

RADIO VARIETIES

OCTOBER, 1940

The Midwest Edition

TEN CENTS

Jack Stilwill, announcer at WLS, Chicago, includes among his many programs portions of the WLS National Barn Dance and the daily Smile-A-While Program.



"PATTER OFF THE PLATTER"

By Hal Davis

Reviews, News and Views of the Recording Whirl

RAYMOND SCOTT has changed the personnel of his new band, but the answers stay the same. Scott's records are prime illustrations of what good musicianship, clever ideas and persistent rehearsals can do. "A Million Dreams Ago" and "In A Moonboat" are distinguished, polished modern dansology.

Nan Wynn delivers a potent vocal job on both sides. She won't be with the band when it opens at Chicago's Blackhawk in November. Ray has added Clyde Burke for the ballads and is currently looking for another girl vocalist.

Girl vocalists generally fall into three classes. The first consists of girls who are beautiful — but can't sing. The second includes the lassies with good voices but poor chassis.

The third, very limited, consists of the ladies who combine both tone and sex-appeal in the proper quantities. One of the nicest girls third-class on radio and records is Ginny Simms, the Kay Kyser canary. Ginny has a peculiar style which is highly individualistic. Her high, soaring obligatos on popular tunes are a joy to hear. Listen to "I'll Never Smile Again" and "I Can't Resist You" (Okeh) for good examples of the Simms technique. Another favorite with vocal fans is Connie Boswell. Lovely Connie has few equals when it comes to swinging or balladry. Her Deccadisc of "Blueberry Hill" and "The Nearness of You" approaches vocal perfection.

With the fall season approaching, word comes that the New York Philharmonic - Symphony

Orchestra will again be heard on the CBS air-planes. Columbia Records has released the Brahms Second as played by Barbirolli and the Philharmonic in a technically perfect recording that is made more attractive by the recent price cuts. Chicago's Frederic has recorded Sibelius' "Swan of Tuonela" for Columbia with the Chicago Symphony. The playing is brilliant and Stock's interpretation decidedly worth-while.

Dixieland swing is a specialized field in which few bands are outstanding. Most notable in this line is the Bob Crosby outfit, followed closely by Will Bradley's up-and-coming aggregation. Decca has just issued a Crosby Dixieland album that is darn good jazz. Especially liked were such sides as "Dixieland Shuffle," "At The Jazz Band Ball," and "Dixieland Band". Solo honors are evenly distributed with Bob Haggart's bass being in evidence most of the time.

Eddy Duchin fans will probably be thrilled to death when they hear his new Columbia piano album. "The Magic Fingers of Radio" get busy with such numbers as "Lovely To Look At," "April in Paris," "Way You Look Tonight," "I Guess I'll Have To Change My Plan" and other romantic ballads in the same category with highly effective results. Backed by a smooth rhythm group, Duchin plays in his usual distinctive style. Highly Recommended for piano fanciers.

Eddy Howard's "I'll Never Smile Again" and "Now I Lay Me Down To Dream" are admirable song-selling. Lou Adrian handles the accompaniments. (Columbia). Tommy Dorsey unleashes smooth trombone on "Our Love Affair" and "That's For Me." (Victor). Vaughn Monroe's new band, which looks like a comer, does an excellent job with "There I Go" plus "Whatever Happened To You." (Bluebird). Give this department John Kirby for instrumental perfection. His "On A Little Street

In Singapore" and "Zooming at the Zombie" can't be matched by any other small combination. Watch for Billy Kyle's pianistics. (Okeh). Teddy (Cafe Society) Wilson's Columbia disc of "Liza" and "Sweet Lorraine" features terrific Wilson 88-work. Don Arres caters to the current conga craze with "One And Two And Three" plus "Aqua."

Tommy Tucker Time flips lightly off the tongue — but maestro Tucker deserves a longer period of consideration. Tommy, likeable and personable, has



TOMMY TUCKER

gathered together a really fine sweet band under his banner. Smart showman and shrewd batoneer. Tucker realizes that the success of a band is not only dependent on the kind of music it plays. Tommy is constantly on the lookout for new ideas, songs and novelties to spice up his entertainment value. Remember "The Man Who Comes Around?" Tommy plugged and plugged at that tune till his Okeh record had sold over 200,000. Now he has the sequel, something called "The Man Don't Come To Our House Anymore." It's tuneful and rhythmic, with a catchy lyric. If Tommy doesn't watch out, he'll end up with one of the country's biggest name bands. ASIDES: Amy Arnell, young, luscious, smooth, does the vocals. Amy sings in the Bonnie Baker fashion when she has to, but can turn out a fine job on clever novelties. Catch "Ain't It A Shame About Mame?" (Okeh).

(Want a picture of Tommy Tucker? Just drop this column a postal. The first 500 fans to write in will receive a picture of Tommy and a list of his latest records.)



GINNY SIMMS

"LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL"



LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL — If you don't believe it ask the above members of the cast of *Life Can Be Beautiful*, NBC dramatic serial heard Mondays through Fridays

over the NBC-Red network at 12 Noon CST. Left to right: Ralph ("Papa" David) Solomon, Mitzi (Rita) Gould, John (Stephen Hamilton) Holbrook and Alice ("Chichi" Conrad) Reinheart.

The "Life Can Be Beautiful" program was on the air two years last September 5th, and to date the chief problem of the authors, Don Becker and Carl Bixby, is how to introduce a villainous character into the script and keep him, or her, that way.

Their difficulty can be traced directly to Papa David Solomon, the central figure of their story, and to the atmosphere of his little Slightly-Read Bookshop, where, for the most part, the scene of the story is laid. When Bixby and Becker created David Solomon, they endowed him with a philosophy which is summed up in the program title, "Life Can Be

Beautiful", and they gave him a sincere belief in the fundamental goodness of every human being. Papa David immediately came to life before their eyes, and has so stubbornly adhered to the characteristics, with which they themselves endowed him, that every new, and supposedly villainous, character which they introduce to the script immediately reforms under David's kindly tutelage, and another plot has to be revised.

Stephen Hamilton, a crippled young lawyer, was already living with David in the bookshop when the story opened and, in the first day's episode, Chichi Conrad, a

young girl from the slums who had been turned out on the streets by a woman she believed to be her mother, ran into the shop for refuge. These two have since become Papa David's "adopted" children, and the old man's influence on them was all according to plan. A short while ago, however, a character by the name of Rita Yates was introduced to the show. She was supposed to be in the bookshop for the questionable purpose of swindling money from one of Chichi's friends, and her character was definitely on the shady side when first we met her. She

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LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

Continued from Page 3

stayed in the bookshop a few weeks and, in spite of the authors, her better nature began to assert itself. Finally David reformed her completely, while Bixby and Becker tore their hair and resigned themselves to finding Rita honest work in a settlement house. She was a complete washout as a villainess when David got through with her.

Ralph Locke, who takes the part of Papa David, is a genial gentleman with a twinkle in his eye, and a perfect fit for the part. Even Papa David's stubbornness is reflected in Ralph's sustained and single-minded refusal to accept publicity. He says that if he's any good the public will find it out, and if he isn't there's no point in trying to persuade them to think he is. He then retires to his out-of-town home and only shows up in the city for his regular broadcasts.

Alice Reinheart, who plays the part of Chichi Conrad, and John Holbrook, who plays Stephen Hamilton, are, however, regular city dwellers and maintain a sort of program solidarity by living within a few blocks of each other.

Alice, the petite and pretty star of the show, is 5'2" tall and weighs only 95 pounds. She has chestnut hair and her own description of her eyes is "green with coffee grounds in them". Her radio life in David's bookshop reflects her own life, for her library is the most important part of her own home. She has collected first editions for years and has a four-volume scrapbook in which she has transcribed excerpts from the world's greatest literature. She turned down a movie contract to make her debut in radio in 1931, and has behind her a long list of successes in stock and on Broadway. An accomplished pianist, Miss Reinheart studied the piano for fourteen years, part of the time at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and then tried her hand at journalism, majoring in that subject at the University of California. Her early stage experience took her on a European tour, and she has appeared on the stage in Berlin. The wide variety of her interests, and the

vital quality of her mind make Miss Reinheart a well-informed and fascinating conversationalist on almost any subject that can be brought up, and lends an unusual richness and depth to her acting.

John Holbrook, the Stephen Hamilton of our story, has a rather different and unusual background for an actor. His first business venture was a very successful ski school in Canada. Passing from this job to being an automobile salesman, and later joining a group of actors in Waterbury Conn., he eventually found himself before the microphone as an announcer on a local station. After this he wrote, produced, and announced various shows in Boston, and was at one time the head of the Radio Department of an advertising agency. He gave up this job, because he didn't feel he knew enough about radio, and came to New York City. Here he was primarily responsible for the compilation of the largest known recorded library of music in public domain, and here his career as a successful radio actor really began.

