

GODFREY

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PDC



**THE
GREAT**

by
JACK O'BRIAN

★
**The
LIFE STORY
Of
ARTHUR
GODFREY**

*Complete
Unabridged
Edition*

PREFACE
by
Arthur Godfrey

•
**57 EXCLUSIVE
LIFE-STORY PICTURES**





Mr. Jack O'Brian,
Journal-American,
220 South Street,
New York City.

Dear Jack:

I don't know where you dug some of this stuff up but you must have found people who knew me since I wore stove-pipe pants. Some of the stories I've been trying to hide for years but seriously, all in all it's the kind of story I thought would never be published until they started writing my obituaries. You did a swell job on the newspaper series, too. Thanks and regards.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Arthur Godfrey". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Arthur Godfrey.

Author Jack O'Brian in a swapfest with Arthur Godfrey and Sherman Billingsley at the latter's famous Stork Club.



3-19

Godfrey

The Great

by **JACK O'BRIAN**

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Godfrey The Great

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His Voice Sways a Nation...

ARTHUR GODFREY'S voice is heard by more persons each week than anyone in the history of the spoken word.

He is the most valuable single property of the Columbia Broadcasting System including, it has been said, its president or its board of directors.

He earns for his network a total of more than \$10,000,000 a year on nine commercially sponsored radio and television programs a week.

He manages to keep for himself—before taxes take their bite—about \$1,000,000 a year.

After taxes, what remains is considerably less, but still an impressive sum: \$140,000.

The impact of Godfrey's most casually spoken suggestion impresses everyone and most of all Godfrey himself, essentially a modest man, who never can quite believe it.

Several months ago a magazine called *Guideposts*, a non-denominational publication devoted to inspirational religious texts, ran an article by Arthur Godfrey about the manner in which he learned of his father's death.

Godfrey wrote that he was a Navy radioman on a destroyer at sea in the early twenties when, sleeping at night in his bunk, he dreamed his father walked into the cabin, shook his head and said: "So long, son."

Some time later Godfrey was notified by radio that his father had died, and the time was set as exactly the moment when the dream took place. It moved Godfrey deeply and his seriousness reflected itself in the article.

When it appeared, a man named S. O. Shapiro who takes an interest in its activities without recompense called Godfrey to tell him extra copies had been printed in case any of his listeners might want one without charge. Did Godfrey think 25,000 extra would be enough? By all means, Godfrey said, adding he thought perhaps a couple of thousand might

do, and asked Shapiro to write him a note including the details so that he could mention it on the air.

Several days later Godfrey read the letter—just once—and mentioned that "S. O. Shapiro" was the writer of the letter, and commented pleasantly about Shapiro's initials. He said that no person who took such an unpaid interest in religious matters ever should have to use the initials SOS in a call for help.

Guideposts quickly learned the impact of the Godfrey word. Mail literally inundated the little offices of the publication. It swamped the facilities of the little postoffice nearby with more than 45,000 requests in the first four days: They kept right on coming in a stream from every part of the U. S. and Canada until, when the last dribble arrived, more than 68,000 requests were counted.

Shapiro, now more amazed than Godfrey, felt the impact personally. With no more than his name and initials to guide them, more than 100 persons who hadn't contacted him in more than 25 years wrote to ask if he were the same man they knew. Dozens of other letters came from University of Illinois classmates he hadn't seen since his graduation in 1923. One relative he never knew existed wrote him from Montana. Old girl friends, boyhood chums, took pen in hand merely because Godfrey had mentioned him in passing. He couldn't count the telephone calls. "Hundreds, at least," he said, called him within a few hours of the morning broadcast.

"And he only mentioned me in passing," Shapiro said, his voice still with a note of wonderment.

Nothing of Godfrey's exterior seems to indicate the impact of his slightest suggestion on his listeners. He is a medium-proportioned man, about five-eleven. He is 47 years old, looks ten years younger in person, is well dressed in a casual fashion, topped by a shock of red hair that only color television could depict properly to his 40,000,000 fans.

He's the sort of bright-faced fellow everyone feels

The camera catches Arthur Godfrey in a gay mood on his "Godfrey and his friends" show



he knows as soon as he shakes hands. I met him first years ago and had that feeling. In the years since, that feeling has been more than justified.

Has his success changed him?

Certainly, but not in any irritating way, except to himself.

Godfrey always was a fellow who liked to wander around New York, in book stores, restaurants, movies, the Automat. He particularly enjoyed the Automat where he could pick up many a sprightly conversation and turn it to his radio use.

Now that television has made his face as familiar as his voice, he can't go anywhere without being recognized and lionized. He liked it better when he was just a voice.

His appearance on TV, of course, was an abrupt turn in his career. It brought home to viewers the fact that Godfrey was just as homespun a character as his rich, warm radio conversation suggested. It brought his career into fullest flower, after a long climb which he considers is based on "getting the right breaks at the right time."

When and what were these "breaks"?

The moment he decided to start talking over a radio microphone as if he were talking to one person instead of declaiming to some unseen convention of listeners; the day he started kicking the stuffiness out of radio commercials; and the day Walter Winchell gave him his first "plug."

The first, while it came without the dramatic significance of Winchell's admiration, arrived in the wake of a near-tragic auto accident which left Godfrey with 47 fractures, including a badly injured leg which to this day causes him to limp slightly.

Recuperating painfully, Godfrey had a radio brought in. An unusual hospital item in 1931, it helped keep him entertained, but more important, helped him do extensive personal research on what made bigtime radio announcers tick.

At the time, Godfrey affected a bit of a British accent and a broad A. "It must have been murder!" he now recalls, grimacing as if the memory hurts.

But lying in that Washington, D. C. hospital, his body in a cast and one leg poised painfully at the end of a rope, Godfrey came to realize that the radio techniques being used were all wrong.

There he was, one man in a hospital room, all by himself, and the announcers were talking to him as if he were the last man in the last row of 75,000 persons in Yankee Stadium. For six months he took this lesson. He never learned one to better advantage.

Once back on the job, he put his theory into practice. His British accent disappeared. No more broad

A. Just a casual tone, intimately delivered.

His superiors were suspicious at first, preferring the unctuous formality to which they were accustomed.

Not long thereafter he fell upon what has come to be his most precious trademark, his ability to kid the labels off his commercial announcement.

It was 1933 and a Washington department store sent along a bit of radio copy to be read "straight."

Handed to Godfrey just before he went on the air, it detailed, unblushingly, "filmy, clingy, alluring silk underwear in devastating pink and black!"

Godfrey's voice rose, awed and incredulous, as he read. Then he let that final colorful syllable sink in during a moment of silent appreciation and then—a long, low, unmistakably Godfrey-style whistle and the hoarse, whispered comment:

"Is MY face red!"

His bosses were livid as they rushed in—too late to stop him.

They merely postponed the moment when they would toss him bodily from the premises until after they learned how mad the department store management would be. But no complaint arrived.

The store, it seemed, sold out its stock of "filmy, clingy" commodities within an hour. Thenceforth Arthur was left strictly to his own salesmanship devices.

That, it safely can be said, was the beginning.

Many persons, including the redhead himself, realizing the fabulous success attending anything he touches, try to put a finger directly on the reason. Some even have tried asking Godfrey. They get the same, sincerely modest answer:

"Don't ask me!"

But advertising men, network brass and his many friends agree it probably is what Morton Downey, one of Godfrey's close friends, told me recently in attempting to sum him up:

"Arthur's just a nice guy," Morton explained, "whose nice-guy qualities and nice-guy reactions in almost any situation that pops up spill out in warm, articulate fashion."

"The world's loaded with nice guys, but few of them have Arthur's ability to get off his chest the little problems that bother him, and which, it turns out are everyone else's problems, nor his genius in observing the little unusual things in simple terms the rest of us grope for."

"The fans see in Arthur a guy they respect for all those nice-guy reactions. That's why they rush out and buy his orange juice and tea bags when he tells them to. They're just sort of grateful."



Arthur Godfrey in the role of bandleader, is introduced by Walter Winchell, a Godfrey fan since 1934.



A younger Arthur Godfrey in 1930, as he strummed the banjo and sang at station WFBR in Washington, D. C.

**FROM
GODFREY'S
ALBUM
OF
YESTER-
YEARS**



Shirt-sleeved, homespun, friendly and uninhibited, that was Godfrey on the radio in 1940 over WJSV. And it's the same Godfrey today on radio and TV.

Farmer Boy and Musical Sailor...

WHEN ARTHUR GODFREY was a lad the Duke of Windsor was the Prince of Wales and was spending more time falling off horses than today he spends at parties.

To the carrot-topped Godfrey boy, the handsome young Prince of Wales was just a picture in the newspapers of a man being detached violently from a thoroughbred and certainly far beyond the world the little redhead envisioned some day would be his own.

At the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel during a luncheon of The Banshees, an organization of famous newspapermen where both were guests, Godfrey suddenly found himself being introduced to the unhorsed ex-King of England who once was that glamorous picture in the papers, too impossibly distant socially ever to imagine meeting on equal terms.

The Duke and Godfrey conversed easily about television, and the former King mentioned to King Arthur of the Air Waves that he was quite the enthusiastic TV fan.

"I hope you're looking when I'm on," said the Duke of the Uke to the Duke of Windsor, who quickly countered in the friendliest possible fashion:

"Is there a time when you're not?"

This was, of course, just another slight milestone in the rapidly expanding celebrity of Arthur Godfrey, whose 40,000,000 followers each week do his bidding in a fashion that makes a sad and tepid flutist indeed of his ancient counterpart, the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Such glittering acquaintances as the erstwhile British ruler could not have been further from his family's thoughts when little Arthur Godfrey arrived 47 years ago in the comfortable but modest Godfrey home on 112th st. just off Amsterdam ave., in New York City.

Because he and his family—his father, mother and a brother—moved to Hasbrouck Heights, N. J.,

when Arthur was very young, he doesn't remember the exact location of the house itself.

From the manner in which his followers have reacted in other instances, it may be just as well for the owners of the property. There is more than a slight suspicion that a good percentage of his fans would descend upon the house, erect a plaque or even a statue to their hero, and declare it unfit for ordinary occupancy thenceforth.

Over in Hasbrouck Heights some of his old neighbors remember Arthur as a typical boy, full of fun, more than his share of good natured mischief, a deep interest in the fortunes of the Brooklyn Dodgers, a pretty fair left hook in street corner altercations, a face that seemed always set in a full grin, all topped by a shock of red hair that now seems one of the best reasons for hustling color television into operation.

A mixture of Irish, Scotch and English, Godfrey's parents were of intelligent stock.

His father was a magazine writer, editor, former newspaperman, a specialist in equine articles and a particular expert on the hackney horse.

His mother was a pianist and amateur painter.

But when Arthur was 10, the family lost its money. Things were so rough in the eyes of the suddenly sobered lad that, from being the life-of-the-neighborhood, he took on the mantle of adulthood in one stroke. While little Arthur never could entirely erase his good humor, the continued reduced family circumstances depressed him until he was 14, when he took the traditional American Boy expedient—he ran away.

He hoped that would be one less burden on his folks, although his staying home, his mother says now, would have made the rough years easier to bear — Arthur possessing that sort of comfortable manner even then.

But off he trudged, his few belongings packed into

one small bag as he boarded the ferry across the Hudson for the city he some day was to entertain more completely than any person in the history of entertainment.

Not entirely with a light heart, the little boy went job hunting. His first success—a \$10 a week position as office boy in an architect's office.

Happily, he went through that first week's work, awaiting the fortune that was to come on Saturday. When it arrived, he put the money safely in his pocket, and next day after church set off for a Sunday of sightseeing, the Statue of Liberty being first on his program.

The young, lonesome lad was walking up the stairs of the Statue when a strange girl, several years older and, as it turned out, a woman of the world using Bedloe's Island for a pickpocketing base, struck up a conversation.

Arthur, grateful for anyone to talk to, spent an hour in sprightly conversation. Then the girl said she had to go to the powder room but would be back directly.

Nine boats to Manhattan came and went while Arthur, gullible as any youngster his age, waited. Finally he went to a hamburger stand and ordered 65 cents worth of food.

When it was time to pay, he discovered his \$10 had disappeared with his first pickup, a situation that was pretty tragic back in 1917 but today strikes him, as most things do, on the funnybone.

"I figure I am the only man now alive who was rolled in the Statue of Liberty," he laughed in his familiar baritone style.

The tragedy of the incident was that Arthur had to wash dishes to pay for his meal, then got hungry from exertion, ate some more, which in turn he had to pay for by washing more dishes, which made him hungrier still, which might have gone on forever.

It managed to keep him from returning to his brief architectural career. At night he slept between rolls of newsprint in the old New York Tribune, and worked at odd jobs where he could find them. This casual but trying existence ended after a year when he answered an ad for civilian workers at an Army separation center in New Jersey.

He was hired, although he wasn't a typist or a high school graduate, the two prerequisites for the job, at the most monumental salary he'd ever dreamed about until then—\$105 a month, plus barracks privileges.

While helping separate World War I veterans from their khaki, Arthur became fast friends with a soldier headed home for his beloved Clymer, Pa., a community which took on increased attractions

during his overseas service. So glowingly did he detail its municipal advantages, the pulchritude of its young ladies, the romance of its coal mining, that off Arthur went with his new friend to the mines.

Being slight of build and without the tender ministrations of home food and proper care, Arthur worked underground only a short time until he developed a cough. He was advised by a company doctor to get a job outside the mines and for a while he worked on coal cars as they came out of the pits.

Despite his skimpy physical resources at the time, Godfrey was so moved by stories of forest rangers and the men who cut down the trees that he tried to become a lumberjack. As he then weighed a soaking 140 pounds, he was not exactly a threat to Paul Bunyan.

