

NOSTALGIA DIGEST

AND
RADIO
GUIDE

FEBRUARY - MARCH, 1984

8:30 a.m.
TOMORROW
EXTRA EARLY AND
LATE COMPLETE
SHOWS To
Accommodate
Everyone

Chicago
BALASAN & KATZ
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**THE GREATEST SHOW VALUE
THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN**
At Our Regular Adult Prices For All Seats

**All
IN
PERSON**
ONE
WEEK
ONLY!

**JACK BENNY
PHIL HARRIS
ROCHESTER
Marjorie REYNOLDS
and Jack Benny's
SPORTSMEN QUARTET**

More Wonderful Fun
On The Screen—

MEET THE
WACKEST FAMILY™

BARRY FITZGERALD • DIANA LYNN • SONNY TUFTS

that ever sub-tilt your heart!

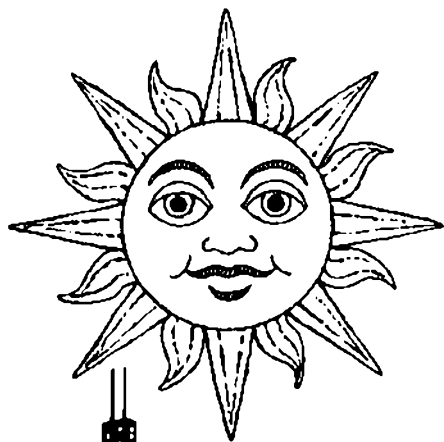
**EASY COME
EASY GO™**

Parodying / Parodies they with

Don't forget / John, Marjorie / Allen Jenkins
John Little / Frank Taylor

JACK BENNY ON TOUR

ALL NEWS ALL DAY ALL NIGHT



News when *you* want it—any time, day or night.

WBBM Newsradio 78

NOSTALGIA DIGEST[©]

BOOK TWENTY-ONE

CHAPTER TWO

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1995

Hello, Out There in Radioland!

BY CHUCK SCHADEN

Last year was not a very good year for show business. We lost many of our favorite entertainers during the 12 months of 1994. They're gone, but not forgotten:

IRIS ADRIAN, 81, actress; sassy blond in movies and on TV, usually as a snappy waitress or night club gal; often on TV with Jack Benny. *September 17.*

CLAUDE AKINS, 75, actor; was "Sheriff Lobo in "B.J. and the Bear" on TV; in many films including "Inherit The Wind;" in TV commercials for AAMCO. *January 27.*

HERBERT ANDERSON, 77, movie and TV actor; played the father of Dennis the Menace. *June 11.*

NOAH BERRY, JR., 81, character actor in films; appeared on TV in "Rockford Files." *November 1.*

MERWYN BOGUE, 86, cut-up cornet player and comedian, known as "Ish Kabibble" on Kay Kyser's "Kollege." *June 5.*

SORRELL BOOKE, 64, TV and movie character actor; played "Boss Hogg" on "Dukes of Hazzard." *February 11.*

ROSSANO BRAZZI, 78, romantic motion picture star of "South Pacific" and other films in the 1950s and 60s. *December 24.*

PAT BUTTRAM, 78, comic actor; sidekick to Gene Autry; appeared on National Barn Dance on radio; on TV as Mr. Haney in "Green Acres." *January 8.*

CAB CALLOWAY, 86, "Hi De Ho" band-leader, singer, dancer, songwriter. *November 18.*

JOHN CANDY, 43, motion picture comedian, star of Second City TV series. *March 4.*

MAC DONALD CAREY, 81, radio, TV, film actor; on radio in "Stella Dallas" and many other dramas; on TV for almost 30 years on "Days of Our Lives." *March 21.*

KEN CARSON, 79, lead tenor in Sons of the

NECROLOGY OF 1994

We Remember Them Well

Pioneers, singing "Cool Water" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." *April 7.*

RON COCHRAN, 81, ABC and CBS radio and television news anchorman in 1950s and 60s. *July 25.*

DOROTHY COLLINS, 67, singer and television star of "Your Hit Parade." *July 21.*

WILLIAM CONRAD, 73, actor on radio as Marshall Matt Dillon on "Gunsmoke" and in many roles on "Jigsaw," "Suspense;" on TV narrated "Rocky and his Friends," starred in "Jake and the Fat Man," "Cannon," narrated "The Fugitive." *February 11.*

JOSEPH COTTEN, 88, celebrated stage and screen actor, appeared in "Citizen Kane," "Shadow of a Doubt," "Third Man," "Niagra;" worked with Orson Welles in the Mercury Theatre on stage and radio. *February 6.*

PETER CUSHING, 81, British stage, screen, TV actor, featured in many horror films of the 50s, 60s, and 70s. *August 11.*

JERRY DEVINE, 85, radio producer and director of "This Is Your FBI;" wrote for "Mr. District Attorney" and "The Shadow." *May 20.*

JACK DODSON, 63, veteran Broadway, film and TV actor; appeared in many TV shows; was "Howard Sprague" on the Andy Griffith Show and "Mayberry, RFD;" was "Ralph's father" on "Happy Days." *September 16.*

TOM EWELL, 85, stage and screen comedy actor; appeared opposite Marilyn Monroe in "Seven Year Itch;" Tom Ewell Show on TV, 1960-61. *September 12.*

BETTY FURNESS, 78, actress, commercial spokeswoman (demonstrator on TV for Westinghouse in 1950s), consumer advocate for U.S. Government during Lyndon Johnson administration. *April 2.*

(continued on page 14)

*Ken Alexander
Remembers . . .*

Jack Benny on Tour



On one of the Jack Benny radio shows in the 1940's, Jack made a \$4.98 purchase in a department store and handed the clerk a five-dollar bill.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Benny," the clerk said. "I'm all out of pennies. I'm afraid I'll have to go to the cashier's office up on the 15th floor and get some change."

"Oh, that's all right," Jack said. "I can wait."

"I can wait," along with "Now, cut that out!" "Yipe" "What happened to the gas man?" "Well!" and other phrases heard on the Jack Benny program, soon began to be heard in our household and, I imagine, in millions of households around the nation. Such was the popularity of the Jack Benny show.

Beginning in the middle 1930's, my family listened regularly to the Jack Benny program for years and years. Most of us think of Jack as a perennial 39-year-old, but I can remember when he claimed to be 38 — that's how far back I go.

All through the years, every Sunday evening at six, my dad would turn on the radio and for the next half-hour we would forget the Great Depression, or the war, or any other worries.

By the time I graduated from high school, in January 1947, I was a devoted Benny fan.

COVER STORY

On the Benny programs in late spring of that year, Jack and the gang began talking about Jack's upcoming vaudeville tour. First stop would be Chicago, where Jack would appear at the Chicago Theatre for a week beginning May 9. On the May 4 broadcast, Jack and the gang talked of the tour as they prepared for the trip.

I decided that I had to see Jack Benny in person, and on Saturday, May 10, I took the streetcar downtown.

Benny's engagement at the Chicago Theatre, as well as his entire personal appearance tour, was receiving a great deal of publicity, no small part of it due to the efforts of his friendly enemy, Fred Allen.

We all know that the long-running feud between Jack Benny and Fred Allen was not a feud at all; the two men were old friends. The purpose of their feuding was to entertain the public; however, there was a side benefit for both antagonists. When Fred, on his radio show, would launch a tirade on Benny's stinginess, or his violin playing, for example, listeners would decide not to miss next Sunday's Benny show to hear Jack's response.

By the same token, when, on the Benny show, Mary would say, "Jack, did you hear

what Fred Allen said about you on his program last week?" and Jack would dismiss Allen as a reformed juggler, the listeners would be sure to tune in Fred's show the following week to hear *his* response.

Thus, Jack and Fred each helped to enhance the other's radio audience while the public sat back and enjoyed the fireworks.

Prior to Benny's personal appearance tour, Fred mentioned the tour on his show. He did so in a derogatory way, of course, but his intention was to pique the public's interest in Jack's tour.

Besides the references to the tour on Allen's show and on Benny's own program, other comedians mentioned the tour on their shows. If all these mentions had been paid advertising, they would have been worth many thousands of dollars. In fact, the advance promotion for the Benny tour was probably the most extensive ever for a vaudeville tour up to that time.

To further promote interest in the Benny tour, Fred Allen wrote a letter to Nate Platt, of Balaban & Katz, who booked the acts at the Chicago. Fred's letter was printed in the May 14, 1947 edition of *Variety*, the show business weekly. It read as follows:

Have just received word that a strolling player, one Jack Benny, currently appearing at the Chicago Theatre, is making snide references to me during his alleged performance. If Mr. Benny continues to malign my character, and cast aspersions on my ability, I will sue the Chicago Theatre for \$2,000,000. After paying my taxes, all I have left is my good name and I am not going to permit Mr. Benny to foul that.

Since I cannot come to Chicago to reply to Mr. Benny's scurrilous attacks, I have taken this means of fending off Mr. Benny in kind.

Before shoes were invented Mr. Benny was a heel. His false teeth are so loose they are always clicking. The last time Benny walked into the lobby of the Palmer

BALABAN & KATZ
TODAY
 and every day
OPEN 8:30 a.m.
C'm' On, Everybody
PLENTY OF SEATS.
 COMPLETE EXTRA
 EARLY AND LATE
 SHOWS EVERY
 DAY to
 accommodate
 all!

CHICAGO
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**THE GREATEST
 SHOW VALUE IN
 THE WHOLE WORLD**
 At Our Regular Adult
 Prices for All Seats

**ONE
 WEEK
 ONLY!**

Here they are—
ALL IN PERSON
JACK BENNY
PHIL HARRIS
ROCHESTER
**MARJORIE
 REYNOLDS**
 and Jack Benny's
**SPORTSMEN
 QUARTET**
LOU BREESE
 and CHICAGO THEATRE ORCHESTRA

Screenplay
**YOU'LL BE
 CRAZY ABOUT
 THIS "WACKY"
 FAMILY!**

Happy-go-lucky
 people... Boasting the roof
 with their happy-go-
 lovin' shenanigans!

**BARRY
 FITZGERALD**
**DIANA SONNY
 LYNN • TUFTS**

**"EASY COME,
 EASY GO!"**

JACK BENNY ON TOUR

House wearing false teeth, he said "hello" to a friend and three elevators went up. Benny has no more hair than an elbow. He is so anemic, if he stays out at night he has to get a transfusion so his eyes will be bloodshot in the morning. His feet are so flat he can wear a wheatcake for an arch-supporter. He has no bones. His shins are two xylophone notes stolen from an old vaudeville musician. If the musician ever takes his notes back, Benny's shins will collapse and he will be two feet shorter.

The reason Benny is playing the Chicago Theatre is that he is visiting his sister in Chicago. He is too cheap to pay for a hotel room. Playing the theatre, he can sleep in the dressing room. This makes the Chicago Theatre the biggest flop-house in the world. During the night Benny is sleeping in his dressing room and during the day, when Benny is on the stage, the audience is sleeping in the theatre.

*Yours in high dudgeon,
Fred Allen*



FRIENDLY FOES: BENNY & ALLEN

In these days of tiny multiplex movie theatres, it may be hard for young people to believe that the huge Chicago was once a movie theatre, but it was. In show business parlance, it was known as a "vaudefilm" house; its program consisted of a first-run film plus a vaudeville show. The headliner of the vaudeville show was always a nationally known entertainer, very often one who had achieved popularity through the medium of radio. There were usually a couple of lesser known opening acts as well — perhaps a singer, a juggler, an impressionist, or a comedian. Music was provided by Lou Breeese and the Chicago Theatre Orchestra, which had about 18 members.

Balaban & Katz didn't use the term "vaudeville" — especially with reference to the grand Chicago Theatre. Vaudeville was dying, and B&K chose to call their shows "stage extravaganzas" or "stage presentations." Irrespective of what they were called, the acts at the B&K Chicago were among the best in the nation and they were presented proudly. The newspaper ads while Benny was in town, for instance, called the show "The Greatest Show Value the World Has Ever Known."

The productions were always slick and well rehearsed. The acts were introduced by an unseen master of ceremonies, whose voice came through the theatre's sound system.

The troupe in the Benny show comprised — in addition to Jack himself — Phil Harris, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, the Sportsmen Quartet, and Marjorie Reynolds.

The movie on the bill at the Chicago was a Paramount release, "Easy Come, Easy Go," an "easy-to-love story" starring Barry Fitzgerald, Diana Lynn, and Sonny Tufts.

Mary Livingstone and Dennis Day, although they were not members of the vaudeville troupe, travelled to Chicago

with the company to take part in the Sunday radio show.

Don Wilson didn't come to Chicago; his place on the broadcast was taken by the NBC Chicago announcer Norman Barry.

Many vaudevillians would complain about having to do five shows a day. And well they might, for doing a show five times a day must certainly be a grind. Jack Benny and the gang had a schedule in Chicago which was even more grueling: On Friday, May 9 — opening day — they did six shows. For the remainder of the run, they did seven shows a day.

Late on the night of Saturday, May 10, hundreds of people were lined up on the sidewalk on State Street waiting to get into the theatre. Even though there were no more shows scheduled that night, Jack did an emergency eighth show at 12:45 a.m. Sunday. Jack Benny was 53 years old at the time.

In its May 14, 1947 edition, *Variety* reported, in a dispatch from Chicago:

Hard-boiled Balaban & Katz executives here frankly admit that the loyalty of Phil Harris, Rochester and, in fact, every member of the cast is a modern milestone in show biz. Scheduled to do an estimated 50 shows in one week, everyone of them is by now so punch-drunk they keep asking, "Is this the fifth or the sixth show? Or maybe is this the last one of the night?"

The Chicago opened at 8:30 a.m. The movie began at 8:50 a.m. and the last Benny show ended at midnight. In order to squeeze in seven shows, the only movie shown was the feature film — no newsreel, no cartoon, no trailer. "Easy Come, Easy Go" runs 77 minutes, and Benny's stage show ran 53 minutes, for a total of



JACK BENNY'S SPORTSMEN QUARTET

two hours and 10 minutes (130 minutes). Multiply 130 minutes by seven shows and the product is 910 - the number of minutes between 8:50 a.m. and midnight. As you can see, not a minute was wasted; it was wall-to-wall entertainment.

With only 77 minutes between the end of one stage show and the beginning of the next, Jack and his troupe couldn't wander far from the theatre. There was, of course, the matter of Jack's Sunday radio show at 6 p.m., followed by the Phil Harris and Alice Faye show at 6:30.

Even with the radio shows, Jack and his crew still did their seven shows at the Chicago that day. The rehearsals for the broadcast most likely were held a day or two before the gang opened at the Chicago.

