

ON THE AIR



The
Encyclopedia
of
Old-Time
Radio



JOHN DUNNING

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The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio

JOHN DUNNING

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*To the seven who read the manuscript and made
it a better book by far than it might have been.*

Barrett Benson, collector and listener for two decades; member since 1979 of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado.

Frank Bresee, actor, radio man, show host: his *Golden Days of Radio* has been on the air continuously since 1949, including 29 years on Armed Forces Radio.

George Fowler, who initiated the author into old-time radio in 1969; one of the earliest collectors of taped radio material.

Terry Salomonson, expert on the WXYZ Trendle shows; compiler of detailed logs; holder of one of the largest collections of shows.

Chuck Schaden, Chicago radio show host, whose programs, *Those Were The Days* and *Old-Time Radio Classics*, have run since 1970.

Ray Stanich, who, in the words of radio historian Jay Hickerson, did more work dating shows than anyone. Ray died before this book was finished, but his research in libraries and network archives pinned down and corrected hundreds of elusive dates.

Barbara J. Watkins, collector, California radio show host, radio actress, historian, columnist, and active member of SPERDVAC, the California-based radio society.

And to

Helen Dunning, who coordinated the readers' comments, chased final dates and spellings, and argued with the author over points large and small.

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Credits

*T*hanks to those, living or dead, who contributed in many ways to this or the first edition. Some read parts of the manuscript; some sent suggestions or corrections; many consented to lengthy on-air interviews.

Steve Allen	Charles Collingwood
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Introduction

Twenty years have passed since the original edition of *Tune In Yesterday* appeared in bookstores. It was subtitled *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, its author slightly uncomfortable in such a huge hat. We are older now and hopefully wiser. We know that books are seldom, if ever, ultimate. And in radio history, the information that has come to light since the first edition appeared has some of the characteristics of a major flood.

The book quickly became the standard reference work. Frank Buxton and Bill Owen had compiled an earlier encyclopedia, *The Big Broadcast*. Vincent Terrace produced a later one, *Radio's Golden Years*. But *Tune In Yesterday*—possibly because it dealt with behind-the-mike folklore in addition to facts and dates—became one of the most-sought out-of-print books in America. Collectors routinely pay \$150 to \$200 for a copy, a gratifying experience to its slightly bewildered author.

But these books all failed the tests of comprehensiveness and accuracy. *The Big Broadcast* had been criticized by buffs for a few glaring errors, but Buxton and Owen went where none had gone before, and their book remains a valued reference tool. Terrace was more widely denounced. His book seemed a poor man's copy of *The Big Broadcast*, the mistakes compounded and enlarged. But Terrace too had his contributions: in his pages a reader will find dozens of arcane tidbits, intriguing facts that appear nowhere else.

Between Buxton and Terrace was my book, *Tune In Yesterday*. This was judged far less critically than either Buxton or Terrace. People were generally so delighted to have access to the material that they gladly overlooked the book's many problems. There were, of course, exceptions: a few reviewers pointed out errors; some wondered how an encyclopedia could neglect such important milestones as the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts; and the author still remembers a strong letter from radio actress Alice Reinheart, taking him to task for what then seemed like a Sears catalogue of mistakes. But the reaction from the sadly diminishing community of radio pioneers was positive; even when they had bones to pick, the people who worked in network radio seemed

thrilled by the book. Dick Joy wrote a long letter from the Northwest: Dick had been the announcer on *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, among many others, and offered some gentle corrections to the author's faulty assumptions and "mistakes in judgment." He became a friend, as did Elliott Lewis, a true genius of the medium. The recollections of these and other radio pioneers have enriched the author's understanding of life behind the mike during the network years (1926–62), when the business was truly a big-time national force.

How big was it? People who grew up with television have no idea how much their parents and grandparents were affected by what they heard. Radio took the country by storm. Careers were made overnight, and a few were lost the same way. The shows that came out of the three national radio centers—New York, Chicago, and Hollywood—informed, entertained, and shaped the opinions of three generations. *On the Air*, a revised and vastly enlarged edition of *Tune In Yesterday*, will hopefully fill a gap even for the serious student of radio history. A week seldom passes when I am not asked for a copy of the old book: interest in big-time radio continues to grow as more people realize what a truly special art form it was. Like any popular medium, it was saturated with junk, but there were also shows that cannot be called anything less than wonderful, even from the critical and somewhat jaded distance of four decades. The tragedy of radio in America is unique. It's the only lost art, abandoned by its public at the very moment when (in the words of writer E. Jack Neuman) "radio was just starting to stand up and put on its long pants."

In this revision, readers will find full descriptive and factual details on hundreds of people and shows that were not covered in the first book. Some are of major importance. Richard Durham's powerful series on black history, *Destination Freedom*, was virtually unknown when the original book was published: today it would make this writer's list of the greatest radio shows of its day. The same can be said of *Words at War*, which had an unheralded run on NBC during World War II. There are also hundreds of little shows, important early series of which no recordings and little descriptive material was available. *The A&P Gypsies*, *The Palmolive Hour*, *The Clicquot Club Eskimos*, *The Gold Dust Twins*, *The Atwater-Kent Hour*, *The Majestic Theater of the Air*, and *The Eveready Hour* are a few of the important 1920s shows of which no accounting can be found in *Tune In Yesterday*. I wanted to do more than list the names of people who appeared: I wanted the life of each show, its essence. And the great days of collecting shows had only begun.

Everything on radio was done live, often with so little preparation that it defies belief today. Thankfully, these broadcasts were captured on cumbersome acetate records by network sound engineers, or by various transcription services that could be professionally engaged to "aircheck" any given program on the dial. It is now estimated that the number of shows saved on transcriptions might run into hundreds of thousands. Even at this writing, almost three decades into the collecting game, at least 100,000 shows are on tape and circulating among buffs. My own radio library has grown to around 40,000

shows. Most have received my full listening attention. For more than 20 years, I have produced and hosted a radio show in Denver, playing these wonderful recordings for anyone who wanted to listen. I interviewed 125 radio stars, writers, newscasters, and sound effects people. Some of them—Elliott Lewis, Eve Arden, Clarence Hartzell, Virginia Gregg, Frank Nelson, Howard Duff, Phil Harris, Charles Collingwood, Eric Sevareid, and Dennis Day are a few who come immediately to mind—have died. Others who gave their time generously, and whose memories I have preserved on tape, include Janet Waldo, Sam Edwards, Parley Baer, Steve Allen, Bill Idelson . . . the list does run on. These interviews also add to the revision.

It was a massive but simple research job. I spent months at the Denver Public Library, photocopying everything from every magazine or newspaper that had any reference to radio. At night, abetted by my wife, Helen, I stapled and collated this material and built it into a giant file, which eventually took up most of a filing cabinet. Each article was marked with the name of the show it covered: these were inserted in alphabetical order, encyclopedia-style. A gentleman named Roy Bright sent me 11 years of *Radio Life*; Terry Salomonson, who became one of my proofreaders, sent years of *Radio Guide*. When I came to, say, *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, I might find a dozen or more articles ranging from *Radio Stars* and *Tune In to Time, Life*, and *Newsweek*. I would read this material, check the dates through *Radio Guide* and *New York Times* microfilm, listen to a few shows, and write the entry. The question always remains—was the contemporary reportage reliable? Some accounts were obviously better than others; a few were heavily fictionalized, but *Radio Life* and *Radio Guide* had beat reporters on the scene and dealt in hard facts that could often be verified elsewhere. I still admit to some uneasiness when confronted with the memories of an aging radio star. Did it actually happen as he now remembers it, or was it the way *Radio Life* reported it 50 years ago? Reporters can be wildly inaccurate, but the memory does occasionally embellish. To guard against errors, I asked seven friends, each with at least 15 years of experience in the field—studying, researching, logging, and listening—to read the work and point out questionable material. They have been diligent and tireless, and each of them has saved me from mistakes and oversights. Naturally, any errors that remain are my own responsibility.

The author is also indebted to a trio of fine editors at Oxford. To India Cooper, a gentle copy editor and a wizard at formatting. Without her there'd be no organization. To Joellyn Ausanka, a cheerful and diligent production editor. Without her there'd have been no safety net. And to Sheldon Meyer, a good, tough editor-in-chief. Without him there'd be no book.

The new format should make this an easier book to use and read. At the top of each article, a reader will find all the factual material: who did what, when, what time it ran, who sponsored it. Then comes the narrative, the essence, which may run many pages, depending upon the importance of the entry. Occasionally, in postscript, I try to assess the show's impact today, when

many episodes exist on tape. This is the happiest thing about radio drama—it is still with us, just as it was then. It is truly living history. Maybe we've changed, but radio is eternal. No matter how many comebacks radio might make, no matter how advanced our audio technology may become, scholars will always look to those three decades of American broadcasting as the prime force in shaping its generation. Much of it still plays well, as gripping and hilarious as ever it was. The best of it is simply sensational, and even the worst of it is interesting. As someone once said, discussing *The Romance of Helen Trent*, "That's so bad it's great."

This, I believe, eclipses the old book. Few are the articles that stand as written 20 years ago. Generalities have hardened into specifics as hundreds of new shows have been unearthed and added. That it can never be ultimate is a fact for which the writer apologizes, preferring not to carry that particular conceit this time around.

Ongoing research by many radio historians continues to turn up previously unknown programs, some heard for only a few broadcasts before dropping from schedules and disappearing. As this book was entering its final phase, Jay Hickerson of Hamden, Conn., issued a massive log containing thousands of series titles and dates, including many unfamiliar to this writer. What the author has tried to do here is describe and date all the significant shows, with enough intriguing unknowns to give a reader a comprehensive grasp of the depth, vitality, variety, and scope of the most important entertainment medium of its day.

John Dunning
Denver, Colorado
1969–1997

How to Use This Book

First, use the index. The book is heavily cross-referenced, and the index will lead to comparisons and mentions perhaps not to be found in the main entries on particular programs. The index will also point the way to programs that might not be arranged by the titles a reader remembers best. A look at *Ozzie and Harriet* or *Sam Spade* in the index will reveal that these programs may be found under *The Adventures of* in the main encyclopedia, and that *The Boston Symphony Orchestra* will be grouped with others of its ilk under the general article *Concert Broadcasts*. If all else fails, look for the people involved. The index listing for *Nelson, Ozzie* will not only lead to the program titled *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* but will point out prior appearances by the stars that may have been significant in the eventual development of their own series. The Nelsons, for example, worked with Joe Penner in the 1930s, in a series titled not *The Joe Penner Show* but *The Baker's Broadcast*. The index will clear up these apparent lapses and inconsistencies.

All timeslots, with the exceptions here noted, refer to Eastern Time. A show that ran at 8 P.M. in the East could often be found one hour earlier for each time belt westward that a listener moved. But this was by no means reliable. Some shows were done on different days in the West. Far more common, especially on major programs, was the practice of having the casts do two live broadcasts so that both might play in prime time. A show originating in Hollywood and scheduled at 8 P.M. might be aired live to the east at 5 P.M., Pacific time, with the cast returning three hours later to do the identical show live for the West Coast. Shows originating in New York, of course, had this cycle reversed, with the "repeat show for the West" going out at 11 P.M. To avoid confusion, the eastern timeslot is used as the anchoring point for the majority of entries, the obvious exceptions being the regional broadcasts that were confined to the western states. These are clearly designated "Pacific time" within the entry.

A staunch attempt has been made to pin down exact starting and ending dates for each series. When dates are general (1927–31 rather than Dec. 14, 1927–Jan. 5, 1931), it is because the specifics remain elusive or are in doubt.

Most entries contain precise timeslots with the show's length abbreviated. An entry designated "60m, Wednesdays at 8" means an hour-long broadcast at 8 P.M. "Then at 9" means the show later moved to a 9 P.M. timeslot, still on Wednesday. Morning designations only are noted as A.M.

Confusion is bound to result from the fact that NBC owned two networks, the Red and the Blue, and that the Blue was sold in 1943 (with a little nudge from a federal government concerned about monopolies in broadcasting), to be renamed the American Broadcasting Company. For our purposes, references to NBC without a color indicates the main NBC Red Network. The confusion deepens during the transition period, 1942–44: references are made to the Blue Network through 1943 and into 1944, when the name change to ABC took place. In several instances during this time, the network is described as Blue/ABC.

Finally, the reader should avoid assuming facts not in evidence. The lists of personnel under *cast*, *announcers*, *directors*, *sound effects*, and the like are as complete as the author can make them within the scope of this book. That there may have been other announcers, directors, and even players for the roles described remains distinctly possible, though the goal has always been to list every major contributor. And though programs usually took summer vacations, these absences from the air are only noted when there was a significant change of format or network.

On the Air

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THE A&P GYPSIES, exotic music with a nomadic motif; one of radio's earliest, most distinctive programs.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1923–27, WEA, New York. First heard as an unsponsored group in the winter of 1923; scheduled regularly beginning March 17, 1924, Monday nights. A&P Food Stores.

Jan. 3, 1927–Sept. 7, 1936, NBC. 60m initially, Mondays at 9 (8:30, 1928–31). Split into two half-hours, 1931–32: Red Network, Mondays at 9; Blue Network, Thursdays at 10. 1932–36, Red only, 30m, Mondays at 9. A&P.

CREATOR-LEADER: Harry Horlick. **ANNOUNCERS:** Phillips Carlin, Milton Cross. **THEME:** *Two Guitars*.

It arrived on the air at the dawn of broadcasting, its world a place that radio people today can hardly imagine. There was no direct advertising then. Even the concept of using the airwaves for commercial gain was controversial, the future far from certain. Continuity was spotty: much that went on the air was hit-or-miss, with programs penciled in as talent and scheduling became mutually available, often at the last minute.

By 1924 potential clients realized that radio could be an advertising powerhouse. But the rules were strict: "No merchandise could be offered," William Peck Banning wrote of WEA in his comprehensive history of the station. "Not even the color of a can could be mentioned." Radio, which would later thrive on the hard sell, opened with the softest sell possible. The acts

would simply bear the sponsor's name: if people liked the act, hopefully the sponsor would make new friends. Thus came the weekly radio variety show, with regular personalities performing in a consistent timeslot. The best of these shows were highly successful: their performers became stars, and their sponsors, with all the limitations, enjoyed national success.

The A&P Gypsies was created as a commercial entity when a sales executive from the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company happened to hear a haunting gypsy melody as he was touring WEA in 1923. Looking up, he saw the musicians beyond the control room glass, their melodies coming through an intercom. It was precisely what he had been looking for, a novelty act to link with the A&P. He approached the leader, Harry Horlick, and the six-piece ensemble was signed on the spot.

Horlick, born in a hamlet near Moscow, was pursuing a lifelong interest in the music of nomads. He had played in the Moscow Symphony before the war, but he found the "communized" music of the symphony's postwar years sterile and restricting. He went to Constantinople, where he began traveling with gypsy bands and learning their ancient folk music.

Much of the music he learned had never been written down: when he came to the United States and formed his group, his musicians had to learn it by hearing Horlick sing it. It had a sound that could be haunting, romantic, or fiery. Americans found it fascinating and appealing.

Success brought inevitable changes. The six-

man ensemble grew into an orchestra of more than 25. Top guests of the time, such singers as Jessica Dragonette and Frank Munn, appeared on the program. A singing quartet was added: its tenor, Frank Parker, went on to a successful radio career, including stints with Jack Benny and Arthur Godfrey. The musicians "dressed" for the show, performing in gypsy costume. For most of its run, *The A&P Gypsies* was among radio's elite. By the time it left the air, a new era was in full bloom.

A. L. ALEXANDER'S MEDIATION BOARD, advice to the hapless.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 11, 1943–April 11, 1952, Mutual. 30m though also heard in an unusual 45-m format; 15m, 1952. Mondays at 9:15 through mid-1943, then Sundays, often at 8 or 8:15. Serutan.

A. L. Alexander had achieved great success with *Goodwill Court*, breaking into radio's top ten in 1936. That series offered legal advice to defendants in real court cases, but it died on the vine when the New York Supreme Court barred lawyers from giving counsel on the air. Six years later, Alexander returned with a similar show, minus the legal problems. Here he used sociologists and educators on a panel that dissected and advised on personal problems. Marital discord, even infidelity and promiscuity, were frequent topics. Taped copies reveal a dated but interesting series, sometimes hilarious when the subjects were obviously coached—none too successfully—in microphone technique.

THE ABBOTT AND COSTELLO SHOW, comedy in the vaudeville style, often slapstick, with guest stars, variety, and an orchestra.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 3–Sept. 25, 1940, NBC. 30m, Wednesdays at 9. Summer substitute for *The Fred Allen Show*. Sal Hepatica.

Oct. 8, 1942–June 27, 1947, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 7:30 until 1943, then at 10. Camel Cigarettes.

Oct. 1, 1947–June 9, 1949, ABC. 30m, Wednesdays at 9, 1947–48; Thursdays at 8, 1948–49. Sustained.

Dec. 6, 1947–March 26, 1949, ABC. 30m, Saturdays at 11 A.M. *The Abbott and Costello Children's Show*. Sustained.

CAST: Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, Universal film stars, with support from Mel Blanc, Frank Nelson, Sid Fields, Iris Adrian, Martha Wentworth, Sharon Douglas, Verna Felton. **ANNOUNCER:** Ken Niles, who had regular roles in the comedy, with Elvia Allman as Mrs. Niles. **VOCALISTS:** Connie Haines, Marilyn Maxwell. **ORCHESTRA:** Leith Stevens (1942), Skinnay Ennis, Will Osborne, Jack Meakin. **PRODUCER:** Martin Gosch. **WRITERS:** Gosch, Howard Harris, Hal Fimberg, Don Prindle, Ed Cherkose, Len Stern, Martin Ragaway, Paul Conlan, Ed Forman (head writer from the mid-1940s). **SOUND EFFECTS:** Floyd Caton.

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, remembered primarily as movie comics, got their start toward national fame in radio. For two seasons, beginning Feb. 3, 1938, they were regulars on *The Kate Smith Hour*; they also appeared on Edgar Bergen's *Chase and Sanborn Hour*. They had met in 1929, when Costello was booked with a vaudeville act into a neighborhood theater. Abbott worked in the box office and soon found himself onstage, serving as Costello's straight man. In 1936 they forged a permanent partnership, playing vaudeville and burlesque in the Depression. In 1938 they appeared at Loew's in New York, where they were seen by Ted Collins, architect of Kate Smith's career. Their slaphappy style was perfect for radio, and their rise to front-line stardom was rapid.

Their standup comedy consisted mainly of short skits with clever plays on words. The famous baseball spoof *Who's on First* was created for the stage but proved ideal for radio. The skits developed their images: Abbott was the stern taskmaster; Costello fumbled his way through life and shrugged off his bumbling with the memorable catchphrase "I'm a baaaaad boy!" Costello's shrieks were punctuated by flat sarcasm from Abbott, a simple formula that especially delighted children and kept the duo near the top of the entertainment world for a decade.

Together they made and lost a fortune. Signed by Universal in 1939, they pulled the financially troubled studio out of red ink with a string of low-budget hits. The radio show supplemented their screen success, boosting the gate for such films as *Buck Privates*, *In the Navy*, and *Hold That Ghost*. But their personal lives countered the happy image. William "Bud" Abbott was born Oct. 2, 1895—it is said in a circus tent—

to a family of circus performers. He earned millions in his film and radio career but died a pauper, April 24, 1974, after an eight-year audit of his back taxes left him penniless. Costello's life was marked by numerous tragedies, earning him the nickname "Hard-Luck Lou." Born March 6, 1908, in Paterson, N. J., Costello would also be plagued by the tax man. In March 1943, with the radio show at its peak, he was stricken with rheumatic fever and forced off the air. Abbott refused to carry on alone, so a new team, Jimmy Durante and Garry Moore, was hastily recruited to replace them. Costello returned in the fall to another cruel tragedy. In dress rehearsal for his first show, he was called home suddenly for the news that his year-old son had fallen into the family pool and drowned.

The news swept through Hollywood. Mickey Rooney was brought in to read his lines. Calls offering to help came from Durante, Bob Hope, and Red Skelton. But around 6 P.M. Costello called Abbott and said he was returning to the show. For 30 minutes he fought back tears and wisecracked with his partner. Abbott pushed the show at its usual pace, wrote Bob Thomas in his dual biography, but guest star Lana Turner "was so distraught she could scarcely deliver her lines above a whisper." As Ken Niles read the sign-off, Costello broke down: Abbott then stepped forward and explained to the stunned studio audience what had happened.

Costello never lost his interest in youth. *The Abbott and Costello Children's Show* featured top juvenile talent and awarded \$1,000 savings bonds to "outstanding youngsters of the week." But the slapstick brand of comedy faded along with radio. Costello died March 3, 1959.

ABBOTT MYSTERIES, comedy-detective, following the formula established by *The Thin Man* and *Mr. and Mrs. North*.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 10, 1945–Aug. 31, 1947, Mutual. 30m, Sundays at 6, 1945; 5:30, 1946–47. Summers only, substituting for *Quick as a Flash*. Helbros Watches. **CAST:** Julie Stevens and Charles Webster (1945, 1947) as Jean and Pat Abbott, a young married couple who regularly solved murders. Les Tremayne and Alice Reinheart as the Abbotts in 1946. **WRITERS:** Howard Merrill, Ed Adamson, from the novels of Frances Crane.

Oct. 3, 1954–June 12, 1955, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 8:30. *The Adventures of the Abbotts*. **CAST:** Claudia Morgan, Les Damon.

A *Radio Life* critic, writing in 1947, found the Abbotts "cute, brave, witty, and sophisticated"—all the attributes of the Norths and of Nick and Nora Charles. There was even an "at home with the Abbotts" bit at each episode's end—the same kind of thing Nick and Nora had been doing for years. Though the series got decent reviews, had a colorful locale (San Francisco), capitalized well on the lighthearted sleuth formula, and, in its 1954–55 revival, featured the same female lead as the earlier *Thin Man* series, it never enjoyed the success of the big two.

THE ABE BURROWS SHOW, sophisticated comedy, wit, satire: a small but highly regarded series with occasional guests and music by a quartet.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 26, 1947–June 26, 1948, CBS. 15m, Saturdays at 7:30. Sustained until Jan. 1948, then Listerine.

July 4–Oct. 28, 1949, CBS. 30m, Mondays at 9:30 until Sept., then Fridays at 9:30. Satirically titled *Breakfast with Burrows*.

Manhattan-born and -reared, Abe Burrows moved to Hollywood in 1939 and found work writing for radio. His credits included *The Texaco Star Theater*, some of the John Barrymore skits on the Rudy Vallee Sealtest show, and *This Is New York*, for Ed Gardner. He helped create Archie, the sloppy manager of Gardner's *Duffy's Tavern*, and when *Duffy* became a regular series in April 1941, Burrows was hired as its head writer. He worked on a serial of his own, *Holiday and Company* (CBS, Feb.–April 1946) and later wrote the Joan Davis program. While he was with Davis, his career as a performer began.

One night after the broadcast, Davis invited the audience to stay around while she turned the stage over to Burrows, long known as the life of any party; his wit was admired by Robert Benchley, Groucho Marx, and Danny Kaye, among others. He satirized the songs of Tin Pan Alley to his own piano accompaniment. His after-hours performances with Davis led to his own show, which won a Radio Critics Circle Award and was promptly canceled. Highlights were Burrows's razor-sharp quips, his self-taught piano,

and music by the Milton DeLugg Quartet. His later show, *Breakfast with Burrows*, was more of the same in a longer format. Burrows explained the title by saying, "I get up late." His career before the mike was brief, but he would have brighter days in other fields—a successful TV series, writing the book for the musical *Guys and Dolls*, and coauthorship of *How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

ABIE'S IRISH ROSE, situation comedy with a "marriage of two cultures" theme.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 24, 1942–Sept. 2, 1944, NBC. 30m, Saturdays at 8. *Drene Shampoo*. **CAST:** Sydney Smith and Betty Winkler as Abie and Rosemary Levy, a young married couple from Jewish and Catholic families. When rumors arose of a movie deal, the leads were recast with a camera in mind: the parts went to Richard Coogan and Mercedes McCambridge, but the movie was never made. Abie was also played during the run by Richard Bond and Clayton Collyer; Rosemary by Julie Stevens and Marion Shockley. Alan Reed and Walter Kinsella as the feuding fathers, Solomon Levy and Patrick Joseph Murphy (with Alfred White heard for a time as Solomon Levy). Menasha Skulnik and Anna Appel as Mr. and Mrs. Cohen. Carl Eastman as David Lerner. Ann Thomas as Casey, the secretary. Bill Adams as Father Whelan. Dolores Gillen as the Levy twins. Amanda Randolph as the maid. **DIRECTOR:** Joe Rines. **WRITER:** Anne Nichols. **THEME:** *My Wild Irish Rose*.

Abie's Irish Rose was one of the great hits of Broadway, closing in 1927 after 2,327 performances. The radio show was first heard as part of NBC's *Knickerbocker Playhouse*, a formula "theater" anthology in the *First Nighter* mode. The theater format disappeared in early 1942, leaving *Abie's Irish Rose* with the regular timeslot. Author Nichols gave it a "true love conquers all" flavor, opening with the elopement of Abie Levy and Rosemary Murphy. This set family against family until the couple became parents of twins, born on Christmas Day. Even then, disputes between the crusty old fathers were always brewing. The series drew solid ratings in 1942 but faded the following year and disappeared in 1944.

ACADEMY AWARD, an anthology of famous movie stories, using the original film stars whenever possible.

BROADCAST HISTORY: March 30–Dec. 18, 1946, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at 7 through June, then Wednesdays at 10. *House of Squibb*. **CAST:** top Hollywood stars: Ronald Colman, Gregory Peck, Henry Fonda, etc. **MUSIC:** Leith Stevens, composer-conductor. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Dee Engelbach. **WRITER-ADAPTER:** Frank Wilson. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Berne Surrey.

All of the plays on *Academy Award* had something in common: one or more of the players or the film on which the script was based had won or been nominated for the Oscar. The opening show was *Jezebel*, with Bette Davis; high spots included *Stagecoach* (Claire Trevor, Randolph Scott, May 4), *The Maltese Falcon* (Humphrey Bogart, Sydney Greenstreet, Mary Astor, July 3), and *Suspicion* (Cary Grant, Oct. 30). The *House of Squibb*, a drug firm, footed a stiff bill: up to \$4,000 for the stars and \$1,600 a week to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for use of the title. The production had all the class of a *Lux* or *Screen Guild* show. For *Stagecoach*, four soundmen (Gene Twombly, Jay Roth, Clark Casey, and Berne Surrey) were brought in to create the illusion of the racing coach. But the tariff took its toll, and after 39 weeks the series was scrapped.

THE ACADEMY AWARDS SHOW, the annual presentation of the Oscar, Hollywood's highest award for motion picture excellence. The first awards were given in 1927, and on April 30, 1930, KNX, Los Angeles, began radio's coverage of the event. It continued as a local broadcast in the '30s. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences banned radio from the 1939 ceremony, but KNX reporter George Fisher defiantly opened a microphone and locked himself in the booth. Security guards broke in the door with axes, and the broadcast was halted after a few minutes.

CBS gave partial coverage in 1942 and 1943. By 1944 the event was on KFWB, with a short-wave hookup around the world. The master of ceremonies was Jack Benny, and the whole show took less than 30 minutes. *Casablanca*, the 1944 winning movie, received the first award of the evening, without melodramatic buildup. Accep-

tance speeches were brief, and only the major awards were broadcast.

On March 15, 1945, the affair went on the Blue Network. The ceremony, now 70 minutes long, included clips from the films, which had to be explained for the radio audience. Bob Hope, emcee, became closely identified with the show (20 appearances as host or cohost, 1940–78), always coveting the statuettes that went to others.

By 1946 the show had grown to 80 minutes. In 1947 it ballooned to three hours. Television coverage began in 1952. Radio dropped it after the 1968 awards, but it has continued as a TV extravaganza. Today it takes an entire evening and ends in the early hours.

THE ADMIRAL BYRD BROADCASTS, one of the earliest series of on-the-spot true adventures, broadcast from Antarctica and also heard under the titles *The Adventures of Admiral Byrd* and *The Byrd Expeditions*.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Nov. 11, 1933–Jan. 6, 1935, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at 10 until late May, then Wednesdays at 10. General Foods.

Feb. 2–May 24, 1940, NBC. 30m. Alternate Fridays at 11:30 A *Salute to the Byrd Expedition*.

When Admiral Richard E. Byrd announced his second trip to the South Pole, CBS explored the possibility of sending radio equipment and setting up a weekly news show. This concept soon expanded to include variety. A network executive discovered that the Byrd supply ship, the *Bear of Oakland*, contained a collapsible organ and a piano. Sgt. Al Carbone, the cook, could “do double tremolos on the harmonica,” and Capt. Alan Innes-Taylor, the main dog-driver, “headed a mean quartet of Malemute-mushers” (*Radioland*). The news segments would be handled by announcer-director Charles J. V. Murphy, who would make the two-year trip with the expedition. The show would be shortwaved to Buenos Aires, 4,000 miles away, then relayed to New York and CBS.

Sponsor General Foods supplied the frozen vegetables taken on the journey and promoted its Grape Nuts cereal line on the air. The radio station, given the letters KFZ, was set up at Little America, the base camp established by Byrd in 1928. As Murphy told it: “At noon on Monday, KFZ was nothing but a pile of crates, boxes, and loose gear on the deck of the S. S.

Jacob Rupert”; this equipment was ferried across the ice on a Citroen tractor; “Thursday night it was in communication with New York, and Saturday it was broadcasting.” In addition to the “Antarctic Antics,” the show offered geologists, oceanographers, zoologists, and a generous slice of time for Admiral Byrd. A tense situation developed when Byrd departed to spend the winter (March to August) in a tiny hut alone, 120 miles from base camp. He was equipped with a radio but was severely hampered by frostbite and monoxide poisoning from his gasoline heater.

For the third Byrd expedition, in 1939, NBC used the concept of an oral mailbag. Each show consisted of mail readings and personal conversations between expedition members and their relatives at home. This series originated at WGEO, Schenectady, which had a powerful directional shortwave tower and was able to boost a signal at 20 times the norm. In Antarctica, the men often picked it up “just like a local program.”

ADOPTED DAUGHTER, soap opera, telling of a “courageous young wife who fights for home and happiness.”

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1939–41, NBC Midwest only. 15m. Transcribed for J. C. Penney.

Adopted Daughter was developed from a series of regional skits created by Jettabee Ann Hopkins. Originally titled *The Jangles*, it told of the Jangles family and their adopted daughter Jennie. Hopkins, in addition to writing the script, played the lead. In 1937 she joined station WOW, Omaha, where the serial was bought by a Penney’s representative. In April 1939 it went on NBC.

ADULT EDUCATION SERIES, a blanket title covering three distinct CBS educational radio programs.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 28, 1938–April 23, 1940: *Americans at Work*. 30m. Heard variously on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Tuesdays, late evenings.

May 4, 1938, then March 3–June 30, 1942; *Living History*. 15m, Tuesdays, early evenings.

March 17, 1938–Aug. 18, 1957: *Adventures in Science*. 15m, various days, mostly late afternoon.

The Adult Education Series, a landmark experiment in adult education by radio, was under the overall supervision of Sterling Fisher. *Americans at Work*, the most popular segment, offered interviews with executives and workers recorded in the field. One show followed animator Walt Disney through a typical day, but mostly the series was concerned with the "common man." By 1939 *Americans at Work* was being heard regularly on Thursday nights. Many of the shows were in-studio sessions, done live and without script. In *The Auctioneer*, the show of Sept. 21, 1939, announcer John Reed King hosted auctioneers in five widely disparate fields—live-stock, furs, art and literary properties, real estate, and, "of all things, eggs." Listeners learned how auctions were conducted, the secrets of bidding signals, and even the pay scale, the fur auctioneer revealing a salary of \$5,000–\$10,000, to which King commented, "That's a very good salary." Brewster Morgan directed the later *Americans at Work* shows. Pamphlets of scripts, complete with directors' cues, were available to the public.

Living History dramatized famous moments of the past and, where possible, drew an illuminating parallel with the present. *Adventures in Science* came under the *Adult Education* banner May 6, 1938, after running as its own series for two months previous: historian Allan Nevins hosted the opening show, and the series dealt with such topics as medicine and atomic research.

ADVENTURE PARADE, juvenile serial, specializing in classics by installment.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1946–49, Mutual. 15m, daily at 4:45. Sustained. **CAST:** John Drake, host and storyteller and source of all the voices in the dramas. **ANNOUNCER:** George Hogan. **MUSIC:** John Gart on organ. **PRODUCER-DIRECTORS:** Robert and Jessica Maxwell.

Action was the hallmark of this series: the goal was to convince young people that literature was an exciting alternative to comic books. Drake was cited by *Radio Life* for his ability to single-handedly maintain "compelling suspense." A chapter from *The Bells of Leyden Sing* (November 1948) sounds quite fully dramatized. Announcer Hogan called the club to order with "Adventurers atten-shun! Fall in for *Adventure Parade!*" Among the plays heard were *Moby-*

Dick, *Swiss Family Robinson*, and *Last of the Mohicans*. Each story lasted about a week and was transcribed.

ADVENTURE THEATER, a dramatic anthology of classics; a noble though futile attempt to resurrect radio drama long after its network demise.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Feb. 5, 1977–Jan. 29, 1978, CBS. 50m, Saturdays and Sundays at 6:07. Known also as *The General Mills Radio Adventure Theater* and *The CBS Adventure Theater*. General Mills, Feb.–Aug. **HOST:** Tom Bosley. **CAST:** Vintage-era New York radio people, including Robert Dryden, Evelyn Juster, Court Benson, Ralph Bell, Bill Griffis, Mason Adams, Teri Keane. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Himan Brown. **WRITERS:** Ian Martin, Elspeth Eric, and others who had been actors in the old days.

Adventure Theater joined Himan Brown's *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* on a 218-station network in an era when radio drama had long been relegated to the scrap heap. The series was designed for young people; the plays were classic fare (*Captains Courageous*, *The Black Arrow*, *Gulliver's Travels*, etc.). Brown produced them at an oldtime pace. A morning taping session of three hours would wrap up a show; then, after a short break, he would begin another show with another cast. Many young performers joined the oldtimers on the soundstage. But even the vast energy of Himan Brown and a major national sponsor couldn't keep it afloat.

THE ADVENTURER'S CLUB, a title given to two action series 15 years apart.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1932, 15m. Transcribed syndication. *The World Adventurer's Club*.

Jan. 11, 1947–Jan. 3, 1948, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at 11:30 A.M. Sheaffer Pens. **HOST:** Ken Nordine.

The 1932 run comprised 32 shows, with such titles as Pancho Villa's Treasure and Land of the Black Hand; all survive on tape. The premise of the 1947–48 series was an adventure story told by the explorer, hunter, or traveler who experienced it.

