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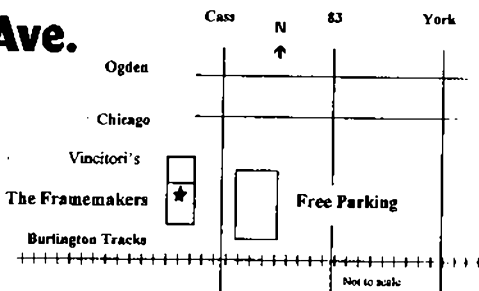
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# CHUCK SCHADEN'S NOSTALGIA DIGEST **AND RADIO GUIDE** ©

BOOK 29 CHAPTER 4

SUMMER 2003

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

## *Neighborhood Movies*

BY DAN MC GUIRE

My pals Chuck, Wayne, Bobby and I were movie addicts during our wild and crazy youth. Radio shows kept us enthralled for an hour or more every day, but the silver screen was our second most frequent source of escapist entertainment.

Weekends almost invariably included a Saturday matinee at one of Chicago's many Northwest Side theatres. Only birthdays, illness, family vacations or some other special event would occasionally interrupt the routine. When school was out for the summer or holidays, an additional Sunday or weekday matinee was not unusual.

One might think this would have been enough to satisfy us. Wrong. A number of other opportunities presented themselves, and we seldom could resist.

In our little semi-rural suburban community, a family named Kandler operated a mom-and-pop grocery store on Irving Park Road, the main artery that connected us to Chicago.

Midway through World War II, the store put up posters announcing that it

would begin showing free movies on Friday evenings. This may have been partly a way to build up clientele, but there was an element of patriotism in offering free entertainment to folks enduring many wartime sacrifices.

There was a large vacant lot between the grocery store and the next building. The whitewashed west wall of Kandler's Foods became the screen. From an upper window of the neighboring building, Mr. Kandler acted as projectionist, beginning the show as early as possible after sunset.

The movies were older films that could be rented at reasonable cost, and were selected to appeal as much as possible to whole families. Some folks who lived nearby lugged folding chairs with them and sat in the rear. Most of us brought blankets and huddled together on them.

Each week one family member manned the store so it could stay open a bit later than usual. Parents bought their kids soft drinks, ice cream, candy, etc., and occasionally purchased a few groceries before heading home. But the free movies were not meant as a sales gimmick, for Kandler's profit would not have covered the rentals.

Fund raising did combine with community service when the Acacia Lutheran Church began offering outdoor summer movies on Wednesday nights.

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*Dan McGuire is a free-lance writer from Bensenville, Illinois and a former Nostalgia Digest columnist. He is presently working on a compilation of those columns to be published in book form later this year.*

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Ice cream, hot dogs, potato chips and soft drinks were on sale in the church kitchen. On the walkway, church ladies set up a long table and sold assorted candy bars and penny candy.

A large white sheet was stretched between two trees on the far edge of the church's large lawn. The movies were projected from an upper window in the Sunday school wing. Most of us kids clustered together with our friends on blankets. Some adults also used blankets, but the church janitor stacked folding chairs near the entrance for those who preferred them.

Since only one projector was used, there would be a break between reels, during which time church members walked through the crowd with baskets to accept free will donations. Adults put in varying amounts, sometimes as much as they would pay at a theatre. But there was no "suggested" amount, and no eyebrows were raised if kids put in only a penny or two, or nothing at all. Some kids had already spent whatever coins they had at the candy table.

I would be hard pressed to name any of the films we watched at Kandler's or at the church, but my recollection is that I was more keen to attend the church screenings. They tended to lean more toward the action and adventure films that appealed to kids.

That was definitely the case for the films we saw at the Norwood Park Township Volunteer Fire Department. In the years when the NPTVFD was struggling to add to its equipment and purchase a new truck, the fire station was turned into a mini-theatre the second Saturday of each month.

The lone fire truck was parked outside and a screen was hung on the inside of the large bay door. Folding chairs (probably borrowed from the school or a



local church) were lined up from a few feet away and back to the kitchen wall. Kids paid a 10-cent admission as they entered through the walk-in door. Through the kitchen window, wives of firemen sold candy and bags of popcorn popped the old-fashioned way over the firemen's stove.

A few mothers brought small children; otherwise, the audience was entirely kids. That made for a noisy crowd, so several firemen hovered on either side of the aisles to maintain order. Before the lights went out, they mostly talked among themselves and tolerated the noise. But once the show began, any kid who became rowdy could expect a curt warning to calm down or get out.

Between reels, the firemen also had to maintain crowd control as half the kids rushed back to the kitchen to replenish their candy supply.

Of these three non-theatre movie experiences, I recall anticipating those fire department shows the most. Their films were selected to appeal to an all-kid audience.

We saw old *Our Gang* and *Laurel and Hardy* comedies, even an early *Abbott and Costello* "laugh riot." There were cowboy films and mysteries, including a couple of the comic variety with the *Dead End Kids* and the *East Side Kids* (pretty much the same group with different names).

We saw a number of war movies, which were very popular in the years during and just after World War II.

Because I was a big fan of Johnny Weissmuller, it was a real treat for me when they offered an older Tarzan film that I'd never seen in the theatres.

I presume that Chief Schoenfeld had a back-up plan in case the NPTVFD was called upon to put out a fire during one of these shows. But in the years that I attended, the fire siren never sounded during the movie. It was a pretty small town at the time.

Because the fire department's movies were shown on Saturdays, they presented a sort of conflict of interest for my pals and me. As I've said, it was a given that we would attend a Saturday matinee unless something special took precedence. Did the fire department shows qualify?

For several reasons, we decided that they did. The audience would all be kids we knew from around the neighborhood. That made for a sort of party atmosphere. It was within walking distance from home. So we had more time before and after the show for other activities. And in addition to the streetcar fare we saved, the admission price was cheaper than at the theatres. That meant we could save some of our modest allowances. Or spend more of it on sweets.

Which did I do? None of your becswax.

One more fond movie memory involves the feature films that were periodically shown as a special treat for students in the assembly hall at James Giles School.

But that's a whole 'nother story. ■

*Dan McGuire and one of his boyhood pals, Chuck Schaden, will get together to reminisce about the good old days on TWTD August 9. Don't miss it if you can!*

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# Richard Crenna

## *More Than Just Walter Denton*

BY BILL OATES

When Richard Crenna died on January 18, 2003, a chapter closed on one member of a very select group: entertainers whose careers spanned from childhood through adulthood. Remaining popular before the eyes and ears of mass media for a lifetime rarely occurs, but for Crenna, his tenure on radio, television, and in the movies lasted over six decades.

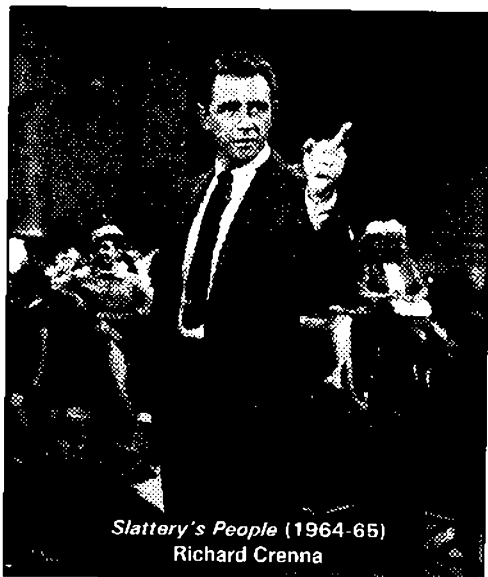
Conveniently born on November 30, 1926, in downtown Los Angeles, where his mother operated a small hotel that doubled as the family residence, Richard Crenna and his friends not only grew up in the burgeoning film and radio community, but they also auditioned before the microphone at young ages. Of the group of boys who came to play on the local program *Boy Scout Jamboree*, only ten-year-old Crenna found regular employment.

Although he matured in the medium as it gained prominence in the premiere loca-

*Bill Oates, of Kouts, Indiana, is a high school English teacher and author.*

tion for network radio, parts for his voice seldom advanced further than adolescence. Unfortunately, the world moved into a sec-

ond world war as his real childhood was ending, and he delayed his radio career and enlisted in the Army Signal Corps. After his discharge, Richard Crenna entered the University of Southern California, where he majored in theater arts, eventually earning a degree in English. The talent that returned him to broadcast radio was the ability to



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emulate, as he fondly called them, "all idiot adenoidal kids."

During the 1940s, the network comedies that focused on the trials of teenage years became more commonplace. *The Aldrich Family* catapulted such shows to prominence, when it debuted in 1939 as a summer replacement for Jack Benny. Comic strip teen Archie Andrews followed with his own show in 1943. Soon after, programs with female leads found permanent time slots on radio when *Meet Corliss Archer* began on CBS in 1943, and *A Date with Judy* formally debuted the following

year (It had been Bob Hope's summer replacement in 1941 and 1942, and Eddie Cantor's in 1943). Louise Erickson became Judy in 1943, and to share her adventures, Richard Crenna entered network radio for the first time in a regular role during the 1946 season when he became her boyfriend, Oogie Pringle.

The scenario of the show remained fairly simple: Judy often found herself in, to her, some potentially earth-shattering crisis. In one episode, she gloats over letters sent to her from movie star Joseph Cotten. Unbeknownst to her, little brother and resident sister antagonist Randolph (Dix Davis) has been writing them as a prank. To her surprise and Oogie's consternation, she actually meets Cotten, when he is appearing in town.

Both Erickson and Crenna found themselves on additional programs through the 1940s and early 1950s, with the latter appearing on as many as seven shows per week. For example, listeners can recognize his voice on programs such as *One Man's Family*, *A Day in the Life of Dennis Day*, and *The Aldrich Family*. Among his recurring roles were Marjorie's boyfriend Bronco on *The Great Gildersleeve*, Beasley on *The Hardy Family*, and Emily's boyfriend Rudy on the *Burns and Allen Show*. Despite keeping busy on many shows, his greatest claim to fame in old time radio came on July 19, 1948.

Writer Al Lewis developed a character for a program that revolved around an unmarried high school English teacher. Producer Harry Ackerman wanted Shirley Booth, better known to radio listeners as Miss Duffy for two stints on *Duffy's Tavern*, to play the part of Miss Brooks. When she declined the part, CBS President William S. Paley requested that Eve Arden audition. After a rewrite of the character and an agreement that the program be tran-



*Our Miss Brooks* (1948-56)  
Eve Arden and Richard Crenna

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scribed, so that Arden could spend quality time with her children, *Our Miss Brooks* appeared on the CBS schedule for an eight-week trial run.

Born Eunice Quedens in Mill Valley, California, in 1912, Eve Arden arrived at the role to which she was forever linked after several very impressive motion picture parts.

Creating a successful radio program often meant gathering a formidable ensemble, and *Our Miss Brooks* did not fail. In order to cast the counterpart to the underpaid and overworked teacher, Gale Gordon accepted the role of the blustery principal, Osgood Conklin, the head of fictional Madison High School through the program's duration on radio and television. Under his reign came Phillip Boynton (Jeff Chandler 1948-1952 and Bob Rockwell 1952-1956), the biology teacher and target for Miss Brooks' romantic designs. To round out the cast, and to intensify the comic possibilities, Richard Crenna came on board as Miss Brooks' loyal student,

Walter Denton. To complicate many of the plots, as well as Conklin's life, Denton and the apple of the principal's eye, Harriet Conklin (Gloria McMillan), were both romantically intertwined and often connected to Miss Brooks' weekly dilemma. Add to the mix often-be-fuddled landlady Mrs. Davis (Jane Morgan), Superintendent Stone (Joseph Kearns), Minerva the cat, Stretch Snodgrass (Leonard Smith), and even Mr. Boynton's pet frog McDougall, and the potential for many very entertaining shows kept *Our Miss Brooks* in the classroom through July of 1957.

Typical plots might include Miss Brooks being entrusted with a valuable object, such as the key to the school. Through mix-ups the key is inconveniently lost, and the students are locked out just as the superintendent is about to present the high school with a perfect-attendance award. In another story, Stretch Snodgrass's special Easter egg dye gets mixed up with a cleanser, turning Mr. Boynton's face blue. Through many such episodes, Walter Denton and his souped-up jalopy are at his teacher's beck and call for an escape from the calamity.

In 1956, a movie version of *Our Miss Brooks* (Warner Brothers) appeared. Even though most cast members had been visible on television since 1952, several noteworthy additions make the film a curiosity. First, Miss Brooks attempts to entice a young Nick Adams into studying journalism. Audiences can test the limits of their hearing with Crenna as Walter Denton "crooning" "It's Magic." And finally, for those who seek closure, Miss Brooks actually holds onto Mr. Boynton long enough to marry him. Perhaps this late installment into the series signaled to everyone that the program was about to end.

Real educators completely enjoyed an accurate look at their profession. Even



*The Real McCoys* (1957-63)  
Walter Brennan and Richard Crenna

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though she made \$200,000 annually to play an English teacher, Eve Arden received numerous opportunities to address educators who would not see that amount in a lifetime. She even spoke to the National Education Association at its annual convention. Although the radio show was a comedy, the savvy cast painted a picture of teachers more accurately than the stereotypes of old maid, strait-laced, humorless lecturers. Many teachers could have contributed real stories about their own overbearing Conklin type or goofy schemes created by a Walter Denton.

As for the cast of *Our Miss Brooks*, Richard Crenna recalled years later that it was family. Not only did they have a good time doing the show, but they also socialized. Crenna actually lived with the Gale Gordons for a short time. During the 1952-53 season, Mrs. (Virginia) Gordon played Mrs. Conklin. And even though rightly believing that he could not play a teenager the rest of his acting career, because of his loyalty to friend Eve Arden, Crenna acquiesced to her requests and continued play-



ing Walter until he was 30. However, when he decided to move on, he realized that he needed to make some drastic changes in his acting choices.

Richard Crenna attempted to diversify his opportunities in the early 1950s, when he took on several movie roles. Years later he related that radio actors had a special challenge getting parts in films, because they had to prove to movie people that they could move in front of a camera, even though many came from stage backgrounds. After two small parts in *Let's Dance* (Paramount, 1950) and *Red Skies of Montana* (20th Century Fox, 1952), the call came for him to play Paul "Daffy" Dean opposite Dan Dailey's title role performance in *The Dizzy Dean Story* (20th Century Fox, 1952). For a relative newcomer to the medium, Crenna did an admirable job as the younger brother. His next gamble came when he played a handsome reporter in the melodrama *Over-Exposed* (Columbia, 1956). The film was neither a commercial nor a critical success, but it proved that Richard Crenna showed promise on screen as a serious actor—a career pathway that led him to many more roles through the 1990s.

Television appeared to be the next meal ticket, and one year after he left *Our Miss Brooks*, a ripe offer materialized. Veteran film actor Walter Brennan did not, at first, wish to have any connection to a rural comedy. Smart money said that such a sitcom might not fare well in the cities. However, the creators, New Yorkers Irving and Norman Pincus, persevered, gaining the financing from Danny Thomas Productions, and *The Real McCoys* debuted on the struggling ABC network on October 3, 1957. Once Brennan was on board as Grandpa Amos McCoy, another strong cast followed. Starting with Richard Crenna as Grandson Luke, the fictitious family



*I Love Lucy* (1952)  
Lucille Ball and Richard Crenna

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moved from West Virginia to California's San Fernando Valley in search of greener pastures. Regulars in the cast included Luke's wife, Kate (Kathleen Nolan); younger sister Hassie (Lydia Reed); a younger brother, "Little" Luke (Michael Winkleman); a Mexican handyman, Pepito (Tony Martinez); Grandpa's friend George MacMichael (silent film star Andy Clyde), and in the recurring role of Mr. MacMaginnis, Willard Waterman (former radio character Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve). Together they kept the modest farm afloat and often bailed Grandpa out of difficulty.

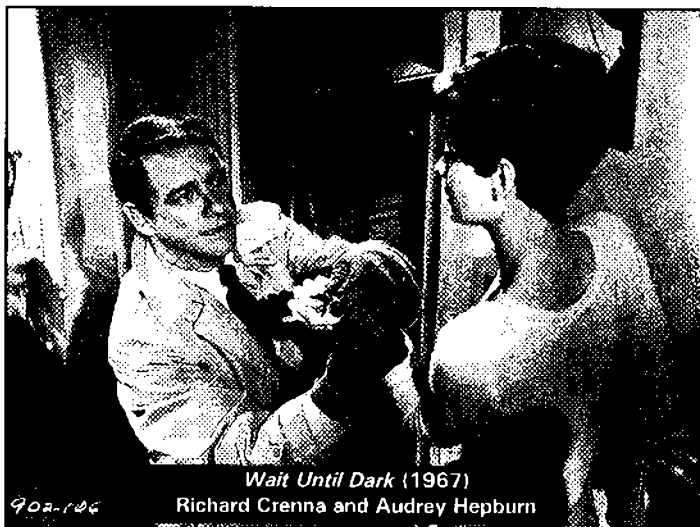
During its tenure on ABC and a final season on CBS, Richard Crenna received his first Emmy nomination. The show itself climbed into the top ten during its second season and stayed on the air until the spring of 1963. Although his popularity on television grew, he now worried that this new stereotype of a "rube" might limit his opportunities. By the way, Richard Crenna never spoke disparagingly about parts like Walter Denton or Luke McCoy; he just realized that he did not wish to be limited to these two types of characters. What the

television show did achieve was the launching of successful "hillbilly" television, such as *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Green Acres* (radio's *Granby's Green Acres* revived) in the early 1960s.

Richard Crenna's fears were allayed when he began receiving a variety of guest shots in television.

As early as 1952, he made an appearance with Janet Waldo on *I Love Lucy*. In "The Young Fans" Waldo plays a teenager smitten with Ricky Ricardo, and to counter, her boyfriend, played by Crenna, falls for Lucy. All is sorted out when Lucy and Desi act like teenagers to repulse the young ones' advances. Later Crenna visited on a number of television shows, such as the westerns *Cheyenne* and *Have Gun, Will Travel*. During his television days, he even had the opportunity to direct over 100 episodes of programs, such as *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Rockford Files*, and *Lou Grant*. Eventually, he was cast in his own series, *Slattery's People*, in 1964.

Playing the "idealistic, reform-minded state legislator" James Slattery augmented Richard Crenna's credentials. This political drama, produced by Bing Crosby, brought two more Emmy nominations and a Golden Globe nomination for the star during its short run. He kept busy in a variety of television productions, but he would not achieve another regular role on a weekly show until he became businessman Jared Duff in the courtroom drama *Judging Amy* in 2000. So popular was he in these final appearances that the produc-



Wait Until Dark (1967)

Richard Crenna and Audrey Hepburn

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ers planned a February 2003 sweeps episode that had him marrying love interest Maxine Gray (Tyne Daly), but his fatal illness prevented such a story.

Even though he kept busy, Richard Crenna's film roles had their share of peaks and valleys in the last three decades of his life. Two key films from the 1960s mark the maturation of Richard Crenna's film career. In 1966, Twentieth Century Fox exercised its rights to make *The Sand Pebbles*, a novel based on a U.S. Navy gunboat that tried to extricate Americans from political turmoil in China in 1926. Steve McQueen played the romantic and heroic lead in this three-hour epic, and Richard Crenna held the job as captain of the boat, while attempting to control his crew. A year later, Crenna played one of the three thugs who harass blind Audrey Hepburn in the suspenseful *Wait Until Dark* (Warner Brothers).

After a number of disappointing roles in the 1970s, Crenna's film career once again gained momentum in the 1980s, starting with *Body Heat* (Warner Brothers, 1981). In this thriller, he plays the cuckolded husband, who, as the roadblock to their affair, becomes the target of his wife's and her

lover's plan to murder him. One year later, Crenna supported Sylvester Stallone in the first of three Rambo films. In *First Blood* (Orion), it is the duty of Colonel Samuel Trautman (Crenna) to keep the mentally unstable Vietnam War vet from self-destructing or hurting too many people. Two inferior sequels followed. (Obituaries usually lead either with Richard Crenna's roles in *Rambo* or as Walter Denton.) During this same decade, the made-for-television *The Rape of Richard Beck* (1985) netted the actor an Emmy as Outstanding Lead Actor in a Mini-Series or Made-for-TV Movie. Now distantly removed from the part of innocent Walter Denton, in this drama Crenna plays a sexist, masochistic cop, whose attitude about rape changes drastically when he is sexually attacked. In 2001, co-starring with Richard Dreyfus, Richard Crenna played the title role in the made-for-TV film *The Day Reagan Was Shot*.

