



OLD TIME RADIO CLUB

PRESENTS

MEMORIES

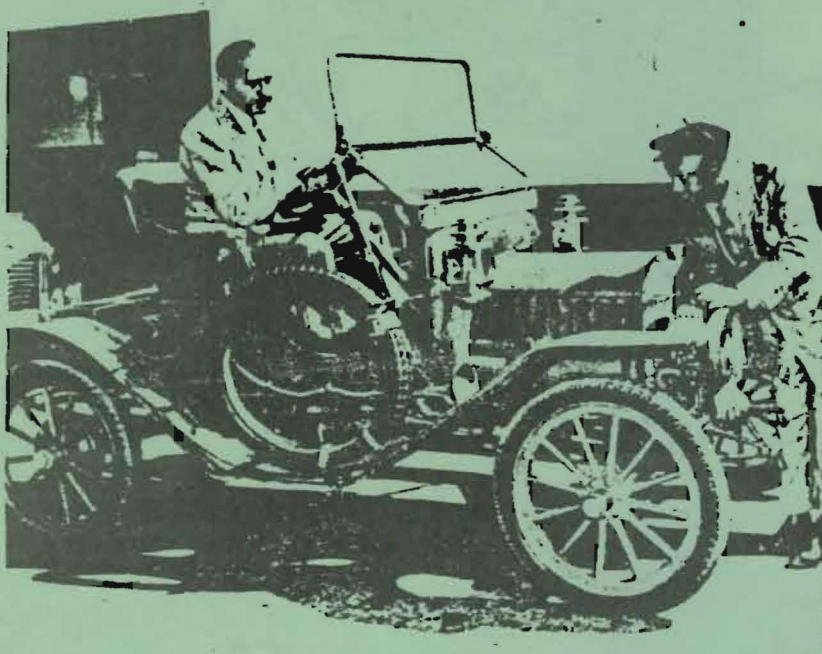
We're on our way again...

visiting

FRED ALLEN

JACK BENNY

GEORGE BURNS
GRACIE ALLEN



TENTH ANNIVERSARY
1985

MEMORIES - VOL. 11 - ANNUAL ISSUE FALL 1985

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Joseph O'Donnell and Phyllis Wazenska O'Donnell.

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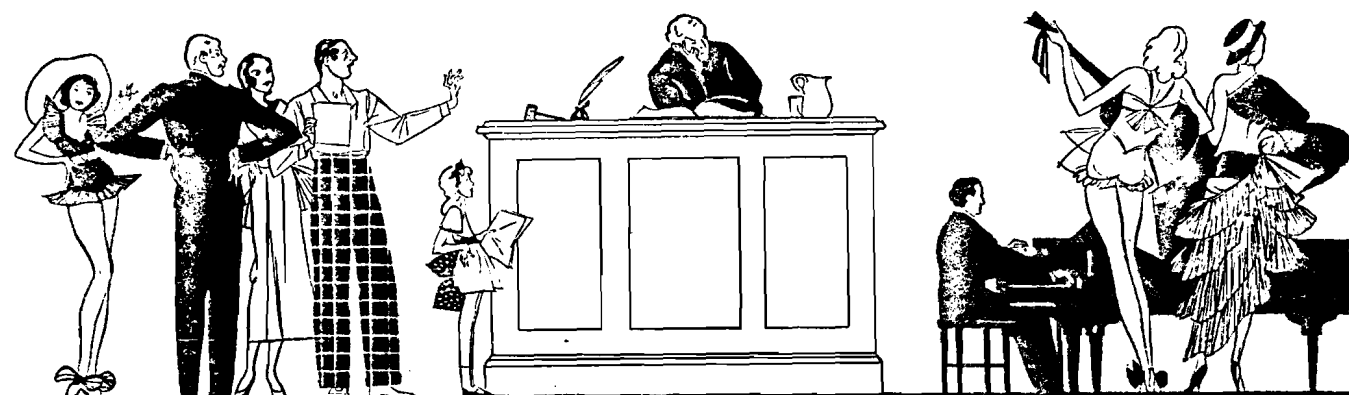
Michelle O'Donnell was again junior research assistant.



"I wish I were home, reading MEMORIES."

MEMORIES is a publication of the Old Time Radio Club, which
meets the first Monday of each month, September through June at
393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, New York. Those who are
interested in the Golden Age of Radio are invited to join with
us as observers, participants, or members. Any inquiries regard-
ing the club should be sent to OTRC, 100 Harvey Drive, Lancaster,
New York, 14086.

This tenth anniversary issue of Memories is being dedicated to
DOLORES WANAT
a friend and supporter of the OTRC.



Board of Review

Presented for your enjoyment is Part II of *The Great Radio Comedians*. This year's selection consists of Fred Allen, Jack Benny and the team of George Burns and Gracie Allen, who provided laughter to a country beset by the grim realities of the Great Depression. While their humor, though topical, was universal and timeless, they also embodied within themselves the very values and virtues traditional to America, that were so needed in this time of transition, disorder and sweeping social change that enhanced their appeal. Disseminated through the medium of radio, these characteristics provided a lifeline to which a desperate and despairing country could cling.

These three men came from poor, humble, untheatrical beginnings. Their schooling, though not their intelligence, was limited, due in part to disinterest, but also to the real need by their families for their earnings. They came into entertainment almost by accident; theirs was a happy marriage of genius, opportunity and the determination not to let their families down. Throughout they retained their enthusiasm and their optimism; when eventual success came, they wore this proudly, but humbly.

While they moved away physically, emotionally they were never far from their families of origin. Moreover, their marriages were life-long, stable and happy; they were partners in every sense. George and Gracie were a team, while Mary Livingston and Portland Hoffa provided the "zing" to the fictional characters of Jack Benny and Fred Allen. For these women, the home was primary - Gracie dreamed for years of retirement to spend more time with her family, which included two adopted children, Sandra and Ronald John, while Mary concerned with her home, husband and child, Joan, would appear only for the final rehearsal and the show itself. And their children seemed to grow up, untroubled, and unspoiled, despite the wealth.

Friendships were valued. That of the Bennys and the Burns continued into the second generation as their daughters remained close. And the respect they had for each other enabled the famed Fred Allen-Jack Benny feud to go on for years.

They became wealthy; they enjoyed that wealth; they brought comfort to others with it; they did not abuse it. Theirs were the Horatio Alger stories that gave hope to America that the golden dream was still a reality.

We are not presenting the material in this issue of *MEMORIES* as definitive in any manner. This is to provide a taste to whet your appetites that you may look further into the lives of these fascinating people, who have become part of America's history.

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Fred Allen 



Juggler in a Top Hat



Frank Boncore...

On March 18, 1956, I was not quite ten years old. My father and I were sitting in front of the TV watching the news, when an announcement came over the air. A comedian, Fred Allen, had died of a heart attack the night before. My recollection of him was only as a panelist on What's My Line? I said to my dad that I didn't think Fred Allen was funny at all. He looked down upon me as only he could and said that Mr. Allen was one of the greatest comedians that had ever lived. The way he said it has stayed with me for so many years because at the time I could not understand why my remark had upset him so.

When I grew up, I really began to get into old time radio. I started with the Lone Ranger and The Shadow as so many new OTR fans do; then I branched out. One day, I discovered Fred Allen. I listened to one of his old shows and that's when it finally sank in that Dad was right. I've done a lot of reading on OTR and find myself constantly looking in libraries, bookstores and flea markets, hoping to find more about this thing that has become so much a part of me today. My own Fred Allen collection is close to a hundred shows; I wish my dad were alive to enjoy them with me.

It seems to me that Fred Allen had a comment on just about everyone and everything during his life and times:

On STUART KANIN, a young violinist who appeared on his program- "Just imagine, this young man can play a piece perfectly that Benny can't even attempt after practicing for 40 years". This was the start of the famed Benny - Allen feud.

On JIMMY DURANTE- "A warm comic whose singing is like a dull rasp calling its mate".

On COLONEL LEMUEL Q. STOOPNAGLE (F. CHASE TAYLOR) - "Life to him is the lilt of a cuckoo's wing".

On NBC - "Welcome to the stucco Taj Mahal".

On his BIRTH - "The doctor slapped me after I started crying".

On his HOTEL ROOM - "It was so small it had removeable door knobs".

On CALIFORNIA - "A wonderful place to live if you happen to be an orange".

On PARISIAN CUISINE - "The food in Paris is served in flames; for the first time an American in Paris can enjoy food he can read by".

On FRENCH MONEY- "It was the thinnest paper I had ever seen in public...French money is Kleenex with murals...I had been blowing my nose in it for five days before I found out it was money".

On LIFE - "The way to live is to live each day as if it were your last, and someday you may be right".

On CARTER'S FOUR- WAY TABLETS - "They work on me one way four times, and the other three ways I never heard from at all".

When Fred Allen typed letters to his friends, he always typed in lower case. When asked why, he replied, "I've never been able to shift for myself."



Fred Allen, with Stoopnagle (F. Chase Taylor) and Bud (Wilbur Hulick), who were on TOWN HALL during Fred's vacation. When Fred returned, they started a show of their own.

A GLIMPSE OF ALLEN: Cambridge, Massachusetts, was the place and May 31, 1894, the date of Fred's birth; John F. Sullivan was his natal name. . . . Worked first in a public library, where he read books on juggling; practised this science assiduously at home until he became an expert. . . . Took part in an amateur show; failed miserably. . . . Tried again, again and again; failed again, again and again. . . . When stage manager asked, "Where 'd you learn juggling?" and he replied, "I took a correspondence course in baggage smashing," the audience laughed. Fred quit juggling to become a comedian, changed his name first to Fred James, then to Fred Allen, in vaudeville, touring the world. . . . Joined the A.E.F. . . . After the Armistice, married Portland Hoffa. (If you think her first name odd, consider two of her sisters: her father, Doctor Frederic Hoffa, named one Dr. Frederica Hoffa — *Dr.* and all — after himself; another LastonE, — with a capital final *e* — because he thought he had enough children.) Allen is a writer as well as a comic; has written movie shorts for Jimmie Barton, Bert Lahr, Tom Howard, Charles Butterworth; sketches for *Little Show* and *Three's a Crowd*; vaudeville acts, magazine articles. . . . Appeared in both these shows. . . . Recently a star of feature film, *Thanks a Million*. . . . A bland, "dead-pan" comedian most of the time, studio friends have nicknamed Fred "Long Puss." He likes banjo playing, when he can do it himself.



THE MISSING CHAPTER IN FRED ALLEN'S LIFE

WHEN you finally meet Fred Allen, you have to keep reminding yourself that you're talking to a famous comedian. No one ever looked less like one. What he really looks like is a serious, sensible New Englander in a good conservative business suit.

Fred was born, you know, in a house which stood on the boundary line between Somerville and Cambridge, Massachusetts. His first job, when he was fourteen, was in the Boston Public Library. Nobody in his family ever showed any inclination to go on the stage. His people were, and are, the sort to whom the world of spotlights and backdrops seems completely alien, inhabited by foreigners.

Yet today Fred Allen is a successful comedian, in radio, moving pictures, and the stage. How did it happen? How did he make the transition from public library to Town Hall?

The answer lies in the woman who molded Fred Allen's life—the one person who always thinks of him, and still speaks of him, by his real name of John Sullivan. Few of Fred's friends and business associates have ever seen her. Most of them, I imagine, don't even know of her existence. Yet she has had a profound effect on Fred's character and career, and even now, in everything he does, he is motivated by the wish to please her, to help her.

She lives in a Boston suburb, her name is Mrs. Elizabeth Lovely, and she is Fred Allen's aunt. You'd do better to call her his mother, though, because she's the only one he's known since he was four years old.

I visited her in her second-story flat just out of Boston—five sunny rooms, not very large, filled with comfortable, elderly furniture. "I've lived here for eighteen years," she told me. "John wants me to move into an apartment closer in to town, but you'll never catch me living in one of those little boxes."

I believed her, because I couldn't imagine Elizabeth Lovely doing anything she was convinced wasn't right and sensible. She is seventy-eight now, an alert, strong seventy-eight. Her near-sighted eyes indicate her humor and kindness, but the lines of her face, the firm chin, indicate her will-power.

And again, looking at her, I wondered how in the world Fred had gone on the stage when he was scarcely more than a boy. Surely his Aunt Elizabeth must have opposed it, not on any narrow-minded or intolerant grounds, but simply because of its hazards and insecurity!

As she told me her story, though, I began to understand. It's her story, and a part of Fred Allen's story that's never been told before, as well.

"John's mother—she was my sister—died of pneumonia

BY NORTON
RUSSELL

when John was four and his brother Robert two," she said. "His father was busy all day in the Boston Library, where he was a book-binder, so of course he didn't have time to raise the boys. I decided it was up to me to take care of them, and their father too."

It was not a new sort of job for her. Her own mother had died when she herself was only fifteen, the oldest of a family of six. Already she knew how to rear a family, how to make a home run smoothly. She'd mothered her father, her brothers and sisters, since before she was old enough to put up her hair. In addition, a few years before, her husband, Michael Lovely, had been stricken with paralysis, and she had been caring for him. Childless herself, she still has had more cares, more responsibilities, than the average mother.

"I took in home dressmaking after my husband fell ill, but when the two boys and their father came to live with me, I didn't have time to do that any more. I looked around until I found a comfortable house in Allston, a suburb of Boston, and we all moved into it. One of my brothers and two of my sisters agreed to live with me and pay board, and all together, by managing, I was able to make both ends meet."

It was in Allston that Fred Allen spent his boyhood and went to school. It was the ordinary boyhood of an ordinary American boy, unshadowed, thanks to Aunt Elizabeth, by the lack of a mother. An ordinary boyhood, concerned with such matters as baseball, swimming, and school. Nobody, certainly not Aunt Elizabeth, attached any significance to the fact that a good deal of Fred's time was unaccounted for. Off playing somewhere, no doubt. She didn't know, then, how many hours he spent practicing juggling.

Then, when Fred was fifteen, and working after school in the library, a neighbor tossed a bombshell into the Sullivan-Lovely household.

"Saw John acting on the stage last night," he told Aunt Elizabeth.

"Acting—on the stage?" she asked, amazed. "How? Where?"

"Amateur night over at the Bijou," she was told. "They announced him as Fred Allen, but it was John all right."

Now right here is where you would have expected Aunt Elizabeth to call her nephew and register some serious objections. He had been performing in amateur night shows for some time, she learned, while she thought he was safely at work in the library.

"The idea at first did seem utterly fantastic to me," she said. "Why, John had been studying for a business career! But as I thought it over, I began to see his viewpoint. I

knew him so well that I could understand why he'd kept it all a secret. If he hadn't been afraid I'd forbid him to enter the amateur competitions, he'd have confided in me—and that he hadn't done so proved that entering them meant a good deal to him.

"Without saying anything to him, I found out the next time one of the theaters was going to present amateur acts, and went, sitting in the back of the auditorium where he

couldn't possibly see me. I admit I was a bit excited.

"I guess I was a lot more nervous than he was when he came on the stage. He started his act with some juggling, and everything went along all right until somebody in the audience cried, 'Give him the hook! Give him the hook!' If it had been me, I'd have run right off the stage, but John just stopped and answered the fellow, 'No! Give me a show instead!' He answered up so quickly and so spunkily that I had to laugh myself, and the audience roared and clapped and told the heckler to be quiet. Then John finished, and everybody applauded.

"I went home and made up my mind that if John wanted to go on the stage—well, he'd just have to do it. I don't believe in trying to keep people from doing things they want to do, to make a living, as long as it's an honest living. Besides, John seemed to have a natural talent. Not many boys his age could have answered up to that man in the audience.

I found out he'd been afraid of two things—that his father and I would object, and that he'd fail. Those were the two reasons he'd used the name Fred Allen.

"Of course, I didn't know then that he'd be as big a success as he has, but after watching him that one time I thought he could probably make a go of it. Anyway, I decided I wouldn't stop him from trying."

That's how it happened that Fred Allen entered vaudeville as soon as he'd finished high school. Fred's early days in the show business were about as precarious as those of others who are stars today, but no matter how difficult it was to get money, nor where he was, he

Wide World



FROM BOSTON LIBRARY TO
RADIO CITY—WHO HELPED
PUT THIS UNTHEATRICAL
COMIC IN THE SPOTLIGHT?

Above, in a Boston suburb lives an old lady of seventy-eight who has had an amazing influence on Fred's life. Right, Fred with Portland Hoffa, his wife and his aggravating heckler before the mike in Town Hall Tonight.

contributed regularly to the expenses of the family. It was no longer necessary, financially, for the family to live together, and gradually they drifted apart, until, when the war broke out, Aunt Elizabeth had with her only her invalid husband and one sister. Fred's father had died a few years before.

During the first years of the war, Fred was touring in Australia, but when the United States entered the conflict he returned home, intending to enlist. His brother Robert had already done so, and was in a training camp, preparing to go overseas.

But he found his aunt facing a crisis. Her sister had fallen ill with an incurable disease, and it was taking every penny she had saved throughout long years of economical housekeeping to pay for medicine and doctors for the two invalids.

