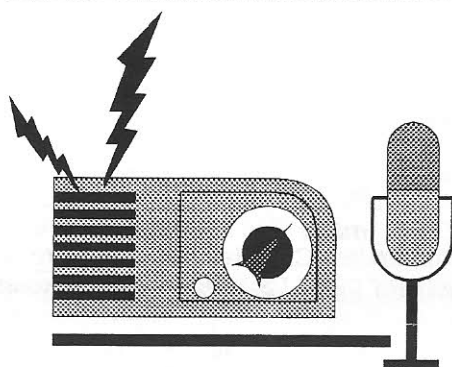


Volume 25, Number 8

March, 2000



Radio's Moments Of The 20th Century - *The One Hundred Greatest Moments in Old-Time Radio*

by Elizabeth McLeod ©1999 Elizabeth McLeod

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Editor's Note: Ten of Elizabeth's *The One Hundred Greatest Moments in Old-Time Radio* will be published monthly in the RHAC Newsletter.

90. *Elsie Hitz and Nick Dawson and the rise of Romantic Adventure: 1932*

Sexual tension in serial drama is nothing new. The smoldering relationships of Elsie and Nick brought a vicarious thrill to Depression-weary women thruout the mid-thirties. The couple starred in three different series of "exotic, romantic adventure" during these years -- *Dangerous Paradise*, *Follow The Moon*, and *The Magic Voice*. Different titles, different settings -- but the sublimated passion never changed. The concept of the "Super-Couple" is key to soap opera technique to this day, and it can be argued that Elsie Hitz and Nick Dawson were the pioneers. Granted, "Mary and Bob" of the *Macfadden True Story Hour* came first -- but Elsie and Nick had the mystique.

89. *Who's Yehoodi?? Spring 1940*

Bob Hope was just another fresh-guy comedian thru the

late thirties, and while he was a rising star on the *Pepsodent Show* at the dawn of the new decade, it took a chance exchange with stooge Jerry Colonna over possible names for announcer Bill Goodwin's infant son to capture the national imagination. Was "Yehoodi" a figment of Colonna's imagination? A reference to violinist Yehudi Menuhin? Or a mysterious personification of prewar jitters? No one knows -- but that didn't stop all America from asking. And as Americans became Yehoodi-conscious, they soon made Bob Hope the top-ranked radio comedian in the land.

88. *National Defense Test Day 9/12/24*

Broadcasters and the military join forces for an impressive demon-stration of how radio can link the country together in the event of an emergency. The substance of the evening -- a series of rather tedious speeches, livened only by one general's seemingly-tipsy rendition of an old barracks song -- is less important

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RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

Dedicated to the preservation of old time radio programs and to making those programs available to our members.

RHAC Board Meeting Thursday, April 6, 2000 - 7:30 PM

At

Guy Albright, 786 South Quitman St., Denver, CO

303-934-0184

Old time radio is alive and well in Denver!

KRMA Channel 6 Secondary Audio Program, RHAC's show *Tribute to OTR* Sunday 2:00 PM

KEZW 1430 AM *When Radio Was* weekdays from 7:00 - 8:00 PM *Radio Movie Classics* Sundays 5:00 - 6:00 PM

KFKA 1310 AM *Radio Memories* Sundays 6:00 to 12:00 PM

KUVO 89.3 FM *Destination Freedom* 3rd Sunday of the month 7:30 PM - **BROADCAST LIVE!!!!**

RHAC WEB SITE

The RHAC web page and catalog is on the World Wide Web:
<http://www.old-time.com/rhac.html>

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Sad News

We just learned that Margaret Duniven, wife of Herb Duniven, died a few days ago.

As most of you know, Herb was President of RHAC for many years and has been involved with the organization in many other capacities. He continues his contributions to RHAC by helping organize the Contributors' Library.

Many of our members have met Margaret at RHAC functions. She was a wonderful lady and will be missed.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Herb and his family during this difficult time.



By JoAnn Bantin

Currently, the retired but very busy RHAC *Players*, will be doing two morning performances of "The House That Time Forgot" on Thursday, March 2nd at Aurora Central High School for the school literary festival. The cast members include: Larry Weide, Helen Lozynsky, Nancy and Ernie Witte, Ellen and Les Benoit, Guy Albright, John Stevenson, Dave Clow, and JoAnn and Fred Bantin. The performances will be in the student ROTC building at 9:30 & 10:30 A.M.