In 1993, with a nod to his first great success, Richard Crenna assumed the part of Colonel Denton Walters in *Hot Shots: Part Deux*. Even though the actor had successfully shown that he could play dramatic roles as well as comedic ones, he agreed to make the tie back to Walter Denton. Most young fans probably visited the film for its lampooning of many action films, as well as following the more contemporary lead, Charlie Sheen, rather than identifying with a name that had its roots in old time radio. Nonetheless, Richard Crenna never abandoned his springboard to national attention. He even returned to radio a few more times when he appeared with CART (California Artists Radio Theater) to present original shows with OTR performers such as Dan O'Herlihy, Les Tremayne, Parley Baer, and Janet Waldo.

Leonard Maltin, the film and radio buff, who attended Richard Crenna's memorial service, noted that very little was said about



*Hot Shots! Part Deux* (1993)  
Richard Crenna as Col. Denton Walters

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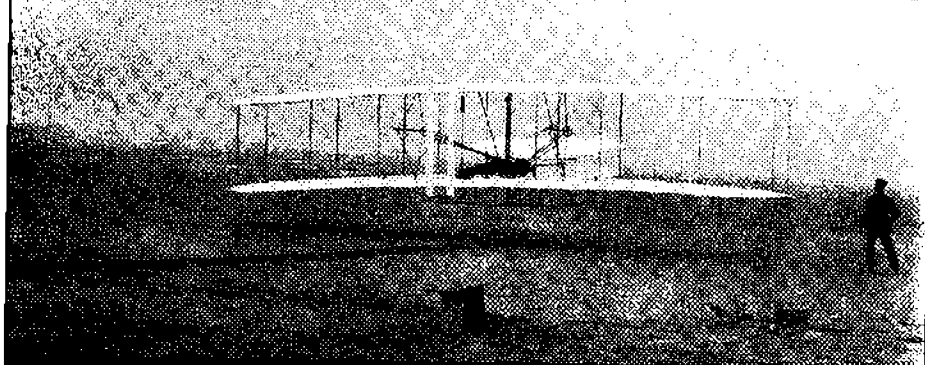
the actor's long and productive career. Moreover, friends recalled what a wonderful and friendly person he was. Bob Newhart even remarked that Crenna was one of the funniest people he knew. Of his passing, Sylvester Stallone said, "He was one of the brightest, nicest, funniest and most talented actors I've ever worked with. He was everyone's friend."

Old Time Radio fans have one additional tie to Richard Crenna: they can delight once again in this very nice man's contribution to radio comedy and even see themselves in the goofy kid whose adult voice has not quite arrived when they listen to an *Our Miss Brooks* show.

Recalling a talented actor is a tribute to anyone in entertainment, but being identified as a genuinely nice person who touched so many over a lifetime of acting is an even greater credit. ■

*TUNE IN TWTD September 6 to hear Richard Crenna in various radio roles.*

# MAN WILL NEVER FLY...



The first air flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on December 17, 1903. Orville Wright is at the controls and Wilbur Wright is running beside the plane.

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## BY CURTIS L. KATZ

Today it is difficult to imagine that for most of history the impossibility of heavier-than-air human flight was an established fact. Actually, it is difficult for us to imagine a time when man did *not* fly. We all do it – travelling in airliners, private planes, or military aircraft. Most of us know people who are pilots. We don't give a second thought to an airplane in the sky. From *Wings to Captain Midnight to Top Gun*, the aviator has, for decades, rivaled the cowboy as hero in our popular media.

But 100 years ago, it was an accepted truism that, "Not within a thousand years would man ever fly!" Such an assertion seems quaint in its ignorance, but it seems startling when one realizes it was made by the man who just over a year earlier wrote, "For some years I have been afflicted with the belief that flight is possible to man."

The author of both these statements was a bicycle mechanic from Dayton, Ohio: Wilbur Wright, who, with his younger brother, Orville, had begun investigating

the problem of manned flight in 1899.

The latter quote, made in 1900, opened Wilbur's first letter to Octave Chanute, a French-born American civil engineer living in Chicago, who at the time was one of the world's leading authorities on aeronautical research. Chanute would become the Wrights' chief supporter, advocate, and confidante on their journey to realizing humankind's oldest dream.

The former quote was made in 1901 when, after two seasons of glider flights over the wind-swept sands of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the dream seemed unreachable. It had become apparent to the Wrights that the widely accepted air pressure charts on which they had based their engineering work were utterly wrong. The task of constructing new pressure data seemed daunting, but it was only one of many problems overcome by perseverance and original thinking that led Wilbur and Orville Wright to their rendezvous with history a century ago. On December 17, 1903, the Wright brothers made the world's first four airplane flights, flying against a 21-mph wind and the wisdom of the ages.

"Inform press. Home Christmas," wired

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*Curtis L. Katz is a transportation historian and writer from Chicago, Illinois.*

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Orville to his father, the Reverend Milton Wright. The press was duly informed, but only a few newspapers nationwide carried brief mention of the story. None grasped its significance, and all distorted the facts. Inventing the airplane was challenging, but now Wilbur and Orville had to overcome a challenge more formidable than erroneous pressure charts and more adamant than gravity: the universal conviction that flight was impossible. The unsuccessful aeronautical experiments of scientists and charlatans throughout the nineteenth century reinforced this conviction, and the indisputable pronouncements of recognized authorities validated it.

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible," was the flat assessment of physicist Lord Kelvin, president of the British Royal Society, in 1895. That same year, America's prolific inventor Thomas Edison told the *New York World*, "It is apparent to me that the possibilities of the aeroplane, which two or three years ago was thought to hold the solution to the [flying machine] problem, have been exhausted, and that we must turn elsewhere." "Flight by machines heavier than air is unpractical and insignificant, if not utterly impossible," was the emphatic view expressed in 1902 by Simon Newcomb, astronomer of the Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., and a widely published critic of aeronautics. Predictably more liberal in his estimate was the famed futurist and author H.G. Wells, who in 1901 allowed that, "...long before the year 2000 A.D., and very probably before 1950, a successful aeroplane will have soared and come home safe and sound." But Wells's countryman, British Minister of War Lord Haldane, staunchly maintained, "The aeroplane will never fly."

Incredibly, that utterance came in 1907, the fourth year after the flights at Kitty Hawk! But even at that late date, neither

Lord Haldane nor many other people knew of the Wright brothers or their achievements. Against the prevailing thought about flight, Wilbur and Orville were having trouble establishing credibility. The U.S. Patent Office was unresponsive, its attitude summarized by the statement made in 1899 by its commissioner, Charles H. Duell, that "Everything that can be invented has been invented." Quietly the Patent Office had adopted a policy of classifying claims of flying machines along with claims of perpetual motion machines, neither to be taken seriously.

Newsmen, even from the hometown Dayton newspapers, could not be persuaded to risk their reputations on investigating a flying machine story, even when in 1904 and 1905 the Wrights took up flying at Huffman Prairie, a cow pasture just outside Dayton. As Orville would later observe, "Flight was generally looked upon as an impossibility and scarcely anyone believed in it until he had actually seen it with his own eyes." Even seeing didn't necessarily translate into believing. Huffman Prairie was in full view of two busy roads and an interurban trolley line, yet the brothers' flights continued to attract little notice.

Most disappointing to the Wright brothers was the refusal of the U.S. Army to sanction a demonstration flight. As patriotic Americans, the Wrights wanted their own government to have the first look at their invention. Ultimately, though, through the aid of Octave Chanute, the first public demonstration of the Wright airplane was given in France. The French had a more credulous attitude about flight, having taken a proprietary interest in aviation ever since 1783, when the Montgolfier brothers invented the hot air balloon and became the first men aloft. What the French doubted was that two American bicyclists with no more than high school

education had solved an inventive problem that had baffled the best minds of Europe.

On August 8, 1908, before a small dubious audience, Wilbur Wright flew circles around the racetrack at Le Mans for less than two minutes, and brought Europe to its feet. Frenchmen laughing, cheering, crying tears of joy thronged Wilbur, embracing and practically kissing the embarrassed inventor. The following month Orville at last began flight trials for the U.S. Army at Fort Meyer, Virginia, near Washington, D.C., to an equally enthusiastic, if not quite as passionate, response.

The world was at last awake to the arrival of the Air Age. But what was to be the use of the airplane? Still befogged by old illusions about flight, not even the inventors or early advocates of the flying machine were sure of its practical possibilities. Octave Chanute echoed the Wright brothers' sentiments when he stated in 1904 that airplanes "will be used in sport, but they are not to be thought of as commercial carriers." Indeed, like the early automobile, the early airplane was initially a plaything of the rich. Dozens of wealthy young men learned to fly, acquired airplanes and, like aerial yachtsmen, organized aero clubs, exhibition flights, air shows, and contests to test the mettle of man and machine. Some of these activities resulted in genuine aviation progress, as when in 1909 Louis Bleriot became the first pilot to fly the English Channel. But they also resulted in an alarming death rate among pilots.

When in 1910 newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst offered a \$50,000 prize for the first person to make a transcontinental airplane flight in 30 days or less, Orville Wright declined to approve the contest, contending that the development of the flying machine had not reached the state to safely warrant such a venture. In the autumn of 1911, playboy Calbraith

Perry Rogers became the first to fly from coast to coast, while virtually proving Orville's contention; he stumbled from Long Island to California in 49 days and a dozen crashes. Despite the dubiousness of his achievement, Rogers was lauded as a national hero: "He takes place with the great pioneers of history..." was a typically effusive editorial prediction. Yet five months later little notice was given when Rogers became the 147th aviation fatality. Cal Rogers quickly became a footnote in the history of flight, eclipsed by trailblazers who advanced aviation beyond mere sport and pushed the airplane farther, higher, faster; pioneers such as Rickenbacker, Doolittle, Post, Earhart, Ycager, and of course, Charles Lindbergh.

From the start, transatlantic flight was an obvious, attractive, and controversial challenge. "The popular mind often pictures gigantic flying machines speeding across the Atlantic, carrying innumerable passengers," observed Harvard astronomer William Pickering in 1908. "It seems safe to say that such ideas must be wholly visionary." That same year, Orville Wright himself concurred. "No flying machine will ever fly from New York to Paris... [because] no known motor can run at the requisite speed for four days without stopping." The weight of sufficient fuel was also cited as an obstacle. "Such an attempt would be the height of folly." Even a Wright could be gladly proven wrong. Less than 20 years later, in 1927, a gleeful Orville Wright shook hands with Charles Lindbergh as he stepped from his *Spirit of St. Louis* at Dayton's Wright Field—the former Huffman Prairie—less than a month after his epic flight from New York to Paris. That night the two aviation pioneers dined at Wright's home, while a crowd of Daytonians trampled Orville's shrubs and flowerbeds for a glimpse of America's newest air hero.



Orville and Wilbur Wright

PHOTOFEET

Wilbur Wright did not live to see the heroic achievements of such great aviators as Lindbergh; he died of typhoid in 1912 at the age of only 45. But he was spared seeing his invention become a weapon of war. Orville was not so fortunate in this respect, living to see the airplane's destructive potential developed through two global conflicts. Like the inventors of the submarine and of the atomic bomb, the Wright brothers believed that "...we were introducing into the world an invention which would make further wars practically impossible," as Orville wrote in 1917 while the first American airmen were heading "over there." Two world wars later Orville could still confide to a friend, "I don't have any regrets about my part in the invention of the airplane, though no one could deplore more than I do the destruction it has caused."

Yet out of the crucible of war came accelerated aviation progress of which Orville was undoubtedly aware, notably the

development of reaction motors—rockets and jets—whose potential defied prediction. The four jet planes that flew honor guard above Orville Wright's funeral in early 1948 were a harbinger of aeronautical advances which, less than two thirds of a century after Kitty Hawk, would put footprints on the moon and take mankind to the threshold of interplanetary flight.

"If God wanted man to fly, He would have given him wings." That was the conventional wisdom of a century ago. But some of the earliest fliers felt that God had done just that. "It is as though we have grown wings which, thanks to Providence, we have learnt to control," proclaimed Louis Bleriot. The hand of Deity seemed implied when Orville Wright, the son of a United Brethren Church minister, wrote in June 1903, "Isn't it astonishing that all these secrets have been preserved for so many years just so that we could discover them!!"

Once discovered and revealed to the world, the winged miracle of flight rapidly and consistently exceeded the meager expectations of the public, the experts, and even its discoverers. When they invented the airplane, the Wright brothers not only "slipped the surly bonds of earth" (to quote World War II pilot/poet John Gillespie Magee), but enabled mankind to slip the equally surly bonds of earthbound thinking. Defying conventional wisdom as well as gravity, the gift of flight has, for a hundred years, inspired humanity to literally and figuratively look higher, to recognize and seize the infinite possibilities of our world.

It is this dual legacy of the Wright brothers—the freedom of flight, and the freedom of thought—that we celebrate in this, the centennial year of aviation. ■

*Tune in TWTD September 20 for an Aviation Centennial, celebrating of 100 years of flight, with guest Curtis Katz.*

# SONGBIRDS

BY WALTER SCANNELL



Dolly Dawn

PHOTOFEST

Although several big band singers are fondly remembered, the lady who started it all, **Dolly Dawn**, is virtually forgotten. Born of Italian immigrant parents, she was the first stylist to have band arrangements built around her. When she began performing on nationwide radio with the George Hall Orchestra six days a week in 1935, Walter Winchell said she “sang like a canary,” giving slang a new word.

Dolly (Theresa Stabile) influenced such singers as Ella Fitzgerald, who, like other black vocalists, was merging ballads with blues. In turn, the success of Count Basie and Cab Calloway with Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday encouraged white musicians to form their own groups, because they could play where black bands were not welcome.

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*Walter Scannell is a history buff and nostalgia fan from Chicago.*

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When **Helen Forrest** (Helen Fogel) replaced Billie Holiday with the Artie Shaw Orchestra, he beefed up the strings to match her dreamy style. After Shaw disbanded the group in 1938, Helen joined Benny Goodman but rankled under his indifference to singers. She made a name for herself the next year by recording singles with Lionel Hampton, Goodman’s vibraphonist, then made it big with the Harry James Orchestra. Her renditions of “I’ve Heard That Song Before” and “I Don’t Want to Walk Without You” captured the longing of women separated by war from their boyfriends and husbands.

By 1944 the big bands were losing their popularity, so Helen teamed up with crooner Dick Haymes for a radio program that lasted until 1948. She died pretty much forgotten in 1999 at the age of 82 in the Motion Picture Country Home and Hospital in Woodland Hills, California.



Helen Forrest

PHOTO LSI





Frances Langford

**Frances Langford** (Newbern) of Lakeland, Florida, wanted to be an opera singer but a throat operation kept her from projecting. Her caressing, mellow voice was a reminder of home for World War II servicemen, and she expressed the vulnerability of a mature woman. Frances never turned down a tour with Bob Hope, once flying to Alaska even after her husband, actor Jon Hall, insisted she stay home, because she had the symptoms of acute appendicitis.

Frances was given her own radio program in 1945, but her slow delivery had gone out of fashion. She developed a drinking problem and Bob Hope reluctantly had to replace her on his tours. But, like most songbirds, Frances was resilient. The creator of the *Baby Snooks* radio series, Philip Rapp, came up with *The Bickersons*, and Frances and Don Ameche were soon having some of the funniest quarrels in radio history.

After her divorce from Hall, Frances married Ralph Evinrude of the outboard motor family and moved back to Florida, where she ran Frances Langford's Outrigger Resort and Restaurant in Sewall's Point.



Ginny Simms

Kay Kayser star **Ginny Simms** was often seen at USO shows for servicemen and had her own radio program. Her high cheekbones and small mouth gave her an almost odd appearance in profile, but this pert and lively young woman was lovely full-face. With fewer jobs for band singers during the war, Ginny flitted in and out of several movies, including *Hit the Ice* with Abbott and Costello. Ginny also hosted the TV variety show *Front and Center*, but her death in 1994 at age 81 in Palm Springs, California, received a single paragraph in the newspapers.

The Hutton sisters virtually burst on the scene. The Thornberg girls were born in Battle Creek, Michigan, three years apart. If you remember the voice of singer-comedian **Betty Hutton**, you were practically hearing her sister **Marion Hutton**. Both had a tomboy robustness that audiences found refreshing after 15 years of Depression and war. Marion was the lead vocalist for the Glenn Miller Orchestra from 1939 to when he joined the Army Air Corps. But there is only so much of a Hutton you could take. Marion married composer-bandleader Victor Schoen and quickly became a has-been, but that is only



PHOTOFFEST

where her story starts.

Bewildered by the end of the band era and overshadowed by her sister's movie career, Marion almost destroyed herself with drink. Realizing that no one was talking about the increasing problem of female alcoholics in the 1950s, she dedicated the rest of her life to helping such women across the country. She also often performed on local radio programs to raise money for her crusade. She died at 64 in Kirkland, Washington, where she had moved to set up an alcoholism treatment center.

Betty Hutton got her start singing on street corners to support her kid sister and alcoholic, widowed mother. Betty was hired by lesser big bands when she was only 13 and took to jitterbugging. After starring in *Miracle of Morgan's Creek*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *The Greatest Show on Earth*, the "Blonde Bombshell" walked out on Paramount, because the studio refused to hire her latest husband as a director.

Somehow the \$10 million she had made slipped away more rapidly than her seven

marriages, and in the 1970s, destitute and addicted to pills, she was hired as a cook and housekeeper at a Catholic church rectory in Rhode Island. With the discipline of her big band years, Betty Hutton eventually earned a college degree and became a teacher before returning to obscurity.

**Dinah Shore's** early life was a long struggle. She was born Fanny Rose Shore in 1917 in Winchester, Tennessee, and contracted polio at age two. Only with painful exercise and continual massage did her right leg begin to grow normally, but then high school classmates in Nashville taunted her for being Jewish. After her mother died, Fanny Rose was left without funds to continue her sociology studies at Vanderbilt University.

With just a few dollars to her name, she went to New York. A vocal coach who happened to be in station WNEW when she auditioned burst into the studio saying, "Hold everything!" But Fanny Rose was so nervous she asked the male singer who also had just auditioned to hold her hand as she sang into the microphone. The young man was Chicagoan Frankie Laine.

From radio, Fanny Rose signed a recording contract with Xavier Cugat's orchestra in 1939. Benny Goodman and both Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey rejected her, because she was too girl-next-doorish. Her break came when comedian Eddie Cantor hired her for his radio show in 1940 and urged her to appear in Danny Kaye's first movie, *Up in Arms*. By then she had taken the name "Dinah" from an Ethel Waters song.

Dinah performed for servicemen across the country, but her lasting impression came when she began appearing as a guest and then as a host on television shows. It seemed as if she would forever be singing "See the USA in your Chevrolet" and throwing her audience a big kiss. After changing tastes ended the variety-show craze, she hosted a long-running TV talk show. Years after her divorce from actor George Montgomery, she had an affair with Burt Reynolds in the 1970s. She was 20 years older than Burt but never looked better.

Montgomery still loved her and was at her bedside with their two children when she died in her Beverly Hills home in 1994, just days before her 77th birthday.



Helen O'Connell

For spunk, how about **Helen O'Connell**, still singing in public at 73? The glamorous blonde had great cheek dimples but was rather self-contained. She left Ohio and hit the road with big bands when she was 16. Helen was still a teenager when a recording of "Green Eyes" with the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra became a hit in 1939. Then came her signature song, "Tangerine."

But Helen retired in 1943, when she was a 23-year-old "darling of GIs." She simply wanted to catch up on the kind of normal life she had missed by pursuing her career. Being the wife of wealthy Bostonian Clifford Smith Jr. meant she did not have to worry about money. Still lovely and bouncy (but never quite personable), in her middle life she hosted the Miss Universe Pageant for nine years.

After her second husband, novelist Tom Chalmers, died in a house fire, Helen married the movie composer Frank DeVol. While being treated at a hospice for cancer in August 1993, Helen performed with a big-band-style music fair at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. No one in the audience was



Dinah Shore

aware of the pain that forced her to cut her act short. She was driven home to San Juan Capistrano, California, and died two weeks later.

**Anita O'Day** was raised in Chicago and practiced to recordings of Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. But like many others needing money in the 1930s, she wore herself out in dance marathons. She drifted into scat songs and survived the transition from big bands to the tepid jazz sounds of Gene Krupa and Stan Kenton. But her fans were unaware of her hellish personal life in which she was raped, underwent two illegal abortions, and had a bungled tonsillectomy that nearly mangled her throat. Her career was further shortened by 15 years of drug addiction. But refusing to let the mistakes of her life keep her down, she returned to singing and was still performing in her 70s.

Imagine sophisticated **Peggy Lee** -- Norma Egström--milking cows on the family farm in North Dakota. When her mother died, the four-year-old wrote a song about her loss. But her childhood soon became a nightmare as her stepmother repeatedly beat her. For the rest of her life, Peggy



Anita O'Day

PHOTO FEST

would cover a facial scar with makeup whenever she was about to appear in public.

