

The Old Time Radio Club

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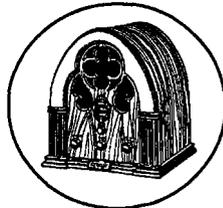
BURNS and ALLEN

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Club Mailing Address

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Lancaster, NY 14086



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Autry, Kaye Leave Large Legacies in Radio

by Jim Cox

(Special to The Illustrated Press)

A couple of highly respected musical entertainers—whose shows might well have appealed to vastly divergent audiences—left their long running radio berths for the very last time in the same year, 1956. Their departures left few others with their prestige and durability as replacements during the waning days of radio's golden age.

Gene Autry's Melody Ranch was a western musical-adventure that brought together a mixed band of faithful listeners. *The Sammy Kaye Show* was predominantly musical, highly representative of the big band era Americans recalled from the 1930s and 1940s.

Beginning January 7, 1940 on CBS (and never leaving that network for another) *Gene Autry's Melody Ranch* pretended to originate in a campfire setting at screen star Autry's California spread. It featured western songs and a 12-minute dramatization of a western adventure: Autry would outsmart a band of cattle rustlers or put a local bank robber behind bars every week. Then he'd ride into the sunset singing his signature "I'm Back in the Saddle Again" or a similar ballad.

With the exception of two years, 1943-45, when Autry took the show off the air to serve in the Army Air Corps, it was one of the most durable variety programs on radio. From its start in 1940 until it departed on May 13, 1956 the show had but a single sponsor: the William J. Wrigley Company, for "healthful, delicious, satisfying Doublemint chewing gum" Autry reminded fans each week. The program was broadcast in a Saturday or Sunday night timeslot and went from a quarter-hour to a half-hour in 1946.

Comic Pat Buttram was Autry's most prominent companion. Johnny Bond, singer and comedian, often appeared along with several vocal groups, principally the Cass County Boys. In the program's later years announcer Charlie Lyon introduced the show's star as "the boss man himself, America's favorite cowboy, Gene Autry."

Aside from Autry the only other famous singing cowboy (on radio, television and the silver screen) was Roy Rogers. He left NBC Radio on July 21, 1955 having starred in an on-again, off-again series since 1944. None of the remaining major western legends (Hopalong Cassidy, The Cisco Kid, The Lone Ranger, Tom Mix, Wild Bill Hickok and others) made a career out of singing while catching rustlers red-handed.

All, incidentally, departed network radio several years earlier, making Autry the last of that genre. [*Guns Smoke* and its contemporaries didn't qualify as they aimed for an adult audience.] Autry was also gone from the tube only a couple of weeks after he left radio. He was on CBS-TV continuously every week from July 23, 1950 to August 7, 1956. His prime competition (Roy Rogers) remained on NBC-TV from December 30, 1951 to June 23, 1957. Rogers and his wife, cowgirl Dale Evans, headlined an ABC-TV musical variety series for 13 weeks in the fall of 1962.

A slide trombone in the first few notes of a tune was a dead giveaway in the big band era that radio listeners could join those in grand hotel ballrooms to "swing and sway with Sammy Kaye." Kaye's orchestra was on radio so often, in fact, that he was certified as the most "air exposed" bandleader of the 1940s. During that era his orchestra broadcast on all four networks: six times weekly on CBS and MBS live from the Astor Roof, weekday evenings at 8:15 p.m. on ABC and on NBC's *Sunday Serenade*.

Kaye, a clarinet and alto sax instrumentalist, was an engineering student at Ohio State University in 1933. On the side he gathered a small group of amateur musicians to perform at college dances and off-campus one-nighters. By 1937 he appeared sporadically on the Mutual Broadcasting System. His first permanent radio series was launched on that network December 17, 1938, a 45-minute musical variety show at five o'clock Saturday afternoons. Within a year he attracted NBC and the rest is history.

His programs went under many titles: *Sensation and Swing*, *Sunday Serenade*, *Tangee Varieties*, *So You Want to Lead a Band*, *Chesterfield Supper Club*, *Sammy Kaye's Sylvania Serenade* and *Bring Back the Bands*. His final series, on ABC Sundays at 9:30 p.m., was canceled on February 12, 1956.