ADVENTURES BY MORSE, adventure thriller.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1944–45, transcribed syndication, intended for weekly play in 30m time-slots. **CAST:** Elliott Lewis, David Ellis, and Russell Thorson all serving stints as Capt. Bart Friday, a San Francisco detective who roamed the world looking for dangerous adventure. Jack Edwards as Skip Turner, Friday's Texas-talking sidekick. **WRITER-PRODUCER:** Carlton E. Morse.

It's no accident that *Adventures by Morse* bears a striking resemblance to *I Love a Mystery*: both were written and directed by Carlton E. Morse, who produced this syndication soon after his *ILAM* had been scrapped by NBC. The hero, Capt. Friday, sounded much like *ILAM* strongman Jack Packard; the sidekick, Skip Turner, was an *ILAM* Doc Long sound-alike. The stories bordered on the supernatural, though there was usually a near-rational explanation. Major stories of ten weeks alternated with shorter pieces of three chapters, accommodating the standard 13-week broadcasting contracts. The first show sent Friday and Turner to a graveyard in northern California, a fog-shrouded place where the dead walked, wolfmen prowled, and ghouls roamed at will. Later they went to Cambodia and confronted an ancient order of vampire priests inside a vast hollow mountain. The entire 52-week run exists on tape in splendid sound, giving a fine example of the kind of terror-chillers that Morse did better than anyone else.

ADVENTURES IN READING, educational series, an NBC alternative to the CBS shows that dominated this field.

BROADCAST HISTORY: May 2, 1938–Oct. 7, 1940, Blue Network. 30m, Mondays at 2. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** James Church. **WRITERS:** Helen Walpole, Margaret Leaf.

Adventures in Reading gave insights into the works of writers great and obscure, classic and modern, by looking at how events in the authors' lives had shaped their books. It came to the air when Walpole and Leaf submitted a script on Mark Twain to Lewis Titterton, a network editor. The second script focused on Raymond Ditmars, snake expert at New York's Zoological Park. A show on John Milton was selected by Max Wyllie as one of the best broadcasts of 1938. Originally scheduled for only six broadcasts, the series ran two years.

THE ADVENTURES OF BILL LANCE, detective drama, heard in two runs with separate casts and production people.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 23, 1944–Sept. 9, 1945, CBS West Coast. 30m, Sundays at 9, Pacific time. **Planters Peanuts.** **CAST:** John McIntire as detective Bill Lance until March 1945; Pat McGeehan as Lance, March–Sept. 1945. Howard McNear as Ulysses Higgins, Lance's friend and assistant. Regular players: Mercedes McCambridge, Cathy Lewis, Joseph Kearns, Frank Graham. **ANNOUNCERS:** Dick Joy, occasionally Owen James. **MUSIC:** Milton Charles. **CREATOR-WRITER:** J. Donald Wilson. **PRODUCER:** Glan Heisch. **DIRECTOR:** Mel Williamson. **WRITERS:** Stewart Sterling, Sylvia Richards, Maurice Zimm, Martha Chapin.

June 14, 1947–Jan. 4, 1948, ABC. 30m, Saturdays at 9 until Aug.; Mondays at 9 until Sept.; then Sundays at 5. **CAST:** Gerald Mohr as Lance. **PRODUCER:** Dwight Hauser.

The opening signature in 1944 pegged Bill Lance as "that ace of criminologists, whose daring exploits and infallible accuracy have earned him, from the underworld, the nickname Fer de Lance, the deadliest of reptiles, so swift, so sure, that it never misses." Creator J. Donald Wilson, a crime show veteran, said of his hero: "He has the deductive type of mind and is very fond of music." Lance's assistant Higgins, said Wilson, "doesn't have the deductive mind and isn't fond of music." Producer Heisch had a weakness for exotic locales: circuses, waterfronts, morgues, South American cafes, and such places as North Africa."

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN DIAMOND, an early series of sea tales.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 5, 1932–March 29, 1934, Blue Network. 30m, Wednesdays at 8 until Jan. 1933, then Thursdays at 8. General Foods for Diamond Salt.

Nov. 15, 1936–April 18, 1937, Blue Network. 30m, Sundays at 3:15 until Jan., then at 3. General Foods for Diamond Salt. **CAST:** Al Swenson as Captain Diamond, an old salt who told stories in his lighthouse-home. Florence Malone as Mrs. Diamond. **ANNOUNCER:** Tiny Ruffner, who listened to the stories.

THE ADVENTURES OF CHAMPION, juvenile adventure serial.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1949, Mutual. 15m.

CAST: Unknown. **DIRECTOR:** William Burch.

"A series of fast, exciting stories about a boy named Ricky West, raised in the wilderness since childhood by his adopted Uncle Smoky, a German shepherd dog named Rebel, and a stockin'-legged chestnut stallion you know and love—*Champion!* . . . the world's wonder horse!" Uncle Smoky told stories of western mystery: *Champion* was presented as a king of wild horses who let only Ricky ride him. The series was subtitled *Gene Autry's Champion*, but it was not explained in the reviewed episode where Autry was or how the horse became wild again.

THE ADVENTURES OF CHRISTOPHER LONDON, crime drama with international flavor.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 22–April 30, 1950, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 7. **CAST:** Glenn Ford as Christopher London. Supporting players: Barton Yarborough, Joan Banks, Virginia Gregg, Ben Wright, Ted de Corsia, Alan Reed. **MUSIC:** Lyn Murray. **CREATOR:** Erle Stanley Gardner. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** William N. Robson.

Christopher London was a globetrotting investigator-troubleshooter who tackled a weekly "excursion against crime."

THE ADVENTURES OF CHRISTOPHER WELLS, crime drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Sept. 28, 1947–June 22, 1948, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 10 through Jan., then Tuesdays at 9:30. DeSoto-Plymouth. **CAST:** Myron McCormick and Charlotte Lawrence as newspaperman Christopher Wells and his assistant Stacy McGill; beginning in Feb., Les Damon and Vicki Vola in the leads. **MUSIC:** Peter Van Steeden. **CREATOR-DIRECTOR:** Ed Byron. **WRITER AND "CHIEF ASSISTANT":** Robert Shaw.

Christopher Wells shared elements of the more successful *Mr. District Attorney*. Both were created and produced by Ed Byron, who had an almost uncanny knack of foreshadowing the news. Byron often went slumming through New

York in search of plot material, and with *Mr. DA* he had earned a reputation of fictionalizing scoops before they happened. On a *Christopher Wells* smuggling case, a real incident with strong similarities occurred at the same time the episode aired. Wells also just happened to be in India at the time of Gandhi's assassination. These hot elements kept the show interesting, but the mid-season shift into a Tuesday night timeslot (opposite NBC's *Fibber McGee and Molly* powerhouse) proved fatal.

Byron wrote out a complete biography of his hero, giving a thumbnail sketch to *Newsweek*. Wells was born Sept. 28, 1912, sold newspapers, started as a "sub-cub" reporter on a New York daily for \$16 a week, and eventually became a bylined columnist with some of the trademarks of Walter Winchell, Nellie Bly, Richard Harding Davis, and any charming bachelor. It was a traveling show, with Wells in Shanghai one week and India the next.

THE ADVENTURES OF DICK COLE, juvenile adventure.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1942, transcribed syndication for Bluebolt magazine and Foremost Comics, in whose pages the hero excelled. **CAST:** Leon Janney as Dick Cole, a cadet at Farr Military Academy.

With his Academy friends Ted and Simba, Dick Cole won football games, tracked down crooks, and covered his alma mater with glory.

THE ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN, mystery, combined with a panel of clue-sifters, alleged experts challenged to guess the murderer.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 18, 1939–Sept. 22, 1940, CBS. 60m until Feb., then 30m. Sundays at 8 until Sept.; at 10 until April; then at 7:30. Sustained until late April, then supported by Gulf Oil in the summer slot for *The Screen Guild Theater*. **CAST:** Hugh Marlowe as Ellery Queen, deductive genius, a suave modern-day Sherlock in the William Powell mode; Santos Ortega as Inspector Queen, the detective's father; Marion Shockley as Nikki Porter, Queen's adventurous secretary; Howard Smith as Sergeant Velie until Sept. 1939, when Ted de Corsia took the role; Robert Strauss

as Doc Prouty; later Arthur Allen in this role. **ANNOUNCER:** Ken Roberts until April 1940, then Bert Parks. **MUSIC:** Bernard Herrmann, then Leith Stevens, then Lyn Murray. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** George Zachary.

Jan. 10, 1942–Dec. 30, 1944, NBC. 30m, Saturdays at 7:30. Bromo Seltzer. **CAST:** Carleton Young as Ellery until Aug. 1943, then Sydney Smith. Santos Ortega, Marion Shockley, and Ted de Corsia returned as Inspector Queen, Nikki, and Sergeant Velie (Helen Lewis briefly as Nikki). **ANNOUNCER:** Ernest Chappell. **MUSIC:** Charles Paul (organ). **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** George Zachary.

Jan. 24, 1945–April 16, 1947, CBS. 30m, Wednesdays at 7:30. Anacin. **CAST:** Smith, Ortega, and de Corsia returned as Ellery, Inspector Queen, and Sergeant Velie. Barbara Terrell briefly as Nikki, then Gertrude Warner, then (Oct. 1946) Charlotte Keane. **ANNOUNCER:** Don Hancock.

June 1–Sept. 21, 1947, NBC. 30m, intermittently, Sundays at 6:30. Anacin. Production moved from New York to Hollywood. **CAST:** Lawrence Dobkin as Ellery. Bill Smith as Inspector Queen. Ed Latimer as Sergeant Velie. Charlotte Keane as Nikki. **ANNOUNCER:** Don Hancock. **MUSIC:** Chet Kingsbury (organ). **DIRECTOR:** Tom Victor.

Nov. 27, 1947–May 27, 1948, ABC. 30m, Thursdays at 7:30 until Feb., then at 8:30. Sustained. **CAST:** Lawrence Dobkin as Ellery until Jan. 1948; Howard Culver thereafter. Herb Butterfield as Inspector Queen. Alan Reed as Sergeant Velie. Virginia Gregg, later Kaye Brinker, as Nikki. **ANNOUNCER:** Paul Masterson. **MUSIC:** Rex Koury. **DIRECTORS:** Dick Woollen, Dwight Hauser.

Ellery Queen, perhaps as famous as any fictional detective after Sherlock Holmes, was created by cousins Frederic Dannay and Manfred Lee over lunch one day in 1929. This led to more than 40 popular novels, a film series, a long and convoluted run on radio, and various runs on TV. The radio series grew out of an appearance by Dannay and Lee on the Mutual quiz series *Author, Author*: radio director George Zachary thought an interesting format could be devised from the best qualities of the panel show and the melodrama. For a \$350 fee, Dannay and Lee would write one mystery per week. Dannay left the series after the 1944 NBC run; Anthony Bou-

cher became coauthor with Lee. The action would be stopped near the end, and a panel of “armchair experts” would try to guess the solution. The experts would come from the worlds of entertainment and news broadcasting, hopefully adding a layer of glamor to the standard detective thriller. Early panelists included Deems Taylor, Ed “Archie” Gardner, photographer Margaret Bourke-White, and Princess Alexandra Kropotkin, who earned fees of \$25–\$50 for guessing the answers—generally wrong. In the first four months, only playwright Lillian Hellman correctly nailed the culprit. This caused the format to be reorganized, with the “experts” being solicited from the studio audience. It was a disaster: the people from the audience were not only *always* wrong, they were uniformly lifeless and boring on the air. In a later format, a panel of mystery writers was used: they enjoyed relative success in the guessing game without putting the audience to sleep in the process. The “armchair detective” format, despite its drawbacks, remained popular with listeners, especially when panelists were major celebrities. Among those who appeared were Dorothy Kilgallen, Gypsy Rose Lee, Norman Corwin, Guy Lombardo, Ed Sullivan, Fred Waring, John Wayne, Spike Jones, Jane Russell, Jack Dempsey, Orson Welles, Milton Berle, Bela Lugosi, Arthur Godfrey, and Mel Blanc.

THE ADVENTURES OF FATHER BROWN, detective drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 10–July 29, 1945, Mutual. 30m, Sundays at 5. **CAST:** Karl Swenson as Father Brown, the detective priest created by G. K. Chesterton. Supporting players: Mitzi Gould, Robert Readick, Barry Thomson, Bill Griffiths, Will Geer, Vinton Hayworth, Gretchen Davidson, Gladys Thornton. **ANNOUNCER:** John Stanley. **DIRECTOR:** William Sweets.

This summer series found the priest each week “at his desk in his modest parish house.” He was watched over by a housekeeper named Nora but still found plenty of mystery and murder.

THE ADVENTURES OF FRANK MERRIWELL, juvenile adventure, based on the dime novels by Gilbert S. Patton under the name Burt L. Standish.

BROADCAST HISTORY: March 26–June 22, 1934, NBC. 15m continuation, three a week at 5:30. Dr. West's Toothpaste. **CAST:** Donald Briggs as Frank Merriwell, a super athlete who was usually deeply involved in mystery. **ANNOUNCER:** Harlow Wilcox.

Oct. 5, 1946–June 4, 1949, NBC. 30m, Saturdays at 10 A.M. (1946–48); then various Saturday times. **CAST:** Lawson Zerbe as Frank Merriwell, beloved hero of American fiction, super athlete at turn-of-the-century Yale. Elaine Rost as girlfriend Inza Burrage. Hal Studer as Bart Hodge. Patricia Hosley as Elsie Bellwood. Also: Lamont Johnson, Brad Barker, Grace Keddy. **ANNOUNCER:** Mel Brant. **MUSIC:** Paul Taubman at the organ. **DIRECTORS:** Ed King, Joseph Mansfield, Harry Junkin, Fred Weihe. **WRITERS:** Ruth and Gilbert Brann, with William Welch.

The two eras of Frank Merriwell are from widely diverse times in American radio. All the information on the early series comes from one scratchy disc. Frank gets drawn into a shameful poker game and later confesses to his enemy-turned-pal Bart Hodge an uncontrollable weakness for gambling. There are periodic, teary references to Frank's "dear, sweet mother," from whom he once stole money to support his despicable habit.

The later series was a complete-in-each-episode half-hour. It strived mightily for a nostalgic flavor, opening to the sounds of a trotting horse and a distinctive signature. "There it is, an echo of the past—an exciting past, a romantic past—the era of the horse and carriage, gas-lit streets and free-for-all football games: the era of one of the most beloved characters in American fiction, Frank Merriwell."

THE ADVENTURES OF FRANK RACE, adventure melodrama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1949–50, transcribed syndication by Bruce Ells Productions (began running in some markets May 1, 1949). **CAST:** Tom Collins as Frank Race, an attorney who took up a life of intrigue after the war; Paul Dubov assumed the lead after 22 shows. **WRITER-DIRECTORS:** Joel Murcott, Buckley Angel. **MUSIC:** Ivan Ditmars, composer and performer (organ).

THE ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE, detective drama, based on the novels of Rex Stout.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 5, 1943–July 14, 1944, Blue Network after a trial run on a regional northeastern network in early 1943. 30m, Mondays at 8:30 until late Sept.; off the air four months, then Fridays at 7. **CAST:** Santos Ortega as Nero Wolfe, "gargantuan gourmet, the detective genius who rates the knife and fork the greatest tools ever invented by man." Luis Van Rooten assumed the role in 1944. John Gibson as Archie Goodwin, Wolfe's legman, assistant, and secretary, who told the stories.

1946, Mutual Network. 30m, Sundays. *The Amazing Nero Wolfe*. Jergens Lotion. **CAST:** Francis X. Bushman as Nero. Elliott Lewis as Archie. **ANNOUNCER:** Jim Bannon. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Travis Wells. **WRITER:** Louis Vittes.

Oct. 20, 1950–April 27, 1951, NBC. 30m, Fridays at 8. *The New Adventures of Nero Wolfe*. Sponsored in part by Plymouth. **CAST:** Sydney Greenstreet as Wolfe (typecasting, as his greatest screen role is thought to be that of Guttman the fat man in *The Maltese Falcon*); a potpourri of actors as Archie, including Gerald Mohr, Wally Maher, Harry Bartell, Herb Ellis, and Lawrence Dobkin. **ANNOUNCER:** Don Stanley. **PRODUCER:** Edwin Fadiman. **DIRECTOR:** J. Donald Wilson.

The eccentricities of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe were well known by the time the character came to radio. He was an orchid fancier world-class. He was a bon vivant by nature and a fat man by consequence. He waddled about and solved the most baffling murders from the comfort of his home, without ever visiting the scene. Wolfe grumbled whenever a potential client appeared, but usually took the case because high living had taken its toll on his bank account. It was Wolfe's assistant, Archie Goodwin, who actually got around, interviewing witnesses and gathering clues for interpretation by the great one later. It was also Archie whose appreciation of a well-shaped leg gave the show its token romance.

THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET, situation comedy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 8, 1944–June 11, 1948, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 6 until Jan. 1948, then Fridays at 9:30. International Silver.

Oct. 3, 1948–July 10, 1949, NBC until April; season finished on CBS. 30m, Sundays at 6:30. International Silver.

Oct. 14, 1949–June 18, 1954, ABC. 30m, Fridays at 9. Heinz Foods until June 1952; various sponsors thereafter.

CAST: Ozzie and Harriet Nelson. Tommy Bernard and Henry Blair as their sons David and Ricky Nelson until April 1949, when the sons began playing themselves. Joel Davis as David Nelson, 1944–45. John Brown as “Thorny” Thornberry, the next-door neighbor. Lurene Tuttle as Harriet’s mother (usually on the telephone). Janet Waldo as Emmy Lou, a breathless teenager who often gave Ozzie bad advice. **ANNOUNCER:** Verne Smith. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Glenhall Taylor, Dave Elton. **MUSIC:** Billy May. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Ed Ludes, Monty Fraser, David Light.

Ozzie and Harriet filled one decade with music and the next decade with laughs. They had two full, distinct careers. Harriet came out of Iowa, gave up her real name (Peggy Lou Snyder), and became a singer in the big band era. Ozzie was leading one of the best-known dance bands of the time and was looking for a girl singer when he happened to see Harriet in a short film she had made for Paramount in 1932. They arranged a meeting, and she agreed to give up her current billing—songstress at a New York restaurant—and sing with the band. Together they worked out the song-and-patter routine that would become their trademark: while the band played, Ozzie and Harriet would toss song lyrics back and forth in an almost conversational banter, developing a style that was distinctive in its time.

Ozzie (born Oswald George Nelson, March 20, 1906) formed his first orchestra at age 14. He worked his way through college and law school by playing ballrooms and proms. He graduated from Rutgers, then took a law degree in 1930. But his band was doing too well to give it up: a booking at the Glen Island Casino was giving him national exposure on the networks, and his orchestra was becoming one of the best-paid in the country.

After three years together in the band, Ozzie and Harriet were married Oct. 8, 1935. They had

been signed as melodians for Joe Penner’s *Baker’s Broadcast*, an engagement they continued after Penner left the show and Robert “Believe It or Not” Ripley took it over. Their son David was born Oct. 24, 1936; another son, Eric, May 8, 1940. After the birth of Eric, who later became famous as Ricky, the Nelsons moved to Hollywood, where they joined *The Red Skelton Show* on NBC in 1941.

The Skelton job lasted three years, ending suddenly when Skelton was drafted. This led Nelson to develop his own situation comedy. *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* would depict the Nelsons at home. They would be billed as “America’s favorite young couple,” living the good life but constantly entangled in amusing situations created by Ozzie. The plots were simple: Ozzie was the pivotal character, his tangents the vehicles to confusion. Once Ozzie had set his mind to something, nothing could dissuade him until disaster had run its inevitable course. This week it might be a “men are superior” kick; next week he’d get the notion that the boys were being neglected. Whatever the cause, Ozzie would take it to ridiculous lengths, Harriet would gently try to guide him back to reason, David and Ricky would get in a few wisecracks, and Ozzie would be further confused by the ill-timed advice of his next-door neighbor Thorny.

At first Nelson refused to allow his boys to portray themselves. He felt that the experience of big-time radio was too much for children of 8 and 4 to handle. In April 1949 he relented, and the real David and Ricky began playing themselves. The series made an almost painless transition to television and was one of TV’s early success stories. The characters remained consistent: the voices were the same; the shows were always in good taste; the Nelsons looked like the Nelsons were supposed to look, even to those who had never seen them. It was a solid series, a radio staple, a cute show. But as the times changed, *Ozzie and Harriet* seemed a little too cute, too precious. Ozzie was a guy who never seemed to work: he lounged around his home (“1847 Rogers Road” during the years when 1847 Rogers Brothers Silver was the sponsor) in a sweater and slacks, his whole existence built around his weekly displays of flawed judgment. This even became a running gag for nightclub comics: the question “What does Ozzie Nelson

do for a living?" was prime trivia. For the record, he was a bandleader; because most of the action of *Ozzie and Harriet* was set on weekends when the boys were out of school, his occupation was never a factor. But the notion persisted as the times changed—here was a family from Neverland, far away from Real Life. Along with *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver*, *Ozzie and Harriet* is most frequently cited as the epitome of sitcom fantasy. This undoubtedly led to Ricky's deepening discomfort with the old show, a distancing that was evident in the last years.

Nelson wrote much of the material himself, though many writers were used in the show's ten-year radio run. The TV series had an even longer life than the radio version, seen from 1952 through 1966. *Ozzie and Harriet* seemed an eternal part of the broadcasting scene, successful at everything they tried until the ill-fated TV series *Ozzie's Girls* in 1973.

On June 3, 1975, Ozzie Nelson died of cancer at his California home. Rick, who emerged as one of the major stars of rock and roll, was killed in a plane crash between engagements Dec. 31, 1985. David went into television production. Harriet lived in retirement in California until her death Oct. 2, 1994.

THE ADVENTURES OF PHILIP MARLOWE, detective drama, based on the novels of Raymond Chandler.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 17–Sept. 9, 1947, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 10. Summer replacement for Bob Hope. Pepsodent. **CAST:** Van Heflin as Philip Marlowe, Los Angeles private detective. **ANNOUNCER:** Wendell Niles. **MUSIC:** Lyn Murray. **WRITER:** Milton Geiger. **PRODUCER:** Jim Fonda.

Sept. 26, 1948–Sept. 29, 1950, and a short summer run July 7–Sept. 15, 1951, CBS. 30m, various days and times. Ford Motors, briefly in 1950. **CAST:** Gerald Mohr as Marlowe, with support from top-line Hollywood players: Edgar Barrier, Gloria Blondell, Vivi Janiss, Lou Krugman, David Ellis, Wilms Herbert, Virginia Gregg, John Dehner, Lawrence Dobkin, Jack Moyses, Laurette Fillbrandt, Parley Baer, Howard McNear, among others. Jeff Corey as Lieutenant Ybarra. **ANNOUNCER:** Roy Rowan. **MUSIC:** Richard Aurandt. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Norman Macdonnell. **WRITERS:** Gene Levitt, Robert

Mitchell, Mel Dinelli, Kathleen Hite. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Cliff Thorsness.

Raymond Chandler was never fully thrilled with the treatment radio gave his hard-boiled detective Philip Marlowe. He allowed himself to be photographed with actor Van Heflin and producer Jim Fonda in 1947 but looked none too happy about it. "It was thoroughly flat," he wrote to colleague Erle Stanley Gardner of the opening episode. Chandler's role was strictly ornamental: for both series, he was given pretitle or in-title billing, but he took no hand in the shows. The CBS series was somewhat more to his liking. A voice like Gerald Mohr's, he wrote to scripter Levitt, at least packed personality. Indeed, Mohr had one of the most distinctive voices on the air. This was not a cute series: it had little of the *Sam Spade* charm or the *Richard Diamond* flippancy. It was blood, guts, and thunder, and Mohr's bassy voice carried it. "Get this and get it straight," he barked, opening the show. "Crime is a sucker's road, and those who travel it end up in the gutter, the prison, or an early grave." The story titles were of the genre: *The Hard Way Out*, *The Last Laugh*, etc. The music was loud and stinging, containing the essence of hard-boiled action.

THE ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE, DETECTIVE, detective drama, based on the character created by Dashiell Hammett.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 12–Oct. 4, 1946, ABC. 30m, Fridays at 8. Wildroot Cream Oil.

Sept. 29, 1946–Sept. 18, 1949, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 8. Wildroot.

Sept. 25, 1949–Sept. 17, 1950, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 8. Wildroot.

Nov. 17, 1950–April 27, 1951, NBC. 30m, Fridays at 8:30. New series with change of male leads. Sustained.

CAST: Howard Duff as Sam Spade, a San Francisco private detective; Steve Dunne as Spade late in the NBC run, beginning Nov. 17, 1950. Lurene Tuttle as Effie Perrine, Spade's slightly breathless, addled and babbling secretary. John McIntire as Lieutenant Dundy; William Conrad as Dundy in the NBC series. Regulars from the Hollywood radio pool: Cathy and Elliott Lewis, June Havoc, Joseph Kearns, Jerry Hausner, Elliott Reid, Mary Jane Croft, Jeanette Nolan, Betty Lou Gerson. **ANNOUNCER:** Dick Joy. **MUSIC:** Lud Gluskin,

Rene and Pierre Garriguenc. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** William Spier. **WRITERS:** Bob Tallman and Jo Eisinger until March 1947; then Tallman and Gil Doud until June 19, 1949; rotating group of writers thereafter including John Michael Hayes, E. Jack Neuman, Harold Swanton, and others. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Berne Surrey. **THEME:** *Goodnight, Sweetheart*.

The first thing Sam Spade wanted to know was "How much you got on you?"

Two hundred?

"Okay, I'll take that and you can pay me the rest later."

Spade was not in business for his health. He was a man for hire, though principle often came to bear in the cases he took. His appearance on the air was a marked departure from the old Humphrey Bogart image, though the early ABC series was based on creator Dashiell Hammett's original stories. Hammett had brought Spade to life in the 1930 crime classic *The Maltese Falcon*, and in 1946 he was the most striking detective on the air.

Director William Spier wanted an actor in the Bogart mold. Howard Duff, the man who got the part, was decidedly not that. Duff had earned his radio stripes with the Armed Forces Radio Service, arriving in Hollywood in 1945 a seasoned but unsung veteran. His reading for Spier was less than memorable: the only person impressed was Spier's wife Kay Thompson, who became such an advocate that Duff won the job. Thirteen weeks later, it would be difficult to remember that any other choice had been possible. Duff had become Spade, overcoming two intimidating handicaps—the image of Bogart and the power of the novel. Compared with Bogart's dour and straitlaced Spade, Duff's was a cutup: a hard-knuckled master of street-level whimsy and sarcastic comeback. His sense of burlesque was superb. *The Adventures of Sam Spade* on the air was its own entity, owing little to the forces that had created it.

"An audition record was made on May 1, 1946," wrote John Scheinfeld, a radio historian who spent years researching this and Spier's other series, *Suspense*. "The script was called *Sam and the Walls of Jericho* and was adapted by Bob Tallman and Jo Eisinger." But Tallman and Eisinger got no air credit: "ABC wanted to give the impression that Hammett was really in-

volved with the show (he wasn't). Of the 13 shows broadcast on ABC, six were Tallman-Eisinger originals; the remainder were adaptations of Hammett short stories. Tallman and Eisinger were finally given credit with the first CBS broadcast on Sept. 29, 1946. But Eisinger was under contract to Columbia Pictures and was forced to employ a pseudonym, Jason James."

Spade was no spendthrift. His favorite mode of transportation was the streetcar, which took him anywhere for a dime. He had an aversion to cabs and a liking for cheap booze. A listener didn't have to be told: those clinking glasses as Sam opened his desk drawer and began dictating each week were enough. His clients got bumped off with startling regularity. But Spade had a code, one of his lingering endowments from Hammett, and it went like this: if a client dies in the course of things, a guy is supposed to do something about it.

His dictation was taken by Effie Perrine, who was always flustered and secretly in love with him. Each case unfolded as a report—a caper, if you will—dated with the actual air date, signed and delivered to the client, the client's widow, or the police. Spade's license number, 137596, was always included in the report, which unfolded chronologically, with the scene shifting between Sam and Effie in the office and the in-field dramatization of Sam's dictation.

"March 16, 1947, was the last script cowritten by Tallman and James," wrote Scheinfeld. Tallman and Gil Doud wrote every subsequent episode through June 19, 1949, when, "written-out and going insane," they relinquished their duties. The writing was high-class if metaphorical, and the Wildroot commercials—imploping listeners in lively song to "Get Wildroot Cream Oil, Charlie!"—seemed to fit right in. By most accounts it was a happy show, until political pressure came to bear in 1950.

Dashiell Hammett's name had come up before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and in June Howard Duff was listed in *Red Channels*. This may have been inevitable, for as early as 1947 the show had taken some not-so-subtle digs at Communist-hunting lawmakers. "The Constitution says every citizen shall have the right to bear arms," Sam said in one episode. "Even Parnell Thomas can't. . . ." Exactly what Rep. J. Parnell Thomas, whose thinking often ran with that of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, could or

could not do was lost in the heat of the moment. Sharp-eared listeners got the point, and so, by 1950, did Wildroot. The sponsor had moved with Duff and the entire cast to NBC in 1949 but was having serious second thoughts nine months later. *Variety* reported that Wildroot would continue only if Hammett's name was removed from the credits, and the sponsor wasn't enthusiastic about Duff either. The shoe fell on September 9: *Billboard* announced that Wildroot was dumping *Spade* and putting its money into a new series, *Charlie Wild, Private Detective*. The report caused an avalanche of mail: 250,000 letters poured in protesting the decision, a powerful enough voice that NBC was persuaded, unwisely, to continue the series without Duff. Duff's last broadcast was *The Femme Fatale Caper*, Sept. 17, 1950. When the new show arrived November 17, the role was played by Steve Dunne, a boyish-sounding *Spade* laboring under a major handicap. Not even Bogart could have followed Howard Duff by then.

The show was loved in its time and still is. The plots were often run-of-the-mill radio fare, obviously hacked out in the heat of the deadline. No one cared if holes were patched in an obvious and sometimes careless way—this show had a style and class that the others all envied. Duff made the writing part of his own unique character. The wit and charm of the show has weathered four decades, and *The Adventures of Sam Spade* remains today the pinnacle of radio private eye broadcasts.

THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN, juvenile adventure serial, based on the hero of DC Comics.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1940–42, transcribed syndication, beginning Feb. 12, 1940, WOR, New York.

Aug. 31, 1942–Jan. 28, 1949, Mutual. 15m, initially three a week at 5:30; mostly five a week thereafter, sometimes at 5:15, sometimes 5:45. Kellogg's Pep, Jan. 1943–Dec. 1947.

Jan. 31–June 17, 1949, Mutual. 30m, three a week at 5.

Nov. 5, 1949–March 1, 1951, ABC. 30m, Saturdays at 8:30, then at 8; twice a week at 5:30 as of June 1950.

CAST: Clayton Bud Collyer as Clark Kent, reporter for the *Daily Planet* in Metropolis, who in reality was the strange being from another world known

as Superman; Michael Fitzmaurice took the lead role in 1950. Joan Alexander as cynical reporter Lois Lane. Julian Noa as Perry White, *Daily Planet* editor. Jackie Kelk as cub reporter Jimmy Olsen. Gary Merrill, Stacy Harris, and Matt Crowley as Batman, another DC Comics superhero who often visited the show. Ronald Liss as Robin, Batman's sidekick. **ANNOUNCER:** Jackson Beck from ca. 1943. **DIRECTORS:** George Lowther, Robert and Jessica Maxwell, Mitchell Grayson, Allen Ducovny. **WRITERS:** Jack Johnstone, B. P. Freeman. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Jack Keane, Al Binnie, Keene Crockett, John Glennon.

The comic *Superman* was created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster in 1938. It, and the subsequent radio serial, told of the destruction of the planet Krypton and how the scientist Jor-El and his wife Lara placed their infant son in a rocket headed for Earth. Here, the child had wondrous powers: he grew up disguised as Clark Kent, "mild-mannered reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper" who "leads a never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the American way." Kent wore glasses and took on a meek demeanor. He was bullied by his boss Perry White and barely tolerated by Lois Lane, the *Planet's* star female reporter. Lois adored Superman even as she disdained the alter ego, Kent. Superman could fly through the air, a feat accomplished on radio with a gush of windy sound effects and a shout, "Up, up, and away!" The network opening signature was one of radio's best, setting the stage for those quarter-hour flights into fantasy with a cascade of voices, narration, and sound effects.

Faster than a speeding bullet!

More powerful than a locomotive!

Able to leap tall buildings at a single bound!

"Look! Up in the sky!"

"It's a bird!"

"It's a plane!"

"It's SUPERMAN!"

One month found Superman chasing train robbers; the next battling Nazis and "Japs" at the North Pole. During the war, Superman joined most other serial characters in the fight against tyranny. Only two things stopped him: his X-ray vision couldn't penetrate lead, and when confronted with the element Kryptonite he was rendered helpless. In 1945 he was joined briefly by Batman, the other great DC Comics hero, but Batman suffered in the inevitable comparison.

Could he fly? Could he see through brick walls? Could he dart in front of a bullet and save the day? The character faded from *The Adventures of Superman* and never did break away for a show of his own.

The producers went to great lengths to protect the identity of the hero, onstage and off. In the storyline, anyone who discovered Superman's secret identity was eliminated: the writer simply killed him off by accident or disaster. It was also insisted that the identity of Clayton Bud Collyer, the actor who gave voice to the man of steel, be kept secret. Only in 1946 did Collyer emerge in an interview with *Time* to promote a *Superman* campaign against racial and religious intolerance. The serial became the first of its kind to tackle such heavy themes. Collyer, who later became a well-known TV game show host, gave the series one of its trademarks—the ability to change characters in midsentence, from the mousy Clark (“This looks like a job for . . .”) to the barrel-chested (“SUPERMAN!”) man of steel.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE THIN MAN, a comedy thriller, lighthearted mystery based on the novel by Dashiell Hammett.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 2, 1941–Dec. 23, 1942, NBC. 30m, Wednesdays at 8. Woodbury Soap.

Jan. 8, 1943–Dec. 26, 1947, CBS. 30m, mostly Fridays at 8:30, some Sunday timeslots. General Foods for Post Toasties, Maxwell House Coffee, and Sanka.

June 22–Sept. 22, 1948, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 9 until mid-July, then Wednesdays at 10:30. *The New Adventures of the Thin Man*. Pabst Beer.

Oct. 28, 1948–Jan. 20, 1949, Mutual. 30m, Thursdays. Kaiser-Fraser.

June 23–Sept. 1, 1950, ABC. 30m, Fridays at 9. Heinz Foods.

