

THERE'S LAUGHTER IN THE AIR!

**RADIO'S TOP COMEDIANS
AND THEIR BEST SHOWS**

BY

JACK GAVER and DAVE STANLEY



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*There's
Laughter
in the
Air!*

N O T E

Many of the scripts are in slightly condensed form. They were edited to make them more readable. Sound effects, music cues, and even some dialogue have been deleted. When no single script seemed to contain the full flavor of a performer, we have used portions of two or more scripts. The commercials have been eliminated.

THE AUTHORS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, we bow to the actors who are the subjects of these chapters. We know exactly what we would have done without them—we wouldn't have written the book. Under the law they now are accessories before the fact. They had better watch their step.

Second, we scrape to their writers, whose first names we didn't quite catch but who have for surname the handle of that fecund family known as Legion. May they continue to increase, both in quantity and quality.

Third, we bow to all of the people of the Blue Network, the Columbia Broadcasting System, and the National Broadcasting Company.

Fourth, we make a leg to the following mixed company whose contributions were both large and small, from an anecdote to permission to use scripts: Joe Copps; Jane Kalmus; Walter Batchelor; Steven Hannigan (both man and firm); Hal Block; Martin Goodman; William Morris Agency, Inc.; Bush Barnum; James Sauter; Lester Gottlieb; Ben Gross; William McCaffery; M. Shapiro; Foote, Cone & Belding; Eddie Lee; Buchanan & Co., Inc.; J. Walter Thompson Co.; William Esty & Co.; Jan Schimek; Young & Rubicam; William Murray; Tom Fizdale, Inc.; Edward Sherman; Earle Ferris; Biow Co., Inc.; Needham, Louis & Brorby; McKee & Albright, Inc.; Benton & Bowles, Inc.; Al Foster; Ben Pratt; also to all those named herein as sources of information.

In short, we thank EVERYBODY, including those unwitting contributors who go to the trouble of turning on their radios.

And we must apologize to those indispensable collaborators on radio programs, the sound-effects men, because in these scripts their role has been cut to a minimum. We have no doubt that someday someone will do an excellent anthology of radio scripts in which all of the dialogue will be eliminated and only the sound effects printed. It sounds like a project worthy of a Guggenheim subsidy.

JACK GAVER and DAVE STANLEY

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*There's
Laughter
in the
Air!*

Then

Radio humor, like it or not, has become the mainstay of American comic entertainment. Millions of dollars are spent annually in its preparation and projection, not to mention the publicity. Thousands of persons rack their brains (no heckling, please) every week trying to put a new suit of clothes on an old joke.

Gag writers, actors, Joe Miller, directors, producers, J. Miller, musicians, stooges, Joseph Miller, lawyers, technicians, José Miller, stenographers, salesmen, Giuseppe Miller, advertising experts, press agents, columnists, assorted flunkies, pencil sharpener-uppers, mimeograph jockeys, telephone girls, sandwich and coffee fetchers, aspirin dispensers, doormen, waiters, Western Union Mercuries, bartenders, elevator operators—all are engaged consciously or unconsciously (the latter lead much the happier lives) in contributing a share to putting over split-second-timed comedy. It may seldom be inspired, but you certainly can get a lot of changes rung on “who was that lady I seen you with last night?” for three hundred, five hundred, a thousand dollars and up a week.

The pioneers in radio, of course, had no such financial incentive. They simply knew they had a new entertainment medium by the tail, that comedy was a part of entertainment; and they felt they had to do something about supplying the listeners with laughs. There is no point in arguing over the identity of the first radio comedian (and the fellow might want to remain anonymous anyway), but somewhere, somehow, sometime, someone stepped up to what passed for a microphone and told a joke. That’s the guy. And, the mechanical setup being what it was in those days, there is an excellent chance that no one heard him anyway.

However, it is reasonably certain, insofar as anything about radio can be considered certain or reasonable, that radio’s first real

comedy program stemmed from an incident that occurred October 18, 1921.

On that day Ernie Hare and Billy Jones walked "the last mile" along a narrow corridor of the red-brick Westinghouse factory in Newark, New Jersey. They entered a small tarpaulin-hung room on the third floor, looked apprehensively at some unfamiliar mechanical gadgets, and, at a given signal, launched into a series of songs and jokes over Radiophone Station WJZ. They kept it up for ninety minutes, without script or notes.

Owners of crystal sets who heard the broadcast liked it and were generous with fan mail. Hare and Jones were enthusiastic about radio and a short time later they were on the air regularly over Station WEAJ as a comedy and singing team for the Happiness Candy Stores. The original contract was for five weeks; they stayed with Happiness for five and a half years. If your memory is long enough you'll recall their "signature":

How-do-you-do, everybody, how-do-you-do;
Don't forget your Friday date,
Seven-thirty until eight;
How-do-you-do, everybody, how-do-you-do!

Jones and Hare constituted the first successful radio comedy team; they were among the first to entertain for a commercial sponsor; and they were the first to use a team name identifying them with the sponsor. They were on radio for eighteen years—until the death of Hare on March 9, 1939. They were on long enough for the second generation to catch up. During Hare's final illness, and for a time after his death, his sixteen-year-old daughter, Marilyn, took his place. Then Jones went on alone and with other combinations and was still a radio performer at the time of his death on November 23, 1940.

Jones and Hare were more or less typical of the early radio entertainers. They were not great stars of the show world—the big shots wouldn't touch radio in the early years except as an occasional stunt—and primarily they were singers. Music was the handiest

thing to put on the air in those planless days, and the fact that Jones and Hare also had great ad-lib ability and could break up their songs with comedy patter served to make them outstanding.

- Jones, a tenor of Welsh blood, was a jack-of-all-trades until theatrical producer Lew Fields (Weber & Fields) happened to hear him sing and put him into a musical comedy he was producing. After that he went on concert tours and did vaudeville work. For a time he made records for the Victor Company under the name of Victor Roberts, and it was in a Victor studio that he met baritone Hare.

The Victor people were looking for a singing duo and Hare and Jones teamed up for recordings. They hit it off from the start and became extremely popular in the then rapidly growing phonograph industry. Hare, who began as a salesman and discovered his singing ability in a church choir, came to Broadway in 1909. He was in ten musical shows at the Winter Garden and served as Al Jolson's understudy in *Sinbad*.

It was a little more than a year after they met that the pair made the WJZ broadcast. The Victor Company didn't care much about their decision to enter the radio field, feeling that such trivial doings would ruin them as a recording team.

"The Happiness Boys" hit the top of their popularity in the middle and late 1920's. In a time when there was not nearly the listening public there is today, they would get seven hundred fan letters a week. Once when they broadcast a Tin Pan Alley classic called "I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover," they received several pounds of the good-luck tokens in the post. They were at their best in those early untrammelled years when scripts were unknown and they could create that genuine feeling of spontaneity that was their big appeal. In later years they were overshadowed when the famous comics of the theater and the big script shows took over the industry.

Jones and Hare, of course, were not alone in this pioneering. Scores of unknowns across the land were trying their hands at this new game, making up the rules as they went along and working

solely for the glory of it most of the time because until the late 1920's there was little important cash return for any except a very few. And the financial rewards of these was a bagatelle compared to the thousands paid weekly to many performers today.

Some of the old-timers, as a matter of fact, never saw radio cash. A sponsor in those days more often than not paid off in merchandise, if indeed he was sufficiently convinced of the benefits of the new advertising medium to pay off at all. There is a story, possibly apocryphal, that one Middle West comic of that period collected enough merchandise in a series of microphone appearances to open a store.

