

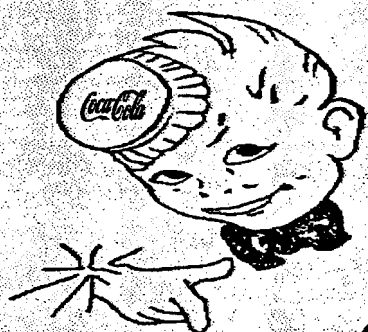
*The Old Time Radio Club*

Established 1975

# THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

Number 264

November 1998



TONIGHT! HEAR  
Spike Jones  
his City Slikers and Dorothy Shay  
in  
Spotlight Review

*a brand new musical show*

guest  
star Frankie Laine

CBS Network every Friday

**WIBX 10:30 P.M.**



[1947]

**Membership Information**

New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$15 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: if you join January-March, \$15; April-June, \$12; July-September, \$8; October-December, \$5. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The *Old Time Radio Club* meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 PM during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The *Old Time Radio Club* is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

**Club Mailing Address**

Old Time Radio Club  
P.O. Box 426  
Lancaster, NY 14086



Back issues of *The Illustrated Press* are \$1.50 post-paid. Publications out of print may be borrowed from our Reference Library.

**Deadline for *The Illustrated Press* is the 1st of each month prior to publication**

*The Illustrated Press* is a monthly newsletter of The *Old Time Radio Club*, headquartered in Western New York State. Contents except where noted, are copyright ©1998 by the OTRC

Send all articles, letters, exchange newsletters, etc. to: *The Illustrated Press*  
c/o Ken Krug, Editor (716) 684-5290  
49 Regal Street  
Depew, New York 14043

E-Mail address: AnteakEar@AOL.com

**Club Officers and Librarians**

**President**

Jerry Collins (716) 683-6199  
56 Christen Ct.  
Lancaster, NY 14086

**Vice President & Canadian Branch**

Richard Simpson  
960 16 Road R.R. 3  
Fenwick, Ontario  
Canada, L0S 1C0

**Treasurer, Back Issues, Videos & Records**

Dominic Parisi (716) 884-2004  
38 Ardmore Pl.  
Buffalo, NY 14213

**Membership Renewals, Change of Address, Cassette Library - #2000 and up  
*Illustrated Press* Cover Designs**

Peter Bellanca (716) 773-2485  
1620 Ferry Road  
Grand Island, NY 14072

**Membership Inquires and OTR  
Network Related Items**

Richard Olday (716) 684-1604  
100 Harvey Dr.  
Lancaster, NY 14086

**Tape Libraries**

**Cassettes - #1 up to 1999**

Don Friedrich (716) 626-9164  
21 Southcrest  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

**Reel-to-Reel and Reference Library**

Ed Wanat, Sr. (716) 895-9690  
393 George Urban Blvd.  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

**Tape Library Rates:** All reels and video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; audio cassettes and records are \$0.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling. Canadian rates are the same as above, but in Canadian funds.

## TIME MARCHES ON

The First "Docu-Drama"  
{Prologue}

By OWENS L. POMEROY

*My Dad was a News/Information/Docu-Drama "buff," during the "hey-day" of radio. There wasn't one news broadcast or documentary that he didn't listen to. And we had our short-wave on more times when we were on the brink of World War II (1939-1941) than "Carter had liver-pills."*

*I can still hear "Herr Hitler" - from Berlin - and Neville Chamberlain - from London, broadcasting through our old Majestic "High Boy," complete with all the "squeaks and squawks" over over-seas broadcasting. I can still see, as I entered our living room where Dad had his head close to the speaker so as not to miss any of the translation from Berlin, or the American over-seas correspondent's comments after the speech. One program — his absolute favorite — that he listened to constantly, was "THE MARCH OF TIME."*

The broadcast media was an excellent source for reporting world and local events of the day. It progressed from a man sitting at a table reading the news in a sing-song tone in those pioneering years, to interviews with notable personalities in the studio, on-the-spot reporting at the source, into newsmen having their own shows. In addition to these "star" broadcasters, the writers and producers came up with a way to present the news, that is still with us today — the Docu-Drama. This type of programming made the listener feel that radio was creating a news event by "being there" in person, so to speak.

