse of flickering images on a small black and white screen. They were fascinated and looked forward to the time they could have television in their homes.

The outbreak of World War II had curtailed development of television, but when peace was restored and the necessary materials became available once again – production was accelerated. As television sets began to appear in people's homes it cut great inroads into the world of entertainment. They were content to stay at home instead of venturing out to motion pictures or live theater. One other form of entertainment was also greatly effected – radio. Many of the long time comedy and drama programs began to fade from the airwaves.

In 1949 a number of shows began to appear on regularly scheduled telecasts. A few brave pro-

ducers of radio's most popular programs took the risk of transferring to the new medium. Among these pioneers were: *The Aldrich Family*, *The Life of Riley*, and long time radio staples, *Lum and Abner*. During the 1950–51 telecasting season, a few others followed: *Amos 'n' Andy*, *George Burns and Gracie Allen*, and *Meet Corliss Archer*.

By 1950 there were an estimated five million television sets in use. One of the most popular forms of programming were shows based on situations faced by ordinary families that contained elements of comedy. Parke Levy, a writer and producer of radio comedies coined a new phrase for family comedy situation shows on television and dubbed them sit-coms.

With the television debut of the immortal sit-com *I Love Lucy*, in the fall of 1951, the death knell for radio comedy shows was sounded. The first comedian to make it big on TV was the very visual comic, Milton Berle with the *Texaco Star Theater* program. He became so popular he was dubbed "Mr. Television." Another who quickly followed was ex-vaudevillian Ed Wynn who relied heavily on sight gags for his comedy. The pantomime skills of Red Skelton and Jackie Gleason were also well-suited to the new medium. And radio stalwart Jack Benny's comedy involved a lot of gesturing and facial expressions.

In the February 1948 issue of *Radio Mirror* another popular radio comedian also raised his voice on the subject of television.

“From Hollywood comes word that Harold Peary who you will probably know better as the Great Gildersleeve has been complaining in the broadcasting studios for months because radio executives have not been experimenting with television. He claims that the movie studios are going to beat them to the draw, as they have been preparing half-hour films taken from video transcriptions, while radio men have been letting time pass without any similar gimmicks.”

Mr. Peary was ahead of his time in his thinking. It is unfortunate that when *The Great Gildersleeve* made the transition to TV in 1954 he was no longer associated with the role. Willard Waterman had taken over the role on radio in the fall of 1950, so he was starred in the TV series. With the exception of Lillian Randolph as Birdie, all other characters were recast. Although the actors were competent, they simply did not look or sound like the radio counterparts. Forrest Lewis as Peavey managed to sound something like Richard LeGrand who had created the role.

Waterman was vocally acceptable, but at 6' 4" he did not appear as most listeners had envisioned Gildersleeve. The tall actor had been directed to appear pop-eyed, with constantly uplifted eye-



brows, and gaping mouth. There were far too many grimaces and much mugging. On TV Gildy became a one-dimensional character, with the main focus placed on his many romantic escapades. A lot of the features and relationships which were such an important part of the radio show were lost. The relationship between Gildy and Leroy never successfully developed on TV.

The series was not successful and lasted only one season. A total of 39 half-hour episodes had been filmed at the Hal Roach Studios. It was produced by Matthew Rapf using various directors. The filming schedule alternated and took place on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday on one week, and then Thursday, Friday and Saturday the following week. The series was distributed by Republic Pictures.

As the Gildersleeve program entered its 13<sup>th</sup> season on the air in September 1953 the story line had basically run its course and the writers began to introduce new situations and character relationships. The changes were not necessarily for the betterment of the show.

The program did not return to the air for the fall season of 1954. It did, however, come back in November of that year but in an entirely new format and with a different air schedule. Instead of the regular half-hour broadcast, it was changed to

a reduced quarter-hour format that aired five times weekly. The unusual new schedule aired Sunday through Thursday nights at 10:15 PM. For a time it was followed by a quarter-hour version of the *Fibber McGee and Molly* program.

The awkward new time slot presented insurmountable odds for the program to maintain a large listening audience.

Cuts in budget made it necessary to decrease the size of the cast. Only Gildy, Leroy and Birdie continued on a constant basis. Hooker and Peavey were heard occasionally but not usually on the same show. The characters of Marjorie, Bronco and the twins were eliminated, as well as several others. Gone also was the studio audience and live orchestra. Scripts were adapted from excerpts of previous broadcasts.

The quarter-hour series was taped with as many as five or six shows being completed in one recording session. Tapings took place during the same period when the TV series was in production. The radio series was taped on days when TV production was inactive. It was a very exhausting schedule for everyone involved, and consequently, program quality suffered. Only a few examples of the quarter-hour shows have survived.

Even though the television series did not succeed, Gildersleeve managed to maintain a loyal radio following. In the fall of 1955 it returned to the air-

waves in a 25 minute format, heard Wednesday s at 8 PM. Competition from TV was constantly on the rise, but faithful listeners continued to tune in. In 1956 Gildy returned to the air for another full season.

The final season opened on September 6, 1956 with Virgil Reimer as director, and scripts by Virginia Stafford Lynne. Lillian Randolph was absent for the broadcast of March 7, 1957 and the role of Birdie was played by her sister, Amanda.

The final Gildersleeve show was aired on March 21, 1957. A golden broadcasting era had ended.

Some years later, tapes of a number of old broadcasts were packaged and distributed by an organization known as The Radio Nostalgia Network. Independent stations paid a fee to air them. The commercials, as well as the original music, were deleted, and canned music substituted.

Orchestras for the radio series had been conducted by William Randolph (1941), Billy Mills (1941-42), followed by Claude Sweeten, Jack Meakin and Robert Armbruster.

Producer/Directors included Cecil Underwood, Frank Pittman, Fran Van Hartesveldt, Virgil Reimer and Karl Gruener.

Sound Effects were in charge of Fred Caton, Virgil Reimer and Monty Fraser.

Announcers: Jim Bannon (1941-42), Ken Carpenter (1942-45), John Laing (1945-47), John

Wald (1947–49), Jay Stewart and Jim Doyle (1949–50).

Writers: Leonard L. Levinson, Robinson and Gene Stone, John Whedon, Sam Moore, Jack Robinson, John Elliotte, Andy White, Paul West and Virginia Stafford Lynne.

The ensemble cast of *The Great Gildersleeve* was one of the finest ever assembled for a radio program. Their combined talents and experience represents more than two centuries of work in legitimate theater, vaudeville, touring musical comedies, tent shows and night clubs.

Some members were pioneers in the broadcasting field, others played leading and supporting roles in every form of program from comedy to drama and variety shows. There were also years of work in television and films, including voice-over work in animated cartoons, and commercials.

We thank them all for so many years of memorable listening pleasure.

Take a bow.







Cast of *The Great Gildersleeve*.

Standing: Shirley Mitchell, Lillian Randolph, Richard LeGrand.

Seated: Earle Ross, Hal Peary, Walter Tetley, Louise Erickson.



Hal Peary, "the Great Gildersleeve."





Hal Peary, the Great Autograph Signer.



Hal Peary.



A young Willard Waterman, 1935.



**Willard Waterman**

Willard Waterman, “the Great Gildersleeve.”





Hal Peary visits Willard Waterman in Willard Waterman's dressing room, during his Chicago run of *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*, 1963.



Walter Tetley, 1935. "Leroy Forrester."



Walter Tetley as "Wee Sir Harry Lauder."



Walter Tetley.



Walter Tetley,  
Hal Peary,  
and Lurene Tuttle, 1942.





Louise Erickson.



Mary Lee Robb, Willard Waterman and Walter Tetley.



Lillian Randolph as “Birdie,” 1952.



Hal Peary,  
Lillian  
Randolph  
and Freddie  
Mercer in  
*Gildersleeve  
on Broadway.*





Marjorie, Birdie, Gildy and Leroy (Lurene Tuttle, Lillian Randolph, Hal Peary and Walter Tetley)



Earle Ross as "Judge Hooker."

Back cover of  
*Grimm's Fairy  
Tales*, narrated  
by Earle Ross.

# GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES

ALBUM No. 50

SNOW WHITE ROSE RED

DR. KNOW-ALL

THE THREE BROTHERS

NARRATED BY EARLE ROSS



This Album consists of 3-10" Black and White Records, in drop sequence. Narrator, EARLE ROSS; Stories Adapted by WRIGHT ISSEX; Music by HOWARD HALBERT; Supervised by RALPH BASS JR.

For that neglected age — the child too old for nursery rhymes — too young for the classics, such as Robin Hood, Treasure Island, etc. In this Album, GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES live again. Each immortal narrative completely enchants the child with its beauty . . . its charm . . . and its world of make believe loveliness. Black and White Record Company is proud to present this, the first of a series of album sets for juveniles, for these are the stories which will never grow old. The Land of Fantasy awaits the playing of the first record . . .

Earle Ross, one of America's finest character actors, as well as one of the great voices of modern radio, is the Narrator of each story in this album. Heard from coast to coast daily, and on at least one transcontinental programme of note, doing a well defined and easily recognized series of characters, Earle Ross is the former Dean of one of the largest schools of Fine Arts in the country, catering strictly to children. Mr. Ross has been seen in countless motion pictures, and he has received thousands of requests to enter still another field of endeavor: THE TELLING OF CHILDREN'S STORIES on home recordings. We are happy that we have been chosen to bring Mr. Ross to this new channel of entertainment. We trust that you will get as much enjoyment from the hearing of these stories (so often told, but never old) as Mr. Ross received in the telling of them, and we KNOW you will enjoy each character etching which Mr. Ross has so finely drawn for you in the telling of those tales.



Gildy (Hal Peary), Judge Hooker (Earle Ross) and Peavey (Richard LeGrand).





Shirley Mitchell, "Leila Ransom."

Shirley  
Mitchell and  
Willard  
Waterman at  
a Friends of  
Old-Time  
Radio  
gathering.





Arthur Q. Bryan as "Floyd Munson," 1942





Mrs. Hal Peary - Gloria Holliday (“Bessie Barstow”).

Gloria  
Holliday and  
husband,  
Hal Peary.





Bea Benadaret, "Eve Goodwin."



Richard Crenna as “Bronco Thompson.”





Gale Gordon, "Rumson Bullard."



Una Merkel, "Adeline Fairchild."



Barbara Whiting, 1945. "Babs Knickerbocker."

Goodbye, from  
*The Great  
Gildersleeve* cast!  
Seated: Lillian  
Randolph, Gloria  
Holliday, Una  
Merkel, Mary Lee  
Robb  
Standing: Richard  
LeGrand, Earle  
Ross, Walter  
Tetley, Hal Peary,  
Jack Meakin, John  
Wald, Arthur Q.  
Bryan



## MEET THE CAST

HAL PEARY (Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve) was born Harrold Jose Pereira deFaria in San Leandro, California on July 25, 1908. His birthplace was located on Dabner Street which had been named in honor of his maternal great-grandfather, João Guilherme Dabner, a third generation Californian whose Portuguese-Flemish ancestors emigrated from the Azores in the early 1860's. The family held a land grant.

“Hal,” as he preferred to be called, received his education at St. John’s Academy and St. Mary’s Highland College. At an early age he had displayed an excellent singing voice and received training from Professor Ernest Muse, and later, in New York City, by Dr. Emil Polak who was rehearsal accompanist and vocal coach for opera star, Mary Garden. Back home the talented youngster began

to perform at local functions. For publicity purposes he dropped one of the R's from his first name and changed his surname to "Perry." His radio debut took place on January 21, 1923 over station KZM where he was billed as "The Oakland Tribune's Boy Caruso." In a review, the entertainment editor of the newspaper accidentally misspelled the name as "Peary." Hal liked the unique spelling, and in time had it legalized, continuing to pronounce it as "Perry."