"I couldn't even lift the ax they use," he laughed and added: "It was an awful mistake."

Quickly the Godfrey future switched from lumberjacking to farming, the first available job, where he saved his money and moved along to Akron, O.

By now—he was 16—a man of the world, Godfrey knew what to do in such emergencies. He walked into an Akron police station, and with his Irish antecedents having accounted for a Gaelic physiognomy, he hauled off and hit the police sergeant on duty with as rich an Irish brogue as the uniformed gentleman had heard since leaving County Cork.

The little fiction worked and the sergeant listened with great sympathy to the tale of the young Irish lad who wanted a job and a place to live. The latter was easier, and the sergeant made room for Godfrey in a neat cell, then pulled a few bluecoated strings to get him a job in a rubber company plant.

Arthur might still have been in Akron, running the Goodyear Rubber Company by now if it hadn't been for a railroad strike. The rubber plant had to shut down and Godfrey found his dishwashing facility again a handy emergency occupation.

At night he picked up a few more dollars working in a dice game, eventually advancing to the security of "stickman." But having moved from the police cell to the home of a young college man named Daniel Cullinane, who looked on his dice activities with disfavor, Arthur one day found himself the object of a serious meeting with his educated friend and a Catholic priest. Their solution:

Join the Navy, see the world, and forget about becoming a professional gambler.

Arthur took their advice and never once regretted it.

He traveled the world, changed his gambling status from professional to amateur as was Navy tradition on paydays, and studied so hard he was able

to pass the entrance examinations for Annapolis.

But having been too young to get into the first World War, Godfrey discovered a little action might possibly come his way if he were to volunteer for service in the Mediterranean during the Greco-Turkish War.

"I wasn't the admiral type anyway," he says now.

He was a radio operator on a destroyer patrolling the Mediterranean, and a good one, his superiors attest. When he encountered no action in that area of operations that did not stem from the barroom forays of his shipmates, he decided that for then at least he'd had it.

The Navy was followed by a dervish assortment of jobs. He wrote advertising for a perfume company but left accusing the boss of not smelling quite so well as his product.

He watched the Fords go by him on a Detroit assembly line. Fortunes seemed bent on returning him to the kitchen and he became a dishwasher in the Book-Cadillac Hotel in Detroit, but swiftly worked up to short order cook.

He shifted to night clerk of a hotel of questionable clientele and left hurriedly when he discovered it was headquarters for a widely known mob of hoodlums.

In those days his favorite reading was the want ads. Answering an ad for a salesman's job one day, he discovered he was on the selling end of an unusual commodity indeed—cemetery lots. That was the first hint that the Godfrey persuasiveness might be his fortune.

In a month he was earning \$500 a week, was living in a suite at the same hotel where once he served short orders, and put a down payment on a Stutz-Bearcat, ultimate sign of complete affluence of the day.

But his mother's musical leanings were more

deeply imbedded than he ever thought and one day a fellow to whom Arthur was trying to sell a final hole in the ground, countered by offering Godfrey a half interest in his vaudeville act, which included the right to perform.

Unable to resist the call of the four-a-day siren of vaudeville, Godfrey instantly proclaimed his cemetery salesmanship a dead issue, tramped through the West to California—and wound up broke!

Riding freight trains to Chicago, where he intended to start over, Arthur tried to become a cab driver armed only with willingness and a map of the city but was fired when his recommendations failed to stand up.

"Furthermore, the address you gave is a half mile out in Lake Michigan," the manager announced, adding the dreaded: "You're fired."

No security loomed anywhere. Taking stock, Arthur decided the only period of economic safety in his life until then was in the Nation's Service, and off he sped to the first recruiting office he could find.

It was the Coast Guard. The sudden decision to join changed his whole future. It placed him in Baltimore the night his first opportunity to go into radio presented itself.

He might have finally shifted into radio had he remained selling cemetery lots, or dishwashing, but he doubts it.

"The services are good jobs in themselves," he maintains, "and anyway, I think every time I worked for Uncle Sam I was lucky."

When Godfrey and Buddy Rogers, both lieutenant commanders in the U. S. Naval Reserve—broadcast from Navy's huge transport plane, "Constitution".





Holding onto the toy wheelbarrow and following instructions to smile at the birdie is Arthur Godfrey, when he was a little lad vacationing on a farm in Vermont. Enlarged photo shows Arthur as a lad, age one year.

FARMER BOY and



Arthur at two, wore this handmade dress 45 years before television.

As Lieutenant Commander of the U. S. Naval Reserve during World War II.



MUSICAL SAILOR

When Arthur joined the Navy to "see the world." Here he is sitting on the rocks at the base of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, striking up a tune on his trusty old banjo.



Coast Guard to the Rescue...

THE United States Coast Guard, savior of many a man capsized at sea, was the outfit that in 1929 steamed full speed ahead to save Arthur Godfrey from anonymity.

It was a Saturday night in that famous year that led into the depression but Arthur Godfrey was not thinking much of depressions, financial or psychiatric. He was having a fine time, surrounded by a crowd of his friends, engaging in two traditional Coast Guardsmen enthusiasms—lager and conversation.

The bluejackets were sitting around in a Baltimore speakeasy, sipping their suds and having fun. They were making a little too much noise for the proprietor, a man who had his ear close to a radio, an uncommon 1929 speakeasy furnishing, listening to a local Baltimore amateur hour called "Saturday Night Function."

As the barkeep listened to the sound of one of his neighbor's children bedeviling an innocent melody, he shushed his Coast Guard clientele several times.

Between being shushed by the barkeep and having to listen to the little monster torturing George Gershwin, they all got up to leave. One of Arthur Godfrey's buddies thereupon turned to him and said:

"You can do better than that monkey—let's get out of here."

Came a chorus of assent from Godfrey's mates on both statements and before he could say he wouldn't, he was whisked into a taxi and to the radio station.

This was no sudden, unexplainable whim of his shipmates.

Godfrey at the time was armed with the same sort of comfortable barbershop baritone he now utilizes to his high financial advantage. He also was a handy gent with a banjo, had a repertoire of lusty songs of the sea and soil, and even then, his voice had that unusual suggestive quality, virtually the vocal coun-

terpart of a lifted eyebrow, never nasty, always fun.

With no more fanfare than that, Godfrey and his pals descended on the radio station. He was just as good as his buddies insisted. After several songs, the announcer invited him back again.

The next week was even more successful, and Godfrey was handed—lovely phrase—a commercial program of his own. Not, of course, anything near the glittering \$1,000,000 a year he makes now. But a local businessman—the Triangle Pet Shop—was looking for a 1929 version of Pinza at his own price—\$5 a program. Billed as "Red Godfrey, the Warbling Banjoist," Godfrey was glad to get it.

Godfrey remained the pet shop's pet until a few weeks later when the announcer failed to show up, not a strange defection in those haphazard radio days. Arthur simply took over himself, announced his own selections, plunked his own banjo, grew ecstatic about bird seed, canine toenail clippers and other such elegancies, and as he left the studio, was grabbed by the station manager.

Envisioning an end to his career, Godfrey had no time to stammer an explanation before the manager informed him:

"You talk at least 50 times better than you sing. If you want an announcing job, you're on the payroll."

Arthur did, and boarded radio's payroll, never to leave it. Thus began one of the most fabulous careers in the history of entertainment.

Godfrey and the Coast Guard by coincidence were going their separate ways after his hitch, and he dug in at the Baltimore station to learn the ropes, or wires.

A year of experience there and he felt ready to slay larger dragons, this one in Washington, as a staff announcer at the NBC station. But a shattering accident halted his career temporarily.

Forty-seven fractures sent him to a hospital for

six months of reflective study of radio spieling. He did his listening almost by force. He wanted to see what made radio spieling insistent on its formal, stiff-shirted, double-breasted habits. He left the hospital limping, but he took with him the desire never again to utter a fake British accent, another broad A.

And this can be said for Arthur Godfrey—he tried his technique the very first day back on the job! No period of adjustment was necessary. He'd been adjusted, back in the hospital.

Convinced he was talking to a great number of single individuals rather than one great crowd of people, Godfrey took his new theory right to the microphone. No more of that stilted, "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen . . ."

Quietly, as if talking directly to some lonesome friend in some hall bedroom a couple of feet away, he said with simple sincerity: "Good evening."

He sounded as if he really meant it, as if he hoped that indeed it was a good evening, not just a bit of expendable rhetoric. But—the sudden change was too much for his bosses. The chief announcer came running in to pull Arthur away from the mike.

"Old man, you just haven't got it anymore," he said, patting the redhead on the shoulder. "Maybe you should rest a little longer?"

After extended discussion, mostly in rising tones, Godfrey went back on the air, this time at an early morning hour considered safe by the management, which thought no one possibly would be listening. They cautioned Godfrey anyway, and he remained their good little boy—for four days.

On the fifth, Arthur suddenly discovered he was

fed up with the record being spun a few minutes after seven a. m. There was the unmistakable sound of the record being broken into bits and then the easy, baritone voice, edged with good-humored sarcasm:

"Ain't that the silliest thing you ever heard of," dropping the first preposition-ending of his radio career.

"Here I'm playing 'The William Tell Overture' at seven o'clock when what we really need is a little peace and quiet."

Having dared that far, Godfrey thought he might as well go all the way. A derisive bleacher-style sound was heard being dedicated to Godfrey's boss, who, he added, certainly would not be up that early to hear.

"If he does, I won't be here tomorrow," he laughed.

"I almost hoped I'd be fired," Godfrey said.

"But I wasn't. The guy had a sense of humor, I guess, because he dropped by a day or so later and said he'd been told I was a funny guy and that he'd have to get up early some day to see for himself."

And that was the simple, impudent beginning of the Arthur Godfrey legend.

Washington never was famous for planned amusement and the refreshing Godfrey style became a local favorite. He began to be compared to Will Rogers, to Huck Finn. He had a little something to say about any subject on the face of a newspaper. Nothing big, just little edgy, cheerful opinions that poked fun but didn't bring blood. It was the ordinary guy hearing the things he'd like to have thought of himself. And the ordinary guy loved it.

Arthur Godfrey (right) and C. Leo De Orsey his attorney and financial adviser.



With listeners, as the night the day, followed the sponsors. A waiting line presently began patiently to take its turn on Godfrey's program.

He decided to set standards of his own, in the bargain, and refused to accept a product he didn't think gave listeners fair value.

His bureau of standards was simple. No big laboratory. Godfrey just tried everything himself. If it was a pudding, he ate it, smacked his lips if it was good and accepted it, or chased the man with the money away if it was bad.

Once a manufacturer hopefully sent Godfrey a carton of chewing gum. The redhead stuck a stick or two in his mouth and discovered it was turning into almost dusty lumps. He sent it back with his reasons attached.

Horrified, the manufacturer rushed through a laboratory examination which turned up the fact that Godfrey was right and that some necessary ingredient had been dropped from the gum in the carton sent for Arthur's approval. He quickly ran off an-

other, sped it along with an apology and a plea for one more Godfrey try.

That time it was fine, a stenographer's delight. But Godfrey thought the management deserved some penalty anyway, so he put the gum on probation for another 13 weeks, a traditional radio sweating-out period, while he gave it a good, extended personal chomping. Then, satisfied, he accepted the sponsor.

It was during this period that Godfrey happened upon what now is considered his "trademark," kidding the commercials.

Never, of course, does he poke fun at a product.

Always it's the advertising copy, or the rich full syntax of a company's official motto that strikes his interest in the ridiculous.

It's a style of humor so direct, so honest, that the woman home peeling her onions and listening to Godfrey's morning show feels in her heart he is her friend. In return, the national sisters of the skillet are making Godfrey a millionaire. Slowly, of course, what with taxes, but a millionaire nevertheless.



The Columbia Broadcasting System heaves a sigh of relief as the uninhibited Godfrey completes a show.

SINGING TROUBADOR



Stepping another rung up the ladder of entertainment success, Godfrey played at Washington's Club Michel in 1934. Seven years before he was a singing troubador with the Coast Guard.



GODFREY SPARKLES AT DAWN

Just before the start of his early morning program Godfrey tries his fingers on the big Hammond organ.