One program, to be sure, that could take credit for this was *The March of Time*. The show was backed — and sponsored by — Time Magazine, and went to no length to get the best radio artists at that time to be on the show. One such radio personality, who became known as the "Voice of Time" was Westbrook Van Vorhees, a superior narrator, who was our guide, as we listened to more than fourteen years of world events . . . "just as they happened," beginning in 1931. It may have been what some radio critics of the day dubbed as a "hokey" show, but it did do justice to all of the major news events of the day, as it brought us talented actors and actresses impersonating historic voices — some so incredibly real, that you could swear it was the person themselves, proving once again that "magic and

power of radio" — from Hitler to Capone, and from President Roosevelt to Babe Ruth. (After hearing Art Carney impersonate Roosevelt on one such program in 1938, Orson Welles hired him to do the Roosevelt voice on *War Of The Worlds*. The next time you listen to WOTW, pay particular attention to what the voice of "the Secretary of the Interior" sounds like. That was Art Carney doing his Roosevelt bit!).

A Baltimore born soap opera actress, Margery Quarles, who died in the late 70s, was very proud of the fact that she was called upon many times during the Roosevelt administration to do the voice of Eleanor Roosevelt for *The March of Time*. The first time she did it, she received a call from the White House — from Mrs. Roosevelt, congratulating her, and requested, no change that, she insisted to the producers, that Miss Quarles portray her each time there is a segment featuring Mrs. Roosevelt on the show.

The show was, more or less, a radio version of Time Magazine, since they used stories constantly that appeared between the magazine's pages week-after-week, to bring us closer to the story and interviews by Time correspondents.

Above all, it was the way Van Vorhees delivered the stories, that became the program's trade-mark — but — before the producers of Time hired him, Harry Von Zell and Ted Husing were the narrator/hosts. Hard to believe, isn't it? Dwight Weist became known as "the man of a thousand voices" on the show in the early years. He is credited with playing such notable characters as Hitler and Musselini, Neville Chamberlain and John L. Lewis.

When Mr. Weist came to Baltimore in 1988, as a guest of The Golden Radio Buffs of Maryland, Inc., to help celebrate the 16th Anniversary of the Club's founding, he told us that he even did at one time portray BOTH Mr. Roosevelt and Eleanor! (Art Carney, the regular actor who did Roosevelt, had left the show to join the Mercury Theatre, and Margery Quarles, who portrayed Eleanor, was ill and could not make that particular show. So Weist stepped in for BOTH parts! (I know this is true, because he did a "conversation" between Franklin and Eleanor during an interview in Baltimore). Again, there is that "ole' magic and power of radio" at work!

Two other great radio artists who went on to radio stardom, got their start on *March of Time*: Staats Cotsworth (*Casey, Crime Photographer*) and Agnes Moorehead (*The Shadow* and *Sorry, Wrong Number*).

Two brilliant musical directors are credited with the magnificent mood music, Howard Barlow and Donald Vorhees. As is always the case — and the nature of most Americans — perhaps we become tired of the endless profound week-after-week real-life dramas presented in those years, before, during and after World War II. It is difficult to pin-point just why the show left the airways in 1945. But one thing we can be sure of, for fourteen wonderful years, when Westbrook Van Vorhees gave the opener to the show . . . “*THE MARCH OF TIME*,” we knew that we were in for twenty-nine minutes and thirty seconds of one of the greatest dramatic shows in radio history.

“ . . . *TIME . . . MARCHES ON!*”

[NOTE: This Essay is an excerpt from Mr. Pomeroy's book about Old-Time Radio, “SOUNDS LIKE YESTERDAY (The Magic & Power of Radio) A RETURN TO RADIO'S GOLDEN AGE . . . AGAIN!” He is the Co-founder of The Golden Radio Buffs of MD., Inc. and the Editor of their Newsletter “ON THE AIR.” It is reprinted with permission of the Author.]