Norman Barry, who was the announcer, recalls that the rehearsal took place in Benny's suite at the Ambassador East Hotel. The cast of the radio show — Jack, Mary, Phil, Dennis, Rochester, Barry — guest star Marjorie Reynolds and Jack's writers worked for about three hours.

The Script was not in its final form when the first reading began. Jack and the writers would change a word or a line or cut a bit of dialog. They refined a couple of jokes about Chicago. There was a good

JACK BENNY ON TOUR

deal of joking at the session. Barry recalls that Rochester was particularly funny. Barry remembers Jack and the gang as very nice people.

This session in Jack's hotel suite was not a full rehearsal; there were no microphones, there was no orchestra, no sound effects man. The cast sat around a table reading the script — that was it. There never was a dress rehearsal. The next time the group assembled to read the script was when they did it "live" on the NBC Radio Network. What a group of professionals they were!

The Benny broadcast originated that day (Mother's Day) in the Eighth Street Theatre. Thirty seconds after it ended, the Phil Harris and Alice Faye Show began on the same stage.

Norman Barry had been told in advance how much Benny would pay him for announcing the broadcast. When he received the check, however, it was for double the amount he had been promised.

Immediately after the broadcast, the gang had to rush back to the Chicago Theatre for another show.

Despite the tough schedule, I can report that everyone in that vaudeville show was bright-eyed and alert. As for Jack himself, his timing, his delivery, his facial expressions, his gestures and body language seemed so spontaneous, his routine seemed so fresh, that he might have been doing it for the very first time.

I had seen Jack Benny in movies, but I had regarded him primarily as a radio comedian. Seeing his show at the Chicago, however, convinced me that he was equally at home in a radio studio or on a stage. After all, he had been a vaudevillian for 15 years before he ever appeared on radio.

Although I was 17 at the time, there were not many people in the audience who were

that young. Nate Platt noted at the time that there were very few autograph-seekers among the crowd during Jack Benny's run. The people who came to see Benny were older than those who made up audiences for Frank Sinatra, for example. Platt saw this as the beginning of a trend away from the bobbysoxer type of vaudeville attraction.

The stage show began with Lou Breese and the Chicago Theatre Orchestra playing "Love in Bloom" to introduce the star, who strode onstage with a jaunty gait, a walk which was familiar to millions who had seen his movies. Television would soon make it familiar to millions more.

Wearing a dark business suit, Jack opened the show with a monolog. He told how happy he was to be back in Chicago: "It's such an exciting town," he said. "There's so much to see and do. Why, we've only been here a week...Ten bucks gone — just like that." (LAUGHTER) "Next time I'll have to come alone." (MORE LAUGHTER)

He took some verbal shots at Fred Allen, and he ridiculed the Lucky Strike commercials on his radio show, poking fun at the tobacco auctioneers and the sponsor's slogans, including "L.S./M.F.T." And he singled out this bit of ad copy:

In a cigarette, it's the tobacco that counts. And Lucky Strike means fine tobacco. So round, so firm, so fully packed. So free and easy on the draw.

"In a cigarette, it's the tobacco that counts," Jack scoffed. "In a cigarette, what the heck else would count?"

Following his monolog, Jack introduced the members of his troupe and worked with them onstage. He was heckled by Phil Harris, who then sang "The Dark Town Poker Club" and, of course, his signature song, "That's What I Like About the South."

Marjorie Reynolds, without whose pres-

ence the show would have been all-male, lent her considerable feminine charm to the proceedings. Jack tried to romance her, but she, unimpressed, gave him the brush. Then Phil Harris moved in and she found him irresistible. Miss Reynolds also sang a couple of popular songs of the day.

When Rochester sauntered onstage, he amazed not only the audience but also his boss. Clad in a rich, dark green, brocaded robe, pantaloons, and a huge turban, he looked like a prince from the Arabian Nights.

At the time, I wasn't able to see the significance of Rochester's getup. Later, however, I read that he had bought a wardrobe which enabled him to have a different costume for nearly every performance. His reason for doing this was merely to amuse the audience — and Jack. In this he certainly succeeded.

Rochester had some dialog with Jack and he did a song-and-dance routine.

The Sportsmen sang two songs: "Why Did I Ever Leave Wyoming?" and "Sippin' Cider."

After all the members of the troupe had performed, Jack announced that now he would like to play "Love in Bloom." He turned toward the side of the stage and said, "My violin, please."

At this point, one might expect to see a nice-looking young man or woman walk out from the wings bearing the violin,

which he or she would present to the soloist. That didn't happen.

The violin came skittering along the floor of the stage as if it had been kicked from the wings. It came to rest at Benny's feet. The violin bow followed a second later.

With a look of chagrin, Jack picked up the instrument and the bow and walked forward to the apron of the stage. As he placed the fiddle under his chin and raised his bow, everything happened at once:

The spotlight, which had been shining on Jack, was doused. The footlights did a quick fade. The house lights went dark. Behind Benny, the curtains closed. The movie screen lowered, also behind him. The movie began, the Paramount fanfare blaring from the loudspeakers.

Jack played for a few seconds; then, realizing that his efforts were futile, he

removed the violin from under his chin, shrugged, and slunk offstage. That's the way he ended his show. It was a very funny bit, but it was a most unusual way to end a show.

Most entertainers, when they finish a performance, will milk the audience of all the applause they can get. They'll come out and take a bow again and again as long as the applause continues.

The adulation of the public — the bows, the applause, the curtain calls — is one reason many people enter show business, and



JACK BENNY AND "ROCHESTER"

JACK BENNY ON TOUR

they can't be faulted for that. Applause is an audience's way of saying thanks for a job well done, and all of us appreciate a thank-you, no matter what kind of work we do, no matter how much we're paid.

I'm sure that Jack Benny liked to hear the sound of applause as much as any other entertainer. Yet, when he concluded his act, the applause lasted only a few seconds. We knew that Jack would not be coming out for a bow because the footlights had been doused. Besides, when he disappeared into the wings, the movie had already begun.

Jack Benny was America's best-loved comedian and had he chosen to end his act in a more conventional manner, the audience would have given him an ovation. Evidently, though, when given a choice between leaving his audience clapping and leaving them laughing, Jack Benny chose to leave them laughing.

He must have been secure in the knowledge that the audience loved him; he didn't need to be reassured by their applause. Jack Benny was a man with very little ego and a great deal of class.

Although the Chicago charged only regular adult prices during the Benny engagement, the box office gross for that week set a new record: \$113,466. In the theatre's 26-year history up to that time, the next three runners-up were Danny Kaye, who had grossed \$92,000 for the first week of a two-week run; Frank Sinatra, who had sold \$91,000 worth of tickets, and the Andrews Sisters, who, together with the Bob Hope film "Monsieur Beaucaire," had grossed \$90,000.

Of the \$113,466 taken in during Benny's engagement, the Benny troupe received \$51,733. (The theatre deducted \$60,000 from the total and paid Benny 50% of the remaining \$53,466 — \$26,733— plus a

\$25,000 guarantee.) Thus, the amount paid to Jack Benny and company for the week was also a record for the Chicago.

The troupe gave their last performances at the Chicago on Thursday, May 15. In the next edition of *Variety* (Wednesday, May 21), Balaban & Katz took a full-page ad to thank Jack for his efforts and for the results they had produced.

Next stop: New York, where Benny and company would play a two-week engagement at the Roxy Theatre. Jack and the gang must have been both exhausted and exhilarated during their train ride to New York after their brilliant success in Chicago.

The Broadway community, too, was in a state of excitement in anticipation of Benny's arrival. Speculation was rife as to whether he would break the Roxy's box office record. Showmen were making bets on how much the Roxy would gross.

The second week of the run would include Memorial Day, which fell on a Friday creating a three-day weekend — a definite plus for theatre attendance. (This was before the practice was begun of observing certain holidays on Mondays; Memorial Day was observed on May 30, regardless of what day of the week that happened to be.)

Jack and the gang opened at the Roxy on Wednesday, May 21, with a show at 11:30 a.m., which turned out to be a historic event in the annals of vaudeville: Without any advance notice to the public, Fred Allen emerged from the audience, walked onto the stage, and interrupted Jack's monolog. What followed was a delicious, face-to-face confrontation between the feuding comedians.

Fred declared that Jack had killed vaudeville 15 years ago and had now returned to the scene of his crime. He said that he had been guaranteed that he would die laughing at Benny's performance and since he

**A WORD OF APPRECIATION
to a Grand Trouper —
A Gentleman of the Screen,
Radio and the Theatre —
JACK BENNY**

You have just completed the most phenomenal engagement the Chicago Theatre has ever enjoyed. Your tireless efforts, playing as many as eight shows a day, your complete cooperation with every department of the theatre and its staff, has been a refreshing experience to each and every one of us.

Of course, we expected you to break the theatre's record for boxoffice and attendance — but never in our wildest imagination did we anticipate such a remarkable showing as you scored — 24% greater than any previous high. We never saw such crowds even in the most exciting days of the World's Fair.

It was a strenuous week for you and your gang, but throughout all the excitement and strain, you maintained your affability, gentleness, graciousness, and friendliness. Your single determination was to entertain as many as possible of the thousands who jammed the theatre every day from early morning to past midnight. To accomplish this, you literally spent all your time in the theatre.

We are grateful to you for your unselfish devotion; to Phil Harris, Rochester, Marjorie Reynolds, and the Sportsmen Quartet, for their fine cooperation. Like yourself, they worked diligently and hard, and took it with a smile.

You gave Chicago a great show it will long remember.

You are indeed a grand trouper, a gentleman of the screen, radio and the theatre.

John Balaban

THIS AD SALUTING JACK BENNY APPEARED IN VARIETY, THE SHOW BIZ PUBLICATION

was still alive, he asked for his money back.

Jack wouldn't agree to refund the entire price of the ticket; he suggested that they prorate it: the Sportsmen should be worth 15 cents. Marjorie Reynolds was worth a quarter. Rochester should be worth 20 cents. They haggled over Phil Harris.

And so it went — Allen and Benny scud-ing onstage and the audience delighted to be there to witness it.

(The original plan had been to have Fred planted in the audience with a hand mike, but it was felt that autograph-hunters might surround him and disrupt the act. Besides, the people in the balcony would not have been able to see Fred sitting beneath them.)

The surprise appearance by Allen was played up in the papers, sparking further interest in the show.

Benny and company's performance in

New York was essentially the same as the one they had given in Chicago. At the Roxy, however, a brief routine was presented by the Roxycettes and the Esquires as an opening act.

The schedule at the Roxy was far less demanding than the one at the Chicago had been: the troupe did 32 shows a week, as opposed to the 49 they had done during their week in Chicago. Even so, Benny had the potential to entertain almost exactly as many people each week at the Roxy as had seen his show during the week in Chicago. This was because the Roxy had 5,886 seats, as opposed to the Chicago's 3,869.

The top ticket price at the Roxy during Benny's engagement was \$1.50.

♦ On the first Sunday of their engagement, the Benny troupe broke the Sunday record

JACK BENNY ON TOUR

management credited Jack Benny with the box office record on the theory that the crowds had come to see Jack and not "The Brasher Doubloon.")

Balaban & Katz bought a full page in the June 4 edition of *Variety* for another salute to Jack:

To JACK BENNY
 For the outstanding box office achievement of any stage attraction, May 21 - June 3, 1947.
 Thanks too, Jack, for Friday's sensational \$31,189.82 - the biggest holiday ever in Roxy Theatre history!
A.J. Balaban
 Executive Director, Roxy Theatre

Although he had made many personal appearances at benefits and in war shows, until Jack undertook his three-week vaudeville tour in 1947 he had not done a vaudeville act as such in 10 years. Many people in show business thought that he was "taking an awful chance" in making the tour.

After all, they reasoned, Benny had no compelling reason to do the tour. He had no need to spark interest in his radio program, which was one of the highest-rated shows on the air. Nor did he have a forthcoming movie to promote — the reason many stars had for making personal appearance tours. Further, Jack could reach more people in one half-hour broadcast than would fill a thousand Roxy's

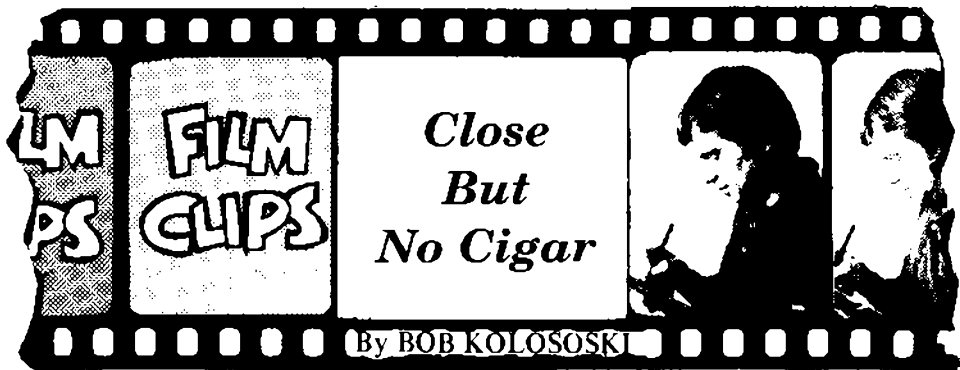
Jack did the tour, he said, because he felt that it was good publicity and good showmanship. As it turned out, the success of the tour exceeded the expectations of everyone, probably, including Jack himself.

Benny's 1947 vaudeville tour afforded hundreds of thousands of his fans a chance to see Jack Benny perform in person for a dollar and a half. Generate publicity it certainly did. In fact, it made show business history. ■

at the Roxy, in both attendance and money; ticket sales for the day totaled \$29,706. Jack also broke a holiday record on Memorial Day.

The bottom line: a gross of \$278,000 for the two-week engagement. This was a record amount for any stage attraction at the Roxy or any other theatre. Jack Benny and company collected \$88,000.

(The Roxy had taken in more money during the previous Christmas season, when the main attraction was the film "The Razor's Edge." During Benny's engagement, a film — "The Brasher Doubloon" — was on the bill, but this film had received mostly unfavorable reviews; therefore, the



Clark Gable, James Cagney, Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, Barbara Stanwyck, and James Stewart were all movie stars whose careers spanned two or three decades, but there were dozens of actors actresses and hopefuls whose careers were over in "a blink of an eye."

For every successful film there were dozens that promised much but delivered little, and therefore failed to find an audience. Other films lost money in their initial releases, but through the years and constant television exposure have become "classics." Looking back at near misses and could-have-beens is a little like being

a "Monday morning quarterback," because there really isn't a formula to making a successful film or creating a superstar. The recipe for success is a hit or miss proposition and if one ingredient is missing the public will not hunger for the final results.