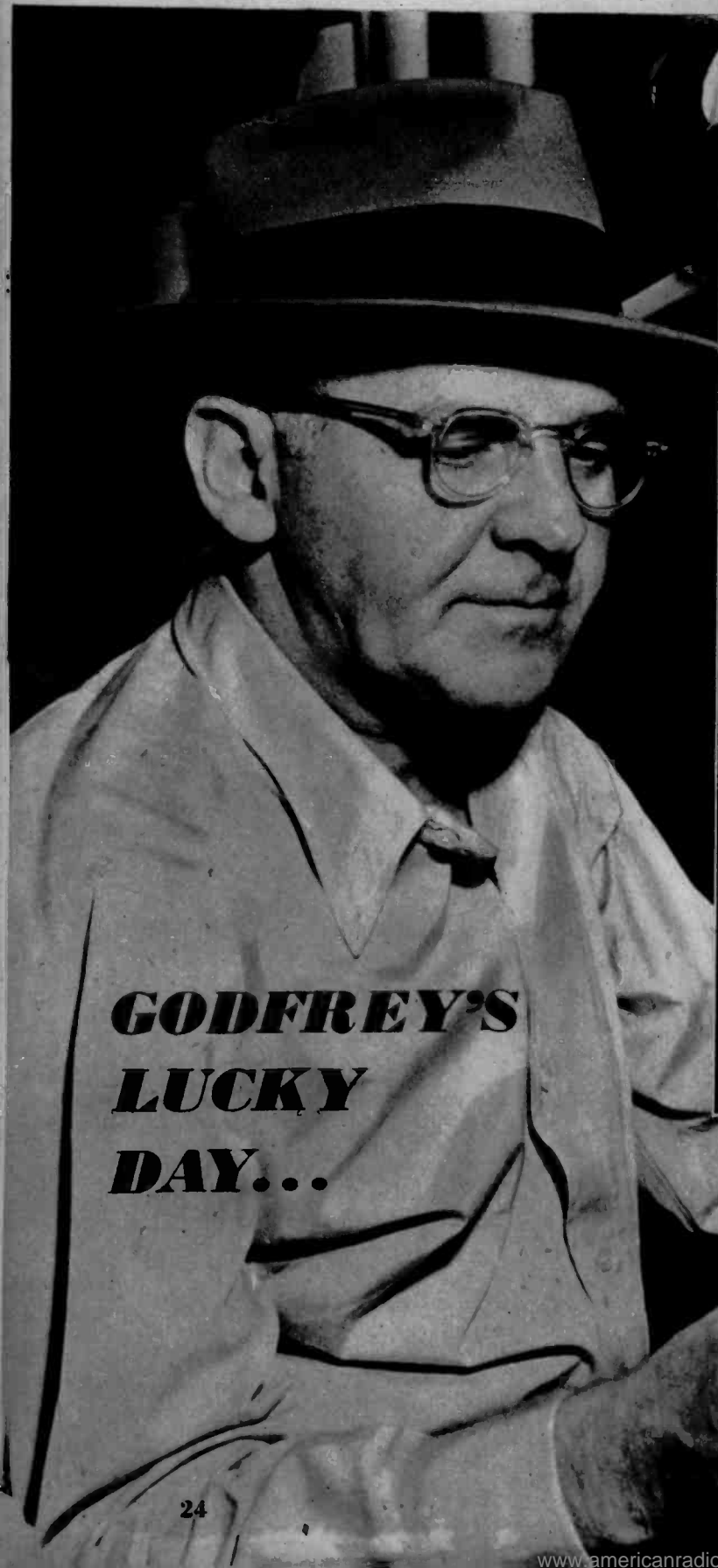
Anything for a laugh, the Great Godfrey back in '35 panicked his audience as he bottle-fed timid calf.



It was Godfrey's Washington disc jockey palter, which stirred the interest of columnist Walter Winchell, who gave our hero his first big plug in 1934.



Grinning Godfrey got his first big break on Jan. 26, 1934 when a man named Winchell caught his show one early morning. A swell plug in his column skyrocketed Godfrey to immediate fame and 30 offers from Broadway.



**GODFREY'S
LUCKY
DAY...**



Discovered by Winchell...

ARTHUR GODFREY, a casual fellow who makes \$1,000,000 a year just saying anything he pleases, gets very serious when he says the luckiest day of his life was Jan. 26, 1934.

"That was the day a guy named Walter Winchell discovered me," he said.

Godfrey, at the time a Washington, D. C., disc jockey, occasional night club bandleader and local radio favorite, had not yet even dared to dream that some day his fame would spread and that his voice would be heard more times each week than any other person's in history.

He had just quit the National Broadcasting Company's station in the nation's capital after a hassle with the management.

"We had a row and I walked out," Godfrey explained.

It was over his cheerful but casual treatment of his commercial sponsors, which his fans loved but which the station thought the advertisers resented.

"I got outside the studio and took a walk," he said. "When I got about as far away as the park in front of the White House, I'd simmered down some. I hadn't really wanted to quit. I had said something I was sorry for and I decided to go back and apologize."

"Next day I walked in and told the boss I was sorry. He said fine, that was the right attitude, and I thought things were nice and peaceful again along the Potomac. But then he said apology or not, that he was firing me anyway. Crazy? Sure, but I was out of a job. So I started looking."

Godfrey didn't have to look far. The Columbia Broadcasting System station in Washington welcomed him with open microphones. To this day it's something for the local Washington CBS staff to gloat over, to get in their digs at NBC.

"At least," Godfrey said, with a sly good humor, "I can say I quit *them* first."

That was just 10 days before Winchell discovered Godfrey, considered around CBS a happier day than the moment when Columbus scouted Isabella. Because Godfrey was to start a CBS early morning program similar to his former NBC local show, NBC decided to shoot in a "big name" announcer and give Godfrey his popularity lumps.

"I was really worried," Godfrey said, "so I fixed it with the station manager, Harry Butcher—he later became Ike Eisenhower's aide—to let me stay on the air the whole night before the other guy got started. I figured I could get a full start ahead of him that way."

Arthur went to the transmitter at Alexandria, Va., where the entire station complement included himself, an engineer, a few records and a telephone.

After spinning a few records, he asked listeners to call in requests, a new idea at the moment now considered their own invention by night club disc jockeys, and a dull and diabolical device it has since become indeed.

"It was amazing," Godfrey said. "I got calls from all over the U. S. My end of the conversation was all that was heard on the air. One gal kept calling me from New York. Said she was lonesome. I filled all her requests—with music. It must have been one of Walter Winchell's few dull nights because by chance he heard me talking to the girl in New York."

"He had some celebrities with him, he said when he telephoned me, including Billy Rose, Ben Bernie, Ruth Etting and Jimmy Cannon. He asked me to kid Ben Bernie. Next day he had a swell plug for me in his column. Then he put more plugs in and I got more than 30 offers from Broadway."

"Put down Jan. 26, 1934, as the luckiest day of my life and Walter Winchell as the guy who made it that way."

Godfrey's star, thus propelled, started ascending. Several times network brass decided he would be

a fine hotshot-type, hep comedian, the sort that inhabit Lindy's at a dime a dozen when the price is up. Each time, he adds, he laid an egg. He wanted to bring his easy, casual style to the networks but the brass wanted him to be flip, furious and noisy.

The network's eggs thus deposited did not keep Godfrey from becoming even more of a local Washington favorite. Then, in 1941, despite the noisy prewar ructions in the capital, he caught the attention of CBS bosses once again.

This time they started feeding Godfrey's line of effortless gab straight to New York City over WCBS, the local outlet, meaning that Godfrey had two different local shows, with two separate sets of sponsors.

Because of this complex situation, Godfrey was forced to spend much of his time at conferences in New York. It meant he made his Washington pitch from Manhattan over a telephone extension. At other times he would shift his headquarters to Washington and shoot his New York show over the same telephone wire. Betimes he was attempting to Build Character with Important People, looking for that big New York break.

Building Character meant, usually, staying out until the last spaniel was dangling. Taking a good look at their tiring, bi-local favorite, CBS built him a studio in his farm in Virginia and let him broadcast from there. At least he could get some semblance of a good night's rest and save an hour by dashing to the microphone from his bed, still pajamaed and frequently with sleep fuzzing up his voice for the first five or ten minutes.

In Arthur's case, he even made capital of that, and added to his reputation for the unexpected.

The dizzy program finally got him down, but he wouldn't give in, not even when he stayed out with executives who could sleep next day until the unconscionably late hour of eight or nine. Arthur had to be up bright and early, or at least early, in time for his 6 a. m. spiel.

Later, not satisfied with running himself down to a frazzle, he let his good friend Katharine Cornell talk him into making a pass at the legitimate theatre.

Miss Cornell thought it might propel the Godfrey bandwagon along much faster if he were to suddenly associate himself with round acting as confederer of an Intimate Revue being produced by her friend, Nancy Hamilton. It was "Three To Make Ready," prepared at first as one of those cosy little neo-front room affairs where everyone was charming and close and fashionably bright.

But suddenly it was booked into the huge Adelphi

Theatre, took on about as much intimacy as the Greatest Show on Earth, and Godfrey found himself shouting his lines sans microphone to the second balcony which, he said, seemed some blocks away.

Between the bad role, poor notices, eight shows a week including two matinees, his disappointment over an unhappy association with the legitimate stage and the savage schedule of early morning broadcasts—the Godfrey physique took the only way out. He simply fell down exhausted one day and was carted off to a hospital, where his condition was diagnosed as a heart attack.

"It was nothing of the sort, just plain fatigue I found out later," Godfrey said, "but for two years it made me a cardiac neurotic. I was just plumb wore out."

Safely tucked into a hospital bed, Godfrey had another period of reflection. He came to a conclusion: "I gave the theatre nothing and it gave me nothing. We're even," and called his bout with thespis a draw. Then he turned his full attention to network radio—and then television, on which his fullest success now is being accomplished.

First came "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts" in 1946, planned originally as a "Summer replacement." It weathered that Winter and a year later, took aboard a sponsor. Sir Thomas Lipton's name was thereupon bandied about in an impudent fashion never before associated with the famous yachtsman, but the Godfrey salesmanship would have made the late-titled Britisher approve his methods, it's sure.

Meanwhile some 60-odd sponsors still were receiving the local Washington and New York benefits of the Godfrey radio pitch, and he continued, many onlookers wondering why, as CBS experimented with various morning show formats before the present 10:00 a. m. to 11:30 a. m. show was put together. For the benefit of those who questioned his hanging on to the local shows, they were fantastically profitable to Godfrey.

"Why, I made \$200,000 a year before everyone else was even awake," he explains today.

That indeed was a difficult sum to shoo away. But as his network fortunes starting ascending for good, Arthur took the final step Oct. 29, 1948, and abandoned the local broadcasts.

He was then, and more so now, becoming a permanent national favorite. He was King Arthur of the Air Waves, the nation's kilocycle barefoot boy with plenty of cheek, a fabulous Huck Finn of Huckstering who finally could pay a little attention to his home, his family, his health, and his hobbies.

Down on the Farm . . .

LITTLE that is authentic has been written about the family and close personal life of Arthur Godfrey until this book for one very definite reason.

Godfrey, while deeply proud of his wife, three children and his farm, livestock and the usual personal possessions, is hesitant about bringing them into full public focus.

"They might get bothered, and the kids might get spoiled," he said, with quiet sincerity.

"They're all normal, everyday people like you or anyone's folks, and I don't want them ever to change."

Godfrey, therefore, keeps his wife, Mary, Richard, a 20-year-old son by a previous marriage, his young son and daughter who go to public school in Virginia—and his mother here in Manhattan—away from the dizzy attractions of the dervish radio and television whirl in which he spends just about half his time—the public half.

The entirely private half is spent with his family on his 800-acre farm at Catoctin Ridge, Loudoun County, Va.

There's an ample farmhouse on the grounds, large but not quite lavish.

Fine cattle, horses, well-tended crops and all sorts of farm products are carefully nurtured with such efficiency that the farm each year turns a profit. Last year it was \$12,000, certainly not much in comparison with Godfrey's \$1,000,000-a-year income from radio and TV, but more than enough to take him out of the amateur class.

"If anything ever should happen to my other interests, and I could pay all my attention to my farm, I could double that income," he said, with more than a touch of pride.

This Manhattan-born farmer cuts away from all the New York razzle-dazzle every Thursday morning directly he is finished with his morning program at CBS.

Promptly as it goes off the air, Godfrey strides swiftly out a backstage entrance of the studio into a car and speeds to Teterboro Airport, N. J.

With him constantly until she retired last fall was "Mug" Richardson, his general manager, chief of production, executive assistant, "my good right arm." She just couldn't keep up to Godfrey's jet-shot pace.


Along for the weekend ride usually is some other close associate; last week it was Archie Bleyer, Godfrey's orchestra leader on all his shows, just one of the many professional associates of the lovable redhead who changed a strictly business relationship to one of abject loyalty, sincere friendship, virtually family-style affection.

At Teterboro Airport, all gassed, oiled and ready for him to step behind the stick, is a Navion four-seater private plane. No delays, usually, and they're winging toward Washington.

In Washington, "Mug" Richardson said so long and left for her own apartment. She had only the final Friday morning show to go, and Thursday afternoon and evening free for anything she wished.



Officially a lieutenant commander in the U. S. Naval Reserve Godfrey is entitled to the rank seen painted on his plane by virtue of custom calling boss, "captain."



On weekends Godfrey finds lots to talk about after a hearty lunch prepared by his wife. Relaxing in the haystack with his kids, Pat and Mike, and his lovely blonde wife to whom he's been married since 1938, is Arthur's idea of complete wholesome fun.

As "Miss North Carolina" of 1934 Miss Richardson does not go dateless, never fear. And after 16 harried years with Godfrey, she still is one of the handsomest girls anywhere.

While "Mug" went to her flat and her own way, Godfrey wastes no time getting to his rich acreage. Once there he relaxes completely. And may we add, that when Godfrey relaxes, he relaxes as completely as he works. That is as near to the impossible as I ever expect to see.

A big lunch awaits him, overseen by his wife, a lovely blonde young woman to whom he's been married since 1938. They have lots to talk about, and the lunch is long, loaded with fine family chatter about the kids, the cows, the kittens, the kids, and then the kids some more.

The "kids" are daughter Pat, eight, and son Mike, ten, about as unspoiled a brace of celebrity offspring as can be located anywhere.

At Godfrey's insistence, they attend public school. They engage in all community activities, have a

natural love for the farm and outdoor things encouraged without insistence. They are growing up just as almost any well-fixed farm parents might raise their children.

Once the initial family problems are talked away, Godfrey climbs into corduroy and wool shirt and makes his farm rounds.

There always are new colts, new cattle, or a Brahma bull to crossbreed experimentally with domestic cows. Godfrey tramps his land, keeps careful watch of new installations or old items that need attention, checks grazing stock, scrupulously investigates his barns, silos, henhouses.

By afternoon, his kids are home from school to change into play duds and go chasing after pop. It's a joyous, profitable romp for the rest of the day, and to bed after dinner at a proper time for all.

Next morning Arthur sleeps until almost time for his 10:00 radio show. "Mug" Richardson arrived to check the "script," or what passes for a script on any Godfrey show. Mostly it consists of piles of carefully-culled comments written in the Godfrey style by several "writers," who actually are mere collectors of the proper sort of newspaper story or anecdote that fits Godfrey's fancy.