## The Detectives, The Cops, The Investigators and The Private Eyes

—  
by **DOM PARISI**  
(Part 9)

Do you know who sponsored the radio show *Charlie Wild, Private Detective*? If your answer is Wildroot Creme Oil you're right. (You better use Wildroot Creme Oil Charlie . . . You'll have a hard time keeping all the gals away.)

Wild was the NBC crime show about a private cop called Charlie Wild. The show was on the air in 1950-1951. George Petrie, Kevin O'Morrison and John McQuade all were portrayed as the character Charlie Wild. McQuade did when the program went to CBS in 1951. Peter Hobbs played Wild's assistant McCoy, William Rogers announced.

*Policewoman* aired over ABC in 1946-1947 as a 15-minute real-life police drama that presented the stories based on actual incidents taken from the files of Mary Sullivan, a former policewoman in New York City.

Betty Garde played Mary. Walter Herlihy and Dick Dunham announced. Two episodes are available.

*Private Files of Rex Saunders* ran on the NBC radio network during 1951. It was another of the 15-minute crime shows that starred actor Rex Harrison as a British Detective living in the Big City. Around 12 episodes are out there.

Yet still another 15-minute, this time daily, show on CBS during 1946-1947 was *Mystery of the Week*. The broadcast featured Harold Huber as the famous detective Hercule Poirot who went about solving crimes as only he could do. Huber also had the part in Hercule Poirot on Mutual during 1945-1947. Louis Vittes and Science Fiction author Alfred Bester provided the material for this series.

The crime show *Pursuit* made it to the airwaves over CBS during 1949-1952. The series starred Ted deCorsia, then Ben Wright, as the Scotland Yard Inspector Peter Black . . . “A criminal strikes, and fades quickly back into the shadows of his own dark world; and then, the man from Scotland Yard, the relentless, dangerous pursuit, when man hunts man!” Support for this program came from radio regulars Bill Johnstone, John Dehner, Jeanette Nolan and Joe Kearns. Elliott Lewis produced and directed the series. About 10 shows exist.

*Raffles*, a syndicated radio program, brought to the radio audience the exploits of a reformed burglar turned detective. As the detective, Raffles, played by Horace Braham, dedicated his time and energy in combating crime and preserving law and order! Detective Raffles hung out at Filipo's Restaurant. (A lot of these radio cops hung out at restaurants or beer joints.) The series ran from 1942 to 1945 under the direction of Jock MacGregor. Tune In Yesterday reports that the show came to radio in the summer of 1945; the Handbook Of OTR gives the date as 1942? As far as I know only 4 episodes are available.

In 1940-1942 Mutual aired *Ned Jordan, Secret Agent*. Jack McCarthy as federal agent Jordan worked as an undercover agent for the railroads. **Agent Proctor** was portrayed by Dick Osgood. The show was produced by George W. Trendle. Each weekly episode ended with . . . “Uncle Sam wants you” . . . as Jordan turned the criminal over to agent Proctor. Two episodes are available.

*Nightwatch*, heard over CBS during 1954-1955, was an unusual show that had a police reporter, Dan Reed, tag along with Culver City, California detectives as they

answered police calls. No scripts or actors were used in this series. Reed recorded the police reports with a portable tape recorder. All 47 episodes are available.

A crime-quiz show on NBC in 1950 called *One Thousand Dollar Reward* dramatized a crime as it was happening. Then a phone call was made to a radio listener. The \$1,000 reward could be won if the killer was identified. Ralph Bell, Ethel Everett, Bill Smith and Ken Lynch starred in the series. The announcer was Ken Roberts.

Marvin Miller was Scientist/Detective Quill on Mutual's *Peter Quill* that aired in 1940-1941. Captain Roger Dorn, played by Ken Griffin, and Gail Carson, played by Alice Hill, helped Quill in his fight against crime.

*Mystery File* was a 30-minute crime-game-show heard on ABC during 1951. A criminal event was acted out on the radio studio stage and then the crime had to be solved by the radio contestants. Numerous clues were hidden within the skits. The program was hosted by Walter Kiernan with Charles Woods announcing.

Another syndicated radio series was *Mystery Is My Hobby*. Glenn Langan played mystery writer Barton Drake. Barton worked with the police to research the material he needed for his stories. The Handbook Of OTR lists the dates for this show as 1949. I've seen shows advertised by dealers with 1947 dates. About 64 shows are out there.