These three people, versatile and interesting in their own right, make up the nucleus around which the story of "Life Can Be Beautiful" revolves. Other permanent members of the cast are: Carl Eastman, who plays the part of Toby Nelson, a loyal and belligerent admirer of Chichi ever since her childhood days in the slums of the big metropolis where our story takes place; Richard Kollmar, who is heard as Barry Markham, son of the wealthy and prominent surgeon, Dr. Markham, played by Charles Webster; and Mitzi Gould, vivacious and talented young actress who takes the part of the now reformed Rita Yates.

The theme music used on the show was written by the co-author, Don Becker, and its title is, naturally enough, "Life Can Be Beautiful". It can be bought in sheet music form. Don, himself, listens to the show and to the rehearsals almost every day by means of a private wiring system, which allows him to "tune in" to the studio at any time while sitting in his own living-room.

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RADIO AND YOUR IMAGINATION

Cecil B. DeMille, world famous motion picture director produces the Lux Theater programs over the CBS each monday at 8:00 p.m. CST. DeMille, one of the screen's foremost figures for more

than 25 years, is the first big film director to devote a regular portion of his time and talent to radio. In this story he explains the technique used to stimulate the imagination of the radio audience.

By Cecil B. DeMille

Strength of the radio dramatization of any story involving action and excitement lies in the ability of producers and players to stimulate the listener's imagination.

This was clearly demonstrated for me recently when we produced Louis Bromfield's novel, "The Rains Came", on the CBS "Lux Radio Theater." You will recall the climax of the story — the earthquake that releases a flood on the province of Ranchipur, India, taking an appalling death toll, and violently changing the destinies of all who are left alive.

The day after we produced this story on the air I received the congratulations of a motion picture actress who had listened to the performance at home.

"That was the greatest flood scene I've ever witnessed," she said — and then laughed at her slip. "I mean," she corrected, "that I've ever heard."

But I told her she was right the first time. We had tried to make that flood **visible** to our audience, and to her it apparently was. She had enough imagination to visualize the whole scene that we could merely suggest with sound. And in this combination of powers—imagination and stimulation—lies the great magic secret of radio.

The radio listener, his imagination stimulated by the sounds and effects, becomes for the moment a motion picture director. Let us suppose a war story is being broadcast. There are sounds of battle and a single line of dialogue:

"There are 15,000 men storming that hill, sir."



CECIL B. DEMILLE

The listener with imagination immediately creates that scene in his mind. He visualizes trees, rocks, parapets, distributes thousands of men through the scene. Perhaps, like a general, he places

guns, tanks, planes, puffs of smoke here and there, hand-to-hand fighting.

The listener with imagination can "see" this effect, I repeat, but only if his imagination is properly stimulated by the sound we give him.

Not long ago, I imported hundreds of 70 and 100 foot pine trees from the San Bernardino mountains, "planted" the forest at Paramount and populated it with 500 Indians for a single scene in the picture, "North West Mounted Police." The total bill made me think, with some chagrin, how much easier it would be to create the same scene when we do "North West Mounted Police" on the Lux Radio Theater — with a few words of description, some dialogue, and a number of supernumerary voices, back from the microphone for "atmosphere." Yes, motion pictures are much more expensive.

In a motion picture, each member of the audience will see that scene in exactly the same way. But the radio audience, hearing it on the air, will have thousands of individual concepts. It is this "imaginative elasticity" of radio that fascinates me.

Once I asked a room full of people to sketch for me their impressions of a great temple referred to as the scene of a broadcast. Of course, all the sketches differed greatly in conception and detail. Yet each was striking, and revealed how vividly the subject had impressed each listener. So, too, with a complete drama on the air — projected through a single microphone, it is transformed into as **many** imaginative dramas as there are pairs of ears to hear it.



With remodeling of the studios and control rooms at WLS, Chicago, now complete, WLS is new throughout. Their new 50,000-watt transmitter near Tinley Park, Illinois, has been in use for more than a year. Now they have new studios and centralized engineering control to make WLS one of the most modern radio stations in the country — insuring Mid-West listeners the best possible reception as they listen in their own homes. Visitors are always welcome at WLS.

When the old WLS control room (upper left) was first built, it was the latest thing in modern radio equipment. But it can't compare with the streamlined equipment today in the new WLS master control. Note the variety of gadgets scattered clear across the room in the old arrangement, compared with the new, (upper right) where everything needed is in a single console, at the operator's fingertips.

All studios and offices at WLS were remodeled, redecorated, and air conditioned. A new floor was added to the Prairie Farmer Building, in which the studios are located, to provide quarters for the music department and library,

as well as half a dozen rehearsal rooms for talent. Studio D, (center) is completely new, with the latest acoustically treated walls and ceiling and modern fluorescent, two-tone, concealed lighting.

"The following program is transcribed." When you hear these words over WLS, this is the studio (lower left) from which the program comes. Two ultra modern turntables are equipped to handle radio transcriptions which make 33 1/3 revolutions per minute, or regular phonograph records, which turn 78 times a minute. Through the window is the new master control.

Streamlining in the new WLS transmitter (lower right) equals that of the studios and control rooms. Here again, everything is at the operator's fingertips; he runs all programs from the console at left. The transmitter is equipped with emergency living quarters, always fully stocked with foodstuffs. In the worst storms and blizzards, operators can stay at the transmitter, are sure to be on hand for all broadcasts. Thus WLS service to listeners is protected against interruption.



THE WLS RANGERS



More than a year ago, the Rangers returned to WLS as a trio. Accordionist Augie Klein played background music for a number of their selections, gradually worked more with the Rangers until today Program Director Harold Safford has decreed the Rangers to be a foursome instead of a quartet, with Augie Klein a regular member of the act. Left to right standing are Harry Sims, Clyde Moffett and Osgood Westley; seated, Augie Klein.

HERE'S HOW IT ALL STARTED

By JOAN BLAINE

Joan Blaine, popular star of "Valiant Lady", analyzes the daily serial, tracing its early beginnings . . . and gives readers a brief glimpse of her own background.



JOAN BLAINE

Now that I've been "Joan Barrett" for over two and a half years on "Valiant Lady," every weekday afternoon, with rare vacations for a few days, it's time to go over my radio work and to analyze this art form in which I work, the radio serial.

I'll get myself out of the way first. "Joan" seems to be good luck for me. There's "Joan Barrett," and there was "Joan Houston," who stayed by me a long

time too. It must be my ancestor James G. Blaine, who was almost president of this country, who transmitted my love of the stage to me. When I was a kid I was the gal on the debating team, you know . . . "Should The Government Run The Railroads?" or, for the sake of variation, "Should we Free The Phillipines?" I must admit that I didn't care much which side I took, so long as I got a chance to deliver a good rous-

ing speech. I won medals, certificates, and a silver loving cup that I've hung on to, sort of a good luck piece. It's too big for a vase, and too small for a punch bowl, so it retains its pristine glory!

My love of oratory stood me in good stead, too, as it won a Northwestern University scholarship for me. I won first in all speech contests there, and got the thrill of my life when I won the Grand Prize in the Northern Oratorical league contest, competing agin' nine men from nine other universities. It's a wonder I didn't go in for politics!

New York, with attendance at Columbia's Journalism School; acting in Chicago with the Chicago Theater Guild; and a concert tour from coast to coast, where I played the harp and did dramatic character sketches brought me to the stage in a serious way. I worked in California, New York, and in summer theaters, and enjoyed stardom on Broadway. I did movies, then I worked on radio shows out of Chicago's NBC studios. I recall such parts as that of Mary Marlin, in the show of the same name; Joan Huston in "A Tale of Today;" "Music Magic;" "Musical Keys;" "Welcome Valley;" and "Silken Strings."

All this happened before 1937 and "Valiant Lady." I've worked in so many serials that I've done a lot of investigating into the history of the radio serial. While radio's version of the continued sketch has grown into a definite art form, its ancestry is long and honorable. Way back in the Middle Ages, in France, Spain, Italy, and other countries, a form of rapid-fire sketch called "Vaudeville" was developed. From this sprang modern vaudeville and the "revue." Since there were no newspapers (or radios!) in those distant days, the actors presenting the "Vaudeville" also included sketches based upon reports of contemporary events, often in ballade form.

In Spain and the Latin-Ameri-

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FAMILIAR MUSIC IN A MAJESTIC MANNER

FORD SUNDAY EVENING HOUR IN ITS SEVENTH SEASON

When the lights dimmed in a Detroit Auditorium on the night of September 29 it marked the return of the Ford Sunday Evening Hour for the seventh consecutive season. Lily Pons, Metropolitan Opera soprano, who was guest soloist on the opening broadcast shared the spotlight with her husband, Andre Kostelanetz, conductor. The program of the 75-piece Ford Symphony Orchestra and the 26-voice mixed chorus was heard in millions of homes in the United States over a nation-wide CBS network, and in far distant lands via short wave, at 8 to 9 P.M. (CST).