Frequently a "writer" bothers to dash off a punchline for Arthur which under other auspices might delight a comedy star. But generally the sketchy background matter injected by Godfrey is of such hilarious moment that Arthur makes more than the most out of it before it reaches its supposed climax.

Having once attained uproarious response with such a joke or situation the redhead prefers not to press his luck and try for the big prize.

He is a master of underplaying. He senses when several leading up laughs are plenty, when that big final yell of laughter might put him in the Broadway comedian field. He does not wish to attain that—ever.



He therefore tosses aside many a carefully polished comedy gem, completely satisfied with the appreciation extracted in low-pressure style.

That's Godfrey.

"Mug" Richardson always was a past master at selecting such items for Godfrey's attention while on the air. Many times he has no more idea of what he is going to talk about than his listeners. What comes out has a high level of friendly hilarity. It's not accident, by any means, but long habit, a style of presentation that is easier on the nerves than jokes pressure-cooked out of Joe Miller's by dint of painful, ulcer-wracked labors.

Godfrey broadcasts from his farmhouse studio each Friday without benefit of his orchestra and singers being there to let him know visually what's going on. Janette Davis, his pretty girl singer, and Bill Lawrence, a bobby-sox favorite, both discovered by Godfrey and brought along to handsome paychecks on his shows, always are in the CBS studios in New York.

Arthur, with earphones bringing him in contact with the Manhattan center of activities, synchronizes his voice to the music that trickles to him by telephone wire.

The Mariners Quartet, also featured on his various shows, once were playing a benefit engagement at South Bend, Ind., and Archie Bleyer's orchestra was in New York. The impish Godfrey thought it

would be fun for him to sing from his Virginia farm, with Bleyer's baton leading the band in New York and the Mariners chiming in from the most distant background in most people's memories—from a stage in a South Bend theatre.

Everything came out fine. The song was "A Million Tomorrows," but the engineers spread thus around the country hoping the trick would come off properly, would have settled for just one single tomorrow—right then.

Once the Friday show is out of the way, Godfrey settles down to a weekend of earnest rest and diversion. He chops trees and farms in a fashion that puts his Manhattan half-week entirely out of his mind. Saturday and Sunday are 24-hour heavens.

But as Sunday evening approaches, the Navion is being gassed and oiled in Washington, "Mug" Richardson was powdering and packing or saying so-long-for-now to some anxious young man as she dashes off to the National Airport.

Godfrey finally kisses his wife goodbye, tousles the hair of his children, gets into his car and is driven off—for another three-and-a-half days of dizzy, frantic nose-to-the-microphone.

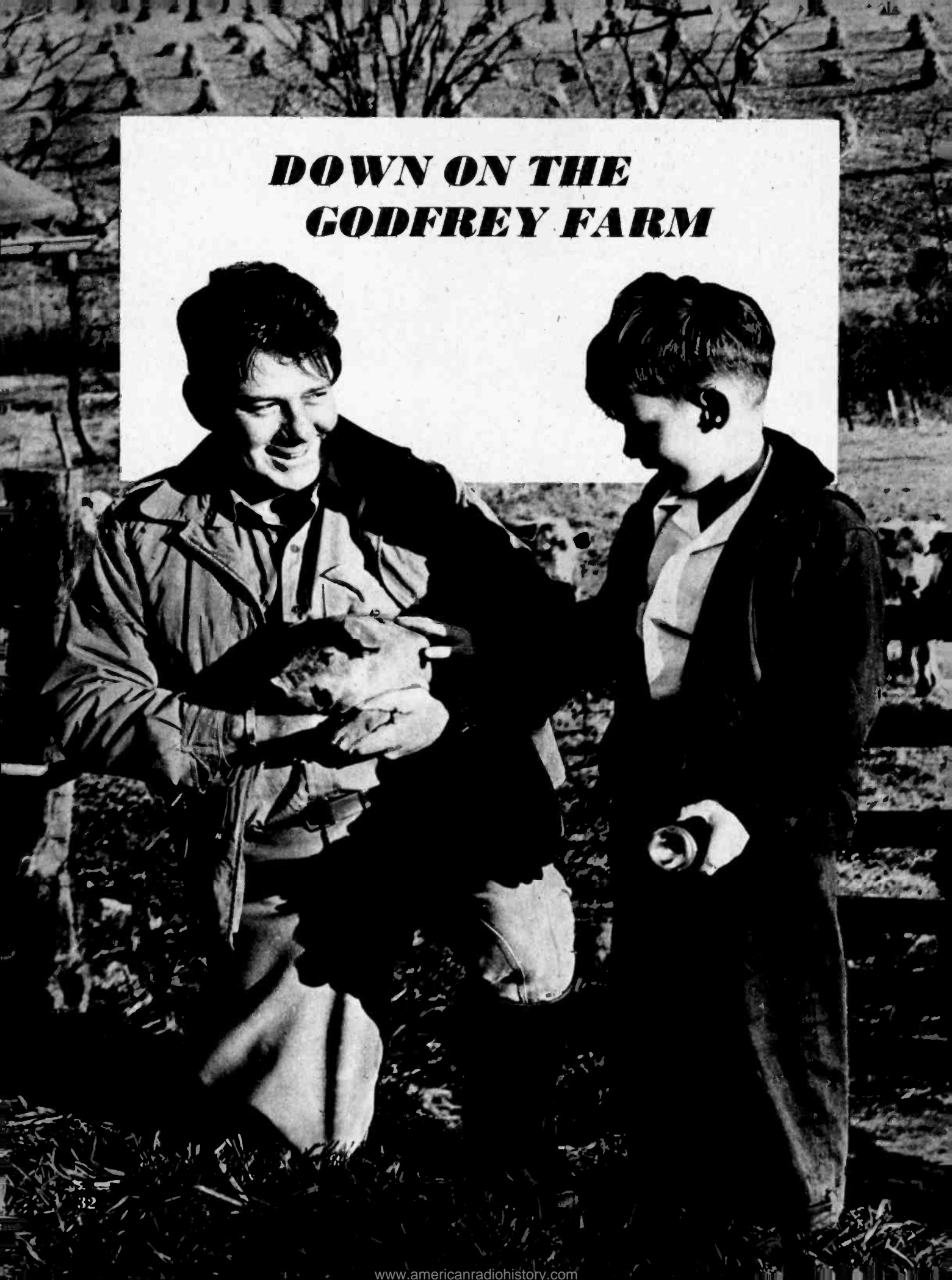
The plane lands at Teterboro again and out steps a thoroughly rested, entirely happy man, refreshed from his brief stay with his loved ones.

The world is Arthur Godfrey's oyster. With a pearl in it.



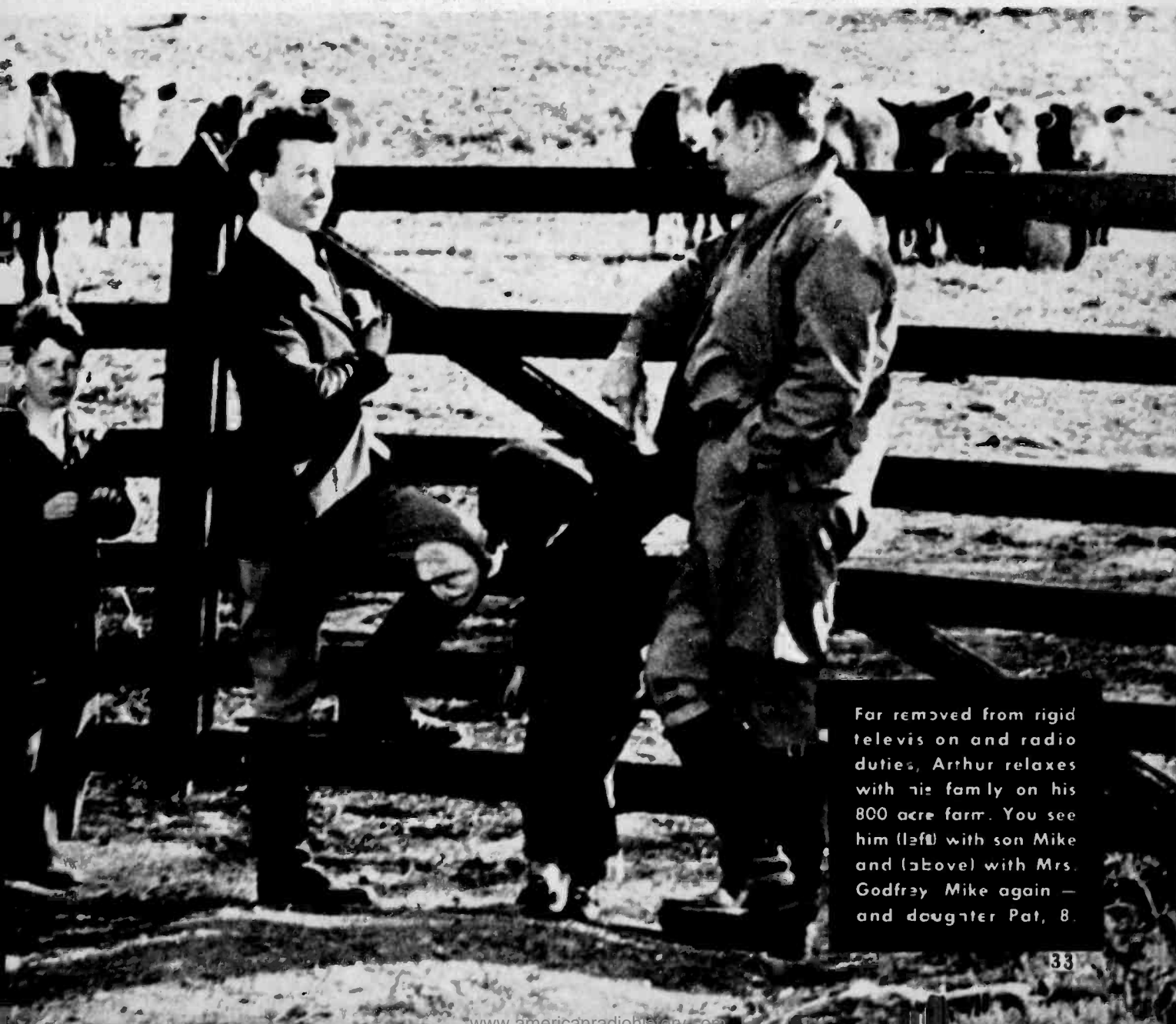
There's plenty of horse sense about Godfrey's big 800-acre farm at Catoctin Ridge, Loudoun County, Va. Last year the farm brought him a profit of \$12,000.

**DOWN ON THE
GODFREY FARM**





Godfrey broadcasts from his farmhouse studio each Friday without benefit of his orchestra and singers. On this day Arthur climbs into riding attire and tramps his 800 acre farm astride his favorite horse.



Far removed from rigid television and radio duties, Arthur relaxes with his family on his 800 acre farm. You see him (left) with son Mike and (above) with Mrs. Godfrey Mike again — and daughter Pat, 8.



A happy interlude in the day of Godfrey, getting the Silver Mike Award from "Mugs" Richardson. Later, Godfrey copped the coveted "Michael" too.



Grinning Godfrey broadcasts from his Washington hospital bed in 1942, after having his appendix removed. Mugs and nurse join in the hilarity.





CHESTERFIELD

LINE
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A DAY IN

NEW YORK -

It's not often that Godfrey finds time to do some of the New York spots. But here's one of those nights at the Stork with his wife and son Richard.



No Rest for the Popular...

WHEN Arthur Godfrey awakens on Monday morning of any week—this, last, the next—he faces a program that would make a dervish think he was spinning backwards.

It's 9 a. m. and the sun peeps through the draperies of a two-room penthouse apartment atop the Lexington Hotel, which Godfrey has rented for many years, and where the staff of the hotel fills his most simple whim with a speed and affection usually reserved for people they like.

Maids scurry around on tiptoe until they hear him taking his shower. Then they know all is fine in the Godfrey world, and they whistle while they work and shout greetings to their favorite guy.

Breakfast is ready as he steps out of the shower. He eats it swiftly but without gulping, out of habit. Then he shaves, puts on jacket and slacks and goes downstairs. Greeting folks in the lobby is an accustomed, casual, pleasantly diffident affair, as any old neighbor might greet another on the way to work. After all, it's just another Godfrey workday.

At the curb he steps into a cab and is whisked to CBS' big studio on E. 52d st., where he walks in usually just in time to say howdy, talk five fast minutes with an assistant about the day's program and with no more fanfare than that Arthur Godfrey is on the air.

"This is the Pillsbury Program and let's have a song," is a typical beginning, and from then on the order of the day gets even more informal.

An hour and a half later, six sponsors are delighted that Godfrey even got around to mentioning their product at all, the Mariners have performed their musical chore, Janette Davis has sung brightly, Bill Lawrence has sent young hearts beating a bit faster and The Chordettes, a girls' barber shop harmony-style quartet has delivered itself of some mighty handsome feminine version of the best shaving music.

Nobody's nervous, no one's blood pressure is popping, ulcers are for other people's programs and all still is right with Godfrey's world.

Eleven-thirty is here and Godfrey takes his usual fast stroll out a door, down a corridor, across a street, up an elevator and into an office high up in the Columbia Broadcasting System's main office building on Madison ave.

"Hya, Bennie," he calls warmly to Miss Phyllis Benson, his private secretary, as he ambles by her desk and into his executive-style, handsomely neat but not gaudy office, away up where Arthur can enjoy the view. If there were no more view than an alleyway, it is more than certain he'd find something to admire about *that*. Just that sort of guy.

He picks up a telephone to talk to Larry Puck, or with his staff's offices, who's in charge of the office which handles applicants, auditions and the business of his evening TV and radio simulcast, "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts."