*Ted Drake* was a traveling circus detective that was on the air over MBS in 1949. This adventure show was sometimes called *Ted Drake, Guardian of the Big Top*. Vince Harding portrayed Drake.

The lovely Ilona Massey starred as a female World War II undercover agent in NBC's 1950 show *Top Secret*. Fred Collins did the announcing. Around 23 episodes should be available.

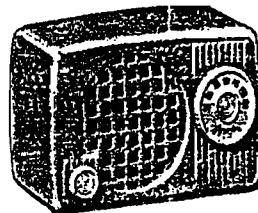
As far as I can tell only one episode is available of *Two On A Clue*, the CBS 1944-1946 detective show. Ned Wever and Louise Fitch teamed up to play Jeff and Debby Spencer, a husband and wife detective couple. Police Sergeant Cornelius Trumbull was played by John Gibson. Alice Yourman announced.

*Wanted* was another of the real-life-police broadcasts that appeared on NBC in 1950. This one narrated by Walter McGraw with Fred Collins doing the announcing. Around 12 episodes are available.

I never heard an episode of *Whitehall 1212*, the 1951-1952 NBC crime series. It was written by Wylis Cooper

and hosted by Harvey Hays. Even though I know little about this show there are reported to be 42 episodes out there. I do know that the stories were based on the many different items that were stored in Scotland Yard's famous Black Museum . . . "a set of false teeth, a running board of a motor car, a handle of a woman's purse and so on."

(to be continued)



## SAME TIME, SAME STATION

by Jim Cox

## THE BREAKFAST CLUB

*Good mornin' Breakfast Clubbers,  
Good mornin' to yah!  
We woke up bright and early  
Just to how-day-do-yah!  
It's first call to breakfast,  
For all of you out there . . .  
America, arise!  
The Breakfast Club is on the air!*

It began as "an hour no one wanted." It turned out to be ABC Radio's most valuable commercial daytime property, proving that an ungodly time frame abandoned by almost everybody could be a prime source of network revenue. From its inception June 23, 1933 until *The Breakfast Club* went off the air the last time Dec. 27, 1968, it was the longest-running early-morning show in radio.

The series began when host Don McNeill, who captured the post in a NBC Chicago audition, was allowed to tinker with a little known program airing on NBC Blue (forerunner of ABC) called *The Pepper Pot*. It had been running for a few months in the forgotten zone of 8 a.m. CST featuring an orchestra conducted by Walter Blaufuss interspersed with banter supplied by announcers King Bard and Bill Kephart. McNeill, with a free hand to enliven the show, retitled it *The Breakfast Club* and added vocalist Dick Teela and featured violinist Joe Englehart.

McNeill subdivided the program into four distinct quarter-hour segments that he termed the "four calls to breakfast." In time these would acquire permanent sig-

nificance as each was assigned a specific theme. Adding McNiell's own gregarious personality to the mix turned the affair into a lively hour of comedy and variety that obviously caught the attention of millions of early risers.

Using a couple of joke books to draw on for most of the show's humorous moments, McNiell soon discarded them. He discovered, instead, that fans were submitting funnier material than he could reliably manufacture. After a couple of months, he threw out the scripts that he had been tediously laboring over. From then on he used scripts only for commercials and special presentations; the rest went on unrehearsed. Thus, he set in motion a pattern that would serve Arthur Godfrey, Robert Q. Lewis and other daytime hosts well in the years to follow.

"The fans can write a better show than I can," McNiell acknowledged. Going with his instincts, he proved to be right, and the program settled into a long run of music and humorous routines mixed with incidents supplied by the folks at home.

For its first few years *The Breakfast Club* operated in a rather sterile, placid environment: a 12-piece orchestra, a growing company of vocalists, McNiell and an announcer in front of a microphone in a small studio. But in 1937 someone came up with the notion of putting all of it before a live studio audience. From that time forward *The Breakfast Club* took on new dimensions of greatness as fans everywhere arrived to react to what they had been hearing. The program drew big crowds, forcing it to move to larger venues. For 15 years it was broadcast from Chicago's Merchandise Mart. It enjoyed lengthy runs at the Sherman House, The Terrace Casino of the Morrison Hotel and, in its final years, at the Allerton Hotel.