CAST: Les Damon as suave New York sleuth Nick Charles until 1943; then Les Tremayne, David Gothard (1944–45), Tremayne (1945–46), Damon again (1946–47), Tremayne (1948–49), and Joseph Curtin as the last Nick, 1950. Claudia Morgan as Nora Charles throughout. Parker Fennelly as Sheriff Ebenezer Williams of Crabtree County. **ANNOUNCERS:** Ed Herlihy, Nelson Case, Glenn Riggs, Tom Shirley, Ron Rawson, Jimmy Wallington, Joe Weeks, Ted Pearson, Dwight Weist. **MU-**

SIC: Fred Fradkin. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Himan Brown. **WRITERS:** Ruth Hawkins, Denis Green, Milton Lewis, Louis Vittes, Robert Newman, Eugene Wang. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Hal Reid.

The Thin Man was a slick piece of high-hatted sophistication based on the 1934 film, which was based on the Hammett novel of the same year. Nick Charles, the hero, was a retired private eye who just couldn't stay away from murder. Abetted by his eccentric wife Nora, Nick ran a ten-year race with that other light thriller *Mr. and Mrs. North*, and for a time the Charleses were billed as “the happiest, merriest married couple in radio.”

They certainly were the sexiest. *The Thin Man* gave its listeners all the censor would allow. Nick and Nora were cast in the screen images, with William Powell and Myrna Loy firmly in mind. Les Damon and Claudia Morgan learned to talk so much like the screen stars that some listeners refused to believe the credits, insisting that Powell and Loy were actually at the microphone. Morgan cooed invitingly: she mouthed long, drawn-out kisses and kidded Nicky-darling about his outlandish pajamas. One critic strongly objected to the “ooooohs” and “aaaaahs” and “mmmmmm’s” during the “squeaky” kisses and love scenes. But as feminine and cozy as Nora was played, *Life* noted that “she can step across pools of blood with all the calm delicacy of a lady-in-waiting.” Nick, the deductive genius, developed a distinctive, sexually suggestive purr. When she preened, he purred. This was pure radio, imagery carried through dialogue and sound with no narration necessary.

Nick became the top sleuth of the martini set while keeping a running acquaintance with such characters as Dippy Danny the Pickpocket, Charlie the Creep, and Big-Ears Benny. With the show well in progress, Parker Fennelly was added as Nick's old friend and partner Sheriff Ebenezer Williams of Crabtree County. Fennelly played the same kind of Titus Moody character he had originated for Fred Allen. These three were the only regular characters, with the exception of Nick and Nora's famous wirehaired terrier Asta.

THE ADVENTURES OF TOPPER, situation comedy, based on the novel by Thorne Smith

and the subsequent film series starring Roland Young.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 7–Sept. 13, 1945, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 8:30 (final two shows at 8). Post Toasties. **CAST:** Roland Young as Cosmo Topper. Hope Emerson as his wife Henrietta. Paul Mann and Frances Chaney as George and Marion Kerby, ghosts who appear only to Topper (Tony Barrett also heard as George).

Cosmo Topper was a banker whose life was complicated by two friendly spirits. The comedy ensued when Topper talked to his ethereal friends and, of course, seemed to be talking to people around him. “Go away,” he would say, or, “That’s a terrible suit you’re wearing.” This was the same dilemma faced by Donald O’Connor in the *Francis* (the talking mule) film series. *Topper* was done far more effectively on television, becoming one of that medium’s early successes. In the TV series, George and Marion Kerby were killed in an avalanche while skiing. Also killed was Neal, the alcoholic St. Bernard who had come to rescue them. The TV roles were played by Leo G. Carroll (Topper), Lee Patrick (Henrietta), and Anne Jeffreys and Robert Sterling (George and Marion).

THE AFFAIRS OF ANN SCOTLAND, detective drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 30, 1946–Oct. 22, 1947, ABC. 30m, Wednesdays at 9. Hudnut. **CAST:** Arlene Francis as Ann Scotland. **MUSIC:** Del Castillo (organ). **DIRECTOR:** Helen Mack.

Ann Scotland was described in the memoir of Arlene Francis as “a sort of private eyelash.” She was a satin-tongued cutie, quick on the uptake, the kind of role that was ideal for Francis. Arlene was pregnant when this series aired (“I could have been called Scotland Yard because that’s how wide I was”), but it didn’t matter in a medium where everything was done with the voice. Her friend Claire Trevor gave this assessment of her come-hither performance: “You don’t sound the least bit pregnant, but you sound as though you might be at any moment.”

THE AFFAIRS OF ANTHONY, soap opera.

BROADCAST HISTORY: May 29, 1939–March 22, 1940, Blue Network. 15m, daily at 3:15. Sus-

tained. **CAST:** Henry Hunter as Anthony Marleybone Jr. Marvin Miller as Anthony Sr. Laurette Fillbrandt as Susan. Lenore Kingston as June. Bernardine Flynn as Alice McGinty. **DIRECTOR:** Axel Gruenberg. **WRITER:** Sandra Michael.

THE AFFAIRS OF PETER SALEM, detective drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: May 7, 1949–April 18, 1953, Mutual. 30m. Heard most often on Sundays, but also Mondays and Saturdays. Sustained. **CAST:** Santos Ortega as Peter Salem, a small-town detective who used brainpower and wits to trip up sophisticated lawbreakers from the city. Jack Grimes as his sidekick Marty. Regulars from the New York radio pool: Everett Sloane, Luis Van Rooten, Ann Shepherd, etc. **PRODUCER:** Himan Brown. **DIRECTOR:** Mende Brown. **WRITER:** Louis Vittes. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Adrian Penner.

AFRICAN TREK, African folk music.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 13, 1939–Oct. 17, 1943, Blue Network. 30m, Fridays at 7:30 until Nov. 1940, then Sundays at 1:30.

July 13, 1946–March 15, 1947, ABC. 15m, Saturdays at 10:15 A.M.

The creator of *African Trek* was Josef Marais, who, with three companions, performed a vast repertoire of native African and Boer folksongs. Much as Harry Horlick had done with gypsy ballads a decade earlier, Marais gave his show an authentic sound, rooted in firsthand knowledge. Born near Cape Town, Marais was a symphony orchestra violinist in his teens and a longtime collector of Afrikaner and Hottentot music. His series drew so much fan mail that the Blue Network expanded it from 15 to 30 minutes. By 1941 it was being shortwaved to Africa. The campfire flavor of such Boer War numbers as *Brandy, Leave Me Alone* gave the series an exotic ambience that Americans found fascinating. There were also stories and folk yarns. The theme was *Sarie Marais*.

AGAINST THE STORM, serial drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 16, 1939–Dec. 25, 1942, NBC. 15m, daily, opened at 5:15 but was frequently moved. Procter & Gamble for Ivory Soap.

April 25–Oct. 21, 1949, Mutual. 30m, daily at 11:30 A.M. Philip Morris.

Oct. 1, 1951–June 27, 1952, ABC. 15m, daily at 10:45 A.M. Philip Morris.

CAST: Roger DeKoven as Professor Jason McKinley Allen of Harper College (DeKoven starred in the three runs, though years apart). May Davenport Seymour as his wife Margaret from 1939; also played by Katherine Anderson (1949) and Florence Malone. Gertrude Warner and Claudia Morgan as their daughter Christy. Joan Tompkins and Dolores Gillen as their daughter Siri. Arnold Moss and Alexander Scourby as Philip Cameron, who married Christy. Grant Richards as Siri's husband Hal Thomas. Chester Stratton as Mark Scott. Joan Alexander and Ruth Matteson as Nicole Scott. Charlotte Holland as Kathy Reimer. Philip Clarke as Dr. Reimer. Elliott Reid as Julian Browning (1949). Eddie Mayehoff as Professor Waldo Greentree (1949). **DIRECTOR:** Axel Gruenberg. **WRITER:** Sandra Michael. **THEME:** Theme from *Song of Bernadette*, by Alfred Newman.

Against the Storm was so highbrow that to call it a soap opera made its creator-writer "see red." Sandra Michael had long believed that daytime radio needed an antidote for the mindless formula of *Our Gal Sunday* and *Stella Dallas*. Michael disdained the cliffhanger, that well-worn device that made listeners wonder, "Will John's wife finally meet John's other wife, and what will happen then?"

Michael was born in Denmark. She wrote commercials and announced fashion shows in Milwaukee, then moved to Hollywood to write some of the quality nighttime shows. Her serial opened in wartime and quickly established its theme of resistance to that war, indeed to all wars. The central character, Professor Allen, taught at Harper University and lived at Deep Pool Farm, a setting taken from the 32-acre farm in Connecticut where Michael lived. Allen was a pacifist and an outspoken opponent of Hitler. Many episodes were solid philosophy: on Memorial Day 1941, the entire broadcast was a soliloquy about Allen's childhood pal Porky Mason, killed in France in the First War.

Against the Storm was lauded for originality. A *New York Times* critic, comparing it with its daytime neighbors, termed it "stratospheric." Whole broadcasts were given over to ballads or readings from Walt Whitman or Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Edgar Lee Masters appeared, reading from his *Spoon River Anthology*. John Masefield was shortwaved in from Britain, ostensibly lecturing to Professor Allen's class. President Roosevelt accepted a speaking part, an appearance shelved when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. In 1942 the show won a Peabody Award, the only daytime serial ever thus honored. By the end of that year it was off the air.

Newsweek summed up the network line, saying the show "didn't click" with listening housewives. But ratings were respectable throughout the run. Sandra Michael gave a *Radio Life* reporter a different version years later. She wanted the show expanded to 30 minutes daily, a format unheard of in the soap schedule. When the network refused, she requested and received a release from the agency. She did get her half-hour, from Mutual, in 1949, but it lasted less than a year.

THE AIR ADVENTURES OF JIMMIE ALLEN, transcribed juvenile adventure serial.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1933–37, 15m. Transcribed for Skelly Oil, a Midwest petroleum company, and aired by stations throughout the Skelly market area; syndicated by World Broadcasting to businesses outside the Skelly area. Though production ceased, repeats aired sporadically throughout the country through the early 1940s. **CAST:** John Frank as Jimmie Allen, 16-year-old boy pilot. Shelby Storck as his pal and mentor Speed Robertson. Also: Art Ellison, Al Christi.

1946–47, more than 400 new 15m episodes recorded and broadcast for International Shoe Company of Kansas City and other sponsors. **CAST:** Jack Schlichter as Jimmie. Shelby Storck as Speed. Twila Comer as Jimmie's girlfriend Barbara. **CREATORS-WRITERS:** Bob Burt and Bill Moore.

Because *The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen* was never on a network, its history has until recently remained vague. In 1980 *Jimmie Allen* advocate Walter House unearthed all the vital facts and published them in a detailed two-part article in the magazine *R/C Model Builder*.

The idea of a serial about a boy pilot was first suggested by a pair of World War I flying aces, Bob Burt and Bill Moore, at a party in Kansas City. Burt and Moore had become writers, and their scenario was met with enthusiasm by ad-

man Russell C. Comer. Comer sold the package to Skelly Oil. Three stations carried the initial series: KDAF, Kansas City; KLZ, Denver; and KVOO, Tulsa. The first broadcast was aired Feb. 23, 1933. Soon seven more stations were added, and Skelly found itself involved in one of the great promotions of early radio.

A Jimmie Allen Flying Club was created: all a kid had to do was apply at any Skelly station. Applicants received many premiums, highly treasured today—a set of wings, a membership emblem, and a “personal letter” from Jimmie Allen. Other giveaways: a Jimmie Allen picture puzzle (a Skelly truck refueling a light airplane), a “secret service whistle,” and a Jimmie Allen album. The club newspaper was sent out to 600,000 kids a week, and Jimmie Allen Air Races—attended by tens of thousands of people—were held in major Midwest cities where the show was heard. Skelly had to hire a special staff just to answer Jimmie Allen mail. Flying lessons, model plans, and other promotions were part of the mix, available to listeners who displayed their club credentials at their Skelly Oil station. Comer never sold the show to a network: by marketing it himself (to the Richfield Oil Company on the West Coast and to scores of individual businesses elsewhere), he kept control of it.

Throughout the 1930s, interest was high. Boys were fascinated by the adventures of Jimmie, his older pal Speed Robertson, and their mechanic Flash Lewis. Together they solved mysteries (even murder, unusual for juvenile fare at that time, when Jimmie’s passenger Quackenbush died under mysterious circumstances), went on hunts for treasure, and raced in air shows around the country. Their enemies were Black Pete and Digger Dawson.

The original Jimmie Allen, John Frank, was more than 40 years old when the series opened. Murray McLean, then 16 and a son of radio actress Betty McLean, was hired to make personal appearances as Jimmie, but Frank continued the radio role throughout the original series. By 1936 the character was so popular that Paramount shot a Jimmie Allen movie, *The Sky Parade*. In 1937 Skelly dropped the show and began working with Burt and Moore on a new air series, which would become the long-running classic *Captain Midnight*. The postwar revival was not success-

ful: its day was the 1930s, when, as House tells us, “kids, radio, and aviation were growing up together.”

THE AL JOLSON SHOW, musical variety spanning the years 1932–49, for various sponsors and under various titles. Jolson was a dominant personality whose appearance in any series inevitably made the public think of it as “the Jolson show,” whatever its real title might have been.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Nov. 18, 1932–Feb. 24, 1933, NBC. 30m, Fridays at 10. *Presenting Al Jolson*. Chevrolet. **ORCHESTRA:** Ted Fio Rito.

Aug. 3, 1933–Aug. 16, 1934, NBC. 60m, Thursdays at 10. Joined Paul Whiteman’s *Kraft-Phenix Program*, which had begun June 26, 1933, and became the long-running *Kraft Music Hall*. Jolson’s appearances were erratic, with many absences. *KMH* continued long after Jolson’s departure, with Bing Crosby as a star.

April 6, 1935–March 6, 1936, NBC. 60m, Saturdays at 9:30. *Shell Chateau*. Shell Oil. **ORCHESTRA:** Victor Young. **DIRECTOR:** Herb Polesie of J. Walter Thompson. **WRITER-PRODUCER:** Carroll Carroll of the Thompson agency. **THEME:** *Golden Gate*. Jolson left the show in progress; it ran with other hosts until June 26, 1937.

Dec. 22, 1936–March 14, 1939, CBS. 30m, Tuesdays at 8:30. *The Lifebuoy Program*, then *The Rinso Program*, then *The Tuesday Night Party*. Lever Brothers. **COSTARS:** Harry Einstein as Parkyakarkus; Martha Raye. **ANNOUNCER:** Tiny Ruffner. **MUSIC:** Lud Gluskin, Victor Young. Again, Jolson left the series in progress: Dick Powell took over (March 21, 1939), then Walter O’Keefe (Sept. 19), and it left the air Dec. 12, 1939.

Oct. 6, 1942–June 29, 1943, CBS. 30m, Tuesdays at 8:30. *The Colgate Program*. Colgate. **COSTAR:** Monty Woolley. **VOCALIST:** Jo Stafford. **ORCHESTRA:** Gordon Jenkins, Ray Bloch. **PRODUCER:** William A. Bacher. **DIRECTOR:** Bill Lawrence.

Oct. 2, 1947–May 26, 1949, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 9. *The Kraft Music Hall*. Kraft Foods. **COSTAR:** Oscar Levant. **ANNOUNCER:** Ken Carpenter. **ORCHESTRA:** Lou Bring. **THEME:** *April Showers*.

Depending on the source, Al Jolson was either the world's greatest entertainer or the world's biggest ham. Some people would have said both.

His natural environment was the stage. He had buckets of charisma before anyone had ever heard of the word. Though Jolson loved performing before an audience, he was a formidable radio presence, fully able to project his dynamic, forceful nature over the air.

His name was Asa Yoelson; he was born May 26, 1886, son of a Russian rabbi. In his youth he considered becoming a cantor: instead he became a performer, a specialist in blackface vaudeville skits whose down-on-one-knee delivery of robust southern songs was as powerful in its way as Louis Armstrong was on trumpet.

His popularity grew quickly after 1909, when he first sang *Mammy* from a San Francisco stage. He so loved performing that he often kept his captive audience overtime. In 1927 he starred in *The Jazz Singer*, the world's first talking picture. He was on the air as early as 1928, in guest roles and cameos, but he seemed too busy to be tied down long in regular radio jobs.

Carroll Carroll described in his 1970 memoir (*None of My Business*) how the mid-1930s series *Shell Chateau* was put together. It was typical Depression fare, "five acts and Jolson," with much brainstorming put into the title. The sponsor wanted its name up front, and it was Carroll himself who came up with *Shell Chateau*. It was thought at the time that a variety show gained something by pretending to air from some exotic location, though some amusing (and justified, as the tapes reveal) fears were expressed over how Jolson might pronounce "chateau" on the air. The mix was predictable: greetings, a warmup and a song by Jolson, a comedy act, another song, a singing guest such as Dixie Lee, music, another Jolson number, station break, a dramatic skit, Jolson again, and so on. Among other guests, *Shell Chateau* drew John and Lionel Barrymore, Bette Davis, Ginger Rogers, Joe Penner, and such sports personalities as "Slapsie" Maxie Rosenbloom. When Jolson left the show in midstream, Shell tried to keep it on the air with such hosts as Wallace Beery and Edward Everett Horton. But the show was swamped in the ratings wars, proving that Jolson had been its one major draw.

Jolson's *Lifebuoy Program*, at 30 minutes, was not as well produced as *Shell Chateau*, but

it soon gained a major share of the Tuesday night audience. This was Jolson's longest regular stint, but again he left before the run concluded. In many ways, his 1942–43 CBS series for Colgate was his most interesting show. Monty Woolley, ex-Yale professor turned actor, parlayed a single guest appearance into regular costar status. The writers had a fine time with this, pitting the low-brow Jolson against the highbrow Woolley. "If you give your brain to the Smithsonian," Woolley said to Jolson on one broadcast, "I'll give them a magnifying glass."

Jolson's career went into a decline in the early '40s but was resurrected in 1946, when Columbia filmed *The Jolson Story*. Larry Parks played the young Jolson, but Jolson's voice was used in the soundtrack, and again he was a hot property. He was now doing so many radio guest spots that it became a running gag of comedians. It also led to a sequel, *Jolson Sings Again*, in 1949. Both stories were dramatized on *The Lux Radio Theater*, with Jolson playing himself. By then Bing Crosby had left *The Kraft Music Hall* in a format dispute, and Jolson was given the host's role, returning to the series that he had left 13 years before.

Shows are available on tape from each Jolson era after the 1934 *Kraft Music Hall*. Though his music lost favor for a time because of its "darky" lyrics, he remains one of the medium's giants. *Shell Chateau* offers a dated format, historically important but tired. *The Lifebuoy Program* is musically interesting, but the comedy is stale business. Perhaps Jolson's best series for modern listening is the later *Kraft Music Hall*. Many shows exist in good fidelity. Jolson is in good voice, and Oscar Levant adds significantly to the show, for those who appreciate his dry wit. This came at the end of Jolson's life, as he died Oct. 23, 1950.

THE AL PEARCE SHOW, comedy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1928–32, KFRC, San Francisco. *The Happy-Go-Lucky Hour*.

Jan. 13, 1934–March 29, 1935, Blue Network. 30m, Saturdays at 6 until Sept., then two 15m shows heard Mondays and Fridays at 5.

May 13, 1935–April 3, 1936, NBC, sometimes Blue Network. 30m. A schedule-bouncer, but often Fridays at 5. Pepsodent.

Jan. 5, 1937–June 28, 1938, CBS. 30m, Tuesdays at 9. *Watch the Fun Go By*. Ford Motors.

Oct. 10, 1938–July 31, 1939, NBC. 30m, Mondays at 8. *Grape Nuts*.

Oct. 11, 1939–April 3, 1940, CBS. 30m, Wednesdays at 8. *Dole Pineapple*.

May 3, 1940–Jan. 2, 1942, CBS. 30m, Fridays at 7:30. *Camel Cigarettes*.

Jan. 8–July 2, 1942, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 7:30. *Camel Cigarettes*.

May 7–July 30, 1944, Blue Network. 30m, Sundays at 4. *Fun Valley*. Dr. Pepper.

Dec. 9, 1944–June 30, 1945, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at 10:15. *Here Comes Elmer* or *The Al Pearce Show*. Lewis-Howe.

Dec. 3, 1945–Sept. 6, 1946, ABC. 30m, five a week at 3.

July 26–Oct. 25, 1947, ABC. 60m, Saturdays at 9 A.M.

CAST: Al Pearce, often in the role of Elmer Blurt, self-conscious door-to-door salesman. Broadcasting often under the title *Al Pearce and His Gang*, the “gang” in 1929 included Pearce’s brother Cal, Jean Clarimoux, Norman Nielsen, Hazel Warner, Abe Bloom, Monroe Upton as Lord Bilgewater, Tommy Harris, Charles Carter, Edna Fisher, and Cecil Wright. Mid-1930s gang included Arlene Harris, “the human chatterbox,” who delivered mile-a-minute telephone monologues; Andy Andrews, the singing comic; tenor Harry Foster; Mabel Todd; Morey Amsterdam; Tony Romano; tenor Carlyle Bennett; Harry Stewart as Yogi Yorgesson; Bill Wright as Zeb of the Eb and Zeb skits (Pearce was Eb); Kitty O’Neil, “the laughing lady”; Jennison Parker as Yahbut of the team Yahbut and Cheerily (Bill Wright as Cheerily); Bill Comstock as Tizzie Lish, the show’s expert in cooking and health. Others: Artie Auerbach, Arthur Q. Bryan, Orville Andrews, Marie Green and her Merry Men, the Three Cheers (Travis Hale, Phil Hanna, E. J. Derry). **ANNOUNCERS:** Bill Goodwin, Ken Roberts, Wendell Niles. **ORCHESTRA:** Harry Sosnik, Larry Marsh, Carl Hoff. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Ray Erlenborn.

Al Pearce was one of radio’s earliest and most durable comics. He was singing and playing banjo at KFRC, San Francisco, when a writer offered him a character skit starring a timid traveling salesman named Elmer. Pearce was typecast, as he had once sold insurance door-to-door. He later sold real estate and, with his brother

Cal, sang on the air in 1928 with the San Francisco Real Estate Glee Club.

He was moonlighting at KFRC when writer Jack Hasty gave him the Elmer skit. Elmer was a bashful salesman who’d rather miss a sale than confront a customer. He would knock distinctly—bump-bump-abump-bump . . . bump-bump—and mutter, “Nobody home, I-hope-I-hope-I-hope.” Elmer became Elmer Blurt, and the phrase became a national slogan.

Many of his “gang” remained with Pearce across frequent changes of network, format, and sponsor. Arlene Harris, the human chatterbox, could gush 240 words a minute, talking to her friend Mazie on the phone. Bill Comstock developed his female Tizzie Lish character on a recipe show at a station where he’d once worked. Eb and Zeb were two geezers who ran a general store at the crossroads. Harry Stewart as Yogi Yorgesson sang nonsense songs with a Swedish accent, among the most popular being *Yingle Bells* and *I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas*.

Pearce faded quickly after the war. He had a brief stint on TV in the ’50s, but his comedy was of an earlier day. He died June 3, 1961.

THE ALAN YOUNG SHOW, situation comedy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 28–Sept. 20, 1944, NBC. 30m, Wednesdays at 9. Summer substitute for Eddie Cantor. *Sal Hepatica*. **CAST:** Alan Young as himself, a bashful young man (he really was, said his wife Ginni), throughout the run of the show. **VOCALIST:** Bea Wain. **MUSIC:** Peter Van Steeden.

Oct. 3, 1944–June 28, 1946, ABC. 30m, Tuesdays at 8:30 until Sept., then Fridays at 8:30. *Ipana*. **CAST:** Jean Gillespie as Young’s girlfriend Betty; also played by Doris Singleton. Ed Begley as Papa Dittenfeffer, Betty’s crusty father. **WRITERS:** Jay Sommers, Will Glickman.

Sept. 20, 1946–May 30, 1947, NBC. 30m, Fridays at 8:30, then at 8. *Ipana*.

Jan. 11–July 5, 1949, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 8:30. *Tums*. **CAST:** Louise Erickson as Betty. Jim Backus as snooty playboy Hubert Updike III. With Nicodemus Stewart, Hal March, Ken Christy. **ANNOUNCER:** Don Wilson. **VOCALISTS:** The Regalaires (Sue Allen, Fay Reiter, Ginny Reese, and Ginni Young). **MUSIC:** George Wylie. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Helen Mack.

Alan Young was an English-born comic who learned the craft of radio in Canada. At CJOR he became friends with Fletcher Markle, who later became a force in American radio. Young's earliest Canadian show was called *Stag Party*: he was virtually the entire act, and when he asked for a raise (from \$15 a week) he was fired. Soon he was earning \$150 a week doing situation comedy at CBL, where he was heard by an agent who helped him break into American radio.

His summer show for Eddie Cantor was "routine situation comedy" laced with "rapid-fire gags," according to one trade journal. But it led to his own show, where he was typecast. *Newsweek* thought him a "meek, washed-down blond with saucer eyes and a perpetual woe-begone manner . . . [with] flashes of Harold Lloyd and Charlie Chaplin." He was signed for *The Jimmy Durante Show* in 1948, and his new series for Tums premiered while he was still a Durante regular. He finished the year on both shows. But Young had a hot-and-cold career on radio. He was often thought to be the man about to make it big. He made some films to mixed critical notice; then he went into TV, where, perhaps, his humor was better placed. Today he is best remembered for his 1961-65 CBS-TV role of Wilbur Post, the man who talked to Mr. Ed, the talking horse.

THE ALDRICH FAMILY, teenage situation comedy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 2-Oct. 1, 1939, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 7. Summer replacement for *The Jack Benny Program*. General Foods for Jell-O.

Oct. 10, 1939-May 28, 1940, Blue Network. 30m, Tuesdays at 8. Jell-O.

July 4, 1940-July 20, 1944, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 8:30. Jell-O.

Sept. 1, 1944-Aug. 30, 1946, CBS. 30m, Fridays at 8. General Foods for Jell-O and Grape Nuts.

Sept. 5, 1946-June 28, 1951, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 8. Jell-O, Grape Nuts.

Sept. 21, 1952-April 19, 1953, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 7:30. Sustained.

CAST: Ezra Stone as Henry Aldrich, 16-year-old student at Central High School in the town of Centerville; Norman Tokar as Henry, 1942-43, when

Stone went into the Army; Dickie Jones as Henry, 1943-44; Raymond Ives as Henry as of mid-1945; Ezra Stone resumed the role in Nov. 1945; Bobby Ellis as Henry in 1952-53. House Jameson as lawyer Sam Aldrich, Henry's father, for most of the run; also played by Clyde Fillmore and Tom Shirley. Katharine Raht as Henry's mother Alice (Lea Penman and Regina Wallace were also heard in the role). At least a dozen actresses over the years as Henry's sister Mary, among them Betty Field, Patricia Peardon, Charita Bauer, Ann Lincoln, Jone Allison, Mary Mason, and Mary Rolfe. Jackie Kelk almost all the way as Homer Brown, Henry's pal and companion in mischief, with Johnny Fiedler, Jack Grimes, and Michael O'Day in the Homer role in 1952-53. Ed Begley, Arthur Vinton, and Howard Smith as Will Brown, Homer's father. Agnes Moorehead and Leona Powers as Homer's mother. Mary Shipp as Henry's girlfriend Kathleen Anderson; also played by Ethel Blume, Jean Gillespie, and Ann Lincoln. Eddie Bracken as Henry's pal Dizzy Stevens. Charles Powers as Henry's rival George Bigelow. **ANNOUNCERS:** Harry Von Zell, Dwight Weist, George Bryan, Dan Seymour, Ralph Paul. **MUSIC:** Jack Miller. **CREATOR-WRITER:** Clifford Goldsmith. **DIRECTORS:** Harry Ackerman, Edwin Duerr, Fran Van Hartesveldt, George McGarrett, Sam Fuller, Bob Welsh, Lester Vail, Joseph Scibetta, Day Tuttle. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Bill Brinkmeyer.

Henry Aldrich was described in the press of the time as "typical," "not at all typical," and with all the daffy adjectives that those two opposites suggest. He was described as the Penrod of the '40s, but his likeness to the hero of Booth Tarkington's 1914 classic was more imagined than real. Henry found more ways to turn the ordinary into complete chaos and disaster than Mack Sennett ever devised for his old two-reel chase films. With Henry, ordinary objects became lethal weapons. A telephone was a window to such bizarre convulsion that its consequences tested the imagination. A bicycle with a flat tire led to much round-robin lunacy before the tire was patched and a sadder-but-no-wiser Henry Aldrich pedaled his way home.

Each week for 13 years, Henry was summoned into millions of living rooms to the wail of his long-suffering mother: "*Hen-reeeee! Henry Aldrich!*" And the cracking adolescent

voice that answered, "Coming, Mother!" was the ticket to mayhem. If the show began with Henry tying up the family telephone, it was certain that within the half-hour he would somehow have every phone in town tied up, and calls would be coming into the Aldrich house for everything from plumbers to cab drivers.

The show was developed by Clifford Goldsmith from his Broadway play *What a Life*. Goldsmith drew his *Aldrich* ideas from his own teenage sons, who frequently left him bills for services rendered and good-natured complaints about "plagiarism" after the broadcast. By then Goldsmith had arrived at an enviable plateau in radio: at \$3,000 a week, he was the highest-paid writer in the business, an overnight success after years of obscurity. His first attempts at writing had gone nowhere. As originally conceived, *What a Life* was a heavy problem piece, with Henry a minor character. Producer George Abbott advised him to make it a comedy. How little Goldsmith thought of its chances is revealed in a magazine interview: he was so skeptical that he considered selling half interest in the property to a clothier for a winter coat.

In the play, all the action takes place in the office of the high school principal. Rudy Vallee saw it and asked Goldsmith to work up some radio skits. These were performed on the Vallee program, and in 1938 the company (with Ezra Stone, who had played Henry onstage) was signed by Ted Collins for a 39-week run on *The Kate Smith Hour*. Bob Welsh, the director on the Smith show, devised the famed "Coming, Mother" signature, which became an indelible part of radio when *The Aldrich Family* opened in 1939.

It was a hit, and a big one. By 1941 the show had streaked to a Crossley rating of 33.4 and was nestled high in the top ten with Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. But this was wartime, and the young cast was soon depleted. When Stone went into the Army in 1942, his replacement was his understudy from the stage show, Norman Tokar. Tokar had been unable to find much radio work because producers thought he sounded too much like Henry Aldrich: his role of Willie Marshall, Henry's friend, had to be given a "marbles in the mouth" treatment to avoid confusion with Henry. But Tokar was called into the Signal Corps soon after getting the lead, and a frantic search went out for a

new Henry. Dickie Jones, who got the part, was a radio veteran at 16: he had faced his first microphone at 5 and was the voice of Pinocchio in the 1940 Disney cartoon. Two years later, with Stone, Tokar, and Jones all in the Army, the role went to Raymond Ives. "Not a single member of the original cast is left," *Tune In* reported in 1943. The same magazine found Jackie Kelk (as Homer Brown) the actor most consistent with his role. "Always slightly in need of a haircut and inclined to rattle around in his clothes, Jackie actually looks like he sounds."

By all accounts it was a happy cast. Goldsmith believed in two things: family love and keeping the cast happy. There could be bickering at the Aldrich house, but at the root of it was love. Said *Tune In*: "If Norman Tokar reads a line to his mother with the barest annoyance, the director is quick to remind him, 'Be nice to your mother, Henry, when you say that.'" Such a stickler for Aldrich ambience was Goldsmith that he had Dickie Jones as his houseguest in the summer of 1943, immersed in the language of the character he would assume that fall.

But it was Ezra Stone who made the biggest impact as Henry. He became a TV director after the series ended and in later life was director of the David Library of the American Revolution. Even in middle age he could get his voice "up" on demand for that broken echo of a lost era. The show peaked during his run, in 1941-42, and its fade was slow throughout the decade. Tapes reveal a charming period piece, silly, frivolous, undeniably crazy: nostalgic even to the jingle that set off the commercials:

*Oh, the big red letters stand for
the Jell-O family!*

*Oh, the big red letters stand for
the Jell-O family!*

That's Jell-O!

Yum-yum-yum!

Jell-O pudding!

Yum-yum-yum!

Jell-O Tap-i-oca Pudding, yes sir-eee!

ALEC TEMPLETON TIME, musical variety.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 4-Aug. 29, 1939, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 9:30. Summer substitute for *Fibber McGee and Molly*. Johnson's Wax. **ANNOUNCER:** Conrad Nagel. **VOCALIST:** Edna O'Dell. **ORCHESTRA:** Billy Mills.

Sept. 25, 1939–April 25, 1941, NBC. 30m, Mondays at 9:30 until June 1940, then Fridays at 7:30. Miles Laboratories for Alka-Seltzer. **ORCHESTRA:** Daniel Saidenberg, with a chorus of 16 voices. **VOCALIST:** Pat O'Malley, with Irish monologues and songs of the English North Country.

March 1–Aug. 27, 1943, Blue Network. 5m, Three a week. Dubonnet Wine.

June 2–Aug. 25, 1946, and June 1–Aug. 31, 1947, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 8. Summer series replacing *The Charlie McCarthy Show*.

Alec Templeton was a pianist, mimic, mnemonist, and satirist. Blind from birth, he came to the United States from Wales in 1936. His act was built around satire: with the Jack Hylton Orchestra, he created comic interpretations of the classics, and his first summer show highlighted this talent. He loved to dip in and out of classical pieces, mixing them, blending into new arrangements and current musical styles. He played popular songs in the manner of Strauss or Mozart to great effect.

Templeton had studied at London's Royal Academy and played with various American symphonies before his radio career began. His initial radio exposure came on *The Rudy Vallee Show*, *The Chase and Sanborn Hour*, *The Kraft Music Hall*, and *The Magic Key*. He was a voracious radio listener, "everything from *Vic and Sade* to *Toscanini*." He memorized his radio scripts by having them read to him 20 times. His longtime director and manager was Stanley North. They developed an intricate series of touch cues: North would squeeze Templeton's shoulder when the star was to speak or play; a finger across the back meant slow the tempo, and a squeeze with the forefinger meant pick it up. Templeton was clever and became popular with the so-called intellectual set.

ALIAS JANE DOE, adventure drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 7–Sept. 22, 1951, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at 1:30. Toni Home Permanents, Gillette Super Speed Razor. **CAST:** Kay Phillips as Jane Doe, the "lovely magazine writer" who assumes various roles in order to get her stories. Hollywood players included Tudor Owen, Lamont Johnson, Eric Sinclair, etc. **ANNOUNCER:** Frank Martin. **PRODUCER:** Rogers Brackett. **DIRECTOR:** Robert Shue. **WRITERS:**

Kay Phillips, E. Jack Neuman, John Michael Hayes.