For the first time in her life, she asked another person to make a sacrifice for her sake. She knew that Fred had already had two years of living in war-time Australia, met on every side by the question, implied or open, of those hysterical days, "Why aren't you in the trenches?" She knew how the suggestion that he was a slacker had galled him. Yet, because she could see no other way out of her trouble, she explained the situation to him and asked him not to enlist.

FRED proved, then, that he hadn't forgotten his aunt's love and tolerance, that he knew of the years of her life she had given to him.

"Don't worry," he said, "of course I won't enlist. I'll go on working, and we'll get along fine."

But there was still the draft. Fred wouldn't have anything to say about it if his name was drawn. Aunt Elizabeth determined to forestall any such event. She went to the draft board herself, without saying anything to Fred (he doesn't know to this day that she did this), and

explained her situation to the officials. If Fred went to war, she concluded, there'd be nobody to take care of his family. I don't know how much effect this indomitable old lady's plea had—but the fact remains that Fred wasn't drafted. Perhaps the officials were impressed, as I was, by her courage, her refusal to let life control her, and her determination to control it instead.

When I spoke of my admiration for these qualities in her, however, I discovered that I was talking of something beyond her comprehension. She simply didn't realize that in rearing Fred so wisely, keeping the family going against continual odds, she had done anything out of the ordinary.

"But I've never been in want," she said. "I've had to economize, yes, but lots of people have to do that. You just do the best you can with what you have, and everything usually turns out all right."

WELL, it has turned out all right for Aunt Elizabeth, and I'm glad. In her seventy-eighth year she is strong, healthy, full of interest in life and what it has to offer—and very proud of Fred. With her sister she lives in Boston, doing all her own housework and on holidays gathering her family around her once more for a feast she cooks herself. Once a year, lately, Fred has treated her to a trip. Two years ago it was to Ireland, to see her parents' birthplace. Last year it was to South America, with her sister. On their way home they met another grand old lady named May Robson. This year it may be Florida, or Hollywood. She says she'd like to take another sea voyage, but her sister (who is several years younger) had about enough of the sea when they went to South America. They may take one yet, though. I've a suspicion that Aunt Elizabeth thinks it will be time enough to sit around home when she's old.

It's Town Hall Tonight!
—Wednesday, NBC

Fred Allen comes down out of the Maine woods this Wednesday, October 5, to bring again to NBC listeners the inimitable Town Hall. With him will be all the old stand-bys, Harry von Zell, Peter Van Steeden, Portland, and, of course, the Mighty Allen Art Players. The program will follow the same pattern that has distinguished it in the past and, likewise as in the past, Fred Allen himself will be the main-spring of the whole show. Although most comedians surround themselves with a small army of gag-men, dialog-writers, and so forth, Allen hasn't so much as an idea-man in his employ. Practically everything in the "Town Hall" springs from Allen's mind alone, and it's put down on paper without benefit of

typewriter, dictaphone or secretary. The program is on the air over NBC at—



Fred ("Sourpuss") Allen registers hilarious joy

Those who heard Fred Allen's opening show from Hollywood on November 17 will agree with my award of plums to "Buster" (Bradley) Slaven, who took the role of the autograph-hunter. Fourteen years old, Buster started in picture work ten years ago; has been his family's breadwinner for several years, during which his father, a plasterer, has been hard put to find work. Buster is also financing his own education. Funny thing, after talking about "nonprofessional" autograph-hunters and their "dirty pieces of paper," Slaven was approached by a little girl about seven years old who asked him for his autograph. It was Buster's first request. Somewhat flustered, he said "Yes," whereupon she produced a dirty scrap of paper!



The Fred Allen Show. Fred Allen.



WIT DUEL OF THE CENTURY—BENNY (left) vs. ALLEN—WEDNESDAY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22

Fred Allen, Jack Benny . . . squabble

"Town Hall Tonight"—NBC, 9 p.m. EST (9 p.m. PST).

On the surface, this meeting between the two cut-ups promises no cataclysmic disturbances. However, listeners are assured peace won't reign long with the jester from the wilds of Waukegan in the camp of the Yankee Wit. It's the week's laughfest. Radio Guide's own "Singing Cameraman," Gene Lester, will also be present at this broadcast. He'll not only capture what he sees at the Allen-Benny "meet"—in pictures, but he'll tell listeners all about it, too. Then he'll sing, and what he sees while broadcasting will also be pictured. Gene was recently heard on the "Saturday Night Swing Club" and "Vox Pop" shows. The pictures he takes of "Town Hall Tonight" will be in RADIO GUIDE soon.

A complete preview of the meeting of Jack Benny and Fred Allen may be found on page 7.



Fred Allen



Portland

A good time is had by the twenty- or thirty-odd people who sit in at the Fred Allen dress rehearsal every Wednesday afternoon from 1 to 2 p.m. Fred stands in front of the mike practically for the entire hour with his derby hat sitting on the back of his head, his tie loose and collar open. When the boys in Peter Van Steeden's band are not playing, they crowd around near the mike and almost go into hysterics laughing at the Allen quips. They make a swell audience for him, as does Portland Hoffa, who gets a big kick out of her hubby's cracks. Fred chews about two or three sticks of gum at a time during the rehearsal and also at the broadcast. During a peppy Merry Macs routine, the comic breaks out into a tap dance, which isn't bad at all. Yes, everyone has a good time at the Fred Allen rehearsal but the comic himself. He takes his work very seriously and hardly ever even as much as smiles.



Jack and Fred Allen on the stage of the Roxy Theater in 1947.

FRED ALLEN'S debut on his new Sal Hepatica program almost resulted in tragedy. For a few minutes just before the broadcast there was consternation when it was discovered that there was no studio audience. It seems the man having charge of the distribution of the tickets couldn't distribute them because the printer failed to deliver them in time. To Allen and his wife, the delightful Portland Hoffa, the lack of spectators wasn't so serious. Fred pleasantly recalled his experience as a juggler in a small time vaudeville theatre in Fall River, Mass., when he played to the janitor, two ushers and the piano player—the rest of the audience having walked out on him. But "Tony" Ruffner, the production man, was plainly perturbed. The premiere of a broadcast with a famous stage comedian and no audience was unthinkable. So he dispatched emissaries about the RCA Building, thronging with visitors to the NBC studios at forty cents per capita, and sufficient spectators were corralled to permit the program to go on the air, properly attested and witnessed.



At a Benny rehearsal. Jack, Fred Allen, writer Seamon Jacobs

CBS photo by Gabor Rona

FRED ALLEN *tells his story*

in a Strictly JUGULAR

by DORA ALBERT **Vein**

"MY WHOLE life story," said Fred Allen soberly, "if it is to be properly understood, must be told in a jugular vein."

"Jocular vein would be good, too," I ventured.

He raised his eyebrows. "No, jugular is better. Because I started out to be a jugular. Or should you say juggler? Yes, of course you should say juggler."

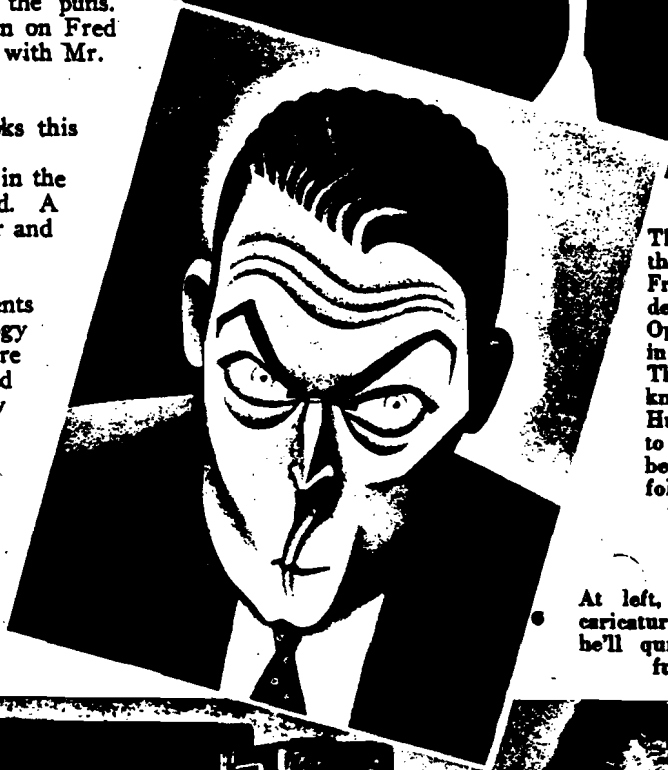
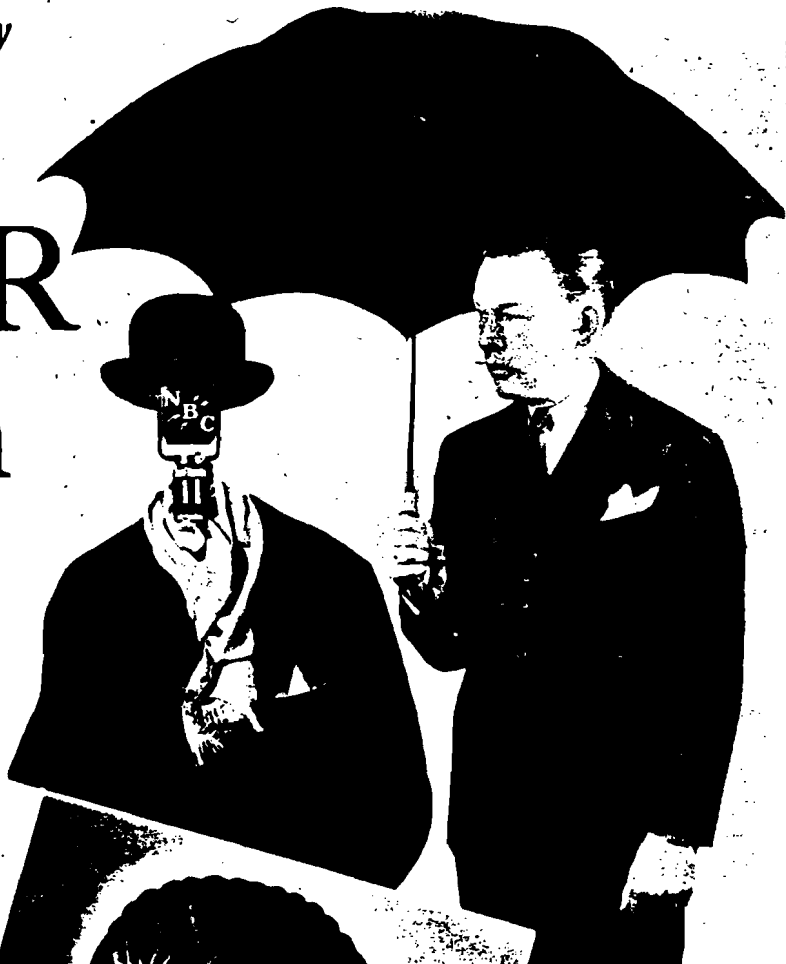
Well, I could see we were off to a swell start. So I will begin the jugular—I mean, the juggler's story just as he began it. And don't write letters to the editor about the puns. Thirty or forty or fifty million people who listen in on Fred Allen's new revue program can't be wrong. So on with Mr. Allen's story.

"STOP it! Stop fooling around with those books this instant!"

The librarian's high, thin-pitched voice rang out in the quiet Boston library. The boy he addressed jumped. A couple of books that he had been tossing into the air and catching expertly each time fell to the floor.

"Yes sir, yes sir," he said.

John Florence Sullivan (as Fred Allen's parents thoughtlessly named him, not knowing that numerology and radio and things made Fred Allen a much more suitable title; but then, the Sullivan patronymic had been in the family for generations and you know how touchy families are) loved juggling even in those days when he was working his way through high school by helping in a Boston library after school at the magnificent salary of twenty cents an hour. But he didn't dream then that his love of juggling was going to put him on the high road to a career. For Fred Allen literally juggled his way to success.



—Roy Lee Jackson

The gentleman with the umbrella is Fred Allen, president of the Society Opposed to Nudity in Microphones. The stage once knew him as Paul Huckle, but he had to change his title because so many folks told him he was the berries

At left, Fred Allen in caricature. Now maybe he'll quit making those funny faces



Portland Hoffa (Mrs. Allen), Jack Smart, and Fred Allen broadcasting their new series of radio revues

Fred Allen Tells His Story

"I practiced for my own *amazement*," he says. And as he speaks his blue eyes are very solemn behind horn-rimmed glasses. His face is always as serious as that of an owl.

When he graduated from high school, Fred Allen went to work in a piano store at eight dollars a week. At nights he did his juggling act at various theatres.

"I wasn't a very good juggler in those days," he explains, "so I covered up my shortcomings as a juggler by telling jokes."

THEY had to be pretty good jokes, because Fred made plenty of mistakes as a juggler. Once while he was juggling a cannonball, he accidentally hit himself with it.

As time went by, Fred improved as a juggler, but he kept on telling more and more jokes, and people seemed to appreciate the jokes even more than the juggling.

He came to New York, where at first he couldn't get a single booking. So for two years he played in small theatres around New York. Then finally he got a chance in a small New York theatre, where an agent from Australia saw him. The agent promised him a six months' contract, and his fare paid both ways.

Afterwards he went back to the United States, and appeared on various vaudeville circuits. He juggled balls, hats, plates, cigars, cuesticks and jokes. Especially jokes. The world was full of jugglers, but there were few people who could dish out monologue the way Fred Allen could. So he juggled his way up from a cheap vaudevillian to a high class comedian.

ABOUT this time he met Portland Hoffa. She was a singer and dancer in the *Scandals*. With his passion for juggling things and people, Fred Allen just couldn't let her remain a singer and dancer. He wrote a vaudeville sketch that included parts for both himself and Portland, and juggled her around from a dancer to a comedienne. And a comedienne she's been ever since.

They appeared together in the *First Little Show*, with Libby Holman and Clifton Webb, and also in *Three's a Crowd*. Just before they appeared in the *Little Show*, they got married.

Then radio grabbed them. Their work in *Three's a Crowd* interested the agency which handled the Linit Bath Club program, and they were offered an audition and then a contract. They appeared for twenty-six weeks on this program, and then for eighteen weeks they helped to glorify Hellmann's Mayonnaise. And now, of course, they've juggled their way to a new program, and are delighting the audiences who listen in to the *Sal Hepatica* program on Wednesday nights. Each week they juggle the backgrounds around.

Fred realizes that he owes his success to juggling. He still keeps the juggling balls he used in *Three's a Crowd*. And almost every day he juggles a handball around in the gymnasium. The last time I saw him his nose was quite red, and he explained that he had hit himself with a handball. You see, he hasn't got over being a bad juggler yet.



Portland Hoffa



Fred Allen



Minerva Pious—Mrs. Nussbaum

Parker Fennelly—Titus Moody



Kenny Delmar—
Senator Claghorn

TOWN HALL TONIGHT

A half-hour before the Fred Allen show is scheduled to start, NBC's big main studio is nearly full. A press pass, however, serves as a passport to a seat in the second row, about six feet from the microphone which Fred is to use. The stage is still almost empty. One red-coated musician is making some adjustments to his drum, and the porters are still bringing in sound effects and making themselves generally useful. Gradually the band drifts in, looking somewhat like British hussars in their snappy uniforms. They are followed by a tall, slim, handsome dark chap in "civies," the band leader, Peter Van Steeden. Van is not one of the self-important sort of conductors — he carries his own music stand over instead of having a porter do it for him. Then he begins looking through a sheaf of music and calling the numbers off to the band.

Next to enter are the amateurs and their friends, and Jim Harkins ushers them to a bank of chairs.

Then Harry Von Zell, a round-faced, light-haired, medium-sized young fellow, comes and explains the show to the audience, comparing the effect it will produce in the studio with the impression it will have on the air. He rehearses them in how to cheer when TOWN HALL opens and tells them when not to applaud, explaining that if they clapped violently the first time Portland appeared, it would be confusing to listeners. The audience thoroughly enjoys taking part in the show with their cheering.

No sooner has he finished than in come Fred, his wife, Portland Hoffa, Jack Smart, and Minerva Pious, who have appeared with him for years, and Eileen Douglas and John Brown, the other members of his cast. They sit in another bank of chairs at the left, opposite the amateurs.

Von Zell makes the opening announcement, and then shouts "It's TOWN HALL tonight!" meanwhile cuing the cheers by waving his right arm. Then the show is under way, with the cast in a huddle around the mike, and Fred holding a megaphone in one hand as if he were about to croon. When he begins his newsreel, which "sees all — shows nothing," he talks *across* the large end of the megaphone, to give his voice a hollow "newsreely" sound.

That sequence over, he takes the horn back to the sound effects man, and pours himself a drink of water. (It looks as though he puts some Sal Hepatica in it, but it is hard to be sure.)

Portland is a tall, slender, cute-looking brunette. Her voice does not sound nearly as "gaga" in the studio as it does over the air, and when she is not before the mike, it is just a nice, normal voice, with no trace of that inexplicable quality which she uses to broadcast.