Harry Sosnik, one of the best-known musical directors in radio, was one of those who had an experience with merchandise payments. A high-school kid in 1922, he helped out as a pianist at a small station in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park where the announcer-singer-comedian-press agent-general handy man—all one person—used to try to beat up business around town. One day he discovered a small outfit getting started in the candy bar business on North Clark Street. He put up a strong sales talk, but the prospect was stubborn. Finally the candy-maker said he'd give it a two-week try if the announcer and Sosnik would take payment in candy bars. So for each of the two weeks the boys each received a huge carton of Oh Henry bars. In those days Oh Henry was as large as an Idaho baking potato and sold for ten cents a bar. At the end of the two weeks the broadcasters were sick of candy and the sponsor was sick of radio.

The dearth of money was the chief thing that kept the big-name comics—the stars of vaudeville and the legitimate stage who could command from five hundred dollars up into the thousands weekly—away from radio. On the whole, they did not scorn the new medium simply out of a sense of superiority—as stage actors in the previous decade had turned up their noses at the films. The stampede to the airwaves, once real money began to beckon, is proof of this.

This same lack of financial return also mitigated against early radio getting any decent material prepared by skilled comedy writers.

There was no inducement for popular playwrights of the day to turn out radio scripts any more than there was for fellows like John P. Medbury, Billy K. Wells, Edgar Allen Woolf, and others, who specialized in vaudeville skits for three hundred dollars and up, plus royalties. These vaudeville writers were the very kind that radio needed, but almost a decade passed before they and a flock of unknowns, starting from scratch strictly as radio writers, made their presence felt. Many comics felt that the matter of material made regular radio appearances impossible. They'd buy a vaudeville skit and play it in back and forth across this and other countries for years. Or they'd be in a stage production that would last them three or four seasons. Once set, the material was the least of their worries. But you couldn't keep repeating on the radio. It was, they thought, a monster that ate up material faster than it could be created.

So the early comedy was largely in the hands of tyros, singers, or musicians. The brunt of it generally fell on the announcer, who, as in the example cited above, did just about everything around the station. The comedy consisted almost solely of cracking jokes, and the procedure was just as crude as that expression sounds. No one hired writers for the announcer and he couldn't afford to buy material out of his meager salary.

These early "comedians" relied mainly on the weekly issues of the old *Life* and *Judge* magazines and dog-eared joke books. (Most of today's comedy comes from the same sources, but it is dressed up like a menu in French.) Some of the boys were not above appropriating a bit from a burlesque show or a musical comedy, if they thought they could get away with it. Usually they could because no one was paying much attention.

One of the standbys of those desperate searchers for gags was a volume called *Madison's Budget*, an annual collection of jokes and comedy bits put together by James Madison, an old New York vaudeville performer who discovered he could write and collect jokes better than he could put them over on the stage. It sold for one dollar a copy, was published on slick paper at 1404 Third Avenue,

New York City, between 1898 and 1921, and contained such nuggets of wit as:

"There was a rumor going around that I was dead. But it was another fellow. I knew it wasn't me the minute I heard about it. . . . My friend made a fortune in the boat-renting business. He put up a sign: RIDES ON THE LAKE. MARRIED MEN 10 CENTS, WIVES THROWN IN."

Or:

"I heard your mother-in-law was dangerously sick."

"Yes, but now she's dangerously well again."

Much of the comedy in the first years was connected with small orchestras that interlarded their musical numbers with jokes tossed back and forth, not too much unlike the technique employed in the minstrel shows popular in another era. One such aggregation was that of Everett (Ev) Jones, a Middle West favorite who worked in Cleveland. Here is an account of this period from Jones himself:

"We received our radio baptism on WTAM, Cleveland, in October, 1924, and became nationally known as the Coo-Coo Club. In that year, as I recall it, there were two other nationally known attractions on the air—the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks in Chicago and the Red Apple Club in Detroit. We were on the air from WTAM from 1924 to 1927 for three hours each Saturday night, from nine until midnight.

"We started out with an orchestra of seven men. We played a song called 'The Little Old Clock on the Mantel' and the drummer had a coo-coo cue. Our announcer, Art Herske, decided that was a good name for us and that's how the Coo-Coo Club was born. We later added more men and finished with about twelve musicians.

"Most of our 'script' was ad-libbed. I would write down a lot of jokes, and as we were playing a tune the announcer would look them over and select the ones he liked. We would go into whatever gags he had selected at the end of a number. We went through this pro-

cedure after every dance tune. There were no rehearsals. There was no real script as we know it today.

"Musically descriptive numbers such as 'The King with the Terrible Temper' and 'The Three Trees' were introduced around 1926. The artists were paid about eight dollars per man for the three-hour broadcasts, with the leader, of course, getting additional. The comic, or announcer, also was paid additional money. He was chief electrician at the Willard Storage Battery Company.

"We had studio audiences. At WTAM they would admit fifty people to the studio at a time. They would stay thirty minutes and then be cleared out to make room for another batch.

"Sometimes a tube blew out and we would be off the air indefinitely."

In its issue of July 27, 1929, *Radio Graphic Weekly* had this to say of the response stirred up by Ev Jones and his boys:

"In addition to considerable fan mail, Ev Jones received many presents and contributions—cases of Coca-Cola and ginger ale, boxes of cigars and cigarettes, cakes, ham, buns, mustard, free gasoline coupons, and checks. Every Saturday, Ev was forced to acknowledge these tokens over the air."

Here are some samples of the gags used by the Coo-Coo Club:

"I received a hundred-dollar order today."

"Impossible!"

"It's true."

"I still don't believe you."

"Well, look then. Here's the cancellation to prove it."

Or:

"Where do boys go who shoot craps on the Sabbath?"

"Into the alley."

"Where do little boys go who don't drop their pennies into the church collection plate?"

"To the picture show."

Introductions were gagged up to provide humor, as in the presentation of a musician as "the pride of the stockyards."

And have a couple more:

"What is the difference between a Scotsman and a coconut?"

"You can get a drink out of a coconut."

"What is a drydock?"

"A doctor out of prescriptions."

Don't jeer, men, the poor devils were trying. And if you listen carefully to your favorite radio comedian today, you're as likely as not to hear these or their first cousins.

Jones was one of those who at that time used his radio program as a means of getting better-paying public appearance engagements. He put out a four-page brochure which said:

"We place a microphone in view of all present and then start in with the 'Hello Song' and on through the same type of program you have heard every Saturday night on WTAM. . . . Write for rates and other information."

One of the dodges used in the early days to get humorous programs was the "jamboree" technique. This was simply a gathering together of studio people or outsiders who could be shanghaied and put through the mill by an announcer with a passable ad-lib technique. The announcer just hoped that someone would come up with something funny every few minutes.

In Chicago, for example, Pat Barnes, chief announcer of WHT at that time, had a program in 1925 called "Your Hour," which was a catch-as-catch-can potpourri of vaudeville and minstrelsy heard from midnight until 1 A.M. He'd entice people into the studio for

service on the program and rehearse them in joke exchanges or skits before a live mike. Listeners, if any, could hear the rehearsal and a few minutes later they'd hear a formal airing of the same thing. The rehearsals were funnier.

Sosnik tells a story about the brothers Atlas, Ralph, and Leslie, who went to Chicago with a lot of money at their command in the early days and began playing around with radio. They opened a station called WBBM and at one time the "studio" was a curtained-off portion of a hotel lobby. Anyone who came in was likely to be snatched up as an entertainer—singer, comic, musical-saw performer, or what not. The brothers frequently would be out on Lake Michigan in their boat, listening to their station. If they heard someone whose performance they didn't like, they'd communicate directly to their engineer, who'd simply throw the switch and take the station off the air. The performer, of course, went right on working—before a dead mike.