ALIAS JIMMY VALENTINE, crime drama, based on the O. Henry story *A Retrieved Information*.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 18, 1938–Feb. 27, 1939, Blue Network. 30m, Tuesdays at 9:30 until April 1938 for Edgeworth Tobacco; Mondays at 7 beginning June 1938 for Dr. Lyons Tooth Powder. **CAST:** Bert Lytell as Jimmy Valentine, a safe-cracker; James Meighan also played the role. **PRODUCERS:** Frank and Anne Hummert.

ALICE JOY, THE DREAM SINGER, music and song; vaudevillian turned radio star.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 26, 1931–April 30, 1932, NBC. 15m, six a week at 7:30. Prince Albert Tobacco.

1932–34, Blue Network. 15m, various times.

Jan. 3, 1938–Feb. 25, 1938, NBC. 15m, three a week at 9:30 A.M.

ALMA KITCHELL, vocalist and interviewer.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Ca. 1927, WJZ, New York.

1928–1942, NBC, many formats and timeslots on Red and Blue Networks; also under titles *Let's Talk It Over*, *Women's Exchange*, and *Alma Kitchell's Brief Case*.

Alma Kitchell began as a singer of opera and later became an accomplished interviewer. She sang in NBC's first televised opera in 1939, and her programs on both radio and TV included family affairs, cooking, and chats with the famous. She died in 1996 at 103.

AMANDA OF HONEYMOON HILL, soap opera.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Feb. 5, 1940–April 26, 1946. Blue Network, 15m, daily at 3:15 until Aug. 1942; CBS thereafter, at 10:30 A.M. until 1943, then at 11 A.M. Cal Aspirin, Milk of Magnesia, Haley's MO. **CAST:** Joy Hathaway as Amanda Dyke Leighton, a "beauty of flaming red hair." Boyd Crawford, George Lambert, and Staats Cotsworth variously as Edward Leighton, "a handsome young southerner who lived in a mansion on the hill, married her, and took her away from her strict father, who kept her close to their Virginia

valley." Jack MacBryde as Amanda's father, Joseph Dyke, a common baker of bricks. Muriel Starr and Irene Hubbard as Susan Leighton, Edward's mother, a snob, a women's clubber. Cecil Roy and Florence Edney as kind old Aunt Maisie, "the wise old woman of the valley," who dispensed wisdom between puffs on her corn-cob pipe and helped Amanda weather emotional storms. John Connery as Colonel Leighton. Helen Shields as Sylvia Meadows. Jay Meredith as Marion Leighton. **ANNOUNCERS:** Howard Clancy, Frank Gallop, Hugh Conover. **PRODUCERS:** Frank and Anne Hummert. **DIRECTOR:** Ernest Ricca.

Amanda of Honeymoon Hill worked a much-used Hummert theme, the common girl who marries into a rich, aristocratic family. Amanda "had nothing in life except her own beauty, neither education nor background nor any real contact with the world." But "in spite of the hatred of both their families, they seek happiness on Honeymoon Hill in Virginia, in a world that few Americans know."

Edward was an artist who whiled away his days making portraits of Amanda. The war took him far away, to Abbeyville and the supervision of his factory, which had been converted to war production. Amanda stayed on the hill and helped in the nursery she had established for the children of war workers. Her father fretted that she would lose her common-folk heritage; his mother worried that Edward had married beneath his station. Overriding all else was a son, Robert Elijah, born to Amanda and dearly loved by all.

THE AMAZING MRS. DANBERRY, situation comedy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 21–June 16, 1946, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 8. Lewis-Howe for Tums. **CAST:** Agnes Moorehead as Mrs. Jonathan Danberry, "the lively widow of a department store owner who has a tongue as sharp as a hatpin and a heart as warm as summer." Also: Cathy Lewis, Dan Wolfe, Bill Johnstone. **ANNOUNCER:** Ken Niles. **DIRECTOR:** Helen Mack.

The Amazing Mrs. Danberry filled the slot held by *The Beulah Show* when Marlin "Beulah" Hurt died of a heart attack. First came a quickly assembled interim series, *Calamity Jane*, with Moorehead playing a bumptious newspaper

reporter battling the rackets. *Calamity* ran only three weeks (CBS, March 30–April 14); then the cast, under *Beulah* director Helen Mack, regrouped and came up with *Danberry*. Mrs. D. tried to delegate the store to her son but couldn't stop meddling. Other characters were banker Tom Stephen and the Danberry servants Judd and Prunella Tuttle.

THE AMAZING MR. SMITH, comedy-mystery.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 7–June 30, 1941, Mutual. 30m, Mondays at 8. American Can Company.

CAST: Keenan Wynn as Gregory Smith, "a carefree young man who runs into trouble galore and becomes an involuntary detective." Charlie Cantor as Herbie, Smith's valet, chauffeur, and man Friday. Also: Elizabeth Reller, Santos Ortega, Cliff Carpenter, John Brown. **ANNOUNCER:** Harry Von Zell. **MUSIC:** Harry Salter. **CREATOR-WRITERS:** Howard Harris, Martin Gosch. **DIRECTOR:** George McGarrett.

THE AMAZING MR. TUTT, lighthearted legal drama, based on the *Saturday Evening Post* stories of Arthur Train.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 5–Aug. 23, 1948, CBS. 30m, Mondays at 9:30. **CAST:** Will Wright as Ephraim Tutt, "America's most beloved lawyer, the old gentleman attorney at law with the stovepipe hat and the stogie." John Beal as Bonnie Doon, Tutt's "legal helper" and narrator of the tales. Norman Field as Judge Babson. Joe Granby as District Attorney O'Brien. Herb Rawlinson as Edgar, the courthouse guard. **ANNOUNCER:** Roy Rowan. **MUSIC:** Lud Gluskin. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Anton M. Leader. **WRITER:** Arnold Perl.

AMERICA IN THE AIR, war drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Aug. 8, 1943–Oct. 13, 1945, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 6:30 until Sept. 1944, then Saturdays at 7:30. Wrigley's Gum. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Les Weinrott. **WRITER:** David Harmon.

America in the Air was billed as "a tribute to the daring men of the United States Air Forces"; its purpose was "to give the average man on the ground a clear understanding of the Air Forces—

its men, its equipment, and its operations.” The first broadcast told of the Flying Fortress *Memphis Belle*. The series used both drama and interviews. It may have been an important show in the *Words at War* genre, but no broadcasts have been unearthed at this writing, and all known data comes from a CBS publicity release.

AMERICAN AGENT, spy drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Dec. 6, 1950–Sept. 26, 1951, ABC. 30m, Wednesdays at 8. Mars Candy. **CAST:** Jack McCarthy as Bob Barclay, globetrotting soldier of fortune. **ANNOUNCER:** Jay Michael. **PRODUCER:** George W. Trendle.

The American agent of the title led two lives. In real life, he was a foreign correspondent for “Amalgamated News”; under cover, he was an agent for the government. This premise was offensive to real newsmen, who flooded the network with angry mail. Their major complaint: that the series was hurting the case of real-life newsmen William Oatis, who was being held in Czechoslovakia on a charge of espionage. Producer Trendle fired back from Detroit, where the series was produced, telling *Newsweek* that the press corps was “too serious about themselves.” But by August 1951 Barclay had resigned from the wire service, and a month later he disappeared from the air.

THE AMERICAN ALBUM OF FAMILIAR MUSIC, traditional music by orchestra, soloists, and vocalists.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 11, 1931–Nov. 19, 1950, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 9 until 1933, then at 9:30. Bayer Aspirin.

Nov. 26, 1950–June 17, 1951, ABC. 30m, Sundays at 9:30. Bayer Aspirin.

COMPANY: Singers Frank Munn, Jean Dickenson, Elizabeth Lennox, Lucy Monroe, Evelyn MacGregor, Vivian della Chiesa, Virginia Rea, Donald Dame. **ORCHESTRA:** Gustave Haenschen. **ANNOUNCERS:** Andre Baruch, Howard Claney, Roger Krupp. **PIANO DUO:** Arden and Arden. **VIOLIN SOLOIST:** Bernard Hirsch. **VOCAL GROUP:** the 12-voice Buckingham Choir. **PRODUCERS:** Frank and Anne Hummert. **DIRECTOR:** James Haupt.

The American Album of Familiar Music was geared for mass appeal. Like the dozens of soap

operas created by Frank and Anne Hummert, the taste was decidedly blue-collar. “Not a song is sung or a melody played that hasn’t first been selected and okayed by Mr. and Mrs. Hummert,” said *Radio Mirror* of the show in 1939. “The Hummerts have only one rule for the music they select, but that’s a good one—it must be full of melody.”

It was “old-fashioned radio,” said *Mirror*, “without ballyhoo or studio audiences.” The Hummerts had discontinued the audience in 1938, deciding that the music was more effective if the room wasn’t filled with extra people. The cast alone was almost a roomful: the singers performed in full evening dress, a custom held over from the audience days, and rehearsal was long and arduous. Each Sunday the cast gathered at 5 P.M. Rehearsal consumed the evening, often lasting right up to air time.

Frank Munn, a barrel of a man, was one of radio’s major early singing stars. His career began in 1923; he starred on *The Palmolive Hour* and was installed on *American Album* in its first season. Billed as “the golden voice of radio,” Munn sang such favorites as *I’ll Take You Home Again*, *Kathleen*; *Home Sweet Home*; and *When You and I Were Young*, *Maggie*. He left the show abruptly in 1945 and retired from the air. Let it merely be said here that Munn was a man of independent mind: his life and character are more fully described in *The Mighty Music Box* by Thomas A. DeLong. Tenor Frank Parker came in as his replacement.

THE AMERICAN FORUM OF THE AIR, public affairs panel discussion.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1934–37, WOR-Mutual. *The Mutual Forum Hour*.

Dec. 26, 1937–Jan. 18, 1949, Mutual. Sundays until 1943, then Tuesdays; various timeslots, usually early evening; heard in 30m, 45m, and 60m seasons.

Oct. 30, 1949–March 11, 1956, NBC. 30m, Sundays, various timeslots, often midafternoon but as late as 10:30.

MODERATOR: Theodore Granik.

The roots of *The American Forum of the Air* were planted in New York’s Gimbel’s department store in 1928. Gimbel’s owned a radio station, WGBS: Theodore Granik, a young law student who worked for Gimbel’s, thus gravi-

tated into radio. Granik did continuity, wrote dialogue, reported sports events, and once, when an act failed to arrive, gave a Bible reading. His law studies gave him an idea for a radio show: it would be called *Law for the Layman*, a panel discussion on all kinds of legal issues. When the station was sold, Granik was offered a similar job at WOR.

He expanded his show beyond the law, working up an adversary format. His breakthrough came when a heated debate—virtually unheard of in radio then—erupted on the topic of Prohibition. The opponents were Rep. Emanuel Celler of New York and Mrs. Ella Boole of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Mrs. Boole charged congressmen with illegal drunkenness, saying that "underground passages" ran directly from their offices to some of Washington's most notorious speakeasies. This caused a national sensation, and the show was off and running.

It was the first regular series of its kind. When the Mutual Network was formed in 1934, with WOR as a flagship station, the *Forum*—then called *The Mutual Forum Hour*—became the centerpiece of its public affairs programming. Granik by then was a practicing attorney, with his office in Washington, and in 1937 the show was moved there to begin broadcasting as *The American Forum of the Air*.

Guests included then-Sen. Harry Truman, New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia, Norman Thomas, Dorothy Thompson, William Allen White, and Sen. Robert A. Taft. Topics ran the gamut, from New Deal legislation to labor strife, civil liberties, isolationism, government controls, fascism, and Communism. Though a staunch advocate of free speech, Granik refused to let Communists on the show, even when Communism was the topic. Other than that he tried to remain neutral while being (in the opinion of *Radio Mirror*) "firm, hard-headed, and diplomatic." Much of his time was spent deflecting personal barbs between the guests and keeping panelists on the issues.

The format was tight. Proponents and opponents were each allowed an opening statement; a panel discussion followed, questions were taken from the audience, and closing summations wrapped it up. Granik admitted that he looked for hot issues: if a major story was "broken" on the air, so much the better. *Forum* was

the only radio show reprinted verbatim in the *Congressional Record*: it sparked many floor debates in Congress, as lawmakers continued on Monday discussions they had heard on the Sunday broadcast.

The show won a Peabody, radio's highest award, and a television version opened in 1949. In addition to his radio work, Granik became an assistant district attorney in New York and did consulting work for the Selective Service Administration, the War Production Board, and the U.S. Housing Authority. He received no salary for the show, once estimating that even the expense money paid him fell \$250,000 short of out-of-pocket expenses over the duration.

AN AMERICAN IN ENGLAND, documentary drama, a landmark experiment produced under difficult wartime conditions.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Aug. 3–Sept. 7, 1942, CBS. 30m, Mondays at 10 via shortwave pickup from England. **CAST:** Joseph Julian as the "American in England." **MUSIC:** Royal Air Force Symphony Orchestra. **COMPOSER:** Benjamin Britten. **CREATOR-WRITER-PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Norman Corwin. **COPRODUCER:** Edward R. Murrow.

Dec. 1–Dec. 22, 1942, CBS. 30m, Tuesdays at 10 from New York. **CAST:** Joseph Julian. **MUSIC:** Lyn Murray. **WRITER-PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Norman Corwin.

An American in England was the story of Norman Corwin's visit to wartime Britain. He had been asked by CBS to observe and report on the character and hardships of a nation under siege. "The style suggested a fusing," wrote Erik Barnouw years later: "the drama of Corwin, the journalism of Murrow. They were, in fact, closely related forms of expression."

In his four months in England, wrote Corwin, "I did not once interview a high government official. The main objective of the series was to establish the character of the British *people* and not disseminate the handouts of the Ministry of Information. The people were soldiers, sailors, workers, miners, the theater manager, the elevator man, Police Officer Gilbert, the Everingtons, the Westerbys, Betty Hardy the actress, Henry Blogg the lifesaver, Mary Seaton the newspaperwoman, the RAF officer who handed me a dish in the mess and explained, 'This sausage is made of two in-

gredients—paper and sawdust'; the navigator, just returned from Wilhelmshaven, who said wistfully, 'Somehow we're always first in over the target'; the woman in Swansea who went to the Guildhall one morning following a severe blitz and turned in two suits of clothes, both nearly new, saying she had bought them for her two boys, killed in the raid."

The series was scheduled to begin July 27, 1942. It would air live at 4 A.M. London time and be carried to the United States, weather permitting, by shortwave. This presented technical problems of an unprecedented nature. No one knew how the 60-piece Royal Air Force Orchestra would sound on the transoceanic signal; no one knew until Corwin tested it with CBS executive Davidson Taylor on a closed-circuit London-to-New York procedure that the sound of a door slamming was "like a bomb going off" on the air. "This sound effects test ruled out at least two-thirds of my intended repertoire of sound," Corwin wrote in his book *Untitled and Other Radio Dramas*. Then there was the problem of a voice for the show. Though Corwin himself was the "American," the two eyes through which the panorama unfolded, he needed a radio actor to carry the part. After auditioning British actors, he called New York, and Joseph Julian was dispatched on a bomber, arriving the day before the scheduled broadcast.

The first show was star-crossed. Corwin had written a pretitle scene in which Julian was having trouble making a telephone connection. At the words "Hello? . . . Hello? . . . What's the matter with this line?" an engineer assumed the show was not coming through and cut the broadcast off the air, going with alternate programming. "No one heard it, except maybe a lonely RAF pilot flying over London," Corwin recalled. Murrow broke the news after the show; Corwin was deflated but bounced back—they would do the same show the following week. In fact, the atmosphere was so oppressive that week that most of the show would have been lost anyway.

So the show premiered in the United States the following week. The Sept. 7 broadcast, in which Murrow had a small speaking role, was snuffed by atmosphere. The stormy season was now at hand, so Corwin returned home and produced four additional shows from the relative comfort of CBS New York. Joseph Julian re-

turned to find that his performance had been lauded in the press. He became one of Corwin's favored players.

AN AMERICAN IN RUSSIA, documentary drama, promoted as an extension of Norman Corwin's *An American in England*.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 16–Jan. 30, 1943, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at 6:15. **NARRATOR:** Larry Lesueur, CBS newsman who covered the Russian front in 1941–42. **MUSIC:** Composed and conducted by Bernard Herrmann. **PRODUCER:** Norman Corwin. **DIRECTOR:** Guy della Cioppa. **WRITER:** Sylvia Berger.

Though only three shows were produced in this series of Larry Lesueur's Russian war experiences, the scope, historical significance, and talent involved made it a major undertaking. At this writing, no shows have circulated on tape, but a sense of the series is conveyed by a CBS press release from January 1943. "The final broadcast presents a picture of Moscow's people living in the shadow of the German juggernaut as it hurled high explosives into the city from the air and from long-range guns. Veterans of the Soviet defending armies shuttled back and forth between the mud-holes of the first-line trenches and the Moscow ballet." The three half-hours were shortwaved to England and heard on the BBC.

A year later, Corwin again focused on the Russian front, in a one-shot broadcast, *Concerning the Red Army* (CBS, Feb. 22, 1944). This was written by Norman Rosten, narrated by Martin Gabel, and again scored and conducted by Herrmann. It ended with the morale-building announcement that "during the period of this broadcast, the Red Army killed 3,000 Nazis in the Cherkassy and Nikopol encirclements." Corwin produced and directed.

THE AMERICAN MELODY HOUR, music in the mode of *The American Album of Familiar Music*.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 22, 1941–April 15, 1942, Blue Network. 30m, Wednesdays at 10 until Feb., then at 9. Bayer Aspirin.

April 21, 1942–July 7, 1948, CBS. 30m, Tuesdays at 7:30 until mid-1947, then Wednesdays at 8. Bayer Aspirin.

SINGERS: Vivian della Chiesa, who also served as hostess for two seasons; Bob Hannon, Evelyn MacGregor, Conrad Thibault, Eileen Farrell, Frank Munn. **PRODUCERS:** Frank and Anne Hummert.

AMERICAN NOVELS, dramatic anthology.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1947, 1948, NBC. 30m, Fridays and some Saturdays from Chicago. Premiere: July 4, 1947. **CAST:** Harry Elders, Harriet Allyn, Boris Aplon, Cliff Norton, Johnny Coons, Cliff Soubier, Jess Pugh, Charles Flynn, Sherman Marks, etc. **MUSIC:** Emil Soderstrom, Bernard Berquist. **DIRECTOR:** Homer Heck.

This was part of a larger series, *The World's Great Novels*, offering classics in single shows and in continuations. It was staged by the NBC University of the Air and offered a *Handbook of the World's Great Novels* to listeners. These shows were direct forerunners to *The NBC University Theater*. *American Novels* was heard during the summer months.

THE AMERICAN RADIO NEWSREEL, news and interviews, one of the early attempts at cut-and-edit syndication.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1939, transcribed syndication. **CREATOR-PRODUCER:** Erich Don Pam. **WRITER:** Joseph Johnston.

The process was the problem when *American Radio Newsreel* went into production in the fall of 1939. The idea was to catch newsmakers and celebrities for recorded interviews, edit these into a smooth 15-minute show, then make these shows available to the 300 stations that had no network affiliation, at a rate these independents could afford. The subjects might be Hollywood stars, sports heroes, aviators, or witnesses to some disaster: their words were blended with music and sound effects on a transcription disc and shipped to subscriber stations. Rates were \$12.50 per show (\$7.50 for little 100-watters) and an even split of any sponsor monies that might accrue. The flavor was that of a movie newsreel, and the response was strong. Within a month, 150 stations had signed on for twice-a-week broadcast. Early shows included pieces on Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, and Dick Powell. Reporter Bill Harding is shown in one photograph interviewing Martha Raye. Recordings took place "in the field" and were edited in the stu-

dio. "By this process," said *Newsweek*, "isolated current events are joined in a diversified but unified table d'hôte for the ear." The day of canned radio had arrived.

THE AMERICAN REVUE, musical variety.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 22, 1933–Feb. 25, 1934, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 7. American Oil Company. **CAST:** Blues singer Ethel Waters. **ORCHESTRA:** Jack Denny.

THE AMERICAN SCENE, syndicated drama based on articles from *American* magazine and "authenticated" by the editors.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1937, 15m transcription. **CAST:** Dunbar Bigelow, news editor of the magazine and "stage manager" of the broadcasts.

Typical features of this series were the life stories of Buck Jones and Paul Muni. A show called *Gun Crazy* pretended to be the story of the Brady gang "as presented by head G-man John Edgar Hoover," but Hoover did not appear on the broadcast.

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF THE AIR, perhaps the most outstanding show in educational radio, offered as a teaching supplement; the equivalent of a half-hour course, often dramatized by radio's top actors.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Feb. 4, 1930–April 30, 1948, CBS. 30m. Mostly five a week at 2:30; moved to 9:15 A.M. in 1939; to 5 in 1945. **CAST:** Parker Fennelly, Mitzi Gould, Ray Collins, Chester Stratton, and others from the New York radio pool. Gene Leonard and Betty Garde as mother and father of *The Hamilton Family*, a popular skit in the 1930s about a globetrotting family who enlightened the audience on geography; Walter Tetley, Ruth Russell, Albert Aley, and John Monks as their children. **ANNOUNCERS:** Robert Trout, John Reed King, etc. **MUSICAL DIRECTION:** Dorothy Gordon, one of the best-known children's programmers; Channon Collinge. **SUPERVISORS:** Dr. Lyman Bryson, Sterling Fisher. **DIRECTORS:** Most of the CBS New York staff worked the show, including Earle McGill, George Allen, Albert Ward, Brewster Morgan, Marx Loeb, John Dietz, Howard Barnes, and Richard Sanville. **WRITERS:** Hans Christian Adamson, Edward

Mabley, Howard Rodman, and others. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Walter Otto, Jerry McCarty.

So new was the concept of education by radio when *The American School of the Air* opened that few teachers were interested. But soon the show was required listening in classrooms around the country. Some states integrated it into their formal curricula, and network writers prepared teaching manuals to help blend the show into classwork.

By 1939 *School* was using this format: on Mondays its topic was *Frontiers of Democracy*, telling true stories of industry and agriculture; Tuesdays, *Folk Music of America* (retitled frequently to reflect different musical forms); Wednesdays, *New Horizons*, describing the feats of American explorers; Thursdays, *Tales from Near and Far*; and Fridays, *This Living World*, offering dramas and discussions of contemporary life. The *New Horizons* show of April 26, 1939, presented Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews, explorer, on a trip to "the fabled islands of spice and pearls" in the South Pacific. Discussion centered on weather, pearl diving, equipment, and sharks. Helen Lyon, a series regular, asked the questions a child might ask: How are pearls formed? How was it to trek through the jungles of Borneo?

The series was not offered for sponsorship, carried for 18 years as a CBS public affairs offering. The full resources of the network were available to the program: when Hitler invaded Austria in 1938, CBS found itself momentarily short of on-scene newsmen, as both Edward R. Murrow and William L. Shirer were helping set up a *School* music broadcast.

In 1940 Sterling Fisher expanded the scope, initiating *The American School of the Air of the Americas*, and by 1941 15 countries were receiving the broadcasts. An advisory board set the show's policy. The theme, *Lenore Overture Number 3*, by Beethoven, was set off by a distinctive trumpet call, played live from CBS in New York.

AMERICAN WOMEN, patriotic drama; stories of women in the war effort.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Aug. 2, 1943–June 23, 1944, CBS. 15m, daily at 5:45. Wrigley's Gum. **CAST:** Charlotte Manson and Eloise Kummer, narrators. **WRITERS:** Frank and Doris Hursley.

THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S JURY, human interest; advice in a mock trial setting.

BROADCAST HISTORY: May 15, 1944–March 16, 1945, Mutual. 15m, daily at 1:45. **CAST:** Dolly Springer as Judge Emily Williams. Evelyn Hackett as Jane Allen, defense attorney. Bill Syran as Robert Coulter, prosecutor and devil's advocate. **CREATOR-WRITER:** George Simpson. **PRODUCER:** Don Fitzgerald.

Listeners would write in with problems; a "jury" of 12 women was assembled to hear evidence on both sides and give a decision. *The American Women's Jury* was described by *Radio Life* as "a three-way parlay of courtroom drama, confession, and soap opera." Problems ranged from a husband's misery at the hands of his mother-in-law to the young wife forced to live with her husband's parents after the husband went into the service. Infidelity was a key ingredient, though *Time* noted that "no two-time divorcées or multiwidowed women are allowed."

Broadcast from Boston, the show came with a judge and opposing attorneys who all were impersonated by actors. It opened to three raps of a gavel and a call to order. Judge Emily Williams would read the letter describing the problem of the day; the jury—drawn from Boston-area women's clubs—could vote one of two possible solutions. As prosecutor Coulter, Bill Syran was surrounded by 14 female adversaries each day and hence was once called "the bravest man in radio." Some of the verdicts were surprising: real-life mothers-in-law often voted against their own kind, and in one case a jury unanimously voted that a woman should stay with her unfaithful husband.

AMERICANS ALL, IMMIGRANTS ALL, cultural documentary drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Nov. 13, 1938–May 7, 1939, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 2. **MUSICAL DIRECTOR:** Leon Goldman. **DIRECTORS:** Earle McGill, William N. Robson. **WRITER:** Gilbert Seldes.

This series highlighted the contributions of the many ethnic and cultural groups who helped build the nation. Twenty-six shows were produced by the Department of the Interior, with WPA assistance. Topics included *Our Hispanic*

Heritage, The Negro, The Irish, The Germans, and The Jews.

AMERICA'S HOUR, documentary drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 14–Sept. 22, 1935, CBS. 60m, Sundays at 8. **MUSIC:** Howard Barlow. **PRODUCERS:** Dwight Cooke, Max Wylie.

America's Hour was a product of the Depression, created by CBS president William S. Paley to help lift the country out of the blues. It marked an important break with broadcasting tradition, the first time an American network devoted 60 minutes of prime entertainment programming to—as *Newsweek* put it—“editorialize on current conditions.” The magazine called it “Paley’s Invitation-to-Recovery Waltz,” a full-hour melodrama with casts of up to 50 players, a large studio orchestra, and the network’s full production staff. An unknown Orson Welles appeared with four players—Agnes Moorehead, Ray Collins, Joseph Cotten, and Betty Garde—who three years later would play significant roles in *The Mercury Theater on the Air*. The stories were of railroads, hospitals, mining, aviation, shipping: the shows praised the mutual worker-employer relationship and denounced “radicals who preach discontent.”

The premiere was July 14. The *Newsweek* critic found it “replete with social wisdom,” though producer Cooke denied any intention to boost a political agenda. “All we want to do is boost America.” The importance of *America's Hour* was its style. It gave rise to the patriotic genre that so infused network broadcasting during World War II. Norman Corwin would bring this kind of radio to its zenith.

AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR, public affairs discussion.

BROADCAST HISTORY: May 30, 1935–July 1, 1936, Blue Network/ABC. 60m, Thursdays at 9:30 until 1941, then in various timeslots—30m, 45m, and 60m: Thursdays, most often at 8:30, 1942–47; Tuesdays at 8:30, 1947–49; Tuesdays at 9, 1950–54; Sundays at 8, 1955–56. **MODERATOR:** George V. Denny Jr. **ANNOUNCER:** Ed Herlihy, Howard Claney, Milton Cross, Ben Grauer, George Gunn, Gene Kirby. **PRODUCER:** Marian Carter. **DIRECTORS:** Wylie Adams, Leonard Blair, Richard Ritter.

America's Town Meeting of the Air was broadcast from Town Hall, New York, at 123 West 43rd Street. The hall had opened Jan. 15, 1921. The League for Political Education, an outgrowth of the suffrage era, was established in 1894 and still met there. Its associate director, George V. Denny Jr., was interested in the idea of a Town Hall radio series. Mrs. Richard C. Patterson, League director, was the wife of an NBC executive, and the program was given a six-week trial run.

The six weeks became two decades. The mail sometimes ran to 4,000 pieces a week. More than 1,000 debate and discussion clubs were formed to listen to the broadcast and continue the debate on into the night. In 1936 *Radio Mirror* termed the show “a stupendous innovation for radio.”

What made *Town Meeting* so different and volatile was its format. Other shows, even Theodore Granik’s lively *American Forum of the Air*, discouraged hecklers. On *Town Meeting*, open condemnation of the speakers by the audience was expected. In each audience, said Max Wylie in choosing a *Town Meeting* show as one of the best broadcasts of 1938–39, was certain to be “a scattered but recurrent percentage of irresponsibles, drunks, and crackpots.” Moderator Denny tried but couldn’t weed them all out. On one show a questioner yelled, “I don’t object to President Roosevelt using the radio to inform the country on the state of the nation, but I do object to his using it to propagate!”

And if this wasn’t enough, the guests themselves often came to the edge of violence. Heywood Broun and Julian Mason seemed ready to do physical battle on the air. At least one libel suit was brought as a result of the verbal fireworks, and almost every kind of debating tactic was put into play. The guests were political and philosophical opposites, their causes heartfelt and of long standing. Most were at home with the microphone, but on *America's Town Meeting* even such radio veterans as Socialist Norman Thomas admitted to bouts of nerves. It wasn’t the first half of the show that worried them: that was when the opposing guests were each given 10 to 20 minutes to make their best arguments. What drove Thomas, Dorothy Thompson, and others to distraction was the free-for-all with the studio audience. “The speakers heckle each other and the audience heckles everybody,” *Time* reported in January

1938. "What a chance to make a fool of yourself on a national scale."

Moderator Denny loved it. The last thing he wanted was an orderly, polite meeting. He went into each show prepared, and hoping, for a verbal bloodbath.

A reading of titles and guests reveals the potential for heated disagreement. The opening show, May 30, 1935, was *Which Way America—Communism, Fascism, Socialism, or Democracy?* Listeners heard Eleanor Roosevelt debate Mrs. Eugene Meyer on the pros and cons of the New Deal, and noted black author Langston Hughes was a guest for *Let's Face the Race Question*. Other program titles included *Do We Have a Free Press?* and *Are Parents or Society Responsible for Juvenile Crime?* Denny often took the show on the road. A broadcast from Los Angeles in May asked, "Is America losing its morals?" Actress Irene Dunne and the Rev. J. Herbert Smith said yes; Eddie Cantor and historian Will Durant thought not.

The show opened to the sound of the town crier's bell and his voice calling people to an old-style town meeting. Denny was fond of displaying a small ball, black on one side, white on the other, and asking someone in the audience to tell him its color. There are two sides to everything, the people learned when Denny revealed the other hue. Denny also liked to say that his show had three basic ingredients—conflict, suspense, and fair play. "Everything possible is done to ensure a hearing for all points of view," Max Wylie wrote. As early as 1936, Denny had installed a remote system, which allowed people from all parts of the nation to be beamed in for their two cents worth. He loved having such intellectuals as Carl Sandburg, John Gunther, and Pearl Buck. "I would rather put on author Will Durant than philosopher John Dewey," he told *Time* in 1938. He admitted that his shows contributed little new information: their main function was to stimulate. His favorite guests were those with "fire and color," he told *Radio Life*.

Said Max Wylie: *Town Meeting* made it essential for a man to listen to all sides of an argument in order to hear his own. The Town Hall, which had such modest origins on 43rd Street, had "lengthened its shadow until it stretched to the Pacific Coast." The broadcasts were published in pamphlet form (by Columbia University Press), and in 1938–39 more than 250,000

copies were sold to people who wanted "a permanent record of what had been said." For many years Denny turned down offers of sponsorship, fearing that commercial interests would inhibit free talk. For only one season, 1944–45, was a sponsor, *Reader's Digest*, associated with the show.

AMOS 'N' ANDY, a comedy milestone that grew out of a prenetwork series, *Sam 'n' Henry*, and was heard in various formats, in many timeslots, and across several networks in a 34-year run.

BROADCAST HISTORY: As *Sam 'n' Henry*: Jan. 12, 1926–Dec. 18, 1927 (586 episodes), WGN, Chicago. 15m continuation, weekdays.

As *Amos 'n' Andy*: March 19, 1928–Aug. 16, 1929, WMAQ, Chicago. 15m continuation.

Aug. 19, 1929–Dec. 31, 1937, NBC, Blue Network until 1935, then Red Network. 15m continuation, initially at 10; at 7 after 1930. Pepsodent.

Jan. 3, 1938–March 31, 1939, NBC Red. 15m continuation, weekdays at 7. Campbell Soups.

April 3, 1939–Feb. 19, 1943, CBS. 15m continuation, weekdays at 7. Campbell Soups.

Oct. 8, 1943–June 1, 1945, NBC. Fridays at 10. Reorganized and heard as a 30m situation comedy with new characters, a new announcer, and an orchestra. Lever Brothers for Rinso.

Oct. 2, 1945–July 6, 1948, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 9. Rinso.

Oct. 10, 1948–May 22, 1955, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 7:30. Rinso until mid-1949, then Rexall.

Sept. 13, 1954–Nov. 25, 1960, CBS. 25, 30, 45m, weeknights at 9:30 until 1956, then at 7. Reorganized as *The Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall*, with the characters playing records, disc-jockey style, and talking among themselves or with guests between songs. Multiple sponsorship.

CAST: Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll as Amos Jones and Andrew H. Brown, blacks from the South who moved to Chicago. Gosden also as George Stevens, the conniving "Kingfish" of the Mystic Knights of the Sea lodge hall, and as Lightning', the slow-talking janitor at the lodge hall. Correll also as Henry Van Porter and Brother Crawford. In the early serial days it was a two-man show, with Gosden and Correll playing any role required. *The cast after 1943:* Ernestine Wade as Sapphire Stevens, wife of the Kingfish. Amanda

Randolph as Mamma, the Kingfish's mother-in-law. Harriette Widmer as Madame Queen, Andy's most notorious flame. Elinor Harriot as Ruby Taylor, Amos's wife. Terry Howard as Arbadella, Amos's daughter. Madeline Lee as Miss Genevieve Blue, secretary of the Fresh Air Taxi company. Lou Lubin as Shorty the Barber. Eddie Green as Stonewall, the crooked lawyer. Johnny Lee as lawyer Algonquin J. Calhoun. **ANNOUNCERS:** Bill Hay until 1943; then Del Sharbutt for less than a year; then Harlow Wilcox; also, Art Gilmore. **MUSIC:** Gaylord Carter (organ throughout the serial days); Lud Gluskin, 1944-45, then Jeff Alexander's Orchestra and chorus. **VOCAL GROUP:** The Jubilaires (Theodore Brooks, John Jennings, George MacFadden, Caleb Ginyard). **WRITERS:** Gosden and Correll exclusively in the early series; Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher, head writers and producers of the sitcom, with Bob Fisher, Arthur Stander, Harvey Helm, Shirley Illo, Paul Franklin, Octavus Roy Cohen, etc. **THEME:** *The Perfect Song from Birth of a Nation*. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Frank Pittman and Ed Ludes (NBC); David Light and Gus Bayz (CBS).