By the age of 20 the handsome 5' 8" actor with black hair and dark eyes began doing stage work in tent shows, comic operas and musical comedies. He also worked for the stock companies of Henry Duffy, the Fulton Street stock company, as well as McLoon Productions. In addition, for a time he formed a musical vaudeville act with Sylvia Breamer. The singing actor worked extensively throughout the west coast, and toured as far as Australia and the Orient.

He returned to San Francisco to attend Santa Clara University. While appearing in stock in Arizona he met his wife, Betty Farquhar Jourdain, a singer and acrobatic dancer. He began appearing on a variety of programs such as *The Spanish Serenader*, *Roads to Romance*, *El Sidelo Minstrels*, and *The Spotlight Revue*, on which he worked with cowboy singer, Charlie Maxwell. In 1930 Peary was signed to a six-month contract with west coast NBC.



In 1935 he relocated to Chicago and was soon being heard on programs such as *Wheatonville*, *Welcome Valley*, *Flying Time* and *It Can Be Done*.

In December 1937 he was heard on *Lights Out* in a World War I Christmas story about the three wise men and the star of Bethlehem. The script was written by Arch Oboler and the setting was a small railroad station somewhere in France, where several soldiers were waiting to return home. Peary was cast in the role of a French army captain and used a very effective French accent. Also heard on the broadcast was another Chicago-based similar-sounding actor, Willard Waterman, portraying the role of a black American serviceman. The broadcast was a fine example of radio drama at its finest.

Also in 1937 Peary had begun to appear on the *Fibber McGee and Molly* program. Among the first roles he played was blustery Mayor Appleby, stuffy Cicero Clod, British Lord Bingham, druggist Cramer, a vain movie star named Silverscreen, theatrical manager Frite-Wig, store owner Dinwiddle, and a Chinese laundryman named Gooey-Fooey.

Other Peary characterizations included a dignified art instructor, a fussy interior decorator who also doubled as an amateur wrestler, a bombastic Army General, a taxi driver, as well as various doctors, lawyers and other professionals. Finally on October 17, 1939 he became Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. The character



quickly became a favorite with listeners and it was decided to give him a program of his own.

*The Great Gildersleeve* premiered on Sunday evening, August 31, 1941. An invited audience of approximately 300 people were in attendance. The program aired weekly from Studio A at the NBC Studios located at the corner of Sunset and Vine, in Hollywood. It was sponsored by Kraft Foods. Peary was signed to an exclusive five-year contract with both the network and the sponsor. The contract limited his future air and screen billing to "The Great Gildersleeve." Although the role would bring him international fame, it also placed limits on his versatile range, especially his musical talents. Occasionally he made guest appearances on other shows, and at such times he was always billed as "The Great Gildersleeve."

On February 1, 1943 Peary was featured as guest star in a radio dramatization of the 1924 Broadway success, *The Show Off*, as heard on the *Lux Presents Hollywood* program. *The Show Off* told the story of Aubrey Piper, a big talking non-achiever who always wore a carnation in his button-hole and carried an elegant walking stick. He was employed as an ordinary clerk at a building company, but liked to pass himself off as a high-ranking executive. Piper's constant bragging got him in plenty of trouble and irked his in-laws, especially his disapproving mother-in-law. There were a

lot of similarities between the characters of Aubrey Piper and Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve and the role was especially well-suited to Peary's special talents.

In introducing the show director Cecil B. DeMille announced:

“The night Fibber McGee and Molly introduced a new character into their show, called ‘Gildersleeve,’ I am sure no one could have foreseen the fantastic success story to which we add a new chapter tonight. Mr. Gildersleeve made a great hit with Fibber and Molly’s audience, and soon had a radio program of his own. Then came a series of motion pictures at RKO. You will find another name on Gildersleeve’s birth certificate – Hal Peary, to be exact. But Mr. Peary has been swallowed up by Mr. Gildersleeve, to the great enjoyment of the American people.”

The versatile actor had lost his own identity to the fictional character he had brought to life on the air. Instead of guest star billing for the broadcast being credited to his own name – it was credited to “The Great Gildersleeve.” Co-stars were Beulah Bondi and Una Merkel. Some 18 years later Miss Merkel joined the cast of the Gildy show as love interest “Adeline Fairchild.” Also heard in supporting roles on the Lux program were Arthur Q. Bryan and Ken Christy. For an actor of Mr. Peary’s stature not to receive billing in his own name for

portraying an important role on a different program, was both disrespectful and a great injustice. His feelings were doubtlessly hurt, not to mention his ego.

Peary had been unhappy with the restrictions imposed by his exclusive contract. At times the situation had an adverse effect on his usual easy-going disposition. There is evidence of this in a book written by the program's first announcer, Jim Bannon. In his autobiography entitled *The Son That Rose in the West* published in 1975, Bannon wrote in a letter to his parents dated September 1943:

“Hal Peary who does the Gildersleeve role is a wee bit inclined to have a bad case of star pains these days and God forbid that somebody does not get a laugh on a line that is supposed to bring down the house. He sputters as though apoplexy is just one gasp away. My feeling is that he would do well to back off a little on the big-wheel attitude, since there is an actor out here now, a recent immigrant from Chicago who does ‘Gildersleeve’ as well as Peary does. It’s a pretty safe bet that this boy, Willard Waterman, would welcome the chance to take over the show.”

After four highly successful seasons on the air, the broadcasting industry was shocked by a front page article in the August 2, 1945 edition of *Daily Variety* that announced “Peary In Fight For Control Of Gildy Program.”

The disgruntled actor notified the sponsor Kraft Foods, as well as Needham Louis & Brorby, the talent agency, that he wanted full control of the radio program, as well as full rights to the Gildersleeve name. Both organizations flatly refused his demands. There were rumors of a search for a new Gildersleeve. It was a very difficult time for all concerned and after serious negotiation Peary decided to remain with the show and a new contract was signed. The new fall season got underway on September 2, 1945.

During the program's fifth season (1947-48) it reached its highest Hooper rating – 19.7.

In December 1945 a new actress, Gloria Holliday joined the cast as Gildy's secretary, Bessie Barstow. A behind-the-scenes romance developed and she became Mrs. Hal Peary in July 1946. A son, Page Peary, was born on March 9, 1947.

Meanwhile, pressures had continued to mount and there was great unrest on the show. In an unwise decision, Peary's agent signed him to a contract with CBS in the belief that the sponsor would be willing to change networks. But Kraft did not want to switch from NBC and quickly found another show to sponsor. Peary had been caught in the middle of a very awkward situation. As a result he was forced to relinquish the role that had made him famous. His long-time contract with NBC was severed, as well as his lucrative association with

Kraft Foods. He played Gildersleeve for the last time on June 14, 1950.

During the summer months CBS conducted a frenzied attempt to create a new series for him. No expense was spared to round up a supporting cast of sure-fire reliables. Music and sound effects would be of top quality, as well as production standards.

On Sunday evening, September 17<sup>th</sup> the new series, *Honest Harold*, premiered. Peary was starred as Harold Hemp who lived with his widowed mother in the fictional town of Melrose Springs. Like the character of Gildersleeve, Hemp had a hand in raising a young orphan named Marvin. He conducted a homemaker program on the local radio station where Stanley Peabody was his finicky boss. Harold had two cronies named Doc “Yak Yak” Yancy and Pete, the town marshal. He referred to the peculiar pair as “the elderly Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.” Doc Yak Yak was a veterinarian who drove an old buggy pulled by an equally old horse named Silver Moon.

Mother Emily Hemp had many admirers, the most ardent being an old codger named Ogleby Walker who always wore a Panama hat with his white suit when he came calling, riding in on his tractor.

The program was introduced as *The Hal Peary Show*, followed by one of his highly recognizable laughs. Peary’s musical talents were frequently

utilized, and although the role of *Honest Harold* may have been self-satisfying to the actor, it came nowhere near his former success.

There was a goodly number of pretty ladies in the cast of *Honest Harold* to provide plenty of romantic interest for bachelor Hemp. Peary's real-life wife, Gloria Holliday was heard as Gloria, the pretty switchboard operator at the radio station. Versatile actress Shirley Mitchell was very effective as Florabel Breckenridge, with her flirtatious giggles and delightful southern drawl. The role was much too similar to Leila Ranson. The real problem with the show was that there were far too many similarities to the Gildy show altogether.

In an all-out effort to quickly establish a supporting cast of colorful characters, the writers and direction relied more on gaining laughs, than in developing humanistic traits. Much of the comedy seemed forced and over the top. The characters of Doc Yak Yak and Ogleby completely lacked the human foibles of Hooker and Peavey.

During its one season a contest was conducted to find a woman who could duplicate the Honest Harold signature laugh. Reportedly there were 50,000 entrants and the name of the winning contestant was announced on the broadcast of November 22<sup>nd</sup>. There was also a very effective Christmas broadcast on December 20<sup>th</sup>. At the close of the program Peary invited listeners to send

in gifts for Korean veterans which he would personally distribute.

The program failed to gain a sponsor and was sustained by CBS for the full season. It had been created by Peary and written by the team of Gene Stone, Jack Robinson and Bill Danch. It was directed by Norman Macdonnell. Music was by Jack Meakin's orchestra and Bob Lemond was the announcer. *Honest Harold* was aired for the last time on June 13, 1951.

### Cast

<i>Harold Hemp</i>	–	<i>Hal Peary</i>
<i>Emily Hemp (mother)</i>	–	<i>Kathryn Card/Jane Morgan</i>
<i>Marvin</i>	–	<i>Stuffy Singer/Sammy Ogg</i>
<i>Doc Yak Yak Yancy</i>	–	<i>Joseph Kearns</i>
<i>Pete, the Marshall</i>	–	<i>Parley Bear</i>
<i>Florabel Breckenridge</i>	–	<i>Shirley Mitchell</i>
<i>Gloria</i>	–	<i>Gloria Holliday</i>
<i>Evelina</i>	–	<i>Mary Jane Croft</i>
<i>Stanley Peabody</i>	–	<i>Olan Soule</i>

In 1940 when Peary was appearing on the Fibber McGee program Paramount Pictures tapped him for a brief appearance as Mayor Gildersleeve in the film *Comin' Round the Mountain*. It was a backwoods comedy featuring a number of other radio characters: Bob Burns as the Arkansas Traveler,

comedian Jerry Colonna, and Pat Barrett known to listeners as old codger, Uncle Ezra. The leading female character was portrayed by Una Merkel.

Peary's second film appearance was in a similar comedy at Republic Pictures, titled *Country Fair* in which he was seen as a gubernatorial candidate named Gildersleeve. Also that year RKO produced *Look Who's Laughing*, the first of a series of three films starring radio's famous Fibber McGee and Molly. Peary repeated his role as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. The second film in the series was titled *Here We Go Again*, once again with Peary as Gildy. Also that year RKO cast Peary as Senator Gildersleeve in *Seven Days Leave* with Lucille Ball and Victor Mature and he sang in one of the film's musical numbers. Later that year the studio released the feature film version of *The Great Gildersleeve*. Peary was starred and the only other member of the radio show's cast to appear in the film was Lillian Randolph as Birdie. Starlet Nancy Gates was seen as Marjorie and young Freddie Mercer portrayed Leroy. Movie veteran Charles Arnt was cast as Judge Hooker and Jane Darwell was seen as Aunt Emma. The film provided the listening audience with a visual reference point for Summerfield and its colorful characters. According to studio publicity the radio show had 17 million listeners.

*Gildersleeve's Bad Day* followed in 1943.

