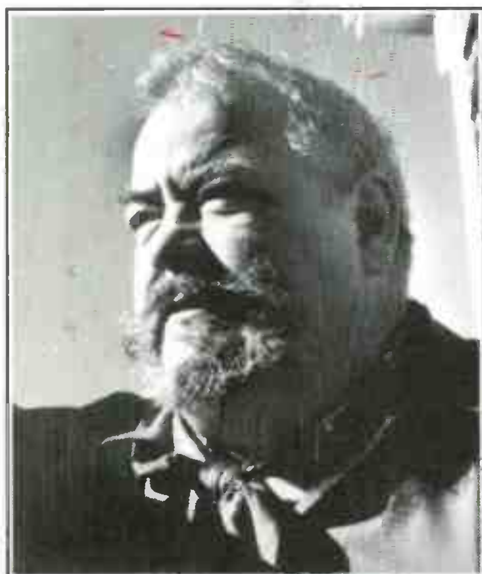
J. Scott Smart



a.k.a.

The Fat Man

a biography by Charles Laughlin

World Radio History

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To Jay Hickerson, the in appreciation for the many years of service to OTR. Keep up the great work! Charlie Laughlin Jan '95

J. SCOTT SMART
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THE FAT MAN

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World Radio History

Sketch by John Falter of Jack Smart sitting in his "nice chair."

World Radio History

PREFACE
A LABOR OF LOVE

Imagine if you will a Friday evening way back in 1948. A young boy sits on the floor with barely concealed impatience in front of the family radio, waiting for his favorite serial to begin. The radio is one of those huge mahogany consoles that you associate with old time radio. It dwarfs the boy. At 8 o'clock the voice of Charles Irving is heard announcing that the Norwich Pharmaceutical Company, makers of Pepto Bismol and other fine products, is proud to sponsor Dashiell Hammett's most exciting character, "The Fat Man," live from New York. And who can forget the opening format of that program? Someone steps up to the microphone and says:

There he goes, into that drugstore.
He's stepping on the scales.
Weight? 237 pounds.
Fortune? Danger.
Whoooooo is it?

And then J. Scott Smart's deep, sonorous tones are heard — the voice the boy has been waiting to hear all day — replying:

THE FAT MAAAAN!

Although I never had the chance to meet him, I first got to know Jack Smart by way of his wonderful voice when I was that boy glued to the radio listening to adventure stories. This was during the nineteen-forties which proved to be the end of the "Golden Age" of radio. Before television became the center of my family's entertainment, we would gather around the radio after dinner to listen to such favorites as "The Lone Ranger," "Sam Spade," "Fibber McGee and Molly", "Jack Benny," "Gunsmoke," and of course, my favorite, "The Fat Man." And although I didn't realize it at the time, "The Fat Man" was my favorite mainly because of the man who played the lead role of Brad Runyon, that corpulent, hard-fisted, sensitive private eye with the cynical wit and big heart who would get his friends out of scrapes and unerringly lead Sgt. O'Hara and Lt. MacKenzie to the solution of the mystery.

That actor was none other than J. Scott Smart. When I came to realize as an adult how much of an impact his personality and skill had upon me, I became curious to find out more about him. As it turned out, I discovered far more than I bargained for. Jack Smart was not only a famous radio actor — certainly as famous in his day as, say, Peter Falk playing Columbo or Andy Griffith playing Matlock are in ours — but also an accomplished stage actor, jazz historian and

World Radio History

musician, amateur gourmet chef, newspaper writer, and artist. The funny thing was that the more I learned about Jack Smart, the more interested I became in the man himself, and less interested in the character he played on the radio — a character he nevertheless played, or so it seemed to me as a boy, just for me. As it has turned out for me as an adult, Jack was a far more interesting character than Dashiell Hammett ever conceived.

So this is Jack Smart's story as far as I have been able to piece it together. The research for this report took many years and I had a lot of help from a lot of people along the way. I am deeply grateful for the time and energy they contributed to this project. They include professionals involved one way or the other in crime fiction or radio research and archiving — people like Kathryn Mets, Librarian, the Museum of the City of New York; Marty Jacobs, Acting Curator, Museum of the City of New York; Melissa Miller-Quinlan, Theater Arts Research Associate, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas; Yvonne Murchison Foote, Library Assistant, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society; Mark Vail, Archivist, Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago; Dorothy Swerdlove, Library and Museum of the Performing Arts of the New York Public Library, New York; Barbara M. Soper, Librarian, History Department, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Buffalo, New York; Ray Wemmlinger, Curator and Librarian, The Hampden-Booth Theater Library of The Players, New York; Guy St-Denis, The D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario; Kristine Krueger, National Film Information Service, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; Katharine Loughney, Reference Librarian, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Douglas A. Alderdice, Alumni Liaison, Lafayette High School, Buffalo, New York; James A. Reicker, Proprietor of Prime Crime, Ottawa, Canada; Paul Koyak, Universal Studios; Ed Russo, Lincoln Public Library, Springfield, Illinois; Rich Conaty, Museum of Broadcasting and Television, New York; Ron Staley, Radio Division, UCLA Film Archives; Professor J. Fred MacDonald, Historian at Northeastern Illinois University; Les Waffen, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Larry and John Gasman of SPERDVAC; Rowena Krum, Public Affairs Specialist for the Norwich Eaton Pharmaceutical Company, Norwich, New York; Silvie Robitaille, Archivist, National Archives of Canada; Ian Higgins, General Manager of Corporate Relations, American Broadcasting Company; Bill Schurk, Popular Culture Library, Bowling Green State University, Ohio; and Anthony Tollin, radio historian.

Special thanks must go to Jack's friends and fellow thespians who took the time to reminisce and share their memories of him.

World Radio History

These include Jonathan Hole, Van Johnson, Amzie Strickland, Dwight Weist, Marion H. Parker, Imogene Coca Donovan, and Jayne Meadows. Many thanks also go to Jack's many personal friends: Eleanor ("Oney") de Laittre, Mike and Helen Horn, the late Lilian D. Plante, Peter Kriendler of the "21" Club, Muriel Bochert, William R. ("Barnacle Billy") Tower, Jr., the late Margaret ("Fishie") Tragard, Lillian B. ("Liller") Biewend, Dr. Amy Freeman Lee, Oscar Hubbard, John Laurent, Bruce Robertson-Dick, Donald Berglund, Barbara Hilty, Richard W. Perkins, Katherine ("Kay") Baker, Arnie ("Woo Woo") Ginsburg, Lois Proctor Mack, Edward H. Hergelroth. I am also indebted to Nancy Smart (no relation to Jack) of North Berwick, Maine, and William Nadel of New York, a radio historian who specializes in Dashiell Hammett radio programs.

I am also very grateful to Patti Hart for the wonderful job she did in editing and producing this work.

And, of course, the project would have been impossible without the moral support, personal knowledge and critical insights of both Jack's widow, Mary-Leigh Call Smart, and their dear friend, Beverly Hallam.

For those of you with an interest in the history of radio and the theater, I hope you find in this account of one of the more popular and productive radio actors of the "Golden Age" of radio yet another piece in the big puzzle. But whether or not you have an interest in history, I hope that you recognize in these words a little bit of the Jack Smart you knew and loved.

-- Charles Laughlin
Ottawa, Canada

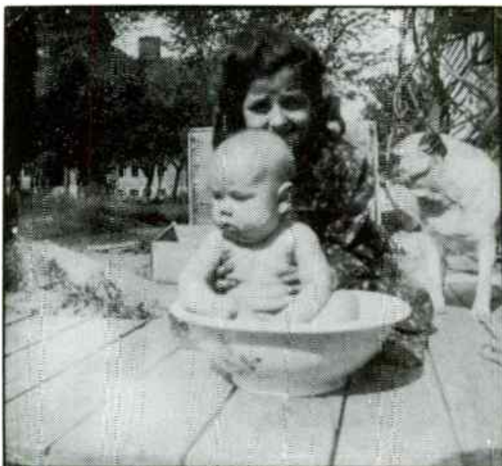
World Radio History

Jack Smart at about five years old anticipating some of his more dramatic roles. Photo: Theatre Arts Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

World Radio History

CHAPTER 1
THE EARLY YEARS

Jack Smart was born on November 27, 1902, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was named John Kenley Tener Smart after his father's best friend and one-time governor of Pennsylvania, John Kenley Tener.[1] Jack's father was Frank Leslie Smart who was a native of Stockton Springs, just outside of Belfast, Maine. His mother was May Smart. May's mother had been born a Scott, but along with her sister, she became orphaned and was later adopted by a Kansas farm family named Moses.



Jack Smart at approximately one year old being bathed outside by his mother, May Smart. Location probably in Philadelphia. Photo: Theatre Arts Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Jack's birth was a bit awkward. He was born on Thanksgiving Day and as a result his mother had to miss attending the Army-Navy football game. His father went anyway. Jack had one younger brother, Edgar, who died two years before Jack, and three older half-sisters and one younger half-sister. The half-sisters were from Jack's father's previous marriage and remarriage following his divorce from Jack's mother. Although Jack was never very close to his family, he financially supported his father in old age and until he died in Los Angeles in 1945, and he contributed to his mother's support until her death.

Because his father's business interests[2] kept the family on the move, Jack lived in a number of places as a child, including Philadelphia; Los Angeles; Fresno, California; Portland, Oregon; Pittsburgh; Springfield, Illinois; Louisville, Kentucky; Newton (suburban Boston); Chicago; Cadillac, Michigan; and Clay Center, Kansas. Little is known about his early life, or about his primary school career. At some point he attended the Stuart School in Springfield, Illinois, and

World Radio History

sold the *Saturday Evening Post* on the northwest corner of the square in front of Claypool's Drug Store.

There is an interesting coincidence about the move to Springfield with respect to his later marriage to Mary-Leigh Call. After they were married, Jack and Mary-Leigh visited Springfield, and were driving down 7th Street when Jack pointed out the house he had lived in during his youth. As it turned out, the house was next door to the house that Mary-Leigh's father had lived in before marrying her mother.[3] Jack had not known her family in those days. And this was not the only curious coincidence involving their relationship, as we shall see.

Jack lived in Newton, Massachusetts. Sometime after 1912, he took dancing lessons there and at around the age of 12 had a job as an assistant to the dancing master at the Copley Plaza Hotel. And this was where he met "Dell" Tower (the mother of William R. "Billy" Tower) who was later to become a close friend during the years Jack lived in Ogunquit, Maine.

Jack began his high school career at the Miami Military Institute in Oxford, Ohio, while

Jack Smart at about ten years old; California. Photos: Theatre Arts Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin

Jack Smart at the time he attended the Miami Military Institute in Oxford, Ohio.

World Radio History

Jack Smart during his high school years. He was very involved in athletics during this period. Photo: Theatre Arts Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

his family lived in Germantown, Ohio. Jack attended the military school — which no longer exists by the way — for approximately two years[4], but was forced to leave before completing high school due to severe financial losses sustained by his father. He was quite athletic as a boy and while at the Institute he excelled in football and swimming. Mary-Leigh says that Jack was always grateful for the military training he received at the Institute, for he said it taught him good posture. It also taught him weaponry, for he was a crack-shot later in life. As Jack, himself, confessed, "My father had the idea that I should go to a military school. I was more inclined to learn things by absorption than application so, I must admit, the discipline and required study there were good for me."[5]

He moved to Buffalo, New York, with his parents at age 18 and enrolled in Lafayette High School in September of 1920 where he played football, became All-High Tackle, and an expert swimmer. Speaking of swimming, there is an interesting story about his swimming prowess. Jack became friends with the Weismuellers during his

World Radio History

Hollywood days. He once was playing with one of Johnnie Weismueller's children and told the child that he had raced against the child's famous swimming champion father. The child naively asked, "Who won?"[6]

Jack was no slouch academically either. His high school records indicate that he had a grade average in 1920-21 of 81.2% and 1921-22 of 76.25%. Jack studied art at Lafayette under Mrs. Elizabeth Weiffenbach (a teacher he revered and whom he visited on a trip to his high school three decades later[7]). It was during this time that his father gave him a set of drums — a gift Jack later claimed changed his life because it made him want to be a performer. "That set of drums," he said, "marks the beginning of my downfall. They changed me from a normal human being into an entertainer."[8] Evidently the seeds of his remarkable capacities in so many creative activities — art, music and performance — were planted during his high school days in Buffalo.

He graduated from Lafayette High School in June, 1922, at the age of 19.[9] Interestingly, he graduated with Francis "Fran" Striker, another well known radioman who created the Green Hornet and wrote for the Lone Ranger and Sgt. Preston radio shows.

Jack had earlier harbored an ambition to enter the Naval Academy at Annapolis, a goal perhaps fostered by his military school experience. But as he became more proficient in football, he lost that ambition. At graduation, he was offered scholarships by Columbia University and Colgate College, presumably based upon his skill as a footballer, but they offered too little money to support him and he would have had to work part-time to attend. Also, he was eager to get out into the world. So he never did attend college.

What he did do was work at a mind-boggling succession of jobs for about the next two or three years. He walked polo ponies, sold shoe polishers, drove a taxi, was a coal heaver on the Great Lakes boats, a bill poster, and fire chief in a factory. More appropriate to his skills, he played drums in an orchestra, was a layout man in an advertising agency where his art training came in handy, and a cartoonist and reporter for a newspaper. Jack once claimed, "I held 30 jobs in 3 years before I went into show business." This is probably an exaggeration of number and time, for, as we shall see, he joined a stock company in 1923.