Nothing ever keeps Godfrey on the telephone very long with Larry Puck in the CBS Studio Building at 49 E. 52d st., across the way, and from which all the administrative red tape connected with the myriad Godfrey enterprises unwinds before they concern Godfrey himself.

Phyllis Rosenberg, Larry Puck's secretary, drops by to take up some brief matter with "Bennie." Godfrey's voice warms up her day, too, with a "Hya, Rosie!" There's an accountant, a girl assistant and other underlings in and out all day. It's an office run efficiently, without noise or hysteria, everyone at peace with everyone else.

"Know why Godfrey's organization is so well-oiled?" asked a delivery boy who dropped in with coffee for those too busy to get out to lunch that Monday.

I expressed my wonderment. The lad explained: "This is a melting pot, this Godfrey outfit," he

said admiringly. "Every sort of character you want to see works here.

"Godfrey's Irish, I hear, and something else mixed in. That's good to start with.

"Then most of the people here have folks who came from the other side. There are Christians and Jews, a couple of colored people, an Italian guy, couple of Germans, kid who talks French like a native and I guess she was, and a couple of Litvaks and Galicianos.

"The Mariners' Quartet has two Negro and two white fellows besides. It's like a little slice of New York City right here, a little bit of America the way we all want it. And know something? That's for me!"

And away he went, his dark skin alight with the satisfaction of such carefree, simple goodwill.

Godfrey's private Monday morning business having been swiftly put aside, I rejoined him in his office. He was on the telephone, looking out the window at a gray day, his startling red shock of hair, just a suspicion of touse in it, lighting up his corner of the room. We sat back to talk.

"Yeah, I'm a salesman," he said. "I sell all sorts of things. They say I'm pretty good at it. I guess I am. But I'd like to be a better salesman about a few things that are closest to me.

"You know, as I get older—yep, I'm getting up there finally, I'm 46 now—life is getting a lot simpler. I'm not so crazy about a lot of things I used to think were so important. Like the fancy places, and being accepted in the *right* places. I got shoved around in enough of the right places to know they're strictly wrong joints to begin with.

"Right now, for instance, I'm getting in a few swipes for good government. Don't get it wrong, though. I'm not getting my nose caught in politics, mind you. But I've given a great deal of thought to a few things that need someone's attention.

"Good government, for instance. If we could get the right people in the right jobs—just think how much better this country, which is pretty wonderful already, could be! I keep harping on that as often as I can without getting my listeners bored. They don't have to be told too often, but they gotta be reminded.

"I'm doing what little I can, and I'm not going to let up on it, to take a poke at racial prejudice. Who needs it? Every time we knock down another racial bar, everyone is happier. No 'incidents' happen.

"Folks get along when they are encouraged to take a good, equal look at the next guy. And that's just about as much as I'm going to preach on that subject today."

Off he went on the subject of farming. Arabian horses. Hunters.

"I raise them, and the feed that makes 'em fine and big," he said.—Then aviation.

"Know one of the biggest kicks I ever got? Eddie Rickenbacker told me a little old woman walked into one of his company's offices and asked for a plane ticket. She said she never flew before but she had to get somewhere and Arthur Godfrey had told her over the air that flying is the safest way to travel.

"If Arthur Godfrey says it's so, it's so," this little old lady said, and took her first plane trip. When she got back home she announced she would never travel any other way again.

"I keep selling my fans on the fact that no airplane ever had an accident that couldn't be traced to human error. Airplanes don't kill anyone. Just man kills man. I've been flying 30 years and I want to keep right on flying 30 or 40 more."

Godfrey didn't mention how grateful the aviation industry was to him for his promotional good will. What's more, the aviation industries honored his many favors with a token gift—a big DC-3 passenger plane that had been knocked down and rebuilt entirely as a personal plane for Arthur Godfrey.

The whole aviation industry joined in—one firm presenting instruments, another an engine, others kicking in some tangible token of its esteem to turn the ship into the finest airplane of its kind anywhere.

Godfrey was so excited about it, and so humbled by the sheer bigness of the gesture, that he hasn't yet found adequate words to express his gratitude.

"I'm just not ready yet to talk about that," he said when I brought up the subject. "Nothing I could say would make me sound anything but hammy, so I ain't sayin' nothin'."

Human Dynamo with Lazy Hum...

YOU won't catch any rings on Arthur Godfrey's merry-go-round, because there's no time to reach for one.

Typical Arthur Godfrey Monday: Up at nine, shower, shave, dress, breakfast, amble casually downstairs as if the whole day ahead was as empty as a Molotov promise.

Hop into a cab, to the Columbia Broadcasting System's studio on East 52nd st. for his morning radio show starting at 10:00, ending at 11:30. To the Godfrey office in the CBS Building at 485 Madison ave. where photographers wait to take pictures for the advertising agency representing one of his sponsors.

This is no hapless procedure but a normally grim job of posing prettily while perfectly still. Not Godfrey, though.

Sandwiches and coffee are wheeled in and he eats lunch while the photographer sets up a tangled mess of equipment, none of which bothers Arthur.

While the flashbulb Rembrandt aims and squints, gauging light and distance, the Redhead munches away, talking to Washington, talking across the street, across the room, across his desk, managing somehow never to get upset as he administers the one-man mint that means \$10,000,000 a year to CBS, and a smart \$1,000,000 a year to himself.

You'd never know, this Monday noontime, as Godfrey with seeming laziness pulls the telephone strings that turn his solo industry into a profitably excavated gold mine, that at the ends of the phone wires, like delighted puppets, dangle a staff of loyal, admiring underlings.

Godfrey's private secretary, Phyllis Benson, steers all unnecessary calls away from him so that he isn't bothered. She feeds some to underlings, some to Larry Puck, general manager of the office which handles nothing else but auditions for "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts," his Monday evening TV show.

In that office are Esther Stoll, supervisor of all auditions; Sylvia Davis, accompanist, and three secretaries busy full time opening, answering letters and summoning likely Talent Scouts' prospects.

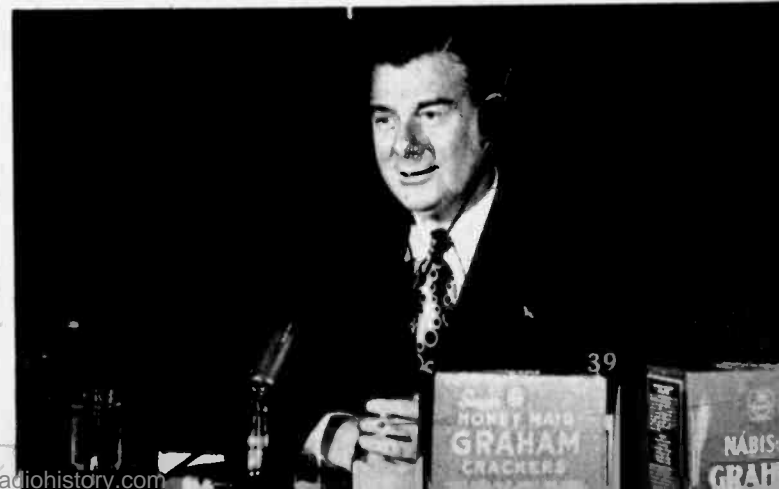
Dangling elsewhere, are two girls in the CBS mail room opening Godfrey fan missives, and another girl in the Washington CBS office.

In the CBS music department Godfrey's musical conductor, composer, arranger and good friend, Archie Bleyer, is slaving over the week's musical plans, not nearly as casual a preparation for everyone else as they seem for King Arthur of the Air Waves.

Bleyer's six musicians, familiar to Godfrey's 40,000,000 listeners weekly, by now have taken on separate characters of their own on the various shows.

They bear the brunt of Arthur's cheerful jibes, and they love it, love their jobs, and think Godfrey is the dream boss of all time. The Chordettes, a quartet of feminine barber shop singers, are elsewhere, practicing for the night's telecast. The Mariners, a male quartet, ditto. Same for Janette Davis, the girl singer, and Bill Lawrence, the latest threat to Sinatra and Vic Damone; the latter, incidentally, is a graduate of "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts."

Amid all this well spread, well-paid activity, Godfrey kept up his constant tussle with the telephone. Until a tall young man arrived, obviously a young advertising agency executive, Arthur pointed out,



by the cut of his clothes, now virtually a Madison ave. uniform; Brooks Brothers' suit, Brooks' polo shirt with rolling, buttoned-down collar loosely tied knitted cravat, argyle socks, stout scotch-grain brogues.

"And a pipe," Arthur pointed out.

Off we ambled with the harried young huckster to 20th Century-Fox Films where Godfrey was to make a movie short. This took a quick hour, virtually a fleeting moment in the everyday schedules of movie men, accustomed as they are to causing a scene to unfold at the rate of a couple of minutes a day — when they're *exceptionally* speedy. With Godfrey, deceptively like molasses in Nome, they ambled through the celluloid sequence with almost days to spare.

Back into a limousine again to be sped the few blocks to CBS Studio 3 to look in on a dress rehearsal of that night's TV "Talent Scouts."

Everything ship-shape, and since he never rehearses with the guests on the show anyway — it could be said almost as a general rule that Godfrey doesn't rehearse with anyone, any time — he ambled out the stage door, east a few feet to CBS Playhouse 52 where that night he was to appear on "The Parade of Stars," a seasonal one-shot television show for a sponsor who makes hot weather confections.

That was even more of a walk-through than his most casual rehearsals of regular shows, and for which he was to be paid a sum rumored in the trade as \$10,000.

"Why should he bother for less, a man with all that talent," Leo Lindy asked me.

At four p. m., Godfrey eased away from the one-shot rehearsal and into the car again, this time to be taken to 400 First Ave. for the graduation exercises at the Institute for the Crippled and Disabled, where he was the principal speaker, and naturally, a whole show by himself.

Arthur spent more time with the youngsters of the Institute than he spent on any one of his Monday projects, and did not even hint at breaking away until the exercises were completely finished.

A great gap in the Godfrey program thereupon loomed—45 minutes!

Into the car again, across town to Arthur's two-room penthouse atop the Lexington Hotel for a shower, change of clothing from the skin out, and another on-the-run lunch.

Dinner traditionally comes last on Godfrey's agenda. Somehow, he even found time to lie down for 15 minutes, close his eyes and, from some strange filling station, extract another shot of the limitless energy he seems able to extract whenever needed.

The trip back to the studio for his evening telecasts aren't nearly so last-minute now as they used to be. Last Christmas season Godfrey was taking his usual dawdling good time about getting to the show and became entangled in the sort of traffic jam that only descends upon Madison and Fifth aves. at the holiday season.

Nearest he could get to the studio was several blocks away and he arrived at that point 10 minutes after the show had begun. This time Godfrey really hustled. As he sped on foot past the marquee of the theatre where his telecast originates, he heard a man say to his companion:

"Why, there's Arthur Godfrey!" "You're daffy! Godfrey's inside. That must be his double," the other man said.

The 10 minutes Godfrey missed didn't enrage the sponsor—as nothing seems to, so long as sales figures continue their properly high average—and Arthur thought nothing more of it, except to get a big kick out of the man on the street, who believed perhaps he had a double around loose!

The Monday night I hitch-hiked along with Godfrey went by with the speed of a good time. He did the 15-minute one-shot show in what seemed a good time for the 100-yard dash, ambled out and back to his own studio for "Talent Scouts," meandered through that show with all the seeming aplomb of a tired vacationing Southerner, and at 9 p. m. eluded his assorted assistants by easing back into his limousine and driving off to dinner at the Cub Room of the Stork Club.

At the Stork, he eased into a seat at Table 50, always occupied by VIPs, whether of the entertainment, political, newspaper, business or social world.

Waiting, were Godfrey's good friend, Morton Downey; another amiable pal, Steve Hannagan, the publicity genius, and Sherman Billingsley, owner of the Stork.

This quartet also runs a perfume concern, Sortilege, of which Billingsley is the biggest single customer, buying an amazing number of bottles of every size for giving-away purposes; one night I saw him give a 120-ounce bottle—looked like a barrel—to the wife of one of his best customers, a radio producer.

"Keeps us solvent," Godfrey boomed admiringly.

That was the only period of the Godfrey Monday wherein it could be said Arthur actually, totally, was relaxed.

About now is a good enough time to disperse one good-natured fallacy about Arthur Godfrey. In his younger days, the Redhead was a fast man with a tankard. But in recent years, he simply hasn't been

able to combine his talents for radio and TV with two-fisted serious drinking.

Somehow, because of his almost complete lack of the usual formalities on his shows, the manner in which he says the first amusing thing that pops into his busy red head, and the wonderful pliability of his features, many onlookers have come to think he must be a wee bit woofled on occasion. But—take a first-hand authority on the matter: He's not! Although I can see why some folks *think* he's a mite tight.

One Wednesday telecast I watched him start

the show after fixing his sock while sitting on a piece of the scenery. As the show started, he finished pulling up the sock, looked impishly through the camera at his many millions of fans, and began the program with some utterly irrelevant remark.

All over the TV landscape his fans already were laughing. I know I was. Normally, and especially on radio, anyone else would have to be slightly fried to ease into a show in that offhand fashion. But not on a Godfrey show; **THAT** was virtually a sedate beginning.

One of the busiest men in show business, Arthur Godfrey plays plunk, plunk, and ukelele sales jump into the millions, amazing as it seems.



HUMAN DYNAMO WITH LAZY HUM-



The great Godfrey's schedule is never too heavy if a good cause is to be served. Here he is with U. S. State Secretary Dean Acheson at charity function.



The Godfrey mantelpiece is filled with plaques and cups awarded for sundry reasons. Georgie Price made this AGVA award for "Bringing Vaudeville Back."





GODFREY BEATS THE BAND

Archie Bleyer's orchestra has become part of the Godfrey personality and plays a big role in projecting Great Arthur's talents.