Produced by the same team, the film ran 63 min-



utes. One severe critic called it “dull and corny fribble, without a single redeeming virtue.” Audiences did not seem to agree and it drew a moderate crowd. One highlight of the film was the appearance of Richard LeGrand recreating his role as Peavey. The plot had Gildy being summoned for jury duty. Because of lack of space, the jury was sequestered in his home, with six male members being jammed into a single bedroom. Gildy became innocently involved with a bunch of shady characters and in an attempt to remove some incriminating evidence from Judge Hooker’s home, he accidentally blew up his safe. Then, he was forced at gunpoint to drive the criminals from the scene in a stolen police car. Resourceful Gildy brought the bad guys to their just reward by singing the whereabouts of the escapees over the police car radio.

By far the best of the series was *Gildersleeve On Broadway* also released in 1943. The film had a convoluted plot in which Peavey’s drugstore was in danger of being forced to close because his main distributor was about to go out of business. Most of the action took place at a druggists’ convention in New York City. Aboard a train to the city, Gildy became romantically involved with a delightfully daffy widow named Laura Chandler; the role was played by Billie Burke. Mrs. Chandler turned out to be the new owner of the Sun Drug Co. At the convention the widow became ardently persis-

tent and asked Gildy to marry her. Peavey came to his rescue by masquerading as “Mrs. Gildersleeve.” The plot was further complicated with the fact that the widow had an eccentric brother with a William Tell complex, and ran around with a bow and arrow. At a party in the widow’s penthouse, the crazed brother aimed an arrow at a fake apple on the imposter’s hat. It also knocked off “Mrs. Gildersleeve’s” wig. The archer then tied a dangling thread of her knitted skirt to another arrow and shot it trailing up into the city skyline. In a hilarious bit of business, as the arrow rose higher and higher, it slowly unraveled the skirt, revealing – Peavey’s true identity.

*Gildersleeve’s Ghost* was released the following year in 1944, and as the title suggested, it was intended to be a chiller. The opening scene took place in the Summerfield cemetery where the ghosts of two of Gildy’s centuries-old ancestors, Jonathan and Randolph Gildersleeve, plotted to turn Gildy into a town hero. It was a scheme that would insure Gildy’s winning an election to replace police commissioner Haley in the position. Peary played all three roles and displayed his acting versatility by delivering a trio of distinctively different characterizations. The plot combined all of the key ingredients usually found in a B-horror film.

The ghosts led Gildy to the creepy old Wagstaff Manor where there was not only one,

but two mad scientists conducting strange experiments with a secret formula, in a wild attempt to make a beautiful blonde, as well as an escaped gorilla, become invisible. The phony professors stood about as much of a chance of succeeding in their efforts as Gildy did in becoming police commissioner.

Richard LeGrand returned as Peavey and once again Lillian Randolph was Birdie. There wasn't much that anyone could do to rescue themselves from the preposterous plot. Unfortunately the series of Gildersleeve films at RKO ended with this weak entry.

On August 13, 1945 *Gildersleeve's Bad Day* was dramatized on the *Screen Guild Players* radio program. The guest cast was comprised of Hal Peary, Walter Tetley, Lillian Randolph and Richard LeGrand, repeating their screen roles. In lieu of being paid a salary, all performers on the show donated their earnings to the Screen Actor's Guild Fund. In the 14 years that the *Screen Guild Players* was on the air it raised more than 5.5 million dollars for the cause.

On November 1, 1945 Peary and Walter Tetley appeared in a Gildy and Leroy sketch on the *Command Performance* series.

Another phase of Peary's long and varied career began in 1944 when he was signed to a

contract with the newly formed Capitol Records to make a series of albums for children. The record company announced, "If you've listened to *The Great Gildersleeve* on the radio, you know why Harold Peary was selected to tell the stories. His humor, warmth and sincerity, along with his obvious love and understanding of children, make him an ideal choice."

Each set contained four discs recorded at 78 RPM entitled "Stories For Children – Told in His Own Way by The Great Gildersleeve." Peary held the distinction of being the first star to do so, and his name appeared on each disc label. In a novel approach Peary injected a few appropriate ad-libs for his young listeners, such as "You better turn over the record; I'll wait," and "Go change the record while I light a cigar."

The first album contained three stories – Rumpelstiltskin, Puss in Boots, and Jack and the Beanstalk. The narration was accompanied by the full orchestra used for the radio show, conducted by Robert Emmett Dolan who also composed original background music. Scripts for the stories were adapted by John Whedon and Sam Moore. The album was released in 1944 as Capitol Set CD 11.

In 1946 a second four-record set was released as Capitol Set CD 33. Mr. Peary's versatile voice was heard portraying all of the characters heard in *The Brave Little Tailor* and *Hansel and Gretel*.

A third set (CD 69) was released in 1947 containing the stories of Cinderella and Snow White and Rose Red. Two years later Capitol re-released the record sets in various formats including a one story single disc, a three-disc set, as well as four two-disc sets. In addition the recordings were also issued in the new 45 RPM speed.

The recordings sold well and on November 10, 1949 Peary returned to Capitol to record the Dr. Suess story, Gerald McBoing-Boing, the amusing tale of a small boy who spoke in sounds, rather than words. The narration was accompanied by special pre-recorded music by Billy May's orchestra. The 78 RPM disc was issued as Capitol's #32001. It was also released in 45 RPM format, and was later reissued on an LP, the only one of Peary's records for children at that speed.

In a departure from children's records, Peary made one 45 RPM disc for Decca's Coral Records subsidiary label. Released in 1951 as catalog number 60586, it contained a song entitled "Whoa Emma!" which had been written for the MGM musical, *Texas Carnival*. On the flip side Mr. Peary recited an overly sentimental poem entitled, "To a Little Boy." Musical accompaniment was under the direction of Jack Meakin.

In the mid 1960's The Longines Symphonette Society issued a set of LP's entitled *Jack Benny's Golden Memories of Radio*, which was sold

only by mail order. Benny shared narration with Frank Knight and the set contained excerpts of various old radio broadcasts. The last side of the set of discs contained something that had been recorded especially for the album, an enactment of one of Arch Oboler's radio scripts from *Lights Out*, the tense drama, "The Cat Wife," in which Peary was heard in a brief supporting role as a butcher.

In 1951 the failure of the *Honest Harold* program to succeed had a devastating effect on Peary's ego, especially as an actor. A man of less strength of character and determination may not have survived. Fortunately he had invested wisely in real estate and was financially secure. He persevered and patiently pursued other paths to contentment.

On April 19, 1952 he guest-starred on the *Stars Over Hollywood* program in an episode entitled "Cupid is a Hobo." The following year he narrated a second animated cartoon, *Gerald McBoing-Boing's Symphony*. He narrated a third cartoon, *How Now McBoing-Boing?* in 1954, and also played the character role of Leo in the Allied Artists film, *Port of Hell*. He also made a guest appearance as a movie producer on the Spike Jones TV show.

On October 19, 1953 Peary appeared with Gordon MacRae and Lucille Norman in the "Sunny" episode of *The Railroad Hour*, a series that presented a different musical for radio every week.

In the fall of 1954 Peary ventured to New York City and accepted a nine month stint as a disc jockey at station WMGM. He returned to the west coast the following year and did similar duty at station KABC. Beginning March 1955 he appeared in the role of Mr. Bannister, the manager of a vaudeville organization, on the June Havoc TV series *Willy* on CBS.

Nineteen fifty-six was an especially busy year for him. He starred as the master of ceremonies of the *Waltz Varieties* program at KCOP. He also supplied the narration for the animated cartoon, *Gerald McBoing-Boing on Planet Moo*, as well as the character role of Ortega in the film, *Wetbacks*. That spring his wife Gloria sued for divorce seeking the custody of their son, Page. In addition he was named Honorary Mayor of Manhattan Beach, California where he had resided for a number of years.

On June 2, 1957 Peary appeared on the *Circus Boy* TV series in the episode entitled, "Hortense the Hippo." On the Perry Mason TV series he was seen as Freddy Fell in the show, "The Case of the Lover's Gamble." He was the murderer!

When Fibber McGee and Molly became a TV series in the fall of 1959 Peary was included in the cast, but not as Gildersleeve, instead he was seen as Mayor LaTrivia.

On November 6, 1963 Peary made a guest appearance on the Dick Van Dyke TV show. On

the *Petticoat Junction* series he was seen as Mr. Davis in the episode, "Bedloe Gets His Comeuppance." In 1964 he returned to the big screen as Uncle Harry, in the film *A Tiger Walks*. On November 13, 1965 he appeared on *The Loner* series in the show called, "Sheriff of Fetterman's Crossing."

For many years he served as spokesman for the Gibraltar Savings Bank, appearing in both radio and television commercials.

With his third wife Juanita Lawson Parker, a former electronics engineer with Douglas Aircraft, Peary planned to retire to Hawaii in 1977. She became ill and passed away in December. He canceled his plans for retirement and continued to look after his real estate holdings. With long time friend and partner, Jim Stuart, he planned further construction in the Santa Barbara area.

Peary's last known television appearance was on *Kraft's 75th Anniversary Show* in January 1977. After nearly 70 years in show business, Peary officially retired in 1981 and died of a heart attack at the age of 76 on March 30, 1985.

PAGE PEARY (Hal's only son) was born in March 1947. His mother was actress Gloria Holliday. After his parents divorced in 1956 Page lived with his mother in Hollywood and visited on weekends with his father at Manhattan Beach,



California. He also accompanied his father to the radio studio and had a happy relationship with “Leroy” Tetley.

In a recent interview Page recalled:

“My Dad was a consummate actor and in many ways was the absolute opposite of Gildersleeve. He was a charismatic personality and was articulate, direct and demanding of both himself and others. When I expressed an interest in show business he neither encouraged nor forbid me, and often said that other professions might be a bit more substantial.

“My career as a psychologist and in mental health administration grew out of my time served in Vietnam. I’ve owned radio properties for many years, but clearly my attention is focused on psychology.

“At a program I directed in Washington, DC I met Princess Diana and first lady Nancy Reagan. It was a thrill to hear Mrs. Reagan tell the Princess what a wonderful man my Dad was.”

Currently Dr. Page Peary heads the Central Presbyterian Homeless Shelter in Denver, Colorado.

WILLARD WATERMAN (Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve) was born in Madison, Wisconsin on August 29, 1914. While in high school he sang over radio station WIBA with a quartet. He was also a member of a trio that sang daily at the crack of dawn. During a school break the ambitious young man got an acting job with a stock company.

After graduation Waterman entered the University of Wisconsin to study engineering. But once again he got involved in radio and had a morning show at the college station. It was called *The Band Wagon* and he played recordings of Sousa marches every day. At other times he read poetry over the air and did some announcing. The young engineering student spent so much time at the radio station that it began to interfere with his classes, and he decided to devote full time to broadcasting.

In 1934 the 6' 4" dark-haired young actor with a mustache ventured to Chicago and began to make the round of radio auditions. One of his first acting assignments was the small role of a lawyer in a transcribed episode of *Chandu, the Magician*. His character was killed off in the first episode. His next few characters, mostly villains, met the same fate.

As his reputation grew in Chicago, Waterman was cast on many of the important nighttime dramas such as *The First Nighter*, *Grand Hotel*, *Fifth Row Center*, and the renowned *Chicago Theater of the Air*.

Waterman's days were soon filled up with appearances on many of the popular daily soap operas such as *Today's Children*. His versatile voice was also in demand for roles on many of the kiddie shows airing from Chicago. On *The Adventures of Tom Mix* he was heard in dual roles portraying a villain named Diamonds, as well as the hero's best friend, Long Bow Billy.