World Radio History

CHAPTER 2
THE LON CHANEY OF RADIO

The period of time just after Jack Smart's high school graduation is a bit confusing. It is not at all clear where Jack did this dizzying variety of jobs. By his own account, most of them must have been in New York City while he was trying to break into show business. "I...decided to go to New York to study dancing. I did go to New York for three years but I never got around to studying dancing. It was at this point I was drawn like a magnet to the stage. I held a series of odd jobs, including one behind a soda fountain, while trying to land roles in the theater. I decided New York was the wrong place for a start. I returned to (Buffalo) where I played in stock theater. I knew then the theater would remain my career."[10] One newspaper article mentions that Jack succeeded in landing parts as an extra in movies being made in New York in 1924,[11] while his Universal Studios biography notes he did work as an extra in movies during 1922-23.[12] All my attempts to track these movies down have failed. Apparently Jack's first job on radio occurred during this period. He was hired as a singer on station WPDQ in Buffalo, and his first song on radio was "Dinah."

What is certain is that Jack returned to Buffalo to pursue a career in stock theater. He was a member of the McGarry Majestic Players, Inc. approximately between 1923 and 1928. The McGarry Players was a stock company that was based out of the Majestic Theater in Buffalo. He was paid $25 a week during the season and would receive half salary when not actually cast in a production. The Universal Studios biography mentions that he worked in stock for five years and played in Erie, Pennsylvania; Buffalo, New York; London, Ontario; Manchester, New Hampshire; and Lynn, Massachusetts. According to Jack, "I had seen many cities as a boy and I saw many more as an adult. I travelled wherever bookings in Vaudeville or stock took me — Erie and Lancaster, Pennsylvania; London, Ontario; and Lynn, Massachusetts, among other places. I rarely played a character my own age. I loved makeup. It came naturally to me. I generally played old men with wigs, beards and putty noses."[13] He also used to say about this period that he "used more putty than Lon Chaney could lift."

At some point during this period he played in London, Ontario, where he met and married his first wife, Alice Wright, a fellow actor. Nothing is known about his first marriage or why it was so brief. Jack would only say later that he and Alice were "immature,"

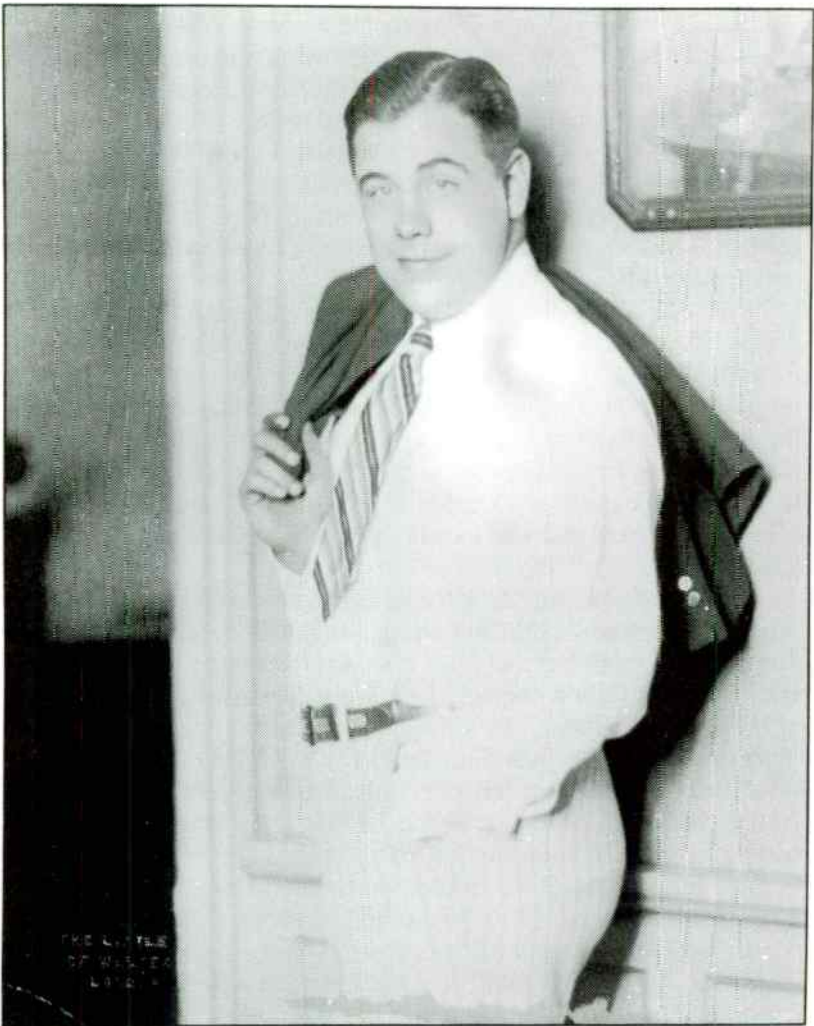
World Radio History

Jack Smart during his mid-twenties in formal attire for a publicity portrait while working for a stock company in London, Ontario. He said he had a boy with a baseball bat accompany him "to beat off the broads."

and although he remained friends with Alice, until he met his second wife, Mary-Leigh, he had forsworn marriage. He also played stock for two seasons in Manchester, New Hampshire, with the John B. Mack Players (1928-29) and the Palace Players (1929).[14] A fellow actor in these companies was Jonathan Hole who later went on to play character roles in theater and movies to the present day.

He also had a byline in the local paper owned by Howard Bangs in Manchester — the paper that is now called the *Union Leader*. Howard had a brother, Frank, in Ogunquit, later to become a

World Radio History



Jack Smart in casual dress for a publicity photo while working in stock theater in London, Ontario. It was during this period that he met and married his first wife, Alice Wright.

close friend of Jack's in The Players as well. Jack was a fine writer and there are a number of examples of his newspaper work available, with a byline. He would often fill-in as a guest writer for a friend who had a column. He also kept up his interest in painting, although it remained a sideline hobby for him until much later in his life.[15]

The year 1929 was a major turning point in Jack's life and marked the real beginning of the career that would eventually make him a household name during the 1940s and early 1950s. This was the

World Radio History

year that he moved back to New York City to do radio work.[16] For the young Jack — he was now 27 years old — New York was an exciting place, although his excitement came to dwindle in time. In the latter 1950s when he was living in the much quieter surroundings of Ogunquit, Maine, he recalled, "I returned to New York in 1929 for a number of radio and theater roles. I remained till 1936, the longest period I had ever lived in one place. Being a gregarious fellow, I loved New York. I enjoyed its many activities and its people. Strangely enough, I no longer enjoy it for more than a four-day stay. It seems a duller place, less alive now."[17]

Jack took to the world of radio like the proverbial fish to water. When he first arrived in New York, a friend of his, Kenneth Fickett, an announcer at NBC, introduced him to a director of the program, "Whispering Tables." Jack auditioned for the part of "singing waiter" and got it. This was apparently his first minor network radio role. His first major role was as Joe in "Mr. and Mrs.,"[18] a role he played opposite Jane Houston as Vi. "Mr. and Mrs." was first heard over CBS in 1929 and was a comedy based on the comic strip by Clare Briggs.[19]

He also played "Jack," a straight man for Bert Lahr on another program of unknown title, but airing around 1933. It seems likely that this was where he first met Lahr who was to become a life-long friend, and who would star along side Jack in the first American production of "Waiting for Godot." Jack played comedy and dramatic roles in numerous programs, including the Prince of Pilsen on the "Beauty Box" show, and the fast-talking, conceited, high-pressure salesman, J. Aubrey Bloomer, Jr., on the "Nine To Five" program. He had a rich baritone voice and was often called upon to sing.

He was one of the charter members in 1931 of the "March of Time" cast, along with Bill Adams and Frank Readick, all three of whom were honored at a fifth anniversary party of the famous show in 1936. The "March of Time," first broadcast on March 6, 1931, was considered the best documentary drama on radio.[20] It was aired on Friday nights and was sponsored by *Time* magazine and produced by Louis de Rochemont. The week's major news events were enacted on the program by a company of extremely versatile character actors.

In keeping with the program title, the "March of Time" scripts would often be rewritten up to the very last minute, so the actors had to be on their toes and improvise on the spot. Jack was one of the first actors on radio with both this kind of flexibility and the requisite skills in dialects and impersonations. He recalled learning to mimic his family and neighbors, the butcher, and the postman, for example. (Once he was mimicking a relative when the relative walked in and whacked him with his cane.) He said that the best place to learn how famous people talk is the newsreel. He once sat through three com-

World Radio History

The cast of the March of Time radio documentary. Back row from the left: Unnamed CBS sound man, Frank Readick, Ora Nichols (CBS sound), Guy (previously Sam) Repp, Dwight Weist and Ed Jerome. Front row from left: Ted de Corsla, Jack Smart, Bill Adams, Bill Pringle, Marion Hopkinson, and Westbrook Van Voorhis. Seated is Paul Stewart. Many thanks to Dwight Weist for the identifications.

plete shows at a theater just to hear Huey Long describe to a bartender how to make a gin fizz to prepare for the "March of Time." Jack was remarkably successful in making careful distinctions in dialect — for example, between Japanese and Chinese — and brought this skill to the work he did for the "March of Time" as well as the Fred Allen shows. It is interesting, however, that the directors of "March of Time" would never let him play Spaniards during their coverage of events there. They said no Spaniard ever had a voice like his.

He often had to do as many as six characterizations in a single "March of Time" broadcast. Jack's first and frequent role on the program was Huey Long. But he was to play an enormous range of historical characters over the years, including Chinese generals and Mayor La Guardia of New York City. In all, Jack reckoned he played between 500 and 600 characters during his stay with the "March of Time." As a consequence of this prodigious versatility, Jack came to be called the "Lon Chaney of radio." Dwight Weist, another member of the cast, had such notable abilities and became known as "the man with a thousand voices."

I should mention that during these "Golden Days" of radio, an

World Radio History

actor did not just work one show, but often many in the course of a week. And so it was with Jack Smart. "I have to get up in the morning, rush to rehearsals, chisel time from this one to make that one, get a cab and rush to the other one, back to still another one, do a show, more rehearsal for a night show — eat — do a repeat broadcast, have a nightcap, fall into bed, then get up and start all over again. And what does it get you? A lousy fortune, that's all. Of course, I'm talking about those performers who are busy all the time — me, I'm too tired for all that."[21] In a 1932 interview, [22] Jack mentions he had played roughly 1,100 characters in nearly four continuous years of radio work. He also made occasional 78 rpm records of children's stories.

In a later interview at NBC, dating around 1937 or 1938, Jack mentions that he did eight or nine shows a week. He complained that radio old-timers were being exploited. The juicy jobs were going to people with Broadway background and the producers would bring in the old-timers to bolster the star. He mentioned his several years of stock company experience, but said that did not count like Broadway experience. He said that if he had to do it over again, he would have gone the Broadway route.

Jack was a regular on the Fred Allen shows in all their incarnations from the very beginning of that great comic's radio career.[23] The debut of Fred Allen's "Linit Bath Club" on CBS was on October 23, 1932. Linit was a beauty lotion produced by the Corn Products Company and Jack played an usher to a non-existent live audience.[24] The show lasted 26 weeks. He eventually became a "mainstay of the Mighty Allen Art Players and Allen's Alley..."[25] Fred Allen took over "The Best Foods Salad Bowl Review" from August 4 to December 1, 1933. [26] Jack was back, along with Roy Atwell, Allen's wife, Portland, and Minerva Pious. Fred Allen's "Sal Hepatica Review" began on January 3, 1934 on NBC. [27] Atwell was no longer featured, but Jack was, along with other standbys like Eileen Douglas, Minerva Pious and Lionel Stander. The now-classic "Allen's Alley" began on December 6, 1942. This was where Jack created his character, Senator Bloat, which he did during the first couple of years of the "Alley," before leaving the show to do the play, "Bell for Adano" (December, 1944, for one year into 1945) and a bit part in a movie. Jack's Senator Bloat was followed by Senator Claghorn played by Kenny Delmar in 1945.

Fred Allen was not only a great showman, he appreciated good, versatile comic talent, and he liked working with Jack.[28] He is quoted as having said, "Whenever I have a radio program, I want Jack Smart to be in it."[29] Frank Farrell in one of his "Day by Day" columns in the *New York World Telegram* once wrote, "Smart played more roles than anybody else with Allen during his first five top-rating years on the ether. He also taught Allen those priceless Chinese

World Radio History

character routines."

Of course, one of the perils of early radio was that programs were done live and as a consequence there was always ad-libbing thrown in. Jack remembered one such free-wheeling exchange while he was doing Allen's "Town Hall Tonight" along with other character actors, Eileen Douglas and John Brown. "I'll never forget a Scottish scene when I 'jumped the cue' and cut Allen off in the midst of a speech. He hooked his thumbs in his lapel, leaned over and cut with 'Hoot, mon, the sponsors ha' paid out a lot o' coin to ha' me speak on this broadcast. Will ye no gi' them their money's worth?'"[30] Jack was once called upon by Allen to do an ostrich cry. Unruffled, Jack just did a hoarse chicken. He went on to do many strange sounds to please producers and this led to his reputation as a man who could do strange noises upon demand.[31]

Being a radioman and being as gregarious as he was, Jack was thoroughly into the New York entertainment scene. There exists a photo in the collection at the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts of Jack in regal costume with the notation on the back: "Jack Smart arrived at the Lambs Club Repeal Gambol dressed as Charles Laughton in 'King Henry the Eighth', December 9, 1933." Of course, as with any working character actor — Jack said character actors were called "D-men" for doubles in those days — Jack played roles on many of that era's great shows during the 1930s and early 1940s.