Kaye's longevity can be explained in several ways. "If a tune can't be danced to, we won't play it," he admitted. "That's our motto. We have a sweet sound, but if a new vogue comes along, such as rock n' roll, we adapt it to our approach.... And we always play plenty of the

good old standards—'My Buddy,' Blueberry Hill'—songs that people remember and want to hum.

He died at 77 on June 2, 1987 in Ridgewood, New Jersey. Kaye was one of the last survivors of the big band era, both on and off the air.

When Autry and Kaye departed the ether, they left commanding legacies—but few contemporaries who could equal their stature as two of radio's most admired, and durable, performers.

Senator Ford

The "Senator" tacked in front of Ed Ford's name has the same authenticity as the "Colonel" that used to precede the names of so many Southern gentlemen. (He's on *Can You Top This?* NBC, Saturdays at 9:30 P.M.)



Edward Ford, as he was christened by his perfectly normal parents, made his initial appearance in Brooklyn, N. Y., a long time ago. He won't tell how long ago. After a couple of years of high school, he decided he wasn't getting educated in the way he liked and quit. Then he went ahead getting educated by hard knocks. He held numerous jobs, none of them very long. Enough of this convinced him that he was cut out for an artistic career.

That decision led him to the Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied a few months, and then tried commercial illustrating. Pickings were lean in that field and there was some heavy competition like James Montgomery Flagg, for instance. So Ford shifted his tactics slightly to doing cartoon acts in night clubs and what small commissions he could dig up in the illustrating field. Soon, however, he decided the artists' materials he had to carry about for his act were too heavy.

Then he fell into an after-dinner speaking job at the Republican Club in New York. It was at one of the Club's dinners that Ford got his tag. The toastmaster, after leading off the applause after Warren G. Harding (then a Senator) sat down, introduced Ford with his idea of a gag, "This man is a substitute. I don't know how good he is, but time was short and we had to take what we could get. I introduce you to Senator Ed Ford." And the title stuck.

Vaudeville fans are, of course, familiar with Senator Ford. When radio was invented, he wrote, cast, directed and played in a domestic comedy. When talking pictures came in, he made one of the first movie shorts for Warner Brothers.

On the serious side, dropping the Senator, Edward Ford helped the artist Dwight Franklin on the famous sculpture groups "South Street" and "Inauguration of Washington." Independently, he also made a figure of John McGraw, the Napoleon of the Giants, which now occupies a prominent spot in the Cooperstown Baseball Museum.

The *Can You Top This?* program was his idea, thought up while after-dinner speaking and commuting between New York and his home in Southold, Long Island, where he's lived for twenty years with his charming wife.

Internet Killed the Radio Star

By Ed Grabianowski

In recent history, a new technology became popular that shook the foundations of the music industry. People feared that it would prevent musicians and promoters from making money because suddenly music was "free" to anyone with the right technological gadget necessary to listen to it.

Those gadgets were known as "radios," and they did indeed change the music, industry. At first, musicians' unions reacted with fear and hostility toward the new medium. Britain's BBC was saddled until the 1980s with severe restrictions on the amount of pre-recorded music that could be played on the air (only a few hours per week were allowed). This was intended to keep bands who performed live in business.

Hands were wrung. "With all this free music on the airwaves, who will ever buy a record again?" worried many. Instead, the national exposure radio brought to artists such as Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly made them superstars. It took a while for the system to be worked out, but today, radio stations pay licensing fees to groups such as ASCAP and BMI, which in turn distribute royalties to artists whose music is played on the radio. Radio stations make their money by selling advertising, and the record labels and artists gain access to a powerful marketing tool.

Sound familiar? Internet music is still in its infancy. The incredible popularity of Napster proves that people

like this new medium—downloading songs to listen to at home is something that will not go away. A business model similar to that used by commercial radio will allow people to enjoy music via the Internet, while ensuring that artists get their just rewards.