Peggy learned from recordings by black singers how to drag behind the back beats, giving her a style of languor and grace. She ran away at 14 and earned some money singing on a Fargo radio station, where the manager gave her the name we know her by. When she was old enough to sing at nightspots, she hopped a train to Chicago. Benny Goodman discovered her at the Ambassador West in 1941 and, without any formal musical training, the 21-year-old replaced the popular Helen Forrest.

Not challenged enough by merely singing, Peggy broke into the virtually all-male world of songwriting and composed some of her top songs. When the big band era faded, she drifted into nightclub work. In 1955 she received an Academy Award nomination for playing a drunken singer in Jack Webb's *Pete Kelly's Blues*.

Peggy's biggest success came that same year when she co-wrote songs for Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*, including "He's a Tramp" and "Bella Notte." She also gave voices to the nasty Siamese cats. After the



Peggy Lee

film became a hit, she insisted that she had saved it by telling people in charge that a dog killed toward the end of the movie should revive for a happy ending. Late in her life, she won a \$2.3 million court judgment from Disney. Peggy continued writing and singing hits through the 1960s. From then on she made frequent appearances in Las Vegas and nightclubs but made no attempt to stay slender. She died of a heart attack at the age of 81 in January 2002 at her home in Bel Aire, California.

The only "canary" who remained in the public eye continually through a long career was **Doris Day**. She was born in Cincinnati as Doris von Kappelhoff, granddaughter of a once wealthy German manufacturer. Although her music teacher-father wanted her to be a pianist, her only dream was to be a dancer. That ended on a rainy Friday the 13th in 1937.

Doris was riding with friends when their car was struck by a train and she crashed through the windshield. The 13-year-old girl's right leg was shattered. As she was recuperating, she climbed out of her hospital bed to dance along with the radio music and fell, severely injuring her leg a second time and extending her hospital stay to a year. Wanting to be in show business but thinking she would never dance again, Doris did what she could with an odd voice and patterned her singing style on Ella Fitzgerald's.

Instead of going out with friends, Doris at 14 was walking up stairs on crutches for auditions. Her voice became whispery in the lower registers, but her delivery was warm and personal. To boost her popularity, a nightclub owner suggested that she take a last name from one of her best songs, "Day After Day." A friend later drove Doris to Chicago, where she auditioned for Bob Crosby at the Blackhawk and was hired on the spot.

At 17 she married a psychologically



Doris Day

PHOTOFLS1

troubled trombonist from Barney Rapp's band. He continually abused her, but she always presented a sunshiny face to the dancers waltzing around her. By sheer determination, Doris also learned to dance again and was ready for films.

Her debut in 1948's *Romance on the High Seas* as a last-minute replacement for Betty Hutton caused no stir, but she showed dramatic talent in *Young Man With A Horn*. In *Storm Warning* (1951), her performance, when she realizes her husband is a psychopath, must have been chillingly autobiographical. But what the public wanted was a frothy Doris Day, first in musicals and then in standard comedies, often starring Rock Hudson.

Doris wanted to rest— she certainly deserved it— but her third husband, Marty Melcher, had committed her to doing a television series without her knowledge. Then in 1974 she discovered that her former lawyer, with Melcher's help, had cheated her out of most of the money she had ever made. She sued and was awarded \$22 million damages. Only then could she retire from show business, which had been so kind and so cruel to her. →



Jo Stafford



Gloria Van

**Jo Stafford** was the first female singer ever to sell 25 million copies. She gained attention as one of the Pied Pipers in Tommy Dorsey's band in 1938. Dorsey music arranger Paul Weston had his eye on her, but it took 12 years for him to pop the question. Servicemen in World War II and Korea fell in love with her voice even without seeing her. No wonder she was fondly called "GI Jo."

Stafford liked varying her styles, making hits out of "You Belong to Me," "Shrimp Boats Are Coming," and "Make Love to Me." She dabbled in jazz and retired gracefully even though, as she said, "The voice is probably there." But the business had changed too much. In the late 1930s, music had been geared for people 18 and up, but the target age had become 12. No wonder songs were missing sophistication and wistfulness.

This leads us to **Gloria Van**, perhaps the last of the big band singers. The pretty teenage Lucille Fanolla had to make it on her own, because her father was murdered by Al Capone's gang. She was working behind a Goldblatt's cookie counter in Chicago when someone gave her a microphone

at a holiday party, and the manager couldn't believe her voice. She took to singing at South Side nightspots and toured the country with Gene Krupa's band.

Gloria was featured on the Lawrence Welk television show in the 1950s, but torch singing was passé. She married fellow singer Lynn Allison and raised a family, confining her musical career to local appearances. Her last performance, three months before her death in December 2002 at the age of 82, was with the Yorkville band at the Paramount Arts Center in Aurora, Illinois.

When Dolly Dawn passed away at the Actor's Fund Nursing Home in New Jersey in the same month, she had seen an entire era in popular music come and go. One reason she died in poverty was that she had essentially stayed with a single band and never developed the resilience other "canaries" needed to stay on the move. Could today's singers put up with what they did? And will they be as remembered as fondly fifty years from now? ■

*Recordings of these Songbirds will be featured this summer on TWTD.*

**An Excerpt From His  
Best-Selling  
Old-Time-Radio Book**

**BY HAL (HARLAN) STONE**

To me, the *Lone Ranger* was a hallmark of Old Time Radio. Along with millions of other children my age, I was addicted to listening to the program. No matter what we kids were doing outdoors at the time, (playing ball, tag, or just plain hanging out), we all made a dash for home to tune in.

I mention this primarily to point out that, back then, I considered myself more of a "fan" of radio programming, (and an avid listener of my favorite shows), than being a part of the medium as a "performer." Go figure! I suppose that stems from the fact that I was about nine years old when I began working in earnest as a child actor in radio.

Having spent the previous five years doing print modeling and performing on the stage, it was just another assignment to me. But as luck would have it, (or by the grace of God), I was equipped to handle it. I had always been able to read well as a child, so sight reading for radio program auditions, and having learned about vocal inflections from my stage experience, made for an easy transition for me. I was spared having to "earn my spurs," and learn my craft, in what was to me a totally new work environment. Things just seemed to fall into place.

Don't ask me how I became known to radio directors and producers. "Known,"



in the sense

that they would contact me to come in and read for any given part. I truly don't remember the mechanics of becoming a radio actor. All I can remember is that I started appearing on shows at that early age. But I do know that an actor, to survive in the business, had to belong to either "Radio Registry" or "Lexington," or BOTH, if they wanted to be:

- a) Known in the industry by people responsible for casting.
- b) Easily contacted for auditions or bookings
- c) Supplied with 3x5 index cards that had a small picture of the performer, a detailed list of one's credits and prior experience,

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*Hal Stone starred on radio as Jughead Jones on the Archie Andrews series and is the author of "Aw... Relax, Archie! Re-laxx!" about his young life in radio show business. The book is published by Bygone Days Press (\$26 plus \$4 S&H, total \$30, softcover, 336 pages including 220 illustrations). To order call toll-free 866-237-5664. Or, send check or money order to Bygone Days Press, P.O. Box 4418, Sedona, AZ 86340. For Internet orders <http://www.by-gone-days.com> ^*

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other pertinent information such as "Age Range" (and when applicable), what "Dialects" they could handle. These "Cards" were then mailed or hand delivered to directors, Ad Agency program producers, etc. Actually, once a performer gained lots of experience and reputation, they were used infrequently.

Being a client of Radio Registry or Lexington served two basic functions. They acted as an answering service for all the New York area performers, and the index cards were a handy reference of available talent that directors and producers kept on file. Radio Registry would also publish and send out annual pictorial "Talent Directories." Actors paid a small fee to be included in these brochures that were sent to all the Agency Producers and Network Directors in the New York Area. Other major cities undoubtedly had similar publications.

As for the first N.Y. radio show I performed on when I returned from appearing in *Life With Father* [on the stage], my mind is a trifle hazy. It may well have been a few appearances on *Let's Pretend*, a very popular CBS children's program on Saturday mornings. But since it was a Saturday morning show, (as was *Archie Andrews*), once I started playing Jughead in later years for NBC, my *Let's Pretend* days were over.

\* \* \*

I was called in to audition for the part of "Jughead" on the *Archie Andrews* show back in 1944, immediately after NBC obtained the broadcast rights from John Goldwater and Louis Silberkleit, co-



Voice Range: 13-25  
Actual age: 20 (1951)  
14 years on actor

## HARLAN STONE RADIO REGISTRY

FL 9-6764

Type Work: Dramatic, Character actor, odd voice parts. Dialects: Cockney, English, German, Spanish, (American dialects).

STAGE: (Horton) in "Life With Father", "Lady in the Dark", "Tomorrow the World", etc.

RADIO: Vicki Family of Five, Let's Pretend, Death Valley Days, Dr. Christian, Road of Life, Right to Happiness, My True Story, Henry Aldrich, Theater Guild, Maxie Rosenbloom Show, Henry Morgan Show, Ethel Merman Show, Etc. Co-Star of the "Archie Andrews Show" for the past six years in the character role of "Jughead".

SCREEN: Carnegie Hall, Whistling in Brooklyn, Army Signal Corps films, etc.

TELEVISION: Henry Aldrich show, (Sing) in "Spring Green" on Kraft T.V. theater. Guest Appearances: Lanny Ross Show, George Fuzum show.

HAL STONE COLLECTION

founders of Archie Comic Publications. It became, and remains to this day, a very popular comic book among the seven- to fourteen-year-old age set. The "Archie" Comic Characters celebrated their 60th Year Anniversary in 2002. And they are still "Teenagers" in Riversdale High School.

It pleased me to learn that the two gentlemen currently running Archie Comic Publications are the sons of the original founders. It's sure nice to know that some things still endure in this fast changing world. My thanks to Michael Silberkleit and Richard Goldwater at Archie Comics, for their assistance when I needed my memory refreshed. And what I found to be even more gratifying, Michael tells me that both he and Richard often talk about the "old days" when the *Archie Andrews* program was on radio, and fondly remember (as young children) being brought into the studio by their fathers to watch some of the broadcasts. And I believe that these two gentlemen are in their 60's. DO I FEEL OLD, OR WHAT!

As I recall, the NBC general audition for "teenagers" to play the main Characters was a "Cattle Call" (the term we used to refer to certain kinds of auditions back then). Simply stated, any and all teenage actors who had a semblance of talent and radio experience, were scheduled to read





Hal Stone when he started playing Jughead

HAL STONE COLLECTION

for the part. They showed up in droves, hence the term "Cattle Call."

The Director in charge of the auditions was Anton (Tony) Leader. The administrative assistants in the casting department would stagger the audition "call times," probably 10 minutes apart, so the area outside Studio 3B wouldn't get too clogged with the hopeful and aspiring candidates for the four "juicy" parts that were up for grabs: Archie, Jughead, Betty and Veronica.

In extensive casting sessions like that, it was usually a wocding out process. Everyone scheduled would get a chance to look the audition script over before going into the studio (to familiarize themselves with the dialogue), then be called in one at a time to read "on mike" for the Director (and other interested parties), who were sitting in the control room behind the big sound-proof plate glass window.

I recall when it was my turn, Tony Leader, (who I had worked for prior to this audition), pressed his "Talk Back" button as I entered the studio and said over the speaker, "Hello, Harlan. How're you doing?" I'd of course wave at him, and reply into the microphone, "Fine, Mr. Leader."

He then asked if I was familiar with the Archie Andrews Comic Book characters,

and I indicated that I was. He then said, "What I'd like you to do for me is to read the part the way you think Jughead would sound. You know what he looks like. How do you think he'd sound? The only thing I ask is that you don't make him sound like Homer on the Henry Aldrich show, O.K.?" I nodded I understood and replied, "Yes Sir." He then said, "Any questions?" I responded, "No, sir!" He said, "Great, let's go. On my cue." He turned to say something to some other people sitting behind him in the glass-encased control room, turned back to face me standing in front of the mike, then "threw" me the hand cue to start. (An index finger pointed in my direction.) At any rate, after doing a brief scene, Tony Leader looked up from writing some notes, turned to say something else to the people behind him, then "keyed" his talk-back mike and said, "Thanks, Harlan, we'll let you know." The standard line after almost all "general" auditions.

The routine of auditioning went on for quite a while. All us "cattle" were given their chance to moo a bit. The "Kids" that were called that day, (or for any other major audition), were always a study in contrasts. The older boys, (age 18 and up who could "play" younger) were usually "strictly business," friendly, but highly competitive. For many of those older kids, (at that stage in their lives) performing was their principal means of economic survival. Besides, there wasn't all that much work to go around in the teenage range, so getting a job was serious business to them.

However, if you took these "job hunting" sessions too seriously, and didn't get the part, the rejection could often result in depression and insecurity. Who the hell needs that as youngsters in their formative years! But of course, we also had our share of the the real "eager beavers." These kids were generally programmed by their

respective stage mothers to approach everything with a "no nonsense," stand-offish attitude. We were "the enemy" to them, and in particular, their mothers. The pressure brought on these kids by their stage mothers must have made lots of psychiatrists rich in later years.

It was probably a few days later that my folks told me that NBC had phoned and wanted me back to read again. I don't think that I experienced any particular feeling of elation or excitement at the news. (Although I can't say the same for my parents.) At that stage in my life, I had already spent five years as a radio performer, and was pretty well used to the casting procedure. I knew enough by then not to get my hopes up in case I wasn't the final choice. It was just part of the routine as far as I was concerned. A weeding out process. Had I known that it would be such a successful and long-running role, representing many talent fees over many years, I might have thought quite differently at the time. And I'm sure that even my folks didn't realize the nature of the program that I was auditioning for, or its potential. I doubt that they were even aware of the popular comic book characters that the show was based on, much less gave any thought to the program's importance to their "fair haired" boy's future and career.

At this point in the narrative, things are a bit blurred in my mind. I really don't remember if there were any other kids waiting outside the studio to read the day that I went back to NBC. I just remember meeting Charlie Mullen for the first time, and he and I read opposite each other. Charlie (NBC's original "Archie") was a slightly chubby and extremely affable guy. He was very animated and threw himself into the part with enthusiasm. I had taken the tack that Jughead should deliver his lines in what we called a "deadpan"

approach, laconic perhaps. To me the comic book character looked "sleepy" and more than a bit "goofy," so my "underplayed" squeaky-voiced approach was apparently a good balance against Charlie's upbeat excitable characterization. At least that's undoubtedly what the brass at NBC must have decided.

One hears the word "chemistry" bandied about fairly often nowadays. Well, we definitely fed off each other's chemistry that day.

Following our reading, we were asked to wait outside the studio for a little while. I guess that's when a bit of nervous anticipation set in. We both realized that back inside the control room, the "powers that be" were close to making a decision, and that we'd know soon enough. Tony Leader stuck his head back out the studio door and said, "O. K., guys. Come on back in!"

At that point, a group of men (who had been in the control room) were sitting around the large "cast" table that was a fixture in each studio. Charlie and I were instructed to sit down opposite them. Then Tony said (with a big smile on his face), "Congratulations boys, you got the parts!"

\* \* \*

[*Archie Andrews* co-starring Charlie Mullen and Harlan Stone went on the air in 1943 and it wasn't long before Mullen was drafted into the Army and was replaced by Bob Hastings,] another sterling individual, an extremely talented actor, handsome man about town, good buddy, and one destined for stardom, who eventually took over the part of Archie. (He paid me to say that.)

Here's the way it happened. During Charlie Mullen's final weeks on the show (before reporting for Army basic training), NBC was auditioning like mad to find a replacement that could handle the part of "Archie" as well as Charlie did. They



Hal Stone as Jughead, Bob Hastings as Archie,  
Gloria Mann as Veronica

HAL STONE COLLECTION

wanted to preserve the same quality that he brought to the character, and that wasn't easy. That quest kept me busy after the end of each Saturday broadcast. Following the show, I'd have to hang around the studio to read opposite the candidates when they came in to audition for the role.

One fine day, into studio 6A, walks this handsome Army Air Force officer, wearing his dress pinks. As you can imagine, because of my interest in the military back then, I almost snapped to attention. He explained to the director that he was visiting a friend on the second floor who told him they were holding open auditions for *Archie*, and would there be an opportunity for him to read for the part. Now, who could say no to one of our returning "heroes"?

Actually, I jokingly accused him, later on, of wearing his uniform to the audition that day just to evoke sympathy and influence the casting decision based on patri-

otic zeal and the love affair the county had for our returning G.I.s.

That was my first encounter with the infamous Lt. Bobby Hastings. And I'm thrilled that it was not destined to be my last.

Bobby got the part because I told the director that I'd work with the kid a bit and teach him everything I knew. (Just kidding, folks.) But you must understand something. After working with him over the following seven or eight years, this is one of the rare occasions that I can get a word in edgewise concerning him, and he can't get back at me unless he writes his own book. Now I ask you. Does this look like someone you'd trust to be a Bom-

bardier-Navigator of a very expensive B-29 bomber?

Bobby was about five years older than I was at the time, but lately, he claims to be many years my junior. But back then, (thankfully), he never treated me like some wet-behind-the-ears kid, and he could act as silly as the rest of us when we were in character. (But then again, sometimes "out" of character as well.) I think that's partly due to the fact that he will never grow up, and never ages. Despite being frozen in time, he is now a proud father and grandfather many times over. (He's probably even a great-grandfather by now.) Whenever I see him lately, I swear he keeps getting face lifts. No one that old should look that young. But his lovely and charming wife, Joan, swears that he's not a retouched individual, or a younger looking clone. ■

*Time in TWTD July 26 to hear Hal Stone and Bob Hastings in Archie Andrews.*



# Lydia Pinkham's Fabulous Compound

BY JOHN DINAN

It didn't come as a surprise when Radcliffe College's Schlesinger Library became the repository of the papers of Lydia Pinkham of Vegetable Compound fame. It didn't matter that her fabled "medicine" contained no vegetables and wasn't a compound. Lydia Pinkham is deemed by Radcliffe as a woman who has done much for womanhood by developing and marketing her fabulous concoction. When asked why Radcliffe wanted Lydia's papers, the curator's eyes opened wide in surprise: "Why, for all she's done for women, of course."

Over the turn-of-the-century years patent medicines proliferated over the American landscape to the point where almost every community had a regional, if not local, brewer of some elixir or other which could cure anything and everything from flat feet to a leaning chimney. While these "medicines" were worthless as remedies for any ills, real or imagined, it has been suggested that the alcohol base (often as great as 21 per cent) provided a certain psychological sedation and the geniality of a cocktail at a time when female drinking was frowned upon.

After the panic of 1873, Lydia, faced with severe economic hardship, put together a mixture she called "The Greatest Medicine Since the Dawn of Mankind." Selling for a dollar, the Vegetable Compound was touted as a mighty elixir for all Victorian "woman problems":

*Some of the conditions which disappoint*

*John Dinan is a free-lance writer from  
Topsfield, Massachusetts.*

*the hope of children are displacement of the womb, constriction of the ovaries, local catarrhal conditions, obstructed menstruation, and abnormal growth or tumors.*

Lydia suggested that women take the compound daily and "let the doctors alone." In fact, much of her pitch was based on a distrust of the medical profession.

What was in this compound? The formula, locked behind double-steel doors in the Lynn, Massachusetts, plant, revealed a hodge-podge of roots:

Life Root-*Sececio Gracilis*  
Pleurisy Root-*Aselepias tuberosa*  
False Unicorn Root-*Hcleonia dioica*  
True Unicorn Root-*Aletris fairnosa*  
Chamomile-*Anthemis*  
Dandelion-*Taraxacum*  
etc.

and the magic touch:

Ethyl alcohol

"used solely as a solvent and preservative"

This formula was adjusted over the years to comply with various acts and laws as they were promulgated—the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, the Regulations of the Bureau of Chemistry circa 1914, etc.—keeping the Compound one step ahead of the law while the powerful American medical Association took a what-the-hell attitude:

*Another day, another ingredient, but still essentially the same old female weakness nostrum. Grandma used it, her daughter tolerated it, but her granddaughter should know better...* AMA Journal, Dec. 17, 1938.

So, given all of this, what is the value of the Lydia Pinkham papers? The answer



Lydia Pinkham

JOHN DINAN COLLECTION

lies in the personal correspondences solicited by Lydia. The Pinkham factory employed all-female help including a staff hired to answer questions, all in the fashion of the "Dear Abby" columns of today, and thus provide a history of sorts of women's preoccupations of the day.