Those were the days when a station went on and off the air at will. Joe Rines, another important musical director in radio for years, recalls when he and another youngster were running a pioneer station in Boston. There was the time when Dempsey and Carpentier were fighting in Boyle's Thirty Acres over in New Jersey and the bout was put on the air. Rines was broadcasting some music when the telephone in his studio rang and an irate citizen shouted:

"Hey, will you guys get off the air? Your damned station's blocking my reception of the fight."

Rines was only too glad to comply. He shut down and listened to the fight himself.

Aside from the money and material deficiencies, stellar comedians of the theater were buffaloes by another aspect of the infant entertainment medium. They "gave" and nothing happened—there was no audience to laugh or applaud. Accustomed to free-wheeling activity on large stages, where they could bolster their laugh quotas by wearing funny costumes and makeup, they were at a loss when they had to stand still and talk into an inverted "tomato can." De Wolf

Hopper, the late comic opera star who was famous for his recitation of "Casey at the Bat," to which he contributed lavish gestures, had this to say about a radio appearance he made over WJZ on July 19, 1922:

"It was a peculiar and dramatic sensation—speaking to thousands upon thousands you couldn't see. It was the hardest thing because I couldn't gesticulate."

The late Frank Tinney, supreme comic with the tragic history, was one of the chief sufferers from lack of an audience, according to the records. *Radio Broadcast*, an early fan magazine, had this to say about the situation in general and Tinney in particular:

"A curious thing in connection with the broadcasting has been the reaction of stage artists to the undemonstrative little receiver into which they pour their songs and remarks. Frank Tinney refused to believe that he was not the victim of a hoax and that he was in reality talking for others than the few persons he could see around him."

Concerning this appearance, over WJR in Detroit, the *Detroit News* said:

"Of all the entertainers who appeared last week, Mr. Tinney probably suffered the most because of the absence of applause."

There was another factor that made comics and other performers wary of radio for a time. The late E. F. Albee, who was practically God in the vaudeville world, sensed a lively rival in the new contraption and wanted none of it. If people could sit comfortably at home and hear his artists, why should they go to the trouble of going to his theaters to be entertained by them? So he let it be known that anyone who worked for him better have no truck with radio—or else. And, of course, he could make the "or else" stick for a while, for radio had no financial inducements to compensate for loss of valuable

vaudeville bookings. Albee's fears were well grounded, too, because after the movies had softened vaudeville up a bit, radio put over the knockout punch on it as a major amusement enterprise.

Despite all of these handicaps the people in radio never ceased trying to bring well-known entertainers to their listeners. When they succeeded, it usually was on a "do a pal a favor" basis because there wasn't much inducement for the well-paid and prominent in offers of free dinners, transportation, and publicity. However, lesser performers often were impressed by the publicity angle and were easier to talk into volunteering than were their more famous colleagues.

One of the most successful ways of trapping talent was employed in New York by Station WHN. Nils T. Granlund, who became well known as a radio voice and a night club showman, was hired to make the rounds of the cabarets and bring to the microphone the music of the club bands and the voices of the entertainers. This was the beginning of what are now called "remotes," the picking up of entertainment away from the studios. It was in this fashion that Jimmy Durante, for one, first was heard by radio listeners, long before he had a big comedy program of his own at thousands of dollars a week.

Money, of course, was the medicine needed to end all of these struggles to establish radio entertainment on a solid basis. All of the difficulties, directly or indirectly, stemmed from its lack. The performer and writer talent was readily available whenever the financial bait could be made tempting enough. The most important step toward making this money available was taken November 15, 1926, when the first effective network of stations, the National Broadcasting Company, began operations. Now it was possible to approach a prospective sponsor and show him that his product wasn't going to be advertised over just one or two stations with a radius of a few score miles. The network would put the name of his product in the ears of listeners clear across the country. Firms which sold products nationally, the ones with millions of dollars to spend on advertising, could now be approached with some prospect of getting a favorable hearing.

Not that the change was immediate. Sponsors did not open their checkbooks overnight. But from then on, the trend was forward at an increasingly rapid pace, with the Columbia Broadcasting System and later the Mutual Broadcasting System entering into competition with NBC's Red and Blue networks. By the start of the twentieth century's third decade the parade of star performers and writers to radio was well under way.

. . . . *and Now*

The radio comic is the king of the airwaves. He has no close competition—not even from music. The largest, most expensive air shows are those built around a comedian or a comic idea. Singers and orchestras are used on nearly all of these programs, but they are generally stopgaps.

Most of the top comedians at this writing have been in radio off and on, mostly on, for at least a decade. They have formulas that remain unchanged year after year because the listeners seem to be satisfied, and that keeps the sponsors happy. Why change a winning combination? The trouble is, from the standpoint of anyone who can be really objective around radio, that the shows are cut too nearly to the same pattern. The sponsors who have made possible this great mass entertainment by the best entertainers must also take much of the blame for this sameness.

The sponsors, and the advertising agencies that try to make the sponsors happy, insist on quick audience response. The top shows in the Hooper and Crossley ratings represent two or three types, so the easiest thing to do is to try to send a new show up the same ladder. Rarely does a new comedy show idea get a chance because there is no time to fool around with it. The sponsors forget that some of the shows now at the top of the list didn't get there overnight. And if by chance a new idea does get a hearing, what happens? Maybe it doesn't click the first few weeks. So the first thing you know one little aspect of the show is changed. In a couple of weeks something else is changed. The next thing you realize is that there no longer is anything left of the original idea—that the show now sounds just like any one of a dozen others.

Only a few persons in radio express real concern about this situa-

tion, wondering if some day the public isn't suddenly going to say the hell with it and go fishing. The majority refuses to worry. They say that as long as the public gets it free, none of the listeners is going to bother about whether radio entertainment is fully realizing its possibilities or not. And both factions have one argument they use a lot: what's the use of trying to make any changes now because television will be along in a short time and then the whole shebang will get a complete going-over.

It is only fair to point out that the comedians and their writers do have their troubles. One of the chief ones is a sort of unofficial censorship (apart from any official blue-penciling the networks may do) that makes it impossible to have fun with certain subjects. On radio you just aren't supposed to say anything that might possibly make someone unhappy. On the stage—even in pictures to a slight extent—you can get away with gags about many subjects that are taboo for radio. And the radio field has become more circumscribed than ever in recent years. It goes without saying that any jokes of a suggestive nature are barred to the radio comics, and this is all to the good; but so many of the other restrictions are ridiculous.

This undoubtedly has had something to do with the prevalence of humor which makes the chief comic the butt of all jokes. Listen to most of the big programs and you'll hear week after week the star made game of as being homely, stingy, lazy, talentless, without humor, and just plain ignorant. This is, after all, one way of making fun of the foibles of the human race.

This intramural heckling has become interprogram on several occasions, with top comics, good friends off mike, sniping at each other week after week. The Jack Benny-Fred Allen insult fest has been going on since 1937, for example. This practice of keeping satire and burlesque within the industry is the easy way out and, as it happens, practically the only way. It has more than a little to do with making a lot of programs sound alike.

The war, too, has had a restraining influence. You have to be mighty careful what you say on the air nowadays about an ally and its leaders.