She, Fred, and the Mighty Allen Art Players work at a single microphone, and while they are talking, Van Steeden, who at other times leads his band with a lead pencil and considerable violence, sits on the edge of the conductor's stand reading a script and laughing harder than anyone else in the show, though Portland chuckles heartily at most of her husband's gags and keeps smiling even while reading her lines.

The first amateur is led out as Fred reads the introduction, grinning genially at the aspirant. Then he lays down his script, and the banter begins flying to and fro. Fred makes up his questions and comebacks as he goes along, and so do the amateurs. They and Fred never see each other until the broadcasts. He has no hand in selecting them. Their letters of application go to the advertising agency, which sends them questionnaires to be filled out. From thousands of these, several hundred are selected to be heard, and of these hundreds, about six actually go on the air each week. Voting is done by the studio audience, a technician with an "output meter" measuring the volume of their applause through a microphone and amplifier.

As the program nears its end, Allen glances at the control room, and he and the man there signal each other. When the show ends there is a deluge of applause. For the next twenty minutes Fred is completely submerged by a wave of autograph hunters and people to whom he is forced to explain that their friends in Kokomo have to write in to ask for auditions.

In answer to a question, Allen said, "Studio audiences are a big help to a program like ours, for their laughter and applause give our show the lift it needs. Sometimes they laugh loudest at things we consider pretty poor, and other times the gags that go best in rehearsal leave the audience cold. I wish we could try every one of our programs on three or four studio audiences before broadcasting them. It would help us iron out the rough spots."



Dear Friend:

We received your note asking if you may compete in the amateur contests for Fred Allen's "Town Hall Tonight." And the answer is definitely . . . YES!

Of course, we receive so many requests that it may take time to get to you, but if you're willing to wait, why, we're a little more than willing to listen. In the meantime, here's some information you might like to have about how we run our auditions. And, incidentally, it might improve your chances of winning.

You see most of our auditioning friends are not unusual enough to win. It takes more than a fair voice, or the ability to play an instrument fairly well. We want things that are different, unusual. For instance, a girl may sing rather well, but not well enough. But if she has a couple of friends who play instruments, and they work out a novel arrangement to accompany her, then the act has a fine chance. Or, a gentleman may sing a rather impressive baritone solo, and still not win. But, if he were to sing a folk song that has color and romance, that is distinctive and unusual, why, his chances are quite good. Sometimes two or three lads may each sing only a fair song, but they may work out quite a novelty, if they sing together. In short, we are trying to find the different, the unique. And we want you to sit right down and figure out how to surprise us in your audition! Anything goes -- from singing chickens to playing the harp with mittens on! And the more unusual your accomplishment -- the greater your chance for cashing in.

Another thing -- Fred Allen and those of you who are on the program always have lots of fun together. Besides, he likes to know something about you -- about your background. Something that sets you apart from the rest of us. Perhaps you have an unusual job, or were born in an interesting place, or came to New York through some peculiar circumstance. If Fred knows about it -- then you both have something in common when you meet on the radio stage.

So send us in a resume of what you're planning to show us (make it different!) and something about yourself that Fred can talk about (it's a fun show, remember!). Then, when your turn comes, we'll send you a card telling you when and where the audition will be held.

Sincerely,

Fred Allen
TOWN HALL TONIGHT
285 Madison Avenue
New York, N. Y.

EMC/FR

The letter you get
when you ask Fred for
an audition.

RADIO

Guide

TEN CENTS

If you heard the Jell-O show of March 19, you'll recall that Jack Benny was supposed to be home ill, but really the sick boy on that show was genial announcer Don Wilson, who arose from bed with a 101-degree fever to broadcast and almost keeled over during his closing announcement . . .



Don Wilson, genial announcer of Jack Benny's Sunday Jell-O Show

In NBC's new studios is a seven-foot thunder drum, the skin of which has been reserved for the autographs of big-name stars, but last week the network requested Don Wilson to pen his monicker thereon, so now the Jell - O - Post - Toasties mikeman feels that at last he has arrived!

Jack Benny



The Bennys' Roxbury Drive residence for more than twenty-five years.



JACK BENNY

When Jack Benny used to play what he fondly believed to be *Love in Bloom* on the violin (but which neither Sigmund Spaeth nor Sherlock Holmes could have identified), it was difficult to believe that Jack's first professional appearance was as *violinist* with an orchestra in his home town of Waukegan, Illinois. Unfortunately one week after maestro Jack made his debut, the theatre closed. "But I had nothing to do with that!" he insists.

Jack was born on St. Valentine's Day in 1894, but, as he will tell you, he has "changed a lot since then." His driver's license shows him to be five feet, nine inches tall, with fair complexion and brown hair, now sprinkled with grey. He admits to one hundred fifty pounds, but when he tells people his weight, they look at him, gasp, and exclaim, "Is *that* all!"

His mother, who was a musician, started Jack studying the violin at the age of six. At first the boy objected, but by the time he was fourteen his interest in his playing was so great that he gave up all the usual high school activities in favor of fiddling.

As Benny wanted to become a vaudeville violinist, he haunted the local theatre whenever he could. This included much of the time when he should have been in school. Finally the principal called him into his office and remarked: "Jack, I want to apologise for letting school interfere with your musical career and to assure you it won't happen again. In other words, Jack, you are expelled."

So, as has been said, Benny became a vaudevillian in Waukegan for one week. That first defeat did not discourage him, however, for he had been a rather successful amateur while still in high school. He took the band's pianist as accompanist and got a contract as "The Boy Violinist."

With this billing, Benny toured for six profitable years before the World War. He then decided to see the world through a porthole and joined the Navy. Someone discovered that he was a musician, so they handed him a fiddle instead of a swab and sent him out to play for the Seaman's Benefit Fund. He got plenty of applause but not much money, and decided that the best way to get contributions was to ask for them.

That's when Benny became a comedian, for he found that laughing audiences were the heaviest contributors. So at every performance, he fiddled less and talked more until, when he returned to vaudeville after the war, he had become a monologist who carried a violin which he never played. The fiddle had changed from a musical instrument to a mere stage "prop."

Gradually he swung from an "opening spot" to a "headliner" and also to master of ceremonies in brilliant Broadway revues.

But he might not have become the great star that he is, had he not met Mary Livingstone one night while dancing at the Hotel Ambassador in Los Angeles, where he was having a record run of eight weeks at the Orpheum Theatre.

He decided that she was going to be Mrs. Benny and talked her into taking a trip to Waukegan to meet his folks, who, it is said, were named Kubelsky. The meeting must have been a pleasant one, for just sixty-four minutes later the chief clerk in Chicago's City Hall was saying the solemn words. Mary fainted dead away the second the ceremony was over. This marriage took place on January 14, 1927; about six years later they adopted a baby, little Joan Naomi Benny.

New York impressed them as the right place to spend their honeymoon, so there they went. Jack asked Mary how she would like to drop in and watch Earl Carroll rehearse the *Vanities*, a new edition of which he was then putting into production. Mary thought it would be interesting for a few minutes and they went backstage. A few hours later they were still there; Jack was on the stage, having been given the leading role. (At least that is the legend that has been told about him. He really came to New York because it is the centre of the show business. He had already appeared in *Hollywood Revue*, a talkie, and on Broadway in a couple of Shubert shows and he wanted to continue in this work. But the other version is more romantic.)

Then along came an offer from a sponsor and Benny was in radio. He still goes out to Hollywood often and stays there for long periods because making movies, while hard work, is lucrative — and Benny does not mind hard work.

Here are a few sidelights on his personality. His favorite sport is golf, but he admits that he would rather go to the movies, because, as he says, "You don't have to walk so far." He prepares his radio scripts about four days ahead of a broadcast. He wasn't scared as an amateur, but he was at his professional debut. He likes pepper steak, loyal friends, and steak sandwiches; dislikes jigsaw puzzles and unresponsive audiences. Pictures radio audience as four or five people sitting around a room, but will not say whether he sees them as responsive or not. Always wears grey soft hat and blue or grey suit (no browns) and keeps hat on in studio. Has been thrilled thrice: First, appearing before President Roosevelt on March 11, 1933; Second, getting a fire marshall's car to rush him from a picture studio to a radio studio in time to broadcast and nearly being killed *en route*; Third, seeing himself on the screen for the first time. Would like to travel or be a theatrical producer; no desire to play Hamlet, though once wanted to be an actor. Eats only two meals a day; goes to bed about three A.M. and gets up at nine the same morning. Buys insurance and bonds with his savings. Says the nicest compliment he ever got was the first time somebody told him his Jell-O broadcast sounded impromptu. Claims it seems like that because they rehearse but once to keep from losing the informal effect.



A Benny for Your Thoughts

Jack Benny Started in Vaudeville as a fiddler and Became a Star Radio Comedian

By Cedric Adams

WHEN a man's favorite dish is cold asparagus and mustard sauce you may expect here and there in his background a curious trait, a peculiar circumstance. Some people call them quirks. Jack Benny, former star of the famous Canada Dry (a nickel back on the large bottle) program, and principal attraction on the new Chevrolet series of weekly broadcasts, has his quirks.

Examining the Benny beginnings, it is apparent that he's entitled to them. He got a break the day he was born. He was a Valentine's present to his mother and



Jack Benny with the Mrs., Mary Livingstone, are another husband and wife team of the airwaves



Left to right, Al Jolson, Jack Benny, Ted Husing, Rudy Vallee, Irene Bordoni and Lou Holtz at the beach

father on February 14, 1894. The Kubelsky family (Jack's father and mother) lived in Waukegan, Ill., a suburb of Chicago. Jack's mother thought it would be better if the Benny heir were born in a larger city than Waukegan. It would be simpler for the child later on in life when people asked where it was born for it to say Chicago rather than Waukegan. That's why the event took place in the metropolis.

Mr. Kubelsky ran a haberdashery business. When Jack was old enough to start making a living the business of selling shirts, socks and neckties didn't have much appeal. With the clothing business definitely out, Jack cast about for a means of making a living. As a child he had taken a few lessons on the fiddle and became fairly proficient at playing the popular tunes of the early 1900's. After finishing high school he organized a dance band, and played at the various Waukegan dances. The violin he played with the orchestra was an Amati, an expensive make. It proved a good investment, however, for it

A Benny For Your Thoughts

was the same violin that was to land him at the top of the nation's professional entertainers.

Benny's entrance into the theatrical business was a curious thing. His first job in show business was doorman in a Waukegan theater. It was that job that started him definitely on a theatrical career. The property man in the theater quit and Benny took the job. While he was handling the props in the theater, the yen for the fiddle came back. A year later he was playing in the pit orchestra.

Show business changes come rapidly. The Waukegan house closed and sent Fiddler Benny into a twenty-year stretch of vaudeville. His first act was a violin-piano act, vastly different from the calm, ironic, succinct humor of the Benny shows today.

In 1918 Jack started as a single entertainer. With him went his fiddle. There were not very many performances, however, before the violin pieces shrunk and the jokes increased. It was adding gags to this act that launched Benny on a career as one of the originators of what we know today as a Master of Ceremonies.

Out of vaudeville into the revues was a short jump. His first "big-time" came in a Shubert show at the Winter Garden in *Great Temptations*.

Jack re-entered vaudeville in 1926 at the Palace in Chicago as Master of Ceremonies. This tour landed him at the Orpheum in Los Angeles. In one of his audiences one night sat several motion picture moguls. They watched the smoothness of his work, recognized in him picture possibilities.

WITH the expiration of his vaudeville contract he signed for his first big picture, *The Hollywood Revue*. There is

nothing quite so pleasant to the movie executives as the clicking of the turnstiles and Benny twirled them. After the success of this picture, Jack Benny made two more films for Hollywood.

In 1930 Earl Carroll selected Benny for the big spot in his *Vanities*. The show played in Gotham for a year and toured another year as a road show.

Jack's start in radio was another irregularity in the comedian's life. A New York newspaper columnist was planning a broadcast over one of the New York stations. To give a little variety to the program he solicited the aid of the Benny fellow.

Jack dashed off his script in a couple of hours, went down to the station with no more than his customary urge to entertain. Something about his presentation, his radio audience appeal created a stir in listening circles. The next morning radio critics on the New York papers had paragraphs on the new radio find.

Among the tuners-in that night also were members of the advertising agency who were handling the account of Canada Dry. A week later Benny was signed for his first long-time radio contract. Subsequent weeks built Mr. Benny into what many consider the highest paid radio entertainer in the world. Jack doesn't like to discuss openly the figures of his new Chevrolet contract. He did say, however, that he'll probably make more in one half hour program than he would have made all year in the haberdashery business in Waukegan.

A story heard commonly about radio comedians is that they buy all their material from a syndicate of joke writers or dig through old files of joke magazines. Benny's method is neither of these.

During his vaudeville and stage career he wrote every line of his comedy himself. The demands of a twice-weekly broadcast were a little too heavy. One man could not possibly supply sufficient material to lend variety to a series of programs. For years Jack had been an intimate friend of Harry Conn, famed Broadway wit. Arrangements were made for Harry and Jack to collaborate on their radio programs. Today Jack gives Mr. Conn a great deal of credit and praise for the success they have achieved over the air.

THE Bennys have a serious eye on the future. Jack, for instance, believes now that the straight gagging, joking, punning radio comic is on the way out.

"When the entire field of humor can be reduced to six or seven basic gags," he says, "there can't be much variation. The modified versions of the original jokes are pretty well shopworn right now. The situation comedy, the type I've used in my three series of commercial programs, has years to go before it will become tedious to the listener."

"If you can't step up in front of a microphone and make good, if you can't please the audience there's something more to blame than the fact that you might have whistled in the dressing room before he took the air. And when you're whowing them you can whistle all day and it won't break them."

In January 1927, Jack married Sayde Marks who is the Mary Livingstone you've heard over the air with him. His pet name for her is Doll. Her pet name for him is Doll. Their married life is exemplified by their rôles in the programs. They laugh themselves through life, enjoy each other thoroughly.

Jack Benny's no dope—he has had the telephone of his new house installed inside the bread box, where nobody will ever think of looking for it.

There must be something about being a comedian that makes you unusually fond of good solid earth. Jack Benny and Fred Allen wouldn't think of going up in an airplane—won't even go up in a tall building if they can help it.

Phil Harris





THE HOUSE THAT BUILT JACK'S GAGS



Because he wants to move in by June 26, Jack turns to, helps the carpenters and the plumbers



"Hey, you! Where's your union card?" Jack produces it—he's a member of the musicians' union!

HIGH in the exclusive Hollywood Hills, Jack Benny is building a new house—and daily withstanding a barrage of "Is this the house that Jack built?" gags as part of the price of it. No secret to the millions who cluster over their radio sets every Sunday to hear the Benny show. Jack's new home is also much talked about in the gathering-places of Hollywood's best-informed gossipers. For this is no ordinary house. From cellar to attic, from end to end, it is to represent the very last word—or at least, the next to the last! Nothing that could contribute to sound modernity and solid comfort has been neglected. The spacious grounds around the house will even boast a concrete-lined barbecue pit! The Benny sense of humor is well represented, too. Grinning on the bottom of the swimming-pool will be a huge octopus—made of shining black tile!

Photographs by Art Carter



Benny is at his best when the lunch-whistle blows. Yes, he drank the whole quart of milk!



And this isn't all! The Benny manse stretches out far to the left. Note the spacious porch in the center. The two straight white lines running across the picture are chalk-lines marking the path of the walk that will

be laid here. A piece of upright pipe—for the diving-board—shows the location of the swimming-pool in the lower right-hand corner. Apparently pleased with the whole scene are Ace Comic Jack and the boss carpenter



HAUNTED HIGH JINKS

JACK BENNY DEALS WITH
GOBLINS, GHOSTS AND
CECIL B. DEMILLE—MON

Cecil B. DeMille (above) will direct some new twists in an old favorite, "Seven Keys to Baldpate," when Lux Radio Theater presents the show over CBS

For one night, Jack Benny will forget his forthcoming Jell-O show to star on DeMille version of "Seven Keys." Jack and Mrs. (above) will play Benny.

The time: Monday night, September 26
The place: Lux Radio Theater
The drama: "Seven Keys to Baldpate"
And—the cast! What a cast!

JACK BENNY will take the role of that many-voiced tragedian, that greatest living interpreter of the classics—Jack Benny!

Mary Livingstone, that modern-day Duse, that second Sarah Bernhardt, will play—Mary Livingstone!

And Cecil B. DeMille, giant of the cinema, producer, director and author, impresario-in-chief of the Lux Radio Theater, will undertake to create for the radio audience the difficult character of—Cecil B. DeMille!

It all sounds a little bit wacky, and no wonder. "Seven Keys to Baldpate," a standard classic in every theatrical company's repertory since the September night in 1913 when the curtain went up on it for the first time, has been played literally thousands of times. Raw amateurs and seasoned professionals, rural theaters and college dramatic clubs—all have staged the famous "Baldpate." But it's very doubtful indeed that any reading of the play, no matter how hilarious, was ever as thoroughly mixed up as the Benny version you'll hear this Monday night. George M. Cohan himself, who wrote the play, would hardly know it now—but he'll probably be the first to admit that the Benny interpretation is as funny as anything possibly could be!