Many listeners have written in requesting information as to when the Ford Sunday Evening Hour started and who thought of the idea of putting on a full-hour of fine music with a complete lack of advertising. For those interested in the Sunday Evening Hour, here is its history.

In June, 1934, seventy musicians of the Detroit Symphony orchestra were selected to play at the Ford Symphony Gardens at the World's Fair in Chicago. For twelve weeks this musical aggregation played a series of 156 concerts, performing two two-hour concerts seven days a week. More than 1,500 compositions were presented before an audience of a million World's Fair visitors. This large number probably exceeds the total audience for most symphonies for a generation.

The programs presented by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, during its engagement at the Symphony Gardens, were not exactly the type of programs you'd expect to hear had you been a regular patron of the concert halls of America. There was liberal sprinkling of lighter music — Victor Herbert fantasies, sparkling selections from light opera, hardly any full-length symphonies but more compositions such as the Hungarian and Slavic dances and Kreisler caprices. However, more serious music was by no means

neglected and was an important part of each concert. But whether the program was light or serious, the enthusiasm of the cosmopolitan audience which attended the



LILY PONS



ANDRE KOSTELANETZ

programs brought to realization the good-will building potentialities of such a presentation.

After the final performance of the Detroit Symphony in the Gar-

dens at "A Century of Progress," the orchestra returned to Detroit to begin the first of the Ford Sunday Evening Hour series. For radio purposes they became the Ford Symphony Orchestra and broadcast over what, at the time, was one of the largest networks in radio history.

These Sunday night concerts were similar to those which were presented in Chicago. Henry Ford, interested in reaching the multitude, offered something to bring beauty and artistic inspiration to the man in the street, as well as to those whose education and tastes would permit them to enjoy the compositions of the great masters.

Mr. Ford's original instructions to the program staff are well summarized in the phrase "familiar music in the majestic manner." These instructions have been followed faithfully. As a result radio listeners have heard a great symphony play an orchestral transcription of "Turkey in the Straw," Victor Herbert medleys and, in 1940, Earl Robinson and John La-touche's "Ballad for Americans." Critics found these works interesting, stimulating and inspiring. At the same time, The Ford Sunday Evening Hour did not assume that listeners appreciated only that kind of music, for it offered on the same programs a Schumann concerto or a great symphony. Lovers of fine music realized anew that majesty can be breathed into a simple and well-loved melody by great art in presentation.

From the standpoint of popular acceptance, the program has established something of a record. This was proved when the Women's National Radio Committee acclaimed it the "best musical program" and presented its annual award to its sponsor for the past three years. For the six seasons it has been on the air it has been voted the most popular radio program in numerous polls conducted by newspapers, mag-

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YOUR CRAZY PROGRAM



Jack Amlung, Your Crazy Program Maestro, signals for a fanfare. Trumpeters "Brother Pinknose," left, and "The Great Lover" comply. All the "noise" is by way of introducing another hilarious skit by Sugarcane (Conrad Brady), left, and February Francis Quinn).

The scene was the Mineral Wells, Texas office of Hal H. Collins, president of the Crazy Water Company. Mr. Collins was addressing a timid young reporter from a college newspaper.

"Yes, this radio business is going to be a big business someday. Why some time we might even use it to advertise our products."

The time: 1929.

One year later Mr. Collins' Crazy Water Company was selling Crazy Water Crystals via WBAP, Fort Worth, with a harmonica player and Mr. Collins as head spieler. One of Texas' most popular radio programs was born.

TODAY, Your Crazy Program is being aired Monday through Friday over WBAP and the Texas Quality Network, consisting of

WFAA, Dallas; KPRC, Houston, and WOAI, San Antonio, in addition to WBAP. The cast consists of nearly half-a-hundred

artists and a recent week's mail count was 32,291 postal cards. Yes, it's a far cry from the harmonica opus of 1930 to the huge

variety show of 1940. And only one of the original cast appears in the current show. It's the boss man, Hal Collins.

So rapid was the sale of Crazy Crystals that a few months after the harmonica player-Collins combination made its ether debut, Jack Amlung and his popular orchestra were added attractions.

With Amlung's band as the nucleus the Crazy show passed through many changes from 1930 to 1935. The amateur-craze had struck radio and Mr. Collins was kept busy interviewing such Crazy program prospects as one-man bands and hog callers. Fiddle bands, whistlers and the popular Skiles Family followed in vaudevillian succession. One of the musical Skiles is now listed on the roster of the Fred Waring aggregation and another is tooting his horn for Henry King.

Conrad Brady, well known in the show business, was added to the Crazy show in 1935 as master of ceremonies. He was assisted by Francis Quinn in forming the blackface team of Sugarcane and February. This act with its homey witticisms met with immediate popular favor and is still going strong. Many contests such as jingles, etc., were built around this comical pair but their presentation of a daily question-answer skit known as "The Brain-busters" drew the most attention. Puzzlers were sent in by the listeners and Sugarcane and February called on members of the studio audience for the answers. When some studio fan's hand would go up the familiar cry: "Here cum a man," was a sure house-bringer-downer.

Your Crazy program was also aired over the Mutual Broadcasting System from November, 1936 to March 26, 1937, in addition to its five-times-weekly WBAP-Texas Quality Network shows.

Not so incidentally, this popular quarter-hour originates in the spacious lobby of the Crazy Water Hotel in Mineral Wells, Texas, 52 miles west of Forth Worth and WBAP, from whence it is placed on TQN lines as well as WBAP's 800 kilocycle frequency. Approximately 500 fans wax wildly en-

thusiastic in the studio-lobby daily, during these programs and the daily mail hails from every Texas county and the states of Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas and Colorado.

During the latter part of 1936 and nearly all of 1937, a young dancer from Weatherford, Texas, appeared on the show in the role of a vocalist. Her torch ballads were delivered in a somewhat

daily but brief heart-to-heart talk by Mr. Collins. It's entitled "One Man's Opinion" and may treat of subjects varying from "Kindness to Dumb Animals" to "Why Gentlemen Don't Always Prefer Blondes." Hundreds of loyal listeners have reported that they like this part of the show best of all. If all the mail from appreciative Your Crazy program friends received since the program's debut in 1930, was placed



Mary Martin was known as Mary Hageman when she sang torch songs for the Your Crazy Program in 1936-37.

pipin voice which by no means made her the popular personage she is today. She was known to Crazy fans as pretty Mary Hageman. Today, she's known to NBC and movie fans as Mary Martin; pretty Mary Martin, needless to say.

One very interesting part of today's Your Crazy program is a

end to end it would reach... er ah... hand me that pencil and paper... now let's see, 1,036, 248 plus 1,026,378 plus... oh well — the Crazy mail would make quite a heap, yes, quite a heap.

P. S. — The timid reporter in Scene I was yours truly at the callous age of 19.

WHO ARE THE MEN BEHIND THE MEN BEHIND THE MICROPHONE?

RADIO VARIETIES herewith introduces three of the men who produce some of NBC Chicago's biggest radio shows.

By **DAN THOMPSON**

Most modest and unassuming of all members of the vast radio fraternity are those men who hide their manifold talents, their personalities and their ambitions under what often amounts to a mask of anonymity — the title of "Director." Like their brothers of the movie industry they are almost completely unknown to the millions of fans for whom they labor. Yet many a proud star, basking in the adulation of the multitude, willingly admits that without proper direction they might flounder helplessly in the sea of scripts which flow from the continuity departments of networks and agencies. Many a singer and musician recognizes the value of a directorial ear trained to bring out the best in any score as well as the best in individual or group performers.

Just to get it straight, let's try to define a radio director as one who is ultimately responsible for everything that goes into a microphone and out on the air during the period to which he has been assigned. His is the responsibility for material, commercial, dramatic, sustaining or what not. His also, the responsibility for performance, announcements, timing and the thousand and one other details which go to make up a show.

Among the producers at NBC Chicago who are responsible for network shows originating in the Merchandise Mart Studios are W. P. Wright, the production manager and director of General Mills' Arnold Grimm's Daughter, popular NBC dramatic serial heard Mondays through Fridays over the NBC-Red network at 1:15 p.m. CST.

Wright has been associated with the stage and radio for a quarter of a century, making his debut as the member of a 1915



(Top) George Voutsas, director who discovered Lillian Cornell. (Center) W. P. Wright, NBC's Production Manager and Director, guides Betty Lou Gerson, star of Arnold Grimm's Daughter thru the script. (Bottom) L. G. (Bucky) Harris who directs the National Farm and Home Hour.

stock company production of "As You Like It." Born in Columbus, Ohio, on February 15, 1897, he attended schools in Michigan and later studied for the bar at the Detroit College of Law. In 1930, he organized a dramatic department for WWJ in Detroit, where he

remained until he came to NBC as a director in April 1934 and to which he returned for a short time before becoming assistant production manager under C. L. Menger on January 1, 1939.