Aviation's Best Friend...

"EVERYBODY," says Arthur Godfrey almost every week, and sometimes *many* times each week to his 40,000,000-plus listeners, "should learn to fly."

"It can't be too hard," he adds, a laugh lighting up his warm, familiar baritone. "After all, if I could learn *anyone* can."

Just that sort of constant, sincere, tenacious personal promotion on the air waves by Arthur Godfrey, most popular radio and television entertainer of the era, has turned itself into the greatest single bit of propaganda the aviation industry now has going for it.

"Arthur has done more to make the public air-minded than any single person since Charles Lindbergh," one top aviation executive said recently.

Eddie Rickenbacker, president of Eastern Airlines and one of Godfrey's closest, oldest personal friends, is a man noted for his conservative, tempered, thoroughly thought-out public gestures in any instance.

But the famed World War I ace finds himself constantly talking about Godfrey in terms he usually reserves for the aviation industry itself.

Just recently Rickenbacker's opinions on the subject of Arthur Godfrey, aviation and unofficial press agent for the entire aviation industry, took an impressively tangible turn.

Now a full commander in the U. S. Naval Reserve, Godfrey's been flying almost 30 years and during most of that time has devoted a high percentage of his public speaking to selling the safety, convenience and time-saving qualities of air travel.

Rickenbacker, speaking several times for the industry, has said there is no way to properly repay Godfrey for his sincerely enthusiastic help.

Today Godfrey is the owner of the finest item Rickenbacker and his associates in the aviation industry could put their hands on.

It is a big Eastern Wright-powered DC-3, converted to Godfrey's private use at the behest and expense of the industry.

It is a gift unprecedented either in the history of aviation or the entertainment world!

It is no desk-size ornament, but a fully equipped former air ship that delivered 21 passengers at a time in its days as a common carrier. As it stands today, it is worth \$125,000, loaded from wing tip to tip and from nose to tail with the finest, safest, most luxurious effects ever seen in any such private, airborne vehicle.

The DC-3 was rebuilt by "executive conversion" at the plant of Remmert-Werner, Inc., in St. Louis. William Remmert himself flew the plane to Washington, and was with Godfrey when it was flown to New York the first time.

Like to step inside a moment and see the Godfrey ship?

The luxurious cabin is the first thing that strikes your eye, virtually a living room aloft.

The ship now seats 14, not including its captain—Arthur Godfrey, of course—or its first officer, Capt. Frank La Vigna, of Philadelphia.

Four stationary chairs are set around a table—gin rummy, Canasta, whatever the Godfrey guests prefer.

At the rear is an observation lounge, seating six, with a semi-circular couch and a coffee table in front, its top a laminated air chart of the U. S.

The lounge end looks out windows a foot high and three feet long. Four other swivel chairs keep a visitor turned in any direction he prefers. There is a desk, with a telephone on it, for business, or for just writing letters. Yes, the telephone works. Call your office on the way from Washington to New York, or have someone call you. Also a telephone connection between the lounge and the cabin up front. Switches

for various modern gadgets also are on the desk, and at the side are two divans that make up into a brace of full-length beds.

A television set is built in, and there's a motion picture projector in case all else fails and a lull descends.

Hungry? There's a thoroughly equipped galley to serve regular home-style meals. Nothing else to do after dinner? Just tune in the regular plane-to-ground radio calls via the cabin's loudspeakers. After that, I guess everyone's on his own.

Up front where Capt. Godfrey took over the controls for his first scheduled run is the part of the ship Arthur is most proud of. The instrument panel is lighted by modern plastic methods. Its maze of fine equipment includes a "zero reader" which combines the findings of the instrument landing system into one "cross-hair." The vertical cross-hair keeps Godfrey on course. The horizontal hirsute line tells him whether he's too high or too low.

There's also an automatic pilot which virtually flies the ship by itself.

Dual instrumentation permits Captains Godfrey



and La Vigna to see what's cooking without reading over each other's shoulder. Everything in the ship is for Godfrey's comfort, convenience and safety. It's the second private plane to be protected by non-flammable hydraulic liquid called "Skydrol," the first being a plane owned by the Monsanto Chemical Co., which makes the liquid.

Despite its 10 years and 44,000 miles of service, the DC-3 is "new" by passenger aviation standards, having been knocked down and every single piece in it rebuilt from tires to tail.

Acquisition of such a tremendous private ship has Godfrey understandably speechless. Probably for the first time.

Nothing so fabulous ever crossed his young mind when, a boy in Hasbrouck Heights, N. J., he spent many an hour nearby at the skimpy 600-foot runway of what now is Teterboro Air Terminal, but then just an adventurous home base for men later to become the greats of early aviation.

By complete coincidence, Teterboro also is the air terminal where Godfrey keeps his Navion plane in which he flies back and forth to his Virginia farm, and where he now also parks his new DC-3.

In those days it was simply called Teterboro, the local heroes were Clarence Chamberlain, Bill Diehl and the Witteman brothers. And although all this flying was going on right in his own Hasbrouck backyard, just a few hundred feet away, Arthur didn't go personally into the Wild Blue Yonder until he joined the Navy in 1920.

The shaky beginning of his 30 years of exciting belief in the air industry began on an onery old F5L flying boat.

Flying such antiquated buzzards frequently left a passenger in shape for nothing more modern than an oxcart, but Godfrey wasn't a backward-looking citizen and has been flying ever since. His hand has been on the stick of every sort of plane and he has the expected commercial license. His modern thinking is filled with nostalgia occasionally when he tells how that same old F5L flying boat now is in the Smithsonian in Washington.

Godfrey has gone a long way from those early Navy days 30 years ago, even if the F5L is in the Smithsonian and Arthur lives only a few miles away on 800 acres at Catoctin Ridge, Va. He keeps his Navion, and his DC-3, at the National Airport in Washington during the home-and-fireside end of his weekly schedule, which includes Thursday, Friday, Saturday and most of Sunday.

Unfortunately for aviation purposes, none of the 800 acres is suitable for conversion to a landing



field; too hilly. But that doesn't disturb Godfrey, who loves the relaxed, detached, farming feeling his "little place" affords.

Commercial aviation has felt the Godfrey propaganda in its ticket sales since, about 17 years ago, the redhead flew from New York to Miami in an old giant Curtiss Conder, a twin-engine job with a wing spread almost large enough to span the Hudson. But its non-stop flight to Miami was history of a sort, and sold Arthur even further on passenger air travel.

Godfrey also was on the first Constellation delivered to Eastern Airlines—his particular pet line because of "Capt." Eddie—when Capt. Dick Merrill broke the trans-continental speed record for commercial airliners on the hop from Burbank, Calif., to New York City.

Nothing was too modern for Godfrey. He's hepped on everything from gliders to helicopters. He hasn't leaned to fly an "eggbeater" yet but he gets around in them on occasion.

Not long ago he and James Viner of Sikorsky Aircraft were rotoring their way through Maryland in a Sikorsky F-51 when they were set down by a thunderstorm. They picked a convenient, unoccupied expanse of nicely-tended grass and only on landing did they discover they were on the infield of Laurel

Racetrack.

What appeared from aloft to be a deserted slice of geography turned out to be a track in the final bustle of the betting day, with few on hand because of the rain, and what few had turned out huddled back under the grandstand where they could take a bath in the betting windows without getting too wet literally.

One race remained to be run and Godfrey, certainly not a man to pass up that opportunity, dug down, bought a scratch sheet, did some quick calculation and got in line at the mutuel window. The storm ended just as the horses were pounding into the final furlong, and Godfrey and Viner waited around to collect their bet—yep, they won!

While no airplane actually frightens Godfrey, he does put some restriction on his enthusiasm. Recently he took over the controls of a T-33 "Shooting Star" jet plane at Bolling Field Air Base at Washington and pronounced it the most exciting experience of his life aloft. Would he buy one for himself, he was asked?

"Oh, no!" he exclaimed, using a switch on the words of the song he made so famous:

"I don't want it, you can have it—it's too fast for me!"

Arthur Godfrey has done more to make the public air-minded than any single person since Charles Lindberg. Unknown to many, the Great Godfrey has been flying almost 30 years.





Anything for a good wholesome laugh, Godfrey insisted that Gene Autry bring along Champion on this program.

Alighting in Honolulu with Mrs. Godfrey for a really needed vacation, he was greeted by enthusiastic fans.



**THE
PEOPLE'S
CHOICE—**

Three best cigarette
salesmen on the air—
Crosby, Godfrey and
crooner Perry Como.
With this look on his face
—you'll never know what
to expect from him next!



Unpredictable Redhead...

THE Columbia Broadcasting System heaves a corporate sigh of relief as its biggest, most valuable star prepares for his Tuesday and Friday night broadcasts, "Arthur Godfrey and His Ukulele."

Some semblance of normal broadcasting is possible on this program alone of all the nine assorted telecasts, simulcasts and regular broadcasts each week that earn for Godfrey \$1,000,000 a year, and the network a total of \$10,000,000.

Arthur Godfrey is in a unique position as star of "Arthur Godfrey and his Ukulele."

He also is the client on the program!

The 15-minute show, which is telecast "live" on Tuesday nights from 7:45 until 8, is sponsored by an orange juice concentrate that is owned partly by Godfrey.

The fact that he is a client, a buyer of time, is less satisfaction to CBS than the fact that Godfrey is "on-camera" for the full 15 minutes, playing his uke, singing to his own accompanist, and has no possible chance to wander away from the center of the TV stage and get lost.

Silly as it may seem to a casual onlooker, this can be a serious matter to the folks who produce and direct an Arthur Godfrey show, a casual undertaking for Godfrey, but a threat of ulcers, high blood pressure, constant worry and near-hysteria to everyone but The King of the Air Waves Himself.

Dick Linkroum, who directs the Wednesday evening telecast, "Arthur Godfrey and His Friends," has to keep more than a directorial eye on the show, its cameras and the pictures that will show up in the nation's living rooms; worst of all, he has to keep a careful eye on Godfrey.

No one ever knows where or what The Redhead will do next, least of all Godfrey.

There's no anticipating him in any given instance. For radio and TV variety purposes, that's dandy. But it has a habit of driving a director stark, raving mad.

Having his usual hysteria on the Wednesday night show, Linkroum was beginning to sit back hopefully as the show moved toward its sign-off.

The Chordettes, a barber-shop quartet of young ladies who sing without instrumental accompaniment, were about midway through their number. Godfrey's movements that night were unusually quiet, a calm before a storm.

Linkroum's habitually nervous glance wandered away from Arthur to see that everything was being prepared properly for the following number. Then it wandered back to Godfrey's place at the side of the stage. **YIPE!**

No Godfrey!

The Chordettes had about 16 bars to go as Linkroum's eye swept the stage, the typical orderly mess of backstage props, wires, coaxial cables, cameras, assistant stage managers, underlings, CBS vice-presidents and other electronic attachments, wired and human.

But no Godfrey!

The Chordettes were working up to their final notes. Arthur still was nowhere near his desk, where he was expected to show up on camera. Linkroum took the final step, the last-resort:

"I'll give a bonus to the first cameraman to pick up Godfrey!" Linkroum barked into the telephone intercommunication system that links the camera operators with the director.

The Chordettes held that last, wavering, pretty chord. Linkroum gazed at the battery of monitor images that showed what each camera viewed.

One of them shifted in a slightly unusual fashion and its movement caught Linkroum's nervous eye—and he saw that the cameraman had earned his bonus.

He'd shifted out of position like a shortstop going after an impossible ball, and had captured Godfrey for his millions of viewers.

**LOVE
THAT
MIKE!**



"It's your bonus!" cried Linkroum triumphantly, sitting back exhausted from the violent half-minute of dread.

From just such small, constant, shattering incidents come radio's and television's traditional occupational irritation, duodenal ulcers.

But none for Godfrey!

The redhead wanders blithely through all this nerve-tearing atmosphere as if it were a quiet glade. The frantic backstage crises never quite touch him. By now he has assembled a reputation for refusing to be bothered—and that goes for anyone. Repeat: Anyone!

Anyone, that is, but some unfortunate kid who might need the attention of some such popular idol to give him a feeling of self-importance, of belonging, a reason for overcoming handicaps that might make him despair about becoming a second-rate citizen.

No hoopla accompanies Godfrey's trips to various charitable organizations, and he runs away, embarrassed, at the gratitude showed by the directors of such causes. His only regret is an inability to help them out.

Godfrey's Tuesday night ukulele lesson is performed "live" from a TV studio, but his Friday night show, of similar format, is filmed on kinescope to permit its showing while the redhead is at his Virginia farm with his wife and family.

Between his regular morning radio broadcast and his TV shows, Tuesday is one more disaster for everyone around him, leaving the center of this whirling hysteria calm and contented.

Wednesdays, of course, start out with the morning show. That having been accomplished, he again visits his office in the CBS building for whatever humdrum has attached itself to him that day; it never is, need I add, very much.

His rehearsals—as they are laughingly called—for his TV show, "Arthur Godfrey and His Friends," take up some of his afternoon, and he is back at the studio—a former legitimate theatre—in time for the telecast at 8 p. m.

That, too, is a walk-through for Godfrey, and again, once behind him, he has a chance to go to the Stork Club and visit with his friends Morton Downey, publicist Steve Hannagan when he is in town,

and Sherman Billingsley.

Or he may cut up a few touches with Walter Winchell, the man who gave him his biggest impetus back in 1934, or with whatever columnist or friends he happens to be among.

For a fellow who somehow has gathered a reputation for being one of the bibulous boys, a man with a thirst of incredible proportions, Godfrey now drinks an amazingly small amount.

In his younger days, he admits, he did his share, but a couple of drinks after his last broadcast or telecast of the day is as much as he now could take and remain in his present excellent physical shape.

