

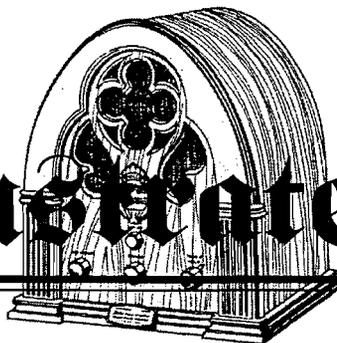
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

# The Illustrated Press

Number 303

October 2002



## The George Burns



## & Gracie Allen Show

# *The Illustrated Press*

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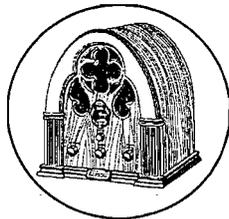
## Membership information

New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets the first Monday of every month at 7:39 PM during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

## Club Mailing Address

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Tape Library Rates: All reels and video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; audio cassettes and records are \$.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.



Life on a farm during the 1930s and 1940s could be dull at times, especially for an only child. Even the smallest new event or object could command quite a bit of attention. My attention was particularly held by our old "B" battery radio. This was my companion and escape to adventure during my childhood. With the radio I could be with many of the heroes, anywhere, and do most anything. With them, I was never alone. To bring me closer to those radio greats, (and to get me to eat the sponsors product), I was offered all sorts of treasures by the *Lone Ranger*, *Sky King*, *Captain Midnight* and many, many others.

Ten cents and a boxtop or two was usually enough to bring me the latest life-saver device used by one of my heroes that month. The items always seemed well worth the small sum of money and the boxtop or label. The hardest part concerning the purchase was the waiting for it to arrive by mail, but finally the day would arrive when the mailman's arm would emerge from his old black and dusty model-A. From his hand into the rural mailbox would go a small brown package from usually one of three places, Chicago, Minneapolis or Battle Creek.

Eagerly opening it, I found the usually small, shiny, well made device, a ring or decoder or ever popular compass in multi-type cases. The object did, in its own small way, just what was claimed on the radio program earlier. Some of these items I have tucked away still, fifty-five or more years after they were offered. Most still do their initial intended chore, and all still do look attractive. How I would love to see once again one of these appearing on the back of a cereal box as I munched away to empty the contents to obtain the boxtop.

One of my most favorite characters associated with selling such devices on the radio was the "Masked Rider of the plains", the *Lone Ranger*. Merita Bread and General Mills were the Ranger's most prominent sponsors. General Mills was the longest running and offered most of the premiums. I can still hear those pitches made for Kix, Cheerioats (that's not a mistake; Cheerios started out as Cheerioats) and Wheaties. When the *Lone Ranger* began using some mystifying device during a program, I immediately prepared to obtain it by getting my General Mills boxtops out and checking my finances.

Sometimes, while carefully taking down the address for some selected treasure, I was afraid the storage battery that supplied power to the radio would fade and die before I got the complete address. As some of you remember with me, the old "B" battery radios were powered by a large dry cell battery and another battery similar to a car battery. The car battery type would run down just like the battery in your car when the generator would quit working in the automobile. Since there was no generator on the radio to keep the battery charged up, about every month or so we would have to take the battery into the village to be "quick charged" by the automobile service station there.

I shall never forget one night my family and I were crowded around the old radio, listening to a particularly exciting *Gang Busters* program, when the sound began to grow weak. We turned the volume down, thinking this would save the battery, which of course it didn't but to no avail. We missed the last ten minutes of the *Gang Busters* program and wondered for months afterward how that story ever ended.

Some more sophisticated radio owners did have a generator type device for their radio batteries. This was a windmill type device which sat atop the house and was run by the wind, of course, and thereby kept the battery charged up.

I always did manage to get all of the *Lone Ranger's* premiums except, perhaps, when the cost ran too high, over fifteen cents. Then a lot of thought would be given to see if that much could be spent on such an item. One of the more expensive rings, I believe it was fifteen cents or possibly a quarter, I still have, and it still works. It was the "Saddle Ring". During the mid-1940s, a ring in the form of a western saddle was introduced in various variety stores. Shortly after, the *Lone Ranger* began wearing a saddle ring. However, his was quite different from the rest. The top of the saddle came off, revealing a luminous base. Into this base could be inserted a provided short strip of film-like plastic with pictures of the Ranger, his horse, Silver, and his companion, Tonto.