One radio trend that got out of hand in recent years was the guest star racket. Scarcely a program stayed free of it. It got so that a comic apparently no longer dared depend on his own talents and those of his supporting cast and gagmen to carry him through twenty minutes of dialogue. Early in 1945 there were a couple of signs that guesting was in for de-emphasis and that again it would be possible to know that when you heard Whoozis it would be on his own program and not one of a dozen others where he might be a visiting artist. The centering of many of the big programs in Hollywood, with its wealth of movie stars, had a lot to do with the growth of the guest system. It was possible to hear the same guest artist on different programs for weeks at a time in quick succession. This also didn't help to lend individuality to the programs. In the season of 1943-44 one Hollywood actor did twenty-five guest shots. With that kind of work he didn't need a program of his own.

A little guesting can be a good thing, such as calling attention to likely talent for radio. The old Rudy Vallee program, for example, gave many of today's top talents their first airing a dozen or so years ago. But when almost every program goes in for it, using movie stars or radio personalities who have programs of their own, it becomes just like too much of anything—too much.

One thing that will do radio a lot of good is the development of new comedians. There are a few prospects coming along now who look as though they will be a help. A quick success late in 1943 was Alan Young, a Canadian who is strictly a radio product, which is something of a novelty now, but probably will be more common in the future. Jackie Gleason, Jack Carson, Danny Thomas, Jerry Lester, Eddie Bracken, Johnny Morgan, Henny Youngman, and Paul Winchell are some others who show signs of making radio headway.

And, if it isn't asking too much, please, God, send radio some more good comedy writers!

Juggler's Progress!

**FRED
ALLEN**

Human memory being the vagrant thing it is, there are some persons with a cloudy idea that Fred Allen invented radio. There are others of more hazy recollection who labor under the delusion that he is the son or grandson of John L. Sullivan, or John L. himself, and, as such, no doubt responsible for the Boxer Rebellion, if the truth were known. But, whatever whimsical turn memory may take, almost everyone realizes, even if only subconsciously, that, regardless of his standing in the popularity polls, Allen is *THE* comedian of radio. Of course, throwing his writing onto the scales gives him added weight.

This viewpoint is most pronounced in the business itself. Radio people may marvel at so-and-so's Hooper or Crossley rating, exclaim about the rise of this or that annual phenom, but they always wind up any discussion of airways comedy and comedians with the remark that "of course there's always Fred Allen. . . ." Which is not a bad windup in any league.

Allen completed his twelfth season of broadcasting in June, 1944. He left with the warning, heard frequently in recent years, that he might not be back. In 1943 it looked as though the threat might be made good, because he wasn't around when the other big shows returned to the air in the fall. Allen had gone to the Coast to make a picture (which he did not make); his health wasn't too good, and generally he didn't feel like resuming his radio chores. But when December arrived, he was back at work; and he stayed for twenty-six weeks.

When the series ended in June, 1944, Allen had no commitments

for the next season; he was due on the Coast for that long-delayed film, and his blood pressure was acting up again. This blood pressure has had him making the rounds of the doctors in recent years, watching his diet, cutting out tobacco chewing for a couple of cigars a day, and generally limiting his activities outside radio while he is working in it.

He actually got the picture made the second time out. *In the Bag* is its name and its kids the pants off movie situations. Allen, naturally, had a hand in the writing. In his supporting cast are several stars, including Jack Benny. Back in New York in December, 1944, Allen still had time to make the second half of the season with a radio program but he passed up the chance. Instead he appeared as a guest once, sometimes twice, a week on other programs. Everyone seems certain that he'll be back with his own show for the 1945-46 season.

"Picture work doesn't bother me," he says. "There someone else has most of the writing worry. I'm just an actor. But with radio the writing as well as the acting is up to me, and between having to think up what to do and doing it, I get in a hell of a shape."

There can never be any doubt that Allen writes his own material. He has "writers" like other comedians—two, three, four; the number has varied from year to year—but they serve only as idea people or to help expand Allen's ideas. He composes the master script himself in a small meticulous hand-printing.

"I can read my printing," Allen explains.

A good gag will not be scorned in the Allen scheme of things, but his comedy is not essentially of the gag type. Ever since he has been on the air, he has followed a steady pattern of satirizing human foibles—a pattern that has withstood changes in sponsors, shifts in networks, and the radical move from the hour-long Town Hall Tonight program to the half-hour Texaco All-Star Theater productions of his past two seasons.

Allen has had to be a close student of the daily scene to work in this medium. It has been his custom to scan nine newspapers daily, clipping out items that might be mike fodder. The items have ranged

from the most important international developments to the most inconsequential events, but it is the trivia that have supplied him with his best material—the little things that are a direct part of the lives of his listeners: the weather, relatives, animals, food, money, and the like.

As a writer, he has the knack of viewing these ideas from the most humorous angle and putting them into the most effective form. As an actor, he flavors them with the pungency of his peculiar delivery—a nasal style that makes almost everything he says sound like an articulate spider enticing a fly to a webbed pratfall.

Because of his type of material, Allen, more than anyone else in radio, bears the cross of trying to avoid hurting the feelings of individuals and groups. Even the most innocuous comedy line may backfire on him. There was his classic observation that the rooms of a certain unidentified Philadelphia hotel were so small that the mice were humpbacked. The hotelkeepers' organization demanded a retraction.

The situation has not been eased through the years either. More and more things in the political and international fields have become taboo in the last half-dozen years, until now it is almost useless to think of making satirical comment along these lines on radio. The networks are taking no chances on getting a dirty look from the Federal Communications Commission. All of which is a sad blow to a person of Allen's penetrating wit and propensity for deflating the smug, the trite, and the obvious.

The advertising agency people, who are in radio show business up to the top of their assets, are also a bane of the Allen existence. He has the bred-in-the-bone showman's legitimate feeling that Johnny-come-latelies, especially when they don't come from show business, should try to learn about comedy from people who have spent a lifetime at it rather than pontificating on what is or is not good humor. The nice-nellyisms that he has run into at this source have left their imprint on the blood-pressure charts.

Al Hirschfeld, writing in the *New York Times Magazine* recently, had this to quote from Allen about his agency woe:

"Why, only last week—not that it's important, but just to show you what happens when a bunch of business executives try to run show business—I had a timely twist to the old half-man, half-woman gag. The half-man enlists in the Army and the half-woman takes a job at Nedick's. [A New York lunch-stand chain.]

"Now, if these mental giants at the agency had thrown it out because it wasn't funny—that would have been all right with me. But no, they censored it because some 'rule' says that a half-woman implies that she's engaged in prostitution. Don't ask me to explain it."

Sometimes, of course, Allen gets around the constricting bars of censorship with one of his famous ad-libs. Even before he was in radio he was famous for his extemporaneous cracks, and his reputation along this line hasn't suffered since he went on the air. Other comedians do not relish a public duel of wits with him because they are almost certain to come off second-best. Back of this ability to "think on his feet" is a mental storehouse crammed with the jokes and situations absorbed during thirty years of entertaining the public under all possible conditions. Those years started in Boston.

Fred Allen was born John Florence Sullivan in a Boston suburb on May 31, 1894. When he and a younger brother were orphaned by the death of their father fifteen years later, they went to live with an aunt in near-by Dorchester. Fred already was employed in the children's department of the Boston Public Library, where his father had worked, and his chief recreation was going to see the shows in Boston's vaudeville houses.

Jugglers fascinated him and he experimented at home until he achieved enough dexterity to entertain friends. In 1912, a year after he graduated from high school, he began to get bookings at "amateur nights," which, of course, were not exactly what the athletic world refers to as *simon-pure*. After a year of this part-time work, he had a chance to fill in for a professional juggler on a vaudeville date. He jumped at the opportunity, billing himself as "Paul Huckle, European entertainer." A booking followed immediately and he took the professional name of Freddie St. James.