He relaxes two evenings a week—Mondays and Wednesdays—with friends. The other nights he proves he is no superman and hits the hay at a proper hour for a fellow of 47 who has to be up and on the job early next morning.

One more evening show on Saturday night tops off the Godfrey week, but that is the easiest of all. It's called "Arthur Godfrey's Digest," and it's just that—a repeat performance of the better moments of his morning CBS radio shows.

From these deep week-long wells of fun and music are taken, by tape recordings, the entire Godfrey output.

These thereafter are edited for a particularly sparkling solo by Janette Davis, an unusually good Bill Lawrence song, one of the richer concertos by The Chordettes and a rousing bit of old-fashioned harmony, or maybe bop, by the Mariners.

Add a couple of Godfrey's songs and ukulele exercises, his improvised hilarity and just plain high good humor, and it becomes one of the pleasantest half-hours on the air.

Godfrey can sit home in Virginia, surrounded by his loved ones and his beloved 300 acres of rich farmland, and hear for a change what the rest of us think is such superior diversion.

But even there, Godfrey considers himself and his career from arm's length and again voices his own incredulity at the stratospheric spot he has attained in the entertainment world.

"How did it all happen?" he's asked himself.

And he admits answering in the same wondering vein:

"I certainly don't know."

Duke of the Uke...

THE premises at 3040 Webster ave. in the Bronx are buzzing along merrily, although the order department of this suddenly expanded small business is going slowly but surely out of its mind.

It is the headquarters of Mario Maccaferri, a manufacturer of ukuleles. Entirely due to Arthur Godfrey's unsolicited enthusiasm for the Hawaiian instrument, of which he is one of the top ranking virtuosi, the manufacturer of this Bronx version of the island instrument is more than 150,000 orders behind.

Nationally, and possibly internationally, no more than 100,000 ukuleles were sold during the last 20 years.

Godfrey went on the radio and TV air starting last January, 1950, with an impulsive decision to turn his favorite instrument into an object of more musical respect than it ever previously had attained.

The American Federation of Musicians did not, and still doesn't, consider the ukulele a musical instrument. A person who plays it in public does not have to hold a union card—so far, that is.

There is more than a suspicion that within a short time the ukulele will follow its larger cousins, the guitar, banjo, mandolin and other stringed instruments into the unionized fold. Very shortly, in fact.

The upsurge of interest in the ukulele since last January has been astounding. The approximately 5,000-a-year sales of the uke since 1929, up to which point no canoe was considered complete without one, was abandoned promptly as a yardstick for 1950.

That many were sold in a few days alone after Godfrey first started plunking for and upon the uke on his radio and TV shows, urging listeners to adopt it as their home entertainment, and describing the simplicity of its operation.

It got to be an object of wholeheartedly approved family enjoyment once Godfrey got this simple mes-

sage over to mothers and fathers of prospective uke strummers:

"If a kid has a uke in his hand he's not going to get in much trouble."

In Chicago, Managing Editor George Ashley DeWitt, of the *Herald-American*, reported his newspaper's recent offer of a ukulele for every two subscriptions "has surpassed all expectations."

Herald-American columnist Nate Gross flew to New York and presented Godfrey with a handsome ukulele embossed with a letter signed by the Governor of Illinois and the Mayor of Chicago. The letter read:

"Dear Arthur Godfrey:

"You have made Chicago and Illinois **UKE-CONSCIOUS!**

"We salute you through the *Chicago Herald-American* which is distributing thousands of ukuleles to its subscribers.

"Our police tell us that boys and girls who make music keep out of mischief.

"With best wishes for your continued success,

"Cordially,

"Adlai E. Stevenson,

"Governor of the State of Illinois

"Martin H. Kennelly

"Mayor of the City of Chicago."

DeWitt said he got the idea after watching Godfrey and recalling what the song "Bird of Paradise" did, before World War I, to popularize Hawaiian music and native instruments.

The penetration of the Godfrey salesmanship came brilliantly to light when it was established that his constant ukulele partisanship on his nine network radio and TV shows weekly resulted in the sale during the first six months alone of almost 1,700,000 instruments!

Once considered a dormant industry, the ukulele trade each day virtually pulls its prayer rug out



Reading left to right, that's son Richard, Mrs. Godfrey, Mr and Mrs. Leo De Orsey, Rose Bigman (Walter Winchell's famous secretary) and "Mug" Richardson, and the Red Head.

onto the salesroom floor to face Godfrey and give its fiscal thanks. No argument has been raised over who is responsible for the new business. Everyone knows it's Godfrey.

And how much is Godfrey paid for such tenacious publicizing?

Nothing! Not a cent!

Not, of course, that he hasn't had an opportunity to latch onto this tidal wave of ukuleles flooding the

nation, returning again to their proper place in the canoe.

Since last March 28, for instance, Maccaferri has been reaping all the benefits of a free network ride as Godfrey extols the attractions of his \$5.95 Islander Ukulele.

The Islander uke gets almost as much praise as Godfrey devotes on each telecast to Hi-V orange juice, of which Arthur is part owner and whose

liquid goodness he is tangibly interested in spreading across the nation's breakfast tables.

But Godfrey doesn't feel it would be proper ethically to take a percentage of the money from such a ukulele promotional enterprise.

"I couldn't keep it a secret and once the word got around that I was in on a 'deal,' the public might lose a little faith in my sales talks for other things," he says.

"My fans know which of the products I advertise are paying sponsors and which I get a little enthused about on my own. They also realize I won't take up the cudgels for any product if I don't think it's worth buying."

"I feel sure the cigarettes and floor wax and tea-bags and flour and other things I peddle every day are fine items. But I've been yelling bout ukuleles so long and so loudly that if I were to hop on now for a financial ride, it wouldn't look nice.

"Yes—I've had offers. But I've turned them all down. This way, if I find good ukuleles I can say so on my shows and not feel I have to. I also can say one is a stinker if I choose.

"And since I want folks to play and enjoy the uke, I also want them to play the right ones and not get stuck with some stiff. I have a double obligation, you know. Every ukulele isn't a good one. Some are good for practicing, some good for serious playing,

and some good for nothing.

"I try to tell folks what I find about each one."

Tell them indeed!

Godfrey told the folks just what he thought about a \$3.79 ukulele from the Abraham and Straus department store. He criticized its workmanship and joined the ranks of the hungry critics by promising to eat it if it could be established as a good instrument.

"You know what happened, probably some buyer over there who didn't know a ukulele from a Stradivarius bull fiddle thought this was a good deal," he said to an obviously amused studio audience, and a good percentage of his 40,000,000 weekly listeners.

William Tobey, vice-president of Abraham and Straus, himself a Godfrey fan, did not scream with rage or sue for libel.

Instead, he took it in equally as good humor as Godfrey constantly exudes and sent the redhead a long wire which the obviously delighted entertainer read on the air next morning.

The telegram pointed out that the ukulele came from A and S' toy department and one he thought might better meet the Godfrey standard, a \$5.95 item, was being sent along for perusal and criticism, good or bad.

The store executive, taking Godfrey's own tone, ended his wire:

With a plink and a plunk, Arthur joins vocalist Janette Davis in a song.





UNITED

"We love you and we're looking forward to hearing and seeing you. For all of us at A. and S., William Tobey, one of those vice-presidents, you should excuse the expression."

Such a cheerfully understanding rebuttal to his previous statements about the toy ukulele brought from Godfrey the comment that, "They're a darn good store."

Then he waxed enthusiastic about the \$5.95 ukulele sent along from the store's music department. It obviously delighted Godfrey, and his loyal fans beat a path to A. & S. where more ukes were sold the next two days than had been sold in two months.

The situation has grown almost out of hand. Orders are ahead of production all over the country.

The fad has caused music publishers to add ukulele chord notations on sheet music. Customers, unlike the pre-1929 ukulele boom, were not confined to young people. Godfrey's Tuesday and Friday TV

programs, dedicated to teaching how to play the ukulele, are growing in popularity.

Godfrey took to the uke 30 years ago when he was taught by a Hawaiian shipmate while in the Navy at Great Lakes Training Station.

After breaking into radio in 1929 at Baltimore, Godfrey gave ukulele lessons on the air. He constantly has used the uke in radio and theatrical appearances, but until he decided this was something the public should have pushed back into its canoes, it remained just another dawdling industry, virtually the Dodo Bird of music.

Everyone including Sparkle Plenty—literally—now is taking it up.

And those cheers from the Bronx, emanating from the Maccaferri premises, are the real-hoorah variety and not Bronx Cheers of classical tradition. Maccaferri is just one more fan who agrees that Arthur indeed is: "The Great Godfrey."


(Left)
At the Jon Rodgers Airport, Honolulu, Arthur, son Richard and his wife are greeted by the fans. Later, Great Godfrey joins Memiki with guitar and baritone.



"Top O' the mornin' to ye," yells
Godfrey to his CBS neighbor, Mrs.
"Goldberg," on visit last year.



HIS EARTHLY HUMOR MEANS MANY



"And a yoo hoo to you," replied the amiable "Molly" as the fun began on the famous family show.

His Uninhibited Mouth...

RECENTLY a small group of important radio people got together to talk about the subject of Arthur Godfrey.

This was not to be an amiable, admiring klatch but a circle of gents in the advertising field who thought something had to be done about the "dirt" they insisted filled the radio and television air whenever Arthur Godfrey opened his uninhibited mouth.

Before this meeting, the men and several women who were to take initial but unofficial steps to curb the Godfrey humor gathered documented evidence for their decisions by listening closely to everything Arthur said for a week's broadcasts, making notes and comments about same to have ready at the very important conclave.

The general tone of the meeting was bluenose, the intention to force Godfrey to stick to the scripts supplied by advertising agencies of the products he extolled in his own peculiarly successful fashion.

During the meeting, all hastened immediately to be heard upon the subject of Godfrey in a certain instance several days before. The seven or eight persons present babbled along until the man who was temporarily in charge decided to make some order out of the Godfrey-inspired chaos.

He asked each person to write out the most flagrant case of blue language, subject or innuendo, that was heard exuding from Godfrey's lips during the week of trial listening. Each of the men and women present did so.

When the papers were read, it was found that all but one of the persons present had chosen a single incident for appraisal but with this result:

Four of the seven had placed entirely *different* meanings upon Godfrey's words.

That would have made him not a past master of double entendre, but a champion of *quadruple* entendre.

It also would have made this projected panel of

penalizers feel very foolish. Especially when confronted with Godfrey's quietly sincere statement that he had only *one* meaning in mind, the simple, primary, literal meaning of the words he used.

This was only one instance of Godfrey's strangely unbossed ether antics causing concerted opposition to form on the right.

In virtually every instance the claims of conversational dirt have been disproved.

In one or two cases the television camera picked up an eyebrow raised with the sort of insinuation that leaves everything to the mind of the viewer. If the mind is nicely-laundered morally, nothing gets through the iconoscope to outrage anyone. If the raised eyebrow inflection falls upon untidy minds, nothing much can be done to stop it from gathering dirt.

Such possibilities have been constant since 1933, when Godfrey began ad libbing his way through his programs and stopped reading everything written for him.

Matter of fact, the likable Godfrey inflections, even when tuned strictly to the clean, washed language of the advertising agencies and script writers, were causing minor ructions in Baltimore and Washington all the way back in 1929 when the redhead started booming that warm baritone into radio fans' ears.

"Back in 1929 I was really sick about it," Godfrey says now.

"In those days I'd receive mail about something dirty or insinuating in my words or tone, and I'd go crazy trying to figure out what they meant. Station managers even tried to tell me I was lousing things up for them and myself, but I couldn't see what they meant. Once a local police commissioner wrote me about it and suggested I tone it down for my own good. I still was all at sea.

"Later, the letters—there never were more than

**Impish Arthur Godfrey
finds his Ad Libs
often have different
meanings to many fans
and regular critics.**



a few—stopped arriving, except for an occasional letter whose contents were so much alike I thought they were from the same person, even though I know they weren't, now. It's just that such a strange, suspicious mentality exists everywhere in the country, everywhere in the world, probably.

"Why, from 1929 until 1933 I rarely uttered a word that wasn't written for me and checked by a program director before I even saw it. Still those letters kept coming in. Not too often, but enough."

In 1933, when he started ad libbing his programs entirely, the protests grew again. They they dropped off almost to none at all until Godfrey began piping his local disc jockey programs from Washington, D. C., to WCBS here in New York, striking an entirely new audience.

He also struck that same suspicious mentality, almost enough to be that same woman who wrote in at Baltimore, and again in Washington.

"Strangely, I began to get the squawks from New York alone, and not from Washington, although I was talking about exactly the same things on an almost identical program. Then the protests quieted down and died out almost entirely.

"Until 1945, when I started the daytime network show for CBS.

"This time I got no letters from Washington OR New York, where I was well known and folks were accustomed to my delivery, but from other cities. That same woman must have had a lot of cousins all over."

Managers of CBS stations elsewhere became understandably alarmed and a good deal of time and patience was expended calming them down.

"I assured them if they would wait a month or two the air would clear itself. Sure enough, true to form, the protests again stopped."

But—then came television!

Not only did Godfreys' un-retouched words fly into the nation's ears, but his lifted eyebrows, smiles, his facial punctuation of any line, however innocuous, were lending a double, triple, and—remember that panel?—quadruple meaning in a manner the red-head couldn't seem to anticipate.

Godfrey, frankly, is a fellow with an extremely earthy sense of humor.

I've found him also with a deep feeling of respon-

sibility for what escapes from the radio and TV studios, and sincerely careful not to "louse myself up," as he puts it.

But he also has such a set of pliable, almost 100 per cent plastic features that he could be emphasizing the simplest point with such a smiling, mobile countenance that viewers go hunting for other meanings. Certainly, Godfrey's pulled a few boners in his day, and like the late Mayor LaGuardia, he admits that when he does he pulls a dandy.