Fanny Brice was a stage star and, later in her career, conquered the radio waves. She tried her hand at motion pictures in 1930 in the film *BE YOURSELF*. The movie and Miss Brice failed to attract an audience so she returned to the New York stage and, with the exception of an occasional cameo, the movies lost the services of a very funny girl. She had a tiny part in the 1936 film *THE GREAT ZIEGFELD*, which was a huge success for MGM, and a personal triumph for **Luise Rainer**. The film was Rainer's second American movie and she won the Academy Award as the best supporting actress. The following year she won her second Oscar for her role in *THE GOOD EARTH*. She was in five more MGM films and then virtually disappeared from the screen. In the span of three years, and eight films, her career had peaked and took a nosedive that defied explanation.

Samuel Goldwyn must have sympathized with his friends at MGM. He had signed a Russian actress named **Anna Sten** to a long contract, fully confident he would turn her into an international star. After four disastrous films and millions of dollars she became known as "Goldwyn's Folly." He settled her contract and contin-



FANNY BRICE

FILM CLIPS

ued to prosper as a producer while she slowly faded from the Hollywood scene.

Goldwyn had another folly only it was a big-budgeted film he appropriately named **THE GOLDWYN FOLLIES**. It featured a variety of performers, all who had done better work in other films. One was radio singer **Kenny Baker**. His success on the radio had brought him to the attention of the Warner brothers. They had produced three films starring operatic tenor **James Melton**, and had three entries in the loss column. Melton's failure to click with moviegoers opened the door for Baker, whose three films at Warners showed up in red ink at income tax time. Baker made several other films at several other studios, however movie stardom eluded him and he continued to work the radio waves.

There were also cases of stars who failed to gel in the movies, went to work in other media and then came back to the movies to become superstars. **Humphrey Bogart** came to Hollywood in the early thirties and appeared in a few features. Nothing he did seemed to work so he went back to the Broadway stage and scored a hit in the play **THE PETRIFIED FOREST**. He returned to California to reprise his role as Duke Mantec, and signed a contract with Warner Brothers as a contract player. However, as he was starting his second Hollywood career, **Kate Hepburn** was rapidly burning out in her first bid as a movie star. She arrived at RKO studios in 1932 to co-star in **A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT** with John Barrymore. The film and she were big hits with the movie-going public. In 1933 she won the best actress Academy Award for **MORNING GLORY**, and was a smash in **LITTLE WOMEN**. In 1934 Hepburn insisted in starring in the film **SPITFIRE** which failed miserably at the boxoffice. Over the next four years she would appear in eight more films (all of which lost



KENNY BAKER

money except **STAGE DOOR** and **HOLIDAY**), and had been labeled "box office poison" by all the other studios. After completing **BRINGING UP BABY** she left RKO, California, and the movies to try her luck at the Broadway stage. She put her faith, as well as thousands of dollars, in Philip Barry's play **THE PHILADELPHIA STORY**, and returned to Hollywood in 1941 to write her own ticket at MGM.

MGM did things in a big way, so if an MGM film was a flop it was a *big* flop. One of the biggest losers in MGM history was the 1936 production of **ROMEO AND JULIET**. The film was supervised by genius **Irving Thalberg**, who had assembled the best cast available anywhere. The critics loved it and the audiences stayed away. Over at Warners the famous German stage director **Max Reinhardt** was working with his former student William Dieterle on **A MID-SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**. **Jack Warner** being a little on the frugal side decided that his stock company was capable of handling Shakespeare. Of course, he was about 90 percent

wrong and Joe E. Brown received the best notices. However, it was the lack of money paying patrons that permanently dampened Mr. Warners enthusiasm for the Bard.

Once in a while even the best directors will put their heart and soul into a film that the public will ignore with a passion. **Cecil B. DeMille** was one of the best showmen in the business, and a DeMille film was like money in the bank at his home studio, Paramount. **THE CRUSADES**, produced in 1935, had thousands of extras and the most spectacular sets money could buy. **Henry Wilcoxon** played Richard the Lionhearted like a kitycat, and **Loretta Young** was too contemporary to be a 12th century queen. It lost almost as much as the original Crusades cost.

Not to be outdone by C.B., **John Ford** tackled Sean O'Casey's play **THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS** with a large budget, courtesy of RKO, and a good cast headed by Barbara Stanwyck and several members of Dublin's Abbey Theatre, including Barry Fitzgerald. It had everything except a story that the public wanted to see on the screen. The Lubitsch touch failed to touch audiences in the **Ernst Lubitch** version of **ANGEL**. He totally wasted the talents of Marlene Dietrich, Melvyn Douglas, Herbert Marshall, Edward Everett Horton and a script by Samson Raphaelson.

The red ink flowed after **King Vidor** decided he would write, produce, and direct **OUR DAILY BREAD**. The film which smacked of socialism and oozed with good intentions did little to cure the ills of society, and forced him back to an MGM contract. One of **Alfred Hitchcock's** few miscalculations was to film Daphne du Maurier's novel **JAMAICA INN**. Charles Laughton and Maureen O'Hara were no help and the film sank under its own weight. Hitchcock's next film - **REBECCA** - was based on a du Maurier novel also, but was better received.

A tried and true star would be considered a safe bet, and studio heads were

gamblers by nature, so they threw the dice often hoping their stars would make them a winner. **Louis B. Mayer** lost with Clark Gable cast in the big budget film **PARNELL** (1936). RKO lost big with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in **THE STORY OF VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE** (1939). Jack Warner added a little insurance to the Paul Muni film **JUAREZ**, by casting Bette Davis as Carlotta, the wife of Mexico's emperor Maximilian. The film was a critical success, but a financial failure.

The list of films that failed to recoup the initial studio investment is a long sorry affair but there is also a list of films that failed to generate an audience when first released and have since become classics. **THE WIZARD OF OZ** lost money on its first release. **BEAT THE DEVIL** and **THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE**, both Bogart films, were big losers when first released. Orson Welles' first two films **CITIZEN KANE** and **THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS** did very poorly when first released. Disney had two first-time losers with **PINOCCHIO** and **FANTASIA**. One of the most beloved films of our time, **IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE**, broke a string of seven hit films for Frank Capra.

Making movies has always been an adventure into the unknown. No one person or element can be out of place or the sweet smell of success is lost to the agony of empty theater seats. ■

HUNDREDS
of
GREAT BOOKS
on the
MOVIES
are available
at
METRO-GOLDEN
MEMORIES
in Chicago

NECROLOGY OF 1994

We Remember Them Well

(continued from page 1)

SONDRA GAIR, 70, radio actress on "MaPerkins," "Chicago Theatre of the Air," "Corliss Archer;" award-winning program host on WBEZ, Chicago; appeared in 1992 *Those Were The Days* re-enactment of "CBS Radio Mystery Theatre." *May 25.*

ANITA GARVIN, 88, movie actress best known for her work in dozens of Laurel and Hardy screen comedies; she was also a Mack Sennett Bathing Beauty. *July 7.*

JIM GIBBONS, 55, veteran television reporter for WLS-TV, Channel 7, Chicago. *February 16.*

FRANCES GIFFORD, 74, movie actress of 1940s-50s; star of "Jungle Girl," 1941 cliffhanger movie serial. *January 20.*

ROBERT HUTTON, 73, leading man in movies of 40s and 50s; played the young soldier on leave in "Hollywood Canteen." *August 6.*

ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM, 67, Brazilian songwriter who wrote "The Girl from Ipanema" and hundreds of other songs. *December 8.*

RAUL JULIA, 54, stage and screen actor, starred in "Kiss of the Spider Woman" and "Adams Family" movies. *October 24.*

BURT LANCASTER, 80, Oscar-winning movie super-star with many unforgettable screen roles, including: "From Here to Eternity," "Elmer Gantry," "Birdman of Alcatraz," "Sweet Smell of Success." *October 20.*

ROBERT LANSING, 66, Broadway and Hollywood actor, on TV in series "Twelve O'Clock High." *October 23.*

WALTER LANTZ, 93, motion picture cartoonist who created Woody Woodpecker, Andy Panda, Oswald Rabbit and many others in over 600 animated cartoons. *March 22.*

ROBERT E. LEE, 75, co-writer with Jerome Lawrence of hundreds of plays for stage, screen and radio. Wrote "Inherit the Wind" and "Auntie Mame;" co-wrote Railroad Hour programs on radio. *July 8.*

DON LES, 79, harmonica virtuoso, one of the original Harmonicats, on the original recording of "Peg O My Heart." *August 25.*

VICTOR LOMBARDO, 82, youngest of Lombardo family musicians; saxophone player with Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians; also formed his own band. *January 22.*

HENRY MANCINI, 70, Oscar-winning composer, wrote "Moon River," "Pink Panther" theme, "Days of Wine and Roses;" "Peter Gunn" theme for television. *June 14.*

CARMEN MC RAE, 74, scat-singing jazz vocalist and pianist. *November 10.*

GEORGE MENARD, 82, Chicago radio-TV personality; farm director on WBBM; WLS Barn Dance announcer. *July 26.*

MELINA MERCOURI, 70, internationally known Greek actress, famous in the U.S. for her role in film, "Never On Sunday." *March 6.*

HOWARD MILLER, 81, big time Chicago radio disc jockey in the 1940s and 50s; controversial commentator in the 60s and 70s. *November 8.*

CAMERON MITCHELL, 75, actor, on stage and movies in "Death of a Salesman" and on TV in "High Chaparral." *July 6.*

DOMENICO MODUGNO, 66, Italian pop singer whose song "Volare" soared to the top of the U.S. charts in 1958. *August 6.*

DENNIS MORGAN, 85, motion picture leading man and singer in such films as "Kitty Foyle," "Shine On Harvest moon," "God is My Co-Pilot;" often co-starred in movie comedies with Jack Carson. *September 7.*

HENRY MORGAN, 79, radio comedian and satirist, television panelist. *May 19.*

MILDRED NATWICK, 89, versatile stage, screen and TV actress; on screen in "Barefoot in the Park," "The Quiet Man," and "Court Jester." *October 25.*

HARRIET NELSON, 85, co-star of the Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet on radio and television; sang with husband Ozzie's band as Harriet Hilliard; mother of David and Ricky. *October 2.*

WENDELL NILES, 89, top network radio announcer, worked with Bob Hope and on many major broadcasts. *March 30.*

HARRY NILSSON, 52, Grammy award winning singer; sang "Everybody's Talkin'" theme for film "Midnight Cowboy." *January 15.*

PATRICK O'NEAL, 66, stage, screen, TV actor, appeared in films "In Harm's Way" and "The Way We Were." *September 9.*

VINCENT PELLETIER, 85, long time NBC and ABC staff announcer in Chicago. *February 24.*

GEORGE PEPPARD, 65, TV and movie star, played opposite Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffanys." On TV in "Banacek," "The A-Team," and "Doctor's Hospital." *May 8.*

BARNEY PIP, 57, one of Chicago's top rock 'n' roll disc jockeys from the old, original WCFL, 1965-70. *February 17.*

BILL QUINN, 81, actor in many radio dramas including Mercury Theatre, Gangbusters, FBI in Peace and War. On TV he was Mary Richard's father on Mary Tyler Moore Show, Mr. Van Ransleer on Archie Bunker's Place. *April 30.*

ESTHER RALSTON, 91, silent screen actress known as "the American Venus;" appeared in "The Kid" with Charlie Chaplin. *January 14.*

MARTHA RAYE, 78, big-hearted singer-comedienne of stage, screen, radio and television. Entertained troops in WW II, Korea, Viet Nam. *October 19.*

FERNANDO REY, 76, internationally renowned Spanish actor, known for his role in film, "French Connection." *March 9.*

SHORTY ROGERS, 70, jazz musician, trumpeter, bandleader, arranger; performed with Woody Herman, Stan Kenton. *November 7.*

GILBERT ROLAND, 88, dashing leading man of silent and sound movies. *May 15.*

CESAR ROMERO, 86, suave actor in many movies and musicals; appeared as "The Joker" in "Batman" on television. *January 1.*

JEAN SABLON, 87, troubadore of French songs; in U.S. was called the "French Bing Crosby." He was the first French singer to use a microphone! *February 24.*

DICK SARGENT, 64, movie and TV actor, played "Darren Stevens," husband of "Samatha," on "Bewitched" series. *July 8.*

TELLY SAVALAS, 70, movie and TV actor, was "Kojak" on television. *January 22.*

RAYMOND SCOTT, 85, composer, bandleader; conductor of "Your Hit Parade" orchestra on radio. *February 8.*

ANNE SHELTON, 66, popular British singing star who came to prominence during WWII; sang with Glenn Miller when he was in England. *July 31.*

DINAH SHORE, 76, singing super star of radio, television, records. *February 24.*

GINNY SIMMS, 81, singer with Kay Kyser on his radio shows, on her own show, on records, and in some films. *April 4.*

HAL SMITH, 77, TV actor, played "Otis Campbell" on Andy Griffith Show. *January 28.*

OLAN SOULE, 84, star of radio's First Nighter and countless other programs; on TV in "Dragnet," "Captain Midnight;" in many films. *February 1.*

LAWRENCE SPIVAK, 93, creator and moderator of "Meet The Press" on radio and television. *March 9.*

LIONEL STANDER, 86, gravelly voiced film and TV actor, in original "Star is Born" and "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town." Played "Max, the chauffeur" on "Hart to Hart;" worked in radio with Danny Kaye. *November 30.*

K. T. STEVENS, 74, movie and television actress in 1940s, 50s; in film "Kitty Hoyle;" on TV in "General Hospital" and "Days of Our Lives." *June 13.*

EZRA STONE, 76, radio's original "Henry Aldrich;" also appeared as actor and director on Broadway and TV. *March 3.*

JULE STYNE, 88, Oscar and Tony winning composer of such Broadway musicals as "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," "Gypsy" and "Funny Girl;" wrote "It's Been a Long, Long Time," "It's Magic," "Three Coins in the Fountain," "I Don't Want to Walk Without You," "I've Minutes More." *September 20.*

BARRY SULLIVAN, 81, actor, appearing in "Two Years Before the Mast" and "Great Gatsby" on screen; on TV in "Man Called X" and "The Tall Man;" on radio in "Rogue's Gallery" and "The Unexpected." *June 6.*

JESSICA TANDY, 85, Oscar and Tony winning actress; on stage starred as Blanche DuBois in "Streetcar Named Desire;" on the screen in "Driving Miss Daisy." She and husband Hume Cronyn starred in "The Fourposter" on Broadway and became the foremost couple of the American Theatre. *September 11.*

DUB TAYLOR, 87, grizzled character actor in films for nearly six decades. *October 3.*

MAI ZETTERLING, 68, Swedish-born actress, starred in American films with Tyrone Power in "Abandon Ship" and Danny Kaye in "Knock on Wood." *March 15.*

We remember them well. ■



OF MICE AND BENNY

BY CURTIS L. KATZ

Jack Benny! What a talent! Star of stage, screen, radio, television, concert hall, and cartoons. That's right — *cartoons*.

