

## Racket Squad

**TELEVISION** — Reviewed Thursday 10, 10:30 p.m., over CBS-TV network. Sponsor, Philip Morris, Ltd. Agency, Biow. Producer, Hal Roach Jr.-Carol Chase. Director, Frank McDonald. Writer, Arthur Orloff. Cast: Reed Hadley, Milburne White, others.

Any TV, film or radio writer worth his salt should know, page by page, line by line, chapter by verse, a book titled *The Big Con*. It is the definitive study of rackets, con guys, grifters, "cannons" (pick-pockets) and other larcenous gentry, from early American history to date. Its glossary is in itself an adventure in utilitarian semantics, designed for the sole purpose of keeping the squares and marks (chumps) uniformed. Its roster of con games has been an unending source of whodunit plots, especially in radio and video, as well as a tribute to the conners' infinite skill and patience—to say nothing of the breathtaking knowledge of human nature and human psychology they possess.

All of which is a preamble to the fact that *Racket Squad*, the Hal Roach film series bought by Philip Morris, used *The Big Con's* most famous routine, known as the "cackle bladder" racket. It has been done more times on radio, in all likelihood, than any other plot of its kind, and seems headed for a comparably durable career in TV. As you read it in the book it's a wonderful and exciting adventure.

The book takes you, step by step, on the elaborate tour given the mark—starting out with the phony telegraph operator who "sells" hoss results to the mark; to the "store" set up by the con guys, complete with ticker, pay windows, players, etc. It tells you how they work on the mark's own larcenous cravings for a killing, how they build him up to betting his entire stake—and then "put the chill on" via the "cackle bladder" routine, a prop murder, so named because originally the "corpse" bit on a chicken bladder and drenched himself in chicken blood. At which point the terrified mark takes it on the lam.

Well, it was this old chestnut that *Racket Squad* elected to preem with, in a pedestrian and routine production which didn't establish any of the flavor or excitement of the original. The semi-documentary approach employed couldn't surmount the handicap of the flaccid script of Milburne White's unconvincing portrayal of the chump.

Philip Morris commercials follow their current "Believe in Yourself" tests. *Jerry Franken.*

## Songo

**TELEVISION** — Reviewed Wednesday (30), 9:30-10:30 p.m. Sponsored Monday thru Friday via KFI-TV (Hollywood) by Songo Merchants' Association. Agency, Hy Heck Advertising Agency. Co-producers, Hy and Grace Heck and Del Moore. Director, Bud Lily, Emsee, Del Moore.

Various forms of musical bingo have been raking in loot via radio for years. As Songo, this is its first step thru the video door and, judging by the show's appeal, it should prove to be an even greater money-maker on TV. This application of bingo is ideal for the visual medium.

Del Moore, game caller, sits before a huge board divided into bingo squares. With each number that's pinned on the board a well-known tune is played via disk. Home viewers phone in winning answers. To add to show's appeal, packagers tie-in with a group of modeling agencies who supply a bevy of beauties to act as phone gals.

Del Moore works in sponsors' plugs between platter spinners. Show packs commercial value in that game participants must first visit a sponsor's store to receive a Songo card before he can play. This spurs store traffic which is bound to pay off in sales. Moore is well suited for this type of show, keeping interest alive thru breezy patter, mugging and zany antics. He should repeat the game's rules a few times during the show to hold late dialers. At present, the game is explained only at the start of the show.

Show's set-up is unique. Technically, its owners serve as sponsor, ad agency, packagers and talent. Package is jointly owned by Hy and Grace Heck and Del Moore. Heck's ad agency placed the business with the station. Sponsor is Songo Merchants' Association, which actually is the packagers, who buy the station time and resell it to various participating merchants. Moore, as one of the packagers, also serves as show's sole talent, its emcee. *Lee Zhitto.*

## Battle of the Boroughs

**TELEVISION**—Reviewed Tuesday (5), 10:30-11 p.m. Sponsored by Rubsam & Horrman Brewing Company via WCBS-TV, New York, thru Sullivan, Stauffer, Colwell & Bayles. Producer, Sherman Marks; director, John Fogel; announcer, Ted Brown; organist, Arlo; emcee, Durward Kirby.

This local stanza is a sort of *Truth or Consequences* without any truth element. It pits a team of contestants from one of New York's five boroughs against a team from another, in a series of zany contests. These all are predicated on occupations of the participants, but they are put thru paces never encountered in the course of their every-day work. Teams on first show represented Queens and Brooklyn.