Anthony Tollin, a radio historian and expert on the history of "The Shadow," mentioned to me that Jack played roles on that program during the 1932-33 season on NBC with Frank Readick as the sinister Shadow. He also was heard in the "Wizard of Oz" series, first as the Cowardly Lion and then as a donkey; "The O'Flynn" musical series (he sang on the last episode); "45 Minutes from Hollywood;" Mr. Fuddle on the "Blondie" show (there is an old photo of Jack with someone who was likely Arthur Lake who played Dagwood); the "Cavalcade of America" (began in 1935); Louie the brother-in-law in the situation comedy "The Adventures of Mr. Meek" (began in 1940); and "Charlie Chan."

After moving to Hollywood to do movies, Jack continued his radio work and played small comedy roles "to add color"[32] in many of the early episodes of "Big Town," which began on CBS on October 19, 1937. This was a show first featuring Edward G. Robinson,[33] and later Steve Wilson, as a crusading editor of a paper fighting crime and corruption, and Claire Trevor, and later Lorelei Kilbourne, as the society editor. Jack is listed in the cast of "Sing Out, Sweet Land" which was aired on the "Theater Guild on the Air," October 21, 1945, on ABC with Burl Ives, Arthur Godfrey, and Josh White, among others. He also worked at times for Bob Hope, Jack Benny and Eddie Cantor on their comedy review shows.[34]

World Radio History

The cast of New Faces of 1936 which included Leonard Sillman, director, (first row, far left) and Imogene Coca (next to Sillman), Billie Haywood and Marion Pierce (top row, third from right; later Marion Pierce Parker). The young Van Johnson, who was a "chorus boy" in the show, is not shown. Jack Smart is fourth from the right in the first row. (Reprinted from Sillman 1959 with permission of publisher, Citadel Press, Carol Publishing Group).

World Radio History

CHAPTER 3
NEW FACES, HOLLYWOOD AND BACK AGAIN

Another turning point in Jack's career as a performer was his selection by Leonard Sillman for the latter's "New Faces of 1936" review.[35] Sillman usually picked unheard-of talent for his annual reviews and many a reputation was launched from the publicity new stars gained from appearing in the show. In Jack's year, the show opened on May 19, 1936, at the Vanderbilt Theater in New York and lasted for 193 performances. His group featured such talent as Imogene Coca, Billie Haywood, Van Johnson and Marion Pierce (later Marion Pierce Parker). The young Van Johnson, who was a "chorus boy" in the show, was quite impressed with Jack's performances. During my conversation with him, Van Johnson said, "He was a brilliant actor and a marvelous comedian. I stood in the wings every night to watch this man. But he wasn't friendly at all, so I never got to know him."

Producers from Universal Studios caught Jack's act in "New Faces" and liked what they saw. They signed him to a movie contract.[36] But Jack's intention was never to shift solely to a movie career. In fact, one of the conditions Jack demanded in his contract was that he continue to be able to do radio work. He saw himself, at least ideally, as an eclectic. "The truth is," he once said to an interviewer, "I don't like work. I'm lazy. Anyway, I don't like business." "But what about show business?" asks the interviewer. "Oh, that's different. Show business is always new, always different. And in show business you don't have to cut anybody's throat. At least I don't. If I only had the time, I'd like to lead a triple existence, appear on the air, act on the stage and in the movies. I wouldn't mind opening up a restaurant, provided I didn't have to do any of the work. I'd like to use all my own recipes... and act as host to people. I like people — all kinds of people. I'm studying them all the time. That's where I get my knowledge of dialects. Whenever I hear someone talking in an interesting dialect, I listen."[37]

He was off to Hollywood in the fall of 1936. Jack did not come to love Hollywood the way he did New York. As he remarked in a 1957 interview, "I liked Hollywood at first. But it has a 'sameness' of which I tired. It lacked the variety and excitement of a city such as New York. I found the movies a rugged business. They have a dreadful caste system out there, based on how much you made in your last picture."[38]

While in Hollywood, Jack — always with an eye for costumes

World Radio History

— affected a ranch hat and a ranch wagon. His friends there egged him on to acquire a ranch to go with them. Jack would often say that he'd first bought a ranch hat, and then had to have a ranch wagon to go with the hat, and then had to have a ranch to complete the ensemble. He did rent a place and had stationery made up giving the name of his ranch as "El Hafacienda" and with two addresses "Tarzana, Cal." and "New York City, 309 E. 48th" on the top left and "Jack Smart" in the lower right corner.

His first picture was *Top O'the Town* with Doris Nolan, George Murphy, and Peggy Ryan. The film was released in 1937 and was directed by Ralph Murphy. Jack played Beaton.[39] Like many fat men, Jack was light on his feet and was an accomplished dancer.[40] There is a publicity photo for *Top O'the Town* with Jack dancing with Peggy Ryan and George Murphy and doing an elevation behind them. He was later to write-in a scene for the movie, *The Fat Man*, which had him dancing with Julie London.

He did parts in a number of Universal pictures during that first year in Hollywood. Most of them were comedies or musicals and all were released in 1937. They include:

100 Men and a Girl with Deanna Durbin, Adolphe Menjou, and Leopold Stokowski, and directed by Henry Koster. Jack played a stage doorman.

When Love Is Young with Virginia Bruce and Kent Taylor, and directed by Hal Mohr. Jack played Winthrop Grove, the Broadway producer.

Girl Overboard with Gloria Stuart and Walter Pidgeon, directed by Sidney Salkow. Jack played Charlie Jenkins.

Love in a Bungalow with Nan Grey and Kent Taylor, directed by Raymond McCarey. Jack played Wilbur Babcock.

The Wildcatter with Scott Colton, Ward Bond and Jean Rogers, and directed by Lewis Collins. Jack played Smiley.

Universal Studios must have released Jack, or failed to renew his contract, after this spate of films, for he went on to play supporting roles in several other pictures for other companies before returning to Universal for his lead in *The Fat Man*. These pictures were completed over the course of the next eight years and were interspersed with his radio and theater work. The titles include:

Some Like It Hot (Paramount, 1939), with Bob Hope, Shirley

World Radio History

Ross and Gene Krupa and his orchestra, and directed by George Archainbaud. Jack played Joe.

Shadow of a Woman (Warner Brothers, 1946), with Andrea King and Helmut Dantine, and directed by Joseph Santley. Jack played Freeman.

That Hagen Girl (Warner Brothers, 1947), with Ronald Reagan, Lois Maxwell, Shirley Temple and Rory Calhoun, and directed by Peter Godfrey. Jack played a man in the drugstore.

Kiss of Death (Fox, 1947), with Victor Mature, Brian Donlevy, Coleen Gray, Richard Widmark and Karl Malden, and directed by Henry Hathaway. Jack played Skeets, the restaurateur.

That Hagen Girl was notable as including Shirley Temple's first "young lady" role. And *Kiss of Death* was a classic thriller in which Jack played the restauranteur along side Victor Mature, who became a close friend. After Jack married his second wife, Mary-Leigh, the couple crossed the Atlantic on the *Queen Mary* with the Matures in 1953. The movie introduced Richard Widmark who turned in a chilling performance as a psychopathic killer. By a curious coincidence, the scene in which Widmark throws the woman in the wheelchair down the stairs was filmed in the building in New York where Mary-Leigh and her first husband had their apartment. They sat in their doorway and watched it being filmed. Of course, Mary-Leigh had not yet met Jack at the time.

As his "El Hafacienda" letterhead implied, Jack was back and forth between Hollywood and New York all the time. He opened on March 23, 1940, in the role of Taggert in the Broadway play, "Separate Rooms," starring Glenda Farrell, but was replaced by June 10th. In 1941 he played a country bumpkin on an episode of "The Prudential Family Hour" (CBS) who likes music but finds it all totally confusing and has to have it explained by the program's master of ceremonies, Deems Taylor. He also took roles in 1941 on the radio shows, "Mr. District Attorney" and "Crime Doctor."

And in 1941 he was elected to The Players club along with Edward Arnold and Ralph Bellamy. He had already been a member of The Lambs club, but he let his membership there lapse after joining The Players. The Players became socially important to him and he stayed there every time he went to New York alone. Jack was a life member of the Actors Fund of America, and a member of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, Actors Equity, and the Screen Actors Guild.

World Radio History

Jack Smart in the throes of creating another culinary delight. He was cooking for friends in his shack in Perkins Cove, Ogunquit, sometime during the period 1947-51. (Photo by Wendy Hilty.)

World Radio History

CHAPTER 4
"A BELL FOR ADANO"

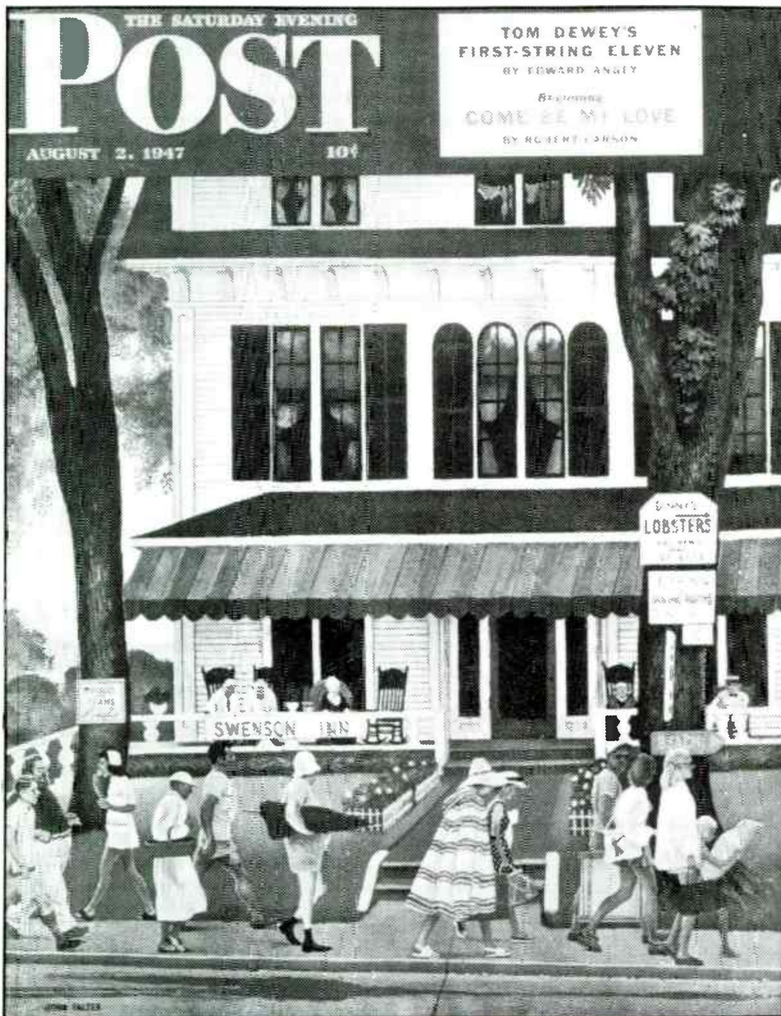
Jack gave up his "ranch" in Hollywood and moved his base of operations back to New York in 1942.[41] He now lived full time in his apartment at 309 East 48th Street. And, of course, in typical Jack Smart style, it was a place completely made over to his liking. In his 1960 obituary, Kent McKinley wrote, "... he rented a fabulous apartment on the East River part of town and completely redid it at a fortune so he could install a magnificent kitchen. Boy, could the boy cook! He was a chef and his food came under the heading of cuisine. J. Scott Smart was one more of the fabulous ones that made life interesting in the '30s and '40s." He returned to New York to play the role of Pedro Vargas in the Boston production of S.N. Behrman's play, "The Pirate," with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. The play opened on October 26th for two weeks. Jack changed his name for the program to "J. Scott Smart" instead of his usual "Jack Smart" in response to the Lunts' criticism that his real name had no class. Jack's early mentor in show business, and the man who actually got him started was the actor Tim Frawley. Jack would say that Frawley should have warned him that his name sounded like an acrobat or a comedian, like "Bob Hope."[42]

Jack had difficulty working with the Lunts. Alfred was no obstacle for him apparently, but Lynn kept changing the lines on him. Lynn did not seem to share the problem, however, for she once said to Alfred within Jack's hearing, "I get more from Jack's eyes than I get from anybody's." Despite this adulation, doing "Pirate" nearly gave Jack a nervous breakdown. As with many new performances, the Boston run of "Pirate" was intended to smooth out the script and give it a test run before taking it to New York. The reviews were not all that encouraging. One reviewer suggested there were problems with the pace and dialogue of the original production He also suggested that Jack did not seem to "realize all the possibilities" of his role. By the time the play opened in New York, it had been substantially revamped and Jack was replaced by Alan Reed as Pedro Vargas.

There is some question about why Jack had such a short tenure in some of his theater roles in plays like "Separate Rooms" and "The Pirate," and later in "Waiting for Godot." Kent McKinley in his 1960 obituary suggests it was because he was forever stealing the show, and the stars wouldn't stand for that. But I think there was more to it than upstaging touchy egos, although that certainly could have been a factor. After all, Jack was a strong-willed character and consid-

World Radio History

ered himself — and rightly by all accounts — a competent professional. But Jack was also, despite his apparent sociability, a shy and introverted person who drank a great deal during his early life (I suspect) to facilitate social interaction. Though he tapered off by the time he married Mary-Leigh, he did continue to drink on a daily basis. As Mary-Leigh put it, "he drank every day, but never too much." One of the oldtimers I spoke to said that the directors and producers were



One of the five covers John Falter painted for the Saturday Evening Post with Jack as a subject. This one was on the August 2, 1947 issue and has Jack (second from the far left) walking in front of the present Old Village Inn in the center of Ogunquit, Maine. In the center are Mrs. Edward H. Asherman and Mrs. Asa Phillips. To their right are Falter, his wife "Boo," Lois Proctor Mack and her daughter, Marcia McDonald. (Reprinted courtesy of Curtis Publishing Company.)