During the Golden Age of Animation (the 1930's through the 1950's) show biz celebrities including Jack Benny often appeared — as cartoon *caricatures*, of course — in animated short subjects. In a devious way, caricature is the sincerest form of flattery. A person must be famous to be recognizable in caricature, so the caricatured appearance of a star in a cartoon was an index of his fame — though not everyone accepted the compliment.

Certainly the leading practitioners of the art of the moving caricature were the rowdies at Termite Terrace, the ramshackle outbuilding where Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies cartoons were created right on the same Warner Brothers lot where Jack Benny made some of his pictures. In various ways the Warner cartoonists gave Jack Benny "the business": they routinely swiped his radio gags and used his radio catch lines, they shared with him the talents of Mel Blanc (it was Mel's work at Warners' that brought him to Jack's attention in the late 1930's.) and so they probably felt no compunction about occasionally borrowing Jack Benny's persona. Here is a not necessarily complete look at Jack Benny's appearances in the Warner Bros. cartoons:

Curtis L. Katz, an authority on the art of movie animation, is a free-lance writer, cartoonist, comedian and Ranger of the Rails.

MALIBU BEACH PARTY

1940 — Directed by Friz Freleng

In real life, Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone were famous in Hollywood for their star-studded parties, and that fact is the obvious inspiration for this cartoon. It begins with an elegant invitation to a party at the beach-front home of "Jack Bunny." (Despite the name, this cartoon presents strictly *human* caricatures.) Attached to the invitation is a card stating "This coupon and 50¢ entitles the bearer to a free 25¢ blue plate lunch." Jack and Mary appear in bathing suits, and after some witty banter, the guests start to arrive, including Clark Gable, George Raft, Andy ("Hiya, Buck!") Devine, and Fanny Brice as Baby Snooks. Spencer Tracy, in pith helmet as Stanley, greets Mary with the line, "Livingstone, I presume." The party's stellar entertainment includes a dance number by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and a song from Deanna Durbin, both played straight, though accompanied by the music of "Pill Harris and His Corn-Fed Cuties." Of course the characters all *look* like Jack, Mary, and their celebrated guests, but they also *sound* like them, and not just because of good vocal impersonations. The cartoon's dialogue and continuity are truly typical of that of the Jack Benny radio show. For instance, Mary keeps kidding Jack about how he looks in his bathing suit, culminating in this exchange:



JACK BENNY entertains (?) the celebrity guests at his "Malibu Beach Party" (1940).

JACK: I'll have you know this is the same bathing suit Robert Taylor wears.

MARY: Yeah, only his has better filler.

And there are "cheap" jokes: Jack's valet "Winchester" spends the evening tending bar, doling out drinks with an eyedropper. When Jack warns him not to be extravagant with the beverages, Winchester expresses doubt that, even at this rate, the *one pint* of spirits Jack bought won't last the evening, and if he has to dilute the drinks any further, it will substantially increase Jack's water bill.

The evening's entertainment culminates in Jack playing "Hearts and Flowers" on his violin. All the guests leave. Winchester also tries to escape, but Jack sits on him, assuring that he still has an audience when he finally says to us, "Good night, folks." Though the ponderously-animated caricatures deprive this cartoon of some of the usual Warner Bros. snap, it is still a real treat for Jack Benny fans.

THE FELLA WITH THE FIDDLE

1937 - Directed by Friz Freleng

An old mouse tells his grandchildren a cautionary fable about greed. It concerns a mouse who poses as a blind beggar, playing his fiddle for money on a street corner (We first see him singing and fiddling a jazzy version of the film's title tune.), and

who lives in what outwardly appears to be a shanty. But in fact he is rich, and his home is elegantly appointed. He fools the tough tax accessor into thinking he is poor, but not a hungry alley cat, who lures the greedy mouse into his jaws with a gold tooth.

Despite my childhood recollections of this cartoon, a recent screening revealed that it includes no overt reference to Jack Benny. Still, I can't imagine that in creating a pinch-penny character who is a "fella with a fiddle," the Boys From Termitte Terrace didn't have a certain radio comedian in mind.

DAFFY DUCK AND THE DINOSAUR

1939 - Directed by Chuck Jones

This cartoon which, "for no particular reason," is laid in the 'Stone Age' — millions and billions and trillions of years ago — probably before any of you were even born!" (as the opening title reads), features Casper Caveman and his dopey pet dinosaur hunting duck for breakfast ... and getting more than they bargained for. Various articles and books claim Casper is a caricature of Jack Benny, but if so, any resemblance between this caveman and our Jack is purely coincidental. Well ... he does *sound* like Jack Benny, especially when he exclaims, "My favorite vegetable! Duck!" and when he ends the cartoon with Jack's characteristic "Good night folks." But Casper does not look or move like Jack Benny, nor does the cartoon refer to any standard Benny business. The only aspect of Jack Benny's personality embodied by the caveman is Jack's irascibility, seemingly justified when, early in the cartoon, Casper says to us, "Well ... I'll bet *you're* cranky before breakfast, too." But without Jack's suavity, vulnerability, and comic timing, Casper Caveman is a pretty disagreeable Jack Benny.

GOOFY GROCERIES

1941 - Directed by Bob Clampett

Always agreeable are the books/maga-

OF MICE AND BENNY

zines/advertisements-come-to-life musical cartoons which were a staple in the Merrie Melodies series almost from its inception. In this instance, it is the labels and products in a grocery store that put on a show late on snowy night. The contented cow on the "Fulla Bull" tobacco box, A Little Egypt routine is performed by a stick of "Wiggly Gum," and the Tomato-Can-Can dancers strut their stuff. The nattily-dressed hare on the "Br'er Rabbit Molasses" label comes to life and announces, "Hello again folks, this is Jack Bunny." (This time he really *is* a bunny.) When the merriment is disrupted by the intrusion of a ferocious ape, who descends King Kong-like from a neglected box of animal crackers, Jack becomes the picture's unlikely hero, riding to the rescue on a bottle of *horse* radish while crying "Buck Bunny rides again!" But the gorilla corners Jack, and not even the caped hero from the "Superguy Soap Chips" box can save him; Superguy is reduced, literally, to a helpless baby by the ape's wrath. The gorilla is menacing Jack with a huge firecracker, which he lights with Jack's cigar, when a matronly voice calls "HEN-REEE!" Suddenly cowed, the ape stuffs the sizzling explosive into Jack's fist, croaks, "Coming, Mother," and hurries off, reduced from King Kong to a simian Henry Aldrich. Jack is so relieved by this turn of events that he fails to realize, until too late, that he is still holding the firecracker. It explodes, leaving Jack blackened. Looking at himself, he exclaims in a raspy voice, "My oh my! Tattle-tale gray!" The cartoon ends with Jack essentially transformed into Rochester!

MEET JOHN DOUGHBOY

1941 – Directed by Bob Clampett

American's prewar mobilization is the inspiration for this collection of military spot-gags, couched in the form of a news-

reel. Porky Pig who, like many Americans at the time, is in uniform, introduces the newsreel, telling us that it is "chock full of military secrets!" One of these "secrets" is a new land-destroyer, which appears as a comet racing wildly around a bomb-cratered battlefield. When the voice-over announcer slows down the action so we can see what it is, the comet inexplicably resolves into Jack Benny's Maxwell! Rochester is at the wheel, and Jack is reclining in the back seat, luxuriously smoking a cigar. After a pause, Jack waves Rochester on, and the vehicle resumes racing around as a comet. The gag is not so much funny as surprising, but the disarming topper comes at the fade-out, when a flute on the music track unexpectedly pipes out the five-note "J-E-L-L-O" theme of Jack's sponsor.

HOLLYWOOD DAFFY

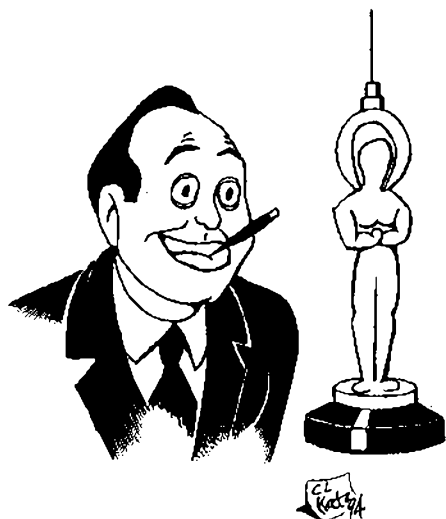
1946 – Directed by Friz Freleng

Daffy Duck crashes the gate at the "Warner Brothers" movie studio, leading a studio guard on a wild chase through the studio lot. Of course this is mainly a vehicle for movie star caricature gags. At one point we find Jack Benny, cagerly playing a penny arcade claw machine. Hanging from the claw is an Academy Award Oscar. Wide-eyed, Jack is carefully guiding his prize toward the chute, when Daffy and the guard race past him, knocking him against the machine and causing the gold statue to fall back into the heap of trinkets in the machine. When Jack recovers his composure and realizes his loss, he grumbles, "Darn it! I'll *never* get one of those Oscars," as he reaches into his tiny coin purse to try again. This delightful gag features the finest caricature of Jack Benny that I have seen in cartoons, and incorporates an interesting curiosity: Jack's voice is supplied by Mel Blanc!

THE MOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

1959 Directed by Robert McKimson

Jack and Mary, caricatured as mice, star in this, the most familiar of all Jack Benny



JACK BENNY comes **THIS** close to getting an Oscar in "Hollywood Daffy" (1946).

cartoons. For Robert McKimson, it is at once one of several cartoons he directed satirizing TV shows (*China Jones*, *People Are Bunny* — both 1959), and one of several cartoons in which he caricatured celebrities as mice (Abbott & Costello in *Mousemerized Cat*, 1946; Jackie Gleason, Art Carney, et. al. in *The Honeymousers*, 1956).

In *The Mouse That Jack Built*, it's Mary's birthday, and Jack is preparing to take her out. He receives a leaflet for "The Kit Kat Club — Cheapest Nightclub in Town — Entertainers Admitted Free." Actually, the flyer was sent by a hungry cat. When Jack and Mary arrive at the club, they admire how much it *looks* like a cat, including the "red carpet" that looks like a cat's tongue. It is only when they are inside, and jaws are closing around them (shades of *The Fella With The Fiddle!*), that they realize they are inside an actual cat.

The heart of this cartoon is not so much its minimal plot as it is the successful caricatures of Jack and Mary, their mannerisms and personalities. Of course, many of the standard Benny bits are used,

including the violin, the vault (filled with cheese), the Maxwell ("voiced," as always, by Mel Blanc), and brief appearances by Rochester (a brown mouse) and Don Wilson (a fat mouse) who even tries to shoehorn a Lucky Strike commercial into the proceedings. What makes this cartoon special is the fact that Jack, Mary, Rochester and Don supplied their own voices for the soundtrack. And what makes this cartoon *extra* special is the ending. As the cat's mouth is closing around the two mice, we cut to Jack Benny — the real, live-action Jack Benny — suddenly awakening in a living room chair. "Gee," he says, "What a crazy dream. Imagine! Mary and me as mice." Just then he hears the tiny scratchy sound of a violin playing "Rockabye Baby." We see Jack's cat asleep on a rug. The music stops, and the Jack and Mary cartoon mice wriggle out of the cat's lips, then skitter across the floor and into a mousehole. Jack throw us one of his famous "takes" for the iris-out.

For Robert McKimson, who was with the Warner cartoon studio from the start, and was one of the last people out the door when it closed, *The Mouse That Jack Built* was a favorite cartoon. For their part, Jack and Mary asked no salary for their work, but just a print of the cartoon. Actually, this is not a screamingly funny cartoon. Its humor derives mainly from the gimmick of translating the conventions of *The Jack Benny Show* into mouse terms, and it is unfortunately drawn in the indifferent style characteristic of Warner Bros. cartoons in the studio's twilight years. But if caricature is the sincerest form of flattery, then this little film stands as one of the most heartfelt tributes to a great performer. And the fact that Jack Benny would willingly donate his talents to such an elaborate spoof on *himself* is just another measure of the greatness of Jack Benny, star of stage, screen, radio, television, concert hall, and — yes — cartoons.

FEBRUARY 1995**Old Time Radio Classics -- WBBM-AM 78
SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK
MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M.**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Duffy's Tavern Perry Mason	2 Famous Jury Trials Theatre Royale	3 Jack Benny Special Part 1 of 12	4 Sherlock Holmes Superman
5 Jack Benny Special Part 2 of 12	6 Fibber McGee & Molly Ceiling Unlimited	7 Escape Bob and Ray	8 Jack Benny Special Part 3 of 12	9 Damon Runyon Theatre Ma Perkins	10 Jack Benny Special Part 4 of 12	11 Pete Kelly's Blues Superman
12 Suspense Lum and Abner	13 Jack Benny Special Part 5 of 12	14 Ellery Queen Perry Mason	15 Crime Classics Bob and Ray	16 Jack Benny Special Part 6 of 12	17 Cisco Kid Easy Aces	18 Jack Benny Special Part 7 of 12 Superman
19 This is Your FBI Bill Stern Sports Newsreel	20 Jack Benny Special Part 8 of 12	21 Hopalong Cassidy Lum and Abner	22 Jack Benny Special Part 9 of 12	23 Mysterious Traveler Ma Perkins	24 Jack Benny Special Part 10 of 12	25 Michael Shayne Superman
26 Jack Benny Special Part 11 of 12	27 Dark Venture Lum and Abner	28 Jack Benny Special Part 12 of 12	PLEASE NOTE: Due to WBBM's commitment to news, <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> may be preempted occasionally for late-breaking news of local or national importance. In this event, vintage shows scheduled for <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> will be rescheduled to a later date. All of the programs we present on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are syndicated rebroadcasts. We are not able to obtain advance information about storylines of these shows so that we might include more details in our <i>Radio Guide</i> . However, this easy-to-read calendar lists the programs in the order we will broadcast them. Programs on <i>Old Time Radio Classics</i> are complete, but original commercials and network identification have been deleted. This schedule is subject to change without notice.			