And the giant corporate, record labels? We won't need them at all.

Have we learned anything over the last 50 years?

by Don Booth

"Thanks for the Memories." Remember when that was the theme song of Bob Hope and his USO show when they'd show up in Okinawa, a military hospital in San Diego or on the flight deck of a flat top in the South Pacific?

I recently was given a stack of 1943 Life magazines, and what memories they've generated. The cover price was 10 cents, and the photos, text and advertising pretty well centered around the war. Every issue carried full-page ads showing the lovely girl in a flight suit and the handsome Air Force pilot holding Camel cigarettes. She was smiling and puffing because she'd just tested a new nylon parachute. And she loved the taste of her Camels. It felt good to her "T zone."

There are photos of another brand new B-17 being rolled out of the factory covered with the names and messages of the workers who built it in order to carry out the war against those three despots who made up the Axis—Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini.

One issue carried a three-page story written about the only Negro battalion in our Army. Another issue showed the Japanese camps for those who had been displaced and moved inland because they might be disloyal to our American cause. A lot of us have forgotten the terrible ways people have been treated on the basis of their skin color or religious beliefs.

Reading these magazines, it's easy to pick up the sense of patriotism and motivation justifying the teaching of young people to hate, to kill and to be willing to die to bring about a successful conclusion of the war. There is a story about one of my favorite comic strips that appeared in the Stars and Stripes, "Terry and the Pirates," drawn by Milton Canniff, and the introduction into our lives of the glamorous girls who were copied onto the fuselages of many of the airplanes our young-people flew and died in.

And the pin-up girls - Dorothy Lamour, Rita Hayworth, Betty Grable, Judy Garland and Alekis Smith. Most of the photos showed the men in uniform smiling and dedicated as they trooped off to war. There are reminders of gas rationing and the difficulty of purchasing nylon stockings and butter. There are pictures of Boy Scouts collecting old newspapers and practicing their. Civil Defense blackouts. And there's the unusual sight—at least back then, of seeing women cleaning blast furnaces, ferrying airplanes and welding ships.

It's interesting, too, how the word "fashion" has taken on new dimension and style. For the men, uniforms are uniforms and they haven't changed that much. But for the women, the description of "sexy" has undergone a revolution.

The descriptions in 1943 of modern weaponry note seem pitifully naive and old-fashioned. Some of us remember how proud we were of our radar systems, bomb sights and all-weather aircraft. How primitive they seem to us now, looking back with the hindsight of Monday morning quarterbacks.

But I wonder—as we've seen kings, kingdoms and dictators go; watched millions of people being killed, starved and evicted from their homelands; had new values thrust upon us; given up freedoms for the sake of fatter wallets; endured the rape of our natural resources; and seen the thrusting of God and his influence out of public life—have we, in fact, learned anything? Are we really the better for it?

He's Made His MARX

Groucho Marx has been combining comedy and questions for some time now on his quiz program—but nobody's ever bothered to quiz Groucho. To correct this tempting oversight, RADIO MIRROR dispatched Fredda Dudley Balling to turn the tables on Groucho. Here are the questions Mrs. Balling asked—and the answers she received.

(Continued from last month)

Q: Millions of fans all over the world will go into deep mourning if the Marx Brothers should stop making movies together. Remember what Alva Johnston once wrote about you: "The Marx Brothers are engaged in a war to free the mind from the domination of reason and judgment, to overthrow give the brain a chance to develop. They're efficient madmen, having taken polished nonsense and combined it happily with the loud

noise and bodily harm tradition of vaudeville. Their comedy is high, low, broad, refined, raw, old-fashioned and futuristic." That's what Mr. Johnston wrote.

A: 'Raw! Old-fashioned!' That's me-Groucho Marx.

Q: So now we come to your radio career, Mr. Marx.

A: You're pretty late. I came to it years ago, but maybe we can still find you a seat.

Q: Let's settle one point immediately: do you agree with many of your critics that you're wasting your talents on a quiz program?