World Radio History

very touchy about drinking back in Jack's day, and "one smell of alcohol" was enough to get one fired from a play. We will never know exactly what combination of factors, drinking or otherwise, kept Jack from longer runs in his early stage career, but we do have Mary-Leigh's first-hand account of Jack's trials with "Waiting for Godot," and we will get to that story in due course.

Again, the fates seem to have been spinning their thread, even with Jack's difficulties with the Lunts, for it was his need for a rest-cure that sent Jack in search of his friend, John Falter, in Ogunquit, Maine, where he stayed at the Hillcrest Hotel until it closed for the season, and then stayed with the Towers for a couple of weeks. John Falter was a famous illustrator and painter who did covers for the *Saturday Evening Post.* Jack was one of his favorite subjects and was featured anonymously on a number of Falter's *Post* covers. In the March 25, 1944 cover, he painted Jack as three different characters, one reading a newspaper, one leading a horse and one a street cleaner. In the May 19, 1945, cover, Jack is leaning over an iron fence on Park Avenue picking a flower. Then, Falter had him at the soda fountain of an actual drug store located at the time on the corner of 4th Avenue and 20th (or 21st) Street, New York, in the cover of October 12, 1946. In the August 2, 1947, cover, Jack is walking in front of the present Old Village Inn in the center of Ogunquit, Maine. And Falter painted Jack ice skating in the January 11, 1958 cover.

It was during this early stay in Ogunquit that he renewed his acquaintance with Adelaide Hatch "Dell" Tower, wife of William R. Tower and mother of William R. Jr. (or "Barnacle Billy" of Ogunquit restaurant fame) whom, you will recall, Jack had known when their respective families lived in Newton, Massachusetts.[43] And it was in Ogunquit that Jack and Mary-Leigh eventually met, and that is why they would always toast the Lunts and the Falters with their first drink of the day for getting them together.

Jack was in the cast of Vinton Freedley's production of "Dancing in the Streets," a musical comedy based on the story by Matt Taylor and with music by Vernon Duke.[44] The play had a brief run at the Shubert Theater in Boston from March 23, 1943 until approximately April 10, 1943. Jack played a minor role as Col. Waverly Smithers, USMC (retired), while the great Mary Martin played the lead role as Mary Hastings. One newspaper article dated April 8, 1943, says that Jack left the cast at the play's closing in Boston in order to return to radio in "Snow Village," also featuring Dorothy Sands. It appears that the Boston production of "Dancing" bombed in the initial reviews due to a poor script, but it improved enough to draw capacity audiences by the end of its run. After closing, the play had to be rewritten before reopening on Broadway. One article reports Freedley recast both Jack and Ernest Cossart. Another

World Radio History

The New York Times.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 1945.

The three cart drivers state their cases to Major Jappolo in "A Bell for Adano," which reopens tomorrow at the Cort. The drivers are Charles Mayer, J. Scott Smart and Albert Raymo; the major is, of course, Fredric March.

Jack Smart as one of the cart drivers in "A Bell for Adano." The other cart drivers were played by Charles Mayer and Albert Raymo. The major was, of course, Fredric March. Caricature by Hirschfeld. (Reprinted with permission of the publisher, from The New York Times, Sunday August 12, 1945).

leaves the impression that Jack's and the other "old men" parts were written out of the new script. Such are the vicissitudes of the legitimate stage, or so it appeared to be in those days.

In 1944 Jack landed a plum role in the cast of "A Bell for Adano," a play adapted by Paul Osborn from the short novel by John Hersey. The production was by Leland Hayward and starred Fredric March as the Major. Jack got rave reviews for his portrayal of one of the cart drivers. It enjoyed a reasonably long run, opening at the Cort Theater in New York for a year or so on December 6, 1944. The production and the company, including scenery and props, were brought to Washington, D.C., in celebration of President Roosevelt's birthday. Jack completed several grease and fingerpaint caricatures of the various players, including himself and March. These are now part of the collection of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin, Texas.

World Radio History

CHAPTER 5
J. SCOTT SMART, a.k.a. "THE FAT MAN"

Following on the heels of the tremendous success of "A Bell for Adano" came yet another major turning point in Jack's already rich career. During the fall of 1945 he auditioned for and was given

Jack Smart, a.k.a. J. Scott Smart, in his most famous role as Dashiell Hammett's "The Fat Man." The radio program premiered on ABC on Monday, January 21, 1946.

World Radio History

Jack Smart broadcasting live and providing his own juicy sound effects in an episode of "The Fat Man."

the lead in a new radio detective serial, "The Fat Man" — the very program that the little boy I mentioned at the outset was waiting so earnestly to hear.

"The Fat Man" premiered on ABC on Monday, January 21, 1946, at 8:30pm, as part of a block of four new programs which also included "I Deal in Crime," "Forever Tops," and "Jimmy Gleason's Diner." "The Fat Man" originated in the studios of WJZ in New York and began as a modestly priced sustainer vaguely based upon character ideas in Dashiell Hammett's writings and fleshed out by producer, E.J. ("Mannie") Rosenberg. The announcer was Charles Irving. The

World Radio History

directors for the program were Clark Andrews, creator of "Big Town," and Charles Powers. The main writer for the series was Richard Ellington, but it was also scripted by Robert Sloane, Lawrence Klee and others. The veteran character actor Ed Begley[45] was featured as Sgt. O'Hara. Regulars on the program included Betty Garde, Paul Stewart, Linda Watkins, Mary Patton as Lila North, and Vicki Vola, also the female lead in "Mr. District Attorney." Amzie Strickland played the ingenue, Cathy Evans, and Nell Harrison played Runyon's mother during the early episodes. The cast also included Dan Ocko, Rolly Bester (wife of Alfred Bester, the science fiction writer), and Robert Dryden. An eleven-piece orchestra was on hand to provide live music, and was directed by Bernard Green, who also wrote that memorably stirring theme. The sound effects were by Ed Blaney, who actually did drop a coin in a change slot each week for the sound of the drug store scale.[46]

"The Fat Man" did not remain a sustainer for long. The show increased from 8.1% to 23.6% of the radio audience in its first year. This steady climb in popularity caught the attention of Norwich Pharmaceutical Company's advertising brass. They wanted a venue to advertise their Pepto Bismol, a product that had been introduced in 1935. But they had an earlier bad experience with radio advertising in England, and were reluctant to try it again. Despite this reluctance, an advertising package was worked out sometime in the fall of 1946 and Norwich sponsorship of "The Fat Man" began on February 14, 1947. Promotion kits were given to Norwich salesmen which included scenes from "The Fat Man" adventures and a personally autographed picture of Jack as Brad Runyon. The salesmen would use the autographed picture as evidence that they knew Runyon personally and that he was a great guy. The program was also moved to a more favorable slot on Friday night at 8:00 among a block of higher-rated mystery programs. This move increased the ratings even more. The sponsors pushed Pepto Bismol two out of every three weeks, while on the third week one of the other Norwich products (Unguentine, Swav, etc.) were advertised. Those of you who remember the program will recall that announcer Charles Irving or Gene Kirby would first step to the microphone, accompanied by a harpist, and do his "You'll feel GOOD again!" bit, and he would be back in mid-program with another commercial and say, "Now, let's catch up with the Fat Man," thereby emphasizing Brad Runyon's speed and agility.

Brad Runyon, the "Fat Man," was a character completely opposite to "The Thin Man," who, as anyone into detective fiction knows, was another popular character actually based upon a Hammett novel. Where Nick Charles, the "Thin Man," was a tall, suave, married, aristocratic, martini-sipping amateur, Brad Runyon was a short, heavy, hard-fisted, charming and sensitive professional. He was closer

World Radio History

in some respects to yet another successful Hammett character running on radio at the time, "Sam Spade" — a character based upon Hammett's detective in the *Maltese Falcon.*

According to William F. Nolan (1983:196, also Johnson 1983:217), Dashiell Hammett, faced with a writer's block, decided to cash in on the popularity of his "Thin Man" series which ran on radio from 1946 through 1951 on CBS, and created "The Fat Man." Just how much of the "creation" was Hammett's, and how much that of others who were commercially involved in radio seems to be an open question. Diane Johnson (1983:227-228) feels that Hammett was already involved with the producer, E.J. Rosenberg, who had also sold the "Sam Spade" series and who "helped develop another series, 'The Fat Man,' inspired by Gutman of *The Maltese Falcon....*" However, Nolan's view is that Brad Runyon was not a copy of Casper Gutman, but was more a mixture of the urbane Nick Charles with the hard-boiled Continental Op., another of Hammett's better known characters. Besides, Gutman was a heavy, and not anything like the Brad Runyon character. John Dunning (1976), another old-time radio authority, gives the creative credit to Hammett. Hammett made more money when the "Sam Spade" series aired from 1941-1950 starring Howard Duff.

Hammett refused to get immersed in writing or giving critiques of any of the radio shows based on his characters. How much money he received for his radio shows is uncertain. Julian Symons (1985:111) says that "The Fat Man" brought him $1300 a week. Nolan (1983:197) says all the radio shows paid him upwards of $6000 a month. Hammett's attitude toward all these programs was cynical. He is quoted by Johnson (1983:228) as saying, "My sole duty in regard to these programs, is to look in the mail for a check once a week. I don't even listen to them. If I did, I'd complain about how they were being handled, and then I'd fall into the trap of being asked to come down and help. I don't want to have anything to do with the radio. It's a dizzy world, makes the movies seem highly intellectual."

Hammett had nothing to do with selecting Jack Smart for the part of Brad Runyon. But it is not hard to understand how Jack landed it. He was a natural as Brad Runyon. Not that he was a detective buff. Quite the contrary. He never read detective stories or went to see detective movies. In fact, because he only read as a soporific, he found dusters more to his liking. No, he was a cinch for the part because, as he would often say, "it takes a fat man to sound like a fat man."[47] And Jack was indeed a fat man. Where Brad Runyon weighed-in at a relatively svelte 237 pounds (or 239 pounds, or 241 pounds, depending on which episode you listened to), Jack himself tipped the scales at around 270 pounds, which, considering it was distributed over a 5-foot, 9-inch frame, meant that he measured up to the part with plenty to spare.

World Radio History

Jack was quite aware of, and more importantly, honestly upfront about the assets and limitations of being rotund. Indeed, he was quite concerned to transform our stereotypical views of fat people. And the role of "The Fat Man" gave him a heaven-sent opportunity to air his views. In a guest column he wrote for Don Tranter in the *Buffalo Courier-Express* on July 25, 1947, Jack revealed some of his feelings about being fat (incidentally, photos of Jack show that he was not overweight as a boy — he put on weight after quitting football and taking up having a milkshake and peanut butter sandwich for lunch). With regard to his role as Brad Runyon, he wrote, "For here, at last, is a sympathetic approach to a fat man, and weighed down with all the mental hazards of a fat boy, naturally I am out to make our side appear more attractive. ... For it's certainly true that, like the Brad Runyon I play every Friday night, I don't feel fat — I feel thin — until I look into a full-length mirror or step on the scales. The trick seems to be with fat people, that you have to balance more favorable characteristics with your bulk as it is visible to the naked eye. Brad Runyon does this in the script by thinking fast, chivalrously helping ladies in distress, and compensating for his weight by a deft display of charm. ...You know very well how easy it is to laugh at a fat man. He has been the target of jokes and ridicule for centuries. To appear less absurd fat men have developed the habit of 'playing along with the gag,' joining the fun, instead of taking offense. Of course, this is a form of defense; most of us are shy, deep down, and we try hard not to let people know it." He notes that like most fat people he actually eats very little, but he loves cooking all sorts of food, Italian, Spanish, French, German, Chinese and Southern U.S. He even contributed recipes to several cookbooks.[48]

Brad Runyon's quick wit was in fact Jack's own and is evident when one listens to the episodes. When jibed by a "baddy" on one program about his weight, the Fat Man snarls back, "the only difference between you and me, Rudolph, is that my fat is from the neck down." Jack was active in assembling the final script, revising the plot, cutting material he didn't like, and even helping select supporting cast.[49] In fact he had it written into his contract that he would receive a copy of a script two weeks before it was to air so that he could blue-line and change lines before it was finalized. This was an important factor in the quality of the series, for there were several writers over the years and those were the days before there were "continuity" people whose job it was to make sure that scripts did not contradict one another. Jack performed this continuity function very well. What a casual listener would not know, of course, was that Jack would often change the names of characters in the script to those of his friends. One of his friends in Ogunquit who was a fisherman at the time, William R. ("Barnacle Billy") Tower, Jr., tuned in to "The Fat

World Radio History

RADIO

THE FAT MAN

270-pound radio detective enacts the case of "The Amnesia Killing"

Jack Smart as "The Fat Man" examines a clue through a lens in the April 26, 1946, Life Magazine feature on the popular radio program. The feature covered the production of one episode of the series entitled "The Amnesia Killing." (Reprinted with permission of the publisher.)

World Radio History

man" one night only to find that he and his boat had been lost at sea. And another of his friends, Mrs. Robert ("Peggy") Dale, became a nightclub owner, Peggy Dale, in the episode, "Murder Plays Hide and Seek."