In addition to attending to all his duties as head of the NBC Central Division production department, Wright directs only the one daytime serial mentioned above. Those who work with him on that show find him one of the most agreeable yet stimulating directors on the NBC staff.

Mr. Wright's assistant is L. G. (Bucky) Harris, former actor, newspaperman, announcer, continuity writer and radio station manager. Listed on the musical side of the staff, Bucky is really one of the most versatile directors in the Midwest. His record includes a year and a half as producer of floor shows for the Boyd-Prinz Company, several years as a minstrel man and in vaudeville and a record of six years as producer of the National Farm and Home Hour. Prior to being made assistant production manager on March 1, 1939, Bucky directed such shows as Today's Children, the Climalene Carnival, Teatime at Morrell's, Real Silk, the Singing Lady, Sinclair Minstrels and Al Pearce and His Gang.

A native Missourian, Bucky attended the University of Missouri. Torn between his love for the theater and for newspaper work, Bucky finally entered radio when, as tri-state editor of the Memphis Commercial Appeal, he was asked to broadcast bulletins over WMC during the 1927 flood. Followed some months as announcer, continuity writer and Sunday Radio Page editor before he became station manager. Jobs later came at WJJD, WBBM, KMOX, WIBO and finally in 1933 he joined NBC. At the present writing he is director of "Beat the Band" as well as of the National Farm and Home Hour.

Third on the present list of "men behind the men behind the mike"

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THE STORY OF A COMEBACK

By HEDDA HOPPER

Chatting about Hollywood on the air three times a week for Sun-kist oranges and lemons gives me a terrific thrill — but sometimes there are stories to tell that defy time — and the timely news crowds them off the air.

One of those stories is about a Hollywood personality who breezed his way to screen fame by way of radio; a personality who all the movie wise guys said was through a year ago. But Dick Powell said, "Watch me, boys!!," packed his bags, said goodbye to loving wife Joan Blondell, children Ellen and Norman, planed out of movietown for a personal appearance tour that knocked 'em dead all over the country.

So began the successful battle that Dick fought to make a Hollywood comeback. Since the exciting radio days of "Hollywood Hotel" and musicals like "Naughty But Nice," Dick's voice hadn't been heard in anything worth while. Then Chicago, St. Louis, New York began discovering a new Powell all over again in spite of the wise owls in the plush chairs out here who couldn't see anything for the laughing boy but oblivion.

Originally Dick had come up the hard way. Playing in bands — then branching into solo radio work he knew the microphone — and he knew audience reaction on the p.a. tour. Besides he was still a big movie name, for several years had been one of the top ten stars at the box office. And that's why he smashed records everywhere — played to more than a million fans on that tour. When Dick played the key cities of the East, fans stormed the box offices to see him in the flesh; everywhere house records fell; he was held over a second week at New York's Paramount, broke a five-year record for that theater, pulled down one of the highest prices ever paid to a star for a personal appearance.

Then the triumphant troubador marched proudly back to wife, kiddies, and the Hollywood moguls to announce firmly, "I'll do

no more singing on the screen!" And why was it that the young man who owed his success to his voice — who had earned his living by warbling for lo these many years — suddenly turned turtle and refused to sing again on the screen?

be Hamlet. Dick will always do pictures that have plenty of comedy — but also stories that have some dramatic meaning. Take, for instance, the picture he's just finishing now for Paramount. A swell yarn about a big coffee concern called Maxford House,



HEDDA HOPPER

The reason for Dick's determination to abandon music in pictures was that he wanted good, meaty dramatic roles — roles that would give him a new lease on life — with himself and with the public. He was confident he could do it — but type casting had killed him in pictures. He rebelled against being cast as the young boy who goes through a lot of refined Hell, always smiling, and comes out o.k. after doing four solos and a turn with a dance band.

Don't worry, though, when I say Powell will do dramatic roles I don't mean his next picture will

whose java is "Great to the Last Gulp." Playing opposite Ellen Drew under the direction of the brilliant writer-director, Preston Sturges, who turned out "The Great McGinty," Dick gets full scope for his talents — and he's going to be swell. And you've all read about the one he just finished called, "I Want A Divorce," built around the familiar radio series. There'll be heart-throbs in that one — and, believe me, when you get a load of Powell and Blondell emoting opposite each other, you're going to get that little hitch in

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KENNY BAKER

As chief vocalizer on the
Texaco Star Theatre Wednes-
day nites at 8:00 P. M. over
85 Coast-to-Coast Stations
Kenny's tenor voice shares
the spotlight with Fred
Allen on CBS



BING CROSBY

Heard each Thursday Nite at 8 P. M. over NBC, Bing contributes to the Kraft Music Hall with his gay shirts, songs and master of ceremonies routine

RENFRO VALLEY FOLKS

HILL BILLY LIFE AND MUSIC OF LONG AGO
LIVES AGAIN IN KENTUCKY'S RENFRO VALLEY



John Lair, left, lays down the law to clowning Slim Miller in a pre-broadcast pep-talk at Renfro Valley, site of the broadcast of Renfro Valley Folks at 8:30 p.m. CST over the NBC-Red network each Monday night. Left to right, rear are the

Coon Creek girls, the Mountain Rangers, the Neighborhood Boys, Shorty Hobbs and Eller, A'nt Idy Harper and Little Clifford. Front, Judy Dell, Granny Harper, Slim Miller and Roland Gaines (kneeling) of the Mountain Rangers.

By JULES CASS

Deep in Kentucky, about 140 winding miles south of Cincinnati on the famed Dixie Highway, motorists begin to realize they're in the Cumberland foothills. A couple of miles south of Dead Man's Curve, they come upon a modern-looking little settlement of 34 buildings, the center of life in Renfro Valley.

There, without sacrificing too many modern improvements, a short, stocky man named John Lair has managed to turn the clock back 50 years. It is from this settlement that every Monday at 8:30 p. m. CST, John Lair and his Renfro Valley Folks give listeners to the NBC Southern Network an idea of the hill life of a half-century ago.

Lair got the idea for this settlement eleven years ago, when he started in radio. He used to be an insurance man in Chicago, but he also had a hobby of collecting old songs. Those he heard on the air seemed to him to be unauthentic, for they were not sung the way he had learned them as a boy in the hills of Kentucky.

So, in the summer of 1929, Lair went back to Renfro where everybody knows the down-home songs and where everybody sings or plays an instrument. He brought some of the youngsters from Renfro to Chicago, had no trouble getting them on the air, and casually went on the air himself. He stayed.

But though he was in Chicago, the green valley of Renfro —

which is named after the little creek that flows through the hills — remained in Lair's mind all the time. Did it remain in the minds of the kids he had taken away from there and brought to the big city?

Not completely. "I found the kids lost something when they went into town," he recalls. In fact, he found you could take the country out of the boy when you took the boy out of the country. The boy started to lose his simplicity.

Lair didn't want that to happen, so he started mulling over ideas. He finally decided on the obvious. Since something was lost when you brought the hills to radio, he would bring radio to the hills.

A year ago, Lair finally got

around to realizing his decade-old plan. All his money went into the Renfro settlement. He had accumulated the money through years of successfully-managed radio programs and stage tours with hillbilly outfits.

He believes that the Renfro Valley settlement will become a shrine of American folk music. He thinks it will recreate an atmosphere of 50 years ago, when people lived a more simple and direct life. He feels he can take the old American songs out of the dusty unreality of an industrialized age, and put them back into the scene of their origin.

The name Renfro Valley Folks exactly describes the NBC program which Lair now conducts. Renfro Folks constitute the talent for the program. Other Renfro folks helped erect the settlement. They built the lodge, where visitors can get dinners of country-cured ham and a lot of dishes that are exclusively hill menus. There was an old grist mill nine miles from the settlement, and they took the machinery from that and installed it in a new mill, where corn meal for the restaurant will be ground. They built cabins, where travelers could stay overnight. They built a huge barn, for the Saturday night barn dance program aired over WLW.

Finally, they moved the old schoolhouse onto the settlement property. Lair attended school in this old log and plaster structure, and so did his father. It used to be located three miles west, up the valley in a red bud thicket. Nobody, not even the 80-year-old patriarchs of the valley, knows the age of this school building. Everybody in the valley went to school there at some time or other, or attended Sunday school or speeches or picnic suppers or the elections held there, since it was the only public meeting place in the neighborhood.

Lair loves the schoolhouse, where he learned grammar, geography, reading, writing and arithmetic. There were 13 pupils most of the time, and a pile of McGuffey books. There were no classes; half the kids were in "big arithmetic" and the rest in "little arithmetic." Nobody ever tried to trace the history of the building, but it was old in the days of the Civil War.

Lair wanted the schoolhouse because more than anything else it represents the dignity, tradition and endurance of the valley people. So he had it moved, log by log, stone by stone, foundation and all, from the old location to the new one on the settlement property.

And now the little schoolhouse is famous. As in the old days, it continues to serve as a meeting place, but now the schoolhouse is also a radio studio. They've set up a microphone and amplifier there, and the NBC broadcasts originate there every Monday night.