A: I certainly don't agree. My current show, *You Bet Your Life*, has caused more favorable talk and has been far more successful than anything I've ever done on the air. Last season we won the Radio Editors' poll as the best quiz show on the air. Even more gratifying than that, we won the coveted Peabody Award for presenting the best comedy show on the air. That sort of thing has never happened to me in the past, but I feel we've only begun to win honors and acclaim.

Q: To what do you attribute this success? After all, the air is cluttered with quiz shows.

A: Let's face it. *You Bet Your Life* is a good program. I like it because it has provided my first opportunity to be myself. I walk out on stage and patter with my contestants, say what I want, do what I want, and have a wonderful time. The listener absorbs some of that feeling of genuine fun and has a good time, too.

Q: The natural, spontaneous humor on your program is quite apparent, Mr. Marx. I suppose you appreciate the fact that you're producing a change in radio comedy.

A: Yes, we're well aware of the new field of humor we've developed. There's nothing artificial about the jokes on our show; they are authentic, homespun comedy.

Q: I don't quite understand. What do you mean by "artificial?"

A: Well, on the usual comedy show, the straight man creates an artificial situation and the comedian makes a joke. We'll say, for instance, that the comedy situation is built around a plumber. The comedian pretends he's the plumber and makes a lot of jokes about plumbing. The listener knows the whole thing is a frame-up because the actor is not a plumber; he may not even smoke a pipe. On our show, when we make jokes about a plumber, the comedy has the ring of truth because I'm actually talking to a plumber . . . or to a tree surgeon . . . or to a dentist, or a cowboy, or a department-store Santa Claus. We don't have to create situations in order to make jokes; the situations are already there. When we had a shoe salesman who was married to a lady chiropodist on our program, it was obvious for me to ask, "How did you meet, did your arches fall for each other?"

Q: Do you attempt to have some sort of pattern for every broadcast?

A: Yes. We always look for particular types of individuals

in our audiences before we go on the air. You'll notice that we always have a romantic couple as contestants; newlyweds, older people who've just been married, a pair of youngsters who'd like to get married or a bachelor teamed with an old maid.

Q: Apparently you also attempt to secure people with interesting occupations as contestants.

A: Yes, but only if the occupations are familiar to everyone. We've discovered a peculiar point; if a contestant's occupation is too interesting, the audience won't laugh. They become too engrossed in what the contestant has to say. On one broadcast we had a chemist who prattled merrily on about the atomic age. It was fascinating stuff, but nobody laughed. After all, we're running a comedy show, so we have to get guffaws. We tried a fashion designer and the same thing happened. Nowadays we try to stick with everyday occupations which have a solid basis for potential humor, such as the butcher, the grocer, the insurance man, the home demonstrator, the bank clerk.

Q: I've noticed that you usually manage to have a gabby housewife . . .

A: Is there any other kind?

Q: . Is this by design, Mr. Marx?

A: Yes, it is. Before the show, we ask for housewives in the audience to volunteer. The volunteers are sent to the back of the house and their stories are heard by members of our staff. If they have something interesting to say, and insist on saying it, we put them on the show. A timid, shy, or boring contestant would be disastrous. The whole thing is like a party: the good eggs have fun and the wall flowers sit it out.

Q: As a quizmaster, what would you say was the most unusual thing that ever happened to you?

A: We had a nervous young fellow on the show, picked from the audience because he was very close to initial fatherhood. His wife was in the hospital at the time and he was momentarily expecting the big news. Naturally, his mind wasn't on what he was doing up there with me. I had some by-play planned to try on him. I was going to ask if he'd like to win a new refrigerator, a new car, and a new home. He was supposed, of course, to say, "Yes." Then I was supposed to say, 'All right, just answer one question correctly and you will win all those prizes.' Whereupon I was going to inquire, "Who is the President of the United States." When he answered, "Truman," I was going to be very funny and say, "That's right. Now here is the question: What is his social security number?" At that, the audience was supposed to go into gales of laughter. Well, here's what happened: the young fellow, sweating profusely, said, "Yes, I'd like to win all of those prizes." "Just one question," I began, "and you get them. Who's the President of the United States?" At this point the boy's mind went completely blank. He stammered and fidgeted and wiped his forehead and laughed nervously and gibbered.

