

Part I

--- *Harry Von Zell*

1940:



message from its snappy beginning to a very relaxing conclusion. Of course, *Sanka's* main objective was to provide its users the satisfaction of drinking coffee, yet allow them to sleep at night.

1940:

**WANTED: RADIO ANNOUNCER WHO CAN
PRESENT A COMMERCIAL WITHOUT SCRIPT.
APPLY HERE'S MORGAN, WOR/MUTUAL:**

The announcers applied, but none of them were accepted. Henry Morgan, "**The Bad Boy Of Radio,**" had to do the live commercials himself--- which was OK with him! Since he ad-libbed the program, Morgan could also ad-lib the live commercials--- much to the chagrin of his sponsors.

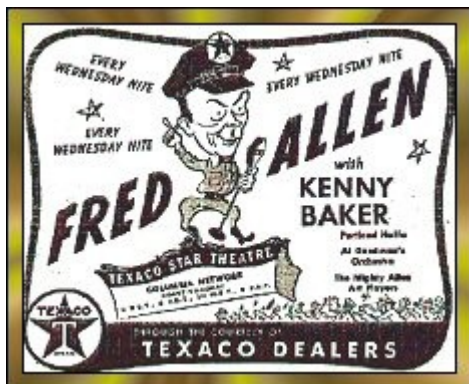
Among the victims of Morgan's biting wit were (among others) *Adler Elevator Shoes*, *Eno Effervescent Salt*, and *Berkeley Razor Blades*. The latter product will be mentioned here. The enclosed *Berkeley* commercial is a curious one--- even by Morgan's standards.

The commercial actually began with a musical recording of *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*. After the recording was finished, Morgan had a laughing fit. When he regained his composure, Morgan said the singer in the recording was another satisfied *Berkeley Razor Blade* user (much to the singer's surprise, I'm sure). Getting serious (at least by Morgan's standards), Morgan talked about a guy who had a quarter in his pocket. He went into a store; bought a box of *Berkeley Razor Blades*; and left the quarter with the storekeeper. A split second after the product's name was mentioned, Morgan made a very odd sound like he was being electrocuted--- followed by dead air. ■

Friends, did the sponsors conspire and got even with Morgan for all the things he said about their products? Is this the end of the Bad Boy Of Radio? Of course, Morgan returned to the air--- I was trying to sound like an announcer of a radio soap opera! All right--- stamp *Hormel* and put me with the other hams!

After a few seconds, the program returned to the air. Morgan regained his composure and continued with the *Berkeley* commercial like nothing had happened. What exactly happened during those few seconds isn't exactly known--- but it was blended into the commercial like it was in the script--- if there was one!

1942:



**WANTED: ANNOUNCER TO AUDITION
WHILE PROGRAM IS ON THE AIR.
APPLY TEXACO STAR THEATRE, COLUMBIA NETWORK:**

Sunday, October 4, 1942 was the first broadcast of the *TEXACO STAR THEATRE* for the new radio season. By the way the broadcast began, Fred Allen was still hiring people, because the program was moved to a new night and time--- and its length was reduced from an hour to 30 minutes. One would think the hiring and auditioning of performers was done off the air, but Allen usually did things his own special way--- and the on the air audition was under way on the program.

Applying for the announcer's job was Arthur Godfrey, "**That Man Himself.**" To get the announcer's audition under way, Allen wanted Godfrey to read the script with the commercial for **Texaco's Car Warden Service**, a wartime vehicle service performed at every **Texaco** station. If you know Godfrey, reading a commercial from a script was like him drinking tea that wasn't **Lipton!** It wasn't done! Using the excuse he couldn't read, Godfrey winged his own commercial for **Texaco**. With the ad-lib commercial sounding better than the script, Allen gave Godfrey the announcing job.

Now that he was on the job, Godfrey was on hand to present the **Texaco** commercials. Later in the broadcast, Allen asked Godfrey to get the lead out and present the second **Texaco** commercial. With war speed at 35 m.p.h., Godfrey informed Allen he couldn't go any faster than the maximum war speed. When he was situated in front of the **Columbia** microphone, Godfrey ad-libbed the commercial for **Texaco Marfak Lubrication**.

After hearing this broadcast, it was interesting that Godfrey was the only one to apply for the announcer's job.

1944:

**WANTED: ANNOUNCERS AND AUCTIONEERS
FOR 3-MINUTE CIGARETTE COMMERCIAL.
APPLY YOUR ALL TIME HIT PARADE, NBC:**

This lengthy commercial required the services of 2 narrators; 3 minor speaking roles; and 2 tobacco auctioneers. If my addition is correct, it was 7 people for 1 commercial! With 7 different people used, this commercial can be costly--- but since it was for **Lucky Strike**, a major radio sponsor during the golden age--- no problem!



This commercial was heard on the Sunday, July 23, 1944 broadcast of **NBC's YOUR ALL TIME HIT PARADE**. It began with auctioneer F. E. Boone of Lexington, Kentucky doing his version of the auctioneering. When Boone of Lexington, Kentucky finished with "**Sold, American!**"--- program announcer Basil Ruysdael opened with the featured subject of the commercial, the visit of author Charles Dickens to the White House. When Ruysdael finished, commercial spokesman Kenny Delmar narrated the story with a few added comments from 3 different voices (their identities unknown). When Delmar finished his narration, auctioneer L. A. "Speed" Riggs of Goldsboro, North Carolina did his version of the tobacco auctioneering. When Riggs of Goldsboro, North Carolina finished with "**Sold, American!**"--- Ruysdael returned with a brief commercial for **Lucky Strike**. Finally, Boone of Lexington, Kentucky closed the commercial with his tobacco chant.

With the exception of the auctioneering, the only part of this 3-minute commercial where **Lucky Strike** was actually being sold was the very beginning and at the very end of the commercial.

As I stated, **Lucky Strike** was one of radio's biggest sponsors of the golden age--- and one of the most popular brands of cigarettes of the era. It could get away with this type of commercial and its large cast, because of its popularity.

The final want ad in this article involves Arthur Godfrey once again. This time, he was hosting the program, and the announcing candidate had to do an unpleasant and unpopular task.

1949:

**WANTED: ANNOUNCER TO INTERRUPT PROGRAM
WHEN IT'S RUNNING LONG.**

APPLY ARTHUR GODFREY & HIS TALENT SCOUTS, CBS.



It must have been an adventure trying to keep **ARTHUR GODFREY & HIS TALENT SCOUTS** within a 30-minute format. Whether it was the funny, but lengthy *Lipton Tea* commercials or Arthur Godfrey getting chatty with the talent scouts---more often than not, the program was slightly longer than it should have been. With an exception that will be talked about here, the listeners knew who won that night--- it was usually Godfrey saying good-bye that was cut off for the closing commercial for *Lipton Soup*.

Talk about running long, the Monday, May 23, 1949 broadcast was running considerably longer than usual. Not only was Godfrey's closing cut out, but also the contestants coming back for a final curtain call to determine the winner. This was a situation where the listeners didn't know who won. What they heard was the announcer (identity unknown) presenting the closing commercial for ***Lipton Soup***. When the commercial was over, the announcer had to inform the listeners who won that night before closing the program. ■■

What you have just read is Part 1 of a special 2-part article on announcer's help wanted ads for unusual radio commercials. Part 2 of this series will be presented on my

website (www.dg125.com) in the near future. Please keep an eye out for it.