It is probably the most unelaborate broadcasting studio in the world. Two none-too-bright electric bulbs provide the illumination, and the engineer keeps a flashlight on hand, just in case. Outside, the katyids gnaw the air in the dark woods. Yellow light falls on the faces of a few people who have come down to peer through the open windows at the shindig within. Inside, these visitors see the Coon Creek Girls and An't Idy and Little Clifford, and Slim Miller and the Neighborhood Boys, and all the others. The visitors grew up with most of these people who are now on the air. They know Shorty and Eller, the Mountain Rangers, Dwight Butcher, the Pine Ridge Boys, the Randolph Sisters, Gene Cobb, Si and Fanny, Harmonica Bill Russell, Granny Harper and Homer and Jethro.

They're just Renfro Valley folks.

How has Lair been able to achieve such success? Probably through his sincerity, first of all. Secondly, through his knowledge of his people, and of his subject, which is American folk music.

Lair is believed to know more about American folk music than any other living man.

Lair does a lot of personal research for his extensive collection of this music. Ten years ago he went out to Kearney, Mo., just to talk to the descendants of Jesse James and discover the tunes the old reprobate liked best. He got the musical lowdown on Jesse, even on the tune that was played at the bandit's funeral. He has a lot of music connected with Lincoln — the first song the woodchopper learned as a child,

a song he wrote and sang at his sister's wedding; "Hoosen Johnny," one of his favorite campaign songs, and the song Anne Rutledge sang to Lincoln while she was on her deathbed. It was called "Vain Man, Thy Fond Pursuits Forbear."

Much of this information comes to Lair from people who have heard him on the radio. Personal information he backs up with collections of songs. He has three famous collections—Grady's Delaney's and Hevermeyer's.

He estimates he has well over a hundred thousand songs in his vast collection. Some of the song books are collector's items. He has Brigham Young's personal copy of the Mormon hymn book, with Brigham's autograph on the hymns he happened to like best.

Lair has no way of evaluating his collection, since probably nobody else in the United States is interested in it. The Library of Congress would like to have a few of the books, but Lair is holding on to everything. He says he wouldn't take \$15,000 cash for the collection.

Of the 24 people who take big parts and small on the Monday NBC broadcasts, only one act, the Crusaders, do not live within a radius of 15 miles of Lair's settlement. The Crusaders come from Seventy Six, Kentucky, a hamlet 80 miles from Renfro.

The Coon Creek Girls, Lair suggests, are typical of the people on his show. They comprise Rosie and Lily May Ledford, who were born in Pitchem Tight Hollow; and Bertha, Irene and Opal Amberg. Lair four years ago got Lily May a job in Chicago, then started his own company and gave them all jobs. When King George and Queen Elizabeth visited the White House, the Coon Creekers went there on invitation to sing. They were chosen as typical singers of pioneer American music.

Lair is now in his forties, turning gray in an iron sort of way, firm-jawed and earnest. He owns three farms, totaling 400 acres. He owns a beautiful set of tackle which he seldom uses, although Renfro Creek has plenty of good bass. He's too busy with his ideas.

BALD PATES AND BOILED SHIRTS

Imagine a man owing his job to bald heads and starched shirt fronts! Incredible, you might say, until you take a look at the many fantastic jobs which have mushroomed in the radio industry since the days of the first crystal sets.

High on the list must be mentioned the man who barks like a dog — and gets well paid for it. And also the woman who cries like a baby to such good effect that a fat weekly salary check greets her efforts.

Then we must not forget the pianist who nightly in the radio studios plays the works of the masters as well as popular compositions — but never goes on the air!

Add to the above list the man who watches clocks right under his boss' nose and gets paid for it, and those strangest of all people — radio sound effects men — and it would seem that radio boasts the greatest collection of queer jobs extant.

Getting back to the man first mentioned. His official title might read something like this: "Official Separator of Stiff-bosomed Dress Shirts and Bald Pates." His *raison d'être* is as follows. During the Fall symphony series at NBC, engineers at a Toscanini concert discovered that the tone values, especially in the higher frequencies, were registering with unusual sharpness. Investigation revealed that this was due largely to the fact that a great many gentlemen in the studio audience were wearing stiff dress shirts.

Because of this particular dress on the part of the gentlemen, the sound waves came bouncing back in a manner which caused a reverberation not present when informal attire was worn. Not that the difference was plainly perceptible, but it was sufficient to register on the oscillograph which tests acoustical conditions in the studio.

Additional research along similar lines revealed other interesting facts about the delicate and tricky nature of sound waves. For example, large persons absorb

sound better than small persons, simply because their greater expanse of epidermis provides more of a target for sound waves. In like manner, a lady garbed in velvet will kill an echo much more quickly than one wearing silk or taffeta.



CRY-BABY

Madeleine Pierce is a cry-baby. While this term is considered the apogee of opprobrium in some circles, (especially the younger ones), Miss Pierce is proud of the fact that she is the leading exponent of the art of crying on the NBC networks. The one-woman nursery plays everything from the smallest, sleepy sigh to the loudest, milk-hungry wail.

YEEEOOW — GRRR — MEEOW — Bradley Barker has taken the wolf from his door and put it to work before a microphone. A wolf's cry is only one of 40 animal voices which Barker simulates in radio dramas. Half of his work, however, consists of imitating dogs and cats. Barker began his unusual calling when he discovered that mechanically-produced animal sounds often resulted in soprano lions, falsetto dogs and basso profundo cats.

And, in case you didn't know it, bald-headed men are shockingly poor at absorbing sound, while hirsute individuals will tangle up the most athletic sound wave.

Now, when the engineers viewed these interesting phenomena, they didn't become unduly

concerned. Program officials, however, took the matter seriously. Pictures of whole sections of boiled shirts or bald heads, from which the sound waves would bounce and go will-nilly around the studio, haunted their mid-night dreams. Something had to be done, namely, to appoint someone to separate the starched shirt fronts and billiard-like domes and scatter them about the studio.

So the job of "Official Separator of Stiff-Bosomed Dress Shirts and Bald Pates" was created and entrusted to a keen-eyed young man who greeted visitors to the studio with tactful, "To the rights, Sir," "To the lefts, Sir" etc. We wonder how the census-taker listed that one!

But while separating bald heads, etc., certainly ranks high up in the queer job category, we must not forget the woman who acts childish. In most quarters this is frowned upon. But when it comes to radio, being professionally babyish is well worth while.

Madeleine Pierce is the leading exponent of the art of crying like a baby, specializing in genuine baby gabble and not the fallacious "muvva's tittle-cootums" variety.

The one-woman nursery can play an infant mood from the smallest, sleepy sigh to the loudest, milk-hungry wail. Though she specializes in small infants, Miss Pierce also plays older boys and girls and mature women. Recently she played an infant, a 12-year-old boy, a girl of six, and a nurse — all on the same broadcast!

Miss Pierce didn't have a thought for her particular talent for the squalls, whimpers and coos business, until friends practically pushed her into the NBC studios for an audition.

From baby's squeals to a repertoire of 40 animal voices, although about half his work consists of imitating dogs and cats, is the fantastic radio leap made by Bradley Barker, who, in

truth, has taken the wolf from his door and put it to work before a microphone.

When Barker first turned to radio in 1926, after seventeen years as a vaudeville and motion picture actor, recorded sound effects were frowned upon, so animal voices were created mechanically by means of resined rods drawn through holes in tin cans, etc.

"The results," reminisces Barker, "were weirdly unpredictable. Often we heard soprano lions, falsetto dogs and basso profundo cats. When we tried to use live animals in the studio we always regretted it."

A husky six-footer, Barker takes his work as seriously as any Metropolitan diva. Recently he spent several weeks with the Ringling Brothers so that he could learn to imitate Gargantua, the giant ape. Barker thought Gargi was a friendly fellow.

And now radio's odd-job quest brings us to the champion clock watchers of this or any other era — men who impudently watch the clocks right under their boss' nose without danger of getting fired!

The heroes of this saga are members of the NBC Maintenance Department. Their particular mission in life is to keep the 291 clocks at the NBC studios in Radio City right up to the split second. Equipped with chronometers, these unsung behind-the-sceners make numerous checks of the clocks. And a nice, easy way of not being able to see a clock is to ask one of the boys, "What time is it?"

Sound effects men are really radio's greatest odd-jobbers. They make nature's greatest imitators — the African Grey parrot, the myna, the raven — look like a third-rate stumble bum matched with Joe Louis.

To any of the thousand and one strange requests which come to them, from creating the sound of rolling a cigarette to the noise produced by a naval battle in the Norwegian fjords, these men have never said "It can't be done."

While the growth of radio has witnessed greater complexity of scripts, resulting in the use of

recordings for background effects to a large degree (NBC has on hand more than one thousand discs, capable of producing approximately 4,000 different noises), the on-the-spot sound effect has lost none of its usefulness as sounds requiring exact cueing, such as door bells or a sudden blast of wind, are best transmitted by the real thing or its synthetic equivalent.