## The Illustrated Press

This could also be used as a secret compartment and it glowed in the dark of course.

It seemed most everything just had to have a secret compartment or glow in the dark or both. One of the largest of the Ranger's "glow in the dark objects" was a plastic belt. I decided immediately I had to send for that and keep my pants up with a glow. Alas, this was one of the great things not meant for me. I was a fat kid at this time, a lot fatter than the *Lone Ranger* must have been, for I couldn't get the belt around my middle. I'm quite slim now, but I still can't get the belt on, but it still has a faint greenish glow. I guess I got my fifteen cents worth since it still works after over fifty years since the purchase.

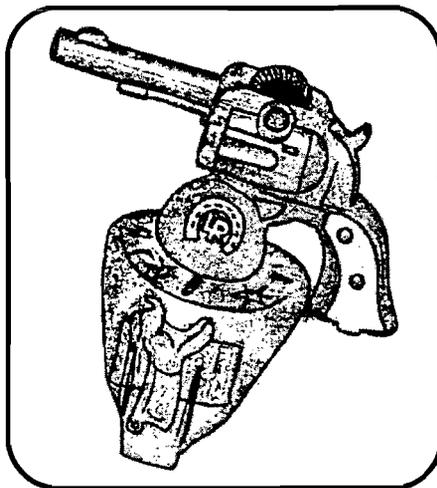
The *Lone Ranger* was interested in weather, as well as outlaws, in some of his programs. One episode dealt with the discovery of a material that would change colors if rain was about to arrive on the scene. Normally blue, the material would turn pink just hours before the showers should appear. This was soon available, of course, to the listeners out in radio land in the form of a ring. It was the traditional gold colored metal band with a plastic top into which a small piece of blue paper was inserted. Two inches or so of this blue paper was provided. When the weather turned damp, the paper did indeed turn pink, and then back to blue when the weather warmed and things turned dry. However, one had to remember not to wash his hands with this wondrous ring on, cause then everything turned pink and the weather forecasting paper was no more!

Another *Lone Ranger* item was the "Six Shooter ring", an especially treasured collector's item today. It was a gold metal band with a Lone Ranger six shooter attached to the top. The pistol stood about an inch high and was impossible to wear, even for the most devout *Lone Ranger* follower. It had a flint and wheel like a cigar lighter in place of the pistol hammer to create sparks.

Also available were *Lone Ranger* silver bullets. Far too large for the pistol on the ring, they were the size of real bullets and were hollow to provide, of course, a secret compartment, and in one edition, a place for a compass. Good as he was, the "Masked Man" must have had trouble with his directions, as a few times he had devices that had a compass built in. The com-

pass in those items worked and still do today in the silver bullets and other items they came in. Of course, the *Lone Ranger* was not alone in offering such rings and things. *Captain Midnight*, for instance had a conglomeration of articles, including a shake up mug

to mix up his sponsor's product, Ovaltine. This was something you really had to have to be a true member of his "Secret Squadron". Those of us that were loyal members, of course, still remember, and possibly still possess one or more of the Code-o-graphs that came out every year or so. This was a device with numbers and letters for decoding secret messages. Remember "Stand by for another Secret Squadron code message!" If you didn't have the current Code-o-graph, you felt a little more than left out. Frequently the entire *Captain Midnight* program was built around the Code-o-graph or his latest premium offer.



The Lone Ranger Pistol Ring, it shot sparks when the flint wheel on top was spun about.

Most every hero of the air waves for the kids decided it was great to have something we could buy to have and hold while the star was using it to fight the bad guys. *Jack Armstrong* used a pedometer, or walkometer as it was also called (a contraption made to strap on your belt to measure the distance you walked) to find out how far it was to the outlaw stronghold. You could get a *Green Hornet* ring that imprinted the seal of the *Green Hornet* the same as Brit Reid (the normal day-to-day identity of the *Green Hornet*) used on his program. *Buck Rogers* had a ring that glowed in the dark after being charged up in the sunlight. However, it would not work if used by a Venusian. I never was able to meet anyone from Venus so I never found out if that part of the ring worked. I've lost it now so I'll never know.