Annually, for a month, McNiell would take the show on the road, playing the cities like Janesville, Wis., Shelbyville, Tenn., Fargo, N.D. and Hot Springs, Ark., in addition to some of the major metropolises. Near pandemonium erupted in 1946 when more than 17,000 fans mobbed the tour appearing at New York's Madison Square Garden.

By 1943 the show's live audience was drawing in excess of 75,000 people every year. When Breakfast Club membership cards were offered a year later, 850,000 requests arrived. As the sponsor had only anticipated 15,000 it shelled out \$50,000 before abandoning the stunt, asking McNiell to plead with listeners not to send in any more requests.

Every 15 minutes of the hour there was a "call to breakfast," with hooting, drum roll and trumpet fanfare.

In the first call, McNiell interviewed folks in the studio audience who had written intriguing comments on cards that they had filled out before the show went on the air.

"Memory Time," appearing in the second quarter hour, included a poignant piece of prose or verse often contributed by listeners at home. It was followed by "Player Time," begun during the Second World War, which clicked with listeners and remained through the final broadcast. McNiell would instruct the crowd: "All over the nation, each in his own words, each in his own way, for a world united in peace, bow your heads and let us pray." For a few moments, soft music would filter over the studio during the period of solitude.

The third call began with "March Time." Members of the cast and studio audience paraded up and down the aisles to a rousing processional piece played by the band.

The fourth call, "Inspiration Time," included a poem or other message directed at the disconsolate, attempting to offer fresh zeal and vigor.

Over the years some fairly to-be famous personalities joined *The Breakfast Club's* cadre of on-air talent. Among them were Jim and Marion Jordan, the future *Fibber McGee and Molly*, appearing as "Toots and Chickie" in 1934; Bill Thompson, who arrived that same year, easily distinguished voice of Wallace Wimple on the future McGee series; Joe "Curley" Bradley, a member of the singing Ranch Boys trio, later dramatic lead in the long-running radio adventure series *Tom Mix*; vocalists Janette Davis (before her long-running stint on *Arthur Godfrey Time*), John Desmond, Betty Johnson, Peggy Lee, Alice Lon (Lawrence Welk's initial "champagne lady") and Ilene Woods; comics Homer and Jethro, later of *Grand Ole Opry* fame; future well-known announcers Durward Kirby, Ken Nordine, Louis Roen and more.

*The Breakfast Club's* most durable supporting cast members, added in 1937, remained with the program for many years. Both began as singers but evolved into comedians.

Sam Cowling initially appeared as a member of The Three Romeos, a musical trio. Over time his contribution was channeled into a stream of one-line gags as he turned into McNiell's prime foil. When Cowling introduced the almost daily feature "Fiction and Fact from

Sam's Almanac" in 1943, his history as a singer was forgotten. Relying on a barrage of silly riddles, he'd typically ask McNiell something like: "What's the difference between a tiger and panther?" When McNiell and other cast members folded, Cowling would retort: "A tiger is a big cat, but panther what you wear."

The other long-lasting personality debuting in 1937, Fran Allison, was a vocalist who developed the character of Aunt Fanny into a big city version of the *Opry's* Minnie Pearle. Prefaced by the theme "She's Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage," the "lovable chatterbox" introduced a series of fictional characters audiences loved. In countrified vernacular, Allison would offer implausible tales about the antics of the Smelers, Ott Ort and Bert and Bertie Beerbower. She gained even more fame while simultaneously co-starring on Burr Tillstrom's live early TV puppet show, *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*.

McNiell, himself, was something of an enigma in the midst of this daily melee. Told in 1929 by radio station WISN, Milwaukee, there was "no future for you in the radio business," he lost his first job as an announcer and scriptwriter. That same year the Galena, Ill. native who grew up in Sheboygan, Wis., was graduated valedictorian of his journalism class at Marquette University. He wasn't about to be discouraged over such a small setback.