"A mysterious melodramatic farce." That was the description of "Seven Keys to Baldpate" printed on the Astor Theater playbill at the premiere. And all those things it certainly is. Full of solid "theater," gripping, suspenseful, and with a surprise ending that would have done credit to O. Henry himself. "Seven Keys to Baldpate" has everything. Millions of Americans have

laughed until they cried watching it—even as they sat on the edges of their seats wondering what in the world could happen next.

Basis of the fantastic "Baldpate" plot—it has nothing to do with men who've lost their hair, incidentally—is a wager, a bet between a writer, one Billy Magee, and the owner of a summer resort, one Bentley. Magee, whose reputation as a writer is based on "the sort of novels that are sold by the pound," has bet \$5,000 that he can write a book in twenty-four hours. Bentley, owner of the mountain summer resort, Baldpate, has suggested that he go there to find the absolute seclusion he'll need to do the job. For it's the middle of winter, and Baldpate is deserted. There is, Bentley says, but one key to Baldpate, and that one he may have so he can be certain of peace and privacy.

MET at Baldpate by the caretaker and his wife, Magee settles down to work at midnight, confident that he can have the story finished on time, despite the ghosts that are supposed to haunt Baldpate. But he has barely tapped out the first page of his manuscript when interruptions begin. One after another, mysterious citizens, obviously on evil bent, fit keys into the

locked front door of Baldpate and come stamping in, shaking the snow from their clothes and swinging their arms to get a measure of warmth back into their blood. There is a girl newspaper reporter, a confessed woman black-mailer, a notoriously dishonest politician, a hermit, the president of a railroad—in all, there are six of them, each with a key to Baldpate. There's \$200,000 mixed up in it—stolen money at that. There's scuffling, there's gun-play, there are policemen and handcuffed criminals—thrills, surprises, suspense—suspense built up to the bursting point.

AND just at the point when Billy Magee, novelist, has concluded that the human mind can bear no more, Bentley, who bet him \$5,000 he couldn't write a novel, or anything like a novel, within twenty-four hours, arrives on the scene—with the seventh key to Baldpate!

Says he: "I'm the owner of Baldpate Inn. Two policemen refused to allow me to pass, and I shot them dead."

Magee: "This isn't true. It can't be true! I'm a raving maniac!"

Bentley: "I just arrived, Billy. I motored from New York. I expected to find you alone. Who are these people? How did they get in here? Have they disturbed you in your work? And how

are you getting on with the story?"

Magee: "How am I getting on? Great heavens, man, to what sort of a place did you send me? Nothing but crooks, murderers, ghosts, pistol-shots, policemen, and dead people walking about the halls. Hundreds of thousands of dollars, and keys and keys and keys! You win—I lose. Twenty-four hours! Why, I couldn't write a book in twenty-four years in a place like this! My God, what a night this has been!"

BUT all in vain. For comes now the denouement. The miscellaneous marauders who've driven Magee into the purple-fringed dithers aren't real at all, it seems—they're only stage actors, a whole company of them, brought from New York by Bentley just as a joke!

Nor is that all. The audience is still staggering under the impact of that revelation when the curtain falls on the second and last act, only to rise immediately on an epilog. None of this has really happened, we're told. It's only the story—the story that Magee has been writing all night! And that—is the end.

But as far as The Master, Jack Benny, is concerned, it's only the beginning. To Benny, Shakespeare may be sacred, but George M. Cohan is only another actor-playwright. Jack Benny's Baldpate (no pun intended, probably) has some new twists.

Jack will play a young man who's tired of forever doing comedy roles—he wants something solid, something with meat on it, something deep, and significant, and tragic. (There's probably as much truth as fiction in that. Few, indeed, are the comedians who don't pine to play Hamlet.) Now it seems that Cecil B. DeMille once made a half-promise of a part in a serious picture to Jack. (That's for the purposes

(Continued from Page 1)

of the play, of course; in real life, DeMille would know better!) Jack and Mary go to DeMille's office to hold him to his promise, and DeMille puts them off, saying, "I haven't any story, Jack." Thereupon, Benny offers to write a story, and to do it in twenty-four hours, too.

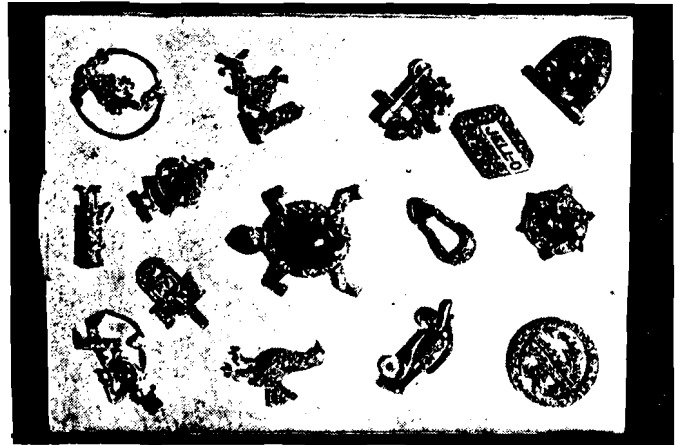
"You can't do it, Benny," pontificates the pontifical DeMille, "but if you can, you can have the lead in it. And you can use my old deserted house on Baldpate Mountain for the night, too. You won't be disturbed there."

So it's off to old Baldpate for Buck Benny, author. His experiences when he gets there, alas, are very much like those suffered by George M. Cohan's Magee. Life at Baldpate is just one interruption after another. But it turns out, as it did before, that the fantastic happenings of the Baldpate nightmare

didn't happen at all—they're only the things that go to make up the story. At last Jack offers the story to the producer. "And remember," he tells DeMille, "—I play the lead."

"Not at all, not at all," says Cecil B. "Seven Keys to Baldpate has been produced many, many times. I've produced it at least twice myself. You haven't written a new story, Benny, you've just embellished the old one. You're not going to play the lead. I'm giving the part to a real he-man; say, for instance, Gary Cooper."

Tuner-innets will probably hear one dull thud indicating "Exit, Buck Benny, author."



Newest hobby of Mary Livingstone Benny is this jeweled charm cigarette case worth in excess of \$5,000. An idea of Husband Jack's, the case contains good-luck pieces from many celebrity-friends

In case you wonder why the Jack Benny Sunday airings leave you so happily satisfied, maybe you'd like to know the "laugh count" on his "Lost Horizon" program of November 21—his best this year, I do believe, for I was there and kept tab. Before the first musical selection, a matter of about seven minutes, Benny and company evoked exactly 31 laughs, vary-

ing in size from small chuckles to loud guffaws. During the next third of the airing, the studio audience rang up a total of thirty, and in the last third, after the second orchestral number, 33 jokes paid off. The tag lines brought two more—or a grand total from a grand program of 96 laughs, and those in but thirty minutes minus the time taken up by the musical selections!

Incidentally, Benny's most recent trip to Palm Springs brought forth a happening too good to keep. Jack, kidding an Indian there in what he chose to consider the redman's tongue, was knocked for a flat gag when the Indian handed him back a quickie in a perfect impersonation of Schlepferman!

"Jack," your reporter asked Mr. Benny during rehearsals for his Jell-O show, "when is your wedding anniversary?—not that I am going to send you anything." "Let's see," the comedian replied, "Mary and I were married twelve years last January 12." Not distrusting him, I asked Mary Livingstone as a double check. She was positive. "Jack and I were married January 14, 1927" . . . Personally, I think they're both wrong. I'm betting on January 12, 1927 . . . Jack told the troubles he was having trying to keep Bill Morrow, one of his scripting team, from putting hospital gags into the Jell-O episodes. Morrow vacationed under a scalpel, so he wanted Jack to use a few lines like "They charged me \$100 an inch," "The opening was a great success," and "They didn't give me ether: they just read me a Fred Allen script."



The Jack Bennys! Mary Livingstone, Little Joan Naomi, and Jack stroll across the lawn at El Mirador in California. Joan Naomi has to skip to keep up with Mother and Dad. Jack's new three-year contract is tops among radio's big stars!



THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BURNS-BENNY SMUGGLING CASE

SHUSHED ON THE AIR, PASSED OVER LIGHTLY BY THE PRESS,
HERE'S THE WHOLE AMAZING STORY OF THE REAL INSIDE

BY T. H. TRENT

CERTAINLY George Burns and Jack Benny were far from the mind of Supervising Customs Agent George Roberts when a German maid named Rosa Weber walked into his office in New York on the morning of October 22 last and announced, "Some smuggling is going on."

Supervising Agent Roberts blinked

at the astonishment of all. "I am a Nazi, and I will not work for anyone who speaks that way about the Fuehrer! I love that man!"

When the startled hostess finally found her tongue, she fired Rosa on the spot. A little later, when the maid was leaving, bag and baggage, she inquired about references.

of New York from one of his frequent jaunts abroad, had, a few weeks previously, smuggled in some Paris gowns for Mrs. Lauer. Colette D'Arville, songbird of the airlines, had also been at the party and, in talking with Mr. Chaperau, Colette had asked him many questions about Nicaragua, so Rosa imagined that the "diplomat or some-

off a steamer without benefit of examination and resultant customs duty. No. Madame had been on the crying side of a tilt with Uncle Sam the year before when she had neglected to declare certain purchases she had made abroad, with the result that Justice Lauer had been obliged to pen a healthy check, payable to Mister Whiskers, in his wife's behalf.

If the elegant Mr. Chaperau had been bringing in stuff for Mrs. Lauer, was it possible that George Burns and Jack Benny, who also had wives who wore jewelry, had been involved with him? That was an outside possibility that Supervising Agent Roberts considered. But there were other—and very delicate—things to be attended to first.

Number One: Was it possible that Rosa Weber, the German maid, was lying, just for the sake of vengeance, and that the basis for her fiction had been the previous trouble in which Mrs. Lauer had found herself involved?

Number Two: If this man Chaperau was in the diplomatic service of Nicaragua, would one of those touchy international situations arise if this government put the bracelets on him, even



When comedian Jack Benny and wife, Mary Livingstone, sailed for France in 1937 (above), it began a sequence of events that led eventually to a coat of over \$40,000 for Benny, including a \$10,000 fine. In France Benny purchased jewelry valued at about \$2,000 for his wife, turned it over to Chaperau to bring into the U. S. to save \$700

kindly but knowing eyes and asked the Teutonic domestic to spill what was on her mind and spare none of the details. This, in substance, was her tale:

The night before, there had been quite a dinner-party in the swank Park Avenue apartment of Rosa's employers—State Supreme Court Justice Edgar Lauer, and his lovely, young and socially ambitious wife, Elma. When the demi-tasse conversation had veered around to Adolf Hitler, the one-time Austrian house-painter, had taken quite a verbal lacing.

Rosa, hovering about the table, grew red of face, tight of lip, and Mrs. Lauer wondered what was wrong. She asked the servant if she were feeling all right. "Certainly not, Madam!" snapped the maid, banging down a trayful of

Mrs. Lauer sniffed. "References!" A bitter laugh. Mrs. Lauer recalled that a sister of Rosa's worked for Russia's former Grand Duchess Marie, then in Manhattan. "Not only will I not give you a reference," said the Supreme Court Justice's wife, "but I shall communicate with the Grand Duchess and let her know what kind of blood runs in your family!"

"Very well," said Rosa. "I think maybe I go down and see the United States people." And she did.

ONE of the guests at the ill-starred dinner-party had been an elegant smoothie named Albert N. Chaperau, "a diplomat or something," and Mr. Chaperau, whose baggage was never searched when he returned to the port

thing" was connected with the Central American republic.

This Mr. Chaperau, Rosa went on, had greatly impressed the other guests with his wide acquaintance among foot-light, celluloid and ether luminaries, and he had happened to mention that two individuals with whom he was very palsy-walsy were Jack Benny and George Burns. "A great fellow—Nate," said Chaperau, referring to Burns. "His real first name is Nate, not George, you know." Another impressive remark had been: "Jack and Mary. A fine couple. I spent some time with them in France this past summer."

Now, this Mrs. Lauer wasn't precisely a stranger to the grim gentlemen whose sworn duty it is to put the screws on those who try to slip stuff



Albert N. Chaperau, self-styled attache of Nicaraguan consulate, was central figure in the case

if he had been bringing in merchandise not for his own use?

Those were the two posers dumped into the lap of Joseph L. Delaney, youthful Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, who was assigned, following the maid's disclosures, to dig into the situation.

Delaney decided there was a very simple way of finding out whether Rosa was telling the truth. So he got her down to his office in the United States Courthouse—right across the way, incidentally, from Justice Lauer's chambers in another building—and asked her to describe in detail the Paris gowns she claimed Chaperau had brought in for Madame. Rosa did so in the presence of two very unusual individuals—Customs Inspectors James Quinn and Harry Pfeiffer. These two gents happen to know considerable more about feminine apparel than the average woman, for they specialize in appraising imported gowns brought in by fair passengers, and it's up to them to know, more or less at a glance, the approximate European price of an exclusive model so that no cute doll on a pier can knock down the price in the hope of evading duty, and get away with it.

So Quinn and Pfeiffer listened and made notes as Rosa described many gowns which, she said, Chaperau brought to the Lauer apartment following his arrival from Europe on the *Ile de France* the first week in October. The Lauers had gotten in a short while before, after a summer abroad.

ROSA declared that Madame had given her the dresses to press, and that the apparel had included original and exclusive creations of Schiaparelli, Maggy Rouff, Vionnet and Rosa Valois—smart Paris establishments, all.

Okay. Now the probe on those dresses—and all this was to lead direct-

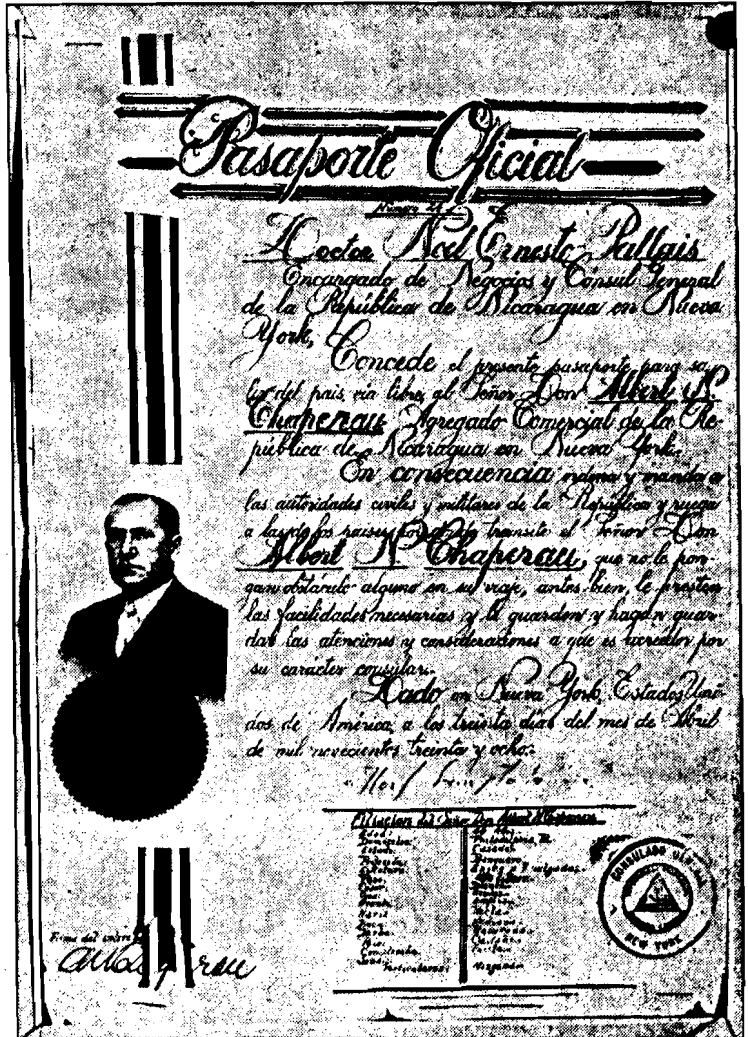
ly to Burns and Benny, as you shall presently see—took two directions. Delaney sent a cable to the U. S. customs authorities in Paris and asked the boys to check on garments fitting the descriptions supplied by the maid, and ascertain whether they had been purchased during the time Mrs. Lauer was known to be abroad. The second angle was that Quinn and Pfeiffer, the boys who could spot an original model the entire length of a night-club and tell you within a few francs what it was worth, were assigned to shadow Madame Lauer and see if she wore any of the garments described by the maid she had fired.

The answer in each instance was a great big YES.

IN THE meantime, the Department of State had been checking on this fellow Chaperau, and so far as could be ascertained in Washington the guy was an eighteen-carat phony. The names of all accredited diplomatic representatives are on file in the capital, and Albert N.'s name was not included. So whatever papers he might have been carrying—and he had displayed papers making him out to be a commercial attache of Nicaragua upon his latest arrival in New York, customs records showed—were decidedly not in order.

In Father Knickerbocker's village, Federal sleuths had been strolling around town trying to get a line on Chaperau's activities there. It was found that the man had an elaborate three-room layout in the Hotel Pierre, one of the city's most exclusive hostleries, and that he spent most of his after-dark waking hours sipping vintage champagne in the Stork Club and El Morocco, habitats of luminaries and satellites of the entertainment, social and sporting worlds.