One script for an NBC program called for the sound of a sewing machine. To the sensitive ears



TUNER

Herman F. Krausser plays more piano music than any concert artist in the NBC Radio City studios but — he never is heard by listeners. Krausser is NBC's official piano tuner, chief custodian of the 38 pianos used daily by artists. Krausser works while the city sleeps, during the hours the networks are off the air.

of the sound effects men, however, the sewing machine brought into the studio sounded like anything else than the real thing. And this is where odd-jobbedness paid. One of the tonal experts had had occasion to experiment with bells of all sort, for another program. He suddenly remembered that the sound produced by cranking the bell handle of a rural telephone — without the bell — had exactly simulated the sound required. A bell, or should we say, a bell-less telephone, was produced. Eureka. The solution was in hand.

And now our tale nears an end with the story of Herman F. Krausser, who, like the sound effects men, is a tonal expert of the highest degree and definitely superior to NBC's "squeak testers" — men who examine each of the folding chairs in radio studios to make sure they are free of all

squeaks because a high-pitched squeak is easily picked up by the sensitive microphone.

Mr. Krausser, a slight man, with sad eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses, takes his place at one of the studio pianos when the curtain rings down on the last show of the day from Radio City.

With all the poise, the strength and sureness of a great artist, Mr. Krausser raps out a few vibrant chords.

Then his fingers run surely through an arpeggio that covers the range of the keyboard. But with this brief performance the music ends and listeners from coast to coast will never savor the full flavor of it.

The artist becomes artisan. Tools come out from his small black bag. At his touch, the piano comes apart with the ease of secret panels opening. Mr. Krausser, NBC's piano tuner, is on the job!

Keeping the 38 pianos used daily by NBC artists at precise concert pitch — whether they are used for a symphony concert or a red hot swing jamboree — calls for the loving attention of Mr. Krausser, who sadly mentions that he has never met any of the artists who use the instruments. He knows them, though, he will tell you.

"Frequently," he says, "I find some of their personal belongings hidden away inside the pianos. Compacts, handkerchiefs, fountain pens, pencils, hair pins, even keys and odd coins. I still can't figure out the loose coins though. Generally there is a penny or a nickel — never more than a dime!

Krausser had his own musical ambitions as a young man but found it easier to make a living as the skilled artisan who keeps the pianos in pitch for others. But he loves music, sings a bit for church services and plays for his own amusement.

As a parting shot, we told Mr. Krausser about the man who's job it is to separate bald heads and starched shirts.

"That's no job," he exclaimed, a trifle indignantly. "There's no future in it."

The Burns of Allen Does a Rhumba

With George Burns learning the Latin branch of dancing at the point of Gracie Allen's finger, and ably assisted by Miss Anita Stone of the Arthur Murray Dancers, these pictures taken exclusively for Radio Varieties show George as the best rhumba dancer in all Mexico. Note the smile of pleasure and contentment in Gracie's face (bottom right) as George goes thru his routines with Latin blood fairly oozing thru his veins.





MUSIC MAKERS

(Top left) Back on the air, Ben Bernie, the old maestro, is heard as conductor of "Ben Bernie's Musical Quiz" (Top right) A native of Mexico and a favorite of New York cafe society, handsome Ramon Ramos is capturing the dancers of the beautiful Camellia House in the Drake Hotel with his sophisticated music. Listen in at 11:30 p. m. over CBS. (Bottom left) Wayne King, favorite of millions, is sponsored by Colgate over WBBM each Saturday at 7:30 p. m. (Bottom right) Featured on Alec Templeton's show on NBC Ray Noble is heard at 9:30 on Fridays.





WLS

At The Fairs

WLS, Chicago, regularly sends the famed WLS National Barn Dance to Milwaukee, Springfield and Indianapolis as the opening night attraction for the annual State Fairs. This year they played their ninth opening at Indiana, shattering all past records, also played the Wisconsin opening. The opening of the Illinois fair had to be skipped this year, since it opened the same day as Wisconsin. However, WLS stars entertained daily in the WLS-Prairie Farmer exhibit tent at all three expositions.

Twelve thousand people jammed the new Coliseum at the Indiana Fair (top) to see the WLS National Barn Dance. All seats were sold, and nearly two thousand persons stood throughout the 4½ hour broadcast.



The WLS Rangers and Grace Wislon (center photo) chat before boarding the Milwaukee Special. Left to right are Ozzie Westley, Grace Wilson, Clyde Moffett and Harry Sims. Note the illuminated sign on the back platform, identifying the troupe.



WLS chartered special trains to carry the Hayloft Gang to the Milwaukee and Indianapolis Fairs. (Bottom photo) Here are Patsy Montana and Pat Buttram being checked onto the train for Milwaukee, also draw their expense allowances from WLS Production Manager Al Boyd (right). Last year, Patsy claimed she didn't get her expense envelope. Boyd has proof she did this year.

P. S. Patsy didn't get it last year, until several hours after the train pulled out.

Pictured here in the upper right corner is part of the Hayloft Gang that lined up on the stage at the Indiana Fair to sing the opening theme for the WLS National Barn Dance.

So the fairgrounds audience wouldn't have to sit through the Alka-Seltzer network hour of the WLS National Barn Dance twice—once when it was done for the East and Mid-West and again when repeated for the Far West, WLS staged a one-hour stage show, not broadcast, giving opportunity for a lot of horse play not possible on the air. One of the stunts was shooting 465 pound Otto from a cannon. (Top photo) Pat Buttram drills his private army: Left to right, "Generalissimo" Buttram; Salty Holmes, whose uniform lacked suspenders evidently; Orrie Hogsett (Joe Rockhold); Ramblin' Red Foley and Otto (Ted Morse).

While the major portion of the Barn Dance cast was busy at the Wisconsin State Fair, others were entertaining visitors in the WLS-Prairie Farmer exhibit tent at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield. The Prairie Sweethearts, Essie and Kay, get a little help from Reggie Cross, of the Hoosier Sodbusters (center). Note the banner. WLS and its parent company, Prairie Farmer, America's oldest farm paper, will celebrate its 100th birthday in January.

The Wisconsin State Fair trip gave Cowgirl Patsy Montana (center right) opportunity to renew her friendship with Sponsor Jim Murphy's horses.

With a number by the Prairie Ramblers (lower right) scheduled immediately after Pat Buttram's army drill, Salty Holmes had no time to recover his pants (and shins). The Ramblers (left to right) are Jack Taylor, Chick Hurt, Salty and Alan Crockett.



The Story of a Comeback

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the mid-section that always comes when you see something good. And there's not a bar of music in it, except for background.

So Dickie boy sewed himself a beautiful little patch of Hollywood clover all over again — and when those two pictures are released he'll be sitting on top of the world. And the radio lad who turned from the microphone to the silver screen — hit the top in pictures, started the old slide down and pulled himself up by his own boot straps, is back with us again stronger than ever doing screen parts with plenty of punch, and getting top billing on the Maxwell House Radio Show.

All of which brings up an interesting point that there's really no foundation at all for the so-called "feud" between radio and the movies. They complement each other. Radio has given many stars to the screen, and certainly many movie people have made your radio hours a lot more entertaining. For years Gene Autry was one of the most popular air personalities in America as "The Singing Cowboy": his fan mail topped any star in the business, he went from there to pictures and became one of the movies' highest-paid stars without ever having one of his pictures showing in a first-run Hollywood theater. Radio gave Dottie Lamour to the screen. All she learned about singing she learned while earning \$18 a week as a sustaining warbler for NBC. You all know the case of Don Ameche; and where would Orson Welles be today if it weren't for the microphone? Personally, I have a tremendous lot of respect for radio people. I did a picture recently called "Cross Country Romance" — a fast-moving, very smart little comedy with Gene Raymond; it was piloted expertly by Frank Woodruff, who produced and directed your Lux Radio Theater for many years.

Yep — I cut my teeth on the stage, grew up in pictures, am spending my old age pleasantly hopping from my daily column, to the air, to the movie sets — and I say, as long as it's entertainment, it belongs — whatever the medium.

Who Are the Men

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is George Voutsas, musically inclined Beau Brummell who was born in Asia Minor, reared in New York City from his second year on and trained in the ways of radio broadcasting by none less than Dr. Frank Black, general musical director of NBC.

Voutsas is chiefly known in the NBC Central Division for his discovery of Lillian Cornell, NBC contralto who is now in Hollywood after making several movie appearances in Jack Benny and Bing Crosby pictures, and for his further discovery of the Dinning Sisters, jitterbug trio heard on the NBC Breakfast Club and Club Matinee broadcasts and mentioned by many music critics as runners-up to the famed Andrews Sisters.