He was also free to develop both the character of Brad Runyon, and the repetitive features of the program that made them so commanding as hallmarks. Take for example Jack's emphasis upon the word "murder-r-r." He only says it that way as a fluke at the end of the premiere episode of the series entitled "The 19th Pearl." But within weeks, all of Jack's friends had associated his role with saying the word "murder-r-r" in that distinctly sinister way. So within the first few episodes, the beginning of the program has the Fat Man giving a prologue that always ended with "murder-r-r," or "murder-er-r," said in just that way. Take for example the prologue from the episode entitled "Murder Is the Medium" which was broadcast on July 22, 1949:

> "To most people a zoo is a collection of four-footed animals. But there's one menagerie I know of where the inmates walk on two feet. In the first cage, for instance, you'll find a giant forger whose specialty is writing other peoples' names. And in another iron cell you can inspect the genus "pickpocket," known also as the "little dip," who can sometimes prove that the hand is quicker than the eye. But the prize exhibit is a hopped-up character with a nervous twitch in his forefinger. He prowls alone when he looks for prey, and he's know for his taste for...murder-r-r."

The ironic association of a pleasant place or activity — in this case a zoo — with an evil place or activity — here a prison — became a common element in both the monologues and epilogues of each episode. And so associated with the character of the Fat Man does the word "murder-r-r" become that Jack slipped it in for its tongue-in-cheek effect at the end of the movie version of the series.

By the time the Brad Runyon role came around, Jack was already a veteran stage, movie and radio actor, and he had the stage actor's contempt for radio. At times he could be downright cynical about how things were done in the broadcasting industry. For instance, he once suggested that it would have run true to form for ABC to hire a "scrawny string-bean with a thin, asthmatic voice to convey the impression of weight over the air."[50] And Mary-Leigh reports that he used to call himself a "high-priced whore" for having to do radio work to support himself. Yet he was utterly convincing at the roles he played because he was so accomplished in his craft.

Although he had dropped out of the Fred Allen group, Jack continued to do other stage, movie and radio work for a time after

World Radio History

starting "The Fat Man." He was both in summer stock in Long Beach and completed his part in the filming of "Kiss of Death" in New York during 1946. But by 1947 he had dropped out of other commitments, presumably because he had begun to make some real money for a change. It was during 1947 that he moved his residence permanently to Ogunquit, Maine. After moving to Ogunquit, Jack would commute by air from Boston to New York to work on "The Fat Man." Although he could have flown and returned on the same day, he was afraid of what the weather might do and that the plane might get into New York late, so he would fly the day before the broadcast, stay overnight at The Players, attend the rehearsal in the afternoon and the show at night, fly back to Boston that night and be back in Ogunquit by 1am. At first he would drive to Boston from Ogunquit and leave his car at Logan Airport, but after he and Mary-Leigh were married, she would drop him off and pick him up.

The one and only movie made by Universal-International starring J. Scott Smart as "The Fat Man" left Dashiell Hammett's name off the billing for political reasons. Copyright© by Universal City Studios, Inc. Courtesy of MCA Publishing Rights.

World Radio History

"The Fat Man" lasted for six seasons. Harrison B. Summers (1971) gives the following summary of the seasons and their sponsorship:

1st season: 1945-46, sustaining program, Monday at 8:30
2nd season: 1946-47, sustaining program, Friday at 8:00
3rd season: 1947-48, Norwich sponsor, Friday at 8:00
4th season: 1948-49, Norwich sponsor, Friday at 8:00
5th season: 1949-50, Norwich sponsor, Friday at 8:00
6th season: 1950-51, sustaining program, Wednesday at 8:30

The show never lost its popularity, and by the end of the series J. Scott Smart had become a household name. One can still find many people old enough to have listened to the program that can readily associate Jack's stage name with "The Fat Man." What actually killed the program were politics pure and simple. In 1950 Dashiell Hammett, who was peripherally involved in leftist politics, ran afoul of the House Un-American Activities Committee when he refused to give names of other activists. He was tried and imprisoned for his failure to cooperate with the Committee and was blacklisted along with the many other fine artists and entertainers who fell victim to the anti-communist hysteria of the day. And, as William Nolan (1983:222) mentions, all of his radio shows were cancelled because they had become tainted. Norwich, being ever-mindful of its public image, was quick to withdraw its sponsorship of "The Fat Man," and the program became once again a sustainer for its last season with companies like Clorets partially paying the bills. Universal-International, in its efforts to distance itself from any stigma caused by the association of Hammett with the imagined Communist scourge, removed his name from the titles of *The Fat Man* movie. It seems likely that they only

J. Scott Smart as Brad Runyon dancing the Charleston with the great singer, Julie London, who played the ingenue in Universal International's film, The Fat Man. *Copyright© by Universal City Studios, Inc. Courtesy of MCA Publishing Rights.*

World Radio History

released the picture at all because it was already in the can by the time the full implications of Hammett's situation dawned on them.

In any event, all of this was immensely frustrating to a fairly apolitical Jack Smart who was hoping both for a longer run of the radio show and a series of "Fat Man" movies to equal the success of Dick Powell and Myrna Loy in the "Thin Man" films. But this was not to be, and we only have the one film upon which to judge what a full series of them might have been like.

The 77-minute film, *The Fat Man* was completed by Universal-International on August 21, 1950, was previewed at the Ritz Theater, Los Angeles on March 26, 1951, and released in May 1951. Rosemary Clooney, the famous singer, accompanied Jack to the premiere in his old home town, Buffalo. A photo of Clooney in the Harry Ransom Library collection is inscribed by the actress: "Thanks for being so nice to Rosemary." Also, Cliff Sterrett drew a cartoon version in 1952 of the publicity photo of Jack and Julie London dancing the Charleston in the movie.

The film was remarkable in many respects. Jack was superb, of course, as Brad Runyon. He should have been, considering that by this time he was 48-years-old and a veteran actor with something like 25 years of entertainment industry experience under his very long belt. And, of course, there was that incredible voice that sounded like a well seasoned oboe. One visitor to the Universal studios during the filming of "The Fat Man" referred to his voice as "a male Mae West." And not only that, there was finally a face to go along with the voice for the fans. The movie put Jack's face together with the Fat Man role, and for the first time people recognized Jack on the street. People would come up to him wherever he was and ask, "Can I have your autograph Mr. Runyon?" Friends wondered if being asked for autographs bothered him and he would say, "No, the time to worry is when they don't ask you for autographs."

The movie was also memorable for its sterling supporting cast:[51]

Character:	Actor:	Character:	Actor
Brad Runyon	J. Scott Smart	Detective Stark	Jerome Cowan
Pat Boyd	Julie London	Ed Deets	Emmett Kelly
Roy Clark	Rock Hudson	Lola Gordon	Lucille Barkley
Bill Norton	Clinton Sundberg	Shifty	Teddy Hart
Jane Adams	Jayne Meadows	Chuck Fletcher	Robert Osterloh
Gene Gordon	John Russell	Happy Stevens	Harry Lewis

The movie provided the first feature role for Jayne Meadows and introduced Rock Hudson and Julie London. The handsome Rock Hudson went on to play the leading man in numerous comedy and dramatic films, and the gorgeous Julie London became a renowned

World Radio History

recording artist. Although he was not featured in the cast, Marvin Kaplan played the part of a truck dispatcher and turned-in a remarkably funny comic role. So did Teddy Hart as the sticky-fingered Shifty. The darkly handsome John Russell played what he always played best, a ruthless heavy. And, of course, the incomparable Emmett Kelly played Ed Deets, the clown that had always wanted a circus of his own. The producer was Aubrey Schenck, the director was William Castle, and the screenplay was written by Harry Essex and Leonard Lee, based upon a story by Leonard Lee. The music was, as always, by Bernard Green, and photography was by Irving Glassberg. These were all top-notch professionals.

Most critics praised the movie as a whole, although a few were critical of the story line (or lack thereof) while praising the direction and the acting. The pacing of scenes was quite interesting, as were some of the photographic effects. At one point there was actually a flashback within a flashback, the first time I have ever encountered that in a movie. The *Hollywood Reporter* of March 30, 1951, notes, "J. Scott Smart is physically perfect for the colorful title role and performs with a naturalness which makes his portrayal convincing."

There are a couple of interesting sidelights to the making of the movie. One has to do with the fact that, though Emmett Kelly was a famous clown, he had trouble acting without his clown face on. Jack had to coax Kelly because he wasn't used to expressing emotion. In doing the final scene, Jack had to stop the action and yell at Emmett, "You hate me. You hate me!" to get some emotion flowing. Jack and Emmett Kelly became fast friends.

Jayne Meadows mentioned in a letter to me that she and Emmett had lunch together every day during the filming of the movie and that Emmett tried to talk her into becoming a clown. "He made me up and said I had the perfect face for the role." She also remembers that she "was pregnant and very nauseous at the time."

Another interesting anecdote pertains to the dark grey suit Jack wore in the movie. It was one of two tailored especially for him for the movie and, of course, it couldn't possibly fit anyone else after filming was finished. And as he had helped bring the film in two weeks under schedule, he asked that the suit be given to him. The studio refused, but he took the suit anyhow. In fact, he was married to Mary-Leigh in that very suit.

It is interesting in these days of multi-million dollar movie contracts to reflect upon how much (or little, as the case may be) Jack was paid to star in *The Fat Man*. I have seen a check voucher (no. CL 47074) from Universal International made out to J. Scott Smart for $1356.87 in payment for six days of work on the film for the week ending August 26, 1950. The voucher also notes that Jack's agent at the time was the William Morris Agency, Inc.[52]

World Radio History

Jack Smart holding one of his paintings on the back porch of his studio, Perkins Cove, Ogunquit, Maine, about 1955.

Jack Smart welding in his studio at Perkins Cove, Ogunquit, Maine, between 1957-58. His studio is currently the Hurricane Restaurant. Photos by Beverly Hallam.

World Radio History

CHAPTER 6
THE OGUNQUIT YEARS

For some reason, Jack was not tarred with the same odious blacklist brush as many of his fellow actors. "The Fat Man" was no sooner history than he had landed another leading role, this time as the "Top Guy." The premiere episode, which aired on ABC on Wednesday, October 17, 1951, was entitled "The Case of the One Way Street" and featured Jack as a "crime-busting" police commissioner of a large metropolitan city. Ross Martin played a regular supporting role. The "Top Guy" was not, however, a rerun of Brad Runyon in disguise. According to Jack, the "Top Guy" was actually based upon the career of Theodore Roosevelt who had been New York City's police commissioner at one time. The show emphasized the use of modern scientific methods in catching crooks, although the commish was not adverse to using old fashioned methods like getting tips from stool pigeons, as in "The Case of the Singing Songbird." In another episode called "The Case of the Angry Widow," the commish goes after a bad cop who had been tipping off a hoodlum whenever his club was to be raided. All in all, the "Top Guy" was lighter and more witty than "The Fat Man" had been, but, as Jack had done a lot of comedy in his day and was naturally witty to boot, the role was little challenge to his talent. Jack dropped out of "Top Guy" at the end of the first season and passed the role to his friend, Jay Jostyn, who carried it for its second and last season during 1952-53.

I suspect there were many reasons why Jack retired from steady radio work after "Top Guy." For one thing, he was fifty years old and his health was not good. He had been an insulin-using diabetic for some years, and diabetic neuritis in his feet kept him from any work that required him to stand too long. Overtures had been made to him before the Hammett fiasco about making "The Fat Man" into a TV series, but Jack simply could not spend the time on his feet that television work necessitated before the age of taping.

And for another thing, after nearly a half century of dabbling in art, Jack finally took the plunge and became a full-time, serious artist. In fact, his rapidly growing dedication to art may well have been the first really disciplined exploration he had ever made. As Jack himself realized, things had always come easy for him. Jazz, cooking, writing, and especially acting he found to require nothing more to excel than an application of his native talent. As Mary-Leigh put it, "He always used to say his problem was he was too talented and as a consequence he never got down to being serious about anything. And I think that's true. He just

World Radio History

enjoyed living and he never took time to do anything, except paint and sculpt."

And Jack found just the right incubator for his artistic temperament when he joined the Ogunquit social milieu. As Jack himself put it, "This is my idea of living year 'round. It's good for the body and the soul."[53] So enthusiastic did he become about the Ogunquit scene that he even wrote and recorded an ad for the State of Maine in 1952 which was eventually aired in Florida and perhaps other places, and expressed the reasons he himself wished to live in Ogunquit and commute to work. Ogunquit had a very special social flavor, for it featured then, even more than it features now, a thriving community of artists. Indeed, in 1947 when Jack traded in his New York flat for an old fisherman's shack at Perkins Cove, it was a very exciting place for a serious artist to live.

There was the kind of ambience at the Cove that every artist dreams of. For one thing, they could paint and sculpt without standing out as an oddity. For another, there was a significant history one became a part of at the Cove. Jack became one of over a hundred full and part-time artists who had lived and worked at the Cove during the first half of the 20th century. The first artist to live there was Charles Woodbury who bought a piece of land along the coast in 1896.[54] In the early days, Ogunquit grew and drew such artists to the Cove as Peggy Bacon, Rudolph Dirks, Marsden Hartley, Edward Hopper, Bernard Karfiol, Walt Kuhn, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Robert Laurent, Niles Spencer, Henry Strater and William von Schlegell. Later the community included Edward and Jane Betts, George Burk, John Dirks, Beverly Hallam, Dewitt and Pat Hardy, Elyot Henderson, Edward H. Hergelroth, Richard Lahey, John Laurent, J. Phillip Richards, Chris Ritter, David von Schlegell and Ulfert Wilke. Woodbury eventually started an art school there, and a number of others were established there over the years. Jack's future wife, Mary-Leigh, studied art, and her mother, Mary B. Call, and aunt, Ethelwyn Bradish, were both painters and would live there part of the year. Unfortunately, in many people's minds, Perkins Cove became a tourist mecca during the 1950s. As a consequence, enrollment at the Ogunquit School of Painting and Sculpture dropped and the famous school was closed in 1962.