Keeping in mind the fact that the maid had reported Chaperau as representing himself to be on pretty close



Above is copy of Chaperau's official passport, on the strength of which he claimed exemption



It was in the home of Mrs. Elma N. Lauer, pictured above with her husband, New York Supreme Court Justice Edgar Lauer, that an insignificant quarrel with a maid began the course of events that led to the uncovering of the whole smuggling affair. The German maid, angry at jibes against Hitler, set Customs officials on the trail

terms with the two radio comedians, the investigators made cautious inquiries here and there in an effort to learn if Chaperau had ever been seen in either the Stork or El Morocco with them. He had, with both of them; not once, but on several occasions. He seemed to have been closer to Burns than Benny, although he and Jack were far from strangers.

Now, the United States Customs Service maintains many offices in various parts of the country, not necessarily confined to ports, and these offices are in constant touch with one another by means of the teletypewriter. This is a machine, on the wonderful side, which makes it possible for a person sitting at one in New York, let us say, to carry on a conversation with an individual at a teletypewriter across the continent. You, in New York, just tap out a message and it appears on my machine, then I answer you on my machine and the words appear on yours.

All right. Supervising Agent Roberts sat down at his teletypewriter in New York and opened a conversation with the Los Angeles office that went along these lines:

Confidential. We are about to lean on phony commercial attache one Chaperau for smuggling with local woman. Suspect as outside possibility he may have brought in stuff for Burns and Benny of radio. Please scout around and ascertain if wives of comedians are flashing new jewelry.

Only a few days had elapsed since the German maid called on the customs authorities, but already the boys were ready to make the first major move. Secret search warrants for the Lauer and Chaperau apartments had been obtained, and at two o'clock one morning, when the sartorially perfect Chaperau, in white tie and tails, was tripping the light fantastic in El Morocco, Assistant U. S. Attorney Delaney and customs men gathered outside the Pierre to await his return.

When he showed up about four o'clock, they slapped him in the Federal jail and went through the little business of taking impressions of the loops and whorls of his well-manicured fingers.

A few hours later, as other agents prepared to raid the apartment of Supreme Court Justice Lauer, many arresting facts about Albert N. Chaperau, Jack Benny and George Burns were popping to the surface.

For one thing, prominently displayed in the Pierre suite was a large photo of Burns bearing the inscription: "From Nate to Nate." From Burns to Chaperau, of course, for the phony commercial attache's name turned out to be Nate Shapiro. Then they found out in police headquarters where the fresh finger-prints of the man had been sent to the Bureau of Criminal Identification, that Chaperau had a record half as long as your arm, and had, over a period of twenty-one years, been juggled in this country and abroad on charges ranging all the way from authorship of checks with a high rubber content to larceny. A thoroughly black guy, in other words.

Like many a criminal, Chaperau had never broken himself of the bad habit of putting things in writing. A desk in the Pierre had been filled to overflowing with a lot of letters and notations he had made. One letter right near the top of a batch bore a Hollywood postmark. It read:

Dear Nate:

G. is crazy about the bracelet.

Thanks a thousand.

(Signed) N.

The handwriting looked to be the same as that on the "Nate to Nate" photograph, so it looked as if George Burns had written the note. Mighty interesting to the government, especially the remark about the bracelet. Near the thought-to-be Burns letter was a slip of paper, a notation on it in, apparently, Chaperau's handwriting, reading

See J. B. re clips for M. L.

J. B. and M. L. Could those initials, in view of what the Federal officials already knew, stand for anything other than Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone? Would a man like Chaperau want to see Jack Benny about clips for Mary Livingstone that were anything less than diamond clips? Well, it hardly seemed so. Nevertheless, Benny's status was different from that of Burns, at least at this early stage of the probe, because Burns had acknowledged receipt of a bracelet, whereas this notation about J. B. didn't mean that Benny had actually bought anything.

Supervising Agent Roberts got busy on the teletypewriter to Los Angeles again. This time it went like this:

Los Angeles what have you found out re Burns and Allen?

New York we just now got report Miss Allen has new diamond bracelet.

Are you sure it is new?

Yes she is showing it off as pres-



Jack Benny hopes he hasn't overlooked a thing for Daughter Joan

Meet "Carmichael," Polar Bear

Latest ether illusion to be created for the edification of all listeners is Carmichael, Jack Benny's polar bear, who at this moment appears to be quarantined "at home" with Jack, for the measles. Carmichael is a characterization of Mel Blanc, delineator also of hiccups, sneezes and sixty-three other types, some of which you hear on the Hope, McGee and Penner broadcasts. Blanc is a proud artisan of noises; so proud, in fact, that he carries about with him a list of his accomplishments. The latter includes (1) a buck-toothed screwball, (2) a slush-mouthed duck, (3) a nervous man with the hiccups, (4) a Brooklyn cowboy, (5) a hayseed popmouth, whatever that is, (6) five varieties of morons, and—why, we don't know—a

Hammond electric organ.

ent from husband.

Do you have detailed description of it?

No but are getting earliest possible moment without uncovering ourselves.

We think it is smuggled. Please get details and send immediately so we can check with Europe. Now please check sub rosa on Mary Livingstone and ascertain if she has new clips probably diamonds, and advise immediately any info.

Twenty-four hours later, Assistant U. S. Attorney Delaney walked into the office of his boss, Lamar Hardy, then the government's chief prosecuting official for the Southern District of New York.

"Chief," said Delaney, "this Chaperau case is turning out to be a honey. When we raided Mrs. Lauer's apartment yesterday we found all the gowns that that maid described. Now the customs men inform me that a bracelet that Gracie Allen is wearing on the Coast, and some jewelry Mary Livingstone has is probably the same stuff referred to in papers we seized in Chaperau's apartment. Therefore it's

my idea, Chief, that George Burns and Jack Benny are in this smuggling business up to their necks. Shall I go ahead?"

Mr. Hardy swung around in his chair, and gazed out at the Manhattan skyline for a long time. Finally, he spoke:

"Many people, Delaney, think that the bigger they are the less the rules apply to them. If Burns and Benny are guilty, I want it clearly demonstrated that they are no better than anybody else. I want this case prosecuted."

Jack Benny plead guilty of smuggling on April 4 and was fined \$10,000. George Burns plead guilty on December 12 and was fined \$8,000. All that is known to the public. But how was Jack Benny implicated by investigation in Europe? What did George Burns do when he was required to implicate his close friend, Jack Benny? What has happened to their friendship and to the friendship of their wives? How could two such smart men as Jack Benny and George Burns make the stupid mistake of becoming the friends of an ex-jailbird, forger, and thief? All these questions are answered in next week's instalment.



As the smuggling-case smoke clears the comedians are still friends, still have a good time, as shown above: Jack and Mary, George and Gracie

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BURNS-BENNY SMUGGLING CASE

A Photo, a Shopgirl's Memory, and a Hotel Register Combined to Change Jack Benny's Mind

BY T. H. TRENT

When Federal sleuths began a routine investigation of a New York smuggling case, they had no idea that the trail would lead finally to George Burns and Jack Benny. It was the baggage of the elegant Albert N. Chaperau that provided the first important clues. One note from George Burns told Chaperau that Gracie was crazy about her bracelet. A memo read "See JB re clips for ML." Quite unknown to Jack Benny and George Burns, Chaperau was an imposter who had wormed his way into their friendship. As yet they had no idea of the embarrassment he was to bring to them and their wives because they permitted him "to do them a favor."—EORRA.

IN LOS ANGELES, Federal men were checking up on Gracie Allen and Mary Livingstone and their new jewelry, on orders from New York. In Manhattan, detectives were sifting every piece of paper found in the swank Chaperau suite at the Hotel Pierre.

One piece of paper was a photograph of Jack Benny and Chaperau together on a beach. Chaperau, the now-known lawbreaker, and Jack Benny. How would the man whom the Federal investigators had got the habit of calling "Jell-O Again" laugh that one off?

The boys in the Los Angeles area had by this time succeeded in bringing the jewelry picture into sharp focus. Gracie Allen, it now developed, was not only sporting a new diamond bracelet but a new ring. Mary Livingstone was wearing not only a pair of diamond clips but a beautiful bracelet.

Now the investigators began to piece together, in a general way, the movements of Burns, Benny and Chaperau during the previous several months. Steamship records disclosed that Benny and Chaperau had been in Europe at the same time the past summer, namely, during the month of August. Benny had returned to these shores August 30, and gone straight to the Coast. He hadn't declared any purchases such as a diamond bracelet and the clips when he came in, and as a matter of fact, so

far as the Los Angeles investigators could ascertain, Mary Livingstone had not been seen wearing the new "ice" until about the middle of October.

NOW, the middle of October was an incriminating period of time, in the opinion of the sleuths, for two reasons. First, Chaperau had arrived in New York from Europe the first week in October, and that is when he would have brought in the jewelry, if he had brought it in. Then, too, George Burns was in New York, at the fashionable Sherry-Netherland Hotel, the day Chaperau got in, and remained for several days afterward, arriving back in Hollywood around the middle of the month. When the investigators added the fact that not only Mary but Gracie both began to wear their new jewelry at the

time in question, the boys figured they had something there.

What would the next move be? Veteran law-enforcement officials are agreed on one thing: When you seem to have the goods on a guy, put it up to him. If he is smart, he will spill all he knows, plead guilty, and get the case washed up with a minimum consumption of aspirin for all concerned. A plea of guilty saves a lot of tedious and expensive investigation, not to mention a long courtroom headache.

So it was decided that the Government's strategy should be to talk turkey to George Burns. The Los Angeles customs gentlemen dropped over to the Paramount Studios on Vine Street and had a little chat with him under the pepper trees. They told him, in a nice way, that in their humble opinion the smartest move Mr. Burns could possibly make would be to hop a plane for New York and stop down to the Federal Building and have a talk with Mr. Delaney, the Assistant U. S. Attorney.

"What for?" asked Mr. Burns.

"IT HAS something to do with smuggling diamonds into this country from Europe," the comedian was told. Then it was added that Mr. Burns, inadvertently no doubt, had been keeping

bad company by being seen with this fellow Chaperau, and that he had certainly been very indiscreet in writing a note to the spurious diplomat saying that "G. is crazy about the bracelet."

It was all very sudden, shocking and embarrassing to Mr. Burns, and he just sat there, under the pepper trees, thinking faster than he had ever thought for an ad-lib. Finally, he said:

"All right, I'll go."

So George Burns, obviously scared to death, landed at Newark Airport thirty-six hours later, and was whisked off to the Federal Building in Manhattan. Those close to the case say they must hand it to George. He knew he was in bad, that a Federal prison was staring him in the face, but he didn't cry on anyone's shoulder. He talked straight and fast, like a man.

"MR. DELANEY," he said to the Assistant U. S. Attorney. "I'm willing to take my medicine."

He insisted that Gracie had known nothing about how the jewels were brought into America. He had met Chaperau through mutual friends some time previously, and hadn't the faintest idea that the man had a criminal record. When Chaperau, who was apparently a diplomatic attache and could pass through the customs without examination, explained that he often carried little items in for his friends, when he offered to help George save a piece of money, it seemed logical and not at all vicious.

So Chaperau brought in a bracelet and a ring in October and delivered them to Burns at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel.

Then U. S. Attorney Delaney took a

shot in the dark: "And when Chaperau delivered the jewelry for your wife, he also gave you the jewelry to deliver to Jack Benny, for Mrs. Benny?"

"Did Chaperau tell you that?" asked Burns.

"No," said Delaney. "Chaperau isn't talking, but we know that the logical thing for him to have done would have been to give you the jewelry to deliver to Mr. Benny, inasmuch as you were here in New York when the stuff was brought in and your friend Benny was on the Coast."

Burns just sat there, staring out of a window. "Yes," he said at length, "Chaperau gave me the stuff to take out to Jack. There's no use trying to hide anything; I'm not going to sit here and lie to you."

Burns was asked if he were willing to tell his story to a grand jury, and warned that whatever he said in the jury-room would be used against him—and also against his pal, Benny.

"Sure I'll talk to the grand jury," said the funnyman. "When do I go?"

"Right now, Mr. Burns." So Burns spilled his tale to the grand jurors and wound up with a smuggling indictment up his back. Mrs. Lauer, the Supreme Court Justice's wife, and Chaperau had also been indicted. It seemed as if the case were going to be cleaned up without much trouble now, for both Burns, Mrs. Lauer and Chaperau walked into the courtroom and pleaded guilty. Burns was fined eight thousand dollars, given a prison sentence of a year and a day, and placed on probation for the same period.

JACK BENNY, however, remained a holdout. He came to New York and appeared before the grand jury. We don't know what he told them, but we do know what they thought about what he told them, for they indicted him on three counts, one of which specifically charged him with wilfully, knowingly and unlawfully smuggling jewelry into this country. Strong, serious words, those.

Back in Hollywood, Jack was telling intimates that he was going to fight the case to a finish. He believed he had not smuggled jewelry wilfully and knowingly. He thought he could prove the case. No jury in America would



—Wide World

In New York's Sherry-Netherland Hotel Chaperau gave to Burns the jewelry for both Burns and Benny



—Wide World

Benny returned to Hollywood chastened, ready to resume his radio and movie career



—Apost

At this beautiful coast resort of Cannes, Franca, Jack Benny made the mistake of being photographed with Albert N. Chaperau. The picture was later to assume important proportions as a clue in the smuggling case

convict him. Later his plea of "guilty" was to show a change of heart.

Meanwhile, the machinery of the Federal Government meshed into high gear.

United States custom investigators in Paris, where Benny was known to have spent part of his summer vacation, were instructed to find out at what hotel he and Mary Livingstone had stopped, and when. The answer was the Ritz. The register revealed that the Bennys had gone into the Ritz for a short stay around the second week in August, that they had been absent about ten days—somewhere—and had checked in again for another short stay nearer the end of the month.

THE next question that had to be answered was this: Assuming that Benny had bought the jewelry himself, and given it to Chaperau to bring in for him later, where would a wealthy man, stopping at the Ritz, be most likely to make such a purchase?

The investigators ran into a piece of luck here. They didn't have to look any further than the Ritz lobby, where

one of the biggest gem outfits in the country had a branch showcase. The jewel firm's records disclosed that during the time the Bennys were paying their first visit to the hostelry, someone had purchased a diamond bracelet and two clips to match—three pieces that tallied exactly with the stuff Mary wore in Hollywood later. Inasmuch as the transaction had been cash on delivery, and delivery had been made forthwith, no record of the purchaser had been kept.

Was the purchaser Buck Benny? The answer to that one wasn't to be forthcoming so easily, for the salesgirl who had handled the transaction was no longer in the jewel firm's employ. What was more, her whereabouts was not known!

The Federal gentlemen gritted their teeth and decided to open Napoleon's tomb, if necessary, in order to find that girl. The search lasted two weeks, and the young lady was found working elsewhere, with nothing in the world to hide. She identified photographs of Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone.

Now we come back to that snapshot that had been found in Chaperau's effects—the one of him and Jack Benny. The two boys were in bathing-suits in the picture. There was, of course, no way of knowing where it had been taken, but from the appearances of things in the background of the shot it looked as if the camera had clicked somewhere along the French Riviera.

After it was discovered that Benny had bought the jewelry in Paris, that picture assumed paramount importance. It was now a clew to the belief that Chaperau and Benny had actually contacted one another in Europe. And proof of a contact of the two men there was necessary to round out the Government's case. That contact would serve as the connecting link in the chain of guilty circumstances. Benny had bought the jewelry in Paris, you see, and hadn't declared it upon his return to the United States. That indicated that he himself didn't bring it in, because George Burns admitted that Chaperau gave it to him for delivery. Thus, if the customs men could prove that Benny contacted Chaperau anywhere on the other side, following purchase of the jewelry, that would constitute an overt, or guilty, act on Benny's part, in view of the unearthed evidence relating to what had happened after the actual purchase of the bracelet and clips. Records at the Ritz revealed that the Bennys had had luggage forwarded from there to Cannes, the famous French watering-resort.

Next investigative point: Cannes.

The investigators found that the Bennys had registered at one hotel while Albert N. Chaperau had been at another hostelry not far away! Not only that, but bellboys and other hotel attaches recalled Benny and Chaperau visiting each other.

Now the sleuths examined the beach, and found the actual background that had appeared in the photo seized in the New York hotel suite! It reads a little like fiction, but it happens to be cold fact.

It was ascertained, too, that when the Bennys left Cannes for the return to Paris, the elegant Mr. Chaperau was at the railroad depot to see them off.

So now there was quite a case. It is doubtful if Benny realized just how strong it was, for he continued to insist he was going to the mat with Uncle Sam.

It is understood that Jack Benny even went to his sponsors and offered to tear up his long-term contract if his troubles embarrassed them, and that they refused his generosity.