The Pinkham Papers themselves are ensconced in the Schlesinger Library, but there are ample copies of a number of booklets and trade cards published by Pinkham which can be had at local paper shows for only a few dollars. Two of these publications contain user dialogue: "Facts and Fancies" and "Lydia E. Pinkham's Private Text Book Upon Ailments Peculiar to Women:"

*Eight years ago I got into an awful condition with what the doctor said was falling of the womb. I would have spells of bearing-down pains until he would have to give me morphine and when I could not stand that they would put hot cloths to me. The doctor said I would never have any*

*children without an operation. A neighbor, who knew what your medicine would do, allowed me to give Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound a trial. I did so and I have never had a return of my old trouble. The next September I gave birth to as healthy a boy as you can find, and now I have two more children.*

The fabled Vegetable Compound delivers once again. It was the principal product of the Pinkham line of nostrums which included a blood purifier, liver pills and a sanative wash. The maladies which could effectively be treated by one or more Pinkham products ranged from anemia to rheumatism and included kidney diseases, colds, impure blood, mental derangement, hysteria and nervous disease, sterility, tumors and dyspepsia, to name but a few.

Lydia was an influential woman in Lynn, Massachusetts, involving herself with the spiritualist world and civil rights activities. Most of the purveyors of patent medicines found themselves wealthy and influential people. In at least one case a town was named after one of these people. Ayer, Massachusetts, (home of Fort Devens) was cut out of Lowell, Massachusetts, and named after "Dr." Frederick J. C. Ayer of Blood-Enriching Sarsaparilla fame.

Lydia sold her patent medicine well into the twentieth century and, with the respectful archiving of her papers by Radcliffe, her immortality is assured.

The bottom-line question—did the Compound do any good?—can be answered "probably, yes." The power of suggestion coupled with the "medicinal" effects of an afternoon cocktail probably did much to create a generalized euphoria, not to mention Lydia's feminist employment practices, which were revolutionary for her day.

And who knows that all those roots didn't have some curative effects given the major drug companies' investigation of barks, herbs and what else. ■

# Oh, How We Loved *The Halls of Ivy*

BY GARDNER KISSACK

While not the brightest star in the glittering galaxy during radio's golden days, *The Halls of Ivy* nevertheless remains a glowing example of radio programming at its finest, as one of the most carefully crafted, thoroughly written, warm, witty, and superbly acted series.

Introduced late in the Radio Days and at a time when television was siphoning writers and actors from traditional talent banks, as well as radio listeners, the program lasted a mere two seasons (1950-52), although more than four dozen shows were aired.

Ronald Colman and his actress-wife Benita Hume, both accomplished and established international thespians, assumed the roles of Ivy College president and First Lady of the unusually serene campus "in the town of Ivy, USA" as intoned weekly by announcer Ken Carpenter.

Colman, who had hosted and starred in radio's *Favorite Story* (1946-49) as Dr. William Todhunter Hall, Ph.D., LL.D., and M.A., the traditional bookish scholar. Hume was the former popular London stage actress Victoria Cromwell. According to the show's story line, he had seen her perform some 26 times and they finally met while he was on sabbatical to England some years earlier. Presumably, that was in the 1930s or late 1920s, because he once told her that when he left the United States for his sabbatical the dance craze was "the Big Apple."



PHOTO: HEST

The program's theme music, ever poignant and softly sung by soothing male voices, their melody wistfully wafting across campus, was, of course, "The Halls of Ivy," © 1950, written by Henry Russell and Vick Knight.

On the inaugural show, January 6, 1950, the Halls together await with anxious anticipation his possible and hoped-for reappointment as Ivy president by the school's Board of Governors. Victoria's vivacious persona and reputation are grist for the mills of some of the starchier board members, who preferred a more matronly, dignified figure to represent the college in such a visible and prominent position. In an early episode, for example, she led and sang a rousing rendition of that popular and mid-century Merv Griffin hit, "I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts." Dr. Hall's reserved countenance and witty humor and his wife's deliciously enthusiastic, infectious laughter were a weekly invitation, for two seasons, anyway, to delightful and fulfilling radio listening.

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

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Husband and wife in real life as well as on Ivy's campus, the Colman-Halls were affectionately attuned to each other, nuances in sync, fondly, warmly and obviously enjoying themselves and their roles on every show.

Victoria, the thoughtful, talented, energetic, sensitive and supportive spirit, amuses and enthuses, elevates and elates her deliberate, wise, professor-become-college president husband. Dr. Hall was bound by tradition yet cautiously appreciative of innovation and a staunch defender of moral standards and contemporary mores in the seemingly innocent years before moral relativism and campus turmoil. Together they were counselors of the first water to Ivy students, and sometimes to fellow faculty members and staff as well.

The Hall house at "One Faculty Row" was a welcome haven to all, especially to those away from their homes for the first time. The weekly radio visit to Ivy College seemed to include a personal invitation to the listener to sit for a while or, perhaps, peruse the bounty of books bound in luxurious leather which surely lined the shelves of the president's library lair.

A strong, talented cast included Willard Waterman as board member John Merriweather, a wealthy ("loaded" and "filthy rich" he liked to say), effusive, gregarious admirer, supporter and defender of the Halls, and Herb Butterfield as Clarence Wellman ("Ivy, class of aught seven"), the usually grouchy, suspicious board member who later became chairman. Others included, from time to time, Gale Gordon, Gil Stratton, Jr., Lee Patrick, Paula Winslowe, Herb Vigran, William Conrad, Bill Thompson, Bob Sweeney, Sheldon Leonard, Elizabeth Patterson and Gloria Gordon.

The show was created by Don Quinn (of *Fibber McGee and Molly* fame), who contributed to most of the programs but left

much of the day-to-day writing to Jerome Lawrence, Robert Lee, and Milton and Barbara Merlin. Quinn's influence and guiding genius were everywhere and obvious. The witty and literate scripts were the heart of the show and made the drama entertaining, instructive, often inspiring and mostly thoroughly enjoyable. These scripts were humorous but seldom hilarious. Sometimes they were frivolous, yet regularly laced with scholarly references and quotations, dialogue from Shakespeare (Quinn closed the final show with lines from *The Tempest*: "Our revels are now ended... we are such stuff as dreams are made on..."). The show's lines included reverse clichés, some strained and painful puns and even a sprinkling of Latin now and then (promptly translated).

Simply constructed plots, set in the familiar collegiate community of Ivy, often focused on a student's course or career choice or social life; a professor's personal dilemma; fund-raising for a new campus building or the dignified and learned president's book writing. Once, when Penny, the Halls' maid (who could be at once droll and dense) heard that he had been "working on a book for three years" she admonished and advised him to "read



Benita and Ronald Colman

PHOTOFEET

faster" (she could read a book, she claimed, in much less time) and "don't form every word with your lips as you read" and "it helps to put your finger on the line as you read along."

Story lines on *The Halls of Ivy*, although usually light-hearted and jovial—Dr. Hall baby-sits, students build a snowman, a mummy is lost or stolen—on occasion turned serious.

On one program Dr. Hall refused to accept a much-needed donation of \$250,000 from the father of an Ivy student, because the money was for a favor to be granted—arranging for the son's acceptance into a fraternity—and because the source of the money was the father's less-than-legal income. Referring to the father after the turndown, Dr. Hall quips to his wife, "A man who lifted himself up by his own bootlegs." Another time Dr. Hall counsels a co-ed who was embarrassed by her father's role as a campus vendor but who was, in fact, a war hero, appropriately honored by show's end.

Sometimes overlooked for its apparent lightness and good humor, while not ignoring human frailties, foibles and failures, *The Halls of Ivy* emphasized everyday victories and the enduring human, and humane, spirit. After each program the listener felt good or at least better, satisfied with the comfortable, and comforting, conclusion.

John Dunning, in his *On the Air Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, concluded that the show was "a pleasant half-hour that holds its charms" even decades later, and he reflects on Don Quinn's love of words "that made *McGee* such a classic" with samples from *Ivy* of reverse clichés: "Wellman is a snob with a capital dollar sign, if I may phrase a coin," Hall says. And on another show: "Spring is that time of year when the man rises in a sap's veins." Once Dr. Hall rephrased a line from the

Bard's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* when Victoria had a hive problem: "What bees these mortals fool."

Quinn's fondness for alliteration, so expected from the frisky, frank, foxy, fanciful, flighty, flippant, flappable, fault-finding Fibber (McGee), also showed up at Ivy as Mrs. Hall, unexpectedly and seemingly off-the-cuff as if she surprised even herself, says, "Doctor declines to disturb his day with drudgery." When Dr. Hall complained to her that subscription inserts were interfering with his magazine reading pleasure so he was "particularly petulant" plus provoked, Victoria asked, "Shall I open up another can of P's?" and he replied "You'd better, because I have a parcel of pertinent, peevish and pungent paragraphs to present about publishers who plague the public with protruding pages in their pesky publications." Although the listener knows the lines are scripted, Colman delivers them with hesitation and relish as if discovering each word spontaneously.

Never claiming to be a scholarly poet, the college president might spout an informal few lines to Victoria by way of expressing his gratitude to his tactful spouse for assisting with a touchy problem directly involving Clarence Wellman. He recites, with apology, his couplet that he called "Advice on Practical Plumbing" in praise of all helpful wives:

"For that difficult task,  
Just go to your bench,  
And select for the job  
An adjustable wench."

Contemporary references abound throughout *The Halls of Ivy*. On one show the erudite Doctor of Philosophy hesitatingly acknowledges that, yes, he had heard of Jack Benny, somewhere—a bit of an inside joke in that the Colmans and the Bennys were neighbors and good friends and he and Benita had often appeared with great success on the *Jack Benny Program*.





Another week, maid Penny from London, with a pronounced British accent reminiscent of early Eliza Doolittle, is urged by the Halls to speak Truman's English, not the King's!

A regularly-used device on the show was employed weekly as the usually resolute Dr. Hall, in a moment of reverie, would flashback dreamily to the time of his and Victoria's courtship in Britain, sometimes lingering in the far-away several minutes before a ringing telephone or door chime or his wife's voice would gradually bring him back to the current moment—a smooth segue—often with an insight from the past to assuage the immediate situation. This was usually accomplished so skillfully that it blended easily into the story.

For the final broadcast, June 25, 1952, Ivy College is about to close down for the summer. It is a pleasant, bittersweet farewell and a fitting conclusion to the unforgettable series. Quinn, in top form, gets the sole credit for this denouement and one can just about hear his big broom sweeping the office corners for all the unused, accumulated, set-aside, saved gags, cleverisms, clichés and puns being poured with joy, gusto and even pride nearly non-

stop through the first half of the finale.

*The Halls of Ivy* was a supreme representative of simpler and gentler times, now all but gone, but surely remembered in the lingering, mellow glow of silent, slanted shafts from fall's fading yellow sunlight on a short September afternoon. Perhaps not as timely today as it was, the program remains timeless with its themes of fairness, justice, individual worth, idealism, selflessness, dedication to principle, and scholarship, like the campus tower chimes, still ringing true, perhaps now more than ever.

The productions were satisfyingly on-target for the tastes of the slightly sophisticated mid-century radio audiences. To hear them once again is to return to our own halcyon halls of ivy.

*Oh, we love the Halls of Ivy,  
That surround us here today,  
And we will not forget  
Tho' we be far, far away.*

*To the hallowed Halls of Ivy,  
Every voice will bid farewell,  
And shimmer off in twilight  
Like the old vesper bell.*

*One day a hush will fall,  
The footsteps of us all  
Will echo down the hall  
And disappear.*

*But as we sadly start  
Our journey far apart,  
A part of every heart  
Will linger here...*

*In the sacred Halls of Ivy,  
Where we've lived and learned to know  
That through the years we'll see you,  
In the sweet after glow.* ■

*Tune in TWTD September 13 to hear the last program in the Halls of Ivy series.*

OLD TIME  
RADIO



CENTURY

Chuck Schaden's

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## JULY 2003

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### SATURDAY, JULY 5 BIG BANDS ON RADIO SHOWS

**HENRY BUSSE AND HIS ORCHESTRA** (1935)  
"Distinctive dance melodies" presented by  
"one of the world's greatest trumpeters." Se-  
lections include "Two Seats in the Balcony,"  
"Ja-Da," "Stolen Harmony" and "Rose Room."  
Vocals by Carl Grayson and Steve Bowes. Syn-  
dicated. (15 min)

**JAN SAVITT AND HIS TOP HATTERS** (9-14-  
37) Noontime broadcast from the "new and  
as yet uncompleted studios of KYW, at 1619  
Walnut Street, Philadelphia." The occasion is  
the laying of the building's cornerstone. Mu-  
sic features "Have You Got Any Castles,  
Baby?" "Josephine," "You Can't Stop Me from  
Dreamin'," "So Many Memories," "Old Man  
Moon." Vocals by Bon Bon and Carlotta Dale.  
Sustaining, KYW. (25 min)

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**CAMEL CARAVAN** (11-18-39) Benny Good-  
man and his orchestra and sextet with vocals  
by Mildred Bailey. Music includes "Scatter-  
brain," "Lilacs in the Rain," "In the Mood,"  
"South of the Border," "Oh, Johnny!," "Sing,  
Sing, Sing." Camel Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)  
**MUSICAL AUTOGRAPHS** (8-21-45) Guy Lom-  
baro and his Royal Canadians play the "fa-  
vorite tunes of America's favorite personali-  
ties." Selections include "I'll See You Again,"  
"Sentimental Journey," "Till the End of Time,"  
"Humbresque," "If I Loved You." Vocals by  
the Lombardo Trio, Don Rodney, Cliff Grass.  
Announcer is Dan Seymour. AFRS. (30 min)

★ **DUKE ELLINGTON TREASURY SHOW** (10-  
20-45) Broadcasting from Radio City in New  
York, Duke presents "KoKo," "Honeysuckle  
Rose," "If I Loved You" and an eight-minute  
version of "Perdido." Vocals by Kay Davis.  
U.S. Treasury Department, ABC. (30 min)

**TOMMY DORSEY NAVY SHOW #1** (1950)  
The Dorsey orchestra with vocalists Johnny  
Amaroso and Frances Irwin present "Song of  
India," "Nice to Know You Care," "Lost in a  
Dream." Don Wilson announces. U.S. Navy  
Recruiting Service. Syndicated. (15 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is big band historian  
**KARL PEARSON**, who will bring additional  
music clips and recordings and talk about the  
studio band shows.

### SATURDAY, JULY 12 AN AFTERNOON WITH ART HELLYER

**ART HELLYER SHOW** (11-14-55) *Excerpt.*  
Chicago's zany disk jockey with records,  
voices, sounds, news, sports and commercials.  
Multiple sponsors, WCFL, Chicago. (26 min)  
**ART HELLYER'S MEMORY LANE** (5-28-68)  
*Excerpt.* The station's antenna was struck  
by lightning; a caller wants music from the

early 1940s; the station's general manager is on a pogo stick. Multiple sponsors, WOPA, Oak Park. (12 min)

**SUPPER CLUB (2-6-61)**

Art Hellyer hosts a live music program with Joe Vito's band, singers Carol March and Bob Vegas. Len Cleary at the organ. Multiple sponsors, WBBM, Chicago. (24 min)

**ART HELLYER SHOW (1954) Excerpt.** Art honors the station's general manager with "This is Your Life, Marty Hogan." WCFL, Chicago. (8 min)

**ART HELLYER SHOW (1960s) Excerpt.** Art covers a radio station office party for one of the girls on the staff. WOPA, Oak Park. (12 min)

**ALEX DREIER NEWS AND COMMENTARY (1964)** Art Hellyer reads the news of the day while Dreier offers an editorial on men's fashions. Miller Brewing Co., ABC. (10 min)

**ART HELLYER SHOW (8-1-57) Excerpt.** Chicago's Number One disk jockey does his thing with comedy bits, commercials, audio clips, commercials, cut-ins, commercials, drop-ins, commercials, comedy recordings, commercials and strawberry shortcake. The legendary "Dr. Kaye" is his record turner. Multiple sponsors, WAIT, Chicago. (22 min)

**ART HELLYER SHOW (3-17-2000) Excerpt.** Broadcasting from his home in Naperville, Illinois, Art presents his 50th annual St. Patrick's Day program. WJOL, Joliet. (15 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is veteran radio personality **ART HELLYER**, who will be with us throughout the afternoon to reminisce about his broadcasting career of more than half a century.

## SATURDAY, JULY 19

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (2-6-40)** Jim and Marian Jordan star in this milestone broadcast, which features the first appearance of the King's Men on the program. Everyone is being extra-nice to Fibber today and he can't understand why. Cast includes Harold Peary as Gildersleeve, Isabel Randolph as Mrs. Uppington, Bill Thompson as Horatio K. Boomer, with Harlow Wilcox, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

**LUX RADIO THEATRE (10-24-49) "Scudda**



Art Hellyer

**Hoo, Scudda Hay" starring Lon McCallister and June Haver in a "drama of a boy and girl and their search for the American dream," the story of a hard-working young man's devotion to a team of mules and his conflict with his abrasive stepbrother. William Keighley hosts. Cast includes Ed Begley, Norma Jean Nilsson, Bill Johnstone, Howard McNear. Lux Soap, CBS. (23 min & 18 min & 17 min)**

**MEET CORLISS ARCHER (9-16-56)** Corliss decides that boyfriend Dexter should become a lawyer, like her father. Janet Waldo as Corliss, Sam Edwards as Dexter with Fred Shields and Mary Jane Croft as Mr. and Mrs. Archer. Sustaining, CBS. (25 min)

**BUT NOT FORGOTTEN (1955)** Pianist Herbie Mintz on television with a quarter-hour of memories. He sits at the piano, reminisces about the past and shows photographs from the good old days. In this outing, he recalls hand coffee grinders, the paddy wagon, Husk O'Hare. He plays "It Had to Be You" and "Over the Rainbow." WNBC-TV. (12 min)

**DANNY KAYE SHOW (1946)** Danny welcomes guest Billie Burke, who is planning a surprise birthday party for herself. Singer Georgia Gibbs joins regulars Butterfly McQueen, announcer Dick Joy and Dave Terry and the orchestra. John Brown is the "average radio listener." Danny sings "Bali Boogie" from his film "Wonder Man." AFRS rebroadcast. (30 min)



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## JULY - AUGUST 2003

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST

### SATURDAY, JULY 26 SATURDAY MORNING RADIO 1947-1948

**Central Time Zone:**

**9:00 AM: ADVENTURES OF FRANK MERRIWELL** (7-17-48) "The Midnight Crimes"

starring Lawson Zerbe as Frank, Hal Studer as Bart Hodge. While on vacation in Atlantic City, Bart is suspected of several robberies in the hotel when he is caught sleepwalking with his tennis racquet. Sustaining, NBC. (28 min)

**9:30 AM: ARCHIE ANDREWS** (11-6-48) Bob Hastings and Harlan Stone co-star as Archie and Jughead. When everyone is locked out of the Andrews' house on a Friday night, Jughead tries to help. Sustaining, NBC. (29 min) *Read the article on page 21.*

**10:00 AM: LET'S PRETEND** (6-21-47) "Bluebeard" wows and wins the beautiful Fatima. After they are married, he takes her to his castle, but she is told not to enter a certain room. Cast includes Gwen Davies, Jack Grimes, Bob Readick, Ann-Marie Gayer, Arthur Anderson, Sybil Trent, Miriam Wolfe. "Uncle" Bill Adams is host. Cream of Wheat, CBS. (24 min)

**10:30 AM: BUSTER BROWN GANG** (7-26-47) It's Smilin' Ed McConnell and all the gang, including Squeaky the Mouse, Midnight the Cat Grandie the talking piano, Froggy the Gremelin. Today's story is about a great tournament in the days of knights. Buster Brown Shoes, NBC. (29 min)

**11:00 AM: THEATRE OF TODAY** (1948) "Thunder and the Miracle" starring Joan Caulfield. On a rainy day, a young woman working in a flower shop in Cucamonga, California, makes a "wish on thunder" to meet a handsome man. Tom Shirley announces. Armstrong Rugs and Linoleum, CBS. (28 min)

**11:30 AM: STARS OVER HOLLYWOOD** (5-24-52) "Mr. Experiment" starring Angela Lansbury as a doctor who has chosen a con-

victed prisoner, suffering from a blood disease, for an important medical experiment. Cast includes David Ellis, William Conrad, Tony Barrett, Joe DuVal. Art Ballinger is host. Carnation Evaporated Milk, CBS. (29 min)

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 2 REMEMBERING ROSALIND RUSSELL

**ACADEMY AWARD** (5-18-46) "My Sister Eileen" starring **Rosalind Russell** in a radio version of her 1942 film about two sisters from Ohio trying to survive in their nutty Greenwich Village apartment. Janet Blair co-stars. House of Squibb, CBS. (28 min)

**HALLMARK PLAYHOUSE** (10-21-48)

"Mrs. Parkington" starring **Rosalind Russell** in the story of a multimillionaire and the poor girl he marries. James Hilton hosts. Hallmark Cards, CBS. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (12-9-48) "The Sisters" starring **Rosalind Russell** as a woman who buys a coffin at a funeral home and asks the mortician to hold it for three weeks until she needs it. Cast: Lurene Tuttle, Joseph Kearns, Jeff Chandler. AutoLite, CBS. (29 min)

**SCREEN DIRECTORS PLAYHOUSE** (2-1-51) "Take a Letter, Darling" starring Fred MacMurray and **Rosalind Russell** in a radio version of their 1942 film comedy. He enters the advertising world as her personal secretary. Cast: Arthur Q. Brian, Jim Backus, Peter Leeds, Mary Jane Croft, Fritz Feld. RCA Victor, Anacin, NBC. (28 min & 29 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is film historian **BOB KOLOSOSKI**, who will reminisce about the film career of **Rosalind Russell**.