It was perhaps the most popular radio show of all time. At its peak, *Amos 'n' Andy* held the hearts and minds of the American people as nothing did before or since.

Media analysts have picked at it for 60 years. Historians have marveled at the grip in which two white men, performing in black dialect, held the nation. Marquees on movie houses in early 1931 announced that the film would be stopped at 7 P.M., so the audience would not miss a word of *Amos 'n' Andy*. The show was piped into theaters, and newspapers published daily accounts of the serial's progress. When Amos was arrested and charged with murder, interest was at such a fever pitch that during the broadcast no one rode the buses, no one used the toilet ("Sanitary engineers finally figured out why the sewer pipes barely carried a flow between 7 and 7:15, then erupted with a roar immediately afterward," wrote Bart Andrews and Ahrgus Juilliard in *Holy Mackerel*, their biography of the show), no one visited, made plans, or was robbed. The listening audience was estimated at 40 million, almost one-third of Americans living at that time. In big-city neighborhoods and small midwestern towns, people could stroll down streets on warm

spring nights and listen to the show as they walked. Every window was open; every radio was tuned to *Amos 'n' Andy*.

Why?

Radio itself was new then. It was the new national pastime, requiring no long drive to the ballpark or tedious waits in line. *Amos 'n' Andy* was a phenomenon waiting to happen. The country was in a desperate economic depression, and *Amos 'n' Andy* brought nightly relief from the fundamental worries of staying alive. Amos Jones and Andrew H. Brown were the commonest of common men: they symbolized the poor Joe with no money, no job, and no future.

People who couldn't afford the vaudeville acts of Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny, and Fred Allen got *Amos 'n' Andy* free of charge. Later all the major vaudevillians would invade radio, but *Amos 'n' Andy* had been there first. It is generally considered the first great radio show. Its format was original: it was the first significant serial, utilizing the surefire elements of sympathetic characters, comedy, and suspense. The cliff-hanger endings gripped listeners at a primal level and held them for weeks.

Freeman Gosden was born May 5, 1899, in Richmond, Va. His family was rooted in Old South tradition: its sons had fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. Gosden sold cars and tobacco as a young man and served as a Navy radio operator in World War I.

Charles Correll was born in Peoria, Ill., Feb. 2, 1890. He worked as a stenographer and a bricklayer while coveting a career in show business. About 1919 Gosden and Correll went to work for the Joe Bren Producing Company, which offered services to amateur, charity, and other small theatrical groups. Correll signed on in Peoria and was sent to Durham, N.C., where he met Gosden, who was working for another unit of the same company. In 1924 Bren added a circus division: Gosden and Correll were anchored in Chicago as managers and roomed together as pals.

In their apartment, they filled their spare time singing harmony: Gosden would play the ukelele and Correll the piano. They began accepting engagements, billing themselves as the Life of the Party. A friend suggested that they go into radio. One appearance on WQGA was all the encour-

agement they needed, wrote Andrews and Juilliard: they auditioned for Bob Boneil at WEBH, "a small station located in a tiny studio off the main dining room at the Edgewater Beach Hotel."

Literally, they played for their supper: the station could not pay them, except in meals. They did a six-a-week songfest at 11:30 P.M., which was well enough received that they decided to quit their jobs and go into radio. WGN, owned by the *Chicago Tribune*, offered \$250 a week for a show that was eventually broadened to include impersonations and humorous chats between musical numbers. It was then suggested that they develop a "strip show," so called because the five skits each week were likened to an audio comic strip. The *Tribune* wanted a show patterned after one of its popular comic strips, but Gosden and Correll turned instead to their roots. Both knew what passed in those days for Negro dialect. They worked up a scenario that, within a week, was on the air as *Sam 'n' Henry*.

The characters were Sam Smith and Henry Johnson. The story, mirroring the real-life pattern of countless poor blacks at that time, followed two "boys" from Birmingham who came north to seek their fortune. In Chicago, Sam and Henry found a grim hand-to-mouth existence that listeners everywhere understood. The storylines—each about two weeks long—were about the perils of the times. After a slow start, Gosden and Correll signed a two-year contract at \$300 a week, and the ratings continued to improve. Soon the show was so popular it became obvious they had undersold themselves. To capitalize on their own creation, Gosden and Correll proposed a novel idea: they would record the show on discs and sell them to stations outside the Chicago listening area. But WGN balked at this: the station owned the show and the names of its two characters and would grant no permissions for use in other markets. Gosden and Correll worked for wages until the contract expired, leaving the station after the broadcast of Dec. 18, 1927.

They found the deal at WMAQ more to their liking. They were allowed to record, and the transcribed version of their new show, *Amos 'n' Andy*, began to build a national audience. Legend has it that Gosden and Correll decided on the new names while riding up in an elevator for

their first WMAQ broadcast. In fact, the decision followed weeks of hard thought: they wanted names typical of southern blacks; they wanted simple names with biblical undertones.

Everything about *Amos 'n' Andy* (except the music and the announcing) was done by Gosden and Correll. They wrote the scripts, often just before air time, and enacted all the voices. In a complicated scene, such as the courtroom sequences in the Amos murder trial, they might use as many as ten voice changes. They broadcast in solitude, sitting at a table in an otherwise empty studio. Even the placement of the single microphone they shared was done with great care. Correll, as Andy, would lean close, within an inch of the mike, and speak in a deep, mellow voice. As Amos, Gosden was about two feet away, delivering his lines in a high-pitched wail. Gosden used a different microphone position for the chiseling George "Kingfish" Stevens and yet another, very close, for the young boy Sylvester, who figured so prominently in the early shows. In the writing, Gosden would often dictate while Correll, using the shorthand he had learned as a stenographer, would transcribe and later type the script. Gosden would pace while he talked out the skit: he would flip coins as he talked, pouring them from hand to hand. The finished script was then placed on the table between them.

"The boys are in character every minute they are on the air," it was revealed in an early premium book, *All About Amos 'n' Andy*. If a line called for Andy to ask for a pencil, Gosden would hand him one. Cigarettes and cigars were lit, dishes and glasses broken, and food consumed during the broadcast. If either character was called upon to take off his shoes, the star did likewise, and "the listener hears a very life-like grunt of relief."

They never looked at each other during the broadcast—the chance of breaking into laughter was too great. Once Gosden had to douse himself with a glass of water to keep from breaking up on the air. They did the show cold, with no rehearsal, believing in the spontaneity this gained them. They were so engrossed in the ten-minute sketches they created that, according to announcer Bill Hay, they often left the studio with tears in their eyes.

The new serial was an instant hit in Chicago,

and the syndicated recordings were beating NBC programming in markets where they played. Soon the network beckoned, and there success was massive and instantaneous. Gosden and Correll were now splitting a quarter-million-dollar annual paycheck. By 1931 they were listed along with Will Rogers as "public gods." That was their peak year: the show drew a CAB rating of more than 50 points, and listeners included Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover. Gosden and Correll were guests at the White House, George Bernard Shaw issued his much-quoted tribute ("There are three things I'll never forget about America—the Rocky Mountains, Niagara Falls, and *Amos 'n' Andy*"), and the nation literally stopped for 15 minutes every night.

Amos 'n' Andy was an outgrowth of *Sam 'n' Henry*, with certain differences. Amos Jones and Andy Brown had come to Chicago from Atlanta, not Birmingham. Their struggle had a harder edge in 1929 than it had a few years earlier. The early shows revolved around money—how to get it, how to keep it: never, it seemed, was there enough. They lived in a State Street rooming house in a neighborhood populated with others like themselves. There was Fred the Landlord, who listened sympathetically to their woes. There were the Kingfish and other officers of the Mystic Knights of the Sea, people known only as "the Shad," "the Mackerel," "the Whale," and "the Swordfish." There was Ruby Taylor, love of Amos's life, described in *All About Amos 'n' Andy* as "pretty, sweet, and intelligent, daughter of a well-to-do owner of a local garage." There was the Widow Parker ("Snook-ems" to Andy), who was "practiced in the arts of love and a graduate of five marriages." Her breach of promise suit helped keep those vast early audiences hanging, the trial dragging on until, just as Andy was facing a certain guilty verdict, the widow screamed and fainted. Listeners had to wait until Monday to learn that she had spotted her husband in the courtroom crowd, a man everyone supposed had been lost at sea. A similar ruse had been played on the audience in the Amos murder trial. Just as Amos was being convicted, an alarm went off: listeners learned that the entire sequence had been a bad dream. If such a device seems crude and unfair today, it did not seem quite that way at the beginning of broadcasting.

Some of the early characters, such as George

"Kingfish" Stevens, would be around for decades: others, like the urchin Sylvester, all but disappeared as the serial developed. Sylvester, who was described as a "loyal and lovable friend of the boys," helped solve a mystery in 1929 when he, Amos, and Andy captured the culprits who had robbed the garage safe. Sylvester also put the skids to the main rival in Amos's pursuit of lovely Ruby Taylor. Gosden claimed to have modeled the character on a childhood pal, a black kid identified only as "Snowball." By the early 1930s, the breakdown of minor parts went this way: Gosden played Sylvester, the Shad, the Mackerel, and Ruby Taylor's father; Correll was Fred the Landlord, the Whale, and the Swordfish. No women were heard on these early broadcasts. Ruby Taylor and the Widow Parker were characterized by being discussed and in one-sided telephone conversations. Only in one other show, Paul Rhymer's *Vic and Sade*, did characters come so fully to life in absentia.

In Chicago, the boys went into business. They sank \$25 into a rattletrap automobile and formed the Fresh Air Taxi Company, "Incopolated," so named because the cab had no windshield. The abuses of language were memorable and deep. "I'se regusted" was a national catchphrase. "Ya doan mean tuh tell me," Amos would wail. Other well-knowns in his vocabulary were "Ain't dat sumpin'" and "I ain't-a-gonna-do-it." Andy was often "layin' down to think," "puttin' muh head to it," or "workin' on de books." This was the world that Amos and Andy created alone. It would change as the times changed: eventually Amos would be virtually dropped from the story, and in his place Andy would be supported by the Kingfish. The Kingfish was introduced when the show was still on WMAQ, on May 25, 1928, and in later years he would become the series' pivotal character.

By the mid-1930s the show was losing its audience. From a high of 53.4 in 1931, it fell to 22.6 in 1935, 11.6 in 1940, and 9.4 in 1943. New voices had been added: the Kingfish's wife Sapphire, who initially had simply been called "the Battleaxe," and Sapphire's truly abrasive Mamma. But the erosion continued, and even such old-style cliffhangers as the "Andy's wedding" episode, climaxing May 3, 1939, were not enough to save it. Still, the wedding show remains a prime example of the serial at its

most polished. The ceremony took up the entire broadcast. At last the moment of truth is at hand. The minister turns to Andy. Will he take this woman? The answer is on his lips when suddenly a shot rings out! Andy falls wounded! Panic erupts throughout the church, while in the background we hear that famed cry of distress from Amos: "Ow-wah! ow-wah! ow-wah!"

A national debate ensued. Was Andy married or not? Lawyers and clergy wrote opinions, and it almost seemed like old times. But *Amos 'n' Andy* had slipped to 60th place in the ratings. By early 1943 tough choices had to be made.

The show would return that fall as a situation comedy, and the toughest choice was that of announcer. Bill Hay had been with Gosden and Correll for 15 years. His delivery was of the old school, low-key and simple. "Ladies and gentlemen, *Amos 'n' Andy*" was his entire announcement in the serial days. The new show would be half an hour, with a writing staff, a big band, a chorus, and a full supporting cast. Bill Hay was out, heartbroken. Among the new voices would come Shorty the Barber, who stuttered his way through every line and always ended up with a one-or two-word summary, often the opposite of what he'd been trying to say. Miss Genevieve Blue, secretary of the cab company, became fully realized: Andy's line "Buzz me, Miz Blue" was well known in this era. Amos's little daughter Arbadella was given voice, in the annual Christmas show that was an instant classic. Arbadella had her heart set on a doll for Christmas. Andy took a job as a department store Santa to earn the money, suffered abuse from children all day long, got the doll, and brought it to Amos's house as an anonymous gift. In the closing sequence, Amos explained to the child the true meaning of Christmas while on the radio the chorus sang the Lord's Prayer.

There were more new voices, notably the lawyer Stonewall, whose lines were funny and sharp. Andy would say, "Stonewall, is you tryin' to gits me to do sumpthin' as mean and crooked as dat?" And Stonewall, without a pause, would say, "Oh, man, yeah!" When actor Eddie Green moved on, actor Johnny Lee brought in a new lawyer-figure, the conniving eel Algonquin J. Calhoun. The show now thrived on funny one-liners. The Kingfish spoke of going to a fine restaurant and savoring the piece de resistance; Andy reckoned that, if he liked it enough, he

might have two pieces. The audience laughed anew: never mind that every show was a carbon of the one before. Now the plots revolved around the double-dealings of the Kingfish, with Andy the inevitable victim. If Kingfish wasn't selling Andy a piece of the moon, it was the Brooklyn Bridge or a car with no motor. The Kingfish always needed money: his crisis of the week would result in a scheme so outlandish that only Andy would fall for it. So slick was the Kingfish that, around 1929, Louisiana's most famous politician, Huey P. Long, had been nicknamed for the Gosden character.

Andy was the perfect fool, thick of voice, dense, single, and pudgy. He wore a derby, smoked old stogies, and made the chasing of women his life's work. He never worked for a living but usually had a little money, which kept him ripe for the con games of the Kingfish. As for Amos, he had come far from the character of the late twenties, when he was a stooge berated by Andy. He had achieved in the half-hour show an almost elder statesman status. Wise, pure of heart, he was always able to see a Kingfish scheme for what it was.

Like its predecessor, the half-hour show was resilient. It immediately doubled the 1942 rating, leaping to a 17.1 and eventually edging into the low twenties. The show moved to CBS in 1948, when the chairman of that network, William S. Paley, raided the cream of NBC's comedy stock with deals involving vast tax breaks to the stars. This resulted in an outright sale of *Amos 'n' Andy* to CBS for more than \$2 million. Just as it had been one of the first of its kind, *Amos 'n' Andy* was one of the last. It ran on CBS until 1955, but even then the characters lived on—*The Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall*, a watered-down disc jockey show, endured on the network until 1960.

A few shows from the '20s are on tape, a few more from the thirties. The best sample of the serial is the wedding episode of 1939. Long runs of the half-hour show are available in excellent sound quality. Listeners who have never liked this kind of humor will like it no better today. As comedy, the shows hold up well, and the lines can still be funny. There is little doubt that *Amos 'n' Andy* was one of radio's great shows: even the embarrassing *Music Hall* cannot diminish that. But the social history of the program is rocky. Such historians as William Manchester

dismissed it as "a racial slur," and even in the early days battle lines were drawn. A petition by the *Pittsburgh Courier* to have *Amos 'n' Andy* removed from the air drew almost 750,000 names in 1931. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People attacked the series in the '30s and was its bitter foe throughout, becoming especially vocal when the television show began in 1951. While the radio show continued relatively unscathed, the NAACP condemned the TV series, calling it a "national disgrace," and sued CBS. Ironically, black actors were used on television (with Alvin Childress, Spencer Williams Jr., and Tim Moore in the lead roles), but on TV, said the NAACP, the entire black race seemed crooked, stupid, or cowardly. The TV show was forced off the air in the outcry; after a period of syndication, the films were withdrawn and have not been seen in more than 40 years.

Gosden, Correll, and their sponsors countered the criticism by saying that their show was enjoyed by blacks as well as whites. Their entertainment was harmless fun, they said; they meant no real harm; they were quite fond of Negroes and would often play benefits for black children. In their behalf it was said that the blacks who complained were unreasonable and hypersensitive. In fact, many blacks did like the show: whether this approached a majority was never determined. One thing is certain: Gosden and Correll were on the defensive almost from the beginning. Their 1929 book has pictures of the pair backslapping and joking with "colored boys" in various locales. The "coloreds" look happy, delighted to have them there. It was a different world then. Gosden was especially stung by the criticism. He withdrew from public life when the show had finally run its last, refusing interview requests and seldom seen. He declined to comment when Correll died Sept. 26, 1972. Gosden died Dec. 10, 1982.

ANCHORS AWEIGH, wartime series of Navy music, talk, and variety.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Dec. 13, 1941–Feb. 28, 1943, Mutual. 30m, Saturdays, Sundays, usually early evenings. **CAST:** Tenor Glenn Burris, Lt. George O'Brien, Lt. Cmdr. Perry Wood. **ANNOUNCER:** Terry O'Sullivan: "Your Navy needs

you!" **MUSIC:** Leon Leonardi with a 32-piece Navy band. **PRODUCER:** Dave Titus.

This series featured guest stars, interviews, and stories of the sea. Among the guests were George Burns and Gracie Allen, Freddie Bartholomew, and cowboy star Jimmy Wakely.

THE ANDREWS SISTERS, musical variety with popular tunes and guest stars.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Dec. 31, 1944–Sept. 23, 1945, ABC. 30m, Sundays at 4:30. *The Andrews Sisters' Eight-to-the-Bar Ranch*. Nash-Kelvinator for Norge.

Oct. 3, 1945–March 27, 1946, ABC. 30m, Wednesdays at 10:30. *The N-K Musical Showroom*. Nash-Kelvinator.

CAST: the Andrews Sisters (LaVerne, Maxene, and Patti), Curt Massey and the Ambassadors, Foy Willing and the Riders of the Purple Sage, and George "Gabby" Hayes, perennial sidekick of western B-picture heroes (all 1944–45 only, the second season featured the Andrews Sisters with guest stars). **ANNOUNCER:** Andre Baruch. **MUSIC:** Vic Schoen.

The Andrews Sisters came out of Minneapolis, where they had been performing since childhood. LaVerne was born in 1915, Maxene in 1917, and Patti in 1920. They had toured with a small band in the South and Midwest during the Depression and, after six years of it, were discouraged and ready to give up. Then Lou Levy, a promoter who became their manager and later Maxene's husband, introduced them to Sammy Cahn. Cahn had the sheet music to a Yiddish folk song, *Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen*, to which he added English lyrics. The trio recorded it for Decca for a flat fee of \$50. It hit the top of the pop charts and was the first song by a girl trio to break the million mark in sales.

Other memorable records followed: *Rhumboogie*, *Beer Barrel Polka*, and *Rum and Coca-Cola*. It was bound to lead to radio. They were signed by CBS as part of the Dole Pineapple show, and in 1939 they received featured billing with Glenn Miller on his CBS quarter-hour Chesterfield broadcasts. By 1941 they had logged an estimated 700 hours on the air. "You'd have to be a hermit to escape them," said *Radio Life* that year. They were frequent guests with Fred Allen, Bing Crosby, and other headliners. Their own

show, in its first year, was a standard musical variety half-hour in which the Andrews Sisters sang a few songs and had a regular supporting cast with a western flavor. The second season featured a top guest each week, who would step out of the "N-K Green Room" to do the routine that had made him or her famous. One week it might be Sophie Tucker singing *One of These Days*; the next, Abbott and Costello doing their *Who's on First?* routine.

The sister act dissolved after the war. LaVerne died of cancer May 8, 1967; Patti became a solo act; Maxene taught drama and speech at a small college in California and died Oct. 21, 1995.

THE ANSWER MAN, questions and answers, usually with intriguing or surprising elements.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1937–56, 15m, often Mutual Network, but also syndicated and locally developed. **CAST:** Albert Mitchell as the Answer Man. **CREATORS:** Albert Mitchell and Bruce Chapman.

The listeners sent in questions; the Answer Man gave the answers. That's all there was to this program. But within the quarter-hour daily offering was enough exotic information to keep it running almost 20 years.

The Answer Man was sometimes sold as a concept and developed in individual markets. Joe Mansfield was the Answer Man in Los Angeles. Derivatives were heard in Europe via Radio Luxembourg, and local versions ran in Greece, Holland, Poland, and Germany.

The Answer Man took on everything. As many as 2,500 questions a day came to *Answer Man* headquarters in New York. Chapman and his staff answered almost a million pieces of mail a year. Every question was answered by mail, even the few that made the broadcast. "Is it true that only the male cricket chirps?" *Yes, the male cricket does all the chirping; the female remains silent and just listens.* "How many muscles are there in an elephant's trunk?" *There are 40,000 muscles in an elephant's trunk.* The questions were read deadpan; the answers given the same way, in a rapid-fire exchange. Chapman and his staff, including 40 helpers, trod a center road with controversial questions. They never gave legal advice except to read exactly what the law said, though they did settle thousands of bets and provided help on such household problems as

getting rid of ants or removing stubborn stains. The Answer Man always seemed to have the answers at his fingertips. In fact, his headquarters were just across from the New York Public Library.

ARABESQUE, early series of music, drama, poetry, and desert philosophy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 24, 1929–Dec. 29, 1931, CBS. 30m. Various timeslots, mostly mid-to late evening. **CAST:** Reynolds Evans as Achmed the Arab Chieftain. Also: Frank Knight, Georgia Backus, Geneva Harrison. **ANNOUNCER:** David Ross. **MUSIC:** Emery Deutsch. **WRITER:** Yolande Langworthy.

According to *The Big Broadcast* by Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, *Arabesque* opened with David Ross reading *Drifting Sands in the Caravan*. *Poems from Arabesque*, a 1930 premium book by Yolande Langworthy, gives some indication of the poetry and philosophy that fueled this desert series.

ARCH OBOLER'S PLAYS, dramatic anthology.

BROADCAST HISTORY: March 25, 1939–March 23, 1940, NBC. 30m, Saturdays, usually at 10 (also heard at 8, 9, and 9:30). **CAST:** Alla Nazimova, Geraldine Page, Elsa Lanchester, Ronald Colman, and other major personalities, with support from such radio people as Raymond Edward Johnson, Ray Collins, Martin Gabel, Frank Lovejoy, Betty Garde, Lurene Tuttle and Santos Ortega.

April 5–Oct. 11, 1945, Mutual. 30m, Thursdays at 10. **CAST:** Franchot Tone, Greer Garson, Eddie Cantor, Van Heflin, etc., supported by radio stars Lou Merrill, Elliott Lewis, Martin Gabel, etc. **WRITER-PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Arch Oboler.

Few people were ambivalent when it came to Arch Oboler. He was one of those intense personalities who are liked and disliked with equal fire. Assessments of his contributions to radio ran the gamut, from "genius" to "showoff." In 1939 *Time* called Oboler a "30-year-old horn-rimmed half-pint scrivener" and dwelled on his eccentricities. Years later Oboler said that the woman who had written it had seen his worst side because her questions, "superficial and impertinent," had irked him from the start. In 1943

Newsweek noted that, while some critics regarded Oboler as radio's top literary genius, "to others he is an objectionable little round-faced Sammy Glick with a flair for flashy writing and a knack for getting his name in the papers." His work was compared to that of Norman Corwin, the resident genius at CBS. Both men did what was then regarded as "radio literature." Both crusaded loudly against Hitler and wrote intimately, with a flair and style that radio had not heard before. Irene Tedrow worked with both. She remembered Oboler as a "fascinating, brilliant man" who in his writing liked to stretch the boundaries of reality, while Corwin "dealt with things as they are." Corwin she termed "a very dear, gentle man, such a loving person. Arch is a neurotic. He yells, and sometimes he's very difficult."

That Oboler may have been influenced by Corwin is interesting speculation, Tedrow said, though Oboler would never admit it. He was certainly no Corwin by-product: his use of stream-of-consciousness was evident in his days on the horror show *Lights Out*, two years before Corwin came on the scene, and in one of his books Oboler reveals a high regard for Corwin's talent. He had made his break with radio horror shows: he would return to the genre later and would always write the occasional fantasy, but his interest in other things was evident by 1938.

He was born Dec. 6, 1909, endowed with a generous helping of natural curiosity and imagination. In the early 1930s, while still in school, he began submitting plays to NBC in Chicago. By one account, he wrote 50 plays before his first, *Futuristics*, was produced. That play caught the attention of Clarence L. Menser, production chief at NBC Chicago, and was used to commemorate the opening of NBC at Radio City, New York, in 1934. Oboler was dismayed at the \$50 he was paid, and he did one of the voices on the show to earn a few dollars more. He wrote short playlets for *Grand Hotel* in 1934-35, did similar work on *The Rudy Vallee Hour*, then got a year-long contract "writing plays for Don Ameche" on *The Chase and Sanborn Hour*. Here he wrote the scandalous "Adam and Eve" skit for Mae West, which caused one of the biggest uproars in radio history (see *The Edgar Bergen/Charlie McCarthy Show*).

He was given the job of writing *Lights Out* when its creator, Wyllis Cooper, departed for Hollywood. Soon he established his reputation

and became a potent radio force. Much of what he learned on *Lights Out* would be put to good use in his later mainstream offerings. Oboler was quick to credit Cooper, who, despite a low-key radio career, is recognized today as a major talent. It was Cooper who pioneered the audio techniques that Oboler and perhaps Corwin would bring to a new art form. "To follow Mr. Cooper was a challenge," Oboler wrote.

But the challenge of producing horror shows was temporary. In Hitler, Oboler saw a real Frankenstein, more chilling than anything he could ever make up. He visualized a radio theater of his own, a forum that would give free reign to his imagination. He wrote a play about the world's ugliest man and decided to produce and direct it himself. Until then, he would write in his book, *Oboler Omnibus*, "I had never thought of directing my own plays, but this was one I wanted to have interpreted exactly as written." He hired three seasoned radio actors, Raymond Edward Johnson, Ann Shepherd, and Betty Caine, and "with the last of my assets I rented a studio and made a recording." His new career crystalized: directing, he wrote, would allow him to close "the gap between the author's conception and the actor's performance." Lewis Titterton, NBC script editor, listened to the record and bought the concept. It was a "young writer's dream," wrote Oboler: "the first series of varied radio plays ever given to the works of one radio playwright."

The first series of *Arch Oboler's Plays* ran a calendar year and was sustained. The problem, according to the NBC sales staff, was that his plays had more significance in Europe than in the United States, which was still torn by isolationist sentiment and was officially determined to stay out of the war. He could be staunchly anti-Nazi one week and bizarre the next. His play *The Word* was on the face of it straight fantasy, but the anti-fascist sentiment was there, for anyone who wanted to look. The theme was heavier in *The Ivory Tower*, which explored the tragic consequences of turning a blind eye to aggression. In the first year he used tried-and-true radio performers: their fees were only \$21 per show, and he was dealing with known quality. Having seen movie stars perform on the big variety shows, he had concluded that most of them couldn't touch radio people for on-air competence. The microphone was a fierce taskmaster. On live radio, there was no retake.

But the stars began hearing about Oboler and asking for roles in his plays. Alla Nazimova became interested in radio, and in Oboler. She worked for union scale in the anti-Nazi play *The Ivory Tower* (July 2, 1939), which Oboler wrote especially for her. Joan Crawford, who might normally earn \$5,000 for a single broadcast, appeared on the March 2, 1940, Oboler play, *Baby*. To calm her preshow jitters, Oboler let her broadcast in her bare feet. The problem with most film people, he would write, was inexperience. They existed to be adored, and when they did appear on the air they were not expected to take direction. No one dared dispute their readings, Oboler wrote: radio directors were "so paralyzed at the sight of a \$5,000-per-broadcast star in front of the microphone that they confined their direction to apology and mentally crossed themselves before daring to point a cue." If this statement has a ring of truth, it still couldn't have made him many new friends in the business.

So Oboler directed. His direction was not done from a glassed-in booth: he got right down on the soundstage with his performers. Sometimes he would stand on a table, compensating for his short stature. In one contemporary photograph, Oboler is halfway up a large stepladder, looming over the cast. The stars took his direction, and most, he wrote, came to appreciate it. "Temperament was checked outside the studio door," and Oboler's reputation was further enhanced by the acquisition of these major names. On Aug. 26, 1939, the 110-piece NBC Symphony was recruited for his play *This Lonely Heart*, the story of Russian composer Piotr Ilich Tchaikovsky: it was the first time the symphony had been used in a dramatic show. James Cagney appeared in Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, which some critics considered the last word in anti-war stories. Trumbo was using stream-of-consciousness in book form: his story was of a First World War veteran who came home without legs, without arms, without eyes, a man whose face was gone, who could not speak, who had been reduced to a "block of flesh." The result startled millions, said *Radio Life*: the core of Oboler's technique was the ability to get deep into the human mind, "to assay the spiritual and psychological truth behind a smile, a scientist making marks in the sand during a seashore night, mysteries of birth and death, a shutter banging in the wind, the implications behind a sigh." These things were Oboler's stock in trade.

When *Plays* ended in March 1940, Oboler moved on. His work on *Everyman's Theater*, *Plays for Americans*, *The Treasury Star Parade*, and *Everything for the Boys* is covered under those titles in this book. His war years were full, turning out plays and sketches for the cause, often without pay. In 1945 he reopened *Plays*, again using a mix of radio and movie people: it ran on Mutual for six months. Throughout his career, he was controversial and colorful. Inevitably he worked in a sloppy T-shirt, unpressed pants, a sportcoat, and a porkpie hat. Historian Erik Barnouw reported that Oboler was capable of having a dozen friends over for a social evening, withdrawing around 11 P.M. and returning two hours later with a new play in hand. For a time he carried a pet toad, which died, he said, from eating too many worms. He had Frank Lloyd Wright build his house, which perched over a mountain and had a brook running through the living room.

Genius . . . or showoff?

That he loved radio and left his mark there is obvious. As early as 1945 he saw it all ending with the complete takeover by television. His "requiem for radio" at the end of *Oboler Omnibus* sees the end of "blind broadcasting" as he knew it and mourns its passing.

Oboler died March 19, 1987. Many of his *Lights Out* and *Plays* broadcasts have survived: probably most have, for Oboler was a saver, and radio people had easy access to such transcription services as Radio Recorders in Hollywood. His material is not so startling after half a century: listeners almost need the ability to project themselves back to that earlier time, when stream-of-consciousness was new and only Oboler was doing it. Some of his *Plays* remain interesting. *Johnny Got His Gun* is probably a classic of the medium. But an author who pioneers technique will always have problems with later generations. Someone will come along who does it better, and people will forget who did it first and the impact it had when it was fresh.

ARCHIE ANDREWS, teenage situation comedy, based on the comic strip by Bob Montana.

BROADCAST HISTORY: May 31-Dec. 24, 1943, Blue Network. Began as a five-a-week 15m strip show; as of Oct. 1, became a weekly 25m series, Fridays at 7:05.

Jan. 17–June 2, 1944, Mutual. 15m, daily at 5:15.

June 2, 1945–Sept. 5, 1953, NBC. 30m. Mostly Saturdays at 10:30 A.M., sponsored by Swift and Company 1947–48; also heard June–Aug. 1949, Wednesdays at 8:30, for *The Great Gildersleeve* and Kraft Foods; other brief evening timeslots.

CAST: Charles Mullen, Jack Grimes, and Burt Boyar in the early series as Archie Andrews, a high school student in the town of Riverdale; Bob Hastings as Archie in the main NBC era. Harlan Stone (also Cameron Andrews) as Archie's pal Jughead Jones. Rosemary Rice as Archie's friend Betty Cooper (Joy Geffen and Doris Grundy in earlier versions). Gloria Mann and Vivian Smolen as Archie's girlfriend Veronica Lodge. Alice Yourman and Arthur Kohl (NBC) as Archie's parents Mary and Fred Andrews (Vinton Hayworth and Reese Taylor also heard as Fred; Peggy Allenby as Mary). Paul Gordon (NBC) as Reggie Mantle, Archie's rival. Arthur Maitland as Mr. Weatherbee, the high school principal. **ANNOUNCER:** Bob Sherry. **MUSIC:** George Wright on organ. **PRODUCER (NBC):** Kenneth W. MacGregor. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Agnew Horine.

Archie Andrews was obviously inspired by the success of Clifford Goldsmith's *The Aldrich Family*, but it displayed little of the *Aldrich* ratings muscle. It was B-grade teen fare, its plots outlandish even for its genre. It was a noisy show, with everyone frequently shouting at once and the juvenile NBC studio audience encouraged to cheer wildly. The character taglines were Veronica's "Hello, Archiekins, mmmmm," Archie's inane giggle, and Mr. Andrews yelling, "Quiet! . . . quiet! . . . QUIIIIEETTT!" over the din of everyone shouting at everyone else. In its sponsored year, it opened with four distinct whistles, corresponding to the pitch of the "Swift's Prem-yum Franks" jingle of the commercial. Archie would yell, "Come on down, Jughead, it's a matter of life or death!" Jughead would answer, "Relax, Archie, reeelax!" The kiddies in the studio audience would sing the Swift song ("Ten-der beef, juicy pork, known from the West Coast to New York . . . Swift's Prem-yum Franks!"), and another week's insanity would begin.

ARE THESE OUR CHILDREN?, crime drama, based on the 1931 RKO film of the same name.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Sept. 29, 1946–Jan. 22, 1948, ABC. 30m, Sundays at 4, then Thursdays at 10. **CAST:** Norma Jean Rose, Helen Kleeb, Herb Ellis. **ANNOUNCER:** John Galbraith. **MUSIC:** Composed and conducted by Phil Bovero. **CREATOR-WRITER-DIRECTOR:** Gilbert Thomas.

Are These Our Children? came from the San Francisco studios of ABC. It used "actual case histories taken from the files of juvenile delinquency courts." The names were changed, but the facts "occurred today and yesterday and the day before to people who didn't ask, are these our children?" Topics handled included parental neglect, divorce, racial prejudice, and the "mother complex." A discussion after each story usually hinted that "we" were all to blame as a society.

ARE YOU A GENIUS?, juvenile quiz show.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 13, 1942–Jan. 8, 1943, CBS. 15m and 30m, weekdays. **CAST:** Ernest Chappell, host and quizmaster.

Ernest Chappell asked ten questions with point values of ten each. A score of 100 points was perfect, and the winning child was pronounced genius of the day. The questions were a better gauge of general knowledge than of genius, judging from the Christmas show in 1942: What gifts were brought by the three wise men? Where did the Christmas tree custom originate? It was the simplest of all possible formats.

ARMCHAIR ADVENTURES, dramatic anthology.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1952, CBS. 15m. **CAST:** Marvin Miller in a one-man show, doing all voices and narration. **PRODUCER-DIRECTORS:** Ralph Rose, Gomer Cool.

Armchair Adventures was a novelty, utilizing Miller in both original dramas and adaptations. A few other one-man shows were done on radio: *Adventure Parade* (John Drake), *The Player* (Paul Frees), and the various formats of Nelson Olmsted.