Just what caused Jack not to go to the mat with Uncle Sam will probably never be known publicly. After several postponements, his case came to trial and he walked into the Federal Court April 4, 1939, and pleaded guilty to three counts charging smuggling. John T. Cahill, newly appointed U. S. Attorney—chosen by President Roosevelt for the express purpose of taking some of the New York courtroom thunder away from District Attorney Tom Dewey—read a lengthy statement about Buck to Judge Vincent L. Leibell.

Judge Leibell fined Benny \$10,000, gave him a suspended sentence of a year and a day, and placed him on probation for a similar period. Counting civil fines automatically imposed on the undeclared jewelry and the dough Jack laid out to buy it back from Uncle Sam, Mary's bracelet and clips ran him over \$14,000, just ten times the original cost. George Burns' purchases ran equally high.

As to turning over the jewelry to Chaperau, United States Attorney Cahill had this to say:

"During the latter part of August, defendant Benny and his wife went to Cannes, France, where they encountered codefendant Chaperau, whom they had previously met in Hollywood, California, the year before. While in Cannes, defendant Benny aided and abetted codefendant Chaperau to defraud the United States Customs by turning over the said jewelry to Chaperau at the Cannes railway station, just prior to the departure of defendant Benny and his wife."

The Judge gave Buck the tongue-lashing of his life, telling him that this country had been pretty good to him, what with Benny's huge earnings, but that Benny had been pretty small in his attempt to evade payment of a measly \$700 duty.

After the trial and sentence, Jack passed out statements of explanation to members of the press which read:

"I feel that some explanation is due my fans of the radio and screen concerning the circumstances of this case:

"I was accused of having brought a bracelet and two clips into the United States without paying duty. There is not now and never has been any dispute about the facts. The jewels, which cost \$1,400, were bought in France as a present to my wife. They were brought into the United States by Mr. Chaperau, whom I had previously met as a businessman of standing. I understood from him that there would be a perfectly legitimate saving in the amount of duty which would have to be paid. I had no intention of defrauding the Government.

"However, subsequent to my plea of not guilty, and after my attorneys and the United States District Attorney's office in New York had each made a thorough investigation and freely exchanged the results obtained, I was informed by my attorneys that in their opinion my actions constituted violation of customs laws of the United States.

"Therefore I instructed them to change my plea. I would have changed my plea long before had it not been that I was required to be constantly at the studio in Hollywood engaged in the making of my latest motion picture, as well as for my broadcasts.

"I want to take this opportunity of assuring my friends and fans of both

the radio and screen that while I know that this is a technical violation, I had no guilty knowledge that a crime was to be committed or was being committed. I regret most deeply that through a stupid mistake on my part, however natural and honest it may have been under the circumstances, I have offended against the laws of the United States.

"I claim no credit for never having violated any laws before; I am appreciative of my opportunities and privileges as an American citizen. I have endeavored through many years of hard work to bring happiness and clean entertainment to people who listen to my programs and who see my pictures. And it is because of this fact that I most deeply regret that I should have so stupidly and carelessly become involved in a situation of this kind."

Thus ended the big diamond-smuggling mystery that brought two of radio's best-loved performers within the very shadow of prison doors. How two such smart men could be taken in by Chaperau is understood by those who know Chaperau's record. He was a smooth operator.

One bright rift in the whole messy business is that the Burns and Bennys are still the good friends they have always been. Despite the fact that George had to "tell on" his pal, their understanding is such that they are close as ever. So are their wives.

As for their popularity, if the week-to-week polls conducted by audience-measurement agencies mean anything, it has not decreased. The fact that Jack Benny paid Uncle Sam \$256,000 in income tax last year is evidence to many that regardless of the newspaper headlines, he is doing his full share to support his Government.

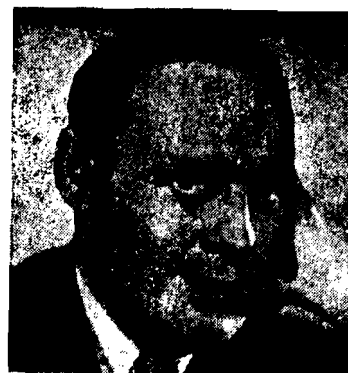
As We Go to Press

New York, April 11, 1939.—The final chapter to the smuggling plots was written in Federal Court in New York today when Mrs. Elma N. Lauer, wife of Supreme Court Justice Edgar J. Lauer, was sentenced to three months in jail and fined \$2,500. She must remain on probation for one year and a day. Judge Vincent L. Leibell imposed sentence on her, expressing sympathy but pointing out that she had brought her troubles on herself. Mrs. Lauer had to be assisted from the courtroom, as she was in a dazed condition. When the sentence was pronounced she virtually collapsed. U. S. Attorney John T. Cahill had recommended a six-month penalty to the court, pointing out that Mrs. Lauer was not a first-offender. In 1937, she was caught smuggling clothes and jewelry and was fined \$10,000, he recalled. Said Judge Leibell: "You have suffered from an insane

vanity. Your constant breaches of the customs laws are comparable to the thefts of those people who are called kleptomaniacs and for which there seems to be no cure." The judge refused to allow her to return home for a few days before starting her sentence.

Albert N. Chaperau, chief instigator of the plot, was sentenced in Federal Court here today to five years in prison and fined \$5,000. He appeared passive and indifferent while in court.

As a side issue of the case, it was revealed today that Rosa Weber, the German maid formerly employed by the Lauers and who gave the Government the tip when she got mad at Mrs. Lauer over a Nazi remark, may receive \$6,712 as a reward for her information.



Jack Benny will be Robert Taylor's "Good News of 1938" guest—Thurs.



Handsome Bob retaliates by visiting Jack and his Jail-O Show—Sun.

Robert Taylor vs. Jack Benny
"Jail-O Program"—NBC-Red, 7 p.m. EST.
(For the West, 8:30 p.m. PST.)

Anything can happen when radio comic No. 1 meets feminine film idol No. 1, Handsome Bob, and it's a sure bet Benny will try to find out how Bob got that way. Perhaps Bob will want to know how Benny got that way, too. In order not to be outdone, however, Benny plans to repay Taylor's visit by appearing with him on the latter's "Good News of 1938" program Thursday night.

A SAMPLE RADIO SCRIPT

Far and away the most popular "script show" on the air is the Jack Benny program. It was, in fact, the best liked show of 1936 according to the annual poll of radio editors conducted by the *New York World-Telegram*.

The Benny broadcast owes its great popularity to a tremendous variety of factors, chief among which are the artistry of Jack himself, and the support which he gets from Mary, Kenny, Don Wilson, and the other members of the cast.

There is, however, an axiom in radio that "no broadcast is better than its script."

As the Benny script is universally conceded to be "the tops," the author has chosen it to reprint below as an answer to that frequently asked question, "What does a radio script look like?" This script is just as it is used by the performers and besides giving them their lines as they are to be spoken, it contains cues for the sound effects men as to when to make their noises, the musicians when to play their selections, and all the other various details for a smooth, uninterrupted performance. (Johnny Green, who later joined the Fred Astaire program, led the orchestra when this script was used.) Here it is.

THE GENERAL FOODS COMPANY — JELL-O PROGRAM

WJZ

(7:00-7:30 EST)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20

Revised

(Signature)

WILSON: The Jell-O program, starring Jack Benny, with Johnny Green and his orchestra. The orchestra opens the program with "From the Top of Your Head" from the motion picture, "Two for Tonight."

(Segue into number 1. "From the Top of Your Head," Orchestra)

(Opening Commercial)

WILSON: There's an old saying that good luck comes in odd numbers. Sometimes it's seven — sometimes it's eleven, but *this* time it's *three*. Yes, sir, there's a three-way reason why Jell-O is the best gelatin dessert you can buy. *First*: Jell-O has found a way to capture new, *extra-rich* fruit flavor — that you won't find in any other gelatin dessert. *Second*: Jell-O looks perfectly swell — with bright, gay, and glowing colors. *Third* and final piece of good luck: there's no quicker, easier dessert to *prepare* than Jell-O. Those are three answers to Jell-O's amazing popularity. Try it yourself. You'll find all six flavors taste *twice* as good as ever before. . . . Strawberry, Raspberry, Cherry, Orange, Lemon, and Lime. But remember! *Only Jell-O* brings you this *extra-rich* fruit flavor. So don't accept any substitutes! Ask for the one and only *genuine Jell-O!*

(First Routine)

WILSON: And now we bring to you the fellow who makes funny every Sunday night — Jack Benny!

JACK: Jell-O again, this is Jack Benny talking. And say Don, before I go any further, did you see the football game yesterday?

WILSON: Which one? You mean U.S.C. and Oregon State?

JACK: Yes, that's it. I couldn't make out the names very well. I had two nice seats near the hundred and fifty yard line.

WILSON: Gee, you must have been out of the field.

JACK: Yeah, I didn't know whether I was sitting in California or Oregon. . . . But I wouldn't miss a game for anything. . . . You know, Don, you're a big fellow. I'll bet you played football in your day.

WILSON: Well I hate to talk, Jack, but for nine years I was one of the best players at Cornell.

JACK: Nine years at Cornell! You must have been a smart boy. Well how good were you, Don — at football I mean.

WILSON: Well I hate to talk, Jack, —

JACK: I know, I know.

WILSON: But one day we had a very tough game and we just couldn't get through Nebraska.

JACK: Did you try the Lincoln Highway?

WILSON: I mean the *University* of Nebraska. . . . So I tried a forward pass and I —

MARY: Good evening, Jack.

JACK: Hello, Mary. Do you know any football jokes?

MARY: No.

JACK: Well go out and get some and then come back.

MARY: Okay.

JACK: What were you saying, Don?

WILSON: Well I tried a forward pass, and just as I —

JACK: Great, Don, but I didn't think it was in you.

WILSON: Oh it was some game. Say, Jack, did you ever play football?

JACK: Why Don, you remember me — Red Benny the Iceman?

MARY: Well any joke ought to fit now. Hello, Jack.

JACK: Mary, look. We're talking about football and you don't fit into this routine at all.

MARY: I don't eh? I didn't play four years with Vassar for nothing.

Rickety rax, rickety rax
Halla kazoo kazoo kazax
Vassar Vassar, oh you kid!

JACK: Oh, so you played with Vassar, eh? Are you sure it was football, Mary?

MARY: I think so. Gee, when you grab a ball and run, it can't be bridge.

JACK: I believe you, Mary. But I can't imagine girls playing football. What team could you play against?

MARY: The Notre Dames.

JACK: Oh of course, Mary. What am I thinking of?

MARY: What do you know about colleges, anyway? Did you ever hear of William and Mary?

JACK: Yes.

MARY: Well, I'm Mary.

JACK: What happened to William?

MARY: I'm looking out for myself these days.

JACK: I still can't imagine you in a football game. What position did you play?

MARY: I was half-backus.

JACK: And you're half nuts. Well, tell me, Miss Livingstone, what was the most exciting play you encountered as half-backus.

MARY: Well I hate to talk but —

JACK: But you must. Don't make a sucker out of the rehearsal.

MARY: Well, one day we were playing Virginia. You've heard of *her*.

JACK: Oh sure.

MARY: We were playing at the Rosetta Bowl.

JACK: Hm!

MARY: They were on our hundred-yard line, seventh down and two to go.

JACK: And what happened, Mary?

MARY: They fumbled the ball and I grabbed it. And I ran and I ran and I ran and I ran and —

JACK: Go ahead, Mary.

MARY: Wait till I catch my breath, will you. I had ten yards to go and they tackled me. But did we lose? No!

JACK: Then what happened?

MARY (*Laughs*): This'll kill you, Graham. I was down, but I borrowed ten dollars from the coach.

JACK: Why?

MARY: So I could make a *touch-down*. (*Laughs*)

JACK: A very smart play.

MARY: And we won the game, ten dollars to nothing.

JACK: Mary, I don't believe it.

MARY: Well that's my story and I'm sticking you with it. Boola boola, boola boola, *etc.* (*Walks away*)

JACK: Hm, let's see — Wilson and Mary — that's two down and two to go. Where's Sophomore Green?

CROWD: *Rah! rah! rah!*

GREEN: What do you want, Jack?

JACK: Say Johnny, were you ever —

GREEN: Well I hate to talk, Jack, but I —

JACK: I know, we all do. But have you ever played football?

GREEN: Yes, and I got my team right with me.

JACK: You have! Well tell the players Coach Benny wants to see 'em.

(*Sound effect: shrill whistle*)

GREEN: Come on fellers, out on the field!

(*We hear scraping of chairs, general confusion.*)

JACK: Come on, boys, let's get in a huddle. Now listen, fellers, we're behind sixty-five to seven. But are we whipped?

CROWD: Yes.

JACK: That's the spirit, those yellow sweaters certainly fit you. Frank, I'm going to take you out. Tom, you play saxophone. Sam, you get in there and play tuba.

VOICES: Yes, sir.

JACK: Now Captain Green, I'll give you the numbers for signals.

GREEN: What are they?

JACK: First, "You Are My Lucky Star."

GREEN: We played that last game.

JACK: How about "The Road to Mandalay"?

GREEN: They're wise to that.

JACK: Then what number do you think we ought to use?

GREEN: "Let's Swing It."

JACK: That'll fool 'em. Ready boys?

CROWD: Rah rah rah, rah rah rah

Jell-O! Jell-O! Sis boom bah

Strawberry — Raspberry — Cherry — Orange — Lemon — Lime — Ah!

JACK: Play, captain.

(*Segue into number 2. "Let's Swing It," Orchestra*)

(Second Routine)

JACK: That was Johnny Green and his Full Halfbacks playing "Let's Swing It" from Earl Carroll's "Sketch Book." And now, ladies and gentlemen, after a lapse of several months we are resuming our series of Guest Stars. There is really so much talent here in Hollywood that it's a shame not to take advantage of it. So tonight we have with us none other than that world-famous mind reader who has told the future and past of all the movie stars — Miss Pisha Paysha!

(Orchestra hits a sour chord.)

CROWD: (Applauds)

JACK: Get her to the mike, Mary.

MARY: This way, you little faker.

JACK: Mary! . . . How do you do, Miss Paysha.

BLANCHE: How do you do.

MARY: Oh, Jack. That's the same lady who told *my* fortune last week.

JACK: She did!

MARY: Yeah, *and was my palm red.*

JACK: Hm! . . . I will now blindfold the little lady who sees all, knows all, and is all nose. . . . Are you ready, Miss Paysha?

BLANCHE: First, you will have to put me in a trance.

JACK: What was that?

BLANCHE: I said you'll have to put me in a trance.

JACK: Oh, with pleasure. Stick out little heady.

(Sound effect: terrific glass crash)

JACK: Hm! And now, ladies and gentlemen, I will pass through our audience and find out what this little lady really knows. Miss Paysha will answer any and all questions. Let's go!

(Drum roll)

JACK: Now, Miss Paysha, there's a man sitting right here in the front row and he's from Coney Island. Please tell us his name.

BLANCHE: Frank.

JACK: Ah, you'll have to go further than that.

BLANCHE: Frankfurter.

JACK: I see you're red hot tonight. . . . Can you tell me the name of this *guy*?

BLANCHE: What was that?

JACK: I said can you tell me the name of this guy.

BLANCHE: Lombardo.

JACK: That's right, Guy Lombardo. . . . Now this same man is holding up a coin. What coin is it?

BLANCHE: It's er — it's er —

JACK: Think hard, what coin is it? It's all right, folks, I'll *pumper* till she gets it.

BLANCHE: Nickel.

JACK: That's right. And what's the date?

BLANCHE: October 20.

MARY: The date on the coin, you dope.

BLANCHE: Shut up!

JACK: Now, Miss Paysha, there is a lady here in the second row. Please tell us her name. . . . What's her name?

BLANCHE: Her name is er — her name is er —

JACK: Come now, I don't want to Harlow at you all night.

BLANCHE: Jean.

JACK: Right. And what has this lady on her arm?

BLANCHE: She has a — a —

JACK: Come, come. What has this lady on her arm? You'll have to answer at your own *risk*.

BLANCHE: A watch.

JACK: That's right, a risk-watch. . . . Now this watch has stopped. At what time did it stop? . . . Come come, what time did this watch stop?
(Hums "A Quarter to Nine.")

BLANCHE: Quarter to nine.

JACK: That's right, a quarter to nine. . . . And now, Paysha, see if you can tell me in what month this lady was born. . . . Be careful now.

BLANCHE: She was born in er — in August.

JACK: No, that's wrong. Come come, don't be a *sap*.

MARY: *Sap*tember.

JACK: Quiet, Mary.

MARY: I'm in a trance, too.

JACK: Now let's take this next aisle. There is a lady sitting here in the second row. What is the name of this poison?

BLANCHE: Ivy.

JACK: Correct. And what kind of a coat is she wearing?

BLANCHE: Rabbit.

JACK: It's mink — aegh!

BLANCHE: That's what she thinks — aegh!

JACK: Now concentrate, Paysha, concentrate. . . . There is a man sitting here with something in his coat pocket. What is it?

BLANCHE: It's er — it's er —

JACK: Come on, come on — for crying out loud.

BLANCHE: A handkerchief.

JACK: Right. And what is his name? . . . Come now, this should be right up your alley — what's his name?

BLANCHE: Katz.