Voutsas studied music under private tutors for 12 years and won a gold medal for his violin playing in competition in 1928. He was considering turning professional when he suddenly landed a job in the music library of the newly-formed National Broadcasting Company. He remained in the music library for four years, meeting great musicians, artists and personalities who helped mold him into a brilliant research man, capable of building and producing almost any type of musical show. In the last of his four years in the music library, he worked with Erno Rapee, Harold Sanford, Cesare Sodero and many others. He became Dr. Frank Black's assistant when the latter came to NBC and remained in that post until Dr. Black insisted on his accepting a position as musical director in the NBC Central Division.

While in New York, Voutsas assisted in producing and writing such shows as the NBC Symphony, String Symphony, Five Hours Back, the Magic Key of RCA, the Pontiac Program and the Sunday General Motors concerts. In Chicago, he conducts the NBC Club Matinee, the Roy Shield Revue, all Chicago City Opera broadcasts over NBC and did conduct This Amazing America at its inception. He is 5'11" tall, weighs 185 pounds, has dark brown eyes, black hair and a serious disposition.

Music in a Majestic Manner

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azines and syndicates. One of the reasons for its popularity, aside from the high musical quality of the program, is the complete absence of commercial fan-fare.

Programs for the 1940-41 season will be conducted by such eminent conductors as Fritz Reiner, Reginald Stewart, John Barbirolli, Wilfred Pelletier, Eugene Ormandy, Andre Kostelanetz, and Victor Kolar.

The list of guest artists to be featured each week reads like a musical "Who's Who." Among the guests to be heard are Lily Pons, soprano; Richard Crooks, tenor; Jascha Heifetz, violinist; Grace Moore, soprano; John Charles Thomas, baritone; Jose Iturbi, pianist; Dorothy Maynor, soprano; Helen Jepson, soprano; Charles Kullmann, tenor; Lawrence Tibbett, baritone; and Gladys Swarthout, mezzo-soprano.

Another popular feature of the Sunday Evening Hour broadcasts are the talks by W. J. Cameron. Interest in these talks, which cover subjects of current interest, has grown to such an extent that over 50,000 printed copies are mailed each week to listeners requesting them. Printed copies of the programs, with brief biographies of the artists and descriptions of the music to be played, also are supplied to large numbers of listeners who write in for them.

In 1934 the programs first started to broadcast from Orchestra Hall in Detroit which has a capacity of 2,000 persons. Two years later the broadcasts were moved to a larger auditorium in Detroit and now some 5,000 persons attend every week. Each Sunday evening the hall is filled to capacity by an audience of enthusiastic people who appreciate an opportunity to hear a fine musical presentation by one of the country's greatest orchestras and famous concert personalities and to witness a major broadcast.

Evidencing the important role played by the Ford Sunday Evening Hour in musical education throughout the country are the many letters received each week from educational institutions and from individuals who use the programs as a basis for instruction in music appreciation.

HERE'S HOW IT ALL STARTED

Continued from Page 8

can countries, old-fashioned vaudeville still survives in its purest form. Because of the censorship of newspapers and their small circulations, current events are satirized on the stages between romantic songs and dramatic skits. Cuban and Mexican theaters present little farces based upon domestic politics, with the chief actors wearing masks to avoid possible prosecution by the authorities!

Until a generation or two ago, the sketch survived as the one-act "curtain raiser" that was an obligatory appetizer to the main fare of a full play, like the preliminary boxing matches. This was true in London and New York.

John and Maggie Field, American vaudeville headliners of 1873, brought the dramatic sketch to this country. In 1896, dramatic sketches had become the most popular fare of "standard vaudeville" as played throughout the country. These acts formed the backbone of vaudeville up to its "death" a short time ago. Most stars of the legitimate stage played at least a few weeks in dramatic sketches while many of them played a whole season throughout the country. A few of the great "legit" stars who were dramatic sketch headliners were: Sarah Bernhardt, Ethel and Lionel Barrymore, Arthur Byron, Florence Reed, Irene Rich, Walter Huston. Comedy skits were the vehicles of such people as the Marx Brothers! Weber and Fields; W. C. Fields; Moss and Frye; Jimmy Durante; Victor Moore, and many others.

Radio took a page from the history of the stage, and repopularized the dramatic sketch, hiring star acting, directing, and writing talent. Eventually many vaudeville artists in vaudeville's heyday carried the sketch a step further by introducing sequels. Radio carried this idea on, making the sketch a daily running story.

I believe that when television finally arrives in all its glory, the "dramatic sketch" with all the props and techniques of old-time vaudeville, plus new radio wrinkles, will hold an important spot in this new form of entertainment.



Radio is rich in beautiful women as any other branch of the entertainment industry and right at the heap in the matter of pulchritude is copper-haired Marian Shockley, who plays the role of Nikki Porter, co-star of the popular mystery "Adventures of Ellery Queen."

I MARRIED A SPORTSCASTER



BY HARRIET STERN,
wife of Bill Stern of NBC

I am a stranger to the radio audience but my husband is probably better known by you than he is by me — you see, he never comes home.

When we were first married several years ago, I realized that it was like marrying a traveling salesman who was always traveling. But I never thought that my only look at my husband would be either in the early morning or very late at night.

Long ago I gave up inviting people over for dinner. You see, I soon ran out of excuses as to why Bill was late. But please do not misunderstand. I love it! It's

like being on a merry-go-round and always trying for the brass ring!

Bill is busy morning, noon and night, but I, at least, have one advantage over other wives. All I have to do is turn on the radio and I know at once where my wandering boy is tonight. Nor am I amazed any longer to find him on one coast of this grand country of ours one night, and on the air the next night from the opposite end.

So much for the complaint department.

You say: "Why do I stand it?" Well that's easy to answer — I

just happen to love the guy. But seriously, it's not entirely as bad as I've painted it. True, Bill does work seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. But his work is so interesting that even I, who knew nothing about sports a few years back, am now all wrapped up in Joe DiMaggio, Joe Louis, etc. To me they've become real people instead of imaginary persons one might read about.

Bill is always dropping in with some celebrity and casually saying: "Honey, I want you to meet Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt or Alice Marble," depending on which sport he's describing that day. I like it, and I think all women would, too. Then, too, you should hear all the gossip I hear about famous people — it's wonderful. Sometimes I think Bill makes some of it up just to amuse me — but it's still interesting and I never let on that I know the difference.

Bill's average week is like someone auditioning for a nervous breakdown. Each morning he's down at NBC by 9:30, getting his daily show ready; that is, Mondays through Fridays. On Saturdays he has usually a football game, track meet or something else in the afternoon.

All week long he is watching to see that NBC covers the right sports event, and making plans and arrangements for his broadcasts not to mention writing his material. In the evenings all he has are two M-G-M newsreels ("News of the Day") to make a week which start at 9:00 in the evening and run through until 3:00 the next morning. They are made on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Hardly a week goes by that he doesn't work with Sam Taub on the fight broadcasts and Sunday evenings are filled with the Bill Stern-Sports broadcasts. (8:45 p. m. CDST, NBC-Blue). There are two of them you know, the second one is heard out West.

Sounds terrible, doesn't it? But it isn't. It's fun — fun for him or he wouldn't be doing it, and as for me — well, I guess I kind of like it, too.

WDZ'S SALES LADIES



By H. Johnston

Pictured from left to right, little Joy Hull, her mother Mrs. Clair B. Hull, and baby Niki. This charming group represents WDZ's female announcing staff, and what a job they're doing!

Joy, age six, is very serious and practical minded. Baby Niki, age two, a little scatter brained, mischievous and naughty, says Mother. Mothers are that way.

The trio carries a half-hour mid-afternoon program and their mail pull is the envy of every WDZ artist. Their popularity with our listeners, proves that the home is without doubt, still America's number one institution. Broadcast from the dining room of their home by remote control, theirs is strictly an informal program in which lovable personalities reign supreme.

In a few days, Joy informs me they will be starting a new contest. "Mother is going to give the commercial on Velvitize (a hair remover), Niki is going to sell

baby shampoo, and I am going to advertize a beautiful blond make-up kit, she said. I ask her who she thought would sell the most. Her reply was, "Well, I can beat Mother...but Niki's pretty good."

What won't the next generation be?

To listen to them is to love them. Sponsored by Schultz & Co.

NUTTY NEWCOMER

"Lespedesa", greener than the grass for which he is named, is featured with the Tennessee Valley boys over WDZ every week day afternoon at 12:15.

Lespedesa, or Joe Forrester, has appeared over the Grand Ole Opry at WSM, Nashville. Then he joined the KVOO Saddle Mountain Round-up in Tulsa, Okla. Slow talking, a born comedian, Lespedesa is already a favorite with the WDZ staff and audience. The picture shows Lespedesa stirring up a panic on the KVOO Saddle Mountain Round-Up.

"WDZ GETS NEW SPORTS CASTER"

Recently acquired by WDZ to take over the sports job on the station is Jack Peterson. Comely fellow, this Peterson. When approached by our reporter regarding his personality, Jack replied, "Peculiar, not nice; in fact an ugly personality at first impression, but not bad if approached in the proper way." Jack's personality is really tops. He was picked for our sportscasting job out of 243 applicants and auditions.