But he gets piqued slightly at the few times he's been criticized publicly for things that started innocently and got out of hand. Not serious, but made to seem so by misconstruing his smiles as leers, and his comments as something else.

When he was taken quietly to task on one or two occasions for handling matters in such a way as might be taken differently, he just as quietly saw the point and made sure it didn't happen again.

"For a while it was open season on Godfrey," he says now, "but that ended finally, too.

"It got so bad for a while that I was afraid to say the word 'Chesterfield' because of that first syllable."

He was sorely tempted at first, he said, to make a big noise about it but decided the best thing was to ignore it.

He also takes a great deal of comfort from the fact that no more than a few letters of protest arrive in the wake of any ether "incident," and that compared with his weekly listenership of 40,000,000, the percentage of opposition to his style of presentation is just about non-existent.

"I'd hate to think all those 40,000,000 were listening to me because they're dirty-minded," Godfrey said last week.

"This country sure would be in awful shape."

Godfrey naturally does not expect to quiet every last letter of protest. Reaching constantly as he does for folk humor and things of national instead of sectional interest, he strikes an occasional off-key note.

Sometimes the very provincial meaning of a word or phrase or situation gets him into trouble. The classical Chic Sale backyard convenience gave a whole generation harmless laughter. But when Godfrey brought a hint of it onto television, the complaints must have sent Chic Sale rolling over in his casket. With laughter.

The Great Godfrey...

ARTHUR GODFREY is considered in the entertainment trades one of the smartest administrators since the invention of red tape. Nowhere in his organization, small, tightly controlled, can be found any wasted effort.

His casual, simple approach to his work is sincerely unaffected, but it is the simplicity of complete understanding, of thorough knowledge of his field, of having all the bumps carefully rolled down into a comfortable bowling-alley smoothness.

The 47-year-old redhead who is the most popular entertainer of the day, whose microphone meanderings bring \$10,000,000 in annual business to the Columbia Broadcasting System, didn't even finish second-year high school.

But—lest his educational defections lead youngsters to believe they can quit school, grab the nearest microphone and emulate Godfrey's success—quickly let us point out that his very lack of schooling almost had him heaved out of the Navy.

Back in 1929, at the U. S. Navy Material School, Arthur was confronted by a lieutenant who decided within a few days of Godfrey's enlistment that he had either to learn mathematics or be scuttled from the service. The lieutenant gave Arthur six weeks.

"For a guy who had to take off his shoes to count above ten, it was an impossible assignment," Godfrey said.

"I was ready to turn in my bellbottoms," he added, when an ad in a magazine stopped him.

Here, it said, was his chance to get special training on virtually any subject—including mathematics. Godfrey hopped to the nearest pen and filled out the blank.

"Within a week I was enrolled in the International Correspondence Schools, studying algebra, geometry and trig for all I was worth."

Came weekend liberty—Godfrey studied. Came a holiday—Godfrey's nose was applied close to the mathematical grindstone.

Came the end of six weeks:

"I was top man in the class," Godfrey said.

"Within six weeks I had mastered two years of high school math, thanks to the training I'd gotten."

But he gives major credit to International Correspondence Schools:

"ICS made the impossible easy," he said.

Having thus learned a lesson, he didn't easily forget it. When faced with later crises, he took his problems where they best could be solved.

Finally, when his contractual obligations became too complicated for even his prized ICS mathematics, he knew he had to find some legal and fiscal expert to handle everything on the business side, leaving production and artistic worries to be handled without also having to study double-entry bookkeeping.

C. Leo De Orsey, a Washington lawyer and close personal friend, loomed as the answer to his mathematical and legal problems.

Arthur considered him then, and even more so now, a combination of Solomon, Einstein, Winthrop Aldrich and the man with the keys to Fort Knox.

The constant Godfrey battle cry is:

"If you can sell De Orsey, you've got a deal."

A tough man to sell anything, De Orsey is equally as tenacious in holding onto the right deal. He hasn't made any mistakes in his Godfrey dealings to date, the redhead points out, and around CBS, as around Washington and Hollywood, he is mentioned with consideration and awe.

Among the other celebrated clients who hew to the De Orsey fiscal line are Dorothy Lamour, General Omar Bradley, Notre Dame's Frank Leahy, Hollywood director Mitchell Leisen, makeup millionaire Max Factor—to name but a handful of his varied stable.

One week older than Godfrey, De Orsey handles every financial detail of the redhead's affairs, however small. Godfrey frequently does not know what

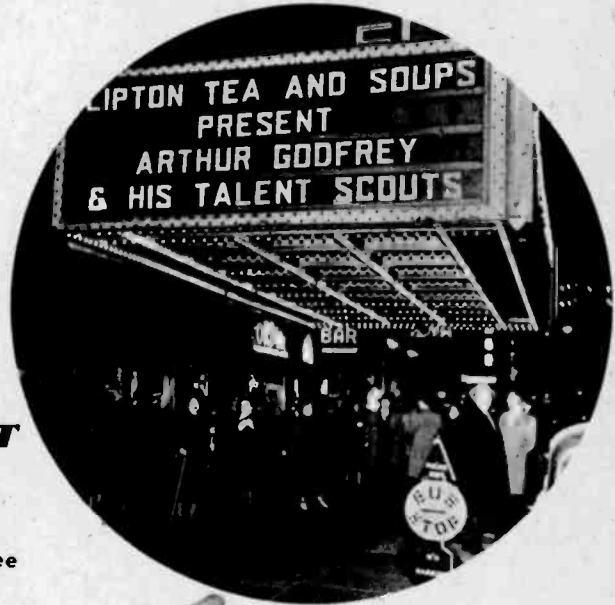


is going on in the background, and prefers it that way.

Even his personal spending money is doled out on a budget assigned to De Orsey.

Under De Orsey's ministrations, Godfrey and the Columbia Broadcasting System recently signed a contract for 12 more years, at the end of which Arthur will retire for good.

"It's the last contract Arthur ever will make for



THE GREAT GODFREY

The big CBS marquee announcing Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scout show is a familiar sight in New York City.

radio or television," De Orsey said.

"By the end of that contract, he'll have all the money he'll ever need. Matter of fact, he has all the money he'll ever need right now—his needs are that simple."

The load which forces other radio and TV entertainers into breakdowns, into dry periods when they slip badly, is constantly lifted carefully off Godfrey's well-built shoulders.

De Orsey pointed out that Arthur is concerned only with the programming and whatever operations slip into his field from the others that can't be helped.

The total Godfrey operation is cut into three parts: De Orsey handles all contractual and financial affairs, big and small.

Margaret "Mug" Richardson, since 1934 Godfrey's "good right arm," until a few months ago handled all the dizzy expanse of production, with a staff of a dozen trained personnel.

Michael Boscia, a young man from the Bronx, is



assigned by the Columbia Broadcasting System to handle nothing but Godfrey's press relations; and just a brief public acknowledgment of one of the most efficient in his field, intelligent, cooperative, thorough, like everything else I've found on the Godfrey team.

His helpers handle anything that comes up in each field as it emerges. Consultations are held weekly. Godfrey is in on any confab he thinks necessary, which is seldom.

"Mug" Richardson was with Godfrey since 1934, when she was selected "Miss North Carolina." With several other beauty queens, she stopped off in Washington and met Godfrey during a broadcast.

She took a fling at New York modeling, but it didn't satisfy her and she headed back to Washington, where she took Godfrey up on an offer to become his secretary, rather dumbfounding him in the process because the original offer was made somewhat with tongue-in-cheek.

Before many weeks had passed, her duties had broadened beyond the secretarial and she started preparing his radio material.

When he moved to New York, "Mug's" value had heightened to a point Godfrey felt he could not do without her. While he is a brilliant ad libber, he must have some notes when he faces a microphone.

Notes, suggestions, poems, news clippings, situations, all were presented in a stream to Godfrey by Miss Richardson during each of his nine weekly broadcasts, telecasts and simulcasts. She kept watch on his ramblings from subject to subject. Now several others combine to handle her former duties.

It's not scientific, but neither is Godfrey. It's the best possible way of handling the utterly unpredictable Godfrey and has resolved itself into almost precision planning.

"Mug" was beside Godfrey on every broadcast. When he had the early morning disc jockey shows from Washington and New York, she was up at 5 a. m. to get his voice into loudspeakers promptly at six.

She got to the CBS studios at 8:30 to prepare for the advent of the boss at a few minutes before his broadcast at 10:15.

One week there was general consternation when he simply failed to show up at all.

"Mug" took it in her composed stride. No Godfrey activity puzzles her any more.

She simply shifted Godfrey's spiels to Tony Marvin, the announcer of all his shows, and they got through as well as could be expected without the casual geniality of the master.

His fans in the studio were disappointed, volubly, and undoubtedly so were his a. m. segment of 40,000,000 persons who bend their ear loyally to him each week, the greatest number of listeners in the history of the spoken word.

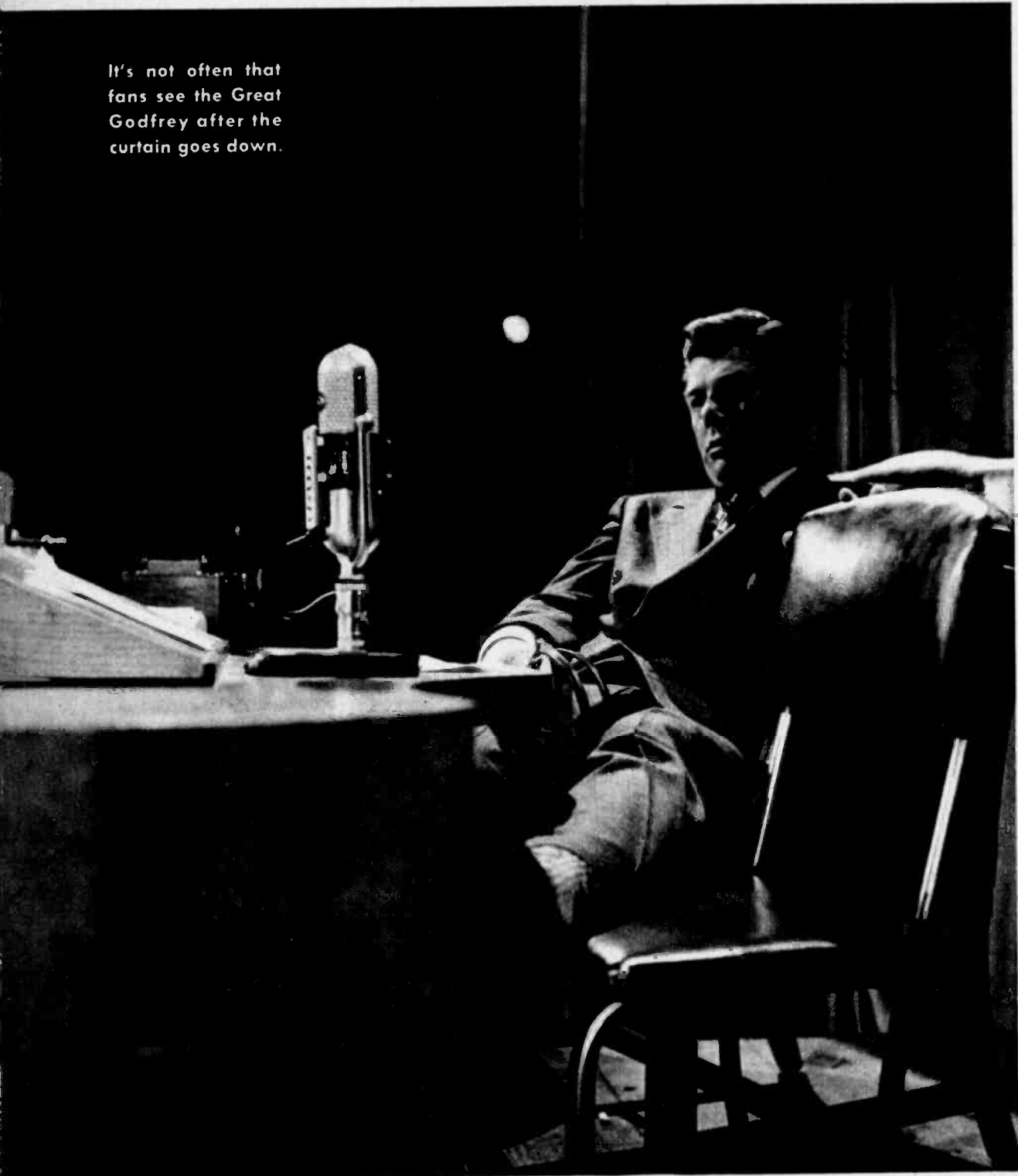
"Mug" handled everything just as she always does, with ease, dispatch, without worry or bluster, the kingpin of Godfrey's loyal little band of well-paid followers.

But, as it must to anyone who tries to keep up with the legendary Godfrey, "Mug" got tired. Hers was an understandable, entirely traditional feminine complaint. She was "just tired," and wanted a chance at a normal, less power-packed pace. She never would have had the calmer life with Arthur.

Typically, Godfrey recently became the first star of Color Television. A red-headed riot in black and white TV, there is no telling to what tinted heights colorcasting—his own word—will take him. But, he rides along on everyone's hopes.

Mostly including the Internal Revenue's.

It's not often that fans see the Great Godfrey after the curtain goes down.







Godfrey
Quartet
THE MARINERS

ARTHUR GODFREY
and his friends...



Godfrey's Own Crooner
BILL LAWRENCE



Godfrey Gal Vocalist
JANETTE DAVIS



Godfrey Band Leader
ARCHIE BLEYER



The Godfrey Announcer
TONY MARVIN