First opponents were two boxers. They were brought out dressed in trunks and headgear, stood on stools and handed long rods with a balloon and boxing glove attached to each end. One balloon was filled with flour, the other with water. Battle consisted of breaking both balloons on a tack on the opponent's headgear, then tilting him off the stool with the boxing glove.

Another bout pitted two waitresses against each other, and involved piling up a stack of dishes behind the back and carrying them to a table. More crockery was broken! A third had teams of two paperhangers working on a board, then on the inside and outside of a barrel. One member of the Queens team was a lady paperhanger, one of the two in the metropolitan area.

Durward Kirby's emceeing was properly hearty. He used some sound judgment in permitting the lady paperhanger to go on at some length on how she got into the business. It proved a relatively calm interlude in an otherwise frantic show, and the lady had grace and humor besides. Plugs for R&H beer were delivered by Ted Brown from behind a small bar, with one featuring a couple of members of the studio audience invited up to quaff some brew.

The audience, incidentally, was provided with signs boosting the two boroughs involved, and reaction shots were used to good effect after each "victory" was announced. However, identical wording on the signs of the opposing factions weakened the device somewhat. Direction and camerawork, as a whole, were good. This show should be a real gone item with practical jokers, adolescents and people who like to watch other people do what they themselves would not undertake. It's broad comedy, played to the hilt. *Sam Chase.*

## The Better Home Show

**TELEVISION** — Reviewed Saturday (2), 6:30-7 p.m. Sponsored by the Anthracite Institute via ABC-TV. Agency, J. Walter Thompson Company. Producer, David A. Lown. Director, Fred Carr. Writer, Edwin P. McIntyre. Cast, Norman Brokenshire, Dick Wilson, Doreen Easton.

This program is directed at home owners and those interested in owning homes—which means most everybody. It presents a series of household problems and illustrates how they may be solved. It does this very successfully, making full use of the potentialities of television.

The program features Norman Brokenshire, cast as a home owner with a flair for carpentry, gardening, interior decorating, etc. The advice of Brokenshire is often sought by his next-door neighbors, Dick Wilson and Doreen Easton, whose problems range from termites in the garage to methods of painting the kitchen. Brokenshire, it should be said forthwith, is wonderful in the role. It so happens that he has had a diverse experience in various mechanical vocations and is therefore exceptionally well qualified. This, coupled with his natural warmth, fine voice and facile manner, renders his performance a standout. When he stands at his workbench, illustrating the use of a plane, explaining its parts, he is tugging at the heart of practically every man.

### Fuel Plugged

Commercials are built around the economy of coal as a fuel and stress the angle of automatic heat-

## Big Joe's Happiness Exchange

**TELEVISION** — Reviewed Thursday (31), 11-12 a.m. EDT over WABD, New York. Presented by White Rock thru Kenyon & Eckhardt. Producer, Hal Tennyson. Director, Bill Seaman. Hosts, Big Joe Rosenfeld Jr. and wife, Dorothy. Guests, Rube Goldberg and W. C. Handy.

Should Big Joe Rosenfeld Jr. and his spouse, Dorothy (also referred to as Choo Choo and Sugarfoot), succeed on TV, it will again attest to the truth of the adage, "It is better to give than to receive." While their spiritually imposing *Happiness Exchange* exemplifies the maxim, as a video program it fails to entertain, and brother (or cousin as Big Joe dubs one and all) that's understatement.

A watered-down version of that cathartic among religious experiences, the revival meeting, the *Happiness Exchange* presents a group of Big Joe's cousins who give out with their "happiest experience." In virtually all cases this proves to be a testimonial on how the cousin struck a spiritual Comstock lode by a good deed. Appellants for different charities are also sandwiched in to testify as to the needs of their private projects.

A cartoon by Rube Goldberg of one of his queer inventions, an interview with W. C. Handy and a phone game for prizes were the only relief from the dervish device. The phone game, the only example of where the televiewer received instead of giving, was simple; the fourth person to phone won the loot.

Rosenfeld, a curio among New York's disk jockeys with his homing grits and cornpone manner, is a balding gent who sparked the proceedings by reminding the audience that "we are our brother's keeper." He also continually refers to the "magnitude of what happened" since he revived altruism among listeners. Mrs. R. is a middle-aged woman with a Buster Brown haircut who seems to be a fitting companion for her husband.

Burped by the ever-loving man and wife, the White Rock plugs tell how wonderful the beverages are. The slogan of the sponsor, "When you mix with White Rock you mix with the best" is worthy of greater development.