Rosalind Russell



Chuck Schaden and Dan McGuire

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 9 FUN WITH CHUCK AND DAN

**CAN YOU TOP THIS?** (11-7-47) Panelists 'Senator' Ed Ford, Harry Herschfield, and Joe Laurie, Jr. try to top jokes sent in by listeners, as told by Peter Donald. Jokes about busses, honesty, teeth and cooking. Colgate-Palmolive, NBC. (30 min)

**HECTOR O. PEABODY SHOW** (1954) with Dan McGuire and Chuck Schaden. Hector doesn't show up for the first show in the series, so Chuck and Dan have to run the premiere program by themselves. Recorded music by the pros, comedy by the non-pros, sound by Marconi. WLEY, Elmwood Park, Illinois. (24 min)

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (1-11-44) Fibber wants to get his income tax return filed early this year. Jim and Marian Jordan star. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (27 min)

**ARBOGAST** (1-11-51) Bob Arbogast and Pete Robinson with sketches, bits, ad libs, recorded music, all live from Chicago. It's Friday night, bath night, so Arbo takes a bath during the program; the "Right to Happiness" won't be heard; Pete's wife had a baby; dramatic narrative: "The City." Multiple sponsors, WMAQ, Chicago. (30 min)

**IT PAYS TO BE IGNORANT** (11-3-44) Moderator Tom Howard and panelists Harry McNaughton, Lulu McConnell and George Shelton with zany questions and answers. "Where is the game of ice hockey played?" "What do we buy a hunting license for?" Guest is actress Shirley Booth. AFRS rebroadcast. (29 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is **DAN MC GUIRE** who joins Chuck Schaden, his old broadcasting and boyhood pal, for this once-in-a-lifetime (?) on-air get-together.

*Read Dan's article on page 1 and Chuck's article on page 48.*

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 16 RADIO AND WORLD WAR II Summer, 1943

★ **PAUL SCHUBERT NEWS** (7-16-43) Military analyst Paul Schubert reports the news of the war and offers a salute to those soldiers who are not on the front lines but nevertheless serve their country in many ways. Virginia Rounds Cigarettes, MBS. (15 min)

★ **KRAFT MUSIC HALL** (9-9-43) Bing Crosby stars with guests Alan Reed (as Falstaff Openshaw) and Phil Silvers. This program, on the opening day of the government's Third War Loan drive, is devoted to the sale of War Bonds. Trudy Erwin, John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. Time Marches Back to 1933. The sponsor of this program turns over all its commercial time to the sale of bonds. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30 min)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (7-10-43) "They Call It Pacific" is a story about Japan's "new order" and a correspondent's account of the early days of the war with Japan. Third program in the series of dramatizations of books about the war. Cast: Les Damon, Sam Wanamaker, Joan Alexander, Ed Begley, Luis Van Rooten, Lon Clark. Sustaining, NBC. (30 min)

★ **TREASURY STAR PARADE** (9-30-43) The motion picture industry salutes the Third War Loan with an all-star cast of guest stars urging listeners to buy bonds: Dick Powell, Ginny Simms, Thomas Mitchell, Olivia deHavilland, Brian Aherne, Grace MacDonald, Kay Kyser and the orchestra, Victor Young and the orchestra. Ken Carpenter announces. U.S. Treasury Department. (14 min)

★ **SUSPENSE** (8-28-43) "The King's Birthday" starring Dolores Costello with Martin Koslick, George Zucco, Ian Wolf. A story about Nazi-occupied Denmark played against the background of the "new order" in Europe and a protest-suicide promised before midnight on the birthday of the King. Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

★ **GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (9-12-43) Hal Peary stars as Gildy with Lurene Tuttle, Lillian Randolph, Arthur Q. Brian, Dick LeGrand, Bea Benaderet, Earle Ross. The Water Commissioner gets involved in Summerfield's War Bond Drive, but he's distracted by school principal Eve Goodwin. Again, the sponsor of this show turns over all its commercial time to the Third War Loan. Kraft Foods, NBC. (29 min)

OLD TIME  
RADIO



CENTURY

Chuck Schaden's

# THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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## AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2003

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 23 ARTHUR GODFREY CENTENNIAL 1903 — 2003

*Arthur Godfrey was born August 31, 1903.*

**ARTHUR GODFREY TIME (1-13-47)** Arthur honors the 1947 All-American Esquire Jazz Book Award winners Billie Holiday and Teddy Wilson. Also performing are Jeanette Davis, Frank Saunders, Naomi Wright, Archie Bleyer and the orchestra. Announcer is Tony Marvin. Sustaining, CBS. (29 min)

**THIS IS THE STORY (10-21-45)** Arthur Godfrey narrates the true story of Barnaby Goodchild, a "legendary American who never grows old" from Walter Kerr's American musical "Sing Out Sweet Land." Burl Ives, as Barnaby, sings "On Top of Old Smoky" and "Blue Tail Fly." AFRS rebroadcast. (29 min)

**ARTHUR GODFREY'S TALENT SCOUTS (9-26-49)** Arthur talks with the scouts and introduces the talent: accordionist Paul Norback, ladies' barbershop quartet The Chordettes, comedian Wally Cox, soprano Joan Dexter. The studio audience selects the winner. Announcer is George Bryan, with Peggy Marshall, Archie Bleyer's orchestra.

★ **FDR FUNERAL PROCESSION (4-14-45)** *Excerpt.* Arthur Godfrey describes the funeral

procession of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Washington, D.C. He says, "God give me strength to do this" as the president's coffin approaches. CBS. (28 min)

**ARTHUR GODFREY'S ROUND TABLE (7-27-52)** *Excerpt.* A Sunday recap of segments of Arthur's morning radio show featuring Jeanette Davis, Frank Parker and Julius LaRosa. Holland Furnaces, CBS. (26 min)

**ARTHUR GODFREY TIME (10-19-53)** *Excerpt.* Singer Julius LaRosa makes his "swan song" on the Godfrey program. CBS. (7 min)

**ARTHUR GODFREY SHOW (3-28-69)** At the beginning of his regular pre-recorded program, Arthur presents a live, six-minute tribute to President Dwight David Eisenhower, after which the network joins his regular show, in progress. Richard Hayes, The Satisfiers. Multiple Sponsors, CBS. (28 min)

*Read the article about Arthur Godfrey on page 40.*

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 30 THAT THING CALLED SWING

**COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA (6-30-37)** *Excerpt.* Remote broadcast from the Savoy Ballroom in New York's Harlem, "the home of happy feet." Tunes include "Shout and Feel

## RE-ENACTMENTS OF OLD TIME RADIO BROADCASTS



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



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2 pm Sunday, July 13

2 pm Sunday, August 10

2 pm Sunday September 14

No Charge -- Limited Seating

Museum opens at 12 Noon

Radio Studio opens at 1:30 pm

It," "You and Me That Used to Be," "They Can't Take That Away from Me." Vocals by Jimmy Rushing and Billie Holiday. " Sustaining, MBS. (17 min)

#### **SATURDAY NIGHT SWING CLUB (6-12-37)**

First Anniversary broadcast in the "series of programs devoted by the Columbia Network to that thing called swing!" Host is Paul Douglas. Announcer is Mel Allen. An all-star Swing Band program featuring Duke Ellington and his orchestra (playing "Frolie Sam"); harpist Caspar Reardon ("Ain't Misbehavin'"); Adrian Rollini Trio ("Rebound"); vocalist Kay Thompson ("It Had to be You"); Bunny Berigan and his orchestra ("Am I Blue?"); Raymond Scott Quintet ("Powerhouse"); Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra ("I Got Rhythm"); Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli from Bricktop's Cabaret in Paris ("Limehouse Blues"); Claude Thornhill and his orchestra ("Flight of the Bumblebee"); Benny Goodman, his Trio and Quartet ("Nagasaki"). A spectacular show of swing music, it even runs over its allotted 90 minutes! Sustaining, CBS. (31 min & 35 min & 28 min)

#### **BOB CROSBY AND HIS ORCHESTRA (3-2-37)**

*Excerpt.* Remote broadcast from the Congress Casino of the Congress Hotel in downtown Chicago. Pierre Andre announces. Music includes "Sugar Foot Strut," "Now" and "One, Two, Button Your Shoe." Vocals by Kay Weber and Bob Crosby. Sustaining, WMAQ. (12 min)

#### **BENNY GOODMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA (4-27-37)**

*Excerpt.* Remote from the Madhattan Room of the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City. Bert Parks announces. Tunes include "Blue Hawaii" and "That Foolish Feeling." Sustaining, CBS. (10 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is big band historian

**KARL PEARSON**, who will talk about the swing scene in 1937 and share a number of music clips and recordings.

## **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 RICHARD CRENNNA ON RADIO**

**OUR MISS BROOKS (4-3-49)** Eve Arden stars as schoolteacher Connie Brooks, with **Richard Crenna** as Walter Denton, Gale Gordon as Mr. Conklin. Denton thinks Miss Brooks has written to a newspaper advice column about Mr. Boynton. Palmolive, Lustre Creme, CBS. (28 min)

**SUSPENSE (10-16-56)** "Prophecy of Bertha Abbott" starring Sam Edwards and **Richard Crenna** in a story of "a boy who ran from a prophecy but couldn't escape its deadly prom-

ise." Cast: Dick Beals, Stacy Harris, Bill James, Jack Kruschen, George Walsh, Peggy Webber, Paula Winslowe. Sustaining, CBS. (28 min)

**A DATE WITH JUDY (5-18-48)** Louise Erickson as Judy, with John Brown as Mr. Foster, **Dick Crenna** as Oogie Pringle, Myra Marsh as Mrs. Foster, Dix Davis as Randolph. Judy gets her long-awaited invitation to the dance from Oogie, but laments she has nothing to wear. Tums, NBC. (29 min)

**GREAT GILDERSLEEVE (11-16-49)** Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Cathy Lewis as Nurse Milford, Mary Lee Robb as Marjorie, **Dick Crenna** as Bronco Thompson, Walter Tetley as Leroy, Lillian Randolph as Birdie, Earle Ross as Judge Hooker, Dick LeGrand as Mr. Peavey. Gildy tries to help Marjorie's boyfriend Bronco, a college student low on funds, get a job. Kraft Foods, NBC. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE (11-11-59)** "Night on Red Mountain" starring **Richard Crenna** as a man with a mysterious past who lives a quiet life in the mountains with his wife. Cast features Doris Singleton, Joe DeSantis, Peter Leeds, Sam Pierce, Norm Alden. Multiple sponsors, CBS. (23 min)

**OUR MISS BROOKS (1-8-50)** Eve Arden stars with Gale Gordon, **Richard Crenna**, Jeff Chandler, Jane Morgan. For the school newspaper, Walter Denton has written a scathing editorial entitled, "What the Board of Education Means to Me."

*Read the cover story on page 4.*



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*Example:* (SEP-03)

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**SEPTEMBER 2003**

★ INDICATES A WORLD WAR II BROADCAST OF SPECIAL INTEREST

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13**  
**COMEDY SHOWCASE**

**BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW** (5-9-46) George and Gracie welcome guest Harpo Marx. Gracie's a newspaper columnist specializing in Hollywood gossip. She needs a "snooping reporter" to get her items for the column and Harpo gets the job. Bill Goodwin, Mel Blanc (as Mr. Postman), Meredith Willson and the orchestra. Voiceless Harpo meets the challenge of radio and the studio audience loves it! Maxwell House Coffee, NBC. (29 min) *Read the article about Harpo Marx on page 43.*

**JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (5-18-47) Broadcasting from New York City prior to opening at the Roxy Theatre, Jack and the gang welcome guest Al Jolson. Jack and Al decide their career paths are similar in their rise to success. Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Artie "Mr. Kitzel" Auerbach, Sportsmen. Kenny Delmar subs for Don Wilson. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27 min)



Jack Benny

**ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET** (2-27-49) Ozzie decides to show Harriet he can handle the family finances. Cast: John Brown, Alan Reed, Janet Waldo, Hans Conried, Tommy Bernard, Henry Blair. International Silver Co., NBC. (29 min)

**HALLS OF IVY** (6-18-52) Ronald and Benita Colman star as the Halls of Ivy College in this last program of the series. A flashback reveals how Dr. Hall met Vicki Cromwell in England. Cast includes Lee Patrick, Gil Stratton, Jr., Voice of America. (25 min) *Read the article on page 28.*

**JIMMY DURANTE SHOW** (3-3-48) The

Schnozz continues his campaign to run for the Vice Presidency of the United States. Guest Victor Moore joins regulars Peggy Lee, Candy Candido, Crew Chiefs, Roy Bary and the orchestra. Howard Petrie announces. Rexall, NBC. (29 min)



Jimmy Durante

**RED SKELTON SHOW** (1-29-46) The Skelton scrapbook topic is "Looking for Trouble" and features Red as Deadeye, Clem Kadiddlehopper and Junior, the Mean Little Kid. Cast includes singer Anita Ellis, Gigi Pearson, Pat McGeehan, Wonderful Smith, David Forrester and the orchestra, announcer Rod O'Connor. Raleigh Cigarettes, NBC. (28 min)

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20**  
**AVIATION CENTENNIAL**  
**Celebrating 100 Years of Flight**

**FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (6-4-46) Jim and Marian Jordan star as the McGees, who decide to go to the Aviation Show at the Wistful Vista Airport. Cast includes Gale Gordon (Mayor LaTrivia), Arthur Q. Brian (Doc Gamble), Bill Thompson (Wallace Wimple), Bea Benaderet (Mrs. Carstairs), Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (30 min)

**AIRPLANES TODAY** (1960) Arthur Godfrey presents a radio documentary about progress in the air over the years, featuring aircraft and their sounds. CBS. (16 min)

**TAILSPIN TOMMY** (10-5-41) "Flying Actor Murder" featuring "Tailspin" Tommy Tompkins, "ace hero of the skies" and his pals "Skeets" Mulligan and Betty Lou Barnes. A motion picture company comes to the town of Three Point to film an aviation picture. Sus-

taining, CBS. (29 min)

**LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE #1164** (6-16-36) *Isolated episode.* Shirley Bell stars as Annie. While Mr. Bond tells Annie and Joe the story of the Wright Brothers and their airplane, lots of mysterious things are happening in Simmons Corners. Pierre Andre announces. Ovaltine, NBC BLUE. (15 min)

**NEWS SPECIAL** (3-2-49) Frank Buckholzer reports as NBC goes to Carswell Air Force Base in Ft. Worth, Texas, where "Lucky Lady II," an Air Force B-50 bomber, has just completed the first non-stop flight around the world, refueling in flight four times in its 24,000-mile trip around the globe. The crew reports from the briefing room in the 11th Bomber Command Headquarters. NBC. (15 min)

**DUFFY'S TAVERN** (1950s) Ed Gardner is Archie, the manager of the tavern, with Charlie Cantor as Finnegan. Archie's old friend, Slippery McGuire, agrees to sell Archie an airplane — a helicopter. NBC. (27 min)

**OUR SPECIAL GUEST** is transportation historian CURTIS L. KATZ, who will talk about the romance and history of aviation. *Read the article on page 10.*

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27**  
**EDDIE BRACKEN ON THE AIR**

**EDDIE BRACKEN STORY** (1940s) Eddie stars with Ann Rutherford, William Demarest, Janet

Waldo and Cathy Lewis. It's a merry mix-up when Eddie has problems while running errands for his girlfriend, her father and others. AFRR rebroadcast. (27 min)

**SUSPENSE** (3-13-48) "Nightmare" starring Eddie Bracken as a man who dreams that he has killed someone. Robert Montgomery hosts this hour-long program, which features William Conrad and Ben Wright. Sustaining, CBS. (26 min & 33 min)

**MOVIETOWN RADIO THEATRE** (1949) "He Knew What He Wanted" starring Eddie Bracken in a romantic comedy about a World War II veteran looking for a house, a wife and a family. Cast includes Barbara Fuller, Earle Ross, Gigi Pearson, Hal Gerard. Syndicated. (26 min)

**SEALTEST VARIETY THEATRE** (4-21-49) Dorothy Lamour stars with guests Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy and regulars Eddie Bracken, the Crew Chiefs Quartet, Henry Russell and the orchestra. Bergen has planned a business dinner with Dorothy Lamour, but Charlie doesn't think it's all business. Eddie is asked to keep Charlie out of their plans. Sealtest products, NBC. (29 min)

**SUSPENSE** (3-6-47) "Elwood" starring Eddie Bracken. There's been a murder in a small town and a teen-ager, just out of high school, fears that he is responsible. Cast features Cathy Lewis, Joe Kearns. Roma Wines, CBS. (29 min)

*Read the article on page 54.*

*...and for more good listening...*

**SATURDAY SWING SHIFT**-- Bruce Oscar is host for this two-hour show featuring swing music on record performed by the big bands, pop singers and small groups. *WDCB, 90.9 FM, Saturday, 11 am-1 pm.*

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

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

**PLEASE NOTE**

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

*Was" may be found on the Internet at [www.RadioSpirits.com](http://www.RadioSpirits.com) Click on "On the Radio" for the daily and monthly broadcast schedules and archived programs.*



# ARTHUR GODFREY

## An Appreciation on his Centennial

BY LEE MUNSICK

In September 1931, broadcaster and aviator Arthur Godfrey finished his morning radio program, and drove off for a glider lesson. A truck in the oncoming lane lost a tire, and suddenly filled Godfrey's vision! He awoke from a coma a week later, having been given up for dead by his physicians. He had dozens of fractures from his legs to his skull, and a hole in his lung. Godfrey was dismayed.

But he never gave up.

With nothing else to do, Godfrey listened to the radio. He squirmed as he heard his colleagues "elocutioning," using the "broad A," sounding every bit the tuxedo-clad, pompous, snooty snobs which many undoubtedly were, inevitably addressing their listeners as "Ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience."

Godfrey realized that he had been doing exactly the same thing and found this insulting and degrading.

When he returned to the airwaves, he adopted the personal, friendly tone we all came to know. He addressed his remarks to one person. At the height of his popularity 20 years later, there were 80 million of these "one persons" listening, but Godfrey pictured his mid-morning weekday audience as mostly lonely housewives enjoying their coffee with him (later it was



tea). The change brought success beyond his dreams. His influence spread like wildfire to other broadcasters. This success was reflected, as happens in our free capitalist society, in financial rewards. Not only for himself, but also for his sponsors and CBS, which basically saw his program pay its housekeeping bills each morning.

Arthur Godfrey was an emotional person. He conveyed his enthusiasm to his listeners about many things, from products to people to ideas. He was a patriot, supporting an all-volunteer military (see its results today!), encouraging the creation of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), advocating aviation in all its facets, and persuading a wary public that it was safe to fly. He served at one time or another in the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, U.S. Naval Reserve, and eventually U.S. Air

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*Lee Munsick is a radio historian from Appomattox County, Virginia. This article is compiled from excerpts in his forthcoming book about Arthur Godfrey, working title, Be the Good Lord Willin'. His e-mail address is leemunsick@carthlink.net*

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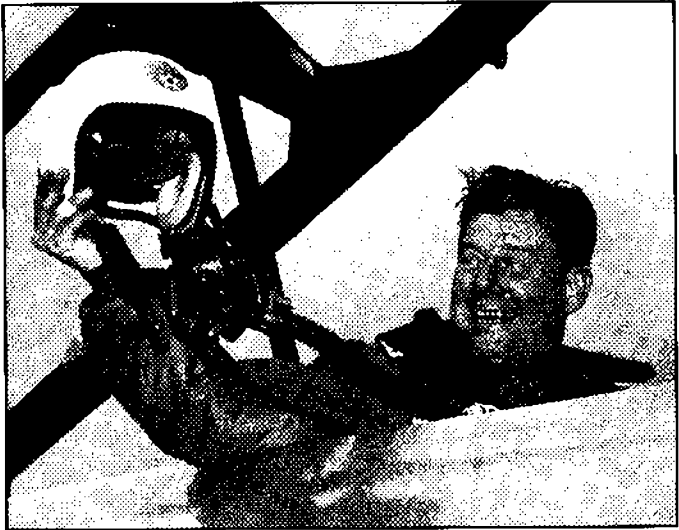
Force Reserve, retiring with the rank of full bird Colonel, USAFR.