Jack not only could work on his art, but he would sit in on jazz and blues at Mike and Helen Horn's Ice House parties with John Laurent and others. Also, John Falter would play the clarinet and Jack the bull fiddle during jam sessions at the Cliff Country Club in Ogunquit. Jack was a jazz aficionado from way back. Like Woody Allen, he would show up at jazz sessions wherever he was, occasionally playing either drums or bass with some of the very best musicians of his day – including Jimmy Condon and Ralph Sutton. He regularly sat-in on bass at Eddie Condon's place, a famous jazz club called

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"Condon's" in Greenwich Village, and continued to join jams in the Village during his stint in "Top Guy." He also had an extensive collection of jazz records, mostly on old 78s. In fact, a project that Jack started, but never got around to finishing, was a script of a radio show he proposed to host based on his knowledge of and collection of

Jack Smart, framed with Perkins Cove in the background, clowns with tub used to hold water in which to plunge red-hot welded sculpture. About 1958. Photo by Beverly Hallam.

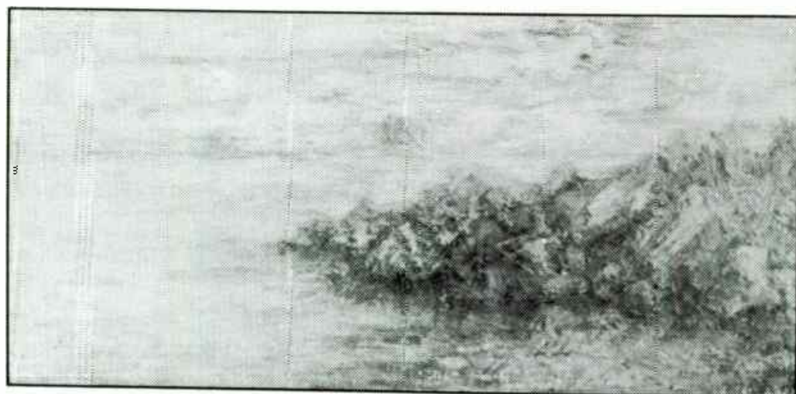
jazz albums.[55] So enamored was he of jazz musicians that he even amassed a sizeable collection of their autographs. Interestingly enough, even though he seemed to know everybody who was anybody in show business, these were the only kind of autographs he cared to collect.[56]

Once he was ensconced in the fishing shack[57] — which, of course, he refurbished to his liking just as he had done to his flat in New York — Jack set to work on his art. Naturally, he faced the problems every artist does, like staring at a blank canvas, trying to get something to come. But come it did. When asked by one interviewer[58] if the shift from actor to artist was difficult, Jack replied, "Art itself was not new to me. I had been sketching for my own amusement most of my life. And I had many friends who were artists. But art from the painting standpoint was indeed discouraging when I plunged into it... I painted many things I thought were good only to hear from experts that they were not. When I completed a painting the experts said was good, I was afraid sometimes I could not do another one of equal merit."

World Radio History

He made his first painting in Ogunquit in 1948 while still starring in "The Fat Man" — a watercolor of a fog scene of the rocks and ocean in front of his shack he titled "Crow Island."[59] He started it at 2:30 one morning and the piece was finished five hours later. His next two paintings he gave to Mack Kriendler of the '21' Club in New York. His early explorations were slow in materializing. He was finding his legs, as it were, while still involved in the entertainment world. Still, it was almost as though Jack had found his way home. He became a volunteer fire-policeman in Ogunquit that

"Opening Night." Collage of Dazian theatrical materials, Collection of Beverly Hallam.



"Sunrise" over Perkins Cove, Ogunquit, Maine. Acrylic on canvas, Collection of University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center.

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same year, which is some indication of how rapidly Jack took to the community, and the community to him. He kept actors' hours and until he was married he enjoyed cruising with his best friend, Cecil Perkins, the chief of police, while patrolling the village till almost dawn. And he took full advantage of the guidance offered by his artist friends in the community. He was more or less instructed in painting by William von Schlegell and John Laurent, in graphics by Arthur Deshaies, and in sculpting by Edward H. Hergelroth and Eleanor DeLaittre.

Jack's friends showed him their heart in many ways. For instance, aware that, like Rex Stout's fictional detective, Nero Wolfe, Jack was uncomfortable in the many chairs that did not fit him, his friends pooled their money and bought him a durable captain's chair and presented it to him as a surprise for his birthday. In gratitude Jack wrote a poem for them all...

my nice chair

it's so good
it's so strong,
my nice chair.
it's so restful
it's so easy,
my nice chair.
such good friends,
have i...
to give me
my nice chair.
it makes me feel as if i'd done something.
something worthwhile,
to have
such good friends.
i've done nothing,
nothing at all
but just the same...
i'll cherish
such good friends
and
my nice chair.
i love
such good friends,
who gave me
my nice chair.

As an interesting aside, I became curious about what had happened to

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Jack's "nice" chair. I asked Mary-Leigh and Jack's other friends in and around Ogunquit, and they were all surprised to discover they had no idea. But we finally located it. It had been given to David Linney, Jack's young cousin by marriage, and was in his study. David had not been aware of its significance.

The final event that influenced Jack to retire and commit himself to serious art occurred during the summer of 1951. He met Mary-Leigh Call Asherman, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. Leigh Call. She had studied painting and arranged programs for the Ogunquit Art Association — and, incidentally, was an excellent cook. They met on July 15th at a party given at the Scarborough home of Robert and Valda Verrier, who were summer residents of Perkins Cove. Curiously enough, Jack was supposed to have flown that day to Chicago for the blessing of the "21" bell at the Ambassador Hotel's famous Pump Room, but for some reason he never really understood, he decided to skip that momentous event and go to the Verrier party. After dinner, Jack was chatting with Bette Davis, whom he had known earlier in New York, and her husband Gary Merrill, when Mary-Leigh walked down the stairs. Jack looked up at her and spontaneously asked if she would like to catch Louis Armstrong at the Old Orchard Pier after the party. "How well do you drive?" she replied. "I've never had an accident," said he. "Good, let's go," she said, and they did. Six weeks later they again went to see Armstrong play and told him that they were going to get married. "That's it, man!" exclaimed the great jazzman.

Jack Smart and his second wife, Mary-Leigh Call Smart, aboard the Queen Mary in 1953 when they crossed the Atlantic with their friends, actor Victor Mature and his wife.

Because they had both been previously married, they came into the relationship not at all inclined to ever marry again. But by summer's end they had both changed their minds and,

World Radio History

realizing that they were thoroughly in love with each other, they married that fall — on September 11, 1951. As part of their honeymoon in October, they visited Mary-Leigh's family in Springfield, Illinois, where, as I mentioned earlier, Jack had lived as a boy and where *The Fat Man* opened the day after they left. At first, Mary-Leigh's father did not know what to make of Jack. He held the common opinion that actors were lowlives. But Jack finally obtained Mr. Call's approval when he turned in a review of an art show being held in Springfield for Mr. Call's former newspaper, the *Illinois State Journal*. He later came to think the world of Jack.

The couple lived in Jack's Cove shack for the first period of their marriage, including that first winter. They did not have much money to live on, for all Jack had was his pay from *The Fat Man* movie and whatever was left over from "Top Guy" and was paying alimony and partial support of his mother. And Mary-Leigh's assets

J. Scott Smart in his role as "Pozzo" in the first American production of Samuel Beckett's play, "Waiting for Godot." The play opened on January 3, 1956 at the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Coral Gables, Florida, co-starring Jack, Bert Lahr (right,) Tom Ewell (left) and Charles Weidman (the latter not shown here). Photo by Stan Wayman, Ratho-Guillumette.

World Radio History

were held in trust at the time by her father, so they had to watch their spending closely during the early part of their marriage. But when Mary-Leigh's father died in the fall of 1952, her inheritance became available and they were able to move out of the Cove in the fall of 1953. They toured Europe during the latter part of 1953 – the year Jack was named "night fire-police chief" of Ogunquit – and began building a house with Mary-Leigh's mother in 1954 at Beachmere Place overlooking Wells Bay and Ogunquit Beach. Mary-Leigh's mother would use the house in the summer, and the Smarts in the winter. The home became known as "Three Faces East," the name of a play, and had its housewarming on January 1, 1955.

Jack never entirely gave up acting and theater work and he continued to be a presence at The Players all during the 1950s. He appeared in a drama on the television program, "Robert Montgomery Presents," sometime during 1954 or 1955 (Mary-Leigh was in the audience for this presentation). And he was a headliner as Falstaff in the company of Shirley Jones as Juliet and Lon Clark as Romeo at the annual costume ball entitled "Shakespeare on Parade" thrown by the Art Students League of New York, April 27, 1956, in the ballroom of the Roosevelt Hotel.

He also was given the last, and perhaps the most important role of his stage career. The call came sometime in November, 1955, and was for the part of Pozzo in the first American production of Samuel Beckett's now-famous play, "Waiting for Godot." Jack spent all of December rehearsing for the role and the play ran for two weeks beginning January 3, 1956 at the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Coral Gables, Florida. This was the premiere production in the new play-house, and it co-starred Bert Lahr, Tom Ewell, Jack and Charles Weidman.[60] Mary-Leigh was able to be with Jack in Florida through-out the run. They were housed in one of the stars' apartments in the playhouse and became friends with Alfred Browning Parker, the playhouse's architect. Parker later asked that Jack's posthumous one-man art show be exhibited at the University of Miami.

It is perhaps ironic from Jack's point of view that though his portrayal of Pozzo was given favorable comments, the play as a whole was panned by reviewers in Florida. The production was ill-fated from the beginning. Theater audiences were not prepared for the dense existentialist outlook that the play represented, and reviewers at that point in the history of theater did not know what to make of Beckett, or of his handiwork. To make matters worse, the play was poorly directed. The director was Alan Schneider whose memoirs (see Schneider 1986) heap blame on everyone but himself for the failure of the production. One trouble was that he had spent an ocean voyage with Beckett and felt (wrongly as it turned out) that he understood the essence of the play. All he succeeded in doing was to confuse the

World Radio History

audience, as well as his actors.

Schneider had some very nasty things to say about Jack in his memoirs. He admitted that Jack "had a strong voice and presence" (ibid:230) while at the same time inferring that Jack was physically inept and incapable of attending to his direction. He ends his diatribe by mentioning that Jack was "catatonic" and ended up in the hospital. The truth of the matter was that Schneider drove the whole cast crazy during the rehearsals and Jack in particular was under such stress that he suffered a diabetic imbalance and ended up in the Joslin Clinic in Boston at the end of the run. The later New York production retained Bert Lahr, but replaced Tom Ewell with E.G. Marshall and Jack with Kurt Kaszner.[61] Schneider was replaced by the fine director, Herbert Berghof.

All during the 1950s, Jack was at the center of a social group — mostly artists — that clustered around Perkins Cove. Beverly Hallam, now a renowned northeastern painter, also had a studio on the Cove and likes to recall that she always knew the workday was over when she heard Jack call to her, "Smartinis!" from the footbridge. His studio became the center of a group that called themselves the "Cove Bunch" and who occasionally wore red jerseys and who met to drink and have fun virtually nightly. Cecil Perkins is recorded as saying "Jack was the life of the town and happiest when he had people around him. He'd get a party going every night, somewhere. After he passed away everything broke up. The whole social structure went to pieces, at least the one we were in. No one else could get those big parties together. He was the one who'd kept things going."[62] (Incidentally, a Smartini is an actual drink invented by Jack. It is a vodka martini, but made with the addition of three drops of Pernod and a paper-thin slice of cucumber instead of an olive. I have had many of them, and they are excellent.)

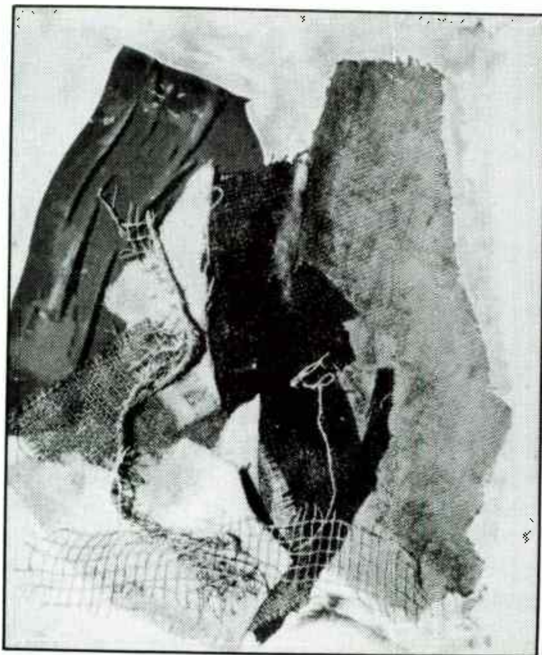
Jack Smart and his friend, the painter Beverly Hallam (in the paper mustache, and one of Jack's costume hats) in Jack's little Isetta car in Perkins Cove, Ogunquit, Maine. Photo by Mary-Leigh Smart.

World Radio History

As one would expect from an inveterate actor who loved makeup, Jack's costumes for the annual Artists Costume Balls were notable. In one of his most memorable costumes in his early Ogunquit days, he painted a face on his naked chest and stomach, wore a shirt for pants making a huge collar around his hips and a gigantic top hat or ice cube over his head and shoulders and went as "a hangover." He won first prize for an individual, while Mary-Leigh and her first husband won first prize for couples. The three were photographed together, yet had not been formally introduced.

Not that his costumed escapades were restricted to parties. Beverly Hallam well remembers one occasion when she was to meet Jack's plane in Boston when he was flying in from a broadcast in New York. Everybody had disembarked from the plane, but still no Jack. Then all of a sudden, Jack emerged with a derby on his head in a dark blue pin-stripe suit and rolling a hula hoop.