Notwithstanding the program's laudable intentions, the lack of entertainment and of production leads to the conclusion that Big Joe has been fortunate—he has found a cousin among advertisers. *Cousin Leon Morse.*

## Prince George Revue

**TELEVISION**—Reviewed Monday (28), 10:45-11 p.m., EDT. Sponsored by Prince George Hotel via WOR-TV thru Sidney Robbins Agency. Producer, Sidney Robbins; director, Mel London; writer, Fred Darwin. Cast: Ted Lawrence, Ross Leonard, Jo Ann Talley, Jan Raye Trio.

Most interesting facet of this new video show is why a transient hotel in New York is trying to lure customers from the 50 or 60 mile radius in which the station's signal can be picked up. It's hard to believe that the hostelry figures to draw much business from people who can get home within an hour or so. In any case, poor production, direction and scripting won't hold any viewers who might accidentally tune in. In sum, this 15-minute opus managed to find time for the emcee to walk in front of the camera, open the show with the announcer completely off mike, slice the end of the last commercial and present three completely ordinary singers doing some ordinary tunes in an innocuous fashion. Show also includes a contest. You get a prize if you guess the song played by the musical trio. On show caught, tune was Irving Berlin's oldie, *Always*. They pick the prize winners out of a hat. *Joe Martin.*

ing equipment. Miniature models are used to illustrate the equipment. Viewers are offered a booklet telling the advantages of hard coal and explaining the role of the local coal dealer in homemaking.

Budget-wise, this show appears to be a very reasonably priced package. It's impact is large because its central idea is good. The casting is good and it is tailored for the TV medium. *Paul Ackerman.*

## Condition Red

**RADIO**—Reviewed Monday 9-9:30 p.m., EDT. Sustaining via WFDR-FM, New York. Producer, Lou Frankel. Director, Irving Robbins. Writer, Jules Bergman. Narrator, Joel Crager. Cast: Tom Brophy, Guy Wallace, Marilyn Arms, Judy Feldman, Jules Bergman, Harvey Husten, Bob Fuller, Frana Klein, Terry Crager.

Radio has been flooded with documentary dramas on the atom bomb for the past six months. Many of them have been elaborate affairs with big name stars, top flight production staffers and expensive elastic budgets. However, one of the most successful atom dramas yet broadcast was aired by New York's FM indie WFDR last Monday.

With the co-operation of local civil defense officials, the station parlayed a near-non-existent budget into such a wholly effective argument for immediate emergency preparedness that plans are being formulated to syndicate the drama to other stations across the country, with the national backing of civil defense group.

Production-wise, every facet of the show was woven into a smoothly harmonious whole, but its most outstanding attribute was the script itself, which depicted the effect of a mythical Red raid on New York. Wholesale destruction is almost always impressive but impersonal, by dint of its very magnitude. Scriptor Jules Bergman, a WFDR newsman, circumvented 'his dramatic pitfall neatly by concentrating most of his action on one small group of volunteer air raid wardens, four typical middle class citizens. When first spotted the foursome (two men and two women) were slaving over a hot poker game on what seemed like a routine air raid watch night. Then the yellow alert changed to red, and the rest of the story centered about their heartbreaking attempts to cope with the inadequacies of our present emergency defense set-up—absentees, disorganized hospital facilities and delayed-action bombs.

Unlike the usual documentary defense worker, with his Dick Tracy-like stolidity in the face of danger, the four wardens were appealingly human, more than a little frightened and even a little funny in their determined, realistically fumbling attempts to do their jobs. Performances and dialog dovetailed perfectly to form believable pictures of all four "little people," with Ed Brophy scoring particularly high as their leader.

As a result, the script drove home its main point (the need for better civilian defense preparedness) with maximum impact, when the quartet was destroyed at the finish by a delayed-action bomb. The intensive realism of the drama was heightened by authentic-sounding sound effects, some of them actually recorded in secret civil defense operation lookouts; and restrained emotional thesping on the part of the actors.

In a rather unnecessary news analysis session at the close, the narrator pointed out that things would have been different if the volunteer set-up had been complete; emphasized the need for more funds, and urged New Yorkers to join up at once. He also made the refreshingly frank observation that "civil defense itself doesn't know how many shelters there are in New York, and is embarrassed by the question." *Jim Bundy.*

## Press Conference

**TELEVISION**—Reviewed Tuesday (5), 7-7:30 p.m. CT. Sponsored by Thyavals and Orvita, thru Schwimmer & Scott via WGN-TV, Chicago. Producer, Al Sweetow; director, Don Cook; moderator, Lee Schooler. Guest: Sheriff John Babb.