He landed a spot as radio editor and cartoonist for *The Milwaukee Journal* and simultaneously announced for the paper's station, WTMJ. A year later, when *The Courier-Journal* and *The Louisville Times* offered him more money, he wrote for them, also announcing on their 50,000-watt radio voice, WHAS.

Meanwhile, McNiell was taken with the secretary to the journalism school dean at Marquette. Kay Bennett grew up in Milwaukee and was attracted to the strapping 6' 2" McNiell. During his first Christmas in Louisville he invited her to visit. When he proposed marriage, she accepted.

A short time later he resigned his post to pursue a comedy acting career on the West Coast. With a chum, billed as "Don and Van, the Two Professors," McNiell played in and around San Francisco. But a sluggish economy forced the act to disband and the McNiell's decided to chase their dreams in radio. Returning to the Midwest, he auditioned for *The Pepper Pot*. The rest is history. McNiell's initial weekly salary of \$50 for six hour-long shows later topped \$200,000 annually for five weekly performances.

Within a few years the McNiell's became parents of three sons—Don Jr., Tom and Bobby. The whole family appeared often on *The Breakfast Club*, becoming familiar to regular listeners. An annual family Christmas show was a highlight with fans during the long run.

Interestingly, in its first six years on the air *The Breakfast Club* broadcast commercial-free. It was a virtual no-man's land that no sponsor dared touch. But when Swift and Co. bought first one and then a second quarter-hour segment, other advertisers were quick to jump aboard. For many years Philco Corp. and the Kellogg Co. underwrote it. Others included the Toni Division of the Gillette Co., Cream of Wheat, Acme Paints and American Home Products for Bayer aspirin. At one point the hour generated \$4 million annually for its network.

The show's single foray into television, an experiment on Feb. 22, 1954, was a disaster. McNiell and the cast came off looking like jerks. Supposedly, they cheerily consumed breakfast while on the set. But they had never eaten a meal during the radio run, and it didn't look or feel right.

When a listener chastised McNiell for failing to give away valuable prizes like many other radio shows, he asked the audience what they thought of it. He received in excess of 50,000 replies, an overwhelming majority stating they didn't want washing machines, furniture or fur coats. Instead, they preferred the kind of *Breakfast Club* corn that McNiell had been dishing out all along. They seemed satisfied with this bit of McNiell philosophy, included in a 1942 family album: "America needs to wake up with a smile, because a day begun happy makes life worthwhile."

Long after other network shows were dying by the dozens, *The Breakfast Club* carried on its traditional upbeat style, changing little from its formative years. About the only variance was in moving from a daily live studio audience to shows pre-recorded one day ahead of broadcast, yet still with a studio audience. At the end of each performance, the cast would jubilantly sing: "America is up! The Breakfast Club now leaves the air!" And Don McNiell would admonish listeners to "Be good to yourself!"

McNiell, the king of the daytime radio audience participation format, who never experienced the widely-publicized tantrums on rival CBS's *Arthur Godfrey Time*, died May 7, 1996, at Evanston, Ill. He was 88. No one dominated daytime radio for as long as he, a legend in his own time.

## Lon Clark, Stage Actor, Dies at Age 86

Lon Clark, a stage actor who was the rich baritone voice of a radio detective, has died at age 86.

He died October 2nd at St. Clare's Hospital in Manhattan, where he lived.

Clark was the star of the popular radio series *Nick Carter, Master Detective* on WOR - Mutual from 1943 to 1955. He also appeared frequently on *The Kate Smith Hour*, *The Thin Man* and *Norman Corwin Presents*.

Clark eventually turned to the theater, at one point taking over the role of Jamie from Jason Robards in the 1956 Broadway production of O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night."