The actor once recalled: "There were times when I would go to work at seven in the morning and work throughout the day. I would do as many as thirty shows in a week. The fee for those fifteen minute broadcasts was between \$2.50 and \$5 per show." He became a founding member of AFRA, the radio actor's union.

During 1941-42 he was featured as Mike Trent on the nighttime series, *Hot Copy*. He also continued on daytime serials such as *Stepmother*, on which he portrayed Mr. Fairchild. In 1945 he was cast as George Webster, the bumbling father in the situation comedy, *Those Websters*. When the series switched to the west coast, Waterman went with it.

Once established in Los Angeles he was exposed to new opportunities in radio. In 1949 he

was heard on the transcribed *Damon Runyon Theater*, as well as a short-lived comedy series, *Me and Janie*. He also worked on the air with comediennes such as Joan Davis and Cass Daley. In January he played the role of John Merriweather on NBC's series, *The Halls of Ivy*.

Waterman began making appearances on *The Great Gildersleeve* program as early as 1947, mostly in brief supporting roles. On May 28, 1947 he was heard as a doctor giving Gildy an insurance exam. On December 24<sup>th</sup> he returned as Santa Claus. After Hal Peary left the show in the spring of 1950 he assumed the title role on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

Waterman embarked on a long screen career in 1949 when he first appeared in a Joe McDoak comedy short, *So You're Having In-Law Trouble*. His first feature film was Republic's *The Flame of Youth*. It was a very productive year, with roles in *Free For All* and the comedy *Louisa*, at Universal. He was seen with Bing Crosby in Paramount's *Riding High*, and then reported to MGM for bit roles in *The Father of the Bride*, *Mystery Street* and *Mrs. O'Malley and Mr. Malone*.

In 1950 he made one film, a drama with Barbara Stanwyck entitled, *No Man of Her Own*. The following year he was seen in two comedies, *Francis Goes to the Races*, and *Darling How Could You?* His other films include: *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?* (1952), *It Happens Every Thursday* and *Half a Hero* (1953), *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954), *How To Be Very*,

*Very Popular* and *Three For the Show* (1955), as well as *Hollywood or Bust* (1956).

In 1958 he was cast in the important role of snobbish Claude Upson in *Auntie Mame* with Rosalind Russell. That year he repeated the same role onstage with Eve Arden. In the mid '50s he began to be seen frequently on various TV series such as *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin* (1954), *Cheyenne* (1955), *The Adventures of Jim Bowie* (1956), *How to Marry a Millionaire*, and western series *Wagon Train* and *Maverick* (1957), *Bat Masterson* (1958) and *Laramie* (1959).

He was back on the big screen as Mr. Vanderhoff in *The Apartment* in 1960, and had a brief bit in the all-star comedy *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963). For television on September 2, 1963 he guest starred as Coach Walter Biddle on *Vacation Playhouse*. In addition he appeared in an episode of *My Favorite Martian*, and if that weren't enough, he returned to the stage with Eve Arden in a west coast production of *Auntie Mame*. During 1963–64 he toured with the National Company onstage in *How to Succeed in Business, Without Really Trying*. During an appearance at the Studebaker Theater in Chicago, in an open gesture of friendship, Hal Peary visited him in his dressing room. The two former Gildersleeves posed for a gag shot for the press, with Peary lighting Waterman's cigar.

In 1964 for MGM he appeared in *Get Yourself a College Girl*. Two years later he and his wife Mary

Anna took an apartment in New York City where he made his Broadway stage debut as Mr. Babcock in the musical, *Mame*. In 1971 he returned briefly to films for an appearance in *Hail to the Chief*. Then back to Broadway to play the role of Mr. Hassler in a revival of *The Pajama Game*. During the summer season of 1974 he joined John Carradine and Sylvia Sidney in a stock production of the classic *Arsenic and Old Lace*, in which he was seen as Teddy Brewster.

For the next several years Waterman's time was spent appearing in tv commercials for products ranging from Alka Seltzer, New York Life Insurance, Florsheim Shoes, A-1 Steak Sauce, to Kellogg's Cereals.

He returned to the stage in 1978 for an extended run as Mayor Shinn in a dinner theater production of *The Music Man*, as well as the role of Harrison Howell in a touring company of *Kiss Me Kate*. Waterman's last appearance on Broadway came in 1983 when he had a featured role in the musical *Mame* starring Angela Lansbury, and later Ann Miller.

In real life Waterman was unpretentious, quiet and reserved. His hobbies included reading and golf. For many years he resided in San Fernando Valley with Mary Anna, his wife of many years. The couple had two daughters, Lynne and Susan.

In later years he was frequently called upon to make appearances at old time radio conventions.

Of his eight years of doing Gildersleeve on both radio and TV, he recalled:

“When I first took over the character in 1950 we had about a three hour reading rehearsal with the cast, producer and writers on Friday. Then, the following Monday we had a rehearsal with the whole cast. And on Wednesday we started rehearsal about 10 in the morning, and went through until we did the first broadcast for the East Coast at 5:30 PM, then we left the studio to have dinner, and returned to do the repeat broadcast for the West Coast at 8:30 PM.

“We used three microphones, I stood at one, and there was another microphone for the person working across from me. The third mike was used for characters making an entrance or exit as well as an elaborate set up for sound effects.”

At the close of the Gildersleeve broadcast of March 28, 1951 a representative of the Invest in America Committee appeared and cited Kraft Foods and NBC for presenting Willard Waterman in his intelligent and understanding portrayal of The Great Gildersleeve, “which has contributed immeasurably to the public understanding of the role of the individual, including America, at the community level.”

Waterman accepted with gratitude on behalf of the Gildersleeve family and made the brief comment, “What a beautiful thought.”

Willard Waterman passed away of bone marrow disease at his home in Burlingame, California at the age of 80 on February 2, 1995.



WALTER TETLEY (Leroy Forrester) was born in New York City, the son of immigrant parents. His father was German-born Fred Tetzloff and his mother, Jessie Campbell was a native of Scotland who traced her ancestry back to the Duke of Argyle and William the Conqueror. The couple had a son, Albert, followed a few years later by Walter.

At a very early age, the bright and smiling Walter showed signs of having been born an entertainer. From the time he began to walk his mother began to teach him the songs of her homeland, and her favorite entertainer, Sir Harry Lauder. When the boy was able to crank up the phonograph he started to play the Scottish comedian's records, and it wasn't long before he could give a precise impersonation.

The family moved to Ridgefield, New Jersey and Mr. Tetzloff went to work as a postal employee. Mrs. Tetzloff continued to teach her son. She made him a kilt and rented a miniature set of bagpipes for his singing debut at a meeting of the Daughters of Scotia. The boy was a sensation and was soon making appearances at church and civic events. With his mother serving as his agent, he entertained on stages throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania

and parts of New York, billed as “Wee Sir Harry Lauder.” For a time he worked professionally on the Keith-Orpheum vaudeville circuit.

Walter’s childhood was an anomaly, clouded in mystery. Because of his diminutive size and child-like appearance, for a number of years he was billed at half his real age. The truth of the matter being, at the age of six or seven his normal rate of growth had been arrested by a glandular disorder. He did not pass through adolescence at the usual age and his voice did not change.

One day in late 1929 a friend of the family suggested that the boy should give radio a try. His mother took him to an audition at NBC studios in New York City. At the time he was approaching the age of 14 but his real age was not given. He auditioned as a child and passed with flying colors. Impressed with his ability the studio booked him to make his professional radio debut on Sunday morning February 9, 1930 on *The Children’s Hour*, a variety program featuring talented youngsters. He was billed as Walter Campbell Tetley, because his proud mother thought it sounded more Scottish. The Wee Sir Harry Lauder impression drew rave reviews and the following Saturday afternoon he was called back to NBC for an appearance on Madge Tucker’s *The Lady Next Door* children’s program. The show also featured child performers, who in addition to singing, also presented dramatic skits.

After continuing the same weekend routines for a number of weeks young Mr. Tetley was signed to a contract by the network and was hailed as the youngest male star under contract to NBC. In those hard times of the Depression he began to earn a weekly paycheck. The family moved into a larger rented home in Edgewater, New Jersey and their surname was legally changed to Tetley.

In order to fulfill his weekend broadcasting schedule the boy and his mother had to travel to New York City by ferry boat from their home in New Jersey. It was a long, time-consuming journey back and forth. Meanwhile, at home she taught him to play the piano and also assisted with his tutoring.

On February 5, 1931, less than a year after his network debut, Walter was at NBC studios when a child actor failed to appear in time for a broadcast. With less than five minutes before air time, Walter was literally snatched off an elevator, had a script pressed into his hands, and was ushered up to the microphone. Without benefit of rehearsal he found himself playing a leading role in a series entitled *Raising Junior*. He gave a very smooth performance, and as a result was signed to play the role in the series that aired for a quarter hour, six times each week. He continued in the part for the next year during which time he was also heard on other NBC programs such as *The Coo Coo Hour*, and a dramatic show, *Emerald Isle*. He was given other assign-

ments on programs such as *The March of Time*, *Death Valley Days*, *The Collier Hour*, *Uncle Abe and David*, *Friendship Town*, *The Flying Family*, *Wayside Cottage*, *Red Adams* and *Wheatonville*. In March his contract had been extended for another two years.

Nineteen thirty-three was an especially busy year, which included the role of Tigger on a radio version of *Winnie the Pooh*, as well as being heard as Tip in a series based on *The Wizard of Oz*. On March 8<sup>th</sup> he was heard on the *Buck Rogers* series and joined the cast of regulars on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. He was heard as Willie, the young protégé of a friendly Martian called Black Barney. Reportedly the busy actor was heard on five different broadcasts on the same day.

On January 4, 1934 Walter made his first of many appearances with comedian Fred Allen and in August was signed on as a member of the troupe known as The Allen's Alley Players, playing a sassy brat named Waldo. He was also heard on programs featuring comedians Burns and Allen, Joe Penner, Jack Benny and Eddie Cantor.

On June 30<sup>th</sup> his broadcasting career was temporarily halted when he and his mother sailed aboard the *Caledonia* for a seven-week tour of England and Scotland with appearances in Glasgow, Edinburgh and London. Never one to miss out on an opportunity to perform, the 19 year-old entertainer gave performances on board ship during both voyages. On his return home his heavy

broadcasting schedule was resumed. He played dramatic roles on the air with Helen Hayes and Irene Rich. He also had the continuing role of a blind boy on the *Show Boat* broadcasts. In addition, he was heard on the *American School of the Air*, as well as the children's favorite, *Let's Pretend*.

In February 1935 Walter became a regular member of the cast of *The Adventures of Bobby Benson*, playing a Scottish boy. He was also heard in the leading role of Spike Butler on *The Thrills of Tomorrow* series.

During 1936 Walter's voice became familiar to the young listening audiences of adventure series such as *Renfrew of the Mounties*, and *The Treasure Adventures of Jack Master*. For his noble efforts, Walter was named Outstanding Child Actor in Radio for the year 1935.

There had been appearances on numerous other shows such as *The Kate Smith Show*, *We the People*, and continuing serials like *Billy and Betty*, and *Home, Sweet, Home*. It has also been reported that Walter substituted at times for Johnny, the calling pageboy for Phillip Morris cigarettes.

A major turning point in his life occurred on Sunday, September 12, 1937. As had become the custom for the past 6½ years, he made his usual morning appearance on *The Children's Hour*. Later that day he began the journey to the west coast. Fred Allen had been urging him to try his luck in

films. The radio star was signed for the film *Sally, Irene and Mary* and arranged for Walter to have a small unbilled appearance.

On September 29, 1937 Tetley appeared on Allen's *Town Hall Tonight* program, aired from the west coast. There were other weekly broadcasts with Allen through December 29<sup>th</sup>. Also on the west coast he was heard on *The Grouch Club* with stone-faced comedian Ned Sparks.