The *Players* Board met in January and the coming agenda of plays were discussed. Everything is not quite finalized but the plays being considered are the following:

The "Amulet of Nefertiti" written by Larry Weide. His play is full of intrigue and excitement against a background of ancient Egypt. It is truly an exciting and wonderful play.

"Arsenic & Old Lace" of course is extremely delightful with the Brewsters sisters and all their vanishing male guests. This wonderful production will be directed by John Licht. For a Christmas production different plays are still being considered.

The possibility of another production of "The Iron Box" may also be on the agenda.

Hopefully more definite times of productions and reading schedules will be included in our next news article. Remember, we are always looking for new players and playwrights. All of the *Players* hope to bring all of you another good year so be sure to keep checking our article and have a good spring.

Radio's Moments Of The 20th Century

Continued from Page 1

than the technical skills necessary to make it all happen, as engineers flawlessly shift from point to point along a coast-to-coast network: demonstrating techniques that would become essential in the years to come.

87. *A Christmas Carol*: 12/25/34

A holiday tradition begins as Lionel Barrymore appears for the first time as Dickens' covetous, grasping old sinner, in a segment of a three-hour Christmas Day broadcast over CBS, under the sponsorship of the Nash-Kelvinator Company. The tradition would endure in various formats for the next twenty years -- and, in recorded form, to this day.

86. *The Death of Will Rogers* 1935

The "Cowboy Philosopher" was a fixture on radio throughout the Depression years, and while he had a successful career in movies and as a syndicated newspaper columnist -- to say nothing of his many years on the stage -- by the early thirties, most Americans knew him as the man with the alarm clock, giving out wry and sometimes even caustic commentary on the passing scene. His sudden

death in the summer of 1935 sent a nation into mourning.

85. *Don Becker's Weak-End Satires* 1928

Before he became a soap-opera writer/producer (*Life Can Be Beautiful*), Don Becker was a ukulele playing utility man at WLW Cincinnati. And he was also the medium's first notable satirist, parodying the conventions of radio at a time when they had barely been established. While recording artists like Jones and Hare had kidded the emerging medium on phonograph records, Becker took the idea even further: creating an entire fictitious network and making the day-in day-out effluvia of broadcasting into one big running gag. His weekly presentation of the programs of the "Lavender Network" and his depiction of the behind-the-scenes chaos have been echoed by innumerable comedians. Stoopnagle and Budd, Brad Browne, Raymond Knight, Fred Allen, Stan Freberg, Bob and Ray, even Saturday Night Live and Second City have all done it since -- but the forgotten Don Becker blazed the trail.

84. *Shakespeare Summer* 1937

Imagine a season in which the two major networks battled for listeners not with comedians or swing bands - but with the Bard himself. NBC's *Streamlined Shakespeare* offered condensed plays starring John Barrymore, while the CBS presentation of "Hollywood Salutes Shakespeare" gave movieland favorites a crack at the Classics.

83. *The Fall Of William L. Shirer* 1947

Was he fired for being too liberal? Or was he fired for being lazy? Was Shirer, later to be blacklisted, the victim and Ed Murrow the villain? Or was it all just a massive misunderstanding? To this day, arguments rage over the departure from CBS of the legendary newsman. The real, full story will probably never be known, but that didn't make the issues raised

any less significant, as radio moved into a dark new era.

82. *The Rise of Joe Penner*
Fall/Winter 1933

Tens of millions of otherwise reasonable radio listeners are captivated by a bizarre, manic child-man, whose piercing catchphrases echo across playgrounds and schoolyards, offices and street corners for nearly two years before the craze fades away. Academics have tried to dissect the Penner phenomenon -- but in fact there is no rational explanation for it. It just is.

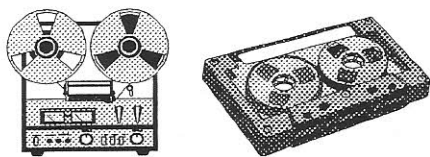
81. *Fall Of The City* 4/11/37

Earle McGill's spectacular production of Archibald McLeish's chilling vision of a not-so-future war brings the *Columbia Workshop* to maturity. Hardly anyone was listening -- but many of those who did were themselves creative radio people, who were profoundly influenced by the program's power.