116. Lux Radio Theatre 3/19/39 "It Happened One Night"
117. Mercury Theatre 7/18/38 "Treasure Island"
118. Mercury Theatre 8/29/38 "Count of Monte Cristo"
119. Academy Award 3/30/46 "Jezebel"; 4/6/46 "Kitty Foyle"
120. Hallmark Playhouse "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn"
121. Mutiny on The Bounty (no program listed)
122. U.S. Steel Hour 4/26/53 "1984"
123. Ruggles of Red Gap, with Peter Lawford (no program listed)
124. Frankenstein (no program listed)
125. Silver Theater "Danger Lights" with Clark Gable
126. Ingrid Bergman on Radio - Highlights from shows she appeared on
127. Command Performance, Victory Extra, 8/15/45, many stars

(more next time)

## TO ALL MEMBERS FROM . . . DOM PARISI

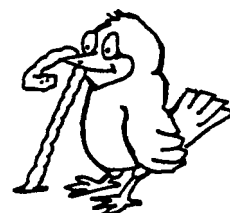
Club member Ray Olivieri saved over 140 OTR albums from being "junked." His Hamburg, N.Y. friend, William A. Bigelow gave Ray the Record Albums. Some great stuff here! I'll start listing some of the albums in this issue of the I.P. and continue until all are given numbers and added to our Library. Thanks to Ray and William Bigelow.

102. Lux Radio Theatre 3/7/38, "Poppy"
103. Lux Radio Theatre 10/14/40 "The Littlest Rebel"
104. Lux Radio Theatre 10/14/46 "To Have and Have Not"
105. Lux Radio Theatre 2/12/45 "For Whom The Bells Toll"
106. Lux Radio Theatre 5/19/38 "My Man Godfrey"
107. Lux Radio Theatre 6/18/45 "Canterville Ghost"
108. Lux Radio Theatre 11/17/41 "Merton of the Movies"
109. Lux Radio Theatre 1/7/40 "Dark Victory"
110. Lux Radio Theatre 10/4/43 "Pride of the Yankees"
111. Lux Radio Theatre 2/22/37 "Captain Blood"
112. Lux Radio Theatre "Sunset Boulevard"
113. Lux Radio Theatre "Alexander's Ragtime Band"
114. Lux Radio Theatre 9/4/44 "Maytime"
115. Lux Radio Theatre 4/18/49 "Treasure of Sierra Madre"

## Modest Dues Increase Announced for 1999

The annual cost of dues for *The Old Time Radio Club* will change from the present \$15.00 per year to \$17.50 beginning in January of next year. The Club's officers have announced the increase citing rising costs in printing. As an incentive to avoid this increase, the current rate will be in effect for early renewals received up until December 31, 1998. Any renewal after that date will be at the new rate. The \$5.00 new member processing fee will not be affected.

Refer to the Information Page in *The Illustrated Press* for the proper address to be used for renewals. Being an early bird in this case saves the cost of a \$2.50 worm. Send in your renewal today while its still fresh in your mind.





## Will Rogers—A Top Performer, He Never Put on Airs

By EDDIE CANTOR

A while ago, watching television, I was startled to hear something that Rogers had ad-libbed back in the summer of 1917. Standing together in the wings of the New Amsterdam Theatre watching the Ziegfeld girls, Will whispered: "Eddie, it's too bad that those gorgeous gals, 20 years from now will all be five years older." More than 40 years later that line was still good.

I first met Will Rogers back in 1912. We were on the same vaudeville bill at the Orpheum Theatre in Winnepeg. Right away I knew he was like no other actor I'd ever met. He actually enjoyed listening to you talk as much as talking himself. The Oklahoma cowboy liked me, I could tell, and the day was to come when I would love him more than any man I'd ever known, with the kind of feeling I might have had for a father or an older brother.

There was complete understanding between us, yet no two people were ever such opposites. When I was trying to muster up enough nerve to make a radical change in my act, I was encouraged by his casual, "Why not go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is."

His success as a performer and as a man was the result of a lifetime spent "out on a limb." He never hesitated when instinct impelled action. He always said what he thought, but always with gum in cheek. I cannot recall anyone taking offense at anything he ever said or wrote. No performer, before or since reached the summit Rogers did with his daily column in hundreds of newspapers read by millions of people, his stage appearances, motion pictures and radio performances.

Will had enough success to swell any man's head to three times the size of his ten-gallon hat, but Rogers' remained quart-size. Despite enormous earnings, he continued to wear a wrinkled store-bought suit, and a ready-to-wear shirt. He couldn't be bothered with tailors or the monogrammed shirts usually accompanying success in show business. He used his time and money for things more important. During World War I, part of his weekly salary went to the Red Cross. He had indigent actors on his payroll. Some of these actors refused to accept small parts in pictures and plays because it would mean less than they were getting from Rogers.