The young actor began to audition for screen roles and his first important assignment was as a Scottish boy in MGM's *Lord Jeff*, released in 1938. He then reported to Republic Pictures for the part of a tough kid, Mulligan, in a western film *Prairie Moon* with Gene Autry. Following the completion of the film Walter made some personal appearances with the cowboy star.

Tetley made five films during 1939, playing a featured role with famed violinist Jascha Heifetz in *They Shall Have Music*. He was also seen in *Boy Slaves* and *The Spirit of Culver*. In addition he had an unbilled bit as a chimney sweep with Boris Karloff in *The Tower of London*, and did a brief bit with W. C. Fields in *You Can't Cheat an Honest Man*.

The Disney studios were planning to produce a feature length film of the classic children's story *Pinocchio*. When the studio learned about the young actor from back east who was causing a stir in films, he was invited to make a voice test for

the leading role. Back in New Jersey one of his hometown newspapers was enthusiastic in reporting the news, and boasted:

“Walter Tetley is doing better than alright in Hollywood and he is not one of those blond effeminate screen lover types. He is famous for his voice. For the past three weeks he has been providing the voice for the title role in Disney’s *Pinocchio*.”

The report was inaccurate, Walter had merely made a voice test for the studio. When the completed film was released in 1940 it featured the voice of boy actor Dickie Jones.

Another momentous occasion occurred on February 7, 1939 when Walter was hired for an appearance on the Fibber McGee program. The broadcast marked the first time he worked with Hal Peary. The pair returned to the McGee program on March 28, 1944 substituting for the absent Jim “Fibber McGee” Jordan.

During 1940 Walter appeared on the movie screen in four films: *Military Academy*, *Emergency Squad*, *Let’s Make Music*, and *Under Western Skies*.

His radio immortality was firmly established when he debuted as Leroy on *The Great Gildersleeve* radio series on August 31, 1941. The role kept him occupied for the next 16 years, as he continued to make an occasional film.

In 1942 he had small roles in films such as *Eyes in the Night*, *Gorilla Man*, *Invisible Agent*,

*Moonlight in Havana*, and *Thunder Birds*. He also appeared as a bellhop with Abbott and Costello in *Who Done It?* He was seen in RKO's *Gildersleeve's Bad Day*, but not as Leroy, instead he again played a bellhop.

Nineteen forty-four brought him film roles in *Bowery To Broadway*, *Follow the Boys*, *The Lodger*, and *Pin-Up Girl*. In 1945 he was also seen in the delightful comedy *Molly and Me*. Tetley's last screen appearance was with radio comedian Bert Gordon, better known as The Mad Russian, in *How Do You Do?* released in 1946.

Once Walter's success in Hollywood was secure, the family bought a home in Van Nuys. He also purchased a 33-foot cabin cruiser that he enjoyed piloting. The boat was christened with a bottle of Welch's Grape Juice by his former radio co-star Irene Rich. For many years Miss Rich's radio program had been sponsored by the grape juice company.

Slowly, throughout his teenage years Walter's height increased a few inches. After he had passed his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday he underwent treatment by a noted urologist, and his growth resumed.

Willard Waterman recalled:

“Walter's voice never changed, so he was able to play youngsters, all of his life. He was about 5' 3" and had no facial hair, and his body was a little out of proportion. Nobody could get



more out of a line than Walter. He was a Scott, and proud of it.”

Hal Peary remembered:

“Walter’s personal voice did change through the years, but to quote him, ‘I can still do Leroy, all I have to do is raise my eyebrows.’ We last worked together in 1966 at Radio Night at the Hollywood Bowl. He had grown nearly six feet tall. Rather amazing.”

Walter’s highly recognizable voice was heard over the airwaves in 1945 as part of the transcribed series, *The Anderson Family*. In 1948 he auditioned for another transcribed radio series about a wise-guy newsboy to be titled *The Kid on the Corner*, but it failed to materialize.

In October 1948 he joined the cast of regulars on the Phil Harris and Alice Faye situation comedy series on CBS. He was heard in the kind of role he did so well, an aggressive and abrasive delivery boy named Julian Abbruzio. In a thick Brooklyn accent, he muttered lines out of the side of his mouth. Typical expressions were “Are you kiddin’?” and “Get outta here!” The show ran through 1954.

During the months of July through October 1957 Walter was heard on the Stan Freberg radio show on CBS. His voice was also heard on Freberg’s comedy recording of *The United States of America, Vol. 1*.

In 1956 another phase of Tetley's long and amazing career opened up when he was hired to supply the voice for an animated cartoon character in the *Gerald McBoing-Boing* TV series. He was heard in episodes of *Dusty of the Circus*.

Back in 1941 his voice had been heard in the Warner Brothers' Looney Tunes cartoon, "The Haunted Mouse." During 1945-49 he supplied the voice for the Walter Lantz cartoons about a lovable panda bear called *Andy Panda*.

In 1959 his vocal talents were again in demand and he was signed to provide the voice of a boy named Sherman in ninety-one 4½ minute episodes of *Peabody's Improbable History* which was part of the *Rocky and His Friends* TV Series.

Peabody was a pedantic white beagle who always wore a small red bowtie and thick spectacles. The dog genius lived in a penthouse with his "pet boy" Sherman, who also wore glasses. Peabody invented a time machine called the Wayback Machine, and the odd pair traveled in it through time and space. The machine landed them in a number of historic places at historic times. Peabody and Sherman got briefly involved with historic figures such as Leonardo DaVinci and Alexander Graham Bell. During the adventure-some pair's first journey in the Wayback they met up with Benjamin Franklin, and continued back through space and time till they caught up with

Cleopatra. The voice for Peabody was supplied by Bill Scott. Others heard were Paul Frees and June Foray. The series was aired on ABC-TV.

Tetley's last radio work was on a five-part episode of *The Hollywood Radio Theater* entitled "The Princess Stakes Murder." This unique series was narrated by Rod Serling and was one of the last recorded syndicated series aired over the Mutual Network.

Having overcome handicaps and hardships, Walter had a special interest in aiding handicapped children. He donated much time to charitable work and helped organize Rainbow Troop #1260 of the Boy Scouts. It was entirely made up of shut-ins and in order for them to participate in outdoor activities, he broadcast meetings over a local radio station. In his later years he developed a sad clown act to entertain children. For his many efforts Walter was cited by the Hollywood Coordinating Council for his outstanding service to handicapped and underprivileged children.

In 1971 while riding on a motorcycle near Van Nuys he was struck head-on by a motorist who failed to stop for a traffic light. Tetley suffered severe internal injuries and damage to his legs. He was hospitalized for nearly a year. When he was discharged he had to use a cane for walking, and was later confined to a wheelchair. Despite his physical limitations he managed to do some voice-over work for the Hanna-Barbera company.

On June 17, 1975 he was admitted to the Beverly Manor Convalescent Hospital where he passed away at the age of 60 on September 4, 1975. There were no family survivors. He was cremated and the remains were buried at Oakwood Memorial Park.

LURENE TUTTLE (Marjorie Forrester) was born August 29, 1907 in Pleasant Lake, Indiana. Her grandfather was a drama coach and managed an opera house. Her father was a noted minstrel man, and at an early age she made her stage debut with him.

At the age of 15 she worked onstage at the Pasadena Playhouse. Later she appeared on the Broadway stage with Helen Hayes in *To the Ladies*. With her fine speaking voice and excellent diction, she entered radio in 1936 and had a featured role on *Hollywood Hotel*. She went on to become one of the busiest actresses in radio. Known to be a “quick study,” she could take over a role at a moment’s notice. Miss Tuttle was the first female president of the radio actor’s union, the organization once voted her The Woman of the Year. One of her best remembered roles was as detective *Sam Spade*’s secretary, Effie. She was the first actress to play the role of Marjorie on *The Great Gildersleeve* and continued through 1944.

She was a pioneer in television and during 1953–54 starred as the mother Vinnie Day in *Life With Father*. In 1962 she was seen as the mother of the groom in the series *Father of the Bride*. In 1959

she was leading lady to Lou Costello in a telecast of *G.E. Theater*. During 1968–71 she was nurse Hannah Yarby in the series *Julia*.

Miss Tuttle made her film debut in 1948 and played a wide variety of roles. One of her most unusual film roles was as the No. 1 female gangster of all time in *Ma Barker's Killer Brood* in 1959. In 1948 she was seen as one of the three witches in Orson Welles' film *Macbeth*.

She married announcer/actor Melville Ruick and they had a daughter Barbara who became an actress.

The 5' 3" versatile actress with copper colored hair was active in all phases of show business. She died at the age of 78 on May 28, 1986.

LOUISE ERICKSON (Marjorie Forrester) was born February 28, 1928 in Oakland, California of Swedish ancestry. Her radio debut was made at the age of seven when she was heard as a fairy princess on the *Uncle Whoa Bill* program. Then at the age of 13 she made her network debut on the *Doctor Christian* series.

In 1940 the exuberant teenage actress was heard on the *Dramas of Youth* on the Mutual network.

After graduation she attended Occidental College where she studied English, psychology and costume design. Louise returned to radio to play the role of a blasé teenager named Mildren on *Meet Corliss Archer*. In 1942 she was heard as Mitzi on *A Date With Judy* and took over the lead role of Judy Graves in 1943.

The following year she was the second actress to play the role of Marjorie on *The Great Gildersleeve*. Her other radio roles were as Emmy Lou on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, and as Betty on *The Alan Young Show*. In 1950 she played the role of Janice on the comedy series *Granby's Green Acres*, which later became the basis for the TV series *Green Acres*. She had a brief career in films.

Louise left radio and moved to New York City to pursue a career onstage. Her first marriage

was to actor Ben Gazzara. She had a second marriage to Herb Leibowitz and became the mother of two sons. She has done some writing and today resides in New York City where she works as a museum tour guide for handicapped children.



MARY LEE ROBB (Marjorie Forrester) was born in Streator, Illinois, the daughter of an NBC executive, who at one time served as manager of Amos 'n' Andy. The family moved to Los Angeles when she was 11. After graduation from high school Mary Lee entered UCLA and studied drama and had radio training with the Geller workshop. In her sophomore year she dropped out of college to concentrate on a career in radio.

She made her network debut on the *Lum and Abner* program in September 1947 portraying Abner's daughter Pearl on her wedding day. The young actress had only two lines: "I do," and "Don't cry papa." She was paid \$45 but was required to pay \$75 to join the radio actor's union. Another of her early assignments was to provide baby cries for *Baby Snooks'* infant brother, Robespierre. She was also cast as Emily Vanderlipp, the girl next door on the *Burns and Allen* program.

In 1948 Mary Lee was hired to supply "off-mike babble" on *The Great Gildersleeve* show. She huddled around a microphone with a group of other actors making "crowd noises." She had become acquainted with Louise Erickson when they attended the Geller workshop together. One day she was visiting the Gildersleeve broadcast

when Miss Erickson was absent for an important rehearsal. Mary Lee volunteered to read for the role of Marjorie. She made an excellent impression and at the end of the broadcast season when Louise left the show, Mary Lee was automatically cast in the role.

At the close of the 1954 spring season Mary Lee left the program to raise a family. Later she did some voice over work for the Disney studios.

LILLIAN RANDOLPH (Birdie Lee Coggins) was born December 14, 1898 in Louisville, Kentucky. She made her first public appearance at the age of four singing in a Methodist church in Sewickley, Pennsylvania where her father was the minister. With her older sister Amanda, she formed a musical act. She made her stage debut at the age of 17 replacing her sister in a stage revue called *Lucky Sambo*.