But there were setbacks after that. Bookings were not plentiful

and he had to take outside work from time to time in order to eat. However, at nineteen, he knew he was going to stick to show business and he was doing better. Then he began to see that juggling might not be the best thing for him and he started playing it down in favor of comedy patter. He also became plain Freddie James, the "world's worst juggler."

Allen crashed the New York field soon afterwards and alternately worked and starved until he finally got a break through an emergency performance in Paterson, New Jersey, that brought him an engagement on the Poli vaudeville circuit in New England. The Loew circuit then gave him a route and he made some of the larger cities across the country—a tour that resulted in his being signed for sixteen weeks in Australia at about 125 dollars per. He stayed in Australia for a year and returned to the United States in 1917. He did little juggling now. He had added a ventriloquist bit to his act and he did well in the West.

When he returned to New York, he decided upon his final name change. He was afraid that if he sought bookings as Freddie James he would be offered the same salary he had received before he went to Australia. His agent, Edgar Allen, suggested that the comedian take his name. Fred Allen it was from then on.

In 1920 Allen made the vaudeville big time on the Keith circuit. He was hired by the Shuberts for their vaudeville venture a year later, and in 1922 he made his first legitimate theater appearance in *The Passing Show of 1922*. He alternated between musical shows and vaudeville for the next few years, earning increasing recognition and money until in 1930 he scored sensationally in the first *Little Show*, something of a departure in stage revues, that did as much for Libby Holman and Clifton Webb as it did for Allen. These three also were featured in the just as successful *Three's a Crowd* the following year. That was Allen's last stage show.

After *Three's a Crowd* closed in 1932, the comedian began looking at the radio field and worked out a sample program for himself and some other stars. He made his first broadcast on October 23, 1932—a truly historical date in radio, although Allen did not click

immediately. His voice seemed to be against him. Radio had never heard anything like it, and the late O. O. McIntyre probably best described it when he said it sounded like "a man with false teeth chewing on slate pencils." But Allen persevered and in a short time he was on radio to stay.

Allen has outlasted many of the radio entertainers who have won top ratings in the polls for a season or two only to slip away into obscurity. That has been largely due to the fact that he exercises more power over his own program than any of the others have been able to do over theirs, his agency and other interference troubles notwithstanding. His programs have to be as nearly right as hard work can make them. They are not the product of two or three days' last-minute slaving, but of at least a week's concentrated effort. In fact, many times the general formats of Allen's scripts have been worked out weeks in advance. No little detail of them fails to get his personal attention—not once but many times—if he feels that there is some word or clause that is not just right.

Allen is married to the Portland Hoffa of his programs. She formerly was a showgirl and they met when both were in *The Passing Show of 1922*. They were married in 1928 and are the closest companions. They live simply, whether in their unpretentious New York apartment, their Old Orchard, Maine, cottage, or in a rented place in Hollywood.

No one could ever tell from observing them that their income has been around five thousand dollars weekly for the greater part of each year in the past twelve. Allen's friends say that he has one of the longest "pension" lists in a profession noted for the unpublicized personal philanthropies of its wealthier members. Allen is one of the softest touches of all.

At fifty, Allen, despite his blood-pressure trouble, looks to be in pretty good condition. He is a six-footer, weighs around 175 pounds, and has a face that looks like that of a Chinese mandarin who has just bitten into a lemon. Other persons discern satanic overtones in his countenance, largely because he has a set of highly mobile and arching eyebrows. All of this, of course, is deceptive, because, while

he is an outspoken man of many dislikes, he is an enjoyable companion and first-rank conversationalist.

Allen's chief desire, expressed during an interview on his fiftieth birthday, is to be a writer. He does not consider the fact that he has written about 450 radio scripts makes him one.

"The writer is the fellow in show business today," he said. "I don't know whether I could make the grade strictly as a writer or not. You have to serve an apprenticeship in that as in everything else, and I'd be getting a pretty late start."

And this was not false modesty from the man many people consider the outstanding writer of humor in the country. It was just Fred Allen giving himself the same critical eye that he gives the people around him before he puts their little idiosyncrasies into his radio scripts.

FRED ALLEN . . . *On the Air*

(A Slightly Condensed Version of One of Allen's Hour-Long Shows)

JIMMY WALLINGTON (announcer): At this time of year, ladies and gentlemen, the sun shines, the birds sing, flowers bloom, the sap is running from the trees. And speaking of sap—that reminds me. Here it is now—Fred Allen in person!

ALLEN: Thank you. Thank you. And good evening, ladies and gentlemen. And before we start, Mr. Wallington, fun is fun. But I resent that sap innuendo.

JIMMY: But, Fred—

ALLEN: Some day you'll overdo it with one of your introductions.

JIMMY: But, gee, Fred. You only give me one line. It's the only chance I have to let people hear the real Wallington. I let myself go.

ALLEN: One of these nights you'll let yourself go. And you'll find that I have beaten you to it. I once had another announcer who let himself go during the introduction. Do you know what happened to him?

JIMMY: What?

ALLEN: He is now announcing in the Blank drugstore in Forty-fourth Street. If you should go into that particular drugstore and order ham and eggs, the gentleman who takes your order will turn toward the kitchen and shout, "Ham and Eggs!" And then from the kitchen a voice will reply, "Ham and Eggs!" And then from somewhere in back another voice echoes "Ham and Eggs!" And then from way back in the

dark, dingy confines of this Blank drugstore a lone voice will cry out, "Coming up!" That is the announcer who once worked for me and once, only once, mind you, let himself go during my introduction. Now what do you say?

JIMMY: If that guy's getting three square meals a day, he's better off than I am.

ALLEN: You are undernourished with that rotunda under your vest! Your stomach looks like either end of the Staten Island ferry. If you open that coat we'll probably hear a watermelon calling its mate.

JIMMY: Oh, *yeah!*

ALLEN: And with this scintillating rejoinder from Mr. W., we turn to the latest news of the week. Highlights from the world of news: New York City, New York. Arrival of spring is officially confirmed as circus opens at Madison Square Garden for four-week engagement. Tonight, we visit the circus and bring you a preview of the greatest show on earth's outstanding features. At the entrance of the circus we find the perennial little rube and his wife from out of town.

CHARLES: What does that sign say, Myrna?

MINERVA: Says Barnum and Bailey.

CHARLES: When them two get together it's a circus. What say, Myrna, shall we go?

MINERVA: You bet. If it's half as good as it smells, it's a great show.

ALLEN: We follow them in and stop for a word with the circus publicity man, Sam Levine. How does the circus look this year, Sam?

SAM: You're askin' me? I told him not to open it. But who am I? Sam Levine, a leopard's press agent. "Don't open it, John," I says, "I ain't ready." So what does he do? I ain't ready and he opens it.

ALLEN: But the circus has to open on a certain date, doesn't it?

SAM: That I gotta grant you. But the point is I ain't ready and he opens it. On bended knees I pleaded with him. "Sam," he says, "all right, you're my press agent. There's nothin' I wouldn't do for you that I wouldn't do if it didn't have to be done. Ask me to put my arm down a hyena's throat—I'd think it over. Ask me for money—you can have it. Any amount with interest at ten percent. But when you ask me not to open it, Sam, I gotta say to you, No, in the affirmative."

ALLEN: Well, he must have had a reason.

SAM: All right. So he had a little trouble. With a circus, trouble you expect. The dog-face boy's got distemper. The sword-swallower's got indigestion. He's hiccupin' knives and forks. The fire-eater overdone it. One of his tonsils is a clinker. I know John's upset with the elephant losing four hundred pounds.

ALLEN: What happened to the elephant?