MARCH 1995**Old Time Radio Classics -- WBBM-AM 78
SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK
MIDNIGHT to 1:00 A.M.**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Philip Marlowe Jerry Dean, Boy Trooper	2 Director's Playhouse Black Castle	3 Lum and Abner The Unexpected	4 Aldrich Family Superman
5 Cloak and Dagger Bob and Ray	6 Richard Diamond Johnny Dollar--Part 1	7 Life of Riley Johnny Dollar--Part 2	8 Bold Venture Johnny Dollar--Part 3	9 Our Miss Brooks Johnny Dollar--Part 4	10 Dimension X Johnny Dollar--Part 5 (Conclusion)	11 Adventures of Frank Race Superman
12 Family Theatre Vic and Sade	13 Escape Easy Aces	14 FBI in Peace and War Editor's Daughter	15 Fred Allen Lum and Abner	16 Candy Matson Perry Mason	17 Bobby Benson Straight Arrow	18 Boston Blackie Superman
19 Suspense Baby Snooks	20 True Detective Mysteries The Unexpected	21 Mr & Mrs North The Black Hood	22 Fibber McGee & Molly Easy Aces	23 Rogue's Gallery The Bickersons	24 City Hospital Magic Detective	25 Adventures of Frank Race Superman
26 Sam Spade, Detective Eerie Stories	27 Damon Runyon Theatre Smilin' Jack	28 Life of Riley Bob and Ray	29 Duffy's Tavern Challenge of the Yukon	30 Escape Jerry of the Circus	31 Halls of Ivy Easy Aces	April 1 Lights Out Superman

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

FEBRUARY 1995

PLEASE NOTE: The numerals following each program listing for *Those Were The Days* represents the length of time for each particular show; (28:50) means the program will run 28 minutes and 50 seconds. This may be of help to those who tape the programs for their own collection. **ALSO NOTE:** A ★ before a listing indicates the vintage broadcast is of special interest during the 50th anniversary of World War II.



February is Jack Benny Month!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4th

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (4-27-47) Jack with Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Phil Harris, Don Wilson. Jack is preparing for a trip to Chicago for an appearance at the Chicago Theatre. Guests Ronald and Bonita Colman prepare to visit the Benny broadcast. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27:00)

★ **CAVALCADE OF AMERICA** (2-5-45) "The Road to Berlin" starring Bing Crosby who, on the fourth anniversary of the USO, recounts his recent overseas tour. Dupont, NBC. (28:54)

LUX RADIO THEATRE (2-15-37) "Brewster's Millions" starring Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone in a radio version of the story that was first filmed in 1914. Jack is a spender who has to unload a million dollars in a short period of time in order to qualify for an even

greater inheritance. Cast includes Frank Morgan. Cecil B. DeMille hosts. Lux Soap, CBS. (22:55; 17:25; 18:10)

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (2-6-45) Jim and Marian Jordan star as the folks from Wistful Vista as their 1944-45 season continues. Fibber is engrossed in the mystery novel, "The Case of the Cross-eyed Cat." Arthur Q. Brian is Doc Gambell, with Harlow Wilcox, the King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:31)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-4-47) Jack leaves for Chicago where his vaudeville tour at the Chicago Theatre begins next Friday. All the regulars, including Verna Felton, Mel Blanc, Frank Nelson, Elliott Lewis, Artie Auerbach, even Mary's sister Babe. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27:07)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11th

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-11-47) Jack and the gang broadcast from Chicago where they are appearing in a stage show at the Chicago Theatre. Marjorie Reynolds, who is in the stage show with Jack, Rochester, Phil and the Sportsmen, also guests on the radio show. NBC Chicago staff announcer Norman Barry subs for Don Wilson who did not make the trip. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (26:31)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (2-20-45) The Squire of Wistful Vista and his wife go to the railroad station to catch a train to San Francisco. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:50)

SUSPENSE (4-5-51) "Murder in G-Flat" starring Jack Benny as an average man, a piano tuner, who mistakenly switches handbags on the subway and comes away with a fortune. Cast includes Bea Benadaret, Joe Kearns, Larry Thor, Jack Krushen, Paul Frees, AutoLite, CBS. (29:00)

BING CROSBY SHOW (2-12-53) From Palm Springs, California. Bing's guest is Jack Benny who is worried about his surprise birthday party. John Scott Trotter and the orchestra, violinist Joe Venuti. General Electric, CBS. (29:35)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (2-13-45) "What to Do with Germany" is a dramatization of the book by attorney Louis Nizer. A timely story because "today from Yalta it was announced what the Big Three would do with Germany." Sustaining, NBC. (28:15)

★ **JACK BENNY PROGRAM** (2-4-45) Broadcasting from St. Alben's Naval Hospital in Long Island, New York, it's Jack and the gang: Mary, Rochester, Phil, Larry Stevens, plus guests Fred Allen and Portland Hoffa. Jack recalls the day he took Mary to his movie, "Hollywood Canteen." Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (28:00)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18th

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-18-47) Jack's vaudeville tour continues from New York where he's appearing at the Roxy Theatre. Special guest on this broadcast is Al Jolson. Jack and Al decide their career paths are very similar. Kenny Delmar subs for Don Wilson. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27:05)

SUSPENSE (1-18-54) "The Face is Familiar" starring Jack Benny in "his first dramatic appearance of the season. Benny plays a man with a nondescript appearance, an asset to some underworld types who plan to use him in a bank robbery. Cast includes Sheldon Leonard, Hy Averbach, Joe Kearns. An Elliott Lewis production. AutoLite, CBS. (28:55)

★ **COMMAND PERFORMANCE** (2-15-45) "Dick Tracy in B Flat" with an all-star cast: Bing Crosby as Dick Tracy; Dinah Shore as Tess Trueheart; Jerry Colonna as the Chief; Bob Hope as Flat Top; Frank Morgan as Vitamin Flintheart; Jimmy Durante as The Mole; Judy Garland as Snowflake; the Andrews Sisters as the Summer Sisters; Frank Sinatra as Shakey; and Cass Daley as Gravel Girtie. A

musical spoof of the popular comic strip, this is one of the most famous—and most popular—Command Performance programs ever broadcast over the Armed Forces Radio Service during World War II. (29:51; 22:02)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (2-18-45) Douglas Edwards and CBS correspondents worldwide. "General MacArthur's paratroops and amphibious attack forces have invaded Corregidor and Manila Bay and its complete capture... is now assured. And from Guam, Admiral Nimitz announces that battleships and cruisers of the great American Fifth Fleet have continued to throw shells at Iwo Jima, 750 miles south of Tokyo." Admial Radios, CBS. (24:45)

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (2-15-53) Guest Bing Crosby, subbing for Dennis Day, joins Jack and the gang from the American Legion Hall in Palm Springs, California. Regulars include Mary, Don Wilson, Bob Crosby, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, and Mel Blanc. In honor of Bing's book "Call me Lucky," the gang offers "The Life of Bing Crosby." Lucky Strike Cigarettes, CBS. (27:05)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25th

JACK BENNY PROGRAM (5-25-47) It's Jack's last show of the 1946-47 season, and his last from New York after his great vaudeville tour. Guest Fred Allen turns up after Jack and the gang do their version of "Allen's Alley." Later, Jack introduces his summer replacement, Jack Paar who will take over the time slot for Jack during the vacation period. Paar gets tips from Benny and Allen. Lucky Strike Cigarettes, NBC. (27:06)

★ **BRAVE MEN ARE AFRAID** (2-10-45) Paul Killiam talks with Lt. Bob Crosby, now with the 5th Division in the Pacific; a stirring new Marine song, first time on the air; and a message to Tokyo Rose. Sustaining, WOR/Mutual.

LUX RADIO THEATRE (9-26-38) "Seven Keys to Baldpate" starring Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone in a radio version of the famous mystery-comedy by Earl Derr Biggers. Jack and Mary, as themselves, find plenty of real-life mystery as the Baldpate Inn. Host Cecil B. DeMille also has a role in the story, playing himself. Cast includes Frank Nelson, Gale Gordon, Lou Merrill, Martha Wentworth, Joe Kearns. Melville Ruick narrates. During an intermission in the broadcast, guest violinist Efram Zimbalist plays "The Bee." Lux Soap, CBS. (26:45; 23:35; 21:30)

★ **AMERICAN WEEKLY** (2-24-45) "Smashing the Black Market in Italy" tells a front page

drama taken from the pages of the Hearst newspapers. Syndicated. (13:24)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (2-27-45) Jim and Marian Jordan star. Fibber discovers that someone has replaced him as head of the Red Cross Drive for his district. Cast features Arthur Q. Brian as Doc Gamble, Shirley Mitchell as Alice Darling, plus Ken Christie and Bea Benadaret, Kings Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:36)

SCREEN GUILD THEATRE (10-20-40) Variety program featuring host Roger Prior and guests Claudette Colbert, Edward Arnold, Basil Rathbone, Ernst Lubitch, and, maybe, Jack Benny who haggles with almost everyone on the show. Gulf Oil Co., CBS. (28:35)

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THOSE WERE THE DAYS

WNIB-WNIZ • FM 97 • SATURDAY 1 - 5 P.M.

MARCH 1995

SATURDAY, MARCH 4th

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (3-6-45) The McGees decide to celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary while they are still young enough to enjoy it! Cast includes Arthur Q. Brian, Shirley Mitchell, Marlin Hurt, Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:32)

★ **PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** (3-1-45) The President of the United States reports to a Joint Session of Congress on his 14,000 mile trip to Malta (Jan. 30-Feb. 2) and Yalta (Feb. 4-11). FDR seems tired, but relaxed, as he sits, rather than stands, to deliver what would be his last address to congress. Note the warmth of his Congressional audience. CBS newsman Bill Henry sets the scene before the president speaks. CBS and ALL NETWORKS. (60:00)

★ **GREAT GILDERSLEEVE** (2-25-45) Harold Peary stars as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, with Walter Tetley as nephew Leroy. Because of a wartime news report, the show does not start on time and we hear Peary and Tetley nervously ad-libbing before the studio audience for about six minutes before the show finally goes on the air. Gildy's Aunt Hattie is his house guest. Kraft Foods, NBC. (30:30)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (3-4-45) Douglas Edwards and CBS newsmen report from around the world. "The German army contin-

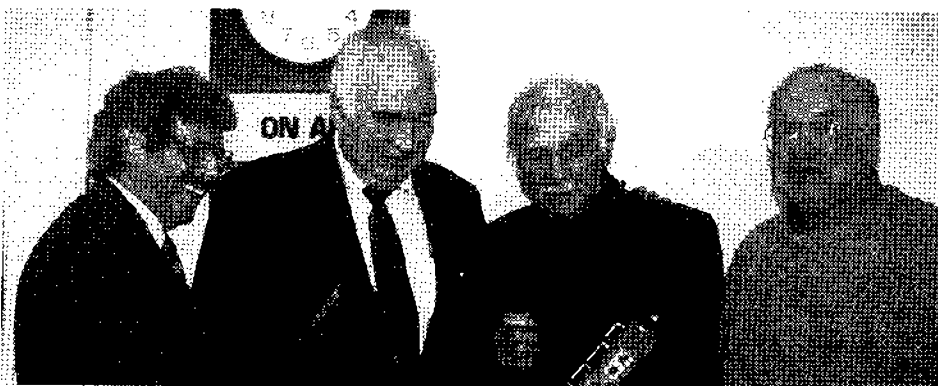
ues its retreat across the Rhine today, blowing big bridges across the river to prevent Allied armies from crossing after the enemy troops. ...B-29s have bombed Tokyo again in very great strength. And on Iwo Jima the Marines have almost split the Japs on the northern end of the island." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:35)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (3-6-45) "Rainbow," a story of Soviet citizens who became traitors and conspired with the German Occupation Force in exchange for gifts and liberties and how they were punished by the Red Army. Sustaining, NBC. (28:28)

SATURDAY, MARCH 11th

KRAFT MUSIC HALL (3-22-45) Bing Crosby stars with guest pianist Frankie Carle, plus Eugenie Baird, the Charioteers and Ken Carpenter. Bing reminisces about his film, "The Road to Singapore." Kraft Foods, NBC. (29:15)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (3-11-45) Douglas Edwards and CBS correspondents. "Berlin says American troops have made another crossing of the Rhine, 10 miles north of Remagen. In the air war, German submarine yards at Bremen, Hamburg and Kiel, and oil refineries were hit today by 2,000 planes of the American Eighth Air Force. In the Pacific, the Iwo Jima battle is still going on and Tokyo radio continues to claim the Americans have landed



NBC CHICAGO ANNOUNCERS reminiscing with Chuck Schaden (left) are Jim Hill, Norm Barry and Ed Grennan. Tune in to the memories on *TWTD* Saturday, March 18th.

on Mindanao in the Philippines." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:55)

★ **LUX RADIO THEATRE** (2-18-45) "Sunday Dinner for a Soldier" starring John Hodiak, Anne Baxter and Charles Winninger in their original screen roles from the 1944 film. It's the story of a family living on a houseboat in Florida who decide to save and sacrifice in order to invite a lonely soldier to a Sunday meal. Guest host is Jesse L. Laskey. Lux Soap, CBS. (22:02; 18:40; 19:10)

★ **WORDS AT WAR** (3-13-45) "Can Do" follows the story of the U.S. Navy Seabees (construction battalion) from battle to battle (Wake Island, Guadalcanal, Salerno, etc.) and their contributions to the war effort. Sustaining, NBC. (28:00)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (3-13-45) The McGees are expecting a visit from Oliver Popydye, an old cattleman friend from out west. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:30)

SATURDAY, MARCH 18th

NBC CHICAGO ANNOUNCERS' ROUNDTABLE (9-28-94) Norm Barry, Jim Hill and Ed Grennan—all long time staff announcers at WMAQ-NBC, talk about their careers in the Merchandise Mart studios of NBC Chicago. Chuck Schaden hosts this panel discussion which was recorded at a Chicago Pioneer Broadcasters meeting at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago. (Part 1: 27:00)

WMAQ: BUT WHY? (10-12-53) Concentrating on local programming, WMAQ staff announcer Hugh Downs describes a typical broadcast week at the NBC station in Chicago. Sustaining. (Part 1: 14:35)

NBC CHICAGO ANNOUNCERS' ROUNDTABLE (9-28-94) The announcers continue to reminisce and tell anecdotes about their great days on the NBC staff. (Part 2: 26:00)

WMAQ: BUT WHY? (10-12-53) Hugh Downs continues his look at the NBC Chicago station. Sustaining. (Part 2: 14:45)

NBC CHICAGO ANNOUNCERS' ROUNDTABLE (9-28-94) Audience members of the Midwest Pioneer Broadcasters get in on the memories. Questions and comments from Jack Angel, Jim Conway, John Yoder, Jim Andeline, John Hultman, Fr. John Banahan, Harry Volkman, Curt Mitchell, Billy Leach, Bill Gershon. (Part 3: 32:00)

FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY (3-20-45) Mr. McGee is anxious to get his radio fixed so he can tune in to singer Gloria Pizzacato's program. Cast includes Arthur Q. Brian, Shirley