Elizabeth McLeod is a journalist, researcher, and freelance writer specializing in radio of the 1930s. She is a regular contributor to *Nostalgia Digest* magazine and the *Internet OldRadio Mailing List*, maintains a web site, Broadcasting History Resources, and is presently researching a book on Depression-era broadcasting. Elizabeth is always looking for 1930s radio recordings in all formats -- uncoated aluminum or lacquer-coated discs, vinyl or shellac pressings, or low-generation tape copies.

You can contact her at:

lizmcl@midcoast.com



New in The Tape Library

By Maletha & Dick King

This month's entries start out with more of the *Meet The Meeks*. The more we listened to the Meek family,

the more we could remember similar happenings in our own lives. It is the kind of show that grows on you. There were very few plots that did not have a familiar sound and at least a reflection of truth.

After the family comedy of *The Meeks*, we go to the antics of Monty Woolley in the role of the *Magnificent Montague*. This is an entirely different type of comedy that we can all enjoy and not be concerned that it might be overheard by younger members of the household. The sound of these shows is good and we feel fortunate to have the recordings that are now fifty years old. Hard to believe?? Time has a way of moving on whether we are with it or left behind. There will be more *Magnificent Montague's* in the next month and we sure you will enjoy them too.



Remembering Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy

By Dr. Charles A. Beckett

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Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy were one of the most popular entertainment teams in the history of radio comedy. Bergen was born Edgar John Bergen in Chicago on February 16, 1903. The idea for his ventriloquist dummy, Charlie McCarthy, was born while Bergen was still in high school. And, although Charlie cost only \$35.00 to make, he helped pay Bergen's way through college.

Bergen attended Northwest

University in Chicago, as a pre-med student, but left before graduation to tour the United States and Europe on the vaudeville circuit. Ironically, although Bergen never graduated from college, Charlie later received an honorary college degree -- Master of Innuendo and the Snappy Comeback -- from the same university that Bergen attended.

Bergen was discovered by Rudy Vallee, who saw him perform at an Elsa Maxwell party. Bergen's first radio appearance with Charlie was on Valle's *Royal Gelatine Hour*, December 17, 1936. Vallee like the act so much that he had "them" perform on thirteen more of his radio shows.

After his appearance on Valle's show, Bergen signed to host *The Chase and Sanborn Hour*, first broadcast on May 9, 1937. He and Charlie continued to perform together on radio for twenty years -- from 1936 to 1956. They reached the height of their popularity in the late 1930's.

In 1939, *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* became *The Charlie McCarthy Show* and was shortened to 30 minutes. In 1955, when the show became *The New Edgar Bergen Hour*, it returned to the one hour time period.

Bergen won a special Academy Award in 1937 for his creation of Charlie. Besides Charlie, Bergen's other dummies included Mortimer Snerd, who first appeared on the show November 5, 1939; Effie Klinker, who was first heard on the September 3, 1944 program; and the lesser known Podine Puffington.

Many members of Bergen's supporting cast over the years went on to successful careers in their own right. They included: Don Ameche, Dorothy Lamour, Nelson Eddy, Judy Canova, Bud Abbott and Lo Costello, Frances Langford, Marsha Hunt, Richard Haydn, and W.C. Fields. Fields revived his sagging career as a member of *The Charlie McCarthy Show*. Later, after Fields was no

longer a regular cast member, he appeared frequently on the show as a guest star. One of the highlights of the show was the several month "on-air" Fields-McCarthy feud, much of which, reportedly, ad-libbed.

Bergen made several movies with Charlie in the late 1930's and 40's.

Besides performing with Charlie, Bergen hosted the *Do You Trust Your Wife?* radio show during the 1956 season. After that, he guested on several variety shows. He also made several movies — without Charlie — in Straight dramatic roles. His last movie was a 1978 cameo appearance in *The Muppet Movie* (released in 1979).

Bergen's final appearance was with Andy Williams in Las Vegas. He announced his retirement in 1978, dying in his sleep on October 1st of that year, at age 75.

Edgar Bergen's final resting place is in Inglewood Park Cemetery, Inglewood, California. His neighbors include cowboy actor Hoot Gibson, Betty Grable, and Gypsy Rose Lee.

Charlie McCarthy continues to enjoy a quiet retirement at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C.

Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy remain unique in the fields of radio, television, and movie entertainment — and in the memories of those of us who grew up with them.