SAM: Malnutrition. The elephant's feeder is nearsighted. For two months he kept leaving the elephant's hay at the wrong end. The elephant was sittin' pretty but he wasn't gettin' no nourishment.

ALLEN: Well, with all that trouble—

SAM: He's got more trouble yet. The Ubangis can't stand the climate. Their lower lips went limp.

ALLEN: You mean the Ubangis' lips are hanging down?

SAM: The Ubangis look like half of their faces are gone and they're wearin' turtle-neck sweaters made outta skin.

ALLEN: That's certainly plenty of trouble.

SAM: But that's got nothing to do with me. All right, so I'm only the circus press agent, but I ain't ready and he opens it.

ALLEN: Why weren't you ready?

SAM: I didn't have an adjective.

ALLEN: No adjective?

SAM: What makes a circus? Is it the animals, the clowns, the bareback riders? No. It's the circus press agent! What makes the circus press agent? An adjective.

ALLEN: One adjective?

SAM: And it's gotta be high-powered. Last year the circus was *resplendent*. The year before *mammoth*. This year I ain't ready.

ALLEN: Why not?

SAM: This year it's all new. The circus is streamlined. How can I find an adjective? Hey, wait a minute! I got it!

ALLEN: A streamlined adjective? What is it?

SAM: Streamlossal! The circus this year is streamlossal! I'm ready!

ALLEN: And now we step inside to see the big show. First, we stop to look at the wild animals. Here we see the hyenas. Where do you keep the hyenas during the winter, trainer?

TRAINER: We rent them to Bob Hope to mix in with his studio audience.

ALLEN: Across from the hyenas is the elephant nook. We see a little man standing near the elephants. We stop to chat with him. Are you an elephant lover, brother?

MAN: No, I was just trying something out. You've heard that old saying "an elephant never forgets"?

ALLEN: Yes.

MAN: I thought I'd put the elephant to test.

ALLEN: And did you?

MAN: Yes. Last year I gave that third elephant a candy bar, and quickly walked away.

ALLEN: And this year?

MAN: I came back to see if the elephant remembered me. He did. He just gave me this old cellophane candy wrapper to throw away.

ALLEN: We look across the way and see the lion tamer just about to perform a feat. The lion tamer makes a special announcement.

TRAINER: And now, folks, for my feature trick I will place my head in the lion's mouth. First I open the lion's mouth to six and seven-eighths. My head size. Open, Max. Next I put in my head—so. (*Lion's jaws snap. Muffled.*) Help, help!

ALLEN: Yes. What's wrong?

TRAINER: Has my neck come out yet?

ALLEN: Yes, your neck is here. Where are you speaking from?

TRAINER: Down here in the lion's stomach.

ALLEN: What do you want?

TRAINER: Throw me down my glasses.

ALLEN: Your glasses?

TRAINER: Yes. If this is my finish I want to see it.

* * *

ALLEN: And now—Oh, hello, Portland.

PORTLAND: Hello, Mr. Allen.

ALLEN: Well, what's on your mind, if you'll forgive the overstatement?

PORTLAND: I just stopped in to say good-by.

ALLEN: Well, good-by, Portland.

PORTLAND: Oh, I'm not going. You are.

ALLEN: I am?

PORTLAND: Yes. Aren't you leaving our show for another show?

ALLEN: Portland, you haven't been reading the sponsor's mind, have you? Where am I going?

PORTLAND: You're going to the Blank

Soup program Friday night, aren't you?

ALLEN: Oh, that. Why, yes, I'm going to be in a little play by Norman Corwin. But—

PORTLAND: Well, it's been fun working with you, Mr. Allen.

ALLEN: But, I'm not—

PORTLAND: And just so you'll remember mama and me, here is a basket of cheese sandwiches we made for you to take along.

ALLEN: Little mementos?

PORTLAND: Two of them are mementos. The rest are Camembert.

ALLEN: Just a minute. What is all this cheesy sentiment, this bon voyage business. Who spread this rumor that I was going for good?

PORTLAND: Kenny Baker said—

ALLEN: Kenny again. That kid looks like Skippy but he's got the soul of Lucretia Borgia. Where is that dimpled rat? Oh, Jimmy, where's Kenny?

JIMMY: Oh, is it time for Kenny's entrance? I'll get going.

ALLEN: Kenny's entrance? What is this?

JIMMY: Quiet, please. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I bring you that worthy successor to Fred Allen. Our new comedy star. And here he is—Kenny, "a laugh a minute," Baker!

KENNY: Thank you, thank you, and good evening, ladies and gentlemen. A funny thing happened to me on the way to the theater—

ALLEN: *Kenny!*

KENNY: Oh, are you still around?

ALLEN: Kenny, what do you think you're doing? Who do you think you are?

KENNY: I'm the fellow you think you are—as of next week.

ALLEN: Now, listen, you little Fifth Columnist—

KENNY: Beat it, Buddy. I'm breaking in a routine. How about a little professional courtesy, F.A.? Let's not part bad friends.

ALLEN: Who's parting? We're not parting?

KENNY: Stop kidding, F.A. I know all about it.

ALLEN: Kenny, I am only a guest on the Blank Soup program for one night. I'll be back here next week. I'm not a man who leaves his friends in the lurch.

KENNY: But think of yourself, F.A. This dramatic part Friday night. It may be the start of your career. Think what it means. Your big chance—the legitimate theater, greasepaint, a cane and spats. I'm glad for you, old pal. This is from the heart.

ALLEN: The heart. You have a heart you can put in a pistachio shell. And it will rattle. You are as two-faced as the leading man in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. You have more ulterior motives, Kenny, than a man bringing an apple to a draft board.

KENNY: Gee, I'm not trying to sabotage you, F.A. I only thought I'd fill in in the emergency. But you'd probably be sticking your neck out going in for heavy drama, F.A.

ALLEN: I happen to be a dramatic actor in my own right. I don't want to boast, but some years ago I was known as the Raymond Massey of East Orange. In my day I chewed more scenery than a termite on a showboat. It so happens that when the news that I was doing a serious play on the soup program got around not only Saroyan made me an offer but a spontaneous organization sprang up overnight.

PORTLAND: You mean a movement is on foot, Mr. Allen?

ALLEN: A vital movement. Have you heard of the C.C.T.D.F.A.F.T.L.T.?

KENNY: What does that stand for?

ALLEN: Why, it's obvious. The Citizens Committee to Draft Fred Allen for the Legitimate Theater. It's bigger than the John Doe Club.

PORTLAND: Who's behind the movement, Mr. Allen?

ALLEN: I don't know the gentleman. They say he's a theater-lover of some kidney in the community. His name is Mr. Preebles. (*Door knock.*) Come in.

WOMAN: Mr. Allen?

ALLEN: Yes.

WOMAN: I'm Mrs. Horlick, party worker for the C.C.T.D.F.A.F.T.-L.T.

ALLEN: Yes, Mrs. Horlick. We were just talking about the good work you're doing.

WOMAN: Mr. Allen, on behalf of our president, Mr. Preebles, I bear the following verbal petition. I hereby urge, in the name of Mr. Preebles and our thirty thousand theater-lovers, that you give up this mockery known as radio and come back and save the legitimate theater.

ALLEN: Madam, this is indeed an honor.

WOMAN: Mr. Preebles insists nothing must stop you from returning to the theater. Come, Mr. Preebles begs you.

ALLEN: Madam, I must have time to think.

WOMAN: Mr. Preebles says—act now! Every moment you spend in radio is a moment stolen from the theater.

ALLEN: But I—

PORTLAND: You're a success, Mr. Allen.