THE ARMSTRONG THEATER OF TODAY, romantic drama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 4, 1941–May 22, 1954, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at noon. Armstrong

Cork Company for Armstrong Quaker Rugs and Linoleum; Cream of Wheat 1953–54. **CAST:** Second-grade Hollywood stars in original dramas. Elizabeth Reller and Julie Conway as “the Armstrong Quaker Girl,” who read the commercials. **ANNOUNCERS:** George Bryan, Tom Shirley. **PRODUCER-DIRECTOR:** Ira Avery. **DIRECTOR:** Al Ward. **SOUND EFFECTS:** James Rinaldi.

Theater of Today was typical Saturday boy-girl fluff. It followed the formula set by *Lincoln Highway* and *Stars over Hollywood*, proving that stars could be lured and audiences built even in timeslots that were the “ghetto of the schedule.” The subtitle of one show aptly describes the series content: “the story of a girl who never stopped daring to dream.” The opening signature featured the sounds of a busy street and the announcement “It’s high noon on Broadway!” Then came a few minutes of world news with “Armstrong’s news reporter, George Bryan.” The drama followed the news.

THE ARMY HOUR, news and variety depicting the Army in wartime.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 5, 1942–Nov. 11, 1945, NBC. 60m until July 1945, then 30m, Sundays at 3:30. **ANNOUNCER:** George Putnam. **PRODUCER-WRITER-DIRECTOR:** Wyllis Cooper.

The Army Hour gave Americans their first long look at the war and how it was being fought. On paper, the idea looked simple. The War Department wanted to boost homefront morale with a no-nonsense, authoritative radio show that told people what their Army was doing. Technically, however, it was far from simple: its problems were both technical and tactical, and it was a producer’s nightmare.

The show would put its listeners right into the fields of battle, using shortwave pickups from far-flung theaters. Signals, almost certainly, would be lost, some would be jammed by the enemy. Remotes would have to be cued in advance, by synchronization. This was live radio: entire sequences might vanish while the show was in progress. Tactically, how would security be maintained? How could a nation be informed without giving away vital information to the enemy? Scheduling was another problem. Even a

major subject like Gen. Douglas MacArthur could get no preshow billing: a hint of his whereabouts would invite a rain of Japanese fire.

The show was conceived in the War Department’s Radio Division, a unit made up mainly of people who had been broadcasters in civilian life. Its chief was Edward M. Kirby, a veteran of WSM, Nashville, who (with Jack W. Harris) assessed *The Army Hour* in his history of Armed Forces broadcasting, *Star-Spangled Radio*. The original idea was to include the Navy—an Army-Navy hour. But the Navy bowed out, its brass wary that the networks might resent the military getting into radio production. Perhaps there was truth in this: the idea was turned down at CBS, Mutual, and the Blue Network. At NBC, however, it was embraced eagerly.

Time found it “a skillful blend of Army and NBC talent.” Wyllis Cooper, director-writer of the horror show *Lights Out* a decade earlier, was given the top job. An Army vet from World War I, Cooper told *Time* the series was to be “100 percent authentic.” There would be no “inspirational stuff, no lush prose. This will be in language that everybody can understand.” He vowed to tell the truth, “good, bad, or indifferent.” Eddie Dunham would be studio director and later producer; Ed Byron, another major radio director, would be liaison between the military and the network.

The show was a masterpiece of cooperation, with networks and broadcast organizations around the world lending a hand: the Voice of Freedom, the BBC, the CBC, the Army Signal Corps; even the radio facilities of the Soviet Union were utilized. Listeners did hear MacArthur, broadcasting from Australia. They heard Joe Louis talking to his mother. They learned from a camp cook how the men were fed, and from privates what life was like in the trenches. There were descriptions of fighting on Bataan: Col. Warren Clear was reduced to tears as he told about it. The last message from Corregidor was heard on *The Army Hour*, a segment David Sarnoff thought “could find no rival in any radio drama.” Frequently the remotes were backed by the roar of mortars and the chatter of machine guns. In one memorable show, the use of “goug-ers” was detailed. These were eight-inch steel blades, just right, said one young warrior, “to take some Jap’s buck teeth out by the roots.” *Time* thought the series had “information, guts,

a good musical score, and the best dramatic material extant—the fighting fronts themselves—to draw from.” Even NBC sportscaster Bill Stern was heard, interviewing pilots “somewhere in the East,” and describing the global conflict in football terms.

By 1943 *The Army Hour* had three million listeners. In the words of creator Kirby, it was “three and a half years of triumphs, flubs, and escapes. . . . The uncertainty that any program would work out as planned filled the life of the radio reporter with suspense. From this broadcasting crucible emerged the battlefield radio reporters, officers and enlisted men, who did the actual field reporting. They reported on the Army in its darkest moments—the surrender of Corregidor, the bad days at Anzio, the Ardennes breakthrough. But they were also there to hail the Army in its brightest successes.”

ARNOLD GRIMM'S DAUGHTER, soap opera.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 5, 1937–May 27, 1938, CBS. 15m, daily at 1:30. Softasilk.

May 30, 1938–June 26, 1942, NBC. 15m, daily at 2:15 until March 1941, then at 2:45. General Mills.

CAST: Margarette Shanna originally as Connie Tremaine, daughter of Arnold Grimm; Betty Lou Gerson as Connie as of mid-1938; also played by Luise Barclay. Ed Prentiss and Robert Ellis as Dal Tremaine, Connie's husband. Don Merrifield as Arnold Grimm. Genelle Gibbs as Sonia Kirkoff, Connie's loyal friend, “blond but intelligent.” Jeanne Juvelier as Madame Babette. Frank Dane as Jimmy Kent, designer in Babette's shop. Verne Smith as Bill Hartley, Arnold Grimm's business partner. Mento Everett as Judy, Connie's maid. Gertrude Bondhill as Dal's mother. Orson Brandon as Dal's father. Jeanne Dixon and Bonita Kay as Mrs. Gladys Grimm, wife of Arnold. Butler Mandeville as Mr. Tweedy. **ANNOUNCERS:** Roger Krupp, Harlow Wilcox. **PRODUCERS:** Frank and Anne Hummert, Ed Morse. **WRITER:** Margaret Sangster. **THEME:** *Modern Cinderella*.

Arnold Grimm was an old tyrant who opposed his daughter Connie's marriage to her childhood sweetheart Dal Tremaine and vowed to disinherit her. Dal's mother was a schemer who disliked Connie and plotted against her; Dal's father slowly came around to Connie's side. Dal was

an artist, irresponsible and often moody, but Connie gave him all her moral and financial help. She went into business with Madame Babette, a French lingerie dealer, opened a shop in Milford, and began to prosper. But Dal hated the poverty imposed upon them by their fathers, and he brooded frequently.

Among supporting characters in love with Connie were designer Jimmy Kent and Bill Hartley, Arnold Grimm's business partner. Connie's maid Judy was outspoken and added comic relief. Mr. Tweedy was described as a character out of Dickens, “thoroughly good, lovable,” and a lover of flowers.

The story changed dramatically when Dal was killed saving a child from a racing fire engine. His son Little Dal was born after his death, and Connie's life focused more upon the problems of her father, whose stove manufacturing firm had fallen on hard times.

ART BAKER'S NOTEBOOK, philosophical discourse.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1938–58; transcribed syndication, heard on ABC briefly, Jan.–March 1950. 15m, weekdays at 1:45. First heard on KFI, Los Angeles, Sept. 8, 1938.

Art Baker was a quizmaster, commentator, and interviewer. His career began in 1936, when he announced *Tapestries of Life*. He hosted *Reunion of the States*, an audience participation show, the genre that later became his specialty. On CBS he hosted *Hollywood in Person*, a 1937–38 celebrity interview show. In 1938 he was host of *Pull Over, Neighbor*, a forerunner of *People Are Funny*, which he also hosted until producer John Guedel dropped him for Art Linkletter. He was heard on *Sing, America, Sing* on CBS in 1939. Baker's first national exposure came as host of *The Bob Hope Show*. He worked Hedda Hopper's Sunkist shows, 1939–41, and was West Coast announcer for the hit giveaway series *Pot o' Gold*. In 1943 he hosted the CBS audience show *Meet Joe Public*. In *Art Baker's Notebook*, he offered musings and tidbits on the ways of the world.

ART FOR YOUR SAKE, art appreciation through dramatized skits.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 7, 1939–April 27, 1940, NBC. 30m. Saturdays at 7:30. **HOST:** Dr. Bernard Myers.

In this series, the stories behind the world's great art masterpieces were dramatized. The dramas were based on the artists' letters and diaries or those of people who knew them. The National Art Society, which coproduced, offered a portfolio of 48 color reproductions of masterworks with a home study course. While studying the picture, a listener learned how Gauguin painted *Tahitian Woman* and what influenced Rubens in his execution of *Fox Hunt*.

ARTHUR GODFREY TIME, talk, variety, and music; best known in its early-morning CBS format that spanned 27 years, but a broadcast phenomenon that had many spinoffs. Godfrey had a fabled radio career, progressing from one-night stands to top network star status.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1930, WFBR, Baltimore. First appearance on the air.

1930–33, NBC staff announcer.

1934–45, CBS staff announcer and personality. Heard on the Chesterfield program (1934), *Professor Quiz* (1937), and on both CBS and Mutual for Barbasol (1937–38); had shows of his own for Carnation Milk and Barbas-Cremo Cigars. His fortunes began to rise with his early-morning broadcasts over WJSV, the CBS station in Washington, D.C., which later became WTOP. This series ran 1933–45 and was relayed to New York 1941–45. Godfrey hit the network briefly as announcer of Fred Allen's *Texaco Star Theater* (CBS, Oct. 1942), but Allen dropped him after a few broadcasts.

April 30, 1945–April 30, 1972, CBS. *Arthur Godfrey Time*. Daily at midmorning (10, 10:15, or 11 A.M.) in timeslots of 30m, 45m, 60m, 75m. Sustained for two years, then an avalanche of sponsorship, notably Chesterfield Cigarettes. **ANNOUNCER:** Tony ("Here's that man himself") Marvin. **VOCALISTS:** Janette Davis, Bill Lawrence, Patti Clayton, Frank Parker, Julius LaRosa, Marion Marlowe, Hawaiian singer Haleloke, Pat Boone, Carmel Quinn, Lu Ann Simms. **VOCAL GROUPS:** The Mariners (Thomas Lockard, James O. Lewis, Martin Karl, Nathaniel Dickerson), the Chordettes (Virginia Osborn, Dorothy Schwartz, Janet Ertel, Carol Hagedorn), the McGuire Sisters (Christine, Dorothy, Phyllis).

ORCHESTRA: Hank Sylvern, Archie Bleyer.

July 2, 1946–Oct. 1, 1956, CBS. *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*. 30m, Tuesdays at 9 until mid-1947, then Fridays at 9:30 briefly, then Mondays at 8:30 after Aug. 1947. Lipton Tea, on radio and TV after 1947. **ANNOUNCER:** George Bryan. **VOCALISTS:** Peggy Marshall; the Holidays. **ORCHESTRA:** Archie Bleyer.

Jan. 28, 1950–Sept. 30, 1955, CBS. *Arthur Godfrey Digest*; also known as *The Arthur Godfrey Round Table*. Taped highlights from the weekday show. Mostly 30m timeslots initially Saturday nights, then Sunday afternoons (1950–53) and Friday nights (1953–55).

THEME (BOTH SHOWS): *Seems Like Old Times* (*Beautiful Dreamer* in the earliest days of *Arthur Godfrey Time*).

People trusted Arthur Godfrey. They liked his humor, which skirted the risqué but seldom went too far. They liked the fact that, as he himself would put it, he had no talent whatever.

They loved hearing him give the needle to a client. This was something new. When Godfrey chided the sponsor's ad copy, people laughed. Sometimes he would ball up the script noisily and throw it away. "Boy, the stuff they give me to read," he would moan, and the audience laughed. Network vice presidents who dared suggest that something might be done more effectively would find themselves ribbed by Godfrey on the air. When CBS chairman William S. Paley hinted that a certain Godfrey show lacked movement, Godfrey brought on a team of hula dancers. "That enough movement for you, Bill?" he asked at the end of the number.

By then he was the most powerful man in broadcasting. He was fond of saying that he made \$400,000 before the average guy got up in the morning. In a parody of breakfast shows, Fred Allen once barked, "Six o'clock in the morning! Who's up to listen to us? A couple of burglars and Arthur Godfrey!" A lot of people were up—listening to Godfrey. CBS estimated that he was heard by 40 million people a week. In the loudest statistic of all, sales of Chesterfields and Lipton Tea soared during their sponsorship of Godfrey's shows. In the words of *Time* magazine: "He is the greatest salesman who ever stood before a microphone."

People discussed his red hair and his style, which boiled down to the fact that Godfrey did

and said whatever occurred to him. Scriptwriters despaired: inevitably, a few minutes into the broadcast, Godfrey would cast aside prepared material. Instead, he might turn to bandleader Archie Bleyer and ask, "Hey, Archie, what's the name of this song?" He'd hum a few bars and ask the band to play a number that had not been rehearsed. People talked about Godfrey's habit of plugging such nonsponsors as Life Savers. If he liked it, he talked about it. And his voice was unique: adenoidal, briary, instantly identifiable in a room full of voices. He had a down-home way that made people think he might be their next-door neighbor. All this contributed to the bond he had with his audience. "He has a deep-rooted dislike for anything that is phony, stuffed-shirt, or highfalutin," *Radio Mirror* wrote in 1948.

He was born Aug. 31, 1903, in New York City. As a young man he led a colorful, nomadic life. He had many jobs but little formal education. He took some courses from International Correspondence School but learned most of what he knew in the "school of hard knocks." By 1921 he was in the Navy, taking sea duty as a radio operator. At sea he learned to plunk a banjo and play the ukelele, instruments that would later become part of his routine. In Detroit he sold cemetery lots and learned that selling was something he did well. He accumulated \$10,000, lost it in a traveling vaudeville act, drove a cab, and rejoined the service, this time going into the Coast Guard.

He was in Baltimore in 1929, listening with some Guardsmen to an amateur show on WFBR. The usual "I can do better" challenges were issued, and the group showed up at the station. The manager put Godfrey on as "Red Godfrey, the Warbling Banjoist": this led to his first regular air job, a plunking-singing-talking gig at \$5 per show for the Triangle Pet Shop. By 1930 he had joined NBC, but it was strictly a local job, announcing shows at the network's Washington station. The following year he was nearly killed in an automobile accident, a misfortune that became the watershed of his life. For months he lay in traction, with little to do but listen to the radio. He discovered a stiffness in the selling techniques of the announcers. He decided they were trying to appeal to large groups of people instead of to that one person who is all people. There were really only "two guys" involved in radio: "If there are more than two people in a

room," he often said in later life, "they've got better things to do than listen to the radio."

He put this new informality into play when he returned to NBC, but it got him fired. He moved over to the CBS station in Washington, WJSV, where he was squirreled away in an all-night slot, playing records and chatting. His informality and natural humor helped him build an audience: sales on Godfrey-advertised products began to rise. One of his early successes was his commercial for a department store sale on ladies' black-lace panties. "Man, is my face red," Godfrey recalled telling his audience. The next day the store was mobbed by women looking for the underwear that had made Godfrey blush.

Godfrey's reputation grew quickly, though CBS still considered him a "local boy" whose appeal on a national hookup was unknown. Walter Winchell heard him and wrote a rave review: Godfrey was given a job on a network show sponsored by Chesterfield, but it bombed and Winchell (according to Godfrey's account years later) dropped him flat. In April 1941 WABC (the New York affiliate that later became WCBS) picked up his Washington show. On Oct. 4, 1942, he began announcing the new Fred Allen show, *The Texaco Star Theater*. In the 18 months that he had been carried in New York, Godfrey had become so popular that the Manhattan audience applauded loudly when his name was announced on the network. Allen was not so charmed: he dropped Godfrey after six weeks.

But his failures were minor. He continued appearing on isolated CBS broadcasts, and in April 1945 he was made the network's special reporter for the funeral of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He wept at the microphone in a broadcast that has become a classic. Two weeks later, after a serious threat to quit and rejoin NBC, Godfrey was given his own network morning series.

Now, instead of playing records, he would use live talent. Thus were formed the "Little Godfreys," that wholesome, well-scrubbed group that rode the crest of his greatest success and would ultimately lead to his downfall. His rise on the network was meteoric, leading to an unprecedented concentration of power. He had two weekly shows in both television's and radio's, top ten, a situation that may never be duplicated. By 1948 he could hire and fire in a single sentence, and his *Talent Scouts* broadcast was a perfect auditioning platform for his regular

company. Godfrey was his own best talent scout: his sense of what would play in heartland America was almost flawless. On *Talent Scouts*, three or four acts were judged by the studio audience. The series followed the general format of all radio talent hunts, with two exceptions: this had Godfrey, and the winners were given continuing national exposure on Godfrey's morning show, Tuesday through Thursday the week following the competition. The few that Godfrey liked best were given further dates and might even be asked to join the Little Godfreys if an opening should occur. The McGuire Sisters and the Chordettes came out of *Talent Scouts*. But the other Little Godfreys were discovered when Godfrey caught their acts by happenstance, and was impressed.

One of the earliest was Janette Davis, a singer who had her own program briefly. Godfrey resurrected the career of tenor Frank Parker, who had been a favorite of early-day radio audiences. Godfrey found Marion Marlowe when he dropped into a hotel and heard her sing; he billed her with Parker in many memorable duets. When Godfrey went to Pensacola, Fla., for an appearance at a Navy enlisted men's club, he discovered Julius LaRosa, an aviation electronics technician. The key words for the Little Godfreys were "plain," "wholesome," and "humble." Godfrey wanted no stars on his show. He was the star, and a more unlikely one never came out of radio.

He couldn't sing, yet his recording of the *Too Fat Polka* ("I don't want her, you can have her, she's too fat for me") leaped onto pop charts in November 1947. He couldn't dance or act, but in time he would try. He wasn't even the cleverest ad-libber on the air. He made his reputation flaunting the sacred cows of broadcasting. Lipton Tea representatives cringed when Godfrey reached for the ad copy to begin his commercial. Perhaps, after a half-hearted attempt to read it, he'd end up by poking holes in it, but he always left his listeners with his personal promise that "the tea is the thing. Just try this stuff, and you're in for the best cuppa tea you ever tasted." This was the difference between Godfrey and Henry Morgan, the most notorious sponsor-drubber of the day. Godfrey never maligned a product: he'd rib the agency for its copy, but if he couldn't recommend a client wholeheartedly, he'd have no part of that company on his show.

By then he had as many as 63 clients on his morning programs, with many more waiting in the wings.

He ate breakfast between numbers, sometimes praising products that had never sponsored him. When Chesterfield took him on, he smoked Chesterfields. But when 4,000 people wrote in after a *Parade* profile, asking why that pack of Camels happened to be on Arthur's desk in the photograph, Godfrey explained on the air that it was an old picture, taken before he'd discovered how good Chesterfields were. This was one of broadcasting's strongest taboos: people never discussed competing products by name. Godfrey did. He also retained what *Newsweek* described as "a profane off-mike vocabulary that would startle a parrot." No one cared.

Sitting with him at his table during the broadcasts was Margaret "Mug" Richardson, a former North Carolina beauty queen who was his girl Friday. It was Richardson who handled the writers and the endless stream of salesmen wanting to get to Godfrey. In his later years, Godfrey often broadcast from his farm, an 800-acre estate in Virginia that was well known to listeners. CBS installed a mini-studio at the farm, where Godfrey would chat with his cast as they did their lines in New York. The farm, the horses, his love of flying, his mannerisms, all were part of the American landscape. His show had ambience and style. After Tony Marvin's opening announcement, trombonist Lou McGarity would ease into Godfrey's then-famous theme, *Seems Like Old Times*. The *Talent Scouts* opening was more elaborate, a jingle by Peggy Marshall and the Holidays:

*Here comes Arthur Godfrey
Your talent scout MC
Brought to you by Lip-ton
Brisk Lipton Tea
You know it's Lipton Tea
If it's B-R-I-S-K
You know it's Arthur Godfrey
When you hear them play . . .*

Up came McGarity's trombone, with Godfrey singing a few lines to get him into the show. McGarity was on the show 26 years, from the first broadcasts until he died in 1971. Others were not so lucky. Discord rippled through the ranks of the Little Godfreys, though fans initially heard none of it. Magazines inevitably referred to Godfrey as a "grand guy": seldom before

1950 was a disparaging word published about him. When the honeymoon ended, it ended badly, with a sourness that Godfrey would take to his grave.

He had begun treating his cast like children, almost like possessions. When Godfrey took up swimming, the cast could expect to do a lot of swimming. He had become a hard taskmaster, lecturing his cast on Navy pilots' equipment or some other front-burner Godfrey passion. No one could be interviewed without Godfrey's consent. It was ironic: Godfrey, who had reached fame and fortune simply by being unpretentious, was suddenly being seen as his own stuffed shirt.

The blowup came Oct. 19, 1953, when Julius LaRosa was fired on the air. A *Radio Life* reporter, Jack Holland, had visited a Godfrey rehearsal earlier in the week and found the studio "filled with a kind of tension you couldn't put your finger on." Godfrey was not there; Robert Q. Lewis was taking his part for the rehearsal. The McGuire Sisters went over their song repeatedly. LaRosa was sitting glumly in the theater. "You could feel his impatience, his trigger-like tension."

Holland said LaRosa had been ordered by Godfrey to take ballet lessons but had skipped the appointment. Godfrey was fuming but kept himself out of touch until air time. The ballet issue was a final straw: other reports indicated that Godfrey was unhappy with LaRosa's growing popularity. Young and good-looking, LaRosa seemed poised on the brink of a major career, and there were no stars on Arthur Godfrey's show.

Godfrey affirmed this on the air. He recapped LaRosa's career in a friendly, easy tone of voice. He had picked LaRosa, he said, because of his humility. But in his two years on the show, LaRosa had "gotten to be a great big name." He spoke these words deliberately, slowly, then he asked LaRosa to sing *I'll Take Manhattan*. At the end of the song, Godfrey said, "Thanks ever so much, Julie. That was Julie's swan song with us. He goes now out on his own, as his own star, soon to be seen in his own programs, and I know you wish him godspeed the same as I do." Godfrey then gave his own closing network ID and signed off to an audible "aaaahhh" from the surprised audience and cast.

Immediately after the show he fired Archie Bleyer. The bandleader had formed a recording

company with LaRosa: the company had just made a recording for Don McNeill, star of *The Breakfast Club* and Godfrey's main rival for the affections of the wakeup crowd.

The story broke on front pages around the country. Godfrey, America's favorite radio man, suddenly found himself under attack.

He counterattacked, a mistake. Saying LaRosa had been guilty of a "lack of humility," he succeeded only in pinning that label on himself. LaRosa made it worse by his impeccable post-show conduct. The model of humility, he refused every opportunity to criticize Godfrey and told reporters he would always be grateful for the opportunities that Godfrey had given him. Among those who came to LaRosa's defense was the first lady, Mamie Eisenhower. Ed Sullivan invited LaRosa to his *Toast of the Town* TV show. Godfrey lashed out again. He called Sullivan "a dope" and said reporters covering the story were "a bunch of jerks."

Then, in the most amazing string of self-defeating acts ever seen in broadcasting, Godfrey dismantled everything he had created. He fired the Mariners, the Chordettes, Hawaiian singer Haleloke, and three writers. He refused to rehire Bill Lawrence when the singer returned from the Army. His excuse was that Lawrence and his bobby-soxed fans had driven him "haywire." Lawrence had a different version. Godfrey had given him "hell," Lawrence said, when he had begun dating Janette Davis. This, it turned out, was yet another heavy-handed Godfrey rule—no dating among the cast. The press reported that Archie Bleyer had also fallen into disfavor because of his backstage relationship with Chordette Janet Ertel. Producer Larry Puck was fired when he and Marion Marlowe began dating, then Marlowe too got the ax. What might have been an isolated incident stretched into six years of bitchy, bickering strife. At the end of it, Godfrey's popularity was a shambles.

Marlowe was replaced by Carmel Quinn, a young red-haired Irish woman. LaRosa's spot was taken by Pat Boone. But the effect of the controversy lingered. It was epitomized by the LaRosa incident, and two decades later the mention of LaRosa's name would still cause Godfrey to bristle. "You guys never forget," he complained to reporters. As for LaRosa, the stardom that seemed so inevitable in 1953 never worked out. He faded quickly from the national scene.

He made a film (a disaster, he said), and in 1969 he turned up as a disc jockey on WNEW, New York. He tried his hand at a Broadway play in 1978, but when the director fired him it made headlines reminiscent of 1953.

Godfrey's problems continued. He lost his pilot's license when he buzzed an airport tower. One by one his shows folded. Then he got lung cancer and later, pronouncing himself cured, devoted much of his time to the fight against the disease. He professed to be writing a book that would tell "the whole story" of his incredible life. He claimed to be working out a deal for a new TV show, but in the end CBS had no spot for him. He continued his network radio show until 1972, when he took it off the air himself.

He took up new causes, becoming an ecologist-conservationist and doing occasional commercials for Axion, a Procter & Gamble laundry product. But when he learned from congressional hearings the extent of the soap's polluting power, he dropped the job and publicly rebuked the product. In his 70s, he still talked occasionally about coming back. He died March 16, 1983, in the city of his birth, New York.

Godfrey's first and last network shows are on tape. The latter is especially interesting, a rambling exercise in nostalgia. *Arthur Godfrey Time* is quite topical: this, 40 years later, is its limitation. *Talent Scouts* exists in great quantity. It is easily the best of the talent shows, far surpassing the dated *Original Amateur Hour* in modern listenability. Godfrey attracted fine talent: with some of these youngsters, it remains amazing that major careers did not follow. *Talent Scouts* is Godfrey at his best—wisecracking, rambling, then rushing through the spot to get the last act in. The temptation is strong, listening to these, to think of Godfrey as a decent man who lost his way. Like Amos and Andy, but for different reasons, he was deified and discarded.

ARTHUR HOPKINS PRESENTS, dramatic anthology.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 19, 1944–Jan. 3, 1945, NBC. 60m, Wednesdays at 11:30. **CAST:** Major Broadway stars. **PRODUCER:** Arthur Hopkins, one of Broadway's best-known figures of the 1910s and 1920s. **DIRECTOR:** Herb Rice.

Arthur Hopkins Presents was an attempt to counter the trend toward short theatrical road

tours and longer runs on Broadway by bringing major drama to all parts of the country by radio. The first play was *Our Town*, with Frank Craven and Evelyn Varden. Other highlights: *Ah, Wilderness* (Montgomery Clift, May 24), *Lady with a Lamp* (Helen Hayes, July 26), and *The Letter* (Geraldine Fitzgerald, August 2).

ARTHUR'S PLACE, situation comedy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 20–Sept. 12, 1947, CBS. 30m, Fridays at 9. **CAST:** Arthur Moore as the owner of a cafe. Also: Jack Kirkwood, Sara Berner. **ORCHESTRA:** Jeff Alexander.

ASHER AND LITTLE JIMMY, country music.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1931, WSM, Nashville; syndicated from there throughout the 1930s. **CAST:** Asher Sizemore and his son Little Jimmy.

This popular duo sang five songs within a quarter-hour format. Asher did mountain ballads; Jimmy sang novelties and cowboy classics. The show closed each night with Jimmy's prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep." The Sizemores were also heard on WSM's *Grand Ole Opry*.

THE ASK-IT BASKET, quiz.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 5, 1938–April 10, 1941, CBS. 30m, Wednesdays at 7:30; Thursdays at 8 beginning Aug. 1939. Colgate. **HOST:** Jim McWilliams until Oct. 1940, then Ed East. **ANNOUNCER:** Del Sharbutt.

Jim McWilliams, the original host of *The Ask-It Basket*, was billed as "radio's original question-and-answer man," by virtue of having worked on one of the earliest quiz shows, *Uncle Jim's Question Bee* (Blue Network, 1936). The *Ask-It* format was simple. McWilliams chose four contestants from the audience and put them through a series of questions sent in by listeners. The levels of questions seemed to increase in difficulty. The first level might be multiple choice ("If you were told that your parsimonious proclivities predominate perceptively, would you be a mountain climber, a miser, or a music lover?"), the second level translations of poetry. Announcer Sharbutt kept a running total of points scored, and the winner got a \$25 grand prize, with \$10 to the runner-up and \$5 for third.

The hapless contestant who finished out of the money was consoled with platitudes ("Gosh, it's too bad you got all the tough ones") and was given a final round of four questions for a chance to win \$1 per correct answer. On the show auditioned by this writer, the contestant missed all four, to the great amusement of the studio audience.

ATLANTIC SPOTLIGHT, transatlantic short-wave talk.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 1, 1944–Feb. 2, 1946, NBC. 30m, Saturdays at 12:30. **HOST:** Ben Grauer, who chatted with British colleagues at the BBC in London. Interviews were done with such personalities as Eddie Cantor and Glenn Miller.

ATTORNEY AT LAW, crime drama, a title given to three distinct series, all of short duration.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 3–June 29, 1938, Blue Network. 15m serial, daily at 10:30 A.M. Johnson's Wax. **CAST:** Jim Ameche as Terry Regan, attorney. Fran Carlon as Sally Dunlap, his secretary. **ANNOUNCER:** Fort Pearson.

July 5–Aug. 30, 1938, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 9:30. Summer replacement for *Fibber McGee and Molly*. Johnson's Wax. **CAST:** Henry Hunter as Terry Regan. Betty Winkler as Sally Dunlap. **ANNOUNCER:** Harlow Wilcox. **PRODUCER:** Cecil Underwood. **WRITER:** Milton Geiger.

June 9–July 28, 1946, Mutual. 30m, Sundays at 5. **CAST:** Al Hodge as Roger Allen, attorney at law.

THE ATWATER-KENT HOUR, a pioneering series of concert music.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 4, 1925, first broadcast on WEAf, New York, and an 11-station pre-network hookup. Atwater-Kent.

1926–31, NBC. 60m, Sundays at 9:15, crossing the hour. Atwater-Kent.

Sept. 24–Dec. 17, 1934, CBS. 30m, Mondays at 8:30. Atwater-Kent. **ORCHESTRA:** Josef Pasternack. **THEME:** *Now The Day Is Over*.

The Atwater-Kent Hour set the standard for early concert music. Sponsored by a well-known radio manufacturer, *Atwater-Kent* featured stars of the Metropolitan Opera, backed by a large symphony orchestra. The obstacles to producing

such a show in radio's earliest days were political, economic, and personal. Stations were proliferating, and there was no real consensus as to how the airwaves should be used. The idea of commercial radio had many critics; others, pointing to the overall excellence of the *Atwater-Kent*, *Eveready*, and *Palmolive* hours, believed that only American capitalism could overcome the dreadful mediocrity that most stations offered. Major talent from the musical stage was needed, but many name performers found the prospect of entertaining for a cigar manufacturer or an oil company reprehensible. Politicians were deeply divided on the questions of regulations and constraints.

For a few years in the '20s, advertising was broadcasting's major problem. The sponsor's message had to be couched: it was subtle and sometimes sneaky. On *The Atwater-Kent Hour*, only two commercials a week were heard. But the show was its own commercial, and in the course of the hour a listener might hear 15 *Atwater-Kent* mentions. The singing quartet was "the *Atwater-Kent Quartet*"; the soloist was billed as "the tenor of the *Atwater-Kent Quartet*"; the orchestra was "the *Atwater-Kent Symphony Orchestra*." Repetition alone sold radios, said Thomas A. DeLong in *The Mighty Music Box*. "Many listeners firmly believed that they had to buy an *Atwater-Kent* receiver to tune in the program." But this was frustrating to listeners, who wanted to know the names of favored performers. Jennie Irene Mix, writing in *Radio Broadcast* in 1925, was a critic who wanted to know the identity of "the tenor of the *Atwater-Kent Quartet*." She guessed that the quartet comprised "paid professionals—and admirable ones at that—who do not want their names sent out as 'radio artists,' a position that can be understood considering the chaotic conditions prevailing in broadcasting."

By the time the advertising question was settled, *The Atwater-Kent Hour* had an established routine. Maestro Pasternack conducted an opening number; then the major artist would sing. Usually this was a performer from the Met's Golden Horseshoe. John McCormack and Lucrezia Bori were regulars. Both had openly disdained radio, but now they, and others, found that there was real money to be made. *Atwater-Kent* budgeted \$120,000 for the show in its first pre-network year. Later the figure climbed sharply, the budget

reaching \$250,000–500,000 a year. This meant that headliners like McCormack and Bori could overcome their disdain with \$1,000 paychecks, for a few hours work.

Others who found their way to the air via *Atwater-Kent* were Frances Alda, Josef Hoffman, Louise Homer, and Albert Spalding. Fees to the Met alone ran \$25,000 a year. By 1930 Frances Alda was the regular soloist. That year, the first that reliable ratings were compiled, *Atwater-Kent* had a 31.0, finishing third behind *Amos 'n' Andy* and *The Rudy Vallee Hour*. An offshoot of sorts was *Atwater-Kent Auditions*, the first talent scout show, heard in 1927 and culminating in December that year. Local competitions were initiated around the country: the five winners from each division (male and female) competed for \$5,000 prizes in the finale. Donald Novis and Thomas L. Thomas came out of *Atwater-Kent Auditions*, but Kenny Baker—who also went on to a notable radio career—never got past the local level. Graham McNamee announced the show.

A further offshoot, *The Atwater-Kent Dance Orchestra*, aired on the Blue Network in a 60-minute timeslot, Thursdays at 10 P.M., in 1929–30. But it was *The Atwater-Kent Hour* that made radio history and was fondly remembered for years.

AUCTION GALLERY, human interest.

BROADCAST HISTORY: May 22, 1945–March 13, 1946, Mutual. 30m, Tuesdays at 8:30 until late June 1945. Reorganized as *Victory Auction* in August 1945, Mondays at 10. Revamped again in Dec. 1945 as *Radio Auction*, Wednesdays at 10. **HOST-AUCTIONEER:** Dave Elman. **THEME:** *You Are My Lucky Star*.

Dave Elman was a master of offbeat human interest radio. His *Hobby Lobby* had run on Mutual for seven years when *Auction Gallery* premiered. It was billed as “the first nationwide auction in radio history,” but the items it handled were chosen as much for entertainment value as for cash value. Guest stars provided background on them in dramatic sketches. The studio audience was small and select, brought in by invitation only: it consisted of established antique dealers and collectors who were serious buyers.

Each item was described by Elman, then was

featured in a dramatic skit. The studio audience was allowed just 30 seconds to bid; Elman then threw open the bidding to the nation, and the listeners had one week to top the high bid, by mail or wire.