But, for the life of him, he couldn't recall the name of the President of the U. S.

Q: You couldn't have cooked that one up with a prepared script.

A: I'll say you couldn't. I'm not going to try. Incidentally, who is the President of the United States?

Q: How about guest stars? Do you ever have them on your show?

A: Art Linkletter is the only guest star we have ever had. Aside from Art, we established a policy about guest stars; the best way to explain that is to cite an example. Last spring one of the most famous and best comedians on the air telephoned me at home and volunteered to serve as a contestant for nothing, except the fun of it. It was with genuine regret that I had to inform him that the regular people from our audience were better comedians than he is. It broke his heart, but he agreed.

Q: What is the most embarrassing experience you ever had before the microphone?

A: Me? Embarrassed?

Q: Forgive me. Mr. Marx, I know you have a staff working for you. If the entire show is spontaneous, what does your staff do?

A: You'd be surprised at the complicated mass of detail connected with a simple show like ours. There's the quiz, for instance. All those quiz questions have to be gleaned from research books, checked and double-checked. We have a complicated bookkeeping system which provides for the payoff to our winners. We have a lot of herding to do for the contestants after they're picked, and, of course, the normal production problems associated with any broadcast must be handled. My partner and producer, John Guedel, is the guiding genius behind the whole show. It was he, by the way, who first decided that I could handle a quiz show like this one, and he's guided me expertly ever since. Please note that the old, brash, impudent Groucho is no more. Now I'm a kindly, warm old character, sympathetic and understanding. Just an old shoe, that's me. But don't be misled, there's still a little kick in the old boot!

Q: In reviewing your two years as a quizmaster, which contestants would you describe as your most interesting?

A: To me, every contestant is interesting. However, I'd say Harry MacDermott, an Irishman with a brogue as thick as a mattress, was outstanding. He said he was a good Irish Catholic, but that didn't stop him from being head of the maintenance department of a Jewish Synagogue, and proud of it. He was an admirable old man, the kind of a contestant you run across every seventy-five years. I also enjoyed an ex-Wac who had married a French bathing suit salesman from Paris. They made a wonderful team. Last spring we had a Hungarian Baroness and a Baron on the show. They were outstanding. Another contestant I won't forget was Etta Rue, an old maid who topped everything I said.

Q: What are your present plans for television?

A: What are yours?.

Q: Not to be completely satisfied with it, Mr. Marx, until I can see You Bet Your Life.

A: I'll say this: many people have been fooled by television, and I don't want to be one of them. I know it is an extremely sensitive and intimate medium. It requires tremendous thought and preparation to do a thirty minute show. Basically, I believe we could use the same format for television as we're using now: just me talking to people from the audience, but we'll need some careful planning to give the show the extra kick that is so necessary in this field. We are making plans to try television sometime within the year, but as yet we have no definite starting date.

Q: Will you be smoking that same big black cigar on your television show, Mr. Marx?

A: Nope. By then I hope to be able to afford a new one.

Q: Thanks, I imagine, to your fine new time and network time on CBS on Wednesday night, just ahead of Crosby?

A: Lady, You Bet Your Life. (October 1949)

LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

- 2897 Grand Marquee "If The Shoe Fits" 1/16/47
- Grand Marquee "Deep Freeze" 2/13/47
- 2898 Public Defender "Eddie Lewis" 12/10/48
- Public Defender "George Brown" 4/27/48
- 2899 Suspense "Out of Control" 3/28/46
- Suspense "Post Mortem" 4/4/46
- 2900 Suspense "The Lodger" 7/22/40
- Suspense "The Burning Court" 6/17/42
- 2901 Lights Out "Author and the Thing" 9/28/45
- Lights Out "Man in the Middle" 8/25/45
- 2902 The Whistler "Man in the Way" 6/8/52
- The Whistler "Last Message" 6/15/52
- 2903 The Great Gildersleeve "Lost Presents" 12/26/51
- The Great Gildersleeve "Looking for New Job" 1/2/52
- 2904 The Great Gildersleeve "Help for Leila" 1/14/53
- The Great Gildersleeve "The Great Dane" 1/21/53
- 2905 The Great Gildersleeve "Grace Tulle" 1/28/53
- The Great Gildersleeve "Leila vs. Grace" 2/4/53
- 2906 The Great Gildersleeve "Mayor's Valentine Party" 2/11/53
- The Great Gildersleeve "Trouble with the Girls" 2/18/53
- 2907 The Great Gildersleeve "Rummage Sale" 3/25/53
- The Great Gildersleeve "Easter Service" 4/1/53