Arthur Godfrey was a pioneer and early advocate in the fields of aviation, broadcasting, wildlife preservation, equestrian activities, pure air and water, zero population growth, and other conservation programs. He encouraged the creation of one of today's most important conservation groups. When the fledgling organization needed funding to open its first office in Washington, Arthur Godfrey quietly wrote out a check for the needed amount, asking that the source of the gift not be revealed.

Throughout, Godfrey's health problems remained. Indeed, they were exacerbated by a largely unsuccessful hip-replacement operation, and then a bout with severe cancer. Most of one lung was removed. In the process, surgeons discovered a cancer wrapped around his aorta, like a hand gripping a rope. Godfrey was told to put his affairs in order, as he had little time left. He ignored them, and lived for another two decades.

Following the discovery of his cancer, he went public, revealing that which most people would have kept secret. He became a strong anti-smoking advocate, urging people to stop smoking. He gave up his longtime association with Chesterfield cigarettes.

Physicians said that Godfrey probably saved countless lives, by bringing cancer "out of the closet", and encouraging his listeners to get checkups. He was a board member of the Damon Runyon Memorial



Cancer Fund (now part of the American Cancer Society) and the Strang Cancer Prevention Clinic in New York (now at Cornell Medical Center).

Godfrey lived with pain all his life, from the 1931 crash, cancer, emphysema and other causes. But he never gave up. He succumbed not to cancer. That seemingly just went away. He died from emphysema and resulting pneumonia, wasted and in yet more pain.

Before accepting any product, Arthur Godfrey, members of his family and staff tested it thoroughly before he would represent the sponsor. He had the luxury of a long line of prospective sponsors eager to get on his program, right up to the end.

When he discovered that one sponsor's product was a danger to streams and "ecology," conservationist Godfrey was furious at Colgate, the maker. He felt they had lied to him, and asked his listeners to complain to the makers of Axion detergent, not to purchase Axion, and return any to their store. The product disappeared (although the brand name has since resurfaced). When he discovered that a glass cleaning product made sand, dust and dirt stick to the windshields of airplanes, he blew that

sponsor away as well.

Not one to stick to scripts provided by advertising agencies, Godfrey made up his own slogans. Often they were hugely successful. "Buy 'em by the carton" for Chesterfield is an example. Another, for a man's anti-perspirant, was "Just because you're a man, doesn't mean you have to smell like one!"

CBS paid his principal company Arthur M. Godfrey Productions a great deal of money. The firm in turn paid the high production costs and salaries for the programs. By the late 1940s, he was well off. Family head Arthur Godfrey established trust funds for his mother, his siblings, his wife, and his children, cared for them well. His first wife married a successful businessman. She neither needed nor asked for assistance from Arthur, but son Richard Godfrey said he knew that it would have been forthcoming if required.

Arthur Godfrey's career suffered a major setback when, against his better judgment, he acceded to repeated requests by "boy singer" Julius LaRosa to let him out of his verbal contract with Mr. Godfrey, so LaRosa could go out on his own and make a lot more money.

When Godfrey reluctantly released LaRosa on the air, after nearly a quarter-hour of praise, LaRosa's new agent called

a press conference and depicted Godfrey as that nasty old millionaire picking on this poor young boy. When headline stories the next day failed to clarify that this was the agent speaking and not LaRosa himself, Godfrey quite understandably blew up. He angrily told reporters that Julius had "lost his humility," a remark that was thrown right back in his face. Unfortunately, neither Godfrey nor LaRosa ever put the true story before the public. While the Godfrey radio broadcasts continued successfully for nearly two decades, his reputation, influence and prestige never recovered to their former levels.

His remaining morning CBS radio program, *Arthur Godfrey Time*, left the air in 1972. The villain was the inability of the network to guarantee sponsors that their programs would be carried by non-owned stations, which opted instead for disc jockeys, time checks and constant commercials.

Arthur Godfrey was born on August 31, 1903. He died March 16, 1983, a bit shy of his 80th birthday.

This year marks the Centennial of his birth and the twentieth anniversary of his death. ■

*TUNE IN TWTD August 23 to hear a program in observance of the Arthur Godfrey Centennial.*

## Nostalgia Digest Audio Selection

### 14 SUSPENSE CLASSICS

TOP RADIO AND SCREEN STARS IN *On a Country Road* (11-16-50); *Zero Hour* (1-3-60); *Three-Skeleton Key* (11-11-56); *August Heat* (5-31-45); *House in Cypress Canyon* (12-5-46); *Ghost Hunt* (6-23-49); *Man Who Wanted to be Edward G. Robinson* (9-30-48); *Name of the Beast* (4-11-46); *Face is Familiar* (1-18-54); *One Hundred in the Dark* (9-30-42); *Devil in the Summer House* (11-3-42); *Dog Star* (12-22-57); *Out for Christmas* (12-21-58); *Yuletide Miracle* (12-16-61)

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# SILENT PARTNER

BY WAYNE KLATT

This is a story of a man who became wealthy, but all he really wanted was a bag of jellybeans. And of a man who could become famous only if no one knew what he looked like, what he sounded like, or knew his name. He was, of course, Arthur Marx. Only, you know him as Harpo, and his life was entwined with those of his four brothers

In the beginning was eccentric Minnie and her husband, a tailor named Sam but who was called Frenchie, because he came from French-German Alsace-Lorraine. He was moderately good looking but didn't have the energy of his wife

to run a home with five unruly boys. Minnie was determined to make her sons as famous as her brother Al Shean (Schoenberg), half of the vaudeville team Gallagher and Shean, even though she didn't have the raw material.

Arthur quit school before completing second grade, because he couldn't stand bullying. He taught himself how to read from signs on fences and in saloon windows. Leonard (Chico) quit school at age

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

12 even though he had a sharp mathematical mind, which he plied only when gambling. Julius (Groucho) was a book-worm but at 11 could sing boy-soprano, meaning the Marxes at last had a marketable talent.

Minnie bought a piano and had it hauled up to their New York tenement. Her plan was to teach each of her other boys how to be Julius' accompanist, starting with Chico, the eldest. It didn't matter that he hated music. Minnie soon ran out of money (it would cost 25 cents a week for a teacher), so Arthur

plunked at the keyboard on his own. He soon could use both hands. No one seemed to notice he was the most musical and dreamy of the live boys.

The few times Arthur could afford a bag of jellybeans, he saved the licorice ones for last. More about this later. As an adolescent, he found himself playing the piano in a bawdy house near New York run by a woman whose teenage son led a burglary ring.

The improbable rise of the Marx Brothers is told in a number of books, so let's be brief, and say it happened. Originally, Leonard (Chico) was the star, because he



Harpo Marx

PHOTOFEST



*Duck Soup* (1933)  
Harpo Marx

PHOTOFLSLI

had Minnie's self-confidence and would do something—anything—when the audience wasn't laughing at his brothers.

Once the family established its stage milieu, Minnie took her brood to Chicago in 1910, because the city was the railroad crossroads of the country. They lived for 15 years in rooming houses and cheap apartments. With bookings scarce just before Christmas on one of those first years, the mood was pretty bleak. Arthur brought home a falling-apart Christmas tree to cheer everybody up. *Oy vey!*

Arthur's life changed when he received a telegram from Minnie at a theater in Aurora: DON'T LEAVE UNTIL YOUR SHIPMENT ARRIVES BY FREIGHT.... DON'T GET IT WET. When he opened a monstrous box, he saw a secondhand harp. In two weeks, Arthur taught himself how to play it and Julius (Groucho) became even more jealous of him as Minnie's favorite.

The incongruity of clowning to harp mu-

sic made their act one of a kind. Although the harp was costing Minnie \$4 a week, the boys were getting \$5 more for the novelty and Minnie was starting to think of Broadway. Milton (Gummo) had a good sense of humor and could sing a little, but he never established a stage personality. When he was drafted into the army in World War I, Herbert (Zeppo) was drafted into the act. He was baffled by comedy but was the best looking of the brothers, if only because he was taller than Julius (Groucho).

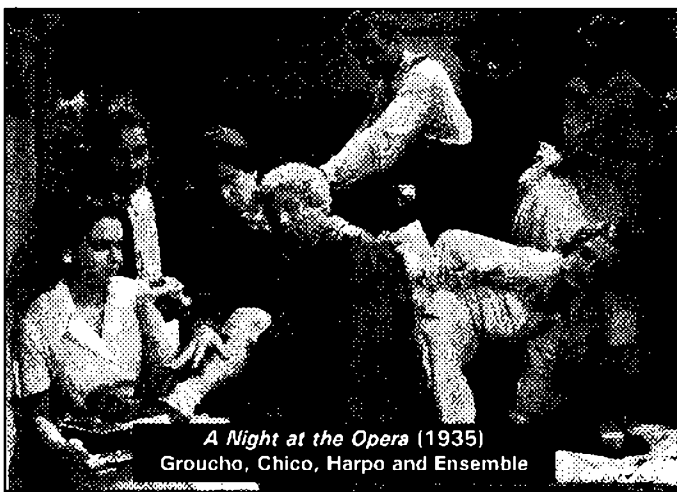
Babytalk was fashionable in the 1920s, so monologist (stand up comedian) Art Fisher gave the brothers their stage names. Groucho always denied the probable truth that he earned his name from his "grouch bag," a sort of wallet per-

formers carried on them. Milton, who continually wore gunshoes (rubber overshoes), became Gummo. Chico (originally spelled Chicko) liked cute girls, and his nickname evolved into the personality of an Italian immigrant. Herbert was dubbed Zeppo, because no one could think of what else to call him.

But what about Arthur, now called Harpo? He didn't deliver his lines well, he lacked the verve of Groucho and Chico, and all he could do was make a hilarious expression like a face about to explode. The expression, called a "gookie," was something he had mimicked as a child from a cigar maker he watched through a window. Then someone came up with the idea of having Harpo not say a word in public. And so magic seemed to settle upon the act.

What could have been a tiresome knockabout without him became something wacky yet human, making fun of everything society people held dear: Love.

Business. Education. International politics. And a woman's honor. The pattern was finally set in the New York review *I'll Say She Is*, which caught the rotund critic Alexander Woollcott by storm. He elevated public perception of the brothers from vaudeville clowns to social satirists.



*A Night at the Opera* (1935)  
Groucho, Chico, Harpo and Ensemble

PHOTOFEST

The show ran a solid year, and Woollcott introduced Harpo to the New York literary world at the famous Round Table, a feast of wit and sometimes wisdom, on the second floor of the Algonquin Hotel. All the brothers were occasional guests, but Harpo was the most appreciated. With Groucho you had to watch what you said, because of his unrelenting barbs; but unassuming, mildly humorous Harpo was a great listener and someone you could relax with during a game of golf. Yet he admitted he couldn't understand half the words his new friends were using.

Harpo made a brief solo appearance in the silent *Too Many Kisses*, then the four performing brothers broke the mold of film comedy with *Coconuts* (1929), from their musical play. That same year, Minnie died at the age of 65 while her boys were in rehearsal for the play *Animal Crackers*, but her check-to-check smile lived on with Harpo.

The final member of the "team" was Margaret Dumont, Groucho's matronly foil. The former singer was more adept at self parody than she has been given credit for. It took humor to keep up with "the boys." When cute Lillian Roth (who would later tell of her alcoholism and physical

abuse in her autobiography, *I'll Cry Tomorrow*) was cast in the film version of *Animal Crackers* (1930), she knew the studio was punishing her for on-set misbehavior.

With Gummo as their agent, the brothers moved to California and made *Horse Feathers* (1932) with Thelma Todd, a beautiful comedy actress who in three years would die under uncertain circumstances after a fling with gangster Lucky Luciano. Also in 1932, Groucho and Chico launched a radio series, *Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel*, the exploits of a low-budget lawyer. Harpo couldn't share in the lucrative NBC contract, because that would have spoiled his status as the silent brother. The program lasted one season.

Low box office receipts from the hilarious *Duck Soup* (1933) made Paramount believe the boys were played out. But MGM knew how to solve the problem. The studio added a love interest, dropped Zeppo, and increased the music. MGM also added Harpo's horn. The result was the brothers' most enduring hit, *A Night at the Opera* (1935).

One Marx Brothers biographer thought the horn was a mistake, because Harpo went from being someone who did not speak to someone who could not. But fans

did not pity the character; his silence lent him the special status. His leading a parade of stable boys in *A Day at the Races* (1937) would have seemed phony if his character had talked and sung. During the filming of this hit, their father, Frenchie, died in his 70s, playfully flirting with nurses almost until his last breath.

At a producer's home, Harpo met the attractive and intelligent actress Susan Fleming, a Ziegfeld dancer whose legs were insured for \$1 million as a publicity stunt. She found Harpo, 15 years her senior, "a warm, fun, darling man to talk to," but he was wary of female friendships. Susan proposed three times to him over four years (as he chased other girls) before he said yes, and they were married for keeps in 1936. They later adopted three boys and a girl.

Harpo's clowning and warmth made him a must-see person for any member of the intelligentsia visiting the MGM lot, including Noel Coward. One draw was to hear what he sounded like. Harpo, of course, did speak to his audiences, but only through his music. He had a single lesson, after eight years of playing a harp, yet could work out complicated arrangements. The interludes are all the more endearing because they are the only times the public

saw a Marx brother being himself.

Since people wouldn't recognize him on the street, Harpo described himself: "Little under average height. Slow and easy of movement... golf-player's tan... inconspicuous in a social gathering... apt to sit quietly with hands spread out on edge of table... occasionally says something out of corner of mouth that nobody seems to hear." Oh, one other thing: "He worked damn hard for every cent... because he started out with no talent at all."

Harpo was not good with verbal humor but was the practical joker of the family. Since an attendant wouldn't admit him into a casino without a tie, Harpo knotted two black socks together around his neck. He once lugged his harp to Eddie Cantor's hotel room and serenaded his friend from outside the door.

The brothers' movie *Room Service* with Lucille Ball, at RKO in 1938, proved they needed their own material and not a juicing up of a standard play. But they remained at the height of their iconoclastic popularity. Harpo's playwright friends George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart patterned the Banjo character on Harpo in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, played by Jimmy Durante in the film. Harpo would have been fine playing himself, but then he would have to speak and spoil the Marx Brothers mystique.

Since Harpo pulled out cards wherever he went—sometimes playing 24 hours straight—he was partly blamed for the demise of the Algonquin Round Table. The brothers thought of ending their careers, but Chico needed money, so they made *At the Circus* (1939), with Groucho singing "Lydia the Tattooed Lady," *Go West* (1940), and *The Big Store* (1941). After that, all of them needed money, so they made *A Night in Casablanca* (1946). They still needed money, but Groucho thought he was getting too old at 56 to be chasing spies, so he

## **NUTS IN A NUTSHELL**

**Leonard (Chico)**

March 26, 1886–Oct. 11, 1961

**Adolph, later Arthur (Harpo)**

Nov. 21, 1888–Sept. 28, 1964

**Julius (Groucho)**

Oct. 2, 1890–Aug. 19, 1977

**Milton (Gummo)**

Oct. 23, 1892–April 21, 1977

**Herbert (Zeppo)**

Feb. 21, 1901–Nov. 30, 1979



*I Love Lucy*  
Lucille Ball and Harpo Marx

PHOTOFEST

notified his brothers that the act was through.

Chico and Harpo thought they could finance a movie starring just the two of them, but realized halfway through *Love Happy* (1950) that it wouldn't work, so they brought in Groucho to play a detective in scenes that were spliced in. Marilyn Monroe did a walk-on.

On television, the three brothers were reunited for *General Electric Theater's* forgettable "Incredible Jewel Robbery." Harpo did scenes for a film of the G. B. Shaw drama-comedy *Androcles and the Lion* (1952), but illness forced him to be replaced by the bland Alan Young. The less said about *The Story of Mankind* (1957), the better. Each of the three brothers appeared separately in a long line of celebrities embarrassing themselves. Harpo was Isaac Newton.

After that, Harpo popped up now and then on TV, most notably on *I Love Lucy*. At his wife's urging, he dabbled in painting and continued being just himself. But

the hunger of his childhood never left them. One night around 1960, as television was starting to make the brothers famous to a new generation, Harpo was on his way to see a movie with his Beverly Hills friends George Burns and Gracie Allen. When they passed a candy shop, he inexplicably "broke into a cold sweat," according to his assisted autobiography, "Harpo Speaks!"

"I was having a seizure. My old hunger for black jellybeans had suddenly returned" after 45 years. So he bought \$30 worth (!) for "the satisfaction of a lifetime." As the movie rolled no one remembered which one it was—the 67-year-old retired clown ate and ate until "I passed out in the middle of my orgy."

In the words of George Burns (Harpo warns that his friend was prone to exaggerate): "The bag splits. Thirty dollars' worth of black jellybeans explodes, flying all over the joint! The audience doesn't know what's happening, only that it's some kind of disaster. People are yelling and clutching their children and putting up umbrellas. They stampede for the exit and skid on the jellybeans rolling down the aisles and fall into heaps [and] Harpo slept through it all. Fast asleep with a drunken smile on his face."

When Harpo died on Sept. 28, 1964, his 28th wedding anniversary, no one outside his family and wide circle of friends paid much attention. He was, after all, only part of an act. But it was an act that would not have been the same without him.

One would like to think he has taught all the angels how to play the harp. ■

*TUNE IN TWTD September 13 to hear Harpo Marx as a guest on a 1946 Burns and Allen radio show.*

# The Elmwood Park Tower

BY CHUCK SCHADEN

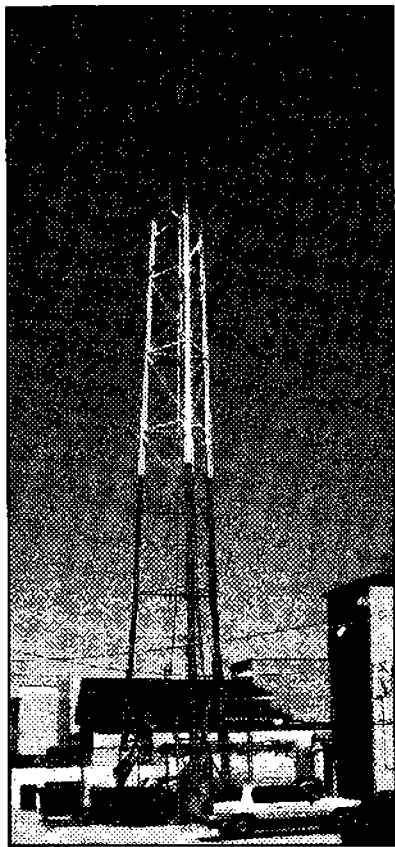
We get mail:

**ELMHURST, IL**— I recently was in Elmwood Park and stumbled across the radio tower off of Harlem Avenue. I remember it as a kid and at that time it was on an empty lot with a small wooden shack next to it. Now it's fenced in behind a small office complex and it seems that the cable running from the tower is running into a basement office. I recall you saying you worked for a station that used the tower. I remember it as the FM tower for WXFM (I think). If I'm not mistaken WKQX IDs itself today as from Chicago/Elmwood Park. Can it be that they're using the tower to broadcast? I thought all the powerful local stations were from the Hancock or Sears tower. Can you tell me what station you were at that used that tower (was it AM or FM)? Anything you can tell me about what stations were once connected to that tower would help satisfy my curiosity. —**KEN DIETZ**

**JOLIET, IL**— I was reading the [Feb-Mar] *Nostalgia Digest* and noticed the letter from Jeff Kwit mentioning the radio tower near his home. That tower was originally used by WXFM, the predecessor station to WCKG, and was licensed to Elmwood Park. In the mid-1980s WXFM was sold and the call letters were changed to WCKG. The station later constructed an antenna on either the Sears Tower or the Hancock Center, but still may use the original Elmwood Park tower. Officially the station is still, to the best of my knowledge, licensed to Elmwood Park. —**ALLEN FREITAG**

Radio station WXFM, where we had a morning drive-time program from 1975 to 1977, was licensed to Elmwood Park, Illinois, but had studios and transmitter in downtown Chicago.

The Elmwood Park station actually goes back to 1948, when it went on the air as WLEY at 107.1 on the FM dial. (The LEY in the station's



RICHARD PORTER PHOTO

call letters represented Leyden Township.) The frequency was changed to 105.9 in late 1955 and the station was sold in 1957.