Among the items offered were Mark Twain’s writing desk, Adolf Hitler’s dice, Robert Burns’s notebook, Lincoln’s draft of the 13th Amendment, a letter from George Gershwin to Irving Caesar, and Goering’s Iron Cross decoration. A “surprise auction” was also held, wherein a bidder bought a trivial item and found a valuable bonus attached. A sack of barley beans, restricted to young couples in love, brought with it a \$500 diamond ring; a collection of “Jap” battle souvenirs picked up in the Pacific by the son of New York furrier I. J. Fox earned the successful bidder a Fox patina fox fur as a rider.

The first broadcast, auditioned by this writer, is still viable after half a century. Lincoln’s breakfast table was the first item, highlighted in a sketch by actor Walter Hampden. A dozen eggs, one broken, was offered. The audience, sensing a trick, bid the item seriously, but Elman called back everything over the ceiling price on eggs, then 56 cents a dozen. The trick was that the broken egg was a valuable dinosaur egg, supplied by explorer Roy Chapman Andrews. Diamond Jim Brady’s piano was auctioned. Music critic Deems Taylor told the story: how Brady had ordered the piano at great cost (\$60,000) especially for Lillian Russell, whose voice, Brady thought, had never been done justice by the usual piano accompaniment. Helen Jepson of the Metropolitan Opera then sang “one of the songs Lillian Russell used to sing,” accompanied by the Brady piano. This was marvelous radio. The final item was George Washington’s death robe. Washington’s bloodstains were still in evidence, and the item was accompanied by letters of provenance from the Washington family. A fine show, highly entertaining, deserving of a better run than it got.

AUCTION QUIZ, quiz show with auction motif.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1941–42, Blue Network, Midwest regional hookup. Fridays at 8. Esso Oil. **QUIZMASTER:** Chuck Acree. **AUCTIONEER:** Bob Brown. **ANNOUNCER:** Dan Donaldson.

Listeners sent in questions; the studio audience bid for chances to answer and win prizes.

AUNT JEMIMA, minstrel-type variety.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 17, 1929–June 5, 1953, heard in many brief runs and formats, in many timeslots over the years. First series was on CBS, 30m, Thursdays at 9, running until April 4, 1929. Also heard on CBS 1931–33 (15m, three a week at 2); Blue Network 1937–38 (15m, five a week at 9:45 A.M.; 10 A.M. in 1938); CBS 1943–44 (5m, early to mid-1943; 15m, Saturdays, Nov. 1943–Jan. 1944); Blue 1944–45 (5m, daily); and CBS 1952–53 (10m, weekdays at 3:45). Quaker Oats; Jad Salts, 1931–33.

CAST: Tess Gardella as Aunt Jemima, the good-natured mammy of pancake fame. Also in the role: Hariette Widmer, Vera Lane, Amanda Randolph.

The *Aunt Jemima* show consisted of minstrel music and exaggerated black dialect. With few blacks on the air in radio's early years, the title role was ironically carried for most of the run by white actresses Gardella, Widmer, and Lane, with Amanda Randolph (a well-known black actress) playing it later. Gardella, who had played a similar role on Broadway, was the first Jemima. Widmer starred in the five-minute 1943 run. This featured a couple of songs by the "Jemima Chorus" and some banter between Jemima and her announcer, Marvin Miller: "Do you have an oldtime saying for us, Aunt Jemima?" *Why a cose ah has—ovah worry hurts a lot mo folks den ovah work.* The theme in 1943 was *Dixie*.

AUNT JENNY'S REAL-LIFE STORIES, soap opera.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Jan. 18, 1937–Nov. 16, 1956, CBS. 15m, weekdays at 11:45 A.M. (12:15, 1946–55). Spry shortening. **CAST:** Edith Spencer and Agnes Young as Aunt Jenny. **ANNOUNCER:** Dan Seymour, who also played Danny in the scripts. **MUSIC:** Elsie Thompson on organ. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Jimmy Dwan. **THEME:** *Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms*, on strings.

Aunt Jenny, unlike most daytime serials, confined its tales to five-chapter, complete-each-week plotlines, with constantly shifting casts. The two continuing characters were Aunt Jenny

and announcer Dan Seymour, who dropped in each day to hear her tale.

Aunt Jenny lived on Indian Hill in the town of Littleton, USA, where she was well rooted as the philosopher of record. In her cozy kitchen, a listener could get a bit of home cooking, some positive wisdom, and a new installment of the running story. Early in the run, Jenny was married to a man named Calvin, editor of the *Littleton News*. When Seymour would ask for a "golden thought of the day," Jenny would say, "Yes, Danny, Calvin read these lines to me last night." What followed was inevitably a creaky platitude on the search for True Happiness. Jenny's cooking tips were likewise simple, all shamelessly linked to liberal use of her sponsor's product: "Brush with lemon juice, then with melted Spry, and broil to a golden brown." There were homey sound effects, largely sizzling pans and boiling pots, and Aunt Jenny had a canary, played by Henry Boyd. In her later days, Aunt Jenny was a widow.

AUNT MARY, soap opera.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Ca. 1942–51, NBC. 15m, West Coast. **CAST:** Jane Morgan as Mary Lane. Fred Howard as Lefty Larkin. Jane Webb as Peggy Douglas Mead. Patrick McGeehan as Ben Calvert. Josephine Gilbert and Vivi Janiss as Kit Calvert. Jack Edwards and Bob Bailey as Bill Mead. Irene Tedrow as Jessie Calvert. Jay Novello as David Bowman. Also: Tom Collins, Cy Kendall, Betty Lou Gerson, Ken Peters. **ANNOUNCERS:** Dick Wells, Hugh Brundage, Marvin Miller, Vincent Pelletier. **DIRECTORS:** George Fogle, Edwin H. Morse. **WRITERS:** Lee and Virginia Crosby, Gil South. **THEME:** *Dear Old Girl*.

Aunt Mary was heard on a regional West Coast hookup "and as far east [according to a later sales pitch for syndication] as El Paso and Dallas." The heroine was a wise old lady philosopher who lived on "Willow Creek Road" and displayed great character in the *Ma Perkins* mold.

AUNT SAMMY, recipes and household hints.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1926–ca. 1935, various stations.

In the mid-1920s, the U.S. Department of Agriculture began using radio to communicate with

farmers in distant corners of the nation. William A. Wheeler, USDA official charged with dispensing market reports, worked up several shows offering advice from county agents. By far the best known was *Aunt Sammy*. First heard as *Housekeeper's Half-Hour*, it was prepared for use by local stations in the summer of 1926. By October it had become *Aunt Sammy*. The first broadcast under that name was prepared for release Oct. 4, 1926. Fifty stations are believed to have carried it, with 50 women in stations around the country reading the same script. *Aunt Sammy* gave advice on pest control, floor care, laundry, and food. The recipes were simple and economical, and the program joined *Betty Crocker* (which started the same year on NBC) as one of the pioneering homemaker shows.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR, quiz derivative with literary guests.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 7, 1939–Feb. 12, 1940, Mutual. 30m, Fridays at 8:30 initially, then Mondays at 9:30, then at 8. B. F. Goodrich, partial sponsor. **MODERATOR:** S. J. Perelman. **PLOT-SMITH:** Ellery Queen. **PANELISTS:** Dorothy Parker, Ludwig Bemelmans, Heywood Broun, Ruth McKenney, Carl Van Doren, Alice Duer Miller, etc.

The idea behind *Author, Author* was fascinating: assemble a panel of literati, have them match plotting skills with detective author Ellery Queen, and allow free reign for spontaneous wit. The situations were submitted by listeners and might be written as nonsense questions. The panel was expected to whip these into respectable scenarios. The show had the potential to be intellectually frisky at the level of *Information, Please*, which had begun on NBC the previous year. But *Time* found it "impaired by talkiness and the occasional complete blankness of literary minds." Panelists squaring off against Queen found themselves double-teamed, as Ellery was the pen name of Frederic Dannay and Manfred Lee.

AUTHOR MEETS THE CRITICS, literary confrontation.

BROADCAST HISTORY: June 12, 1946–April 2, 1947, Mutual. 30m, Wednesdays at 10:30.
May 25, 1947–Oct. 3, 1948, NBC. 30m, Sun-

days at 4:30 until late Feb.; returned in early July, Sundays at 5.

Nov. 24, 1949–April 22, 1951, ABC. 30m, Thursdays at 10 through Sept. 1950, then Sundays at 11:30 A.M.

MODERATOR: Barry Gray on Mutual; John K. M. McCaffrey, editor of the *American Mercury*, on NBC and ABC. **PRODUCER:** Martin Stone.

This lively show resulted when producer Martin Stone was asked to do a book review program on a local New York station. Stone thought a more interesting situation would grow out of face-to-face meetings between authors and their critics. Two critics of "unquestionable stature" were brought in to dissect a book. One show featured Basil Davenport, editor of the Book-of-the-Month Club, and Edith Walton of the *New York Times*. For 15 minutes the critics flailed away at James Caffee's *Poor Cousin Evelyn*. In the second half, the author criticized the critics. Often heated, the talk focused on character, style, and even the author's integrity. It was spontaneous, with no rehearsals. Among the books discussed was James Jones's controversial 1951 novel *From Here to Eternity*.

AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE, dramatic anthology.

BROADCAST HISTORY: March 5, 1941–June 4, 1945, NBC; Blue Network until mid-Oct. 1941, then Red. Many briefly held 30m timeslots, including Sundays at 11:30, 1941–42; Wednesdays at 11:30, 1942–44; Mondays at 11:30, 1944–45. Philip Morris, 1942–43. **CAST:** John Hodiak, Fern Persons, Arthur Kohl, Laurette Fillbrandt, Kathryn Card, Bob Jellison, Nelson Olmsted, Marvin Miller, Olan Soule, Les Tremayne, Clarence Hartzell, Curley Bradley, etc. **ORCHESTRA:** Rex Maupin, Roy Shield, Joseph Gallicchio. **CREATOR:** Wynn Wright. **DIRECTORS:** Norman Felton, Fred Weihe, Homer Heck, etc.

Famous stories by celebrated authors: among them, *Elementals* (Stephen Vincent Benét), *The Piano* (William Saroyan), and *The Snow Goose* (Paul Gallico).

AVALON TIME, comedy-variety.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 1, 1938–May 1, 1940, NBC. 30m, Saturdays at 7 until mid-1939,

then Wednesdays at 8:30. First-season title: *Avalon Variety Time*: Avalon Cigarettes. **CAST**: 1938: Del King, Red Foley, Kitty O'Neil, "the Neighborhood Boys." 1939: Red Skelton star comic as of Jan. 7; Curt Massey replacing Red Foley in July; singers Dick Todd and Janette Davis added in the fall, with comic Marlin Hurt and comedy team Tommy Mack and Bud Vandover. Skelton departed Dec. 20, 1939, and the show was reorganized again. 1940: Cliff Arquette comic star as of Jan. 3; Don McNeill, host; Vandover and Todd in support. **ORCHESTRA**: Phil Davis (1938), Bob Strong (1939-40). **THEME**: *Avalon*.

Despite its many faces, *Avalon Time* is best known as Red Skelton's first regular comedy show. When Skelton joined the show in progress, it was mainly a vehicle for western music. Cliff Arquette brought another change in 1940. Immediately after *Avalon Time* left the air in May 1940, the cast, orchestra, and sponsor moved into a revamped version of *Show Boat*, which ran until April 1941 (see *SHOW BOAT*).

THE AVENGER, crime melodrama.

BROADCAST HISTORY: July 18, 1941-Nov. 3, 1942, WHN, New York. 30m, Fridays at 9 through mid-1941; later Tuesdays. **CAST**: Unknown New

York actor as Richard Henry Benson, a crime-fighter of super-strength known as the Avenger. Humphrey Davis as his sidekick, Fergus "Mac" MacMurdie. **DIRECTOR**: Maurice Joachim. **WRITER**: Paul Ernst, under the pseudonym Kenneth Robeson, with plotlines by Henry Ralston. Based on the Paul Ernst pulp stories in *The Avenger* magazine, by Street & Smith.

1945-46, transcribed syndication. **CAST**: James Monks as Jim Brandon, "famous biochemist," who fought crime as the Avenger. Dick Janaver also as the Avenger. Helen Adamson as his assistant, the beautiful Fern Collier, the only person who shared his secrets and knew that he was the man feared by the underworld as the Avenger. **PRODUCER**: Charles Michelson. **WRITERS**: Walter B. Gibson, Gil and Ruth Braun.

No shows were available from the first *Avenger* series at this writing. In the transcribed series, Jim Brandon perfected two inventions that aided him in the fight against crime: the "telepathic indicator" allowed him to pick up random thought flashes, and the "secret diffusion capsule" cloaked him in the "black light of invisibility." It was a poor man's version of *The Shadow*, despite scripting by *Shadow* author-creator Walter B. Gibson.

B

BABE RUTH, baseball commentary and patter.

BROADCAST HISTORY: April 16–July 13, 1934, Blue Network. 15m, three a week at 8:45. Quaker Oats.

April 14–July 9, 1937, CBS. 15m, twice a week at 10:30. Sinclair Oil.

June 5–July 10, 1943, NBC. 15m, Saturdays at 10:45 A.M.

Aug. 28–Nov. 20, 1943, and July 8–Oct. 21, 1944, NBC. 15m, Saturdays at 10:30 A.M. Spaulding.

George Herman “Babe” Ruth was an awkward radio novice who croaked his lines and had almost no sense of timing. But he was the biggest sports hero of his day. His radio shows consisted of chatter, interviews, stale jokes, analysis, and predictions of upcoming games. Ruth had done vaudeville tours as early as 1921: he was an old hand at working crowds but still suffered periodic bouts with mike fright. His biographer Ken Sobel described his role on the 1937 series as “baseball dopester.” The 1943 NBC series became a baseball quiz, a format that extended into 1944. Alternate titles to some of his programs were *The Adventures of Babe Ruth* (1934), *Here’s Babe Ruth* (1943), and *Baseball Quiz* (1943–44). Ruth was a frequent guest with sportscasters Bill Stern and Red Barber and in 1937 played himself in the comedy-drama *Alibi Ike* on *The Lux Radio Theater*. Probably his finest moment before the microphone was his swan song when, dying of throat cancer, he gave an

elegant, moving farewell speech on Mutual. The date was April 27, 1947. He died Aug. 16, 1948.

BABY ROSE MARIE, songs by radio’s first genuine child star.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1926, WGP, Atlantic City, first appearance on the air, at age 3; first sang on NBC later that same year.

1931, WJZ, New York, beginning in July.

1932–33, Blue Network. 15m, Sundays at noon beginning Christmas Day. Julius Grossman Shoes.

1933–34, Blue Network. 15m, Twice a week. Tastyeast.

March 21, 1938–Feb. 20, 1939, Blue Network. 15m, Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:30.

Born Rose Marie Curley in New York’s Lower East Side on Aug. 15, 1923, Baby Rose Marie had a fully developed voice as a toddler, amazing the nation with its range and adult sound. By age 5, she was reportedly earning \$100,000 a year as “the child wonder of song.” She appeared on *The Rudy Vallee Hour* in the ’20s and usually sang four songs on quarter-hour broadcasts under her own name. She “retired” in 1935 but returned to the air in 1938. In later life she was an accomplished comedienne, taking the role of a wisecracking writer on TV’s *Dick Van Dyke Show*.

THE BABY SNOOKS SHOW, situation comedy.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Feb. 29–June 6, 1936, CBS. 60m, Saturdays at 8. Part of *The Ziegfeld Follies of the Air*. Palmolive.

Dec. 23, 1937–July 25, 1940, NBC. 60m until March 1940, then 30m, Thursdays at 9. *Good News of 1938*; *Baby Snooks* routines joined series in progress; subsequent *Good News* editions of 1939, 1940. Maxwell House Coffee.

Sept. 5, 1940–June 15, 1944, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 8. A curious half-hour divided equally between *Snooks* and comic Frank Morgan. Heard as *Maxwell House Coffee Time* after the sponsor.

Sept. 17, 1944–May 28, 1948, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 6:30 until fall 1946, then Fridays at 8. Initially titled *Toasties Time* but soon widely known as *The Baby Snooks Show*. General Foods for Post Toasties, Sanka, and Jell-O.

Nov. 8, 1949–May 22, 1951, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 8:30. Tums. Fanny Brice memorial broadcast May 29, 1951.

CAST: Fanny Brice as Baby Snooks, impish little girl of the air. Hanley Stafford as her father Lancelot “Daddy” Higgins, with Alan Reed as Daddy in earliest appearances on *The Ziegfeld Follies* broadcasts of 1936. Lalive Brownell as “Mommy” Higgins, a role also played by Lois Corbet (mid-1940s) and Arlene Harris, “the human chatterbox” (post-1945). Leone Ledoux as Snooks’s little brother Robespierre, beginning in 1945. Danny Thomas as Jerry Dingle (1944–45), the “daydreaming postman” who, from week to week, imagined himself as Mr. District Attorney, a railroad conductor, the greatest dancer in the world, and a circus owner. Fanny Brice also as Irma Potts, the befuddled department store clerk (1944). Charlie Cantor as Uncle Louie (1945). Alan Reed as Daddy’s boss Mr. Weemish; Ken Christy as Mr. Weemish, ca. 1951. Also: Irene Tedrow, Frank Nelson, Ben Alexander, Lillian Randolph, Elvia Allman, Earl Lee, Sara Berner, etc. **ANNOUNCERS:** John Conte (late 1930s, early 1940s), Tobe Reed (1944–45), Harlow Wilcox (mid-late 1940s), Dick Joy, Don Wilson, Ken Roberts. **VOCALIST:** Bob Graham (1945). **MUSIC:** Meredith Willson (ca. 1937–44), Carmen Dragon. **PRODUCER-DIRECTORS:** Mann Holiner (early 1940s), Al Kaye (1944), Ted Bliss, Walter Bunker, Arthur Stander. **WRITERS:** Phil Rapp, Jess Oppenheimer, Everett Freeman, Bill Danch, Sid Dorfman, Arthur Stander, Robert Fisher. **SOUND EFFECTS:** (CBS): Clark Casey, David Light. **THEME:** *Rockabye Baby*.

Baby Snooks was created by Fanny Brice at a party in 1921. But Brice was a middle-aged woman before the medium of “blind broadcasting” gave her a new career in the voice of a child.

Her original name was Borach, but in two separate and equally acclaimed careers she became known to the world as Fanny Brice. Years after she died, she was known by another name, “Funny Girl,” when Barbra Streisand dramatized her early life in a successful film.

She was born Oct. 29, 1891, on Forsyth Street in New York’s Lower East Side. As a child she ran away from school to play in the streets of Harlem. She begged nickels and dimes at Coney Island and sang sad songs, with real tears, for her coin-throwing crowds. She made the free lunches in her father’s saloon, and on the streets she picked up the voices of European immigrants and learned to do dialect comedy.

She won an amateur night at Keeney’s Theater in Brooklyn, singing *When You Know You’re Not Forgotten by the Girl You Can’t Forget*. Her prize was \$10, and she gathered \$23 in coins from the floor of the stage. She worked for George M. Cohan but was fired when Cohan learned that she couldn’t dance. After singing with a road show, she appeared in New York musical revues. A struggling young songwriter, Irving Berlin, gave her a musical piece called *Sadie Salome* and suggested she sing it in Yiddish dialect at the Columbia Burlesque House, where she was working. In the audience that night was Florenz Ziegfeld, whose *Follies* were at the pinnacle of Broadway entertainment.

By 1917 she was a major *Follies* star. She had incredible range as a singer and a comic, recalled Eddie Cantor, who arrived in the *Follies* that year: Brice had the singular ability to make people laugh and cry at the same time. Her rendition of the haunting love song *My Man* was one of her trademarks. In the ’20s she was singing *Secondhand Rose*, *Cooking Breakfast for the One I Love*, and *I’d Rather Be Blue over You* (than be happy with somebody else). She appeared in two plays and three films, divorced gambler Nicky Arnstein, married producer Billy Rose, and appeared in the Rose revue *Sweet and Low* in 1930.

Brice had been using her little-girl routine (originally called “Babykins”) in sporadic stage routines in the ’20s, and in *Sweet and Low* she

introduced the character to Broadway. In 1932 she did a brief radio series, singing with George Olsen's band: one source calls this a "straight singing job," while another suggests that she may have done short comedy skits as Baby Snooks on this early program. Snooks was a definite entity by 1934, when the new Ziegfeld *Follies* opened on Broadway. Brice appeared onstage in her baby garb and brought down the house. The routine was revived for the 1936 *Follies*, with Eve Arden playing the mother figure, and in February that year it became a running part of *The Ziegfeld Follies of the Air* on CBS. Her December 1937 entry into *Good News of 1938* (which had been on the air almost two months before she arrived) gave *Snooks* its first long-running national exposure.

Fanny Brice was 46 years old. She was beginning her second career, playing the most notorious brat of the air.

Snooks had a real daddy now. Hanley Stafford won the part almost immediately. "He was perfect," Brice would recall years later; "we didn't need to hear anyone else." Stafford rivaled Gale Gordon and Hans Conried among the best stack-blowers in radio, erupting at least once per show as he became the focus of all Snooks's mischief. If Daddy had insomnia, Snooks would make sure (of course she would) that he'd have a peaceful, quiet night. If Daddy wanted to paper a wall, Snooks would "help." If Snooks wasn't giving Daddy's suits to charity, she was making "atomic lotion" with her chemistry set. Snooks did her deeds and suffered the consequences: corporal punishment was the norm then, and listeners regularly heard Snooks getting her comeuppance across Daddy's knee.

Maxwell House Coffee Time, her first real series outside the variety show format, found her in an equal division of time with Frank "Wizard of Oz" Morgan. Morgan did tall-tales monologues, and Brice-Stafford and Company performed a quarter-hour Snooks skit. Occasionally there was crossover, as when Morgan—to his regret—decided to take Snooks to the zoo, but in the main it was like two distinct programs. Intense competition developed between Morgan and Brice: each kept trying to top the other for more than three years. The unusual pairing was an outgrowth of the *Good News* variety hour, where it had begun: Morgan and Brice had shared top billing on *Good News of 1940*, and

their routines were simply channeled into a more direct format.

When the *Maxwell House* series ended in 1944, *Snooks* moved into its own full half-hour sitcom timeslot. Snooks was the central character in the Higgins household in Sycamore Terrace. "Mommy" Higgins was now fully realized, to play against Daddy. The parents argued about everything, from Lancelot's old girlfriends to Mommy's burnt toast. Snooks played one against the other, ever finding ways to make bad situations worse. If Daddy came home with lipstick on his collar, Snooks threatened to tell. She could be bribed, of course: she was a shameless blackmailer and often a double-crosser as well, leaving the shirt, "by accident," exactly where Mommy would find it, even after she'd collected her ten-cent bribe to drop it in the wash and keep her mouth shut.

She was compared with Charlie McCarthy and with Junior, Red Skelton's "mean widdle kid." But she possessed neither the sophistication of Bergen's dummy nor the coarse meanness of Junior. Confronted, Snooks was the soul of little-girl innocence. A listener could see her, batting her eyes, looking at her feet, saying, full of remorse, "Whyyyyy, Daddy. . ."

Brice missed several episodes due to illness at the beginning of her 1945 season. Her absence was written in logically, as substitute star Eddie Cantor launched a search for Snooks. Robert Benchley, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, and Kay Kyser joined the hunt. Snooks returned for the Oct. 7 episode, and the chaos continued anew. The most significant addition that year was the voice of Leone Ledoux as Snooks's brother Robespierre, who had existed as an off-mike character. Ledoux specialized in gibberish, playing many baby roles on the air: she had worked for Disney and done all the baby roles on *The Lux Radio Theater* for more than four years. On *Blondie*, she gave voice to Baby Dumpling and, in the words of one trade journal, "grew him into the articulate Alexander and then brought the prattling Cookie into the world."

The 1946 season sounded much the same, with Arlene Harris replacing Lois Corbet as Mommy, Ben Alexander brought in as a "utility man," and the rest of the cast continuing as before. Snooks was the constant, "the kid I used to be," Brice recalled. The role was such a natural it was "like stealing money," she told an

interviewer. She was stealing, at that time, around \$3,000 a week. As Snooks emerged, Brice's real personality faded. She all but abandoned her natural voice in public and was seldom seen out of character. After a performance, it could take as long as an hour for her to completely shed the Snooks characteristics. Onstage, she would mug for the microphone, jumping around in her little-girl costume and twisting her face into a broad, goofy grin. She rarely ad-libbed, but in interviews she referred to "Schnooks" almost as a living person. A new generation came of age without knowing Fanny Brice as anything other than Baby Snooks.

On May 24, 1951, she suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. She died five days later, at 59. Her show was still running strong at her death.

BACHELOR'S CHILDREN, soap opera.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1935–36, WGN, Chicago.

Sept. 28, 1936–March 21, 1941, CBS. 15m, daily at 9:45 A.M. Old Dutch Cleanser.

March 24, 1941–Sept. 25, 1942, NBC. 15m, daily at 10:15 A.M. Colgate.

Sept. 28, 1942–Sept. 27, 1946, CBS. 15m, daily at 10:45 A.M. Wonder Bread.

CAST: Hugh Studebaker as Dr. Bob Graham, a bachelor who took in his dying friend's 18-year-old twin daughters; Art Kohl as Dr. Bob for five months in 1940, when a throat illness forced Studebaker off the air. Marjorie Hannan and Laurette Fillbrandt as Ruth Ann, the kind and gentle twin. Patricia Dunlap as her sister Janet, fiery and impulsive. Olan Soule as Sam Ryder. Marie Nelson and Hellen Van Tuyl as Ellen Collins, the kindly housekeeper. Ginger Jones as Marjory Carroll. David Gothard as Don Carpenter. Peg Hillias as Allison Radcliffe. Dorothy Denvir as Margaret Gardner. Charles Flynn as Michael Kent. Jonathan Hole as Dr. Clifford. Arthur Van Slyke as Roy Conway. Don Thompson as Vincent Burke. Michael Romano as Clyde Fallon. Harry Elders as Frank Gardner. Chris Ford as Mr. Wilkes. Lenore Kingston and Allan Franklyn as the Carneys. **ANNOUNCERS:** Russ Young. Don Gordon. **WRITER:** Bess Flynn. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Ed Bailey. **THEME:** *Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life*, on the organ.

Dr. Bob Graham had lost his own mother as a child and was raised by his kindly house-

keeper, Miss Ellen Collins. Now, 35 and still a bachelor as the story opens, Dr. Bob is visiting his best friend, Sam Ryder, when the letter arrives that will change his life. His old sergeant from the war, James Dexter, is on his deathbed. Dexter was his teacher on the responsibilities of manhood, Dr. Bob recalls, and may have saved his life as well. Graham vowed then that, should Dexter ever be in need, he (Graham) would "go all the way for him." Dexter's request: that Dr. Bob take in his soon-to-be-orphaned children.

Sam Ryder is aghast. How could Graham have made such a promise? Both men are surprised at the arrival of the "children," a matched set of lovely young ladies, identical in everything except temperament. Soon a four-way bond exists, with Sam Ryder taking to Janet first as her tormentor and later as her best friend. Dr. Bob tries to maintain an "older brother" demeanor, but it's soon evident that Ruth Ann has stronger feelings.

Among other plotlines, these unfolded: Sam falls in love with Janet; Ruth Ann falls in love with Dr. Bob. But Ruth Ann frets over the impropriety of this, and Sam hides his feelings under a cloak of banter. The girls open a tea room; the theme of unrequited love stretches its way through the '30s. Sam, teasing, makes up a name of a girl he says he really loves—Marjory Carroll. Then a real Marjory Carroll arrives, and they all become friends. Marjory, a musician, falls in love with Sam. Ruth runs away but returns when Dr. Bob gets blood poisoning and hovers for many episodes between life and death. There are many such hoverings: Ruth Ann herself was thus poised not long before with pneumonia. The staples were love, jealousy, and, always, misunderstanding.

Janet and Sam will find love after being quarantined for a month in a scarlet fever case: after years of denying him, Janet will see the light in a blinding instant when she takes a false step while hanging a picture and falls into Sam's arms. By then, Sam is engaged to Marjory Carroll. Dr. Bob will learn of Ruth Ann's love after an auto accident when, still only half-conscious, she confesses but later forgets, leading to a stretch of *Now I know but she must not know that I know* complications for Dr. Bob. Eventually they marry, but the union is haunted by a letter written by Dr. Bob long ago, denying his love. The letter, never mailed (and completely

untrue), is played out for months before Ruth Ann finds it. Meanwhile, Allison Radcliffe, a beautiful patient, drives Ruth Ann to fits of jealousy. Outlaws kidnap Dr. Bob and go on a shooting spree. When Sam and Janet may finally marry after years of trouble, a new tragedy strikes: Sam's sister and her four children are left destitute, and Sam must take on their support. Bravely, Janet puts away her wedding dress.

Eventually they do marry, but it's touch and go all the way.

BACKSTAGE WIFE, soap opera.

BROADCAST HISTORY: 1935, WGN, Chicago.

Aug. 5, 1935–March 27, 1936, Mutual. 15m continuation, weekdays at 9:45 A.M. Sterling Drugs.

March 30, 1936–July 1, 1955, NBC. 15m, weekday mornings initially, then at 4:15; then, beginning in Sept. 1936, a 19-year run at 4. Sterling Drugs for Dr. Lyons Tooth Powder; Procter & Gamble as of mid-1951.

July 4, 1955–Jan. 2, 1959, CBS. 15m, weekdays at 12:15. Multiple sponsorship.

CAST: Vivian Fridell (1930s, early 1940s) and Claire Niesen as Mary Noble, a little Iowa girl who came to the big city and married into the theater. Ken Griffin, James Meighan, and Guy Sorel, over the years, as Larry Noble, Mary's husband, "matinee idol of a million other women." Betty Ruth Smith as the tempestuous Catherine Monroe. Henrietta Tedro and Ethel Wilson as kind, devoted Maud Marlowe. Frank Dane, Charles Webster, and Mandel Kramer as Tom Bryson. Helen Claire as the devious Virginia Lansing, with Andree Wallace as her sister, the charming Irene. Phil Truex as Cliff Caldwell. Anne Burr as the evil adventures Regina Rawlings. Eloise Kummer in many roles, including the calculating Marcia Mannering. Ethel Owen as Lady Clara, Larry's mother. John M. James as stage manager Arnold Carey. Alan MacAteer as the stage doorman Pop. **ANNOUNCERS:** Harry Clark, Ford Bond, Sandy Becker, Howard Claney, Roger Krupp. **MUSIC:** Chet Kingsbury on organ. **PRODUCERS:** Frank and Anne Hummert. **DIRECTORS:** Blair Walliser, Les Mitchel, Fred Weihe, Joe Mansfield, etc. **WRITERS:** Ned Calmer, Ruth Borden, Elizabeth Todd, etc. **SOUND EFFECTS:** Bob Graham, John Katulik, Frank Blatter, Ed Bailey, Michael Eisen-

menger, Tom Horan, Chet Hill. **THEME:** *Stay as Sweet at You Are* (1930s), *Rose of Tralee* (1940s).

There was one endless plot at the core of *Backstage Wife*: sweet Mary Noble stood in the wings as scores of Broadway glamor girls took dead aim at her sometimes fickle man. With Stella Dallas and Helen Trent, Mary was one of the most tortured creatures of the afternoon. The word "suffer" does no justice to Mary's life with Larry Noble. Mary endured.

She faced the most startling array of hussies, jezebels, and schemers ever devised in a sub-genre that made an art form of such shenanigans. Add to this the common soap opera ingredients—arrogant foes in high places, misunderstandings that real people would correct in a moment, and festering resentment fueled by the refusal to communicate—then move on to the real meat of this agony of agonies: avarice, backbiting, hatred, amnesia, insanity, murder. Larry Noble may have been a "matinee idol of a million other women," but Mary too had her admirers. Most of them were psychotics, and this led *Backstage Wife* to a frantic level of melodrama touched by few other soaps in radio history.

Her marriage, according to one late-1930s fan magazine, "brought her the most complete happiness she had ever known. But soon she learned that she had to fight for her husband's love." Her rival then was Catherine Monroe, "the worst adversary Mary ever met." Listeners sent cards, hand-addressed to "Mary Noble," advising her to "watch out for Catherine Monroe." Catherine had come in the guise of a friend. She had agreed to fund Larry's return to the stage after an accident had felled him. This triangle deepened until Mary, in desperation, walked out.

She turned to Ken Paige, an artist who owned the Greenwich Theater where Larry's new play was scheduled to open. The Nobles were strapped for cash after Larry's accident, and Paige was offering a year's free rent, IF Mary would sit for a portrait, and IF the portrait won an award, and. . . . Mary agreed but did not tell Larry, who, when he found out, flew into a jealous rage. Larry was like that: he frequently bristled with jealousy.

The birth of little Larry Jr. had a calming effect, but this was confined to brief moments within the continuing chaos. "Each episode be-

gan and ended in trouble," wrote Erik Barnouw. "Sunny stretches were in the middle. A Friday ending was expected to be especially gripping, to hold interest over the weekend. A serial was not conceived in terms of beginning or end; such terms had no meaning. It ended when sponsorship ended."

Friends and enemies over the years included:

—Maud Marlowe, the character actress who befriended both Nobles and adored Larry Jr. A faithful and true companion, always ready to share their trouble and fun.

—Tom Bryson, Larry's theatrical manager. Gruff, unsentimental, wise in the ways of the world, Bryson took up writing and turned out the play *Blackout*, in which Mary was coaxed to play a starring role. Her emergence as an actress, coming at the precise moment when Larry was struggling professionally, led to a crisis-of-confidence plotline.

—Virginia Lansing, devious, unscrupulous, who did everything she could to undercut Larry's self-confidence, "so that, consoling him, she can come to mean more to Larry than Mary does."

—Irene, the charming young sister of Virginia Lansing, who thwarted her sister's attempts to pry Mary and Larry apart. Irene lived on Park Avenue with her sister, despite the fact that Virginia stole and married her first love.

—Cliff Cauldwell, "handsome young actor" in the new Tom Bryson play. Cliff loved Irene, but Virginia Lansing stood in the wings, ready to upset her sister's life again.

The characters were like paper dolls, flat and one-dimensional, bludgeoning each other with identifying names and traits. "Well, Mary, what have you got to say for yourself?" "Oh, Larry!" "Never mind, Mary, I can see for myself what's going on." "But, Larry, wait!" The listener was never in doubt about what was being said, what was at stake, and, above all, who was speaking. Each character was given a catchphrase or a descriptive set of adjectives. Rupert Barlow became "the unscrupulous Rupert Barlow"; Regina Rawlings "the calculating, devious Regina Rawlings." This was the trademark of the husband-and-wife producing team Frank and Anne Hummert, whose shows were so heavy-handed that they were parodies of themselves.