JACK: Right. Now here is a difficult one, Paysha. What is this same man wearing in his tie?

BLANCHE: His neck.

JACK: Wrong, Paysha. Now concentrate. What is this man wearing in his tie? Don't let this *stick* you.

BLANCHE: Mucilage.

JACK: Wrong again. What is this man wearing in his tie? Don't let this *stick* you.

BLANCHE: A knife.

JACK: Stick you!

BLANCHE: A stick.

JACK: No — *stick* you!

GREEN: A pin.

JACK: Thanks, Johnny — gee! . . . Now, Paysha, the same man wants you to guess his age.

BLANCHE: How old is he?

JACK: Thirty-seven.

BLANCHE: Right.

JACK: Wait a minute, now I'm in a trance. . . . Now, Paysha, I want you to concentrate on this next one. There is a gentleman sitting here in the fourth row who just had lunch. Tell us what he had for dessert.

BLANCHE: He had er — he had er —

JACK: What did he have for dessert? Don't let this *stick* you.

BLANCHE: A pin.

JACK: We did that already. . . . What did he have for dessert? Come, Paysha. . . .

BLANCHE: He had er —

JACK: It has the big red letters on the package and starts with a "Jay."

BLANCHE: Jersey City.

JACK: No, it starts with a "Jay." Come come, this should be *pie* for you.

BLANCHE: Apple.

JACK: No, no! . . . Come, come, Paysha, it has six delicious flavors. Now what did this man have for dessert?

BLANCHE: Fruit salad.

JACK: No, Paysha. *What did this man have for dessert?* Can't you read Don Wilson's mind?

BLANCHE: No, he's got a hat on.

JACK: I give up. . . . Wilson, you tell her.

WILSON: He had Jello, the largest selling gelatin dessert in the world. Every day millions of people eat it.

JACK: That's right. You see, Paysha, why didn't you think of it?

BLANCHE: Oh, I thought this was the Jolson program.

JACK: No, that's Shello . . . this is Jello. Now just one more question. What is this fellow's name standing right here at the microphone?

BLANCHE: Kenny Baker.

JACK: And what is he going to sing?

BLANCHE: He's going to sing "I Wished on the Moon."

JACK: Is that right, Kenny?

BAKER: No, I'm going to sing Johnny Green's new song entitled, "How Can I Hold You Close Enough."

JACK: You see, Paysha, you were wrong again.

BLANCHE: What do you want for ten dollars, an X-ray?

JACK: Hm! Sing, Kenny.

(*Segue into number 3. "How Can I Hold You Close Enough," Orchestra and Baker*)

(*Third Routine*)

JACK: That was Kenny Baker singing "How Can I Hold You Close Enough."

Say Kenny, have you got your old war uniform handy?

BAKER: Yes, Jack. Why do you ask?

JACK: I want you to put it on immediately and stand by. Hey, Johnny!

GREEN: Yes, Jack.

JACK: Do you think you can dig up a steel helmet and a couple of rifles?

GREEN: Why, Jack? What's all the excitement?

JACK: Well, tonight we are going to do a war play. By permission of the League of Nations, we are going to present that great and timely drama of human conflict — none other than "All's Quiet on the Western Sandwich."

MARY: With onions, Jack?

JACK: Of course, Mary. In these times of unrest and uncertainty, when every country is armed to the teeth, somebody's got to do a war play, so why not us?

(*Sound a bugle call*)

JACK: So clear the battlefield, for after Corporal Green's next number we go into action. Play, Corp!

(*Segue into number 4. "I Get a Kick Out of You," Orchestra and Johnny Green*)

(Fourth Routine)

JACK: That was Johnny Green and the boys playing "I Get a Kick Out of You" from "Anything Goes," with Johnny at the piano. And now for our war play, "Farewell to What Price Cavalcade Glory." The opening scene is a real estate office near the front. . . . All right, boys. . . . Curtain. . . . A little war music, Johnny.

(Orchestra picks up "Over There" pianissimo. We hear rumbling of cannon. Gun shots.)

PATSY: Oy vot a night!

(Phone rings twice. Phone off hook.)

PATSY: Hullo . . . Hullo, Sam. . . . Vot? . . . Hozz business? Say, business et's poifect here at the front. The last two weeks they been fighting right here on my property and I'm renting out all the trenches. I haven't got a trench left. Vell, how's wit chu? . . . Dot's good.

(Fade in: beating of drums. Soldiers marching)

JACK (in the distance): Hup hup hup hup hup hup hup hup hup hup.

PATSY: Aha, Sam! Here is coming a regiment. Say, maybe they'll vant to stop here overnight — who knows? . . . Vell, goodbye.

(Hangs up phone.)

JACK (voice gets louder): Hup hup hup hup. . . . Company — halt! (But the marching continues.) I said, Company — halt! (Marching still continues.) Aw come on fellers, halt! Gee whiz. (Marching stops.) All right, boys, at ease. We're at the front now and I'll make arrangements to stop here tonight. Now don't go away, boys.

(Knock on door. Door opens.)

PATSY: Vot can I do for you, lieutenement?

JACK: I'm Sergeant Benny of the Marines. I'm looking for accommodations tonight for my regiment. We're fighting here tomorrow, rain or shine.

PATSY: Vell, I got some very nice trenches. Would you like something in the front or in the rear?

JACK: You can put the boys up in front. I don't care so much about myself.

PATSY: Vell, I can give you a very nice trench reasonable, with southern explosion. . . . Say, would you like something with twin beds?

JACK: No, there are a hundred and thirty in my company.

PATSY: All right, so I can put in an extra cot.

JACK: Denk you. Is it quiet?

PATSY: Quiet! (Laughs.) It's so quiet you can hear a bomb drop.

JACK: Oh you can, eh? Where is the enemy?

PATSY: The enemy? I rented them a trench right next door to you. There's a connecting bath in between.

JACK: Well lock our door and let *them* have the bath. All right, I'll take it. Come on, fellers!

PATSY: Say, wait a minute. You'll have to pay in advance.

JACK: Can't I pay in the morning?

PATSY: I know you're good for it, but with all dese bullets flying around — who knows?

JACK (*laughs*): Come, boys. The bad man is trying to scare us. Well, here's where we live.

CROWD (*into song*):

Mademoiselle from Armentiers, parley vou,
Mademoiselle from Armentiers, parley vou,
Fla fla fla fla, fla fla fla fla
Fla fla fla fla, fla fla fla fla
Hinkey dinky parley vou.

PATSY: Boyiss, boyiss, be quiet. The enemy is complaining.

JACK: Yeah? I wonder what they're doing now.

(*Whistling sound . . . followed by "boom" on bass drum*)

JACK: That's all I want to know. (*Whispers.*) Attention, men! Now let's sneak into this trench as quietly as possible.

CROWD: (*We hear them mumbling. . . . Shuffling of feet.*)

JACK: Pipe down, fellers. Hey, Clarence. What are you doing with that pink uniform on?

WILSON: I'm rehearsing with "The Student Prince."

JACK: Hm! Now remember, comrades, we're getting up at five o'clock in the morning and going over the top.

GREEN: Shall we put on our top hats?

JACK: Yes, we're gonna fight 'em cheek to cheek. Private Green, you go on sentry duty. Take your post!

GREEN: Oh I don't feel like it tonight. You do it.

JACK: Gee whiz, Johnny, you never want to do anything.

GREEN: Well it's dark out there.

MARY: Oh Jack, Jack.

JACK: Mary! What are you doing here.

MARY: I'm a war nurse. Gee, I wish somebody'd get hurt.

JACK: Mary, keep away from here.

MARY: Oh Jack, I brought Paysha, the mind reader, with me. Maybe she can tell us what the enemy is doing.

JACK: That's a great idea. Paysha, what is our enemy doing now?

BLANCHE: First you'll have to put me in a trench.

JACK: That's trance.

(*Slight pause for laugh — then whistling sound followed by a "bang"*)

BLANCHE: (*Gasps.*)

JACK: Hm, they got Paysha. Now, attention! I want three men to crawl through the barbed-wire entanglements into the enemy's trench, see where that shot came from, and report back to me. Now what *three* men will volunteer? What *two* men will volunteer? Is there *one* in this outfit who will go?

MARY: I will, I've got to do some shopping anyway.

JACK: Atta girl, Mary.

CROWD: Hooray!

JACK: Pipe down. Well, get to bed, fellers. We've got a tough day ahead of us. Hey, Warnecke!

BALDWIN: Yes, sir!

JACK: You better get some sleep, you might have to pitch tomorrow. Good night, fellers.

(*We hear the rat-tat-tat of machine guns.*)

JACK: I see. Good night, boys.

CROWD: Good night, Sergeant. Good night, etc.

(Cornet plays "Taps" softly.)

CROWD: *(We hear them snoring.)*

JACK *(snores)*: I'm sleeping but I'm worried.

(We hear approaching footsteps . . . then stumbling.)

JACK: Halt! Who goes there.

PATSY: Sh! I'm a spy.

JACK: A spy! I thought you were the landlord.

PATSY: That's my business. This is my hobby.

JACK: Oh, I see.

PATSY: Listen Sergeant, give me a cigar and I'll tell you what the enemy is planning to do.

JACK: I've only got a cigarette.

PATSY: Then I'll give you a rough idea.

JACK: Okay, spill it.

PATSY: Your enemy is planning a surprise attack.

JACK: When?

PATSY: They're going over the top in ten seconds.

JACK: They are, eh. Hey, buddies! Buddies! Wake up.

(We hear a sour bugle call.)

CROWD: *(A little grumbling . . . Commotion)*

JACK: Now listen, men, we can't wait till morning. We're going over the top now. Courage, comrades, keep your chin up. Remember, this is war!

PATSY: Vell, here's looking at you for the last time.

JACK: All right, fellers, we've got just ten seconds before the attack.

(We hear a whistling sound. Then bomb explodes.)

JACK *(laughs)*: Don't worry, boys, those are cheap bullets.

(Machine guns . . . All kinds of loud shooting . . . Lots of noise)

JACK: Let's give it to them. Come on, you leathernecks.

MARY: Your neck ain't so clean either.

JACK: Cut out the jokes. This is war!

(More machine guns)

JACK: All right, fellers, over the top!

WILSON: And Jell-O sales have gone over the top! It is the largest selling gelatin dessert —

(We hear whistling sound . . . Followed by loud shot.)

WILSON *(groans)*: Oooh, they got me.

JACK: Don't worry, kid, I'll carry on. . . . And remember folks, there is only one genuine Jell-O. Look for the big red letters on the package.

WILSON: Thanks, Jack.

JACK: It's all right, kid.

(We hear more gunshots . . . Machine guns.)

JACK: All right men, let's get those rats and bring back no prisoners. There are a hundred and thirty men in our company and all fighters.

(More machine guns)

JACK: There are still fifteen men in this company. Don't give up, boys, we must fight to the last man.

(Machine guns)

JACK: Hello, folks, this is the last man talking. Well, I'm no fool. I'll get into one of those dugouts.

(Loud banging on door)

JACK: Wait till I get there.

(Loud banging on door)

GREEN: Who's there?

JACK: Ah, there's someone else in there. Who is it?

GREEN: Johnny Green.

JACK: Let me in, Johnny.

GREEN: It's too crowded. My band is here too. Try the next dugout.

JACK: All right.

(Machine gun and loud firing)

JACK *(gasps)*: Ooooooh! it's too late, they got me.

CROWD: *(Applauds.)*

JACK: Oh yeah? Ooooh!

MARY: Jack, Jack. Are you hurt? Speak to me, speak to me.

JACK: They got me, Mary, they got me.

MARY: Who got you?

JACK: I think it was my own boys. Mary, you're a nurse, why don't you help me?

MARY: I can't. I'm a baby's nurse.

JACK: Oh Mary, I think the end is near. It seems to be getting darker and darker. Mary, I hate to leave you. Just do me one favor — sing to me before I go. Sing that lullaby I always love to hear.

MARY: All right, Jack.

I've got a feeling you're foolin'
Got a feeling it's make believe
Dum da da dum da dum dum dee, etc.

JACK *(groans)*: Ooooh! Play, John.

(Segue into number 5. "Everything is Okey Dokey," Orchestra)

(Closing Routine)

JACK: This is the last number of the fourth program in the new Jell-O series, and we'll be with you again next Sunday night at the same time. Oh Mary, do you want to go over and dance a while?

MARY: No, I've got to get some sleep. Vassar is playing Pitts tomorrow.

JACK: Pitts! That's not a woman's team.

MARY: I mean Zazu Pitts.

JACK: Good night, folks.

(Signature)

WILSON: This program has come to you from the NBC studios in Hollywood. This is the National Broadcasting Company.

(Chimes)



Jack, Florence, and their father, Meyer Kubelsky.



Jack and his daughter Joan in the last photograph



Jack with his grandchildren, Michael and Maria Rudolph.

You remember how Jack used to play
"Love in Bloom"!



Kenny Baker, tenor, going
over a song for the Benny show.



Mary, Jack and Una Merkel,

RADIOOLAND

December

15^c

20c in Canada



George B. ...



Burns and Allen

Gracie Allen was born in San Francisco, California, one July 26th. Educated in a convent and taught stage dancing by her father, Gracie made her first professional appearance at her home town's Hippodrome in a dancing act with her sisters. The act was short lived, but later she placed with Larry Reilly and Company, playing the part of an Irish colleen in his sketch. After a time she decided her talents were not for the theatre and bent her efforts toward becoming a capable secretary. Then, suddenly, Gracie received word that one of her friends was going to try out a new act at Union Hill, New Jersey, and wanted her opinion of it. Gracie went there and later, backstage, was introduced to other performers at the theatre, among them the team of Burns and Lorraine.

The Burns was none other than George, born George Birnbaum in New York on June 20, 1896. When thirteen he left school to become a printer, and also made his first appearance as a member of a boys' quartet at a political dinner.

The four split five dollars; Eddie Cantor, then fifteen, sang there too, for the same salary. Later George went into vaudeville with Billy Lorraine.

As a result of his meeting with Gracie, the team of Burns and Allen was formed, first with George as gagster and Gracie as straight. They tried exchanging the parts one night and it went over so well that they have been working that way ever since. In 1926 they signed a six-year contract with RKO and proceeded to celebrate by getting married. Since then they have made at least fourteen talkie shorts and ten feature films. They have played theatres throughout the United States and Europe. Oddly enough, they made their radio debut in England, with a fifteen weeks' series on the BBC.

Their American radio career started when Eddie Cantor, catching their act at the Palace Theatre in New York, invited Gracie to guest star. She accepted, and they have never lacked a sponsor since. Incidentally, they once received three hundred sixty thousand fan letters in a period of four days.

The Burns and Allen program alternates between studios in New York and California, for these stars spend much of their time in motion picture work. When in the East, it originates in a CBS Radio Playhouse, the stage of which is tastefully decorated with Campbell's Soup cans four feet high. Early in 1937, they announced plans to change their sponsors to Grape Nuts.

Just before the broadcast begins, the "seen" audience files in and takes its seats, and a few minutes later, the announcer steps before the curtain to explain things to them. He disappears and the show gets under way.

First the orchestra plays the introduction. Then, to their theme music, George and Gracie walk on the stage, taking their places at a pair of mikes in the center. The announcer and the vocal soloist use a third mike some distance to the left.

Both Burns and Allen use gestures at the microphone. When George is speaking in that puzzled voice, he frequently rubs his chin; Gracie touches her hair or occasionally presses her hand against her chest.

The audience goes wild at their jokes — and some of their most enthusiastic listeners are the members of the band, who laugh heartily whenever one of the cast or the conductor is mentioned in the dialogue. And this, from ordinarily blasé musicians, is the best possible testimonial that Burns and Allen are Masters of Merriment.

ADDITIONAL DATA: Gracie is an even five feet tall, George nine inches taller; she weighs exactly a hundred pounds; he, one fifty-seven; her hair is black; his, brown, and getting a little thin; her eyes, blue; his, blue-grey. Her complexion is very fair and she has a trim figure. Successfully and happily married, they wanted children to make their home complete, so they adopted two babies, Sandra and Ronald John.

Although a radio star of great experience, Gracie still suffers a touch of mike fright at the beginning of each program. Describing the symptoms, she says, "My hands get cold and my face gets hot."

But you would never dream that she was frightened when you hear her.



George and Gracie posed at the mike. (If they were really working, they'd have scripts.)

Burns and Allen on the air; George is carried away with his lines.



Burns & Allen; Jack Benny dressed up as Gracie.



1 Humor flows easily, seems to come naturally on the Burns and Allen show—but each broadcast means plenty of work for George. Top, left: Leaving Gracie, he and Willie Burns (rear) go to a quiet hotel to work

2 In a room at the hotel, the boys take comedy seriously, labor over gags. Above, at top: As Harvey Helm pounds a typewriter, George, John P. Medbury (center) and Willie Burns (right) do some heavy thinking

Photos by
ART CARTER
and JACK ALBIN

3 Left: John P. Medbury thinks of a gag. The others consider it. All take turns suggesting ideas—but thinkers usually stand. There are 3 chairs for the 4. George feels that "it keeps things moving"

The BIRTH of a NATION'S LAUGHTER

HERE'S HOW MONDAY'S
MERRIMENT COMES FROM
FRIDAY'S HARD WORK!