Friends — Lost & Found

By Wendell Basista

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I think it was 1943, it might have been 1942; but whenever it was, Chuck and I lost a pair of friends. We never found them again. Their names were Steve Taylor and Mike Gallagher. Our acquaintanceship ran all that year of our third grade in school. The first order of business after classes were over for the day was to head for our appointed spot in

front of the Philco console in my parent's living room. That's where Steve and Mike would exhibit all that was right in the world of good guys and bad guys. They were Highway Patrolmen or State Troopers. They were patterned after the hero and sidekick models of the B Westerns. I identified with Steve. I could visualize a man's man, lean as a wolf, cerebral, two-fisted and capable of making the most resourceful improvisations in any emergency. Mike, on the other hand was slow and plodding, but intensely loyal and the first guy you would want by your side in a brawl. Tangling with him would be like being locked up in a telephone booth with a wildcat. Every week, the heavies started their criminal activities on Monday and they got their richly deserved lumps on Friday. We were completely absorbed in the action, chewing our lips as the tension reached incredible heights. How were they going to get out of this jam? Somehow, our heroes cheated death at every turn, but only after leaving us in cliffhanger suspense at the end of each episode. We cheered them on, five days a week, fifteen minutes a day; we loved it. . . life was rich.

In those days there was no shortage of heroes on the airwaves. The serial lineup featured such heavy hitters as Superman, Tom Mix, Jack Armstrong and Captain Midnight; just to name a few. I don't know why Steve and Mike were our favorites, but we were their faithful fans, forever, or so we thought. Things went along swimmingly until that painful Friday afternoon late in May. The school term was winding down. Unbeknown to us, the big radio moguls were making their annual summer program changes. Sure enough, that week's serial had just ended on its usual happy note when the announcer unexpectedly told us that we had just heard the last show of the season. It was only small consolation when he added that the

show would be back in the fall; we bought it, we really thought that when the new school year began, Steve and Mike would be back on the highway and we would pick up where we left off. When you are eight years old, you just don't comprehend the reality about ratings and sponsor's bottom lines. Imagine our frustration when September came and we couldn't find them on the dial. Canceling our favorite show was hard for us to grasp. That was it; they were gone. The boys went off to that big State Police Troop in the radio sky, leaving behind unanswered questions that exist to this day. I don't remember the exact name of the show, even after looking through old radio logs of the period. No reference book mentions it. Who were the actors, the sponsor? I just don't know. What I do know is that this was a near magical part of being a kid in the forties. The bond between a boy and his radio heroes was eternal.

Sadly, I don't expect to ever find out. I have never talked to another person who has any knowledge about this serial, except of course Chuck, whom I have not seen or heard from in over forty years. However, we all have lasting childhood memories, important only to us. This one sticks to me like fly paper. I wish I knew the particulars about this show, but I don't feel that I ever will. I guess some mysteries are just meant to remain unsolved. Who can tell, perhaps if I did know, the memories would not be as good. I hope not.

Editor's Note: After consulting some OTR show references, I came up with information of Wendell's show.

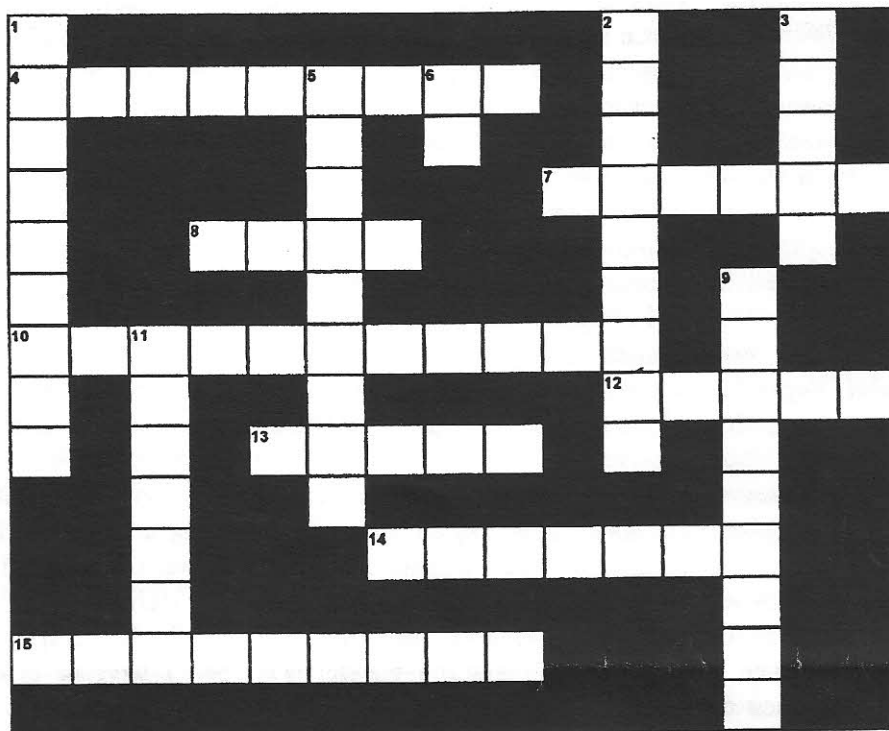
How about *Highway Patrol*? It was a 15-minute, Monday - Friday show that starred Michael Fitzmaurice and John McGovern as state troopers. It ran on the Mutual Network for approximately three months in the Spring of 1943. As best I can determine there are no episodes of this series available.