- 2908 Gildersleeve "Anniversary Present" 5/6/53
- Gildersleeve "Going to Europe" 5/13/53
- 2909 Gildersleeve "Birdie may Move" 6/3/53
- Gildersleeve "Leroy has the Mumps" 6/10/53
- 2910 Gildersleeve "Gift for Miss Tuttle" 6/17/53
- Gildersleeve "Grass Lake Swimming Trip" 6/24/53
- 2911 Gildersleeve "Togetherness" 7/1/53
- Gildersleeve "Buying a Spray Gun" 7/15/53
- 2912 Gildersleeve "A Fish Story" 8/19/53
- Gildersleeve "Sufficient Unto One's Self" 8/26/53
- 2913 Gildersleeve "Leroy's Girl" 9/2/53
- Gildersleeve "Raising Ronnie" 9/9/53
- 2914 Gildersleeve "Mystery Cake Mystery" 9/16/53
- Gildersleeve "The Baby Sitter" 9/23/53
- 2915 Gildersleeve "Flattery" 9/30/53
- Gildersleeve "Home Haircut" 10/7/53
- 2916 Gildersleeve "Teacher and Principal" 10/14/53
- Gildersleeve "Bells are Ringing" 10/21/53
- 2917 Gildersleeve "Unwilling Witness" 10/28/53
- Gildersleeve "Living Impulsively" 11/4/53
- 2918 Gildersleeve "Dinner Mix Up" 11/25/53
- Gildersleeve "Christmas Money" 12/2/53
- 2919 Gildersleeve "Taking Bessie to the Dance" 12/9/53
- Gildersleeve "Gildy Hooker Feud" 12/14/53
- 2920 The Nebbs "World Series" 10/7/45
- The Nebbs "Library Donation" 10/14/45
- 2921 Johnny Dollar "Double Indemnity Matter" 10/25/59
- Johnny Dollar "Hand of Providential Matter" 11/1/59
- 2922 The Lone Ranger "Diamond Mission" 4/6/54
- The Lone Ranger "Cigars and Dust" 4/9/54

The Squeaking Door

The power of radio was its ability to stimulate the imagination, often through simple sound effects. One such effect became such a famous trademark that to this day, the sound of a slowly squeaking door instantly brings back a whole rush of associations to anyone who owned a radio between 1941 and 1952. That's right . . . *Inner Sanctum*. Every week that sound would introduce the ghoully voice of Raymond, your host, who opened with a few lines of graveyard wit before the evening's drama started. There were few really fine dramas, but it didn't much matter; listening to *Inner Sanctum* was just something one did automatically. At the end Raymond would offer a grisley pun or something similar by way of a moral to the story, and then, over the sound of the door squeaking closed, would finish with, "And now it's time

to close the squeaking door . . . Good night . . . pleasant . . . dreams? . . . Hmm? . . . Slam!

- (1) The man who conceived this show remained as producer-director through its entire run. Can you name him?
- (2) What was Raymond's full name?
- (3) Can you name at least one of the announcers?
- (4) Who was after Raymond?
- (5) Which sponsor lasted longer than the other?
- (6) Remember this sponsor's distinctive commercial?