4 The script is written Friday, polished up Saturday. Rehearsal (left, below) is Monday. Left to right: Ronald Drake, Ev. Meade, Willie Burns, George's brother, and George. The hat is Gracie's

5 After working all Friday, the boys take the evening off to go to the fights. Below: The crowd trying to get into the stadium. Attending the boxing matches is a regular thing for most stars



6 Script-writing the show is pretty much a stag affair, and Gracie drops in on it only occasionally. George, however, is in it from start to finish. And the arrangement works. Right: Announcer Ronald Drake at the microphone



7 After rehearsal on Monday the program is ready for the air—and that night (EDT) it's broadcast over NBC. George does the lion's share of work preparing the show, is confident—except when Gracie goes into her song (below)



The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show. An early 1930s photo of George Burns and Gracie Allen.

WHITE OWL

"Oh George, there yah go again!" And there George Burns and Gracie Allen go again, week in and week out and no one ever seems to tire of them. They go on and on about Gracie's relatives and her dumb remarks, yet the natural spontaneity of their delivery and the gift of Gracie's voice makes every program seem fresh. Guy Lombardo's band maintains a pretty even quality.



RADIO GUIDE'S SURVEY OF SANITARIA REVEALS THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE MENTALLY DISTRESSED FAVOR THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS

Burns and Allen
CBS, Friday, 8:30 p.m. EST
(8:30 p.m. PST)

Gracie Allen was born a continent away from George Burns, destined to be her husband and her partner in scaling the heights of the entertainment world. Gracie's home was in San Francisco, George's in New York, and they met in New Jersey. Gracie had done nearly everything before she made her bow as a comedienne. Convent-raised, she's studied dancing under her father's tutelage, and her first stage appearance was in the Hippodrome Theater in San Francisco, in a dancing-act with her two sisters. Half-way through the routine, Gracie fell, dragging her sisters down with her. The audience roared, but the show had to go on. When the second show went on, Gracie, full of high resolution, went through her part perfectly, didn't slip once. Whereupon the manager canceled the act immediately! Gracie's ridiculous spill, he said, was the best part. Gracie's life has been a long succession of incidents like that. Still the perfect zany, she's on the air over Columbia these Friday nights.



That "Boy and Girl" Act, BURNS and ALLEN



One who "remembers them when" contributes this lively word etching of the team of Burns and Allen

By SALLY BENSON

WHEN Vaudeville died, the good people went to Hollywood and the bad people went—well, this is the story. By the middle of February everything in the little town in Connecticut where I live shows only faint signs of life. The drug store, not the one that fills prescriptions but the one with the soda fountain and the magazine stand, closes by nine o'clock in the evening. And old man Parmelee, who sits in the corner near the candy counter all day, has to be bundled up and sent home. Joe, a half-breed Indian boy, closes up the store and walks three miles back country to the wooden shack where he lives with his grandmother. By half-past nine the only lights on the street are the lights from the telephone exchange and the lights from a few trucks on the main road clanking their way through to Boston.

Every Saturday night we have a movie. It keeps the townspeople from going mad and cleaning out their neighbors with axes. And on one particularly

depressing Saturday night, we had a magician and the magician had an assistant. The magician made a Pomeranian dog disappear and he ran his assistant through with a large threaded needle. There is no piano in our theater, so when the magicians' assistant came out between tricks and announced that he was going to dance, we were thrown into deeper gloom. He was a hard-boiled young man in a sailor suit and he talked out of the side of his mouth. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "I am now going to show you the dance I interdooced in the Palace theater, Noo Yawk." And he did. And it didn't panic us. We all went home and cried ourselves to sleep.

I was a vaudeville fan. I suffered with the men with the shiny Indian clubs who opened the show because everyone talked throughout their act. I stayed until the bitter end, when people put on their hats and coats and walked out on the animal act. I still have some paper plates that Arthur Bedini tossed out

over my childish head when he played St. Louis and I was eight years old. He had been tossing china plates around and when he hurled the paper ones out into the audience, everyone gasped. It was wonderful.

A number of years ago, not a great number but not yesterday, either, I saw what we used to call a "boy and girl" act. Usually they weren't very good. The girl walked across the stage and dropped her handkerchief and the boy picked it up and then they sat on a park bench in front of a leafy back drop and sang songs before they went into their dance. My mother, who sometimes went with me, always thought they were married. "I imagine they're really married," she would say. "Most of these vaudeville teams are, they say." In those days before she got to reading so much, she thought everyone was really married. Now she is not so sure.

BUT this particular team was wonderful. They did more than sing, they were hilariously funny in a brand new way. Their jokes weren't pat, they were goofy with a touch of insanity. More than a touch. I laughed at them, talked about them, forgot their names and never saw them again until they were introduced by Eddie Cantor in that famous all-star show at the Palace theater in New York. Their names were George Burns and Gracie Allen.

A woman as pretty and as feminine as Gracie Allen has no right to be funny, too. Just being pretty would satisfy most people. She is small and neatly compact. She is the type of woman who would look enchanting in a frilly apron fussing around a sunny kitchen. But she looks as though she might be a very bad cook. When I met her, I could imagine her concentrating very hard on something and getting nowhere at all, which is a wonderful illusion to be able to create. She is the sort of woman who would be very neat about her failures in the kitchen and would make up for it by being able to make her own clothes. It is her voice, mainly, that makes her seem so helpless. It is an amazingly childish voice, a voice that you might often want to choke into silence before you melted completely and gave her a cookie. It has an expectant quality, as though she were always just about to receive a birthday present or open her Christmas presents.

And Gracie Allen is a lovely dancer. Not in the *cha-boom-boom-cha-cha* manner, however. She dances a little as Julia Sanderson used to dance.

There is a patient quality in George Burns' voice, the same quality, half irritable and half kindly, that creeps into a father's voice when he is explaining something to a favorite child. When he first met Gracie Allen back stage in a vaudeville theater at Union Hill, New Jersey, and they decided to put on a vaudeville act together, it was Burns who wrote the act and Burns who was to be the comedian. But no one laughed at the answers and everyone laughed at the questions, so the parts were switched and Gracie has been the clown ever since. Now, what George Burns can't understand is, how they happen to be so popular. They have been getting off the same sort of gags for years and suddenly they found themselves at the top of the ladder. It wasn't as though they had switched things around to suit the

Burns and Allen

times. They had their act, it was a good act, but they often were broke and wondered what to do about dinner. They still have their act and can eat every half hour if they feel in the mood.

THEY have both been on the stage since they were children. Burns was born in New York and made his debut when he was twelve years old as the oldest of four singers who called themselves the Pee-wee Quartet. This should have ended his career, but people were kinder in those days. Gracie Allen was born in San Francisco. Her father was a vaudeville song and dance man and after a number of years in vaudeville she finally became a featured player of Irish parts in Larry Reilly's Company. It was some time before she could get rid of her Irish brogue.

Burns and Allen played together four years as a vaudeville team before they were married. They continued to play in vaudeville in this country and made annual trips to Europe. It was on one of these trips that they made their radio debut, appearing for fifteen weeks for the British Broadcasting Company. Eddie Cantor introduced them to radio in this country on one of his Sunday night programs and from that time on the world has been theirs.

Everyone has his own idea of humor. It seems strange to me that Cantor should have to introduce Burns and Allen to a waiting public. It might have been the other way around. I have never cared for jokes. The sort of thing that starts out, "It seems two fellows were starting out on their vacations,—," Nor do I like dialect comedians. I can be a little poker face for all of Jack Pearl and Benny Rubin.

But it's a good thing I'm not a criterion because many well-known comedians would be selling papers for all of me.

EVERYONE has often wondered what he would do if he were left a million dollars or won the Irish Sweepstakes. I have often been annoyed by newsreel pictures of Ellsworth J. Mariesky of East Buffalo, New York, plumbers' assistant and winner of one million pounds. "No, sir," Mr. Mariesky announces, wrench in hand. "You don't catch me giving up my job. Although I am the winner of a million pounds, I'm going to keep right on with my same old job just as my father before me did. Money isn't everything." Smack!

So it is really wonderful to see someone with a little imagination get hold of a piece of money. Burns and Allen have an apartment on the sixteenth floor of the very nicest apartment on Central Park South. They can see miles from their living room windows; they can push buttons and ring for things; they can turn on all sorts of lights and leave them on; they can charge things; they can be difficult and send things back; they can have breakfast in bed and gardenias. I hope they do all these things. I sincerely hope they are not putting things away for a rainy day. The rainiest days are the present ones. All other days will seem like holidays in the years to come.



The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show. George Burns and Gracie Allen in a late 40s pose.



Close-up of George —

— and Gracie.



Burns and Allen



CHRONOLOGY - BURNS & ALLEN

1890s

1896 -Nathan Birnbaum (GEORGE BURNS) born in New York City

1900s

1906 -Gracie Ethel Cecile Rosalie Allen born in San Francisco

1910s

1920s

1922 -debut as a team, Philadelphia

1926 -married in Cleveland, Ohio

1929 -first film (short), *Lambchops* (see separate listing for complete record of Burns and Allen films)

1930s

1930 -first radio appearance-British Broadcasting Corporation, London, England

1932 -CBS Radio debut of "The Burns and Allen Show"

1932 -first feature film, *The Big Broadcast*

1939 -last film as a team, *Honolulu*

1940s

1940-49-radio show continues

1940 -Gracie runs for President as the candidate of the Surprise Party

1949 -appearance at the Palladium in London

1950s

1950 -Television debut of "The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show," replaces radio show

1958 -June 4, final television show, Gracie retires

1960s

1964 -Gracie Allen dies in Los Angeles

1970s

1975 -George Burns wins Oscar as Best Supporting Actor in the film version of *The Sunshine Boys*

1978 -George Burns stars as God in the film *Oh, God* directed by Carl Reiner

1978 -George stars in film, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*

1978 -television special, "George Burns' 100th Birthday Party"



The first picture her proud parents ever had taken of Sandra.

The family, when Ronnie and Sandy were very small.
Photo by Tom Kelley.





Lori.



Left to right: Brad, Bryan, and Brent.



Lissa.

My Grandchildren

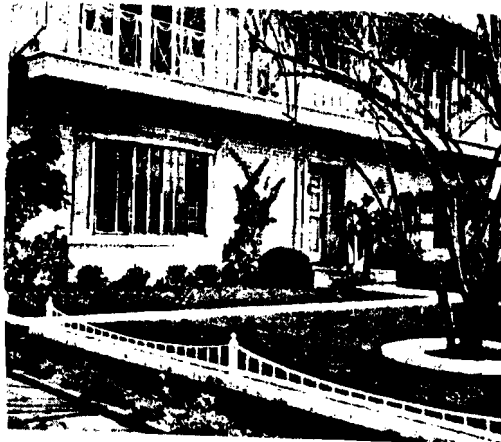


Grace-Anne.



Brooke.

George and Gracie in front of their home in Beverly Hills.



The family, when Ronnie and Sandy were teenagers.



George and Gracie on their first trip to Europe in 1928.







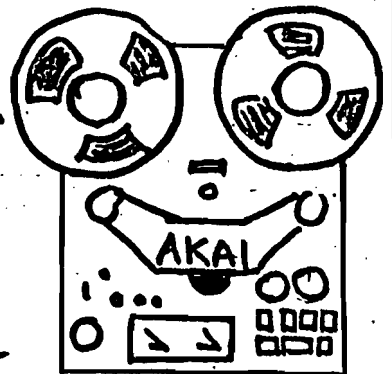
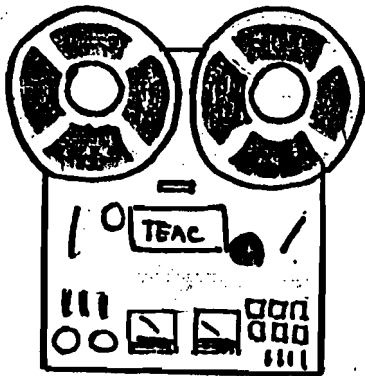
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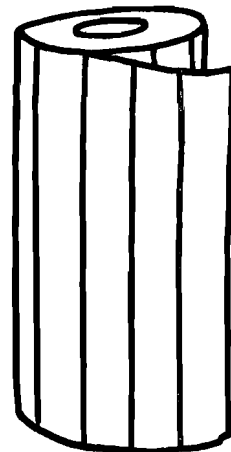
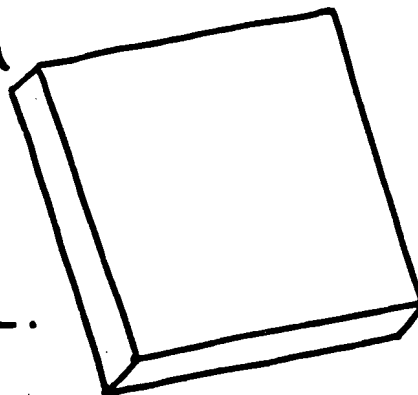
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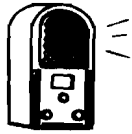
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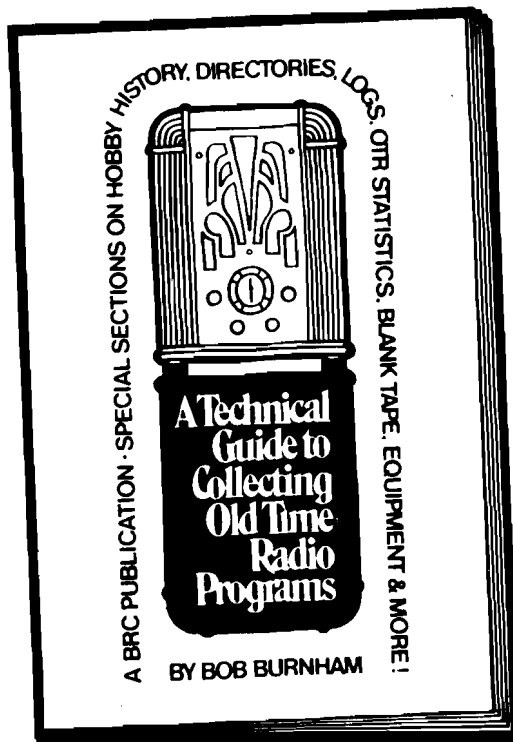
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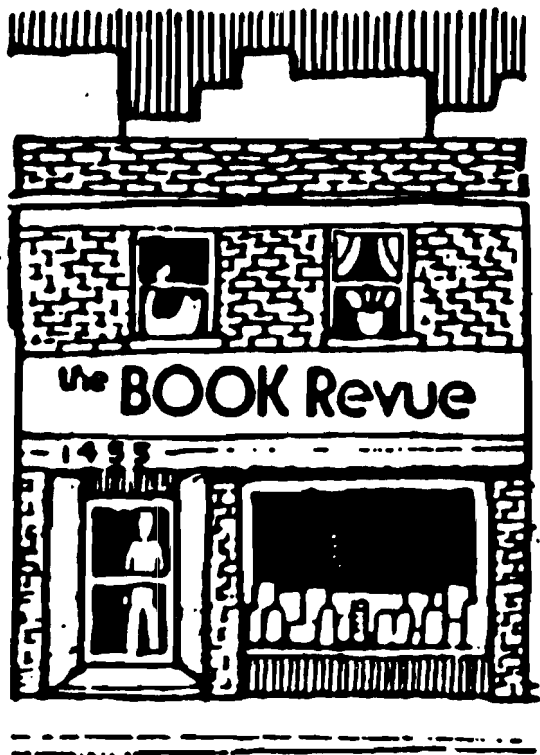
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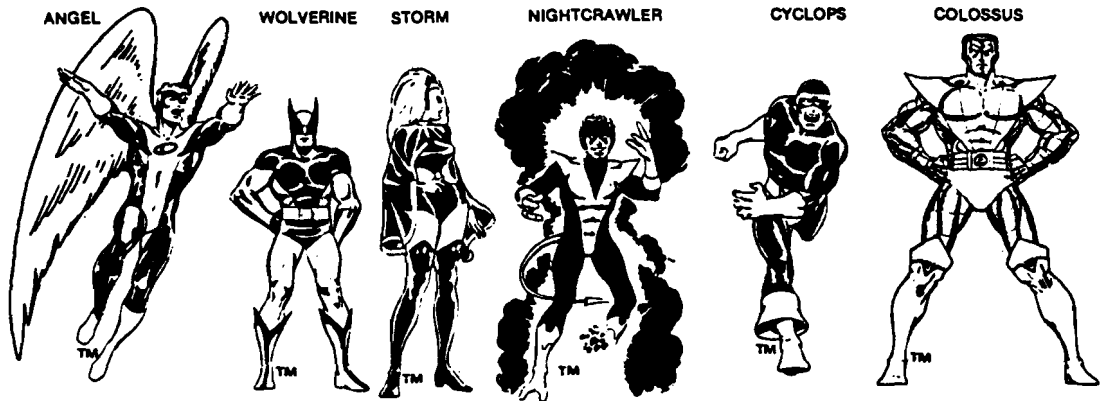
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