Mitchell, Marlin Hurt, Mel Blanc, Harlow Wilcox, King's Men, Billy Mills and the orchestra. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:40)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (3-18-45) Newsman Robert Trout replaces Douglas Edwards as editor of this program. CBS has re-assigned Edwards to cover the Western Front. "The U.S. Army Air Force sent its greatest fleet of bombers to attack targets in Berlin — 1300 heavy bombers and 700 fighters. Tokyo radio insists that some 1400 American carrier-based planes raided southern Japan for eight hours." Admiral Radios, CBS. (24:50)

SATURDAY, MARCH 25th

LUX RADIO THEATRE (9-17-51) "Sunset Boulevard" starring Gloria Swanson and William Holden with Nancy Gates and William Conrad. Radio version of the 1950 film about a silent movie actress, trying to make a comeback, who attracts a down-on-his-luck writer to work for her. Host is William Keighley. Lux Soap, CBS. (18:10; 18:50; 13:45)

★ **WORLD NEWS TODAY** (3-25-45) Bob Trout and CBS correspondents around the globe. "On the eastern bank of the Rhine ...the 21st Army Group has linked all its bridgeheads. The Allies are pouring men and material across the river in preparation for the decisive battle. ...Washington reports that three B-29s were lost in yesterday's low level attack on Japan's aircraft factories, ...but bombing results were described as good." Admiral radios, CBS. (24:45)

★ **FIBBER MC GEE AND MOLLY** (3-27-45) The McGees do their part for the Relief Clothing Drive, but a visit from Doc Gamble causes a problem. Cast includes Bea Benadare in her first appearance as neighbor Mrs. Carstairs. Also: Arthur Q. Brian as Doc Gamble, Shirley Mitchell as Alice Darling, Marlin Hurt as Beulah. Johnson's Wax, NBC. (29:47)

★ **REPORT TO THE NATION** (3-31-45) John Daly offers a variety program with a very patriotic theme. Guests include comedian Garry Moore, shipbuilder Henry J. Kaiser, folk singer Richard Dyer Bennett, and a recording by Lily Pons and Andre Kostelanetz in a USO performance before 2,000 American fighting men, within range of the heavy enemy artillery. Continental Can Co., CBS. (30:15)

IT PAYS TO BE IGNORANT (10-5-45) Moderator Tom Howard deals with zany panelists Hagry McNaughton, Lulu McConnell and George Shelton. Sample question: "What is a window?" AFRS rebroadcast. (29:40)

They Left The Bandstand...

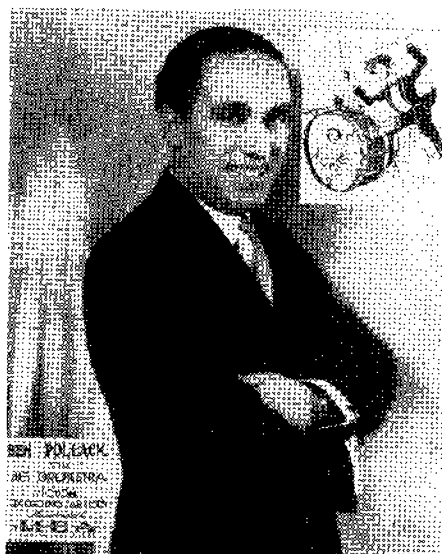
BY EDWARD MICHALS

When popular composer Fred Fisher wrote "Chicago — That Toddlin' Town" in the late 20's he captured the spirit, flavor, and tempo of the bustling city. He indeed must have seen "a man dance with his wife" on the dance floor downtown, or the south, west, and north sides of Chicago. He saw thousands of other people socially dancing to the fascinating rhythms of early big bands. He heard orchestras directed by such big names as Paul Whiteman, Ted FioRito, Isham Jones, Fred Waring, Ben Pollack, Rudy Vallee, Ted Lewis, Red Nichols, Jan Garber, Horace Heidt, Wayne King, and Louis Armstrong.

What made Chicago the Mecca of big dance bands from the 20's to the 50's? What helped make relatively unknown band leaders become veritable celebrities to the dancing patrons throughout the city, and the nation? That prohibition induced Chicago to do more than its share of roaring musically, or otherwise, during the 20's is well documented. But it was more than a free-wheeling spirit that kept the town toddling. Sociologists, musicologists, music critics, and performers don't agree on what played the biggest role in creating the dance craze throughout the city for about 40 years. But there were many reasons.

Chicago was a growing and prosperous

Edward A. Michaels, a retired advertising and promotions executive, has a journalism degree from the University of Illinois, class of 1949. He is a frequent contributor to business and trade publications and has been a big band buff since he was a teen-ager.



BEN POLLACK

metropolis in the early years with new and beautiful skyscrapers, hotels, ballrooms, night clubs, and theaters springing up all over town. The Wrigley Building was completed in 1921 and the Tribune Tower was topped-off in 1925. The Stevens Hotel opened in 1927. The residents were proud of their city and optimistic for its future. Many people were financially able to seek more entertainment away from home. They wanted to personally see the orchestras they heard on the radio and records, feel the elation of a live performance, and dance to the music.

Even teenagers got swept up into the dance band craze by listening to radio broadcasts from the dance halls, playing the juke boxes, or buying records of their favorite orchestras. They were aspiring to become the future patrons for those dance places in Chicago.

During the roaring 20's there was a group of young white musicians, often re-

But the Melody Lingered On



TED LEWIS

ferred to as the "Austin High (School) Gang," that played hot spots in Chicago. Although only one of them attended Austin, the others were from the Chicago neighborhoods, suburbs, or Midwest.

As young jazz musicians they got their inspiration and musical ideas by visiting some of the hot spots where black performers were playing their original type of music. The black population was growing because of the large influx of people from the South who were finding employment in Chicago. There were scores of small night clubs on the South side, so there were more black musicians in Chicago than anywhere else in the country.



WAYNE KING

The part that radio broadcasting played in the early introduction, and the amazingly rapid evolution, of dance band music can not be over-emphasized. The big bands became almost universally popular throughout the country by virtue of local and national remote radio pick-ups.

Not only did the air time help create regularly crowded dance floors for the club and ballroom owners, but they helped create national celebrities of orchestra leaders and vocalists like Bing Crosby, Perry Como, Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, Helen O'Connell, Peggy Lee, and others.

In the early twenties, Chicago's South Side neighborhoods were lined with beautiful boulevards and parkway systems. They included miles and miles of splendid apartment buildings and gracious apartment hotels, particularly in the Oakwood/Kenwood districts.

• To oblige people living in those neigh-

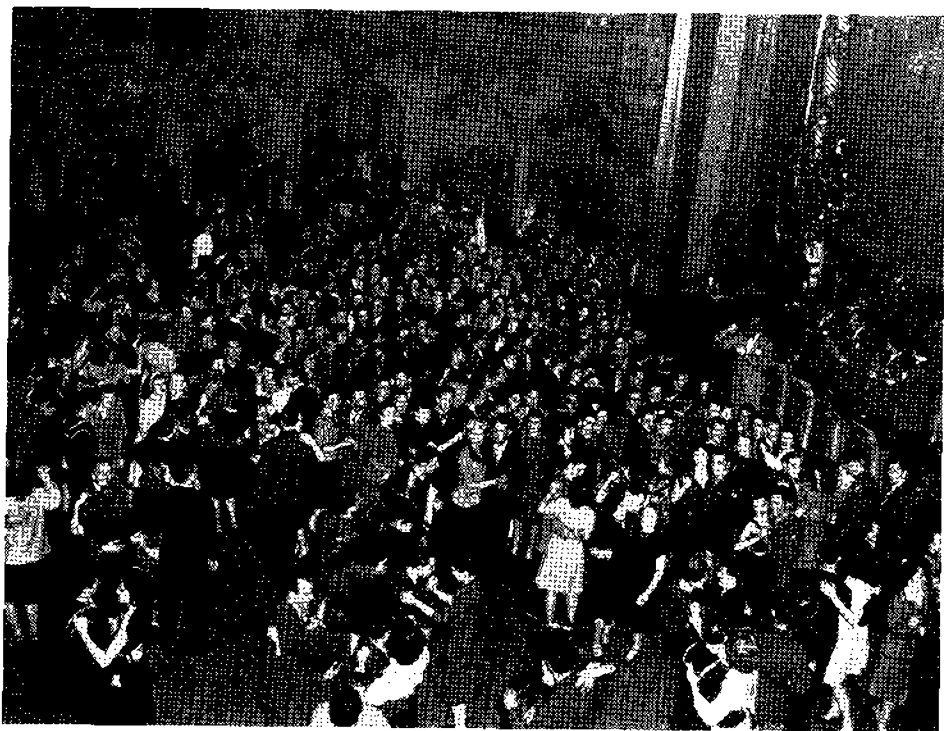
THEY LEFT THE BANDSTAND...

borhoods, and beyond, lively dancing facilities were established in night clubs, ballrooms, and hotels. The Midway Dancing Gardens at 59th and Cottage Grove, an immense indoor/outdoor amusement center designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1923, also catered to young couples eager for modern dancing. Some of the young bandsmen that played there included Jimmy McPartland, Bix Biederbecke, and Benny Goodman. The Garden closed in 1929, largely because of the depression.

Another nearby dance hall was the White City Ballroom on the amusement park premises at 63rd and South Park. It appealed to both young and older dancers. Competition from the Chicago Century of Progress forced White City to close in 1934.

The Southmoor Hotel, at 67th and Stoney Island, was a fairly large and famous hotel on the South Side near Jackson Park. They offered dancing in the Venetian Room, and in the mid-twenties at least two famous Chicago orchestras played there: Ben Pollack and Ted FioRito. The Grenada Cafe, at 65th and Cottage Grove, was a popular small cabaret that hired well-known dance bands, led by Paul Whiteman, Ted FioRito, Ted Weems, and Guy Lombardo. The latter was instrumental in starting a remote radio broadcast from the club, which greatly increased his recognition with national audiences.

In the 20's, 30's, and 40's, the bright lights concentrated around Cottage Grove Avenue, between 59th and 65th streets, for several reasons. It was near a large middle-class population from nearby apartments, the University of Chicago, and apartment hotels in the Hyde Park/Kenwood commu-



ANDREW KARZAS' TRIANON BALLROOM AT 62nd AND COTTAGE GROVE



JAN GARBER AND HIS ORCHESTRA

nities. The area enjoyed good public transportation on the Elevated, buses, and streetcars. Since only a few young people had their own cars, very few places needed parking areas.

Super entrepreneur Andrew Karzas built the magnificent Trianon Ballroom at 62nd and Cottage Grove in 1922 for \$1,500,000. Designed according to Louis XVI decor, it contained magnificent furnishings, marble columns, crystal chandeliers, tapestries and paintings, plus the carpeted regal stairway leading to the dance floor. The Trianon was literally a dance palace, so huge it could hold 6,000 people throughout and accommodate 3,000 on the dance floor. It had two bandstands.

As a master promoter, Karzas hired "The King of Jazz," Paul Whiteman, for the opening at \$2,500 a week. And he had General John Pershing and Mrs. Potter Palmer II lead the grand opening march. To create more publicity for his fabulous place, he engaged Rudolph Valentino and his wife to demonstrate the

Tango to an overflowing crowd in 1923.

Karzas was also quick to realize the value of radio broadcasting over WGN, and the top bands were eager to play there: Jan Garber, Art Kassel, Anson Weeks, Ted FioRito, Freddy Martin, Wayne King, Ted Weems, Kay Kyser, Claude Thornhill, Harry James, and the Trianon's most popular, Lawrence Welk. Welk played there 11 different dates in four years. When the surrounding neighborhood started to deteriorate, they had to bring down the curtain in 1954. The place was demolished in 1967.

Throughout the late 30's and 40's, the Martinique Restaurant, at 95th near Western, featured dancing with dining (prior to the days of their dinner playhouse). Some of the big names the public danced to there were Tony Pastor, Louis Prima, and Ralph Marterie.

Remote broadcasting of dance band music was a very popular form of entertainment between the mid 30's and late 40's. It was a good business attraction for

THEY LEFT THE BANDSTAND...

the clubs, ballrooms, and hotels that had a "wire" from the bandstand to the radio studio. It was a fine opportunity for the bands to get extra recognition for themselves because their music could be heard by large audiences regionally, and often nationally. It also was a great pleasure for their loyal fans who might not have been able to hear them otherwise because of distance, costs, time, or age.

All the major networks participated in these remote broadcasts because it was a source of income for them, and also saved them the cost of producing programs to fill those time slots. Locally WBBM, (Columbia Broadcasting System), WMAQ, (National Broadcasting System), and WGN, (Mutual Broadcasting System), did most of the remotes. Independent WIND did some remotes from Madura's Danceland Ballroom, on 114th and Indianapolis Blvd. in suburban Whiting, Indiana and often broadcast the music of Tiny Hill.

The remotes were usually aired for 30 minutes between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m., five or even seven nights a week. To broadcast, the studio would send an announcer and usually an engineer. The engineer would adjust the sound pick-up according to the size of the room, number of musicians, and even the voices of the nearby dancers. The announcer would introduce the band and the leader during the opening theme song, then announce the song titles and perhaps the soloists for each song. Often the announcer would close by saying, "This broadcast has come to you from the Windy City," and in the summer "...from the shores of beautiful Lake Michigan" giving a plug for the city to out of town listeners.

Remote broadcasts were particularly important to orchestra leaders who had

little name recognition. Therefore they were especially anxious to perform in a famous spot like the Blackhawk, College Inn, or Aragon/Trianon, which were nationally known as prime locations. Those broadcasts put them in the big leagues so they could command a higher fee for their appearances, recordings, or even movies.

To help strengthen their identities, each band had its own theme song, either written by the leader or composed for them. Often their agents would suggest a tag line for them as a sign-on and sign-off in the broadcast. For example, Guy Lombardo had "The sweetest music this side of heaven." Sammy Kaye used "Swing and sway with Sammy Kaye." "Art Kassel and his castles in the air" belonged to Art. And Jan Garber was the "Idol of the air lanes."

Almost all the major clubs and hotels downtown had remote broadcasts, as had the bigger ballrooms throughout the city, either regularly or occasionally. Those broadcasts even make the dancers feel more important because they felt like they were part of the radio program.

Even before some of the famous dance spots really got to be popular, the black clubs were going full blast. Originally called the Sunset Cafe, the Grand Terrace on 39th near South Parkway, in the 30's hired big names like Louis Armstrong, Chick Webb with Ella Fitzgerald, Fletcher Henderson, and Earl "Father" Hines, performing on a regular coast to coast broadcast. "Father" Hines played there many years as a house band. Club DeLisa, at 55th and State, a mixed audience South Side cabaret, booked up-and-coming bands like Red Saunders, Albert Ammons, and Billy Eckstine.