Jack had a sharp sense of his own persona, and how to arrange his apparel to get the effect he desired -- be it elegance, foolery, or a mixture of the two. Beverly Hallam makes this point when she recalls, "We were at a cocktail party and were all sitting on the terrace when it was time to take the flag down. Jack volunteered to take it down, and as he slowly let the flag down, he let his pants drop at the same speed. Because he wore his belt above his bulge, instead of below it like most fat men, he could suck in his gut and cause his pants to fall around his knees at will. He also did a strip tease routine he could do wherever there was a curtain handy. He would go into 'A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody' and come out with the still hanging curtain around him and flounce around in it and finally let his pants fall slowly to the floor. He was really elegant and had a sense of quality that showed in his appearance. He always had his pants tailored to belt above the rise instead of below it.



Untitled collage of Dazian theatrical materials.

World Radio History

You see, he didn't just wear a bow tie, but it was a bow tie that drooped at the ends." Mary-Leigh adds that women would go up to him all the time and try to straighten his tie. He'd wait patiently and when they were through, he'd mess it up again, and say "that's on purpose!"

In any event, Jack's artistic work accelerated after he dropped out of "Top Guy." The medium he used most often was collage, and Lawrence Kupferman, the head of the painting department at Massachusetts College of Art (also Beverly Hallam's teacher and later colleague) once said that some of Jack's collages were every bit as good as any Kurt Schwitters ever did. Like so many skills, collages came easy for him. As a matter of fact, it was in the context of collages that Jack and Mary-Leigh met their dear friend, Beverly Hallam. They attended a lecture in 1957 by Beverly, who was then a young art professor and who had been one of the first to recognize the artistic potential of acrylic paints. Halfway through the lecture Jack whispered to Mary-Leigh to invite the lecturer home for a drink. Then he got up and left the hall. By the time Mary-Leigh arrived home with Beverly Hallam in tow, Jack had bought some Elmer's Glue and had made a collage per Hallam's demonstration.

Untitled collage of Dazian theatrical materials and printed matter.

Yet Jack did not do many acrylics. But he did continue to develop his collage technique. In order to get materials, he would buy swatches of fabric from the Dazian Company, a well-known business that sold different kinds of fabrics for the theater. He would then chop them up to use in collages along with the myriad of other materials that found their way into his pieces. Indeed, his collages exhibit a remarkable "ingenuity of materials:"[63] including theatrical playbills, a voter's poster, candy wrapper, gift wrapping paper, road map, a tape measure, a chain, silver foil, red burlap, dog hair,[64] sponge, tobacco, a

World Radio History

check, sandpaper, and, of course, newsprint. His first serious collage was entitled *Flotsam and Jetsam.*

His output quickly became prodigious, and he began to exhibit in juried art exhibitions by at least 1955. In that year he entered work in the First State of Maine Regional Exhibition at the Portland Museum of Art which was on view from September 6th through the 25th. And he continued to exhibit regularly thereafter.

The year 1957 was a busy one for Jack. He exhibited "The Nubble" in the juried Boston Arts Festival, his work hanging, Jack said, "fanny-to-fanny with Fannie" (or back-to-back with his friend, Fannie Hillsmith, the first prize winner; Beverly Hallam won second) as well as work in the Portland Summer Art Festival and the 17th annual Exhibition of Creative Work by Museum Members, the Brick Store Museum, Kennebunk, Maine, from August 6-31. He was juried into and elected President of the Ogunquit Art Association and became instrumental in founding the famous Barn Gallery there. The community was able to raise the money to build the gallery during 1958-59. He was still working in his Perkins Cove studio at this time.

He also was invited to mount a one-man show at the Petite Galerie, Inc. (later called the Janet Nessler Gallery) in New York from March 26 through April 6, 1957. The exhibit consisted of 21 pieces, of which he sold eight pieces and was paid, after gallery debits, the grand sum of $157.56. He received numerous notes of congratulations on the exhibit, including one from Edward G. Robinson, signed "Eddie" dated March 14, 1957.[65]

The critics gave warm acclaim for Jack's "impressionist style" and "bold use of colors." [66] He revealed something of his philosophy of art to one interviewer at the time of the Petite Galerie exhibit. He predicted a return to more realism in painting, claiming that some artists of his day had gone too far in the direction of abstraction.[67] From his own experience, he equated painting with a jazz solo. The artist begins with a basic pattern and then creates as the artist's fancy and personality take him. "I'd like to paint just as Louis Armstrong plays his horn. And I'd like to compose pictures as quickly and as well as he composes his solo take-offs."[68]

Jack was frequently written up in *The Rattazzi Report,* the newsletter of Dick Rattazzi's "Rattazzi Restaurant" at 9 East 48th Street in New York. And the restaurant bought one of his oil paintings from the Petite Galerie show, a still life entitled "Portrait of a Bloody Mary." It was mentioned in the newsletter that it would be framed in grey flannel. They also mentioned that he stopped by many times during the duration of the show. He also dropped in the following year (1958) while arranging to put two works into the Art USA exhibition at Madison Square Garden. They said he was to be found in the gang at the bar listening to Jonathan Winters telling funny stories.

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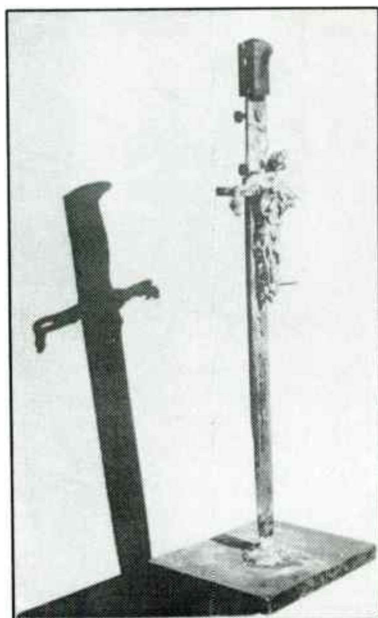
"Joey." Welded sculpture of found objects, rusted in the ocean, later sprayed with "War King" to arrest rusting. Was on indefinite loan to the Portland Museum of Art, Maine. Collection, Mary-Leigh Call Smart.



"Crucifix." Dagger and welded sculpture. Collection, Ione Walker (Mrs. Hudson D. Walker).

World Radio History

The clay for "Widow Woman."

"High Priest." Welded copper and brass.

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Many of the same works, plus some new ones (28 in all), travelled for another one-man show at the Springfield Illinois Art Association between December 3rd and 29th of 1957. One review of the exhibition found Jack's work exceptional. "Bold, strong composition and rich colors, with dramatic emphasis on cadmium reds, orange, warm dark umbers and a veritable passion for texture are the first impression gained from Jack Smart's show by this observer. He paints in an individual vein that ranges freely through a variety of media, techniques and subjects. Watercolors, encaustics (oil and wax), straight oils, woodblock prints, and above all, collages, light up the

Portrait of J. Scott Smart, one of a set of professional pictures he had taken in 1958 as he prepared to begin the search for his next role. Photo by John R. Kennedy.

World Radio History

good gray gallery in a fine firelight glow, never dull, never cold."[69] Already by this point in his career pieces of his art had found their way into the collections of such people as Walter Cronkite, Maxwell Kriendler, Bert McCord, Mrs. Hudson D. Walker, as well as the Rattazzi Restaurant and The Players, among others.

Jack's last professional acting role was in the July, 1958, "Medallion Theatre" television production of "The Decision of Arrowsmith" with Henry Fonda as Dr. Arrowsmith (sponsored by Chrysler on CBS). With something over three decades of acting

Jack Smart, about 1957, in Ogunquit, Maine. Photo by Doucette, staff photographer, Portsmouth Herald.

World Radio History

behind him, Jack played the veteran character actor to the end. The play, adapted from Sinclair Lewis's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *Arrowsmith*, featured Jack as one of the islanders with a fishing boat who was confronted by the bubonic plague. Jack played opposite the lovely Diana Douglas as Arrowsmith's wife, Juan Hernandez as another islander concerned about the health of his community, as well as Luis Van Rooten and Rek Thompson in supporting roles.[70] That Jack had every intention of pursuing other acting roles in the future is born out by the fact that he had new professional pictures made of himself about this time and had an agent.

And about this time Jack also began to do sculpture, at first welded metal sculpture and later castings. In 1958 he exhibited "Joey" perhaps his best welded sculpture, at the Portland Museum of Art in the company of such other members of the Ogunquit Art Association as Edward Betts, Van Deren Coke, Patience Haley, Beverly Hallam, Richard Lahey and John Laurent. He also showed at the 1958 Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by Maine Artists at the Maine Art Gallery, Wiscasset. He served as Vice-President of the Ogunquit Art Association for that year and continued to oversee the construction of the Barn Gallery.

He and Mary-Leigh travelled to Europe — first to England and then to Italy — in February, 1959. Jack spent his three months in Rome sharing a studio with Eleanor de Laittre on the Aventine Hill and doing lost wax sculpture and working on it at the Nicci Foundry. He exhibited some of his cast work in Maine during the late summer of that year.[71] A bronze piece, entitled *Widow Woman*, was one of those cast while Jack was in Rome. The first version of this piece was sandcast in Ogunquit and was bought by Bert McCord, the drama columnist for the *New York Herald Tribune*. A second casting of the subject done in Rome is now in the Harry Ransom Library collection in Austin.

During August of 1959, Jack's old studio at Perkins Cove was listed on the Ogunquit Art Association's studio tour. The Barn Gallery, which had begun as an idea circulating around Jack and Mary-Leigh's table at "Three Faces East," was dedicated in June, 1959. The J. Scott Smart Sculpture court, an outdoor extension of the Barn Gallery, was created posthumously and was named in Jack's honor by the Trustees at Eleanor de Laittre's suggestion and dedicated on June 26, 1961. The plaque in the Court reads: "His many talents led to this community art development."

The Smarts visited Springfield once again in the fall of 1959 where Jack fell ill and entered the Memorial Hospital in early November. He died of pancreatic cancer at 11 A.M. on January 15, 1960. Mary-Leigh had a memorial tombstone placed in his honor on the Call cemetery lot in Springfield, but Jack's body was cremated according

World Radio History

to his wishes and the ashes committed to the sea at Perkins Cove in Ogunquit. V.Y. Dallman, the editor of the *Illinois State Register* and an associate of Mary-Leigh's father, wrote the official obituary,[72] excerpts of which were published in newspapers all over the United States, as well as in *Time* magazine's "Milestones." A flood of condolences arrived in Ogunquit and Mary-Leigh remembers writing 435 responses to people who had taken the trouble to write. She recalls often writing to people about their marriage, "We had more in eight years than most people have in a lifetime."

A memorial retrospective exhibition of 29 of his paintings and sculptures was mounted in the summer of 1960 in celebration of the Barn Gallery's new wing. The exhibit also travelled to the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery at the University of Miami, near the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Coral Gables where Jack had co-starred in "Waiting for Godot." It ran from February 14 through April 9, 1961. There were 35 works in the Miami exhibition — actually more than were listed in the catalogue of the exhibition in Ogunquit — including sculptures, paintings, watercolors, monotypes, and collages. Chris Ritter[73] wrote in reviewing the exhibit, "As a whole, this group represents the production of a sensitive, inventive, resourceful artist whose training and high professional achievement in the field of theatre carried over into his work in the plastic arts. Jack Smart was probably a better artist than many realized — he was probably a better artist than he himself realized." The 9th annual exhibition at the Museum of Art of Ogunquit, now the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, held between July 1 and September 9, 1961, featured one of Jack's collages done in 1958. His sculpture, "Joey," was on indefinite loan at the Portland Museum of Art and then was shown at the Barn Gallery at the Sculpture Court plaque dedication and in 1988 at the Ogunquit Art Center in the Ogunquit Art Association's 60th Anniversary Exhibition.

World Radio History

CHAPTER 7
J. SCOTT SMART — IN RETROSPECT

Being an anthropologist has led me to live with peoples in East Africa, Southeast Asia, the American Southwest and Mesoamerica. Yet it is curious that in all those years of studying other people, I do not believe I ever came to understand another human being as well as I feel I understand Jack Smart. There has been an intensity of interest and a level of empathy in this project that I never have been able to bring to any "anthropological" study. I believe this is because I came to love Jack when I was that child avidly listening to him work at his craft on "The Fat Man". I wish that I had known him in the flesh. I like to think we would have been friends.

We were alike in some respects. Like myself, Jack had developed an extroverted persona that served him well, both as an actor and in his everyday life. This is not uncommon in people who, as with Jack, sustain a good deal of family instability as a child. But like many of us who put energy into an extroverted persona, Jack had an inner-self that was essentially introverted and poorly expressed in early life. And because he was type-cast as a character actor for most of his career, his theatrical work did not provide a venue for him to develop and express that inner-self to any significant extent. In fact radio work tapped the very dynamics in Jack that led him to his extremely social persona in the first place. And his contribution to the "Golden Age of Radio" was therefore considerable. He exhibited the flexibility of speech and range of psychological nuances that made it possible for him to fill the requirements of radio drama with ease. And as a consequence, he left a trail of memorable characters like Joe on "Mr. and Mrs.," Senator Bloat on the Fred Allen show, and, of course, the immortal Brad Runyon in "The Fat Man."

But the problem with a very successful extroverted persona for someone like Jack who was really an introvert at the core of his being is that the inner-life gets short shrift. Indeed, his inner-being only began to emerge in the last decade of his life. Finally secure in a loving relationship with Mary-Leigh, "at home" in and accepted by the artistic community in Ogunquit, and freed from being "a high priced whore" for radio — and, let us not forget, having matured well into his midlife — Jack began to express his inner-self through his art.