Interested in sports always... as a youngster lived near Wrigley Field in Chicago and averaged some 30 to 40 games a season. In school took active part in football, basketball, and track. Has served the past six years as sports editor of the Daily Times Press in Streator, Illinois, and more recently with the Pontiac Daily Leader in the same capacity.

Ah-Ah-Ah, DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL, LISTEN TO "BLONDIE"



Arthur Lake

The high rating of the show is not the only criterion of its popularity, for recently "Blondie" was voted the best comedy serial on the air by 1200 drama students of Los Angeles City College. Final proof is that, after four months, "Blondie" had to give up her plan to answer requests for autographs with pennies—she was getting 2000 requests a week.



Penny Singleton

A year ago when radio entertainment was studded with spectacular guest stars, sensational premises and lavish expenditures Camel Cigarettes diverted from convention to launch the "Blondie" show, based on three words: "keep it simple." The formula of the "Blondie" program has never swerved from that brief theme.

According to Ashmead Scott, who writes and directs the "Blondie" airing, the "Blondie" shows are really just a compendium of people he's met or seen, or of stories about people which his friends have told him.

"Everything that happens on 'Blondie' is really picked from life. On the bus, in the theater, at the grocery, at graduation exercises — I'll note little things that people do and say, — mannerisms — vocabulary — and from these

come the 'Blondie' scripts. Some of the incidents come from observations of people in Eastern cities — some from villages in New England, or Mid-western towns.

"There's probably always something on the broadcast which reminds you of your Aunt Minnie or even yourself. And for all you know, we may actually be portraying you or Aunt Minnie," Scott goes on to explain.

Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake, stars of the program, are real life prototypes of Blondie and Dagwood.

Penny is just as pert and vivacious as the Blondie she portrays. And just as domestic. She cooks and sews and invents amazing household gadgets, such as devices to remove tightly stuck jar caps. They work too. Like Blon-

die, Penny is generous almost to a fault. Out of her radio earnings she has established her mother and father in a beautiful home in San Fernando Valley. But like Blondie, too, she's wise about finances. Penny has established a substantial trust fund for her five-year-old daughter, DeeGee and made arrangements for the proverbial rainy day, even though it seems far distant.

As for Arthur Lake — he's very apt to trip over his own shoe-laces. He spills coffee at buffet suppers and adores gigantic sandwiches. As a matter of fact, the favorite story his own mother, Mrs. Edith Lake, loves to tell on Arthur shows his early proclivities toward Dagwood-like faux pas. Mrs. Lake was touring in stock in Georgia and she had Arthur and his sister Florence with her. Came

Christmas Day and the Lake pocketbook was not exactly bulging. But the three of them decided to splurge on something very gala for the holiday. Being in Georgia, they bought a luscious strawberry shortcake, heaped high with whipped cream and enormous berries. At the appointed hour on Christmas Day, Arthur lifted the cake in a grand manner and followed by sister Florence started to carry it in to present to his mother. Singing and laughing the little duo marched proudly forward until — Arthur stumbled and ended up face forward through the whipped cream and berries in the approved custard pie manner.

It's no wonder the Hollywood post office has had to install a private box for Arthur since 80 percent of his mail is addressed to "Dagwood Bumstead."

No cast ever enjoyed "doing a show" more than the "Blondie" crew. Penny and Arthur clown until time to actual dress rehearsal. Then all is seriousness. The dress rehearsal is put on wax. Then the entire troupe sits down at a long table in the studio with Ashmead Scott, and the record is played for them.

A very careful study is made of every line and the timing of the speeches. A round-table conference follows in which constructive criticisms are made with the players often their severest critics. The cast watch carefully for any diversions from character. When "Daisy" is written into the script, the pooch and her trainer stay close together, listening, too. Scott makes no substitutions for Daisy. The dog barks his own lines — on cue from the trainer. The puppy even has a varied repertoire of barks, controlled by the signs from the trainer.

When Penny and Arthur are in production on one of the "Blondie" picture series, the schedule gets pretty heavy, with the two stars setting their alarms for 4 a.m. to start picture work literally at the crack of dawn. They leave the set for early rehearsals of the broadcast, grab lunch, report for the final "polishing" radio rehearsal at 1 p.m. They usually put in a 15-hour day on the Mondays of the airshow.



Penny Singleton, plays the part of Blondie.
Arthur Lake, plays the role of Dagwood



Blondie, Dagwood, Baby Dumpling and
Daisy the dog.

To Dick Marvin of the William Esty Advertising Company goes the credit for dramatizing a comic strip that appeals to adults. Previous to the "Blondie" show, funny paper programs had been intended for child audiences alone, but the domestic situations of the Bumsteads have been universal in their appeal. The light homespun yarns have proved the sponsor's theory of simplicity in radio.

The show has faced some tough situations since its inception. Twice the broadcasts were staged from the hospital — once when Arthur Lake was forced to the operating table for a tonsilectomy and again when Penny was injured in an automobile accident. The hospital attendants shook their heads mournfully over Penny's severely lacerated leg. Her condition would not permit having the rest of the cast come to the hospital. So a triple hook-up was installed. One line carried everything Penny said directly to the studio where the cast listened to her cues through earphones. The other carried what was said at the broadcasting station directly to Penny's earphones. The third line was simply a telephone hook-up so that the engineers at both places could talk to each other, if necessary. Despite the seriousness of her accident, Penny and "Blondie" didn't miss a broadcast.

Situations like those only serve to stimulate the ingenuity of real troupers. And the "Blondie" cast is composed of just that. Penny and Arthur were practically boys in the proverbial theater trunks. And Ashmead Scott still maintains his own stock company, the "Mt. Gretna Players" in the East.

There have been four weddings since the opening of the "Blondie" program. Joe Donahue, who formerly represented Esty Co. on the coast, and Mary Eastman; Leone LeDoux, actress, and Ted Carter; Hanley "Mr. Dithers" Stafford and Vyola Vonn; and Scott and "Tig" Turner, actress.

It's quite evident that the "keep it simple" policy has won — for the audience — the cast — and the sponsor.

Third Role and Going Strong



Betty Lou Gerson, one of the leading players in the NBC Chicago studios, has added a new laurel to her growing list of triumphs by winning the title role in the widely-popular serial, "Story of Mary Marlin", heard daily over the NBC-Blue Network. She also has the leads in "Midstream" and "Arnold Grimm's Daughter."



(Top) The Yodeling De Zurik Sisters left WLS for Hollywood to appear in Republic movie "Barnyard Follies."

(Bottom) The National Barn Dance celebrated its seventh anniversary, so members of the cast in the garb of seven-year-olds gather for the festivities. Among them are Pat, Ann and Judy, and (bottom) Eddie Peabody, banjo luminary.



AVALON SHOWBOAT

EACH MONDAY
8:30 P. M. CST
NBC Red Network

STARRING

DICK TODD—VIRGINIA
VERRILL—CAPT. BARNEY
BEULAH (MARLIN HURT)
BOB STRONG'S ORCHESTRA
BOB TRENDLER'S ORCHESTRA

UNCLE WALTER'S DOGHOUSE

EACH TUESDAY
9:30 P.M. CST
NBC Red Network

STARRING

TOM WALLACE AS UNCLE
WALTER—BOB STRONG'S
ORCHESTRA—VIRGINIA
VERRILL—DOGHOUSE CHORUS

PLANTATION PARTY

EACH WEDNESDAY
7:30 P.M. CST
NBC Red Network

STARRING

LOUISE MASSEY AND THE
WESTERNERS—WHITNEY
FORD—MICHAEL STEWART
DORING SISTERS
TOM, DICK AND HARRY



Horace Heidt and his wife arrived in Hollywood by plane, where Heidt and his orchestra are making a picture based on his "Pot of Gold" program.

Fugitive From Hollywood



An expert at playing sister roles, Bonnie Bonita Kay owes her technique to an aunt's observation. "Brothers and sisters may fight," says Auntie, "but at heart they're proud of the relationship." That's what is behind Bonita's playing on the NBC serials, "Bud Barton", and "Arnold Grimm's Daughter."

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EVERY FRIDAY NITE AT

7:30 P. M. — NBC RED NETWORK

STARS *from* WLS, CHICAGO



RADIO stars from WLS, Chicago, are famous throughout the nation. When you're in Chicago, visit the WLS National Barn Dance broadcast. And when you're at home, listen to WLS, to the Barn Dance and all the everyday programs that feature these same Barn Dance stars. For greater enjoyment of your radio, tune to WLS, Chicago — on 870 kilocycles.

Right: WLS Rangers. Below left: Harriet Hester, who conducts "School Time" and "Homemakers' Hour"; right: the Williams Brothers. Bottom: 12,000 people saw the WLS National Barn Dance at the Indiana State Fair.