*Sky King* had a ring with a glowing plastic top with a picture of himself that could be removed to reveal an impression of his brand, the Flying Crown. King also had a Signalscope with a glow in the dark band, a mirror for flashing messages in the sun, a code on the side, a magnifying glass and a signal whistle that fit into a secret compartment. Yes, it seemed if you ate any breakfast cereal that the "Champions of Justice" were sponsored by, and supposedly ate, you could possess some of the most remarkable devices in the world. Sometimes it seemed the boxtops were more important than the ten or twenty cents cost of the premiums, and I'm sure they were to the sponsors.

## The Illustrated Press

I believe the greatest proponent of mystifying devices for sale was the radio *Tom Mix*, played by Curly Bradley. He must have had a truck beside the microphone piled full of articles to offer us "Straight-Shooters" out there in radio land, and we were out there all right chomping on shredded Ralston, just waitin' to send in the boxtops.

The *Tom Mix* radio program was presented on the Mutual network, Monday through Friday at 5:45 p.m. He practically had to be on every day to sell all the items and to use each one in one of his adventures. If you missed the sale of one on the air, you could always find it advertised in one of his comic books. Tom, I know, had more rings than he had fingers, and I often wondered how he carried all his articles of war when he fought outlaws.

Among the things I remember is the Magnet Ring. You could tie it to a string and throw it at the bad guys' metal bad things to get them away from them, as I remember happened in one of his programs. There was a siren ring that could be blown to frighten the outlaws into thinking the lawmen were on the way, blowing their siren to clear their way. You could get a *Tom Mix* slide whistle ring that, I guess, was just to play a tune on, but the "Signal Arrowhead" had it all! It was a luminous plastic arrowhead shaped object that had a siren whistle, a 4-note whistle, and a magnifying glass, all in one handy pocket sized piece. For twenty cents and a boxtop, it couldn't be beat by any of the others.

By the end of the 1940s, the end to all this was drawing near. The old radio programs we all knew and loved were on their way to a universal radio station we could tune in only through our memories. Some of the old stars reverted to television, but I for one, thought they were not the same. The rings, the bracelets and all the other great devices were leaving the scene. The heroes now became different; the romance and adventure that so thrilled us on radio now had an aura of make-believe. The caped, masked or flying men when presented to us visually, rather than through our mind's eye, now some-



how seemed silly, rather than exciting. The premiums, the few that were now being offered, were hardly considered and were far from ever competing with the good old radio days really solid objects.

In the back of my mind, I have always hoped someday some of us are tired of the continual music (if that's what some of it can remotely be called) and bring us something even slightly akin to those old radio programs. In the last few years some radio stations have occasionally run some tapes of the old programs, and I

am sure radios all over the country were crowded by nostalgic listeners. Today, still, I cannot hear the "Flight of the Bumble Bee" or the "William Tell Overture" without getting a nostalgic tear in my eye, or thinking about searching for a dime and chomping down some kind of cereal, so I could obtain "just one boxtop". Yes, indeed, those were the "Good Old Days" of radio.

## WOMEN—HOW I LOVE 'EM!

*"But the beautiful creatures, God bless them, just won't reciprocate, not even to pose for a few publicity pictures"*

By ALAN YOUNG (1946)

As far back as I can remember I've always wanted women around me—especially, beautiful women. I always envied men in show business—eternally surrounded by galaxies of gorgeous girls. At an early age I decided that if I was ever to have a bevy of beauties bothering me, I'd have to get in show business where they were. It was pretty evident that they weren't out looking for Alan.

For a long time Mother was my best girl. It wasn't that I particularly wanted to be a Mama's Boy, but I was getting nowhere as a Ladies' Man. Maybe I wasn't dashing enough. Why I didn't even smoke or drink. Why should I run the risk of losing my Boy Scout standing? Finally, I confided to Mother my determination to enter show

## *The Illustrated Press*

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business. To my surprise, she approved readily. It seems Mother had always harbored a secret yen for footlights.