Call letters were changed to WXFM and stayed with the station until it was sold again in 1984.

With that sale, call letters were changed to WAGO and, under the same ownership, call letters were changed again, in 1985, to WCKG, its present name. Still licensed to Elmwood Park, the station has studios and a transmitter site and tower in downtown Chicago. The suburban tower presently supports only cellular and two-way radio transmission.

But would you like to know the rest of the story?



Elmwood Park's first station, WLEY, was co-owned and operated by a man named Zeb Zarnecki, who in the early 1950s kept it on the air for six hours a day, fulfilling the FCC's minimum daily broadcast requirement. The FM station was just one of a small number of FM stations licensed to the Chicago area and none of them had many listeners, mostly because FM receivers were in very few homes and almost no automobiles.

Studios were in a medium-size garage next to the station's tower just off Harlem Avenue, a block or two north of Grand Avenue. There were two "formal" broadcast studios—one small, the other smaller—and a tiny control room studio with the mixing board, record turntables and a reel-to-reel tape player. Students from DeVry Tech were hired to engineer/announce the programs and play the pre-recorded messages of the few sponsors the station had.

WLEY signed on at 3 p.m. and whatever small listening audience it had was treated to two hours of more-or-less popular recordings (*The Tune Train*), an hour of classical music (*Masterpieces in Music*), an hour of dinner music (*Dinner Music*) and two hours of Polish music and

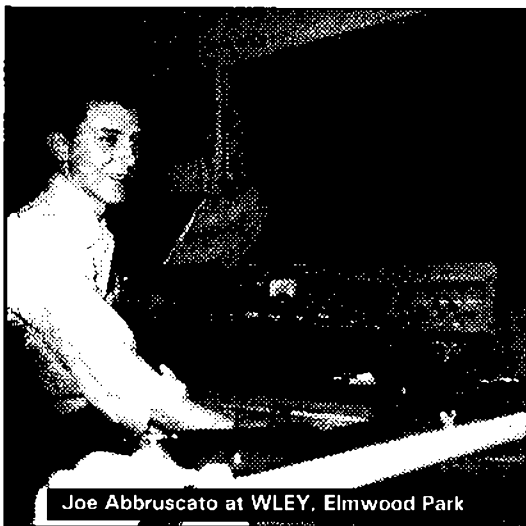
news (*Polish Barn Dance*), after which the station signed off at 9 p.m. The DeVry students "worked the board" for the full six-hour shift and selected program material from 3 to 7, while Zeb Zarnecki himself came in to do the 7-9 p.m. *Barn Dance* in his native tongue and play polka music. In the middle of each show, at 8 p.m., he read fifteen minutes of news from *Dziennik Zwiazkowy*, the Polish language newspaper.

As a teen-ager I was always curious about the broadcasting tower in Elmwood Park (not too far from my home in Norridge). One day in 1953, while I was attending the University of Illinois in Chicago, then at Navy Pier, I decided to take the Grand Avenue streetcar to Elmwood Park to see if I could take a look at the station. (I could never hear it on the air, as my family didn't have an FM radio!) Joe Abbruscato, a DeVry Tech student about my age, was on duty. He answered my knock on the door of the little building next to the tower and invited me in. I was very impressed.

Joe showed me around (it took all of about two minutes) and told me about WLEY. I watched him at work playing popular 78- and 45-rpm records for about an hour and was thrilled to be there. I asked him if he thought it would be possible for me to do a show on the station. He told me to talk to Mr. Zarnecki some evening between 7 and 9. I told Joe I'd be there that night.

When I returned to WLEY that evening Joe was still at the controls, now playing polka records, while Mr. Zarnecki was in the small studio reading the Polish newspaper to himself.

I timidly entered the studio, stood nervously before Mr. Zarnecki and told him of my ambition to be a disc



Joe Abbruscato at WLEY, Elmwood Park

jockey on WLEY. He looked up at me from his chair, listening to my story without any reaction on his face. When I was finally done, he said, "We don't need any disc jockeys. We need money."

"Money?" I gulped.

"Yes," he said. "Bring in some money and you can be a disc jockey."

"How much money?" I asked.

"Ten dollars for an hour," he said as he turned back to his newspaper and began reading it over the air. It was 8 o'clock and time for the news on WLEY, Elmwood Park.

I quietly left the small studio, waved to Doc, and went home. All that stood between me and my own radio show was ten dollars an hour!

But where was I going to get ten dollars to be on the radio?

I was a full-time student at Navy Pier (that's what everyone called the U of I at Chicago at that time) and a part-time Addressograph operator at the National Boulevard Bank of Chicago (in the Wrigley Building), where my father had worked since the late 1920s.

Upon hearing the news of my pending stardom on radio, my father suggested that what I needed was a *sponsor* to support my entry into show business. He further suggested that I approach the bank's Mr. Driscoll, Director of Advertising, (no "Marketing" department for the bank at that time) with a *plan* that would outline my proposed program. The plan, my father said, should show how the bank might get more customers by sponsoring my program. My father also told me not to expect any help from him in obtaining the bank's sponsorship. He would not participate in any way, especially with a "good word" from him to Mr. Driscoll. I was on my own. I understood and started developing



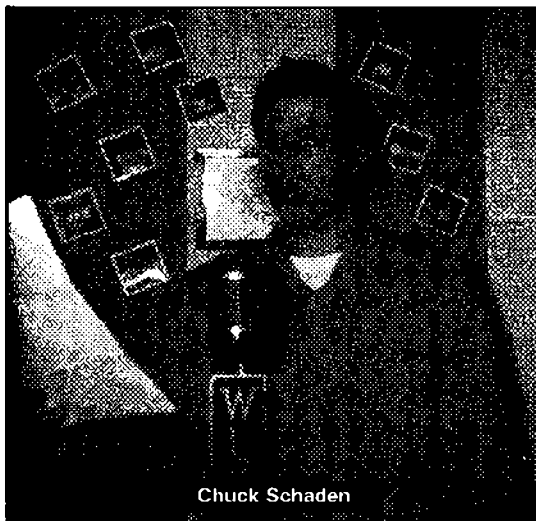
my *plan* that evening.

Being very original, I decided upon a disc jockey show. I would play records, popular records of the day, interspersed with an occasional comedy recording by Spike Jones or Stan Freberg or Jimmy Durante and, of course, witty comments about the recordings by me, the Disc Jockey. I hoped for the 3 to 4 p.m. Saturday afternoon portion of the station's established pop music program, *The Tune Train*. My show, of course, would be broadcast live. I could hardly wait!

I didn't make an audition tape, but I wrote up a sample program outline, listing music that might be played in an hour, carefully positioning commercials for the National Boulevard Bank of Chicago. There would be one commercial at the beginning of the show, one more every quarter-hour, and a final spot at the end of the hour. I had worked for the bank for a couple of years and knew of their "statement stuffers," one-sheet sales pitches that were sent out with monthly statements. From those, I wrote some sample commercials.

Now I was ready to see Mr. Driscoll at the bank and sell him on this fantastic idea.

I knew who he was. He was one of the



Chuck Schaden

big bosses. My father always spoke of him with respect and so, of course, I had respect for him, too. Mr. Driscoll was a tall man who always wore a dark suit and seemed, to me at least, rather aloof. He was a *banker*. When I asked his secretary if I could have an appointment to see him, I was a bit nervous. The secretary knew who I was, who my father was and knew

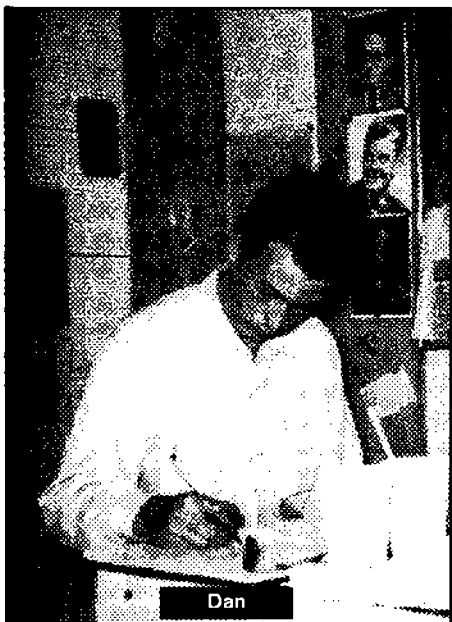
that I worked part-time at the bank. She asked, "What is the nature of your business?" I had to think about that for a minute or so. Finally, I said, "I'd like to talk with Mr. Driscoll about radio advertising."

She checked a calendar and said, "Well, he's very busy right now but if you can come back in about an hour, I think you'll be able to see him."

Great! I went downstairs and began working at the Addressograph machine (automatically addressing envelopes being sent to bank customers) and thought about my good luck in getting an appointment with

Mr. Driscoll (on *company time* yet!).

An hour later I was back at his office and was ushered to his desk. He was cordial, but businesslike. He asked, "What do you want to know about radio advertising?" He thought I wanted to ask him questions about advertising! I thought a few seconds before answering, "I wanted to know if the National Boulevard Bank would like to do



Dan



Chuck

some advertising on my radio program on WLEY in Elmwood Park." I could tell by the look on his face he was not prepared for a sales pitch, but he cleared his throat and said, "Your radio program?" "Yes," I said. "I have an opportunity to do a disc jockey program on radio and I need to have a sponsor. If the bank would sponsor my program, I think listeners would learn about the bank and its services and want to open an account."

He asked a string of questions for which I did not have ready answers: Where is the station on the radio dial? When is it on the air? What area does the station cover? How many listeners does the station have? What other sponsors are on the station?

I realized how ill-prepared I was. "I'm sorry, Mr. Driscoll, I don't know the answers to all your questions. I only know that the manager of the station said I could have a program if I would pay \$10 an hour. So I was hoping that the bank would be my sponsor."

"Hmmm," he hummed. "Tell me about your program."

I gave him my written sample, includ-



Miss Music: Nancy King

ing the commercials. He read it quietly. "Did you write these commercials?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Not bad," he smiled. "When will your program be on the air?"

"On Saturday afternoons, once a week, at 3 p.m.," I said.

"And if the bank decides to sponsor you, what will it cost us?"

"Ten dollars. Ten dollars a week," I said.

"But that's the cost of the time. Do you get a commission on the sale?" he asked.

I thought for a second and told him the truth. "No, Mr. Driscoll, no money for me. But I get *experience* and a chance to be on the radio!"

He stood up and extended his hand. "The National Boulevard Bank of Chicago will sponsor your program for thirteen weeks. Come back next week and we'll have a check for you. And good luck with your radio program."

I had a smile on my face that was wider than his executive desk! "Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. I promise to do a good job for the bank."

A week later I had the bank's advertising check in the amount of One Hundred Thirty and no/100 dollars, and a week af-



Chuck

ter that I was a Disc Jockey on WLEY, Elmwood Park, with the first hour of the Saturday afternoon *Tune Train*.

I think it was the first time anyone other than owner Zeb Zarnecki had sold time on the station.

He was thrilled and a week later suggested that I just go ahead and do the full two-hour *Tune Train* show (no extra charge). Now I was thrilled!

Zeb was a bit gruff on the outside, but a pretty nice guy on the inside. It wasn't long before my pal Dan McGuire was hosting the *Masterpieces in Music* hour between 5 and 6 p.m. and I was doing the hour of *Dinner Music* from 6 to 7. He didn't charge either of us and we were glad to have the opportunity to be on the air.

The bank's thirteen weeks ran out and I just couldn't approach Mr. Driscoll again, seeing that WLEY (and I) really had no listening audience outside of a few of our friends and relatives with FM receivers. But it didn't matter to Zeb Zarnecki. He kind of liked the idea that he had "live" announcers on the air and it wasn't costing him anything. Besides, he had gotten the one-time \$130 sponsorship money from the bank, so he was ahead of the game.

I persuaded him to broadcast for a full day on Saturday. Dan and I and a friend of ours, Nancy King, would do various programs during the day if he would sign on at 9 a.m. and let us go until 7 p.m., when his *Barn Dance* began. All it would cost him was the (very) minimum wage he was paying Joe Abbruscato or one of the other DeVry students. He agreed and we were off and running!

Dan and I alternated with various DJ shows in the morning and late afternoon and Nancy did a *Miss Music* turn at the mike spinning records.



But our main program on Saturdays, the centerpiece of our broadcasting day, was the *Hector Q. Peabody Show*. This was a 30-minute comedy rip-off of Bob and Ray, Stan Freberg and Arbogast. Dan and I wrote it, we starred in it and we took all bows (and the blame).

Movie theatres did not stop the film and pipe in our program when it was on the air. You could not walk down the street, from house to house, and hear the program as you walked along. Not one person declined to make a telephone call while the *Hector Q. Peabody Show* was on the air.

It didn't matter to us. During the year we were doing our thing at WLEY we produced thirteen *Hector* shows and had the time of our lives every Saturday afternoon at WLEY in Elmwood Park.

It was our first radio experience and we are forever grateful to Zeb Zarnecki for giving us such a unique opportunity.

And, to this day, I am also grateful to the two bankers who encouraged us: my dad, Toby Schaden and Hugh Driscoll.

And now you know the rest of the story. ■

*TUNE IN TWTD* August 9 to hear *Chuck and Dan* and the *Hector Q. Peabody Show*.

# Facing the Music: Eddie Bracken in **HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO**

BY MATTHEW C. HOFFMAN

Last November saw the passing of another well-loved actor from Hollywood's golden age, Eddie Bracken (1915-2002), star of stage, screen and radio. In more recent times Eddie resurfaced in films with cameo roles, such as that of Wally, the Disney-esque owner of "Wally's World" in *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983). For many buffs of an older generation, however, Eddie is remembered for the classic Hollywood comedies he appeared in during the 1940s.

With his small mouth and trademark laugh, his sharp nose, and his exaggerated facial expression which could convey extreme mood swings, little Eddie Bracken was not your typical leading man. Then again, there was nothing typical about a Preston Sturges movie. *Hail the Conquering Hero* (1944) would contain one of Bracken's best performances. It would also be Sturges' grand finale at Paramount, the culmination of a great writing/directing career that hit its stride in the war years with a half-dozen unforgettable comedies, including *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944), which also starred Bracken.

In *Hail the Conquering Hero*, Eddie plays Woodrow Layfayette Pershing Truesmith, a 4-F son of a World War I hero. He's first seen alone at the Dog Watch cabaret in San Francisco, drowning his sorrows with a beer. "Smile and the world smiles with you," the bartender tells him. "Frown and you frown alone." For a year Truesmith

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

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Eddie Bracken

PHOTOFEST

has been working in a shipyard, unable to tell his mother he had been medically discharged on account of chronic hay fever. (It seems his friends have been sending her his letters from the "Pacific.") The chanteuse performs "Home to the Arms of Mother" during this sad scene while outside, from out of the fog, fate sends in the Marines. They are led by Sergeant Heffelfinger, played by William Demarest—a character actor who was simply excellent under Preston Sturges. He and his contingent of five are on leave with nothing to do "and five days to do it in." They're flat broke, but Truesmith sends over sandwiches and a round of beers. They come over to thank him for the gesture and hear his backstory and his encyclopedic knowledge of U.S. Marine history. Bugsy (Freddie Steele), a soldier with a mother complex, takes it upon himself to make

sure Truesmith won't disappoint Mom back home with a phone call saying her son is coming home. They soon take this military reject under their wing. On the train ride home they put him in uniform with a medal to show off despite his protestations. Sgt. Heffelfinger assures him he'll be in and out of uniform and no one but Ma will ever know.

The entire town of Oakridge is there at the train station to greet the returning war hero, including former fiancée Libby (Ella Raines). She is now somewhat reluctantly engaged to the mayor's son (Bill Edwards), who has as much personality as a cigar store Indian. Franklin Pangborn, another familiar regular in the Sturges troupe, plays the flustered chairman of the reception committee, trying to organize four welcoming bands with his whistle. Small-town Oakridge embraces the decorated Woodrow while Libby tries to break the news to him. The Marines are quickly adopted into the Truesmith household and are shown the portrait Mrs. Truesmith (Georgie Caine) so proudly displays in a living room shrine—her husband, "Hinky Dinky" Truesmith, who fell in battle the day Woodrow was born.

The public goodwill grows as the family's mortgage is burned at a ceremony in church, and plans are even made for a statue. Before long Judge Dennis (Jimmy Conlin), Doc Bissell (Harry Hayden), and other townsfolk want Woodrow for mayor. The way this scene plays

out, with Woodrow initially misunderstanding their intentions, is vintage Sturges. His Marine brothers add fuel to the fire, playing up his heroics at Guadalcanal. To his chagrin, they start telling lies to the crowd gathered in front of his home. "Every one of those boys is telling the truth," Heffelfinger insists, "except they changed the names a little so's not to give out military information."

But poor, reluctant Woodrow can't hold back the tidal wave of hero worship and soon his supporters are singing in the streets, "Win with Woodrow! Win with Woodrow!" This sends the pompous mayor, Everett Noble (Raymond Walburn) into a tizzy. The earlier speech-making dictation scene with Everett and his son is a classic, showing how dialogue defines characterization. The viewers know everything they need to about the pseudo-pious Mayor Noble from this well-drawn scene, which moves with a verbal dynamism.

Aware of what tomorrow could bring, Woodrow conscientiously attempts to end the charade and admits to Libby he's no hero, but his fairy godfather Heffelfinger and the semper fidelis brothers are always



*Hail the Conquering Hero (1944)*  
Franklin Pangborn, Eddie Bracken, William Demarest

PHOTOFEST

around to protect the image they shaped. A telegram, requested by the mayor's cohort (Al Bridge) arrives, revealing that Truesmith had been discharged a year ago. Noble now has the goods on Woodrow and intends to expose him as a fraud at the town meeting. At this gathering, Woodrow had planned on telling his audience he cannot run for office, because the military is calling him back into service. However, with this one opportunity to speak freely this one opportunity where he's not tightly surrounded by a group— he makes a full confession with sorrow and sincerity in his voice. Afterwards, he heads off to the train depot, intending to leave his home town and the girl who never stopped loving him. But a mob, headed by Heffelfinger, stops him and informs him that because of his honesty they want him for mayor anyway.

*Hail the Conquering Hero* wonderfully blends screwball comedy and farce with pathos. Critic James Agee once wrote, "It tells a story so touching, so chock-full of human frailties and so rich in homely detail that it achieves a reality transcending the limitations of its familiar slapstick."

In film after film, Preston Sturges' caustic wit was on display, but though he was known as a satirist, his last great film reveals him as a great sentimentalist—genuine sentiment which the director so obviously believes in, as evidenced by the final shot of Woodrow's father— without a trace of satire. The underside of small-town politics is certainly exposed, but the greater themes are those of patriotism and community, which play out in a wonderful depiction of America at that time. Despite all the oddball characters who inhabit it, this is an idealized vision of small-town life that is optimistically embraced and not mocked by Sturges. The film generates such a warm glow that, like Truesmith, the viewer is filled with gratitude as the Marines bid farewell aboard the departing train.



Eddie Bracken and Ella Raines

PHOTO: LST

This was one of Eddie Bracken's finest hours, though the director did limit Eddie's famous laugh. "If I wanted Eddie Bracken, I would have written him," Sturges told him. "This is Woodrow Truesmith." The character was well-drawn, as was the plot, which is much like the entanglements master comedian Harold Lloyd often found himself in. One could almost picture Lloyd in this film. (He would later turn up in Sturges' *The Sin of Harold Diddlebock* in 1947.) So it comes as no surprise that Lloyd was a comedian Bracken very much admired.

Whereas Lloyd excelled in the silent medium, Bracken, by contrast, had the one great advantage of dialogue— fast-moving lines which kept the film at an accelerated pace. This wartime story about misunderstanding reveals the art of the spoken word and the pinnacle of the Hollywood sound picture. Having teamed up with Sturges twice—a third teaming called *The Inventor* never materialized— Bracken ensured his immortality on the screen. Though he's even less known these days than a Harold Lloyd, Eddie Bracken's star will never dim as long as there are revivals of his best films such as *Hail the Conquering Hero*, an American masterpiece. ■

TUNE IN TWTD September 27 for an afternoon of Eddie Bracken on radio.