With no conscious effort at imitation, *Press Conference* turned out to be a junior grade version of *Meet the Press*. Sheriff John Babb was interviewed by four Chicago newspapermen, Tony Weitzel, *Daily News* columnist; Harry Ruetlinger, *Herald American* city editor; John Dreiske, *Sun-Times* political editor, and Marjorie Minsk, city press reporter.

Setting was routine, with reporters lined up behind one desk and Sheriff Babb and Lee Schooler, public relations man who is moder-

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## Patt Barnes and Barbara

**RADIO** — Reviewed Thursday (7), 2:15-2:30 p.m. EDT. Participating via WOR, New York. Writer-producer-director, Patt Barnes. Commentators: Barnes, Barbara Barnes.

Patt and Barbara Barnes, father and daughter radio team formerly aired over WJZ, New York, have shifted forces to WOR, where they are heard every afternoon across the board.

Formatwise, the Barnes show follows the familiar "Mr. and Mrs." breakfast chatter pattern, gimmick being that the pair discusses "topical issues of the day from the point of view of their respective generations." On the show caught, they made a valiant attempt to live up to this grandiose description of their subject matter, via some stilted dialog tracing the origin of Betsy Ross' American flag pattern. However, both father and daughter sounded more at home with a frankly frivolous debate on "snap judgments," pater contending that young people are most often influenced by outward appearances, while daughter Barbara insisted it was the other way around.

If they stick to this kind of spontaneous-sounding gabfest on future airers, the series should retain its popularity with hausfraus and teen-age girls this summer. Come fall tho (in view of the program's inherent appeal to the latter) it would be smarter to spot the show in an after-school time slot.

As a father and daughter combination, the Barneses are attractive people and the gal's ability to toss off a completely natural laugh is a decided asset. Aside from an over-enthusiastic plug for participation sponsor Fab, complete with jingle, Mr. and Miss steered fairly clear of phony Home-Sweet-Home dialog. *June Bundy.*

## Date With Judy

**TELEVISION** — Reviewed Saturday (2), 11:30-12 p.m. EDT thru the ABC network. Presented by McKesson-Robbins, Inc., via J. D. Tarcher. Producers, Mortimer Offner and Aileen Leslie. Director, Mortimer Offner. Script, Aileen Leslie. Set designer, Jim Prittipo. Cast: Pat Crowley, Jimmie Sommers, Gene O'Donnell, Anna Lee, Judson Rees, Morton Rydell and Andy Milligan.

A mildly diverting situation comedy aimed at teen-agers, *Date With Judy* should please some of its potential audience, but for a greater appeal, sharper and more astute scripting is necessary. As a sample of what's to come, however, the initial effort in the series indicated that the material was all there and that only more shaping was desirable.

The plot concerned a campaign initiated by Judy's father to diversify her male interests because he thought she was getting too sweet on Oogie Pringle, the No. 1 in her life. Papa, tho, learned the hard way when Judy brought home a group of boy friends, each of whom was more of a jerk than the other. Oogie was hastily invited back into the family circle.

It is in its characterizations that this stanza must be wary. At present Judy's main characteristic is a tendency to over-dramatize herself at any and every opportunity. This peculiarity should be replaced by a much fresher one. Her dad verges on eccentricity but, not being clearly delineated, leaves the audience confused. His character, naturally, should be more definitely blueprinted. Boy friend Oogie could be tremendously appealing were some of his stupid habits removed and were he to be made more normal, perhaps as a contrast to Judy. It is obvious that the writer must script against the whole body of juvenile situation comedies and yet come up with some treatment that is original.

The show has been well cast. Pat Crowley makes an effervescent, bouncy Judy. Jimmie Sommers handles Oogie like an acting veteran, with an evident ability to make the most of every line. Gene O'Donnell seems like a guy anyone would like around as a dad. Anna Lee's mother has a pixieish, gay quality. And Judson Rees' younger brother is the most sensible of the group.

McKesson-Robbins plugs its Yodora deodorant cream and its many other lines of drug products thru a gent who is supposed to be the family druggist. While his spiel is delivered in a no worse manner than many of his predecessors, would it be asking too much to ask the advertiser to come up with a sales gimmick that has some creativity and hasn't already come into public domain thru overuse? *Leon Morse.*