When the jazz age was nearing its zenith, more sophisticated music was heard at some of the deluxe black places of entertainment. In 1927 the magnificent Savoy Ballroom opened with three bands,



KAY KYSER'S COLLEGE OF MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE AT THE BLACKHAWK RESTAURANT

followed in 1928 with the Regal Theater next door at 47th and South Parkway (now Martin Luther King Drive). They not only featured top black bands such as Benny Carter, Fletcher Henderson, and Lionel Hampton, but occasionally white swing bands like Glen Gray, Charlie Barnett, Woody Herman and Stan Kenton. Duke Ellington and Count Basie used to bring in the largest crowds.

In addition to all the dance band activity on the South Side, the Loop was ablaze with night lights because of the concentration of hotels and night clubs, often catering to the big spenders looking for entertainment.

Chicago always had been a favorite town for band appearances. There were as many as 10 to 12 big names in or around downtown on any given day. A day in November of 1941 was typical when Les

Brown, Charlie Spivak, Dick Jurgens, Lionel Hampton, Will Bradley, Lou Breeze, and Ben Bernie were playing at clubs, hotels, and theaters in the Loop.

In 1940, while playing in the Panther Room of the Hotel Sherman, Harry James released his young singer Frank Sinatra's contract to Jimmy Dorsey, who was playing that month at the Empire Room of the Palmer House, four blocks away. An historic event in the popular music world.

Two of the top dance band hangouts for Chicagoans, suburbanites, and out-of-town visitors were spots made famous over the radio. They were the Blackhawk Restaurant and the Sherman Hotel's College Inn.

Both these places booked the bigger swing bands as a standard policy, and they regularly attracted younger crowds like university students from Northwestern, Chicago, and Illinois.

THEY LEFT THE BANDSTAND...

The Blackhawk, with its small dance floor, on Wabash and Randolph, was not a large nor ornate place. But it was always packed because of the great bands they hired. Orchestras like Ted Weems (Perry Como singing), Louis Armstrong, Hal Kemp, Red Norvo, Jack Teagarden, Bob Crosby, Coon-Sanders, and Kay Kyser. Kyser started his "College of Musical Knowledge" broadcasts from there. All these groups broadcast nightly over WGN and Mutual.

The College Inn or, sometimes, the Panther Room of the Hotel Sherman, on Randolph and Clark Streets (now site of the State of Illinois Building) booked the same type of swing bands because it catered to the same young crowd the Blackhawk did, but had a larger dance floor. From broadcasts over WMAQ and NBC you would hear, in the late 20's and early 30's, Ben Bernie, Buddy Rogers, Ishan Jones, Ben Pollack, Vincent Lopez, and Mugsie Spanier. In the mid 30's and 40's the bands broadcasting were Frankie Masters, Jimmy Lunceford, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman, Harry James, and Glenn Miller. Before they tore down the Hotel, Duke Ellington lived on the top floor penthouse.

Two of the more prestigious downtown hotels that booked big name bands and had regular local and national broadcasts were the Drake and the Palmer House. The Gold Coast Room (later named the Camellia House) of the Drake, on Michigan and Oak, from early in the 20's employed famous orchestras such as Fred Waring, Guy Lombardo, Hal Kemp, and Alec Templeton. In later years Vincent Lopez, Horace Heidt, Wayne King, Phil Spitalny ("and his all girl orchestra"), and Freddy

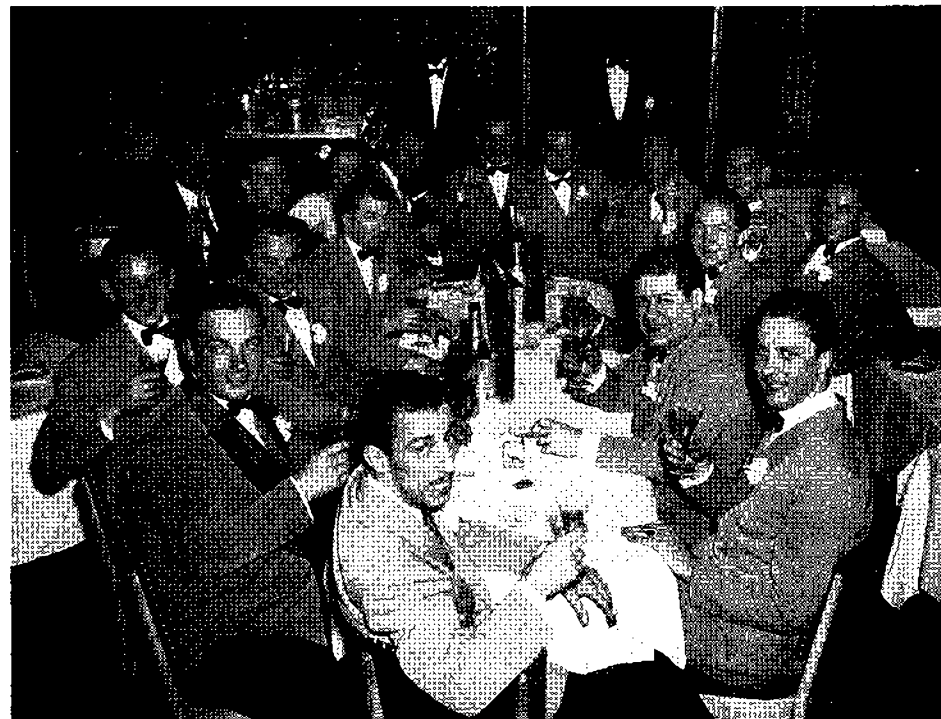
Martin worked the bandstand.

The Palmer House, on State and Washington, had an elegant marble staircase leading up to the green and gold Empire Room. Over the years nightly broadcasts featured George Olsen, Anson Weeks, Hal Kemp, Eddy Duchin, Ray Noble, Shep Fields, Tommy Dorsey, Freddy Martin, Xavier Cugat, and Carmen Cavallero. In addition, they also spotlighted super stars like Sophie Tucker, Ethel Merman, Velos and Yolanda, and in their later years Maurice Chevalier and Nelson Eddy as main attractions.

Two other downtown hotels with regular remote radio pickups were the Stevens (later named Conrad Hilton) and the venerable Congress Hotel. The Congress on Michigan and Congress was a first class hotel. From its Pompean Room dance rhythms would emanate from such troopers as Gus Arnheim, Vincent Lopez, Duke Ellington, Bob Crosby, Art Jarrett, and Del Courtney. When local boy Benny Goodman was signed on in 1936 for one month, his new swing music was such a hit, he stayed on for half a year. From then on his title, "The King of Swing" was undisputed.

The Stevens Hotel (now Chicago Hilton and Towers), on Michigan and 8th street, before WWII, was the world's largest hotel. It showed off its class with elegance and grace, and a fabulous staircase leading to the Boulevard Room. The dance music played there was by Del Courtney, Griff Williams, Frankie Masters, and Ralph Marterie. The radio broadcasts helped make these orchestras nationally known.

Several more nearby hotels gladly accommodated the Loop dance crowds in their main dining and dancing rooms. The Blackstone Hotel, at Michigan and Balboa, featured in the Mayfair Room orchestras such as Bernie Cummins, Herbie Kay, and Chuck Foster. You could also dance to Ted



BOB CROSBY AND THE BOB CATS RELAX AFTER A PERFORMANCE AT THE BLACKHAWK

Fiorito, Jack Russell, Blue Baron at the Terrace Garden Casino of the Morrison Hotel on Clark and Madison (now the site of Chicago's First National Bank). And in the heart of the financial district, the La Salle Hotel, on Washington and La Salle had the likes of Ray Herbeck, Jack Fina, and Dick Stabile lead the bands.

The Bismark Hotel, at Randolph and Wells, hosted in the beautiful Walnut Room the bands of Art Kassel, Phil Levant, and Ray Pearl. Long since silent with the happy sounds of dance music, the Walnut Room was recently renovated to its early splendor and now holds Friday evening dances with local big bands.

There were many other places that offered dancing near the Loop. The glitzy Chez Paree, on Fairbanks and Ontario, was internationally recognized for its big time entertainment, long before Las Vegas. They headlined stars such as Sophie

Tucker, Joe E. Lewis, Eddie Fisher, and Tony Martin. The dance bands that backed them up included Rudy Vallee, Abe Lyman, Vincent Lopez, Boyd Raeburn, Henry Busse, and the perennial Lou Breeze. The featured celebrities did not perform during the radio broadcasts primarily because of contractual reasons.

Though outnumbered by the places in the Loop, Rush Street crowds saw the conventioners rushing around trying to spend some of their expense accounts at music places like Kelly's Stables at 431 Rush (later moved and renamed Mr. Kelly's), and Club Alabam at Rush south of Chicago Avenue. Ina Ray Hutton and her all-girl swing band broadcast from the Alabam in the 40's.

The city's North Side did not take a back step to the South Side when it came to offering dancing enjoyment for Chicagoans, or, incidentally, military men stationed at

THEY LEFT THE BANDSTAND...

nearby Great Lakes, Ft. Sheridan, and Glenview Naval Air during WWII.

The stately art deco landmark Edgewater Beach Hotel, at 5100 North Sheridan Road, was a great location for big name bands throughout those halcyon dancing decades. In the summertime, the hotel's Beach Walk boasted "dancing under the stars on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan" as the radio announcers usually would proclaim. For the rest of the year, indoor dancers would enjoy the luxuriant atmosphere of the Marine Dining Room. Chicago and national band favorites holding sway there were Abe Lyman, Anson Weeks, Griff Williams, Ray Noble, Claude Thornhill, Jimmy Dorsey, and the Glenn Miller band under the direction of Tex Beneke or Jerry Gray. The Edgewater was a great place for school proms. The hotel was torn down in 1969 to usher out the end of an era of dancing on the northern gold coast.

On the Near North Side was the favorite rendezvous of the rich and the famous, the Ambassador East Hotel (now the Omni Ambassador) at State and Goethe. The small dance floor in the posh Pump Room would usually broadcast small society bands like Emile Coleman and Meyer Davis; however, the politely swinging Andy Kirk also played there for an extended gig, broadcasting late at night.

The world class Aragon Ballroom, on Lawrence off Broadway, brought thousands of dancers to their feet every night except Monday, often with matinees on Sundays and holidays. Andrew Karzas earned enough from his Trianon Ballroom to build the Spanish-Moorish giant dance hall in 1926. With palm trees lining the dance floor, and stars dancing on the ceiling, the boy/girl meeting place was slightly

over orchestrated. When the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen hurried up the impressive formal stairs, they would hear the downbeat of such famous maestros as Wayne King, Freddy Martin, Buddy Mereno, and the regular favorites Dick Jurgens and Eddy Howard. The one night that Harry James played there in 1952, they cut an album to prove his gang was as groovy as Count Basie, a band he admired so much.

When the last dance date was scheduled for the Aragon in 1964, super showman Karzas hired Wayne King the Waltz King to please the older crowd who had regarded the place as hallowed. The final curtain came down for a generation of sentimentalists.

A smaller and less pretentious dance hall, at Broadway and Wilson, was the Arcadia Ballroom. At times it featured the swinging black orchestra of Charles Edgar (a big name on the South Side), and a North Side favorite Matty Malneck.

Throughout the 30's and 40's you could almost walk, or dance, to a half dozen night entertainment spots from the epicenter of Broadway and Lawrence. That territory had mass population and mass transportation, and it was the city's open gate to "loaded" North Shore suburbanites, a winning combination for the smart investors.

It may be difficult for the current generation to imagine the West Side of Chicago as a busy entertainment sector of the city. But the West Side also had its splendid parks and boulevard system as part of the original Daniel Burnham Master Plan. And an integral facet of that sprawling area were the thousands of beautiful apartment buildings housing thousands of pairs of happy feet looking for a solid dancing beat.

Out west were small hotels, ballrooms, clubs, and magnificent movie houses anxious to provide live music to satisfy music lovers of popular songs. In the 20's and

30's the cavernous Dreamland Ballroom on Paulina and Van Buren, under the Elevated, catered to the mostly younger neighborhood crowd.

Just as the Rialto downtown was Randolph Street, and South was Cottage Grove, while North was Broadway, Madison Street was the entertainment hub of the West Side.

Further west, just beyond the city limits, in suburban Riverside on Des Plaines Avenue was the Melody Mill Ballroom. It was easily identified by the huge wind mill atop the roof. The dancers who came had cars, thus adequate parking on the premises. A slightly older crowd frequented the modest-appointment ballroom to dance to such regular orchestras as Jimmy Palmer, Teddy Phillips, Paul Neighbors, and Ralph Marterie. Frequent radio broadcasts were heard over WGN and WBBM. In the late 50's, Artie Shaw's band made a one-night appearance, although he looked like he'd rather be someplace else. When the wind mill stopped turning, the dancers stopped "dipping" in 1986.

Even further west of town, and quite a bit south, the grand-daddy of Chicago area ballrooms started out in the early 30's as somewhat of a road house in Willow Springs. The only way you could get to O'Henry, as it was originally called, was finding your way around the gigantic Cook County Forest Preserves. When its name changed to the Willowbrook in 1959 to disassociate itself from the candy bar company, the ballroom looked a little frumpy if you compared it to the elaborate Trianon or Aragon. The dance floor was romantically lighted by two large wrought iron light fixtures mounted from a ceiling draped by black pleated cloth. It was and still is a retreat for serious dancers, some looking professional, who enjoy dance or-



DICK JURGENS



EDDY HOWARD

chestras led by Jan Garber, Art Kassel, Clyde McCoy, Ray Pearl, Chuck Foster, and Dick Jurgens. Willowbrook also benefited by broadcasts direct from the room to entice people to venture out to the refuge by giving instructions on how to get there. In the 60's and 70's when big bands were supposed to be passe', big names like Les Brown, Harry James, Count Basie, and Glenn Miller's band led by Tex Beneke, as well as Tommy Dorsey's band led by Buddy Morrow, would come alive there.

While the big band era is generally acknowledged as having flourished from the early 20's to the late 50's, many band leaders outlasted that time span. Though they weren't fronting the same band continuously, their musical direction did cover several decades.

Lawrence Welk waved his "wunnerful, wunnerful" baton for 55 years; Wayne King for some 56 years; Duke Ellington played for 52 years; Guy Lombardo for 50 years; Freddy Martin and Woody Herman for 51 years; Benny Goodman for 44 years; Harry James for 43 years.

The big band beat went on through the 60's, 70's and 80's, kept alive and jumping by the people of good musical tastes, and a lot of happy memories about the places and faces that brought much enjoyment to millions of dancers and radio listeners. ■

M-M-M-Mmm Good!