ALLEN: I don't—

WOMAN: In the words of Mr. Preebles—the theater wants Allen!

ALLEN: Tell Mr. Preebles if that's the way the theater feels, I capitulate.

KENNY: Congratulations, Mr. Allen. You have chosen wisely. Good-by.

WOMAN: Why, Mr. Preebles, I didn't know you were here.

ALLEN: *Preebles!* So that's it. Well, Mr. *Preebles* Baker, you and I will retire to the woodshed.

* * *

ALLEN: Tonight the Workshop Players treat you to a gander behind the scenes in radio. Many of you no doubt envy the radio comedian. What a life, you say. Nothing to do but clip old jokes out of magazines and retail them through the microphone. No worries. Laughter and applause. Ha, ha! That's what you think. Little do you know what the radio comedian goes through each week. His trials! His tribulations! Tonight we show you the seamy side of the picture. It is called "Short Cut to a Nervous Breakdown" or "The Radio Comedian Makes It the Hard Way."

Our case history concerns the heartaches of an average radio comedian. Let us call him Kenny Dank. Our average comedian is employed by an average advertising agency. We'll call the firm Bettin, Bitten, Ditto, and Button. The curtain rises on the office of Bolivar Balaam Button, president. He is entering his executive sanctum.

ALLEN (as Button): Good morning, Miss Yuck.

YUCK: Morning, B.B. Here's your bran aspirin tablet.

ALLEN: Great idea of mine, this bran aspirin tablet. The bran serves as breakfast; the aspirin fortifies me for a nerve-racking day. Are these our radio surveys?

YUCK: Yes, sir. They sure add up to a lot of figures.

ALLEN: Yes, these are radio popularity ratings, compiled by different statisticians. These figures show whether our clients' programs are gaining or losing listeners.

YUCK: Who collects that mess of statistics—Superman?

ALLEN: Quiet, please. I'm checking our agency programs. Hmmm. "Fake It or Believe It," up one point two. "One Man's Relatives," up two point six. "Carborundum Carnival." Up. The—Gad!

YUCK: Something wrong?

ALLEN: Wrong! Gad! Our comedy program, the "Kenny Dank Fun-fest," has gone down again. This is the second month in succession.

YUCK: What's the rating?

ALLEN: Minus two point two. That means that not only every radio listener in America isn't listening to Kenny Dank. Two hundred thousand people who haven't got radios aren't listening either.

YUCK: But how can people without radios not listen?

ALLEN: One doesn't question statistics, Miss Yuck. The entire advertising business is founded on surveys. The first man who questions a survey will topple the advertising game like a house of cards.

YUCK: Yes, sir.

ALLEN: Gad, if Kenny Dank's sponsors, Moriarity's Matzos, find out that no one is listening to his program, we'll lose the account. When Dank comes in to read this week's script to the office staff for reaction, tell him I want to see him.

YUCK: Kenny Dank is outside now.

ALLEN: Send him in here.

[Door opens.]

KENNY: Hello, B.B., old sock. Ha, ha!

ALLEN: Stop laughing at yourself, Dank. Everyone else has.

KENNY: Ha, ha! What a sense of humor! Ha, ha!

ALLEN: This is no laughing matter, Dank, your program is slipping. This is the second month you have gone down on the popularity survey.

KENNY: Quit kiddin', B.B. I been killin' them.

ALLEN: Figures don't lie, K.D. Here's the Crossley report. Here's the Hooper that checks to the Crossley. Here's the Dooper that checks to the Hooper. And the Booper. According to the Booper, Hooper, Dooper, you are down to minus two point two.

KENNY: Well, I was on opposite two fireside chats last month.

ALLEN: Don't alibi, Dank. You can't blame him for everything. When a comedian slips, the advertising agency has to step in.

KENNY: But the last time the agency stepped in I went down nineteen points.

ALLEN: No heresy, Dank. Your program has got to be revised. Miss Yuck!

YUCK: Yes, sir.

ALLEN: The agency has got to *hype up* Dank's program. Sound the conference bell.

(Fumble, Bumble and Jumble arrive).

ALLEN: Men, we've got to change Dank's setup.

JUMBLE: Check!

FUMBLE: Check!

BUMBLE: Check!

ALLEN: Gad! This conference is going like clockwork. Let's mother-hen that thought. We've got to hatch an idea. Let's mull, men.

JUMBLE: Say, how about cutting out Dank's singer and putting in a quartet?

KENNY: But my program has a quartet now.

FUMBLE: Well, that finishes me. I'm only vice-president in charge of suggesting we put in a quartet.

JUMBLE: Hold everything! I just got a flash.

ALLEN: Lay it on the table, A.J.

JUMBLE: How about cutting out the actors and putting in audience participation?

KENNY: I had audience participation. You cut that out at the last conference.

ALLEN: That's right; we did. That stumps the chump idea.

JUMBLE: Then how about cutting out the audience and putting in actor participation?

ALLEN: You can't cut out studio audiences and render thousands of people homeless.

BUMBLE: How about cutting out

everything and making the program a thirty-minute commercial?

JUMBLE: How about not making it a quiz program?

FUMBLE: How about not making it an Aldrich Family?

ALLEN: No, men, we've got to put a hook in it. What we need is an idea—I've got it.

FUMBLE: What is it, Chief?

ALLEN: The new "Kenny Dank Fun-fest" will be what radio is crying for. This is something revolutionary—a thirty-minute program with an orchestra, a comedian, and a guest star.

KENNY: But that's exactly what my program is now, B.B.

ALLEN: Great! That proves we're on the right track, Dank. Agency co-operation gets results every time. Conference is over. Break it up, men. Now, Dank, what is your show this week?

KENNY: We're doing a burlesque of a moving picture.

ALLEN: A revolutionary idea! What picture is it?

KENNY: *The Sea Dog*. Here's the script.

ALLEN: Hmm. Let me see. Ha, ha! Very funny. Ha, ha!

KENNY: Yeah. It's a wow.

ALLEN: But it isn't funny enough, Dank. It's weak in spots. The agency has got to go over this script and hype it up. How many writers write your program?

KENNY: Sixteen.

ALLEN: No wonder your program is slipping. Trying to turn out a half-hour program with only sixteen writers. Miss Yuck, buzz for our agency gagsmen.

[*Buzzer. Marching feet. Door opens. Marching stops.*]

GLEE: Second platoon, Company two, of agency joke-writers reporting, sir.

ALLEN: Very well, Lieutenant Glee. Here's a script. Have your men put

in some gags, polish it up, kick it around, live with it, sleep with it.

GLEE: Yes, sir. Company! Present pencils! Forward march!

KENNY: Gee, all those writers to fix up one little sketch?

ALLEN: This is merely Company Two of the First Platoon, Joe Miller Brigade. If these men can't do the job, I'll call in the Writing 69th. They saved Benny last year. (*Knock.*) Come in.

GLEE: Lieutenant Glee reporting, sir.

ALLEN: Yes, Lieutenant?

GLEE: Second Platoon, Company Two of agency joke writers has completed gagging up Kenny Dank's "Sea Dog" sketch, sir.

ALLEN: Have copies been rushed to all departments?

GLEE: Yes, sir. All department heads are checking in the next room now, sir.

ALLEN: Nice work, Lieutenant. Dismissed. Gad, what an organization!

KENNY: Is my script ready now, B.B.?

ALLEN: Just one more thing, Dank.

We may have to delete some of the lines in that sketch due to censorship, network policy, and so forth. We'll step next door and see what decisions the department heads have made. (*Door. Voice.*) Good morning, Department Heads.

ALL: Check, B.B.