She was with a band at Chester Park in Cincinnati for a few summers and gained her first radio experience at station WTAM in Cleveland, Ohio. Later she worked for George Trendle at WXYZ in Detroit where Jim Jewell taught her how to speak in southern dialect. She and Billy Mitchell were heard on a comedy program called *Lulu and Leander* where they each played several characters. Miss Randolph's first network broadcast was with Al Jolson. She also was heard with comedians Joe Penner and Al Pearce. In 1937 she made a number of appearances on the *Amos 'n' Andy* program. At night, she sang blues in supper clubs.

She made her film debut in 1938 in *Life Goes On*. The following year she was seen with the Marx Brothers in *At the Circus*. Other films included *Little Men* and *Am I Guilty?* in 1940. *Mr. Smith Goes*

*West, West Point Widow, Gentleman From Dixie* and *All-American Co-Ed* in 1941. *The Mexican Spitfire Sees a Ghost, Hi, Neighbor* and *The Great Gildersleeve*, as well as a comedy short *Cooks and Crooks* with Edgar Kennedy in 1942. *Gildersleeve's Bad Day, Gildersleeve on Broadway, No Time For Love* and *Heaven Can Wait* in 1943. *Gildersleeve's Ghost, Adventures of Mark Twain, Three Little Sisters* and *Up in Arms* in 1944. *Song For Miss Julie* in 1945. *Child of Divorce* and *It's a Wonderful Life* in 1946. *The Bachelor and the Bobbysoxer* in 1947, *Sleep My Love* in 1948, *Once More My Darling* in 1949, *Dear Brat* in 1951, *Bend of the River* in 1952, and *Jennifer* in 1953.

Miss Randolph returned to the screen in 1965 in *Hush, Hush Sweet Charlotte*. During 1969–70 she appeared as Bill Cosby's mother on NBC-TV's *The Bill Cosby Show*. She made a number of other appearances on TV, most notably as Sister Sara in the mini-series, *Roots*. Her last films were *Magic* in 1978 and *The Onion Field* in 1979.

Miss Randolph was working with a vocal group recording a soundtrack for a film at MGM when she learned of the audition for the Gildersleeve show. During a lunch break she slipped away from the recording session, hopped in her car, rushed to the NBC studios, flew into the building, tripped, and literally slid up to the microphone. She laughed, excused herself and proceeded to read the script that was handed to her.

The natural way in which she handled herself, and the humor of the situation, immediately landed her the role of Birdie. She was heard on all broadcasts of the program and also appeared in the 1954 syndicated television series.

In addition, the versatile actress also did commercials for radio and television, as well as voice-over work for animated cartoons. Most notably, she supplied the booming voice for the heavy-set maid with the big feet in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons.

Miss Randolph was noted for her philanthropic work with delinquent children and was active with an organization known as Les Dames.

She died of cancer at the age of 81 on September 11, 1980 and was buried alongside her actress sister, Amanda, under a tree in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

EARLE ROSS (Judge Horace Hooker) was born March 29, 1888. His family hoped that he would become a Methodist/Episcopal minister. He sang soprano in the boys' choir. One day he was reaching for a high note and something strange happened to his voice. It cracked, and for the next couple of days he could not speak. His vocal chords had undergone a complete change. They were no longer high and squeaky, but unbelievably low.

“The more I talked, the lower they seemed to get. I didn't sound like a boy anymore. I sounded like an old man.”

At school Earle became interested in dramatics, and decided to give professional acting a try. His voice was too low to play juveniles so the young actor was cast as villains and old men. He was hired to play three roles in the melodrama *In A Woman's Power or a Dangerous Friend*. He convinced the producer to pay him \$20 a week, plus an additional \$2.50 for serving as stage manager.

In 1908 he worked with Colonel Bill Selig in the first five-reel film, *The Holy Cross*. He then returned east and in 1912 starred on Broadway in *Where the Trail Divides* and *Cost of Living*. He built up a chain of theaters but went broke in the stock market crash of 1929.

Ross became a pioneer radio broadcaster and had his own show, *The Earle Ross Theater of the Air*. He also starred in one of the earliest continuing dramas, *Inspector Post*, written by Carleton E. Morse. Another of his early radio characterizations was known as *The Ramblings of Jeremiah Quid*. He was a pioneer member of the Actors' Equity Union.

In 1942 Ross and his wife resided in Chicago and he was very active in radio there appearing on such programs as *Lights Out*, *Arch Oboler's Plays for Americans*, and *The Theater of Famous Radio Players*.

Back on the west coast he was heard as the crusty older brother, Julius, on *The Billie Burke Show* (1945-46). Other roles included the impossible-to-please boss, J. R. Boomer, on the *Meet Millie* series, as well as various supporting roles on *Lux Radio Theater*, *Jonathan Trimble*, *Esquire*, *The Mel Blanc Show* and *Michael Shayne, Detective*.

Beginning in 1936 Ross did some character work in films and appeared as Colonel Lafe Harvey in *Cavalry*, Thurman in *Stormy Trails*, and Professor Cleary in *Riders of the Whistling Skull* in 1937. In 1940 he appeared onscreen as Grandpa in *Courageous Dr. Christian*, and as Adolph Meyer in *A Date With the Falcon*.

In 1951 he was in the TV *Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok*. He also recorded fairy tales for children on the Black and White record label.

Ross's most memorable role was as Judge Hooker on *The Great Gildersleeve* beginning in 1941. He died of cancer at the age of 73 on May 21, 1961.



RICHARD LEGRAND (Richard Peavey) was born August 29, 1882 in the Mount Tabor section near Portland, Oregon of French-English ancestry. At the age of 16 he decided to become a sailor and left home. For the next three years he journeyed to England and Ireland, then back across the Atlantic, and on to the Orient.

At the age of 19 he found himself on the streets of New York City, unemployed and hungry. While walking past the Bijou Theater he was asked if he would like to earn \$1.50. He eagerly accepted and found himself working backstage operating an artificial snow machine for a production of *The Climbers*. One day he was pressed into service as an actor and his first role was as a butler. His next stage work was with actress Amelia Bingham in *Lady Margaret* which ran for four months. Then for the next year and a half he played juvenile roles with the Murray Hill Stock Co.

He returned to Oregon and joined the Dillon & King repertory company and toured in musical comedies throughout the west for the next five years. He also worked in vaudeville and tent shows.

LeGrand entered radio in San Francisco in 1928 as the announcer for *The Spotlight Revue*. He

played Pa Smithers on *Memory Lane*. He also had one of the first sponsored radio programs, *Ole and the Girls*, on which he worked in a Swedish dialect assisted by a female trio known as The Coquettes. One of his favorite radio characters was known as Professor Knicklebine. He was also heard on continuing dramas such as *One Man's Family* and *I Love a Mystery*.

In 1948 LeGrand joined the Fibber McGee cast as Ole, the Swedish janitor. His best remembered role was as Peavey on *The Great Gildersleeve*. He made a few appearances in films. He died at the age of 81 on June 29, 1963.

SHIRLEY MITCHELL (Leila Ransom) was born in Toledo, Ohio on November 4, 1926. As a talented youngster she began to appear in amateur shows and her first radio broadcast was on *The Children's Hour* on station WSPD. At the age of 13 Shirley passed an audition for a role on *The Lone Ranger* program and made the journey to Detroit by bus. She attended the Universities of Toledo and Michigan and worked as an apprentice at the Cleveland Playhouse.

The young actress convinced her parents to let her try for a professional career in radio in Chicago. She promised that if she did not succeed within two weeks, she would go back home and become a school teacher. Within the two weeks she was cast as a southern belle on a network broadcast of *The First Nighter*. She also did stints on soap operas such as *The Story of Mary Marlin* and *The Road of Life*, as well as comedy roles with Ransom Sherman.

Miss Mitchell then moved on to Los Angeles and was soon appearing on *The Sealtest Village Store* as comedian Joan Davis's rival Shirley Wirley. She was also heard as Honeybee Gillis on the *Life of Riley*, as well as Phoebe Peabody on *The Jack Carson Show*. In 1943 she joined the cast of the *Fibber McGee*

& Molly show as Alice Darling, a defense plant worker who used expressions such as “Crim-in-ny” and “Creepers!” In 1946 she had the leading female role on NBC’s comedy detective series, *McGarry and His Mouse*. She was Kitty Archer, the mouse. In 1947 she was heard as Helen the secretary on *The Bill Goodwin Show*. Also during 1947–48 she played Martha Piper on *Tales of Willie Piper*. During 1949–50 she was Molly Bee on the comedy show, *Young Love*.

Miss Mitchell was first heard on *The Great Gildersleeve* in a small supporting role as a Red Cross worker on the broadcast of February 8, 1942 and became a permanent member of the cast as Leila Ranson in September 1942.

As the wife of a surgeon, she lived for a time in New York City and had a son, Scott and a daughter, Brooke.

Her film credits include *Jamboree* (1944), *Mr. Lord Says No* (1952), *The Clown* (1954), and the role of Myra Smithers in *The Desk Set* (1957).

Miss Mitchell was also quite active in television. During 1953–54 she played the recurring role of Marion Strong on *I Love Lucy*. In 1962 she was Mrs. Colton on the CBS-TV series *Pete and Gladys*. During 1965–67 she appeared as neighbor Marge Thorton on NBC-TV’s *Please Don’t Eat the Daisies*.

She remains active in supplying voice-over work. She is the widow of Jay Livingston, composer of “To Each His Own,” “Golden Earrings,”

“Buttons and Bows,” “Tammy,” “Mona Lisa,”  
“Que Sera, Sera,” and countless others.

ARTHUR Q. BRYAN (Floyd Munson) was born in Brooklyn, New York on May 8, 1899. His long career began on stage when he sang tenor with a number of quartets. He entered radio in 1924 working at a number of small stations. In 1932 he was hired by WCAU in Philadelphia where he served as writer/producer and occasional actor.

The genial, stout, multi-talented performer ventured to the west coast in 1938 and was heard over the CBS network on *The Grouch Club*, a program that offered listeners a forum to air their complaints and pet peeves.

Bryan introduced one of his most memorable characters, lisping Waymond Wadcliffe, on *The Band Wagon* program with Dick Powell. Years later he used the same voice to speak for Elmer Fudd, the exasperated baby-talking wabbit hunter in the Bugs Bunny cartoons. In 1935 he had been heard as Homer Tubbs on Ethel Merman's program. During 1939-44 he played Mr. Fuddle on the *Blondie* show.

He began his long run as Doc Gamble on *Fibber McGee and Molly* in 1943. Also that year he starred in a show of his own, *Major Hoople*, based on a comic strip character. During 1943-44 he was a member of the zany panel on *Nit Wit Court*.

Another of his long-running radio roles was that of Roland “Rawhide” Rolinson on the *Red Ryder* series (1942–51).

In 1946 Bryan played the role of Duke on the short-lived situation comedy series, *Forever Ernest*. In 1950 he created the role of Professor Warren on *The Halls of Ivy*. He also took over the role of police lieutenant Walt Levinson on *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*.

Bryan also played some character roles in films and his versatile voice was heard on a number of children’s records. He passed away at the age of 60 on November 30, 1959.

KEN CHRISTY (Chief Tom Gates) was born in 1895. His career began on the vaudeville stage. He had a deep speaking voice, and sang bass.