ANSWERS:

- (1) Himan Brown.
- (2) Raymond Edward Johnson.
- (3) Ed Herlihy, Dwight Weist, Allan C. Anthony.
- (4) Paul McGrath.
- (5) Bromo-Seltzer.
- (6) A chorus of voices rapidly repeating, "Bromo-Seltzer, Bromo-Seltzer, Bromo-Seltzer," giving the effect of a locomotive; then: "Fights headaches three ways . . ." done in the attenuated sound of a locomotive whistle.



MEL, The Lion-Hearted



" . . . And furthermore Mel Blanc you're a good-for-nothing! Look at you! Tinkering around in this silly Fix-It shop while other young men your age are getting ahead in the world. They'll be Captains of Industry while you're still swabbing decks—and you have the nerve to want to marry my daughter!

Let me tell you . . ." Mr. Colby was warming up well to his favorite subject and he shook a heavy finger at the young man across the counter from him. The young man, in turn, tried to keep his face dutifully respectful and properly chastened—but it was difficult with the dazzling vision of Betty Colby winking at him behind her father's back. The best he could manage was a sickly grin.

" . . . and you'd better start amounting to something pretty soon, Mel Blanc, or I'll put a stop to your seeing Betty. We Colbys have a social standing to maintain this town, remember. Why—" now Mr. Colby drew himself up proudly—"our family have been the pinnacle of respectability here for generations. My greatgrandfather, Hezekiah Colby, was one of the first settlers, and his son—" "Wasn't that old 'Cokey Colby,' the one who"

"Never mind!" Mr. Colby glared at him and slapped his hat on his head and then turned to his daughter. "Betty remember you're not to have any date with Mel tonight. You're going with me to Banker Grimes' party. They're the richest people in town and this is the biggest social affair and it's one place where Mel Blanc will never be invited!" He strode out the door, turning, as he left, to snarl over his shoulder—"The town's tinker!" at Mel. The door slammed behind him.

"What did he call me?" Mel asked, apprehensively. "The town's tinker." Betty perched herself up on the counter beside him. He sighed. "That's what I thought—it sounds the same even when you say it." "Gee, Mel. What are we going to do? Daddy's getting so angry with you." "Don't worry, Betty," he assured her, stoutly. "I can manage your father. Lion-hearted Blanc, they call me." "Who does?" she queried, flatly. "Never mind," hastily. He propped his chin in his hands and leaned on the counter. "If there was only something I could do to impress your father. If the Grimeses had only invited me to their ball tonight, then your father would know I was a fine, upstanding, worthwhile citizen." "I like you the way you are," consoled Betty. But she said it absentmindedly because she was pursuing a thought of her own. "I'm surprised the Grimeses are still planning to entertain tonight. You know Mrs. Grimes was robbed of her diamond ring this morning. I should think—"

But what she thought was never finished because just then the door opened and a stranger walked in. "Customer!" whispered Mel to the girl and she slid off the counter. "My good man—" the stranger's eyebrows elevated themselves a careful quarter of an inch, and his accent hovered somewhere around Oxford—with just an odd, peculiar flavor of Flatbush. "—my good man, is it your business to repair? I have here a treasured antique—a genuine Spoofigshire lamp. The handle is loose and I wish to have it repaired. At once. Just the handle, mind you." There was a long pause then "I don't want you messing around with the rest of it, understand?"

The odd customer wasn't waiting for an answer. He moved to the door and turned with his hand on the knob. "I will return in exactly two hours. I expect to find it ready then. I'm taking a powd—I mean, my train leaves promptly at five this afternoon." The door closed softly behind him.

"Gee, Betty!" Mel came out of his daze. "Did you see his eyes? I don't think he liked me very much." "Nonsense," she said, briskly. "You're getting too sensitive, Mel. He's a stranger in town—people have to know you to dislike you, Mel." For a few minutes there was silence in the shop as Mel studied the lamp. Then Betty suddenly straightened up. "Mel—the shape of that lamp! I've been trying to remember. It looks just like Aladdin's lamp in fairy-tales." "What about Aladdin's lamp?" "You rubbed it," Betty answered. "At least, Aladdin

did—and a genie appeared to answer his wish." She eyed the lamp in Mel's hand speculatively.