Radio Crossword Puzzle

By Jim Johnston

This month we have another Old-Time Radio Crossword Puzzle. The subject of this month's puzzle is perhaps OTR's most popular comedy - *The Jack Benny Program*. The puzzle and its answers appear in the same issue. (The answers are on back page.) Good luck!

Jack Benny #1



ACROSS

4. When Benny wanted his valet, he would call "Oh _____! _____!"
7. Bandleader Phil _____ had comedic timing every bit as keen as Benny's, and greeted him with "Hiya, Jackson."
8. Her stage name was _____ Livingstone, but when Benny first met her at the May Company, her real name was Sadye Marks.
10. _____ sponsored Benny from 1944 to 1948, and 1949 to 1955.
12. When Benny went to the train station, you could bet that the announcer (played by Mel Blanc) would call a departure for "Anaheim, _____, and Cuc-amonga!"
13. _____ sponsored Benny from 1934 to 1942.
14. Mel Blanc was the sputtering, clanking "voice" of Benny's car, a _____.
15. Dennis Day usually greeted Benny with "_____ " because those were his first words when he actually auditioned for a part on the show.

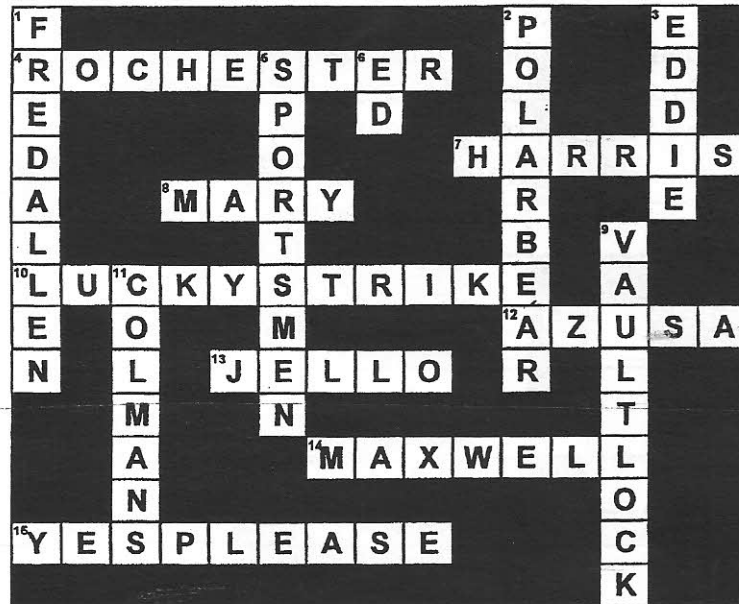
DOWN

1. Comedian _____ comically "feuded" with Benny, and once remarked that Benny "couldn't adlib a belch at a Hungarian dinner".
2. Carmichael, the _____ that guarded Benny's vault, once ate a gas man.
3. The part of the "saw blade" voiced valet was played by _____ Anderson.
5. Benny was constantly firing and rehiring the _____ Quartet because they constantly interrupted his delivery.
6. The human vault guard, named _____, had not been "up" to the outside world since the Revolutionary War.
9. When Benny manipulated the _____, he muttered the combination out loud: Right to 45, Left to 60, Right to 15, and Left to 110.
11. Actually living only 8 blocks away, Benny wrote the _____, Ronald and Benita, into the script as his next door neighbors.

Answers can be found on the back page

Answers to The Jack Benny Crossword Puzzle

Jack Benny #1



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