Christy had a long career as an actor in radio. He was heard on a number of soap operas and played Leonard Clark, a crooked lawyer, on *Stepmother*, and was heard as Ed Prentiss on *Gallant Heart*. His voice was also heard on a number of popular children's programs such as *Smilin' Ed McConnel's Buster Brown Gang*. He played dual roles on the *Jack Armstrong* series, as Talia-San and Sullivan Lodge. He was frequently cast in villain roles on *Tales of the Texas Rangers*. He also essayed comedy parts on *The Alan Young Show*, *Tommy Riggs and Betty Lou*, and was heard as Mr. Twitchell on *The Sad Sack*, as well as Mr. Weemish on *Baby Snooks*.

In 1940 he made his film debut and appeared in a number of comedy shorts, as well as the feature film, *Dr. Kildare Goes Home*. In 1941 he was seen in such varied film fare as *Whistling in Dixie*, *Six Lessons From Madame La Zonga* and *Ball of Fire*. He joined Gene Autry in *Bells of Capistrano* in 1942 and was also seen in *Secrets of the Underground*, *Harmon of Michigan*, *Burma Convoy* and *He Hired the Boss*.

Christy's first appearance on the Gildersleeve program was as Police Lt. Quinn from



Chicago on the broadcast of October 25, 1942. He made occasional films during the 1950's. Among his last screen appearances were westerns *Fury at Sundown*, *Outlaw's Son*, and *Utah Blaine*, released in 1957.

Christy died at the age of 67 on July 23, 1962.

GLORIA HOLLIDAY (Bessie Barstow) was born on August 26, 1924, in Billings, Montana. From an early age she had ambitions of becoming an actress because of her love of films. Immediately upon graduating from North Hollywood High School in 1943 she went to work at the CBS mail room. She soon caught the attention of producer Fran Van Hartesveldt who was then doing *The Kate Smith Show*. Gloria found herself in a plethora of parts in all the Kate Smith shows that Fran did on the west coast.

When the role of Bessie came up for the Gildersleeve series, Fran remembered Gloria and gave her a call to read for the part. "Hal Peary was out of town, but they hired me right on the spot," Gloria recalls. "But the first show I did, I had an attack of appendicitis, which caused me to flub a line. Hal said, 'Oh, get rid of her!' But then he was *so* upset when he found out later that I'd had an attack of appendicitis, he said, 'Oh, bless her heart, God love her, let's hire her!'"

When Hal Peary left the Gildersleeve to try his luck on *Honest Harold*, Gloria went with him. Though the series was short-lived, their artistic collaboration was not. Together they created a musical act which they broke in at the

Coronado Hotel in San Diego. Hal sang, and Gloria accompanied him on the piano. They toured different venues, including the Shamrock Hotel in San Antonio, Texas, for about a year.

After divorcing Hal in 1956, Gloria turned her attention to music full time. Completely self-taught, the lovely pianist performed at a variety of hotels near the Los Angeles International Airport, as well as many clubs in the area. She continued as a professional musician for five years, is a life member of Musician's Union, and still plays for her own amusement.

Around 1961 she turned her attention to working with computers for eight years. Then, she retired.

But retirement was far from inactive. "In 1981," Gloria remembers, "my first love from North Hollywood High School, Ray McGalliard, came back into my life. He was a charming, wonderful man. We remained good friends and traveling companions for years, journeying to all the islands in Hawaii, and before that to Singapore, Bangkok and China. I love to travel. It's been quite an interesting life!"

BEA BENADERET (Eve Goodwin) was born in New York City on April 4, 1906. The family moved to San Francisco when she was five years old. At the age of 12 she was hired to sing over station WGO and was given her own program which was sponsored by Baldwin pianos. Later at station WFRC she acted in dramatic sketches with film star Edmund Lowe. Her work impressed the management and she was placed on the station's staff where her duties included acting, singing, some writing, producing, and at times she even served as the announcer.

By 1935 she advanced to network radio and was heard on *The Blue Monday Jamboree* aired over CBS. The following year she appeared with Orson Welles on *The Campbell Playhouse*. In addition to dramatic acting, Bea excelled at comedy and dialects. Her big break came when she appeared on *The Jack Benny Show* as Gertrude Gearshift, a wise-cracking Brooklynese switchboard operator. In 1938 she married actor/announcer Jim Bannon who was the first announcer on *The Great Gildersleeve*. In 1948 Mr. Bannon was signed by Republic Pictures to play *Red Ryder* on the screen. They had a son and daughter and divorced in 1950.

Miss Benaderet had one of the most versatile voices in all of radio. She was heard as the calm

mother on *A Date With Judy*, as well as Gracie Allen's confidante Blanch Morton on the *Burns & Allen* radio show, and later on tv. She was also heard as the droll, nasal-sounding maid Gloria on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* program, as well as Mrs. Anderson on *A Day in the Life of Dennis Day*. She supplied the sultry tones for Amber Lipscomb on *My Friend Irma*, as well as weird Wanda Werewolf on *Glamour Manor*. She was in the cast of the *Twelve Players* show. Another of her most memorable characterizations was as Mama Bronson on *Meet Millie*. In 1945 she joined *Fibber McGee and Molly* as snooty socialite Millicent Carstairs. She and her husband raised navel oranges, but in order not to sound vulgar, she referred to their crop as "Citrus-Umbilicus."

She was an early convert to television and in 1962 tested for the role of Granny Clampett on *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Instead, she appeared as the yodeling hillbilly cousin, Pearl Bodine. During 1963–70 she starred as widowed Kate Bradly, owner of the Shady Rest Hotel in *Petticoat Junction*. For four TV seasons she supplied the voice for Betty Rubble on *The Flintstones* animated series.

In 1967 she underwent lung surgery for cancer but later returned to *Petticoat Junction* to film 5 more episodes. After a half century in show business, Miss Benaderet passed away at the age of 62 on October 13, 1968. Her husband, sound techni-

cian Gene Twombly died of a heart attack a few days after her funeral.

DICK CRENNA (Bronco Thompson) was born November 30, 1927 in the Belmont section of Los Angeles where his family ran a small residential hotel. As a boy he lived near the broadcasting studios of both NBC and CBS and used to retrieve castaway scripts. His acting debut took place at the age of 12 when one of his teachers yanked him out of a school football game to audition for the *Boy Scouts Jamboree* radio show at station KFI. He was given a permanent role for which he was paid 25 cents a week, plus one dollar for lunch and transportation.

Dick went on to become one of the busiest young actors in Hollywood. He excelled at portraying adenoidal adolescents and was heard as Oogie Pringle on *A Date With Judy* during 1946–50. He also played a high school student with a squeaking voice, Walter Denton on *Our Miss Brooks* in 1950, and continued in the role on the TV series from 1952–56. He played a similar role on *The Burns and Allen Show* during 1949–50.

Crenna's career continued in television. In 1957 he was seen as Walter Brennan's grandson, Luke on *The Real McCoys*, and in 1964 he had the leading role in *Slattery's People*.

During his college days at the University of Southern California he majored in English

Literature and History and served a hitch in the army during World War II. He credited his comedy timing to working with such pros as Eve Arden, Gale Gordon and Walter Brennan. He also did some directing on TV including episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*, *No Time For Sergeants*, and *Lou Grant*.

Crenna's film career included dramatic roles in *The Sand Pebbles*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Body Heat*, and *The Flamingo Kid*. In 2001 he was back on the small screen in a TV movie, *By Dawn's Early Light*, playing an elderly rancher and World War II veteran.

His Broadway stage debut was made in 1957 in the comedy *A Hole in the Head*.



GALE GORDON (Rumson Bullard) was born in New York City on February 2, 1905. His father was a famous vaudeville performer and his mother was actress Gloria Gordon. His education took place in England while his parents were on tour. He made his stage debut at the age of 17 with Richard Bennett in *The Dancers*, and he later toured in a leading role in *Seventh Heaven*.

Gordon's radio debut occurred under most inauspicious circumstances in 1926 when he wandered into the studio of station KFWB in Hollywood. He was put on the air strumming a few chords on a borrowed ukulele while he sang "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More." His radio acting career began on the dramatic series *English Cornets* in 1933. As unlikely as it may seem, in 1935 he starred as interplanetary traveler *Flash Gordon* on a transcribed quarter-hour weekly series for 26 weeks. For seven years he was romantic leading man to Irene Rich on her program.

In 1941 he joined the *Fibber McGee and Molly* cast as pompous Mayor LaTrivia. During World War II he served as a gunnery instructor for the Coast Guard and returned to the McGee program in 1945 as indecisive weatherman F. Ogden (Foggy) Williams, giving non-committal reports such as

“Unofficially, and off the record, weather conditions will *probably* be – about general – if not better – or worse. One never knows for sure. Sometimes it’s this, and sometimes it’s that – or both – usually – one or the other – in a way – although – *not definitely.*”

With his precise diction Gordon excelled at portraying officious lawyers, stiff bankers and pompous businessmen. He was heard on the comedy programs of *Burns and Allen*, *Phil Harris and Alice Faye*, *Dennis Day*, and *Judy Canova*. He also played Judge Grundle on *The Penny Singleton Show*, and as Mr. Merriweathers on *The Halls of Ivy*. Gordon played the perplexed father Harry Graves on *Junior Miss*. He was heard with Lucille Ball on *My Favorite Husband* in 1948–51 and later appeared with her on TV in *The Lucy Show* as her cantankerous boss, Theodore J. Mooney. On *Here’s Lucy* he was again her boss, Harrison Carter.

In 1961 Gordon joined the cast of tv’s *Dennis the Menace* as John Wilson. Perhaps his most memorable role was as the blustery Osgood Conklin, high school principal, in *Our Miss Brooks*.

Gordon appeared in a number of films. He passed away at the age of 89 on June 30, 1995.

CATHY LEWIS (Nurse Kathryn Milford) was born in Wenatchee, Washington in 1918. At the age of seven she appeared onstage billed as “The Jazz Baby.” In her teens she sang with the bands of Herbie Kay, Ted Weems, Glen Gray, Red Nichols and Ray Noble.

The attractive redhead moved to Chicago and became active as an actress in radio. In 1943 she married actor/writer Elliot Lewis. In 1953 they produced and co-starred in the dramatic anthology series, *On Stage*. The pair became known as Mr. and Mrs. Radio. During 1947–54 she co-starred as Jane Stacy on *My Friend Irma* on radio.

Active in films and television, in 1959 she played the role of Molly on the ill-fated tv version of *Fibber McGee and Molly*. During 1961–65 she was seen as Deirdre Thompson on the *Hazel* comedy series. Her last tv appearance was in an episode of *F Troop*, portraying an aging Indian princess.

Miss Lewis passed away at the age of 50 on November 20, 1968.

UNA MERKEL (Adeline Fairchild) was born in Covington, Kentucky on December 10, 1903. She attended school in Philadelphia and studied at the Alviene School of Dance. While trying to become a stage actress in New York she modeled for illustrations in *True Story* magazine. In her free time she taught Sunday School.

Bearing a striking resemblance to the young Lillian Gish, Una was hired by D. W. Griffith to be her stand-in. In 1924 she appeared in her first film role in *The Fifth Horseman*. Also that year she appeared in the first two-reel talkie short, *Love's Old Sweet Song*. She made her Broadway stage debut in 1925 in a small role in *Two By Two*, followed by a starring role in the comedy, *Pigs*. She toured for two years with Helen Hayes in *Coquette*.

In 1930 Miss Merkel was hired once again by Griffith for the role of Ann Rutledge in the film, *Abraham Lincoln*. In 1931 she was signed to a seven-year contract at MGM where she was featured in two screen versions of *The Merry Widow* in 1934 and again in 1952. She also appeared in support of Jean Harlow in a number of films. The versatile actress played roles ranging from highly efficient secretaries to tough-talking chorus girls with names like Tootsie and Fritzi.

At Warner Brothers in 1933 she sang a few choruses of "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" with Ginger Rogers in *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*.