"Rub it?" Mel exclaimed. He and Betty stared at each other, and then back at the lamp. "Oh, Mel, maybe it is!" Betty said at last. "It must be something out of the ordinary! It's nothing to look at and it can't be valuable in itself, and yet look how much store that man put by it! Maybe it does have magical qualities!" "Yeah," Mel said, awed. "Remember how that man looked at me? I still get the shakes every time I think about it—and I don't think it was because he was worried I couldn't fix the handle. I'll bet he was scared we'd find the secret. I don't even think this is genuine Spoofigshire at all. Gee, Aladdin's Lamp! But what do we do?" "We rub it. And we say magic words" Betty contributed helpfully—though not very practically.

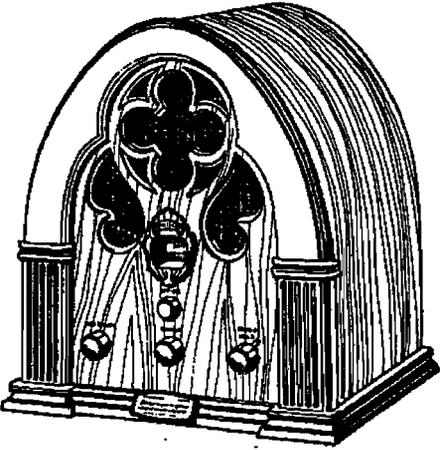
"What magical words?" But Mel grabbed a cloth and started frantically rubbing the side of the lamp. "Ala kazam, ala kazoo." Nothing happened. Frantically the two fell on the lamp, taking turns rubbing—calling up every exotic-sounding word they could think of. And as the hands of the clock moved inexorably on—as moments slipped by and the two hours of the strange customer's threatened return shrank to an hour and then to minutes, "Open sesame!" Mel pleaded. "Come out, come out, wherever you are!" implored Betty. "Eenie-meenie-miney-mo . . . what-to-do-now-I-don't-know—" Mel was wishing something would happen. Something did happen. With that last, frantic rub it happened. But no Genie slowly materialized in ectoplasm in that room; there was a tinkling, crackling sound—and—"Mel! Look—you've rubbed a hole right through the side of it!"

They both stared in consternation and dismay. And then both, with a single thought, looked up at the clock. "Three minutes and he'll be here. Oh, my gosh, what have I done now! Your father is right, Betty." Mel was trying so hard to think Betty could almost see the wheels go round (stripping gears at every turn). "Maybe I can patch it up so he won't notice it, Betty. Do you think so?" They hadn't heard the door open. "And have you fixed the lamp, my good man? I don't like to be kept waiting, you know." "Gee, mister—I'm awfully sorry—there's been a little accident. Oh nothing much—" he added hastily as the stranger took one quick step in his direction—"nothing serious—nothing that couldn't be mended. That's the Fix-It shop motto, you know—if it doesn't need fixing when you bring it in, it will before you take it out. Heh, heh—" but his feeble laughter at his feeble joke died away as he saw the other wasn't exactly convulsed with merriment. "Look, mister—it's almost as good as new. If you'll just wait a second while it sets—the patch, I mean—" "I thought I told you not to mess around with that lamp!" and now there was no mistake about the man's intentions. "Give it to me. And then I'm going to—what was that?"

(To be continued next month.)

Old Time Radio Club

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June 29 - 30: Sponsored by the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound. "Radio Mirror Magazine will be the theme for this year's event and re-creations will be drawn from its pages. OTR stars in attendance will include: Alan Young, Jo Anna March, Douglas Young, Rhoda Whitfield, Janet Waldo, Gil Stratton, Ginny Tyler, Frank Buxton, Paul Herlinger, Art Gilmore, Jim French, Esther Geddes, Herb Ellis, Dick Beals and Harry Bartel. For more information visit their website: www.repsonline.org or phone (425) 488-9518. To be included on the invitation list, contact Mike Sprague, 9936 NE 197th St., Bothell, WA 98011 or e-mail him at hrrmikes@aol.com.