As a much-in-demand speaker he demanded and received hefty fees which he turned over to various charities, and he was the only person I ever knew who never used these contributions as tax deductions.

Of all the things he did, he enjoyed most getting out his daily column. The words he wrote then are applicable now, almost half a century later. "I believe in being neighborly," he wrote in one column, "but you take those countries this country is lending money to—boy, how they hate us. If someone gets a bad cold, it is laid to the grasping nature of money-loving America. So we seem to be in Dutch with all the natives we were so rude as to lend money to. It's the old gag. You loan a man money and you lose his friendship, and the nations are not different from individuals."

He never had a written contract with the great Ziegfeld. In 1915 they just shook hands and that was it.

Rogers had three great loves in his life—his family, America and flying. He flew everywhere, in any kind of plane, and with pilots unknown and known. I believe it was I who sold him on radio. "Will think of it," I said, "every Sunday night in one hour I can reach 40 million people." He commented, "Yup, and aren't you lucky they can't reach you." When he finally signed to do some broadcasts, he insisted that his salary checks be made payable to the Salvation Army.

I have been asked many times what got Rogers into the gum chewing habit. He picked it up from his pals in the major leagues, and one matinee he walked onstage still chewing. The audience tittered, then burst into laughter as Will parked the gum on the proscenium arch. When he'd taken his last bow and was about to walk off-stage, he found another laugh by picking up the wad and saying: "It ain't that I'm stingy, but there's a lot of mileage left in this."

One noon hour, walking through the dining room of the Hotel Astor, a group of people seated at a table stopped him. A well-known critic who had often taken Will to task about his grammar invited him to sit down and join them for lunch. "No thanks," Will said, "I already et." The critic corrected him. "You mean you've already eaten." Will grinned. "I know a lot of fellers who say 'have eaten' who ain't et."

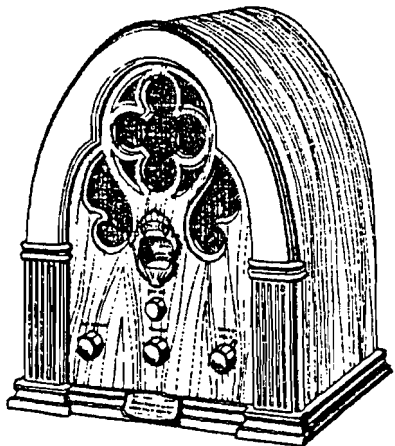
I can recall going to San Francisco for the opening of the Eugene O'Neil play "Ah Wilderness!" His performance had the audience throwing their hats in the air and the critics their adjectives even higher.

During the run of the play, something happened which indirectly caused his death. Will received a letter from a

Old Time Radio Club  
Box 426  
Lancaster, NY 14086

*KEN*

## FIRST CLASS MAIL



lergyman which read: "Relying on you to give the public nothing that could bring the blush of shame to the cheeks of a Christian. I attended your performance with my 14-year old daughter. But when you gave the scene in which the father visits the son in his bedroom and lectures him on the subject of his relationship with an immoral woman, I took my daughter by the hand and we left the theater. I have not been able to look her in the eyes since." This so disturbed Rogers that he found himself unable to sleep nights. Finally he went to Henry Duffy, the producer and resigned. But he was also committed to do the screen version for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

As persuasive as L. B. Mayer was, he couldn't budge Rogers' decision to withdraw from the picture. Finally Mayer said: "All right, you won't have to do "Ah, Wilderness!" but remember you do owe us a picture." Rogers agreed and promised that as soon as a suitable script was found, he would report for work. While waiting, Will accepted the invitation from Wiley Post to fly around the world—the trip that ended in that tragic crash in 1935.

I've always believed that if Will had not received that letter which prompted him to close the play and quit the picture, he might be alive today.

*Excerpted from "As I Remember Them."  
Copyright 1964 by Eddie Cantor.*



WILL ROGERS