My first job, in Vancouver, Canada, was entertaining at civic and social affairs with a song-and-dance act. I teamed up with a girl that was beautiful and talented. Ah, what a break for Alan! Then came another break. She left the act to get married. But it didn't break me up too much—she was my sister Harriet. I became a lone wolf, stalking the theatre circuit for my prey. But I guess I wasn't a very convincing wolf. Every time I howled at them, they howled right back—with laughter.

Eventually things began breaking my way. I went back to Vancouver to do a radio program and there I met a beautiful American girl. I kept trying to convince her that mine would be a wonderful wagon to hitch her star to. She was pretty tough to convince. Then one starry night she got her eyes full of moonlight and before she knew it she was Mrs. Young. My social life was all set. Now if I could be surrounded by beautiful women in my professional life, my dreams would be realized. But I couldn't get any co-operation from my business manager. Since I didn't drink or smoke, he built me up as a pure guy—which was pure poison with the glamor gals.

My wife, Mary Anne, understood my feelings; so she decided to help me by bringing another woman into my life. And what a woman! Beautiful, talented, blonde hair, blue eyes, delicate features, and she's crazy about me. Her name? Alanna Young—my three-year-old daughter.

I suppose that should have satisfied me, but it didn't. All of my admirers were on the home side. I wanted women around me during work hours. Finally, my chance came when I got a radio program in the United States. Jeanne Gillespie was cast in the role of my girl friend, Betty; so things were looking up. But I soon found that Betty didn't spend much time looking at me—especially, when there were male guests on the program. To cap it all, she went out and got herself engaged, which killed all chances of getting any romantic publicity.

For the first year and a half of my American program, I lived in New York, but not once did I get into the Stork or El Morroco with beautiful girls clinging to my arms. I did get to Toots Shor's. What a thrill as I sat there sipping a lemonade and gazed into the soulful eyes of my manager and press agent.

Then the circus came to town and I was told to go pose with some trapeze artists for publicity pictures. That should have been just what Alan wanted, because they



were dazzling, bespangled beauties. I arrived at Madison Square Garden in my best suit and snappiest bow tie, but the daring young lady on the flying trapeze didn't give me a second glance. Her husband was performing and she was so busy watching him that she didn't know I was there. It made me so mad that I threw down my popcorn and stomped out.

After a few days of sulking, the sun broke through again. I was to go to Hollywood to make a picture and was scheduled to appear with Jeanne Crain, the pretty new star. There was no way they could avoid taking pictures of us together—I thought. Then my Hollywood script writers began conferring over my radio program's format to determine how I should react to the glamorous feminine stars that were to guest on the show. They finally decided that I should be shy and non-aggressive. Imagine, Tiger Young being shy and non-aggressive with Rita Hayworth!

Even that man-hungry she-wolf, Vera Vague, gave me a one-two brush off when she visited the program. That was just about the last straw. I not only didn't get any romantic publicity with these guests, I didn't even get a private smile.

But I still had my picture to make with gorgeous Jeanne Crain. They just had to take some stills of us to publicize the picture. That would result in the gossip columnists linking us romantically. At last, the publicity I had waited so long for! Finally, came the day to start work on the picture. Then I got word that there

## The Illustrated Press

would be a one-day delay—to permit Jeanne to get married. That did it, I give up. I guess I just don't have the makings of a great lover. I don't know why. I have a smile like Tyrone Power, hair like Van Johnson, teeth like Robert Taylor, and a build like—like—uh, Mickey Mouse. Say, maybe that's what did it?



### Of Possible Interest

The International Jack Benny Fan Club is planning a Convention to be held in Los Angeles, California during the month of February 2003.

#### THE 39 FOREVER CELEBRATION

Friday evening, February 14, 2003 (Jack Benny's Birthday) — Birthday party and radio show recreation featuring Eddie Carroll (Jack Benny impressionist)

Saturday morning/afternoon, February 15 — A jam-packed day of Benny events, including Jack Benny panels featuring JOAN BENNY, IRVING FEIN, and others who knew and worked with him.

Saturday evening — *39 Forever Celebrity Banquet* at the Beverly Hills Friar's Club, featuring the fabulous INK SPOTS.