This inner emergence would have become more obvious had Jack lived longer, for he had just begun to be recognized as a significant artist when he died. It is very likely he would have developed as distinguished a reputation in art as he had done in acting, and perhaps

World Radio History

more so, because he was dedicated to the discipline of art in a way that he had never been before. Indeed, as he himself would often admit, he was as lazy as he was brilliant as an actor. He often skated through situations on his native talents — talents that were considerable, I might add. I suspect that Jack had not previously pursued any skill with anything like the dedicated devotion he was giving his art during the Ogunquit years. In any event, Jack was an exceptional individual who touched many lives during the course of his career, and he had certainly begun to come into his own as an artist toward the end. As his friend, V.Y. Dallman, wrote in his obituary of Jack, "This distinguished gentleman was by nature a man of extraordinary thought and action. He impressed this writer at times as being to art what Vachel Lindsay was to poetry — extremely individual, different, adventuresome, and unconstrained by custom and tradition." Need I say more?

World Radio History

NOTES

1. There is a letter from "Uncle" John Tener dated 1908 in the J. Scott Smart Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, to Jack which accompanied the gift of a watch that Tener, himself, had carried for 25 years.

2. Just what his father's business was is uncertain. Plante (1960) called Frank Smart a newspaper man and Zook (1957) called him a stock promoter. Jack called him "a manipulator" in a nice way. He organized companies, one of which was an insurance company in Philadelphia that presented him with a monogrammed set of elaborate flatware, which Mary-Leigh still owns.

3. The northeast corner of 7th and Cook.

4. Plante (1960)

5. Zook (1957:5).

6. A newspaper clipping dated Sept. 8, 1932 (source unknown).

7. He painted a poster in 1921 for the Thanksgiving Day football game between Lafayette and Masten. The poster is in the J. Scott Smart Theatre Arts Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

8. An "Information Booth" newspaper article, 1952 (clipping, source unknown).

9. His high school yearbook and high school records.

10. Zook (1957).

11. Portsmouth Herald in 1949.

12. Universal Studios biography dated 1950.

13. Zook (1957).

14. Jack's scrapbook of clippings and playbills for this early period is in

World Radio History

the collection of the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts, New York.

15. A newspaper photo (no date) exists in the collection of the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts, New York, of Jack pointing a finger at a painting and the caption reads "The artistic sense of Jack Smart, popular Palace Player, is not limited to acting. He is shown here with a canvas he has just completed."

16. He would return repeatedly to Buffalo to visit his mother who lived on Elmwood Avenue, and to hang out with old friends. He would sit in on jazz jam sessions with some of these friends, who gave him a lamp made of a clarinet and inscribed "Sinful Seventh from the Sinful Six."

17. Zook (1957).

18. Article in *Buffalo Times* (January 18, 1931).

19. Buxton and Owen (1972).

20. Dunning (1976:393-396).

21. A guest editorial he wrote for Don Tranter in the *Buffalo Courier-Express* (early 1940s).

22. Article in *Buffalo Evening News* for September 8, 1932.

23. Taylor (1989:190).

24. There is a photo and story on the "Allen Review" in *San Francisco Chronicle,* November 11, 1933, with Jack in the photo.

25. Taylor:192.

26. Taylor:204.

27. Taylor:223.

28. Taylor (1989).

29. Rod Reed, "Il Duce, Hitler or Squawking Ostrich: Radio Star'll 'Double' for All or Each," *Buffalo Times,* August 23, 1936.

30. In a guest column Jack wrote for the "I'm All Ears" column (from

World Radio History

a clipping, probably a Buffalo newspaper, around 1933-34).

31. In a column by Alton Cook (*World-Telegram* radio editor, column date approximately 1935).

32. Dunning (1976:70).

33. Edward G. Robinson wrote a congratulatory note signed "Eddie" when Jack opened in the play, "Waiting for Godot." They had become good friends.

34. See John Dunning, *Tune In Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976; Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, *The Big Broadcast: 1920-1950*, New York: Avon Books; Harrison B. Summers, *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States 1926-1956*. New York: Arno Press and the *New York Times*, 1971; J. Fred MacDonald (1979) *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979.

35. Leonard Sillman (1959).

36. There is confusion over whether the contract was for one or six years (see Plante 1960, Zook 1957). Universal Studios did distribute two biographies, one in September, 1936, and another in July, 1950; the latter no doubt associated with the movie, *The Fat Man*.

37. "Radio's Jack of All Trades," clipping from *Screen and Radio Weekly*, dated sometime in the early 1930s, p. 10.

38. Zook (1957:5).

39. Review of "Top of the Town" in both the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune*, March 27, 1937.

40. In a guest shot he wrote for Don Tranter's column in the *Buffalo Courier-Express* on July 25, 1947, he mentions he did a dance dual routine with Ray Bolger at the Chez Paree in Chicago. He said that Ray wore him out.

41. Plante (1960).

42. There exists a Christmas card (probably from 1943) that Jack drew with a sketch of himself bowing and his new name "J.S.S. (formerly

World Radio History

Jack Smart)."

43. Jack was quickly embraced by the Towers' social group who were his age. The group included Brinton and Adele Lucas (Adele was Mrs. Atwater Kent's sister), Alick and Ruth McLean, Robert and Peggy Dale, Harold W. "Burdie" and Eleanor Burdon, the James Dawes, the William Campbells, and the Lustys.

44. It is interesting that Jack was featured under his real name, "Jack Smart," instead of "J. Scott Smart." This was the last time he used his real name on credits.

45. Also the father of the successful, contemporary actor, Ed Begley, Jr.

46. Buxton and Owen (1966), Dunning (1976:194-196), also see article in the May, 1948, issue of *The Norwich Pharmacal News.*

47. Gelb article in the *New York Times* in 1947

48. One of his recipes, "Veal a la Jayscott," was published in Denis (1952:89), and *The Maine Collection,* Portland Museum of Art cookbook, 1993.

49. Gelb article of 1947.

50. In a guest column he wrote in 1947.

51. Universal-International's "Call Bureau Cast Service" report dated May 1, 1951.

52. He may have been paid a final bonus for the film, for his friends remember he had a photocopy of a check made out to him for around $20,000 which he tacked above his desk at Perkins Cove.

53. Article by Cunningham about Ogunquit in 1955.

54. Riddle (1989).

55. The script is in the Harry Ransom Library collection. Jack's jazz collection is now owned by Beverly Hallam.

56. Also housed in the Harry Ransom Library collection.

57. His fishing shack studio is the present location of the Hurricane

World Radio History

Restaurant in Perkins Cove.

58. Zook (1957:5).

59. Mary-Leigh Smart owned this painting for years and then donated it, along with a number of Jack's pieces of art, to the Harry Ransom Library collection at the University of Texas.

60. There are notes of congratulation from various of Jack's friends in the entertainment world in the Harry Ransom Library collection, including ones from Joseph ("Jo") Cotton and his old friend from the stock company days, Jonathan Hole.

61. There is a picture of Jack with Tom Ewell, Bert Lahr and Charles Weidman in the December 18, 1955, edition of the *New York Times*.

62. Boyd et al. (1976:76).

63. Article in *Illinois State Journal-Register*, December 1, 1957, by Mary Jane Masters.

64. Taken from Jack's AKC-registered champion Basset Hound, Babar.

65. Note in the Harry Ransom Library collection.

66. Zook (1957).

67. His own style was largely expressionist. A number of ink drawings are in the collection of the Harry Ransom Library. They are also in an expressionistic style.

68. Zook (1957:5).

69. Article in *Illinois State Journal-Register*, December 1, 1957, by Mary Jane Masters entitled "J. Scott Smart's Exhibit Described as Exciting, Bold."

70. *Variety*, July 15, 1958.

71. Dallman (1960).

72. V.Y. Dallman in the *Illinois State Register*, January 15, 1960.

73. Article in *The Star*, Friday, June 24, 1960, by Chris Ritter.

World Radio History

SOURCES

J. Scott Smart:

Paul Denis, *Paul Denis' Celebrity Cook Book*, New York: Rockport Press. (one of Jack's recipes)

"Ogunquit: Resort Town Down East," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 25, 1949. (Picture of Jack eating steamed clams; mentions he came to visit Ogunquit "two years ago" (1947) and stayed; mentions he was picking up Maine dialect)

"Information Booth," *Radio-Television Mirror*, March, 1952, p. 27. (also mentions "Top Guy")

Dora Albert, "Radio's Jack of All Trades," *Screen and Radio Weekly*, 1935 (?), p. 10. (Jack's attitudes toward his work)

Guest editorial by J. Scott Smart for Don Tranter's "Radio Comment, Highlights" column, *Buffalo Courier-Express*, July 25, 1947. (Reflections on being fat in a thin world)

Bill Cunningham, "Ogunquit Good 'For Body, Soul'." *The Boston Herald*, August 16, 1955. (brief reflection by Jack on moving to Ogunquit)

John Dunning, *Tune In Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976. (picture of Jack as The Fat Man)

Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, *The Big Broadcast: 1920-1950*, New York: Avon Books.

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Rod Reed column, "Il Duce, Hitler or Squawking Ostrich: Radio Star'll 'Double' for All or Each," *Buffalo Times*, August 23, 1936. (Accompanied by photos of Jack posing as various newsworthy people of the day.)

Robert Taylor (1989) *Fred Allen: His Life and Wit*. Boston: Little, Brown

World Radio History

and Company.

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Photo at microphone in *Illinois State Journal,* October 9, 1951.

"Jack Smart – Biography" released by Universal Studios in September 1936.

"J. Scott Smart - Biography" released by Universal Studios on July 21, 1950.

Carrie Boyd, Kathryn Ryan, Betty Wills & William Wills (1976) *The Cove: Perkins Cove at Ogunquit, Maine.* Privately printed by PenMor Printers, Inc., Lewiston, Maine. (A rare limited edition booklet with history and photos of Perkins Cove where Jack had his studio; photo by Mary-Leigh Smart of Jack in his famous chair and part of his hat collection in his studio at Perkins Cove, p.76)

Louise Tragard, Patricia E. Hart & W.L. Copithorne (1987) *A Century of Color: Ogunquit, Maine's Art Colony, 1886-1986.* Ogunquit, Maine: Barn Gallery Associates, Inc. (photos of Jack and Mary-Leigh on the *Queen Mary,* with Beverly Hallam in his three-wheeled Isetta automobile, in his "hangover" costume, and John Falter's *Saturday Evening Post* cover.

Alan Schneider (1986) *Entrances: An American Director's Journey.* New York: Viking.

Sketches at beginning and end of this book are by John Falter from his sketchbook. Courtesy of the Hampden-Booth Theatre Library of the Players and the artist's estate.

World Radio History

Obituaries:

Kent McKinley in *The News*, Sarasota, FL, February 7, 1960.

V.Y. Dallman in the *Illinois State Register*, January 15, 1960.

The Fat Man:

"Shot in the Arm: Norwich Pharmacal Accomplishes It with Radio and 'The Fat Man'," *Sponsor*, November, 1948.

"Look Behind the Scenes Shows Fat Man and Supporting Cast Producing Murder-r-r." *The Norwich Pharmacal News* 7(5):2, May, 1948. (Includes a number of photos of the cast in action.)

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Arthur Gelb, "Rotundity Pays Off." *New York Times* June 22, 1947.

J. Fred MacDonald (1979) *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, p. 173.

Top Guy:

"Whodunnit?" *True Detective*, January 1953, p.58. (A short puzzler by Jack while he was playing the "crime-busting police commissioner on ABC's mystery drama series, 'The Top Guy,' every Friday, 8 to 8:30 P.M. EST.")

Dashiell Hammett:
Wiliam F. Nolan (1983) *Hammett: A Life at the Edge*. New York: Congdon & Weed.

Diane Johnson (1983) *Dashiell Hammett: A Life*. New York: Random House.

Julian Symons (1985) *Dashiell Hammett*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Collections:

Library and Museum of the Performing Arts of the New York Public

World Radio History

Library, New York: (Photo of Jack as Henry the Eighth; Jack's personal scrapbook of his roles in early stock, begins with John B. Mack Players program of 1928-29, and on to the Palace Spotlight Players of Manchester, NH in 1929; newspaper photo (no date) of Jack pointing a finger and the caption reads "The artistic sense of Jack Smart, popular Palace Player, is not limited to acting. He is shown here with a canvas he has just completed." A number of photos of Jack from *The Fat Man* movie.)

The Hampden-Booth Theater Library, New York: A number of sketches of Jack by John Falter in the latter's sketchbook.

The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin: (Numerous private and professional papers donated to them by Jack's widow. Includes a large number of paintings, collages and sculptures donated by his widow. Also his collection of the many hats he either wore in his roles on the stage, or were given to him by friends, the built-up shoes made by Murray Space Shoes for his Pozzo role in *Waiting for Godot*, and numerous mementos.)

World Radio History

Sketch by John Falter

THE END

World Radio History

World Radio History

Photo by Paul Curtis, Photomaya

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a.k.a.
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The author has a lot in common with Jack Smart, especially in his eclectic interests. He is a writer, an occasional painter, listens to jazz and blues, as well as old time radio tapes, plays golf and pumps iron, loves good food and is a good cook, is a fanatic gardener, and collects old fountain pens and comic books. He was trained as an anthropologist and has lived with pastoral people in East Africa, Tibetan lamas in Nepal, Chinese Buddhists in Southeast Asia, and Navajo people in the American Southwest. He has written numerous books and articles about the brain and consciousness, and is presently a professor of anthropology and religion at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.

World Radio History