More on the Subject of Candy

BY RUTH HOSEK

"The Subject was Candy" and tasty, too, but someone forgot that totally Chicago chocolate experience lovingly concocted by Mrs. Snyder. Now *there* was CANDY.

As a college student I was looking for part-time work and walked from my house down Montrose Avenue to the Snyder candy factory under the Ravenswood 'L'. Without much fuss and with much motherly attention from the personnel lady, I was hired and asked to report to the Merchandise Mart. That, in itself, was an experience. The overwhelming mystique of the Mart really intrigued and invigorated me. The retail shops were first floor only and even though I did not use the elevators, the starters got to know me and I, though only part-time, became a part of the 'family' on floor one.

I worked with three delightful sisters of Swedish extraction and another motherly woman who just made my labors easy and filled with happy moments. Summer was the slow time and there was only one really big Mart. The buyers came from all over the country. Sometimes their secretaries placed the orders; they came and spent time checking the chocolates by sight and by taste. They bought hundreds of pounds of candy, sending it all over the world to family and customers alike.

Who could forget those scrumptious, perfect little miniatures in their green cushioned boxes? What a birthday treat

Ruth Hosek is a subscriber to the Nostalgia Digest who submitted this sweet memory after reading Gino Lucchetti's article in our December-January issue.

they were — creams wrapped in milk or dark chocolate, nuts smothered in the same, rich chewy caramels, covered or wrapped in cellophane and, tucked in between those dark crinkly cups, Jordan almonds in pastel-sugar colors. And all these could be found in regular size, too.

Mint meltaways? A Mrs. Snyder's original, I believe. And who could forget that first look and taste of Heavenly Hash? (The secret of chocolate cake homemade was HH pieces on top of a freshly baked cake which was then returned to a warm oven in which that milk chocolate-marshmallow concoction would drape itself slowly over top and sides.)

The trays of hard candies, cellophane-wrapped, resembled shining, touchable rainbows. Lemon drops and peppermints, fruit slices and plump, green spearmint-jelly slices, licorice -red and black -I can't even remember all the varieties of non-chocolate candy. But the lunch crowd jammed the store to select bags of mixed candies, often spending less than a dollar for a hefty little bag full. (Did I mention those elegant, chewy spice drops?)

Other specialties included citrus rinds in sugar or dark chocolate. Fruit jellies in dark chocolate were very big sellers in the Snyder's shop in the 'canyon'. My own special favorites were orange-sugared pecans. One would be hard put to find a rancid nut, even in summer. At Michigan and Oak (Or was it Walton?) Mrs. Snyder had included a soda fountain in her store. What elegance - sitting at the dark marble counter watching the traffic on the avenue across from the Drake Hotel, sipping the

LETTERS...WE GET LETTERS

PROSPECT HEIGHTS, IL — Enclosed you will find my renewal for another two years of *Nostalgia Digest*. I look forward to every issue. I particularly enjoy Ken Alexander's articles. I also enjoy the 50 year anniversary of World War II that you have been running. Enjoyed your re-running of Jack Benny's 1943-44 season and Fibber McGee and Molly's 1944-45 season. Would like to see a season of *The Great Gildersleeve*. These three shows, along with the *Shadow*, are my favorites. I was at the Museum of Broadcast Communications for the Afternoon with the *Great Gildersleeve* and also for the 61st anniversary of Jack Benny's 39th Birthday. Thank you for your part in keeping this history alive. —**JOHN HOLLINGSWORTH**

NORRIDGE, IL — Please, Chuck, lighten up on the war programs. —**MRS. EBINGER**
(ED. NOTE) — The Allies are making real progress on all Fronts and many are optimistic that the war will be over soon. But first we will have to tune in to the death of a president, the death of a dictator, the end of the war in Europe, the dropping of the

MORE ON CANDY

continued from page 36

absolutely finest coffee milk shake in the world made with her special coffee ice cream and syrup.

When I left the job the rumors were already flying - Fannie Mae would take over and buy her recipes. I was angry then and still become perturbed that Fannie Mae never gave proper (and/or continuing credit) to the creator of many of their best sellers - Mrs. Snyder. She was, after all, a Chicago original. And when I buy my three French vanilla creams-dark chocolate, please - (over a dollar, by the way) and carefully take that first bite. I think of Mrs. Snyder who developed the recipe for that jewel of the confectioner's art. Somehow, they tasted better when she was making them. ■

world's first atomic bomb, and V-J Day. Don't touch that dial.)

CHICAGO — Todd Nebel's article on Norman Corwin's 1944 election eve radio broadcast in support of FDR's re-election (Oct-Nov, 1994 *Digest*) reminded me that the star-studded cast of that program weren't the only Hollywood types to put on a show on behalf of Roosevelt.

Earlier in 1944, the United Auto Workers Union, anxious to see Roosevelt re-elected, contacted their brethren at the Screen Cartoonists Guild about producing a theatrical cartoon short promoting a fourth term for FDR. The result was "Hell Bent for Election," a cartoon whose central visual metaphor was a race between two trains, the "Defeatist Limited," a clunky old steam train whose locomotive is a caricature of Thomas E. Dewey, and the "Win the War Special," a sleek streamliner whose engine embodies the elegant profile of FDR. Animators from several studios, notably Warners', Disney, and Columbia Screen Gems, worked after hours, on their own time, to make this film. Some contributed their talents for free, including the film's director, Chuck Jones from Warner Bros. Other animation notables who contributed to the picture included Stephen Bosustow, John Hubley, Bill Hurtz, and David Hilberman. Earl Robinson and E. Y. "Yip" Harburg wrote the music. Industrial Films & Poster Service, the little company formed to produce the film, evolved in a few years into United Productions of America, best remembered for their Mr. Magoo cartoons.

Was there ever a presidential campaign so conspicuously supported by the popular media? Was there ever an election with more at stake for our nation? —**CURTIS L. KATZ**

(ED. NOTE) — Mr. Katz, an authority on movie animation, wrote about WWII "Gremlins" in our last issue, and writes about cartoon versions of Jack Benny in this issue.)

WARRENVILLE, IL — I agree with Peter Cakonic ("Letters" last issue) that Bing Crosby should be in the Radio Hall of Fame. Since Bob Hope is an inductee, so should

WE GET LETTERS

Bing. Besides, the Kraft Music Hall and Philco Radio Time, Bing was instrumental in bringing magnetic tape recording to radio broadcasting back in 1947 when Jack Mullin brought the "new" German recorders back from Europe after WW II. So he played a major role in radio. — **CHUCK HUCK**

CHICAGO— The Radio Hall of Fame must be dead, not to have Bing Crosby in it. They have entered some who have not had the success of Bing over generations on the air, not to mention tape recordings that changed radio. Please get the Hall on the ball.

— **MACK HARBIN**

(ED. NOTE)— The first step towards having someone inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame is to have them receive a *nomination* from the Hall of Fame Steering Committee. The Steering Committee welcomes input from *anyone* interested in the Radio Hall of Fame. If you would like to suggest the Committee nominate Bing Crosby — *or anyone else you feel is worthy of such an honor*— we suggest you write a thoughtful letter and send it to Radio Hall of Fame Steering Committee, Museum of Broadcast Communications, Michigan and Washington, Chicago, IL 60602.)

LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA— A few nights ago I was going up and down the AM radio dial, and I stopped at 780 WBBM Chicago. What I heard was the beginning of a program called "Ozzie and Harriet," a show that I had vaguely heard of as a television program. I had no idea that there was also a radio show featuring the Nelson family. I thought it was hilarious. After the program finished, the announcer told us about upcoming shows for the next month on WBBM, shows that I have never heard of for the most part (except for the great Abbott and Costello), and shows that I think I will have a great interest in.

Being 18 years old and living in Canada, I have not gotten too much exposure to fifties culture. I don't mean music-wise, because there are plenty of oldies stations around here. I came across your show on WBBM by luck, because I usually do not listen to the radio that late (we are in Eastern Time here). — **RAZVAN MOLOTIU**

VALPARAISO, INDIANA— Your program and



ARLINE BLACKBURN
"Pretty Kitty Kelly"

the *Nostalgia Digest* bring back many happy memories to me. How happy were the days when, after school, I would settle down to listen to Jack Armstrong, Little Orphan Annie, Don Winslow of the Navy, Captain Midnight and others. I used to send in for all the special offers, such as Orphan Annie's decoder and Jack Armstrong's whistling ring. I want to ask if you have heard of a program which was on for a comparatively short time back in the late 30's, I think, called "Little Kitty Kelly" or "Pretty Kitty Kelly." It was about a little girl immigrant from Ireland and her adventures in America. I think it was better when we listened to the radio rather than nowadays when the children watch TV programs. We learned to use our imaginations more, and you didn't have to be so tied down in watching something when you could just listen. —

JERRY E. MOE

(ED. NOTE)— "Pretty Kitty Kelly" was heard on CBS from 1937-1940. She arrived in the USA with no memory — a victim of amnesia— and quickly found herself, according to radio historian John Dunning, "alone, penniless, and on the receiving end of a murder charge." The show's theme song was "Kerry Dance." Kitty was played by Arline Blackburn.)

GRANVILLE, IL— I grew up with radio, from listening through headphone to KYW, to a horn speaker attached to a better operated set, all the way to today, and later working at a small radio station. When I was in high school, I often listened on Sunday afternoon to a program presented by "Sam Campbell, the Philosopher of the Forest." I don't remember the station or the exact year, possibly 1936 or 37. Does anyone recall the program or other information about Sam Campbell? —**WILLIAM F. KOSTELIC**

(ED. NOTE)— We're drawing a blank. Can anyone out there in Radioland remember this one? Drop us a line.)

HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA— Enclosed is a renewal check for two years instead of one. Your *Nostalgia Digest* is so good, I don't want to take the chance on missing a single issue! Last year I wrote expressing my sorrow your 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday evening program had been replaced by news on WBBM. I have a radio/cassette recorder with a clock/timer. One evening I decided to see if your station would come in so I could record the show for later listening. Imagine my surprise when the signal was even stronger at 1 a.m. Eastern than it had been at 9 p.m. Eastern! Since that February night I have been recording your program nightly and listening later on. Since one hour tapes are difficult to come by, the last few minutes of the second program are usually clipped. I have the timer set a few minutes after the show begins to give more recording time. (I'm sure your sponsors would not be pleased to know that I miss their spots.) Keep up the good work and I'll be listening! —**JOE MACKAY**

BATESVILLE, INDIANA— Time to renew the *Nostalgia Digest*. I really enjoy the old days! At 64 years I really relate to all the articles and radio programs. Along with a lot of your fans, I hate the changes of the past couple of years in the time of your programs. Now it is 1 a.m. in Batesville. So that knocks us in the head as far as being able to listen to you. So happy I will be able to get tapes and listen when I can stay up. —**FAITH**

WESTERFIELD

HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL— (How quickly two years pass by. It's renewal time already. As I looked through the last issue, I read a couple of letters from people in prison. Yes they are behind bars but their minds are free to travel through time to the golden days of

entertainment via the Theatre of the Mind as are the rest of us fortunate enough to be able to pick up your broadcasts. The *Nostalgia Digest* also is a wonderful commentary on those times. Each article adds to the delight of being able to listen to the episodes and vignettes from our past history. Through the years I've subscribed to many magazines, etc, but never continued any of them as long as I have the *Digest* subscription. The money invested in renewals year after year has had many happy returns. It's money well spent: an investment in the *future* of the *past*. So once again a check for renewal and a heartfelt thanks for your love of the old time shows, and more thanks for sharing them with us. —**ED COOK**

DOWNERS GROVE, IL— Enclosed is my renewal for the *Nostalgia Digest* for two years, with a check enclosed for \$55. The extra \$30 is for a special favor I hope you can do for me. In the Dec-Jan issue of the *Digest*, there were two letters from prisoners which moved me to think about how your wonderful old time radio programs help fill some of the sad and lonely hours for prisoners. I think they would enjoy the *Nostalgia Digest*, too. Therefore, would you kindly send a one year subscription to the two letter writers, J.B.B. at the Draper Prison in Elmore, Alabama and to C.W. at the Regional Jail in Charleston, West Virginia for me as an anonymous Christmas gift from a fellow old time radio fan? If prisoners are not permitted to receive such a gift, perhaps you could send the *Digest* to the respective prison libraries, instead.

—**NAME WITHHELD**

NOSTALGIA DIGEST AND RADIO GUIDE

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Museum of Broadcast Communications

museum pieces

Reported by Margaret Warren

YOU PROBABLY THOUGHT you had seen all the "Father Knows Best" episodes. Wrong. Museum archivist Cary O'Dell tells us that a little-known, never-aired special has found its way to the Museum. The program was produced by the U.S. Treasury Dept. in 1959 to promote the sale of savings bonds. It was not intended for broadcast but rather to be shown before private groups and organizations.

The episode has Jim Anderson (Robert Young) turning his household into a dictatorship in order to teach his kids the patriotic reasons for buying bonds. It's a definite departure from the typical "Father Knows Best" episode and takes on some political overtones of the time. Next time you visit the Museum, ask to view "Father Knows Best: 24 Hours in Tyrantland."

ON TO MORE recent days. Veteran news correspondent Marvin Kalb talked with Museum members last October about conditions in the world, politics and Richard Nixon. Kalb, a longtime State Dept. correspondent and public affairs host for CBS and NBC, was in town to promote his recent book on the former president. It was a thoughtful insight from a broadcaster-turned-college professor on how he saw it, lived it and reported it. The tape of that session is on the Museum archives shelf waiting to be viewed. Take a look.

ANOTHER broadcast veteran is head-



VETERAN NEWSMAN MARVIN KALB AT MBC

ing for Chicago. It's Hugh Downs and he'll be honored by the Museum in April. A former NBC Chicago radio announcer, Hugh left for fame and fortune in New York in the early fifties. At that time he teamed with Arlene Francis on NBC's "The Home Show," later hosted the "Today Show," "Concentration" and shared the "Tonight Show" stage with Jack Paar for those many years. He's still a top-notch host and these days he's doing it on ABC's "20/20."

The big night will be Saturday, April 29th at the Chicago Hilton and Towers. It'll be a terrific black tie, dining and dancing evening. A benefit for the Museum of Broadcast Communications, tickets are \$300. Phone Katy Roan at the Museum for details: (312) 295-6014.

Museum of Broadcast Communications

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← **COON-SANDERS NIGHTHAWKS**

were among the dance bands that made Chicago the Mecca of big bands in an era that is gone, but not forgotten. Read "They Left the Bandstand . . . But the Melody Lingered On" by Edwards Michal. Page 26.

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