In 1931 Miss Merkel was seen as secretary Effie in *The Maltese Falcon*. In 1936 she appeared in a two-reel color short, *How to Stuff a Goose*. In the late 1930's she presented comedy monologues on *CBS Texaco Star Theater*. One of her most memorable screen roles was as Lily Belle Callahan in *Destry Rides Again* in which she had a bar room brawl with Marlene Dietrich. In 1940 she was Myrtle Souse, the daughter of W. C. Fields in *The Bank Dick*.

She was very active in films through the mid-1950's. In 1956 she won a Tony Award for her stage role in *The Ponder Heart*. In 1959 she returned to Broadway for the musical *Take Me Along*. She won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination for her role as the demented shop-lifting Mrs. Winemiller in the 1961 film, *Summer and Smoke*.

During World War II Miss Merkel toured for the USO with Gary Cooper. Her hobby was cooking and her specialty was okra gumbo. Her last screen appearance in 1966 was with Elvis Presley in *Spinout*. She passed away at the age of 82 on January 2, 1986.

BARBARA WHITING (Babs Knickerbocker) was born in Los Angeles on May 31, 1931, the daughter of famed composer Richard Whiting.

A natural comedienne, at an early age Barbara began to entertain celebrity guests at parties in her parents' home. Her radio debut took place circa 1944 playing the role of perky Mildren on the *Meet Corliss Archer* program. In addition she was heard on the broadcasts of Bing Crosby and Jimmy Durante.

In 1944 she took over the leading role on the *Junior Miss* radio series on CBS. She made her film debut the following year portraying Fuffy Adams in the screen version of *Junior Miss*. She was signed to a film contract and toured for the USO.

Her films included: *Centennial Summer* (1946), *Home Sweet Homicide* (1946), *Carnival in Costa Rica* (1947), *City Across the River* (1949), *I Can Get It For You Wholesale* (1951), and *Beware, My Lovely* (1953). Her last screen appearance was as Esther Williams' younger sister in *Dangerous When Wet* at MGM in 1953.

In 1949 Barbara joined the cast of *The Great Gildersleeve* as Leroy's girlfriend, Babs. In addition to comedy roles she was heard on dramatic shows, such as the December 2, 1956 episode of *Suspense*, entitled "Rim of Terror."

She retired in 1958 after her marriage to Gail Smith. A son Richard was born to the couple in 1960. In later years Barbara returned briefly to show business in some commercials for radio, and voice-overs for television.

## Film Credits





# The Great Gildersleeve

1942

## Cast

- Harold Peary* – *Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve*  
*Freddie Mercer* – *Leroy Forrester*  
*Nancy Gates* – *Marjorie Forrester*  
*Jane Darwell* – *Aunt Emma Forrester*  
*Mary Field* – *Amelia Hooker*  
*Charles Arnt* – *Judge Horace Hooker*  
*Lillian Randolph* – *Birdie Scoggins*  
*Thurston Hall* – *Governor Jonathan Stafford*  
*George M. Carleton* – *Frank Powers*  
*John Dilson* – *Mayor Appleton*  
*Syd Saylor* – *Phil, the Carpenter*  
*Anne O'Neal* – *Martha, Old Prune*  
*Fern Emmett* – *Second Old Prune*  
*George Chandler* – *Telegraph Messenger*  
*Bruce Edwards* – *Governor's Secretary*  
*Donald Kerr* – *Photographer*  
*Mantan Moreland* – *Gildersleeve's Butler*  
*Stanley Price* – *Country Club Member*  
*Lorin Raker* – *Court Clerk*  
*Herb Vigran* – *George, the Jeweler*  
*Russell Wade* – *Charles, Governor's Chauffeur*

Produced by Herman Schlom  
Directed by Gordon Douglas  
Written by Julien Josephson, Jack Townley  
Cinematography by Frank Redman  
Film Editing by John Lockert  
Art Direction by Albert S. D'Agostino, Walter E.  
Keller  
Special Effects by Vernon L. Walker  
Music Direction by C. Bakaleinikoff

# Gildersleeve on Broadway

1943

## Cast

- Harold Peary* – *Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve*  
*Billie Burke* – *Mrs. Laura Chandler*  
*Claire Carleton* – *Francine Gray*  
*Richard LeGrand* – *Mr. Peavey*  
*Freddie Mercer* – *Leroy Gildersleeve*  
*Hobart Cavanaugh* – *Homer*  
*Margaret Landry* – *Margie Gildersleeve*  
*Leonid Kinskey* – *Window Washer*  
*Ann Doran* – *Matilda Brown*  
*Lillian Randolph* – *Birdie*  
*Mike Road* – *Jimmy Clark*  
*George M. Carleton* – *Druggist Hawkins*  
*Forrest Lewis* – *Druggist Carson*  
*Walter Tetley* – *The Bellhop*  
*Teddy Infuhr* – *Stanley*  
*Jack Norton* – *Drunk on Window Ledge*  
*Frank Dawson* – *The Minister*  
*Phyllis Dare* – *The Little Girl*  
*Robert Anderson* – *Hotel Clerk*  
*Sylvia Andrew* – *The Spinster*  
*Joseph E. Bernard* – *Mr. Underwood, the Postman*

*Eugene Borden* – *Headwaiter*  
*Ken Christy* – *Delaney*  
*Harry Clay* – *Bellboy*  
*Barbara Coleman* – *Model*  
*Rita Corday* – *Model*  
*Fred Essler* – *The Furrier*  
*Herbert Evans* – *Haddon, the Butler*  
*Barbara Hale* – *Stocking Salesgirl*  
*Daun Kennedy* – *Model*  
*Rosemary La Planche* – *Model*  
*Dorothy Malone* – *Model*  
*Charles F. Miller* – *The Judge*  
*Shirley O'Hara* – *Model*  
*Lee Phelps* – *Clancy*  
*Elaine Riley* – *Model*  
*Lawrence Tierney* – *Cab Driver*

Produced by Herman Schlom

Directed by Gordon Douglas

Written by Robert E. Kent

Cinematography by Jack MacKenzie

Film Editing by Les Millbrook

Art Direction by Albert S. D'Agostino, Walter E.  
Keller

Set Decoration by Darrell Silvera, William Stevens

Costume Design by Renié

Second Unit Direction by Harry D'Arcy

Sound Recording by Bailey Fesler

Music Direction by C. Bakaleinikoff

# Gildersleeve's Bad Day

1943

Cast

*Harold Peary* – *Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve*  
*Jane Darwell* – *Aunt Emma Forrester*  
*Nancy Gates* – *Marjorie Forrester*  
*Charles Arnt* – *Judge Horace Hooker*  
*Freddie Mercer* – *Leroy Forester*  
*Russell Wade* – *Jimmy*  
*Lillian Randolph* – *Birdie*  
*Frank Jenks* – *Al*  
*Douglas Fowley* – *Louie Barton*  
*Alan Carney* – *Toad*  
*Grant Withers* – *Henry Potter*  
*Richard LeGrand* – *J. W. Peavey*  
*Dink Trout* – *Otis*  
*Harold Landon* – *George Peabody*  
*Charles Cane* – *Police Chief*  
*Ken Christy* – *Bailiff*  
*Joan Barclay* – *Julie Potter*  
*Richard Bartell* – *Juror*  
*Herbert Bergman* – *Juror*  
*Eddie Borden* – *Juror*  
*Patti Brill* – *Gladys Knight*  
*Morgan Brown* – *Juror*  
*Jimmy Clemons, Jr.* – *Boy*

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*Lou Davis – Juror*  
*Fern Emmett – Mrs. Marvin*  
*Barbara Hale – Girl at Party and Dance*  
*Earle Hodgins – Mason the Cop*  
*Danny Jackson – Messenger Boy*  
*Warren Jackson – Joe the Cop*  
*Arthur Loft – Lucas*  
*W. J. O'Brien – Juror*  
*Broderick O'Farrell – Juror*  
*Lee Phelps – Ryan*  
*Joey Ray – Tom*  
*Jack Rice – Hotel Clerk*  
*Ralph Robertson – Juror*  
*Edgar Sherrod – Minister*  
*Margie Stewart – Babs*  
*Ann Summers – Dora Deetz*  
*Fred Trowbridge – Defense Attorney*  
*Betty Wells – Dippy*  
*Larry Wheat – Juror*

Produced by Herman Schlom

Directed by Gordon Douglas

Written by Jack Townley

Cinematography by Jack MacKenzie

Film Edited by Les Millbrook

Art Direction by Carroll Clark, Albert S.

D'Agostino

Music Direction by C. Bakaleinikoff

# Gildersleeve's Ghost

1944

Cast

*Harold Peary* – *Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve,*  
*Randolph Q. Gildersleeve,*  
*Jonathan Q. Gildersleeve*

*Marion Martin* – *Terry Vance*

*Frank Reicher* – *Dr. John Wells*

*Richard LeGrand* – *Mr. Peavey*

*Emory Parnell* – *Commissioner Haley*

*Nick Stewart* – *Chauncey, the Chauffeur*  
*(as Nicodemus Stewart)*

*Marie Blake* – *Harriet Morgan*

*Freddie Mercer* – *Leroy Forrester*

*Margie Stewart* – *Marjorie Forrester*

*Lillian Randolph* – *Birdie, the Housekeeper*

*Joseph Vitale* – *Lennox, the Henchman*

*Amelita Ward* – *Marie, the Maid*

*Charles Gemora* – *Gorilla*

*Mary Halsey* – *Blond at Rally*

*Jack Norton* – *Drunk at Rally*

*Dink Trout* – *Judge Hooker*

Produced by Herman Schlom  
Directed by Gordon Douglas  
Written by Robert E. Kent



Cinematography by Jack MacKenzie  
Film Editing by Les Millbrook  
Art Direction by Carroll Clark, Albert S.  
D'Agostino  
Set Decoration by Darrell Silvera, William Stevens  
Costume Design by Renié  
Makeup by Mel Berns  
Second Unit Direction by Harry Mancke  
Sound by Francis M. Sarver  
Special Effects by Vernon L. Walker  
Music by Paul Sawtell  
Music Direction by C. Bakaleinikoff

## Television Credits



# The Great Gildersleeve

1955 (Syndicated)

## Cast

*Willard Waterman* – *Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve*  
*Stephanie Griffin* – *Marjorie Forrester*  
*Ronald Keith* – *Leroy Forrester*  
*Lillian Randolph* – *Birdie*  
*Harry Antrim* – *Judge Horace Hooker*  
*Forrest Lewis* – *Peavey*  
*Hal Smith* – *Floyd Munson*  
*Willis Bouchey* – *Mayor Terwilliger*  
*Leslie Denison* – *Rumson Bullard*  
*Carole Matthews* – *Kathryn Milford*  
*Robert Foulk* – *Charlie Anderson*  
*Barbara Stewart* – *Bessie*  
*Doris Singleton* – *Lois Kimball*  
*Phyllis Coates* – *Sally Fuller*  
*Alex Talton* – *Mona Frances*  
*Dorothy Green* – *Ellen Knickerbocker*  
*Mary Jane Saunders* – *Brenda Knickerbocker*  
*Burt Mustin* – *Foley, the Janitor*



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CHARLES STUMPF was born in a very small town in northeastern Pennsylvania. He has worked professionally in theatre and films. Mr. Stumpf is the recipient of the Allen Rockford Award presented by the Friends of Old Time Radio. A noted historian, Mr. Stumpf has written dozens of articles on old time radio and is the author of several books, including *Ma Perkins*, *Little Orphan Annie and Hi-Yo, Silver!*, *Heavenly Days! The Story of Fibber McGee and Molly*, and *The Smiling Girl on the Cardboard Moon: The Saga of Paulette Goddard*.

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