Sunday afternoon, February 16 — Down Memory Lane

For more information see the IJBFC web site at:

[www.jackbenny.org](http://www.jackbenny.org) or E-mail the Club at:

[jackbenny@aol.com](mailto:jackbenny@aol.com)

### Science Fiction Descends on Philadelphia

## Philcon 2002

December 13-15, 2002, Marriott Center City, Philadelphia, PA

Guest of Honor: Connie Willis (*Hugo and Nebula Award winning author*), Artist Guest of Honor: Donato Giancola (*His work has appeared with DC Comics, Tor Books and Wizards of the Coast, among many others*), Special Guests: David Gerrold (*Screenwriter, Novelist, Producer. Author of Star Trek's "The Trouble With Tribbles"*), Nalo Hopkinson (*Award winning author of "Brown Girl In The Ring", "Midnight Robber" and "Skin Folk"*), Spider & Jeanne Robinson (*The author of "Callahan's Crosstime Saloon" stories, along with his talented wife Jeanne*).

For further information write: P.O. Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303 or see web site at [www.philcon.org](http://www.philcon.org)

A Worldcon comes to Toronto once in a generation. Do not miss your chance to attend it next year!!!

## TORCON3

61st World Science Fiction Convention

August 28 - September 1, 2003

Metro Toronto Convention Centre

Royal York Hotel, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Renaissance Toronto Hotel at Sky Dome

Guests of Honour: George R. R. Martin (*author*), Frank Kelly Freas (*artist*), Mike Glycer (*fan*), Spider Robinson (*Toastmaster*)

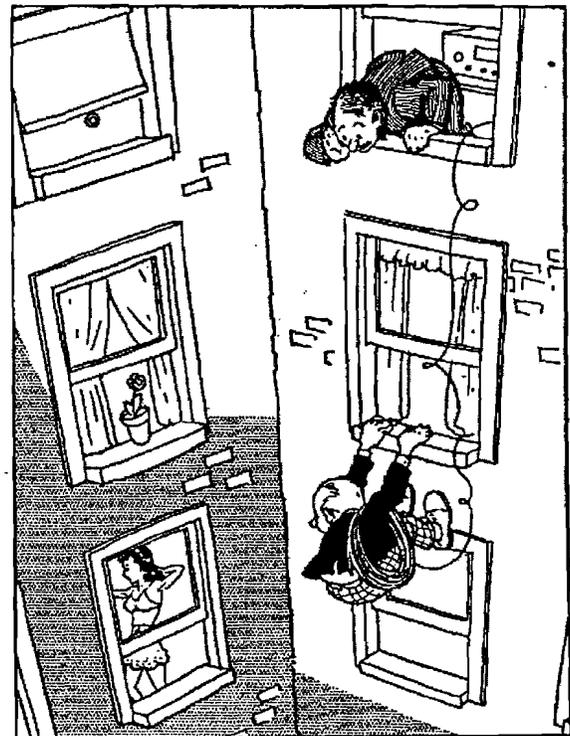
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"Hey, you dope, the antenna goes up—you know, UP—the other way..."

## Cassette Library is Reunited

As of this writing the complete Old Time Radio Club's Cassette Library has been taken over by one Librarian. Pete Bellanca has turned over all of the high numbered cassettes to Dan Marafino who will now be responsible for filling orders for all cassettes.

When requesting tapes be sure to give Dan alternate selections so that your order is not held up or sent out short due to cassettes having been borrowed by other members. Also please return them promptly so that others may have the use of them too.

# Masie

## *Ann Sothern's Screen Character Found New Fame on the Air*

Taking the air was a chinch for Masie after her highly successful celluloid ramblings. And in this, too, Masie displayed her usual lovable lack of respect for orthodox procedure. Instead of first winning fame on the ether waves and then invading the cinema world, as numerous other radio programs such as *Duffy's Tavern* and *Blondie* have done. Masie went at it the other way around. She romped through a whole series of *Masie* films that made her one of the nation's best loved sweethearts before she decided to show them she had as much ear as eye appeal. And she did. Her show came on in July, 1945, as a summer replacement for Milton Berle and by popular demand had been a CBS feature thereafter.