Frank Hummert was a Chicago copywriter in

the '20s. In 1930 he met Anne Ashenhurst, a former newspaperwoman who became his assistant and, five years later, his wife. The Hummerts had a formula that was surefire: appeal to the lowest common denominator, make it clear, grab the heartstrings, and reap the rewards. With writer Robert Hardy Andrews they created *The Stolen Husband*, one of radio's earliest soaps. Hummert went on to do the most notable serials of the daytime. His name was added to the agency Blackett & Sample, though he was never a partner and owned no part of it. He left Blackett-Sample-Hummert and moved to New York. His new company, Air Features, Inc., turned out (among many others) *Just Plain Bill*, *The Romance of Helen Trent*, *Ma Perkins*, *Our Gal Sunday*, *Lorenzo Jones*, and *Stella Dallas*. It was estimated that Hummert at his peak bought 12.5 percent of the entire network radio schedule, that he billed \$12 million a year, that his fiction factory produced almost seven million words a season.

A factory it was, rivaling such earlier operations as Beadle & Adams (creators of Victorian-era novels by the dozens), the Stratemeyer syndicate (a powerhouse in juvenile thriller books, creators of Tom Swift, Nancy Drew, the Rover Boys, the Hardy Boys, The Bobbsey Twins, and others going strong today), and the system that enabled Alexandre Dumas to turn out more than 250 books in his lifetime. The Hummerts "supervised writers," who filled in dialogue from broad, general sketches provided by Anne Hummert. As many as two dozen writers and 60 readers and assistants worked in the soap factory in New York. Writers were paid scale rates, \$25 per episode: a writer who could handle two or three shows could make a fair living. The Hummerts communicated with this vast corps through detailed memoranda and by liaison. They were seldom seen outside their Greenwich, Conn., estate as their fortune grew ever larger. When they did come to New York, they had a regular table, hidden from view by a wall of ferns, at a favorite restaurant. They were not generous people—an actor could count on little overtime pay for rehearsals, and even associates of long standing got piddling gifts at Christmas—but neither were they swayed by political trends. They ignored the blacklists in the late '40s, employing writers and actors who gave them what they wanted. But, as

Mary Jane Higby remembered in her memoir *Tune In Tomorrow*, "any actor who was late to an Air Features rehearsal was in trouble."

Higby remembered the Hummerts well. "He was tall, thin, solemn-looking, and he stooped slightly. She was small, slim, cheerful-looking with light-brown hair. She wore no makeup except a light trace of lipstick. . . . She looked like a well-to-do Quaker lady." The scripts were done in lavender ink: "A radio actor could spot an Air Features script across the room," wrote Higby. The Hummerts brooked little in the way of suggestion or interference. The directors, said Higby, "were not allowed to introduce 'art' effects—unessential sound, background music—that might obscure one word of dialogue." And when Mrs. Hummert was dictating a change of direction, no one ventured an opinion. Vacation plans were shelved and work redone, and an errant remark might be met with instant dismissal.

The Hummerts perfected a soap formula that was best explained by Erik Barnouw. A series of narrative and dramatic hooks was woven into a three- or four-week main storyline. Before the main crisis was resolved, the next one was stirred in as a subplot, which was brought up to a full boil as the old story was resolved and dropped. It was the simplest kind of radio, ripe for satire: comics Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding had little to exaggerate in their *Mary Backstayge*, *Noble Wife* skits.

THE BAKER'S BROADCAST, a comedy-variety series, composed of three distinct radio acts, each of which existed as an entity apart from the series. Ozzie and Harriet Nelson were the linking performers through each era.

BROADCAST HISTORY: Oct. 8, 1933–June 30, 1935, Blue Network. 30m, Sundays at 7:30. Standard Brands for Fleischmann's Yeast. **STAR:** Joe Penner, comic.

Oct. 6, 1935–June 27, 1937, Blue Network. 30m, Sundays at 7:30. Fleischmann's Yeast. **STAR:** Robert "Believe It or Not" Ripley.

Oct. 3, 1937–June 26, 1938, Blue Network. 30m, Sundays at 7:30. Fleischmann's Yeast. **STAR:** Syndicated cartoonist Feg Murray.

The Baker's Broadcast was created for comic sensation Joe Penner. Born Jozsef Pinter (or Pinta) in a small village near Budapest in 1904,

Penner came to America around 1912, struggled to learn English, and worked his way into vaudeville in the 1920s. He often appeared in a derby hat and used a cigar as a prop. For almost a decade he toiled as a second-rate entertainer, rooted in obscurity until he hit upon a phrase in 1931 that made his fortune.

Faced with a cold audience in Birmingham, Ala., Penner ad-libbed the line "Wanna buy a duck?" The audience tittered, he recalled later, so he began to build on the gag. "Well, does your brother wanna buy a duck? . . . Well, if you *had* a brother, would he wanna buy a duck?" By then the audience was coming to life. Penner soon learned that this was no isolated accident. Soon crowds everywhere were responding to the one-liner, delivered in that unique Penner style.

He came to the attention of J. Walter Thompson, the agency handling *The Rudy Vallee Hour*, and in 1933 he was booked for a single appearance on Vallee's Thursday night NBC hour. The response was thunderous: literally overnight, Joe Penner was a national figure. He did a second Vallee show, and the agency booked him for his own regular half-hour. Ozzie and Harriet Nelson were brought in for musical hijinks, and *The Baker's Broadcast* went into the Sunday night Blue Network schedule as a new feature for Vallee's sponsor, Fleischmann's Yeast.

The ratings soared. For some reason that would be lost on later generations, Penner's silly duck joke became the American rage in the fall of 1933. By January the show was perched in fourth place at 35.2, just behind Eddie Cantor, the Maxwell House *Show Boat*, and Vallee himself. It was estimated that every word of the duck gag put \$250,000 in Penner's pockets. His weekly income rose from \$500-when-he-was-working to \$7,000, and his duck became a better-known radio figure than most human acts on the air.

He named the duck Goo-Goo, and Mel Blanc gave it voice. Listeners sent him ducks, real and fake. Penner developed new lines that exaggerated words and reeked sarcasm. "You nah-sty man!" and "Don't ever doooo that!" and "Wo-o-o-e is me!" joined the lexicon of topical catchphrases. In 1934 Penner was voted radio's outstanding comedian.

Then, as it so often happens with vast, rapid success, Penner grew unhappy. He criticized the

writing on *The Baker's Broadcast* and demanded a change of format. The show was still nestled in the top ten: the agency took a "Don't argue with success" position, and Penner quit the show cold. He was out of radio for a year. By the time he returned with a new sponsor, the heat had cooled, and people were soon to find another overnight sensation, Edgar Bergen. "Joe was a terribly insecure little man who had an unfortunate knack for placing his trust in the wrong people," Ozzie Nelson wrote in his memoir. "As a result, his career was badly mishandled." By 1937 he was washed up and he knew it.

But *The Baker's Broadcast* went on. John Reber, head of radio production at J. Walter Thompson, liked the Nelsons and wanted to continue the show. Ozzie and Harriet had made great use of their exposure during the Penner days: they were young and attractive, and their music—lighthearted and melodious—was what America wanted in the Depression. Ozzie's talent was distinctive: not only was he a capable arranger and writer of novelty tunes, he also adapted the popular music of other writers to fit the Ozzie and Harriet style. It was breezy and fun, rich with '30s boy-girl frivolity. A number like *Am I Gonna Have Trouble with You?* was shot through with playful but unstated sex. He is frustrated, she seems aloof. She eats crackers in bed and is an expensive playmate. In counterpoint, she complains of his roving eye—"you're just a guy what won't behave." But in the end they agree on the main bit of business—"you're too darned sweet for me to have trouble with you." Here the Nelsons became stars. They battled lyrics back and forth in a style that had been utilized a few years earlier by Phil Harris and Leah Ray. The Nelsons owned that style by 1935.

Reber needed a new headliner, and he came up with the unlikeliest possible choice. Booked with Ozzie and Harriet for the new season was Robert Ripley and his collection of *Believe It or Not* oddities. This was just another radio job for Ripley, whose career on the air spanned two decades. He told of a "mouthless man" in China, able to talk despite having smooth unbroken skin where his mouth should be. His "armless pianist" could play concertos by hitting the keys with his chin. The world's fastest-talking woman could recite the Gettysburg Address in 26 seconds.

Ripley's dramatizations ran from merely strange to truly bizarre. Twice he had as guests men who had been executed (one by hanging, the other by firing squad) but failed to die. "The broadcasts with Ripley were interesting, challenging, often hilarious and occasionally frightening," Ozzie wrote in his memoir. Nelson remembered Ripley as a "gentle, kind person . . . painfully shy with strangers." The studio audience was a "terrible ordeal" for Ripley, so "he would usually fortify himself with a couple of drinks before the show." When he misjudged his capacity, Nelson recalled, "it was 'anything can happen' time."

Ozzie played the doubting Thomas, the devil's advocate who challenged Ripley to prove his claims. Ripley's reputation rested upon his alleged ability to back up every tale. When pressed by Ozzie, he cited authorities and witnesses chapter and verse, but in fact, wrote Ozzie, "Ed Gardner was the guy who dug up most of those *Believe It or Not* items we dramatized on the show." Gardner produced *The Baker's Broadcast* from 1935 until 1937, and "I often suspected that when Ed couldn't come up with a bona fide story, he either made one up or did a little embellishing."

Harriet continued her singing duties until she became pregnant with her first son, David. The announcer through this era was Ben Grauer. By 1937 Reber felt that the Ripley show had played itself out, but he still liked the Nelsons and proposed to continue *The Baker's Broadcast* under yet another format. The show was moved from New York to Hollywood, where it was decided to offer 30 minutes of music and backstage film-world chatter. Feg Murray hosted, and Ozzie helped with interviews. This never generated much excitement: it faded after a single season.

BAND REMOTES, live programs of popular music, heard on all networks often beginning at 11 P.M. Usually broadcast in half-hour timeslots from hotels, restaurants, ballrooms, dance halls, or Army camps, band remotes thrived in the period 1935–50.

The shows at their best were uninhibited and occasionally inspired. The musicians were loose and often happy, as free as their leaders allowed, sometimes fortified by the contents of the stainless steel hip flask. Remotes were sustained by the networks, and numbers could go on and on,

unrestrained by commercial interruption or the three-minute limitations of studio recordings. Sidemen would long for the ability to capture the fire of a live performance in the studio, but it seldom happened. Only onstage, with a crowd rising to the occasion, could an Artie Shaw build a piece like *Carioca* to a feverish pitch, the powerhouse effect growing for five minutes or more; then, kicking his clarinet into a stratospheric mode, finish with an explosion that had the Blue Room patrons and the NBC announcer shouting with delight.

As early as 1921 stations were experimenting with band music over direct wires from remote locations. The first dance bands to broadcast were probably Paul Specht, Vincent Lopez, and the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks. Specht is believed by Thomas A. DeLong and others to have made the first studio broadcast of dance music, Sept. 14, 1920, on WWJ, Detroit. Lopez took his orchestra to WJZ on Nov. 27, 1921, and filled a 90-minute vacancy that had suddenly appeared on the schedule. Soon he was doing remotes from the Hotel Pennsylvania, his band becoming so identified with that location that by 1924 it had become known as the Hotel Pennsylvania Orchestra. Lopez was perhaps the best-known of the early maestros: his greeting, a simple "Lopez speaking," was the first famous catchphrase in the cradle of radio. His rivalry with Paul Whiteman and George Olsen was spirited and serious. These three bandmasters worked to secure the best talent of the time. They played what then passed for popular jazz. Whiteman defined it: his self-proclaimed moniker, "the king of jazz," would later be ridiculed and dismissed by real jazz artists, but in those first years of broadcasting it was the only exposure to such music that was available to mainstream America.

Speaking of Lopez, Erik Barnouw wrote: "It was decaffeinated jazz he sent to WJZ via Western Union lines from the Hotel Pennsylvania. A distant echo of New Orleans, yet it spoke to listeners." The '20s style was lively, rich with saxophone and violin and well-sprinkled with novelty tunes. Lopez was instantly identified by his theme, *Nola*, given a dexterous workout on the Lopez keyboard. Whiteman had Gershwin: his *Rhapsody in Blue* concert at Aeolian Hall on Feb. 12, 1924, established his reputation. And though Whiteman was slow to find his way into radio, he was a major force in band music of the

'20s. George Olsen was a master of popular music: his 1925 recording *Who* was a bestseller, followed by such period hits as *The Varsity Drag*, *Because My Baby Don't Mean Maybe Now*, and *Doin' the Raccoon*, a testament to the national passion for fur coats. Olsen employed a singing trio (Fran Frey, Bob Rice, and Jack Fulton) that instantly and forever stamped these novelty numbers with the flavor of the times. Also featured in Olsen's band was Rudy Wiedoeft, the best-known sax man of his day.

A thousand miles to the west, the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks had taken Kansas City by storm. There are those who believe that this was the first band of the air. It was a close call: by 1922 they were entrenched in the Muehlebach Hotel doing popular jazz on WDAF. The leaders, drummer Carleton Coon and pianist Joe Sanders, had met in a music store and formed their group in 1918. They sang duets through megaphones: hot, roaring numbers, and Sanders's bubbly greeting—"Howdja do, howdja do, you big ole raddio pooblic"—gave further evidence of the unstilting of America. The nation charged into the new era with music that had never been heard outside small bistros and smoky Harlem speakeasies. Radio was bringing these locations into thousands of homes, making such obscure regional groups as the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks national celebrities. Listeners with crystal sets were picking up WDAF from afar, and interest in the band spread well beyond the Midwest. Coon-Sanders took on road engagements: they were among the first bands to do one-night stands, engagements that were soon engrained in big band life. In 1924 they were playing the Congress Hotel in Chicago: two years later they were at the Blackhawk Restaurant, sharing the bandstand with Ted Weems and Wayne King and carried on the air via WGN. They were still going strong in 1932 when Coon became ill and died.

Quite a counterpoint they offered to Wayne King (soon dubbed "the Waltz King" for the kind of music he favored) and Ted Weems (whose style was always popular and safe). Weems and King were favorites at Chicago's Aragon and Trianon ballrooms: King had a long stint at the Aragon in the late '20s, broadcasting on KYW. The so-called jazz age was on the wane. Jean Goldkette had broken up his important group, a band that George Simon would re-

member 40 years later as “marvelous . . . full of spirit, musical kicks and such brilliant musicians as Bix Beiderbecke, Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang, Frankie Trumbauer, Pee Wee Russell, Russ Morgan, Don Murray, and many others.” There were still exciting groups on the horizon: Ben Pollack, Isham Jones, Red Nichols, and Ted “Is Ev-rybody Happy?” Lewis provided an early training ground for many of the stars of the swing era, which was just around the corner. Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, Earl “Fatha” Hines, Jimmie Lunceford, and Chick Webb had started or were soon to start bands in the mid- to late 1920s, and Duke Ellington was already one of the most respected names in the industry. But the tide of American taste, thus the lion’s share of radio air time, went to more traditional people.

By 1926 the technology was much advanced. There were still glitches, but remote broadcasting had made giant strides since the wing-and-a-prayer days of 1921. For NBC’s grand opening on Nov. 15, 1926, the network was able to pull in the bands of George Olsen, Vincent Lopez, Ben Bernie, B. A. Rolfe, and Fred Waring from various locations. All were then nationally known. Bernie had been on the air intermittently in 1923. He was actually a “front man,” a showman whose success was rooted more in personal charm than musicianship. His trademarks were the glib tongue, the cigar, and the nonsense phrase, widely imitated, “yowsah, yowsah, yowsah.” Waring was also a showman, though less flamboyant than Bernie. Waring’s career would span decades: his band, the Pennsylvanians, came of age in the ’20s and was still viable in the ’70s, long after most of his contemporaries had disbanded, retired, or died. His first broadcast is said to have been on WWJ, Detroit, in the early ’20s, but it was for his elaborate musical shows that he was best known.

And then there were Irving Aaronson and his Commanders, Al Donahue, George Hall, Horace Heidt, Kay Kyser, and Will Osborne. The day of the sweet band had arrived. Guy Lombardo moved his orchestra down from Canada: his Royal Canadians developed (and never lost, over a span of five decades) a sound that was unique. Rich and mellow, it was copied but never duplicated. His first New Year’s broadcast aired on WBBM, Chicago, in 1927. His theme song, *Auld Lang Syne*, was already a traditional year-ender,

and soon Lombardo became known as “the man who invented New Year’s Eve.”

What the public seemed to want above all else was melody. Clyde McCoy struck gold with *Sugar Blues* in 1928; Sammy Kaye was soon swinging and (primarily) swaying and announcing his numbers with singing song titles. Gim-micks were in. Shep Fields blew bubbles at the microphone and called it “Rippling Rhythm.” These extraneous trappings caught attention and were temporarily popular, but they did nothing to enhance the music. It was a time of Hal Kemp, Jan Garber, and Freddy Martin. Ted Fio Rito had a stand of five years in Chicago; Gus Arnheim was a regular at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Remotes of the late ’20s and early ’30s could be stuffy affairs, announced in wordy superlatives and near-perfect diction.

Themes were vital. A soft saxophone arrangement of *When My Baby Smiles at Me* made the masses think of only one leader. “Need we tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that this melody heralds the approach to the microphone of that high-hatted tragedian of song, Ted Lewis.” Announcers now reached for that extra word, the colorful turn of phrase that burned up adjectives while saying nothing. “Isham Jones requests your listening attention,” the announcer would say. The bands came elegantly wrapped, like an invitation to the White House. Formality had invaded the late hours on Radio Row. In a way it reflected the mood of the country, but on another level the reverse was true. These were hard times: the illusion of refinement was a strong lure to listeners in Wichita and Minneapolis. But there was a nervous energy that was yet untapped, a musical search for something new.

When it came, it came literally overnight.

Benny Goodman had had a long career for a young man of 26 years. His training ground was the mid-1920s band scenes in Chicago and Los Angeles. He had been playing clarinet for 16 years: his professional career had begun at age 11. He had been with Ben Pollack, Isham Jones, Red Nichols, and Ted Lewis, among others, and had formed his first band in 1934. Now, in mid-1935, the group seemed stagnated. Goodman had not been able to capitalize on a stroke of good luck that had landed him a regular NBC air job on a Saturday night music show, *Let’s Dance*. First heard Dec. 1, 1934, this series aired at 10:30 in the East and spanned three full hours.

It was sponsored (National Biscuit Company) and ran six months, ending May 25, 1935. It featured three regular bands. Goodman found his group sandwiched between the Latin jazz of Xavier Cugat and the saccharine sounds of Kel Murray (real name Murray Kellner). The instant comparison, said George Simon, made Goodman's sound "downright thrilling."

Goodman had hired Fletcher Henderson to arrange his book. When *Let's Dance* went off the air, he had more than 70 choice swing charts in his pocket. He also had the men who could play them: drummer Gene Krupa, trumpets Pee Wee Erwin, Ralph Muzzillo, and Jerry Neary; trombones Red Ballard and Joe Harris; saxes Toots Mondello, Hymie Shertzer, Art Rollini, and Dick Clark; and pianist Jess Stacy. His singer was Helen Ward, warmly remembered by big band enthusiasts as one of the best. But the band was still largely unknown. Goodman opened at the Roosevelt Hotel, and the blast sent the Lombardo-primed patrons and staff into near-shock. He was fired on opening night. A long road trip followed. The band headed west for an August date at the Palomar, playing to small crowds in places like Jackson, Mich., and Columbus, Ohio. Bunny Berigan joined up on the road, but the reception remained lukewarm until, in July, the band reached Denver.

They were playing at Elitch's Gardens, an engagement that historian Simon would remember as "horrendous." Goodman described it simply: "the most humiliating experience of my life." The dancers at Elitch's wanted waltzes and fox trots. Many demanded refunds. To make matters worse, Kay Kyser was playing to packed houses at Lakeside Ballroom, a few blocks away. It was a striking contrast, sax man Shertzer told writer Mort Goode years later: Kyser was wowing his crowds with "hokum music" and funny hats while Goodman was dying with what was, at that moment, perhaps the best band in the nation.

But momentum picked up in Oakland. The fans had been primed—Goodman records were getting good West Coast air play, and the Oakland date was a boost for everyone. They drove into Los Angeles for the Aug. 21 date at the Palomar. This was the night swing was born: it was the watershed, critics would agree, that would change music for the next 15 years.

It began slowly. Goodman was still gun-shy from his Denver experience, and his opening

numbers were conservative. At some point it was decided to kick the program into high gear. One story has it that Gene Krupa came over to Goodman and said, "If we're gonna die, let's die playing our thing." Goodman put into the third set some of the powerhouse Henderson swing arrangements. As Shertzer described it to Goode: "When Berigan stood up and blew *Sometimes I'm Happy* and *King Porter Stomp*, the place exploded."

Goodman was crowned "king of swing." His subsequent engagements at Chicago's Congress Hotel and New York's Paramount Theater were wild hits. Jitterbugs danced in the aisles at the Paramount, and Goodman—aided by red-hot radio lines almost everywhere he played—became a household word. With Krupa and black pianist Teddy Wilson (Goodman was the first major leader to cross the "color line" and hire black musicians) he formed a trio. In 1936, when Lionel Hampton was added on vibes, it became the Benny Goodman Quartet. The band played the Madhattan Room of the Hotel Pennsylvania: CBS was there in October 1936. Ziggy Elman and Harry James joined up; Helen Ward left, and in time Martha Tilton was signed as the regular singer. Goodman was at the vanguard of a musical wave that grew larger by the week. "For ten years," one old swing fan would lovingly recall decades later, "our music and the public taste were in complete agreement."

The key ingredient was radio. Careers were established in days, after years of struggle. Glenn Miller had formed his orchestra in 1937 but had no notable success until an engagement at the Glen Island Casino brought him to the NBC microphone. Soon he was doing eight or ten broadcasts a week. By 1940 he had signed with Chesterfield for a quarter-hour nightly run on CBS. This priceless exposure booted his career at a record pace until his was the nation's top orchestra. Tommy Dorsey, who came out of the same '20s bands that produced Goodman and Miller, developed a distinctive smoothness but could swing, almost with the best of them. Artie Shaw had a good date at the Hotel Lincoln in the fall of 1938, and his fans came along through NBC. Tony Pastor, Hank Freeman, George Arus, Harry Rodgers, Chuck Peterson, Johnny Best, Buddy Rich, and singer Helen Forrest gave Shaw a happy, exciting sound.

That all these leaders were temperamental and

difficult mattered little to the fans who loved them. Goodman was called "an ornery SOB" by more than one sideman. His icy stare, "the Goodman ray," was usually a prelude to termination. Miller was considered cold and distant. His demeanor kept his men at bay and uneasy. Dorsey could be openly combative. Some stories had it that he and his brother Jimmy sometimes settled disputes with fists in the old days of the Dorsey Brothers band. And Artie Shaw had serious bouts of nervous depression, walking out on his great 1939 band and escaping to Mexico.

Hundreds of bands were now at work across the land. Catchphrases and one-liners—some poking fun at the sweet "mickey mouse" bands—were heavy on the air. Listeners could "swing and sweat with Charlie Barnet" (whose group was described as the blackest-sounding white band of its day). The music of 52nd Street in New York was becoming known by way of radio. Club names—Onyx, Samoa, Three Deuces, Downbeat—were as familiar in Chicago and St. Louis as on the street that housed them. Through band remotes and on such series as *The Saturday Night Swing Club* (CBS, 1936–39) and *Young Man with a Band* (CBS, 1939–40) listeners came to know Jack Teagarden, Wingy Manone, Fats Waller, Coleman Hawkins, Hot Lips Page, and Louis Prima. The nightspots themselves, because of radio, took on exalted and exotic qualities in the minds of faraway listeners who would never see them. "The beautiful Cafe Rouge" opened in the Hotel Pennsylvania in 1937, an elegant contrast to the hotel's smaller, more intimate Madhattan Room. The Glen Island Casino was billed as "the mecca of music for moderns." Management needed no primer in economics to know that an NBC wire was as good for its business as it was for the bands that played there. Fans from coast to coast knew that the Glen Island Casino was "just off the shore road at New Rochelle, New York." Frank Dailey's Meadowbrook, where Tommy Dorsey, Frank Sinatra, and the Pied Pipers were featured in early 1940, was "located on Route 23, the Newark-Pompton Turnpike, at Cedar Grove, New Jersey."

And though there were far fewer radio opportunities for black bands than for their white counterparts, it was through remote broadcasts from the Cotton Club that the general public first heard of Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway. Earl

Hines had become a radio favorite during a long stand at the Grand Terrace in Chicago in the mid-1930s. And it was on a radio broadcast from the Reno Club in Kansas City that Count (William) Basie was discovered by jazz critic John Hammond, who helped launch Basie's career.

Business was booming as the new decade came. In the ten years between Benny Goodman–Palomar and the end of the war, listeners heard the following among at least 50,000 remotes broadcast on the four national networks. On CBS: Bob Crosby from the Hotel New Yorker; Tommy Dorsey from the Blue Room of the Hotel Lincoln; Artie Shaw at the Silver Grill, Hotel Lexington; Red Norvo at the Hotel Pennsylvania; Sammy Kaye at the Palm Room, Commodore Hotel, New York; Harry James at Roseland. On NBC: Chick Webb and Ella Fitzgerald from the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem; Andy Kirk and his Clouds of Joy from the Savoy; Gene Krupa at the Steel Pier, Atlantic City; Larry Clinton at Glen Island Casino; Jimmie Lunceford at Southland, Boston; Jan Savitt at the Hotel Lincoln; Will Bradley at the Famous Door; Les Brown (with a young Doris Day on vocals), Glen Island Casino; Stan Kenton at the Casino in Balboa Beach, Calif.; Lionel Hampton and Lena Horne at the Savoy. On Mutual: Woody Herman and Count Basie at Roseland; Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club; Horace Heidt on the Moonlit Terrace, Hotel Biltmore; Cab Calloway from Club Zanzibar. The scene was rich and alive: to those who lived through it, as spectator or performer, the time of their lives, never to return.

Then, in 1942, a disastrous strike against the record companies disrupted the industry and upset the delicate balance of business. Though it hit directly at record producers, the real target was radio. James C. Petrillo, president of the American Federation of Musicians, was alarmed at the rapid proliferation of disc jockeys. He objected to the free use of recorded music on the air, charging that jocks had cost musicians their jobs at hundreds of radio stations. Petrillo wanted to impose fees at the source, the big companies like RCA and Columbia, where the records were produced. The final agreement, which was not accepted by the two biggest companies until 1944, created a union-supervised fund for indigent and aging musicians. Historian Erik Barnouw found this a "not unreasonable ap-

proach to a serious problem," though Petrillo's move was "generally pictured by the broadcasting trade press as an act of gangsterism." The damage caused by the strike was incalculable. With the long silence in the record stores, the fickle public switched its interest to singers and vocal groups.

The bands continued to swing on the air. All through the two strike years the nights were filled with marvelous remotes and exciting live performances. The war brought in such shows as Coca-Cola's *Victory Parade of Spotlight Bands*, thought by many the final word in band remotes. Heard on various networks in nightly half-hours from 1941-46, *Spotlight* traveled to Army camps, hospitals, naval installations, and war-worker factories. The bands were hot and the boys were loud: even the commercials for Coke had a snappy patriotic flavor. "As Charlie Spivak signs his musical signature in Coca-Cola's guest register, it's been night number 731 for the *Victory Parade of Spotlight Bands*," said the announcer, "and we've marched 896,415 *Spotlight* miles."

The end of the war marked the end of the bands. Glenn Miller had been lost over the English Channel in 1944. Artie Shaw had disbanded and regrouped and disbanded again. Though name leaders like Goodman and Basie and Harry James would always find work, the financial base eroded and the labor troubles lingered. When Petrillo called a second strike in 1948, the die was cast. Perhaps, as Barnouw said, the cause was just and the problem serious, but in the end the strikes hurt no one more than the union's own membership. As Pogo put it, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

Roll Call

Major bands or band shows with regular time-slots on network radio.

ABC DANCING PARTY, Aug. 18, 1951-April 7, 1956, ABC. Saturday nights, various personnel and times.

ABE LYMAN, middle-of-road, his programs filled with old standards. According to George Simon, Lyman was uncomfortable as a leader, and his radio shows were often led by Jacques Renard or Victor Arden.

Sept. 1, 1931-Sept. 1, 1934, CBS. Various days and times for Sterling Drugs.

1936, Blue Network. 30m, Mondays at 8:30.

AL DONAHUE, violinist, arranger, leader of a popular "society band."

June 2-Oct. 5, 1937, NBC. Various days. Radio City's Rainbow Room.

May 15-Oct. 2, 1939, NBC. 30m, Mondays at 10:30.

ARTIE SHAW, one of the best swing outfits ever, led by an eccentric genius who couldn't stomach the harsh light of fame. Marvelous line checks exist of individual remotes, often from the Blue Room of the Hotel Lincoln. But Shaw had only one regular series of note.

Nov. 20, 1938-Nov. 14, 1939, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 10. Old Gold.

BANDSTAND USA, 1949-59, Mutual. 30m, variously Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays. Another poststrike dance party.

BENNY GOODMAN, innovative hot swing, at the cutting edge of popular music. Countless remotes between 1935-48, eagerly sought. Regular slots:

Dec. 1, 1934-May 25, 1935, NBC. 3 hours, Saturdays at 10:30. *Let's Dance*. National Biscuit Company.

June 30, 1936-June 20, 1939, CBS. 30m, Tuesdays at 9:30. *The Camel Caravan*, also titled *Benny Goodman's Swing School*. Camel Cigarettes.

July 8, 1939-Jan. 6, 1940, NBC. 30m, Saturdays at 10.

Feb. 10-May 5, 1941, Blue Network. 30m, Mondays at 7:30. *What's New*. Old Gold Cigarettes.

July 17-Aug. 28, 1941, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 8. *Housewarming Time*. Holland Furnace.

Jan. 10-Feb. 21, 1942, Mutual. 30m, Saturdays at 2.

July 17-Aug. 14, 1943, CBS. 30m, Saturdays at 7:30.

July 3-Sept. 25, 1945, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 9:30. Paired with Danish comic Victor Borge as summer replacement for *Fibber McGee and Molly*. Johnson's Wax.

July 1-Sept. 2, 1946, NBC. 30m, Mondays at 9:30. *Music Festival*.

Sept. 9, 1946-June 30, 1947, NBC. 30m, Mondays at 9:30. Continuation of *Music Festival* time-slot with Victor Borge. *Victor Borge Show*.

BLUE BARRON ORCHESTRA, April 26–July 12, 1941, Blue Network. 30m, Saturdays/Sundays at 6.

CAB CALLOWAY, a showman who popularized the ballad *Minnie the Moocher* and took for his trademark the catchphrase “Heigh-de-ho.”

July 6–Oct. 5, 1941, Mutual. 30m, Sundays at 9:30. Musical quiz from Harlem.

Feb. 18–June 24, 1942, Blue Network. 30m, Wednesdays at 9:30.

CARMEN CAVALLARO, “the poet of the piano;” popular, danceable music with his piano as the centerpiece.

Jan. 10–April 4, 1942, Blue Network. 30m, Saturdays at 10:30.

Dec. 16, 1945–Sept. 7, 1947, NBC. 30m, Sundays at 3. *The Sheaffer Parade*. Sheaffer Pens.

June 29–Sept. 21, 1948, NBC. 30m, Tuesdays at 8:30. Summer replacement for *A Date with Judy*. Tums.

CHARLIE SPIVAK, trumpet man with a gorgeous open-horn sound. Sweet style.

Nov. 12, 1940–March 8, 1941, NBC. 30m, daily at 6.

1952–53, CBS. 15m, Fridays/Saturdays at 10:45.

CHUCK FOSTER, “music in the Foster fashion,” a full array of sweet arrangements, singing song titles, music by rote. A leader since the 1930s, his style was well-suited to the nostalgia of the 1950s.

Regular runs, 1954–56, CBS. Various times.

DAVID ROSE, mainly a studio band (music for Red Skelton). Also:

April 11–Aug. 1, 1940, Mutual. 30m, Thursdays at 9. With pianist Art Tatum.

May 7, 1941–Feb. 4, 1942, Mutual. 30m, Wednesdays at 9:30.

June 26–Sept. 18, 1947, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 10:30. Summer replacement for *The Eddie Cantor Show*. Pabst Beer.

Aug. 27–Sept. 24, 1950, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 8:30. Summer replacement for *The Red Skelton Show*. Tide.

DESI ARNAZ, primarily remembered for *I Love Lucy* on TV. One season on *The Bob Hope Show* and one brief run in his own name.

Jan. 21–Oct. 6, 1951, CBS. 30m, Sundays at 3:30, then Saturdays at 7.

DICK JURGENS, July 2–Sept. 24, 1948, CBS. 30m, Fridays at 10:30. *Summer Spotlight Revue*. Coca-Cola.

THE DORSEY BROTHERS, a good concept that seldom works—a single great band under two sometimes brilliant and often fiery leaders. Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey formed their first band as teenagers in 1922. They worked together in many big bands of the 1920s—the California Ramblers, Jean Goldkette, Paul Whiteman—and revived the Dorsey Brothers concept around 1927. It lasted until 1935, marked by frequent squabbles and sometimes fistfights. At the core of it were deep differences in musical taste: Jimmy liked an even balance of reeds and brass; Tommy wanted a heavier brass section. Tommy went on to great success as a sweet-and-swing trombonist; Jimmy to a hot-and-cold career on clarinet and saxophone. Both were first-rate musicians. They regrouped late in their careers for one final try as coleaders, and radio carried much of it. They died in 1956 and 1957, six months apart.

1953–55, CBS. 30m, twice a week at 10:30.

Those Fabulous Dorseys, also *The Tommy Dorsey Orchestra Starring Jimmy Dorsey*.

DUKE ELLINGTON, who led what many jazz experts consider the most important band of the day, though sadly lacking in regular air time.

May 5–July 22, 1943, Mutual. 15m, various days at 10:15.

May 16–Sept. 19, 1943, Mutual. 30m, Sundays at 7.

March 31, 1945–Sept. 21, 1946, ABC. Various 15 to 60m, Saturdays at 5 until Jan., returned Saturdays at 4 in April. *A Date with the Duke*. Singer Mel Tormé had these performances air-checked and issued most of the music on LPs in 1974. But the editing was poor and the sound just fair. Full transcriptions unearthed since then give a much better accounting of this great orchestra.

EDDY DUCHIN, pianist, a popular personality who peaked in the 1930s.

Jan. 2–June 23, 1934, Blue Network. 30m, three a week at 9:30. Pepsodent and Pepsodent Junis.

Nov. 5, 1936–Jan. 28, 1937, NBC. 30m, Thursdays at 4. Cadillac Motor Car Company for La-Salle.

Sept. 29–Dec. 22, 1937, Blue Network. 30m, Wednesdays at 8. Elizabeth Arden.

Sept. 24–Dec. 17, 1937, NBC. 30m, Fridays at 7:30. Koppers Coke.