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WHEN SOMEONE SAYS	AND INSTEAD OF	YOU THINK OF
pep	energy	pins
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shake-up	change of staff	mug
brownie	chocolate	camera
silver	high yield	hi-yo
bay	Tampa	rum
lead	mineral	Scripto
BO	box office	Lifebuoy
yellow	submarine	Kid
premium	gasoline	decoder
Leo	DeCaprio	MGM
hut	shack	sut
bazooka	bubble gum	Bob Burns
alley	garbage cans	Fred Allen
punch	bowl	board
lizards	reptiles	Orphan Annie
Carter	Jimmy	little liver pills
trigger	pistol	Roy Rogers
Arch	St. Louis	Oboler
bums	hoboes	Brooklyn Dodgers
soapbox	speech	racer
sting	bee	Green Hornet
peek-a-boo	baby	Veronica Lake
Gump	Forrest	Andy
cup	saucer	Dixie
lollipop	candy	Shirley Temple
disk	compact	transcription
Swayze	Patrick	John Cameron
cabdriver	taxi stand	Mills Brothers
fearless	brave	Fosdick
viaduct	railroad	Groucho and Chico
smiling	teeth	Jack
sad	gloomy	Sack
Who wrote this?	Shakespeare	CLAIR SCHULZ

# MARTIN AND LEWIS

## Nightclub Personas Make Movie Magic

BY RANDALL G. MIELKE

The film musical-comedy team of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis did not present itself full grown on the movie screen with their first picture, *My Friend Irma*, in 1949. The singing talents of Martin and the



*My Friend Irma* (1949)  
Jerry Lewis, Marie Wilson, Dean Martin

PHOTOFEST

comedic antics of Lewis were a staple in their nightclub act long before they stepped before motion picture cameras.

Early in their careers, each was performing as a solo entertainer: Martin singing contemporary songs; Lewis doing a pantomime record act. On occasion the two performed separately at the same nightclub and during each other's performance they would offer unsolicited comments to the other entertainer, much to the delight of audiences. This, then, became the basis for their act. They played straight for each other, intentionally stepped on each other's lines, and raised general bedlam.

But capturing the zany duo on film proved to be difficult. Producer Hal Wallis was not even sure the two could act when he signed the team for pictures. He only knew that "they could break me up," so he took a chance on them.

Transforming the nightclub act to films was arduous, because Wallis and his associates had trouble finding a vehicle that

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*Randall G. Mielke of Aurora, Illinois is an author and free-lance writer.*

---

captured the true spirit of Martin and Lewis. About the same time, Wallis had bought the picture rights to a successful radio comedy series called *My Friend Irma*, but was having difficulty casting the male

leads. Since Wallis owned both Martin and Lewis and *My Friend Irma*, the logical solution seemed to be to put them together.

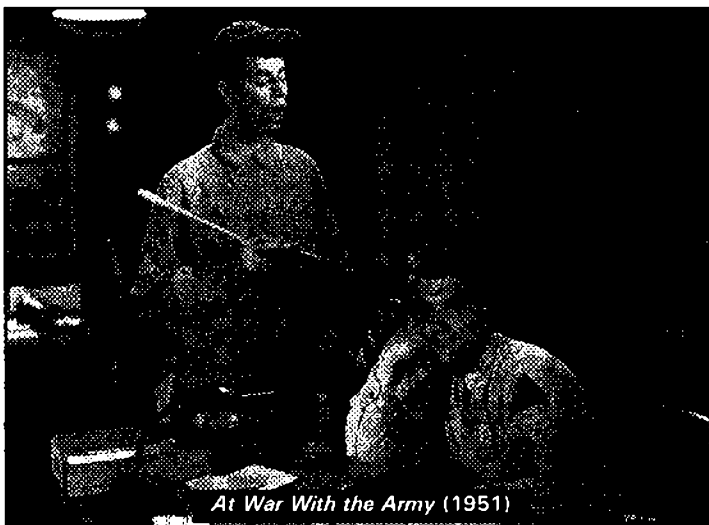
In its original version, *My Friend Irma* contained two female roles and two male roles as their boyfriends. Martin could play Steve Laird, a guy who ran an orange juice stand, but the role of Al, a real con man, did not conform to what Lewis could portray best — a schnook.

At first the studio tried to adapt Lewis to the con-man part, but that failed miserably. Then they thought of altering the Al part to fit Lewis's talents, but felt a film with different characters might hurt the still-popular radio series. In the end, the studio heads hired another actor to play Al and added the part of Seymour, Steve Laird's schnooky assistant, for Lewis. The picture, which was meant to be a showcase for the *Irma* radio cast, was totally taken over by Martin and Lewis. Director George Marshall had worked with comedians such as Laurel and Hardy, W.C. Fields and Bob Hope, and he knew enough to stand back and let the comics be funny. His indifferent approach allowed the Martin and Lewis

team to run off with the film. Critics, for the most part, liked the movie and the debut of Martin and Lewis. Fans loved them.

With the success of *My Friend Irma*, Wallis began developing a sequel that would feature Martin and Lewis more prominently, since it was clear that

their act worked on screen as well as on stage. The result, *My Friend Irma Goes West* (1950), was indeed a Martin and Lewis film. Where the team added comic attraction in the first film, in the second they were a main part of the plot. As would be the case in many of the Martin and Lewis films, the comic would get the best material and the most notoriety, as *Variety* stated when the picture was released: "most of



*At War With the Army* (1951)

PHOTOFEST

the laugh meat is tossed to Lewis."

Martin and Lewis's next film was *At War with the Army* (1951). Although the story was weak, the film was the ideal vehicle for the schnook character Lewis was now a master at portraying.

With three films under their belt, Martin and Lewis were becoming more comfortable in front of the camera. Their screen teaming probably came together best in *That's My Boy* (1951), their fourth film together.

*That's My Boy* was a departure from the usual Martin and Lewis fare in that they played parts, not just themselves doing their old nightclub routines. In the picture, Lewis plays the bespectacled son of Jarring Jack Jackson (Eddie Mayehoff), a former All-American. Lewis is unathletic and studious, so Jarring Jack hires the college football star (Martin) to take Lewis under his wing and make a second Jarring Jack out of him. This time both the critics and the fans enjoyed the duo.

*That's My Boy* would have been a terrific building block for further films for the team, but producer Hal



*That's My Boy* (1951)

PHOTOFEST



Jumping Jacks (1952)

PHOTOFEST

Wallis did not see the team as actors. Instead of giving them films that allowed for drama and pathos along with their comedic antics, Wallis saw them as mere clowns. The result was two more service comedies: *Sailor Beware* and *Jumping Jacks* in 1952.

But the comedy with dramatic undercurrents came to the forefront again with *The Stooge* in 1953. The fact that the team was starting to have problems getting along made this film almost seem autobiographical.

*The Stooge* is an uncomfortable look at the relationship between an egotistic singing comic and his moronic, unappreciated sidekick, based on the reminiscences of a former professional vaudeville stooge who worked from the audience as part of the act in the 1920s. Set in the 1930s, Martin plays Bill Miller, an egotist driven to further his career at the expense of friendship, marriage, and simple decency. When he breaks with his old partner and flounders as a single, his agent suggests he get a stooge—a shill planted in the audience, off whom he can bounce jokes and song in-

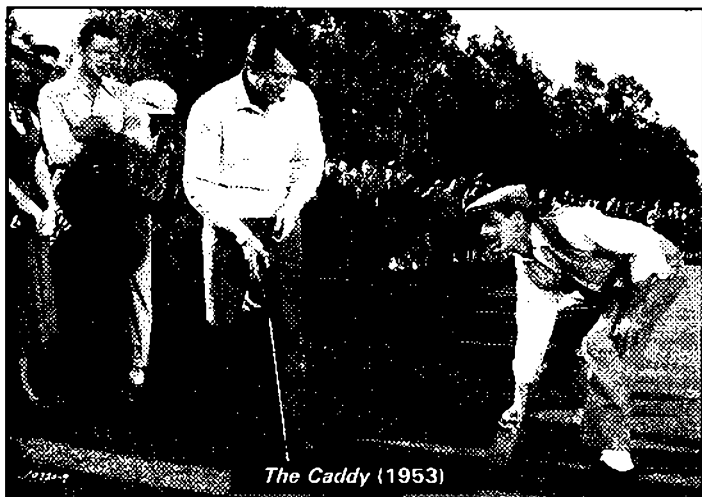
roductions. Enter Teddy Rogers (Lewis), nearly 20 minutes into the film. Teddy immediately becomes Miller's follower and worshipper—performing with him, mending his clothes, covering for him when he gets drunk. But he is a natural comic and becomes the real center of the act. When everyone around him criticizes Miller for his selfishness, he fires Teddy, then flops again as a single, and confesses his dependency on Teddy and they reunite.

Despite the film's tone, fans liked it and Martin and Lewis continued turning out hits. In 1953 they made *Scared Stiff* and *The Caddy*. *Scared Stiff* was a remake of a Bob Hope film, and *The Caddy* is part biographical picture, part Martin and Lewis comedy (Dean the wayward partner, Jerry the wifely loyal pal), and part silly sports film. The Martin and Lewis team continued to make two films a year, and they completed *Money From Home* and *Living It Up* in 1954.

By the time their 12th film, *Three Ring Circus*, was released in 1954, Martin and Lewis were growing tired of each other. Lewis saw himself as the headliner of the act and wanted to be involved in every phase of the production. Martin wanted to perform less and spend more time on the golf course. In addition, Martin felt Lewis's parts usually carried the plot line of the films, whereas Martin was only around to sing a few songs.

In 1954 the duo made *You're Never Too Young* which was quickly followed by *Artists and Models* (1955), *Partners* (1956), and finally, *Hollywood or Bust* (1956).

By this time the duo also was relying heavily on scripts that were remakes of earlier films. *Living It Up*, for example, is a remake of *Nothing Sacred*, the classic 1937 screwball comedy about a cynical reporter who hears about a dying small-town child whose last wish is to visit New York. *You're Never Too Young* is a remake of *The*



*The Caddy* (1953)

PHOTOFEST

*Major and the Minor*, which featured Ginger Rogers. *Partners* is a remake of the Bing Crosby-Martha Raye western *Rhythm on the Range*. When *Artists and Models* was released many of the critics thought the film was a waste of time and they had grown tired of Martin and Lewis. Inundated with at least two films a year since 1949, the critics were past the point of accepting the team and, in many cases,

\$27,000,000 in worldwide box-office business at a time when a movie ticket cost about fifty cents.

Shortly after *Hollywood or Bust* was released, the team broke up officially. Martin and Lewis's final nightclub show together was performed on July 24, 1956 at New York's Copacabana. They parted, but not without leaving behind 16 films of pure movie magic. ■



*Hollywood or Bust* (1956)

PHOTOISTS



## OUR READERS/LISTENERS WRITE

# WE GET MAIL

**PARK RIDGE, IL**— I received the Spring 2003 issue of *Nostalgia Digest* and have read it cover to cover. In two words, "It's great!"  
—**LEO M. RIZZETTO**

**DARIEN, IL**— What a great thrill to receive the new quarterly issue of *Nostalgia Digest*. It was just chuck-full of fascinating articles about people who were part of my life as a youngster almost literally glued to our radio at home. And the expanded calendar helps me plan ahead for programs that had a special meaning for me in my youth. I try very hard never to miss your Saturday afternoon program. Having been an editor of both a newspaper and a magazine for several decades, I can certainly appreciate the vast amount of time, energy and creativity that you have poured into your magazine for so many years. The results are quite extraordinary. You bring more happiness to more people than anyone else I've ever known. —(REV.) **KEVIN SHANLEY**

**CHICAGO**— I'm sorry to learn that the *Digest* will now be published only four times a year, but fully support your decision to do so. Most people retire after working as long as you have doing one job; you have done many jobs. I have all back issues of the *Digest* starting with December 1975 and have gone back through them many times to re-read articles or look for information. I consider them quite valuable. I was also happy that *TWTD* will continue. Saturday afternoon would not be the same without *TWTD*, even though I have heard some of the programs many times before. They still bring back memories of my childhood, when radio was the only entertainment we had. You and I are about the same age and I know how you must feel. You are long overdue to cut back and take life a little easier. Good health to you and your family. Thank you so much for all the great memories you have made possible.  
—**JOHN HEGER**

**WARRENVILLE, IL**— The Spring issue looks very good. When we reach our age, it is certainly time to cut back and smell the

roses. I see too many people our age, and maybe a bit younger or older, having serious health problems... and no hobbies or interests. We have to knock on wood! We have to keep alive the old time radio and old movies, et al. It keeps us going. I don't blame you one bit for taking time to enjoy the family, etc. That's what it's all about.  
—**CHUCK HUCK**

**CHICAGO**— Kindly accept my renewal for a year. I'm sure your quarterly issue of the *Digest* will make no difference to your true fans and subscribers. Your first three-month issue is just fine. In fact, the "thicker" issue seems a little nicer. The magazine is always informative and full of great memories. Your expertise in this field could not be better. Without you, sir, there would be no "thrilling days of yesteryear" and that would be a shame. With the idiotic "reality, sex and survivor" junk they have on today, this generation will have nothing to look back on when they are in our age group. —**BOB FORD**

**OAK LAWN, IL**— Congratulations on the 33rd anniversary to all of you. *TWTD* makes my day on Saturday. I really appreciate and enjoy all the programs. Ken Alexander is also special and adds a lot for me. May you and the program continue a long time. —**CLARICE LUETJE**

**HIGHLAND PARK, IL**— Congratulations on your 33rd anniversary on the air. It's hard to believe that I have spent almost 1,500 Saturday afternoons with you from *WNMP* to your current home. I'm delighted that the signal is so strong and clear, since I can now pick you up in any room of the house.  
—**JOE ZOLLER**

**MAYWOOD, IL**— Happy anniversary and congratulations! It was a wonderful, happy day when I accidentally tuned in your show on the car radio back on a summer day in the early 1970s. I heard Bing Crosby talking to William Frawley and the Andrews Sisters and I wondered what this was that I was listening to. It was, of course, *Those Were The Days*, and to think, if we had left the

car at home that day and taken public transportation, it would have been a very different story. I'm listening to your anniversary show and have concluded that not only is the tower still standing, but also that you're happy and healthy and all set to start your thirty-fourth year on the air. Thanks for everything. —**PETER C. LOGUE**

**JOLIET, IL**— Congratulations on your 33rd anniversary. I grew up in Joliet and my parents never took me to Riverview, which was a discussion on your anniversary broadcast (April 26). It was only after I graduated from high school that I went there with some friends, in the late '50s. The "Bobs" was the first ride I went on at Riverview. I wouldn't ride any of the other coasters. I still remember the collection of earrings and other related items that the operator of the Bobs had on display. I also remember the Chutes and when I rode I liked to get a front-row seat to get splashed. I never rode the parachutes due to the fact that after giving it some consideration I witnessed someone getting stuck up at the top for a while. You made mention of the Rotor on your show. The first time I rode on it someone directly across from me got sick and his "sickness" came right back at him! The person controlling the ride stopped it and let everyone off while they cleaned up the mess. They also gave us a free ticket to come back and ride again if we wanted to. —**STUART PEARSON**

**BARRINGTON, IL**— Thirty-three years and still going strong! I remember the AM station at the top of the dial when it changed formats. When the owner said, "If these people were so good," referring to you and the other on-air personalities, "another station will pick them up." Well, you're still here and that station is history. —**PAUL & JUDY CARLSON**

**E-MAIL**— Thank you for influencing my life with old time radio. I first started listening, if my aging, foggy memory is correct, around 1970, when I was twelve. In college, I was in an improv group, and we had our own show on WDCB. I later had my own specials as well as a comedy anthology program, "The House of Comedy," that WDCB ran for three years. I've been heavily influenced by radio comedy, especially being able to study timing by listening to people like Jack Benny and Bob Hope. The service you have provided has been incredible. Thanks. —**CRAIG GUSTAFSON**

**MT. PROSPECT, IL**— I'm sitting here working on my computer listening to you as usual and today you hit a couple of sensitive memories of Steinmetz High School and those great songs from 1952: "Jambalaya," "You Belong to Me" and "Wish you Were Here." All of a sudden I was back home on Neva Avenue without adult cares or worries (the Korean War was on but I didn't know it). I was 12 years old going to Steinmetz

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## MORE MAIL

the next year and was a BIG guy in grammar school. The next big song I remember was "Why Don't You Believe Me?" with Joni James. Keep this Saturday feature with Ken Alexander and his newspapers and a few old songs going. It's great! **-BILL RITCHIE**

**JOLIET, IL-** I wonder if you knew a bit of trivia about a segment of your show where you and Ken do the "gone, but not forgotten" bit. Back in the early days of television, there was a piano player by the name of Herbie Mintz who did a late-night program called "Gone, but Not Forgotten." He would play old songs and do short bios of vintage performers. **-KEN DUTKA**

**WOODBIDGE, IL-** You and Ken brighten our lives every Saturday. You recently played a commercial that had a musical background of a song about "remembering" which I believe was the theme song for Herbie Mintz. I used to listen to him as a kid. How wonderful it would be to hear him again. **-MICHAEL HUNT**

**(ED. NOTE-** Tune in *TWTD* July 19 to hear a short *But Not Forgotten* program with pianist Herbie Mintz reminiscing about the past.)

**CHICAGO-** I enjoyed Matthew Hoffman's article on "The Day the Earth Stood Still" (Spring 2003 issue) and thought you might like to know how the original story ended. A reporter who sees the spaceman emerge from the spaceship with two robots decides to stay in hiding after everyone leaves. The story ends when he discovers that the Michael Rennie character is only a puppet to the robots, and that therefore the takeover of our world has begun. In other words, screenwriter Edmund H. North did a fine job of turning a little story with a clever twist upside down, making it the first and best film calling for an end to the Cold War. **-WAYNE KLATT**

**GRIFFITH, INDIANA-** Speaking as an old time radio fan, collector, amateur radio historian and part-time audio engineer, today's show [*TWTD* 4-19-03] with guests

Harlan Zinck and Karl Pearson was great! I'm just about to go to [www.radioarchives.org](http://www.radioarchives.org) right now, but I thought I would let you know that all of "that technical stuff" on today's show is appreciated. Though I miss WNIB, I like *TWTD* better now on WDCB. You and Ken get to have more time to clown around together and we love it!  
**-NICK DEFFENBAUGH**

**NEW BERLIN, WISCONSIN-** I've listened to you on the Internet since the Fall of 1994 - first on WNIB and resuming when WDCB went on the Internet. Love your show.  
**-MIKE MAZZONI**

**WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA-** Thank you for continuing to broadcast the wonderful *Those Were The Days* show. I am now in the suburbs of Philadelphia and have to pick you up via the web on WDCB. Am I lucky that WDCB is even ON the web. Look at WFMT, a station that I would like to get here, but is no longer web-broadcasting (and I'm still in pain over WNIB!). We love your show!  
**-TED LAWS**

**BAICOI, ROMANIA-** I listen to your radio show every Saturday from 9 pm to 1 am. I am in the Peace Corps in Romania and I am right now listening to Ken Alexander talk about King Oscar Sardines. I am glad I can listen to your show from here, but it costs 6,000 lei an hour and sounds a bit like an echo. One dollar U.S. is about 33,000 lei.  
**-TONY CHAMBERLAIN**

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### NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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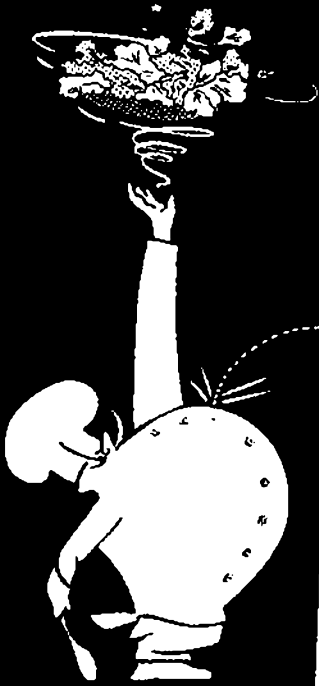
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## ← DORIS DAY

was one of many "Songbirds" who sang with the big bands. Walter Scannell's article begins on page 40.

### NEIGHBORHOOD MOVIES

By Dan McGuire, page 1

### RICHARD CRENNAN

By Bill Oates, page 4

### MAN WILL NEVER FLY

By Curtis L. Katz, page 10

### AW...RELAX, ARCHIE! RE-LAXX!

By Hal (Harlan) Stone, page 21

### LYDIA PINKHAM'S FABULOUS COMPOUND

By John Dinan, page 26

### OH, HOW WE LOVED THE HALLS OF IVY

By Gardner Kissack, page 28

### THOSE WERE THE DAYS

Program Guide, pages 32-39

### ARTHUR GODFREY

By Lee Munsick, page 40

### SILENT PARTNER

By Wayne Klatt, page 43

### THE ELMWOOD PARK TOWER

By Chuck Schaden, page 48

### HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO

By Matthew C. Hoffman, page 54

### NOSTALGIA HAS YOU IN ITS POWER

By Clair Schulz, page 57

### MARTIN AND LEWIS

By Randall G. Mielke, page 58

### WE GET MAIL

Our Readers/Listeners Write, page 62



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