There was one person, however, to whom Masie's harum-scarum, impulsively shrewd ways were often a great trial. And that's her progenitor, Ann Sothern. Ann had become so thoroughly identified with the radio and screen role she created that she often found it hard to remember just who she was. As a matter of fact, she was neither Ann nor Masie; she was born Harriet Lake of North Dakota and as such was discovered and given a Broadway start by Florenz Ziegfeld. But Masie fans expected Ann (nee Harriet) to be and act like Masie and sometimes that made things difficult, as the two had quite different tastes. Masie loved to get herself up in frill and furbelows. Ann preferred simple clothes. Masie didn't go in for sports; Ann adored fishing. Nevertheless, Ann admitted that the little Brooklyn gal with the heart



**MAKING LIKE MASIE:** Even in her own back yard Ann found it hard not to behave like Masie for she didn't like to let her fans down. Thus the frills for the cameraman. Ann really preferred simple clothes and loved fishing which Masie hated. Oh, well . . . Masie paid the bills.

of gold and the will to spurn diamonds had done all right by her. Fans thought Masie had done all right by them, too, according to their letters, which added up to "*Long Live Masie!*" . . .



**YOU CAN'T FOOL MASIE:** George Murphy, Masie's leading man on the screen is doing his best with sleight-of-hand, but no sale.

## THERE'S NEVER A DULL MOMENT IN GEORGE BURNS' HOUSEHOLD

Reprinted from *Tune In Magazine*  
(January 1946)

If you were taking a sight-seeing trip through Beverly Hills, famed habitat of the Hollywood radio and movie stars, one of the sights the guide would call out would be a plain unpretentious 12-room house with a comparatively inconspicuous swimming pool hidden in the back yard. "The Burns and Allen home," the guide would shout, and possibly you would be a little startled to find the zaniest Mr. and Mrs. on radio living in so conventionally suburban a house.

If, on the other hand, a secret key would admit you into the interior of the Burns menage, you would be a little more reassured. For inside the comfortable dwelling, the goings-on have something of the same spirit and animation that Burns and Allen capture on their radio program every Thursday night on NBC.

First of all there's Gracie herself . . . not the flutter-brained nitwit with the high-pitched voice that you are familiar with on the air, but a more gentle, soft spoken Gracie. Despite the fact that the real-life Gracie is a lot quieter than the professional one, she is still lively and vivacious, and forever reminiscing about her crazy relatives. The other half of the famous matrimonial team, George, might be around too—probably playing with the family dog or bending over his income tax returns, but in any event bearing somewhat the same perplexed, impatient air that he is famous for on the radio.

Two other less publicized Burnses would also be in the immediate vicinity. They are eleven-year old Sandra and ten-year old Ronnie, the two children that Gracie and George adopted not so long ago. You'd probably find Sandra practicing a difficult Beethoven sonata on the piano, stopping now and then to do a lively jitterbug to relax her leg muscles. Ronnie, who goes to military school, could probably be found in the backyard shooting away at some clay pigeons.

Not quite as crazy as the Burns and Allen household



Dining in the library of their Beverly Hills home are the Burns Family: Ronnie, Papa George, Mama Gracie and Sandra.

you hear on the radio? Well, maybe not. But it's a lively family, and a happy one, and you can bet your life that there's rarely a dull moment when they are all together. Take dinner time, for example. Chances are the Burnses would forsake the elaborate dining-room for an informal meal in the library. Chances are, too, that Gracie has cooked the meal—she's a confirmed homebody, and passes up thousands of dollars in movie contracts so that she will have more time to take care of her family. All through dinner, Gracie entertains with her sparkling stories—with husband George around to feed cues when Gracie stops to take a breath. "Tell us about your mother and her poodle . . ." George will start out, and Gracie is off on another of her long, amusing stories. After dinner, Gracie takes over at the piano, while George, Sandra and Ronnie do a fast-paced buck-and-wing.

When the junior Burnses have gone to bed, George works over the next week's radio scripts or studies a new contract (he handles all the production and financial chores in the family). It's along about this time, too, that Mr. and Mrs. Burns sound the most like their radio counterparts. "Do we have enough money to buy me a new sable coat?" Mrs. Burns will ask. "Aw, Gracie!" is the familiar cry of hapless George.

## **The Old Time Radio Club**

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