ALLEN: Kenny Dank here is going to read his comedy script. Check on censorable matter as he goes along. Go ahead, Dank.

KENNY: Well, the scene opens off the coast of Florida.

NO. 1: Just a minute, Dank. Public relations can't pass any mention of Florida. California won't like it.

ALLEN: Florida is out, Dank.

KENNY: Okay. There's a tropical storm.

NO. 1: Cut out the storm. Weather bureau won't permit unauthorized storms.

ALLEN: The storm is out, Dank.

KENNY: But there's a shipwreck. The storm blows the boat.

ALLEN: Have the boat run into a rock.

KENNY: All right, the boat crashes into a rock.

NO. 2: The rock is out. A music department must. There is a rock in "Rock of Ages."

KENNY: All right. I'm shipwrecked on a desert island.

NO. 3: Desert is out. The network won't pass it.

KENNY: What's desert—

NO. 3: The Jello show won't tolerate any ridicule of desert. Desert—*dessert*. It's a dangerous cross-reference.

ALLEN: Let me see the rest of those jokes, Dank. Hmmmm. This poker game ioke—"three vegetarians were playing for small stakes." Small stakes offends the meat dealers. It's out.

KENNY: But you can't—

ALLEN: "Three of a kind beats two pairs." Beets offends the vegetarians, pears offends the fruit packers. They're out!

KENNY: But you're ruining—

ALLEN: They're out, Dank. And these other jokes here. Out!! Out!!! Out!!!! There you are, Dank. Make those cuts and your "Sea Dog" sketch is perfect.

KENNY: But you've taken out all the jokes. If I play this script the way it is, it won't make sense.

ALLEN: Sense doesn't make sense in radio, Dank. The main thing is—a comedian mustn't offend anyone. The agency is okaying the script. That is the way we want it played.

KENNY: But listen to how it will sound, Ahoy, the mizzenmast!

[*Door slams.*]

VOICE: Who's got a cigaret?

[*Door slams.*]

KENNY: Ahoy, the mizzenmast!

[*Door slams.*]

VOICE: Who's got a match?

[*Door slams.*]

KENNY: Ahoy, the mizzenmast.

VOICE: The ship's sinking, Cap'n.

KENNY: Then we're saved.

VOICE: No, no! Don't kill yourself!

KENNY: Aye, aye, sir.

VOICE: Cap'n, put down that harpoon.

[Shot fired.]

KENNY: Ahoy, the mizzenmast—I quit. I can't go on the air with a thing like this.

ALLEN: What's wrong with it?

KENNY: Why, even Fred Allen wouldn't use a sketch like this. And he'll use anything.

ALLEN: But, Dank—

KENNY: By the time you agency guys and the broadcasting company get through cutting out a comedian's jokes, he isn't funny.

ALLEN: Exactly. And as the president of Bettin, Bitten, Ditto, and Button, let me tell you, Dank. We cut out your stuff purposely. Radio is a big business. Radio comedians and radio itself must have one thing in common.

KENNY: What's that?

ALLEN: They're not to be laughed at! Dank, you're fired!

While There's Life!

**BOB
HOPE**

To hear Bob Hope carry on about his sugar-scoop nose, Chevalier lip, bashful hairline, and bulldozer chin you'd think he was in a desperate way facially, although there's really nothing wrong with his countenance that a good year of plastic surgery couldn't fix. But his comedy talent is something else again. It's too late to remedy that. Not even tree surgery could rescue him from the limb he's got himself out on by being a really funny man.

Hope's chief stock in trade is being comical at his own expense, both in the movies and on the radio. He's a hero with reverse English which has been through a couple of translations. He makes his point the hard way and accumulates so much money in doing so that Henry Morgenthau, Jr., anxious that nothing untoward befall such a splendid fellow, takes care of most of it for him.

As a star exponent of the self-deprecatory or boy-do-I-stink school of acting, not to be confused with the Stanislavsky or oh-how-I-suffer method, Hope keeps in character much of the time off-mike and off-screen with the able assistance of several friends who insist they are not picking on Hope, but only trying to tie the score (and never quite making it). Chief of these is a notorious racetrack character and mike-moaner of whom it can be said that, while most radio comics have only their Crossley to bear, Hope also has his Crosby.

Hope claims that Bing Crosby actually holds story conferences to dream up cracks to hurl at him because Crosby, being a singer, has his brains around his Adam's apple and, hence, hasn't the wit to think up an insult that would ruffle a thin-skinned mule, let alone Hope, who has a hide like a calloused rhinoceros. It is only fair to add that Crosby denies this soft impeachment and avers that, on

the contrary, Hope is such a novice at raillery that he thinks badinage is something rolled by the ladies of the Red Cross.

The Hope-Crosby acrimenities are not confined to the times when they are together working on the golf course or indulging in recreation on the picture lot. Hope thought he would have his mind fairly free for his work during the summer of 1944 when Crosby went to Europe to entertain troops. He should have known better. Crosby was in London when the Stage Door Canteen was opened there and, taking part in the festivities, which were being filmed for newsreels, he mentioned Hope in passing. It was unfortunate but true, he said, that Hope was getting a little old—was, in fact, developing a slouch pouch. He said this was brought home forcibly to him during the making of their latest "road" picture, *The Road to Utopia*. This road, he added, undoubtedly was the cleanest they ever had traveled because a certain large portion of Hope was dragging along it most of the way.

Hope heard about the newsreel somewhere along the line of a cross-country plane jaunt connected with bond rallies. He could scarcely wait to reach New York to see it. The reel was run off for him at the short-subject studio of Twentieth Century-Fox and it almost threw Hope into a laughing fit. For Der Bingle was slightly vulnerable. He had been filmed without his customary hat and the commercial matting that does him for hair. When the latter is missing, the Crosby ears seem of greater prominence than usual.

"The picture," Hope commented with relish, "will set Crosby's career back twenty years. Did you see those ears?"

A few minutes later when Hope was on the set making a short to assist the tuberculosis fund drive, he began working on his public rebuttal. The script called for him to emerge from a house, start to address the audience, and get bumped out of the way by a man wheeling a huge sack of mail on a hand truck. "Fan mail, no doubt," said Hope, grinning. "Yeah," the man replied. "For Crosby." "If it's for Crosby, it must be girdles," Hope retorted.

Later he confided that he would have liked to have said "toupees" instead of "girdles," but he thought maybe that was a little rough

on his old pal. After all, Hope doesn't want to be too severe with Crosby. The latter's delayed-action race horses have supplied him with gags of incalculable worth. In fact, Crosby maintains that if it had not been for his horses Hope would have had to get off the air years ago by reason of running out of jokes. And that would have been a very bad thing, as millions of Americans will tell you.

For Hope, whether on radio or screen, is about as close to being everybody's favorite comedian as it is possible to get. He has a breezy, conversational personality, but he is never offensively brash. The basis of his humor is contradiction. Actually, Hope is a smart fall-guy. How can you dislike a person who knows all the answers, yet always seems to come off no better and possibly a little worse than the average guy like yourself? Certain things scare you? Hope gets twice as scared for half the reason. Were you played for a sucker? Brother, you have only to listen to or see Hope to know that compared to what happened to him you got an even break. Hope is the kid you went to school with, the guy who works in your office, the pal who guides you home at three o'clock in the morning.

The ability to generate this feeling is not something you achieve by reading a book by Dale Carnegie before or after forty. You have to be born with it, and fortunately that's what the stork delivered along with Leslie Townes (Bob) Hope at the home of William Henry and Avis Townes Hope in Eltham, England, a suburb of London, on May 26, 1904. About four years after that event, the family—eventually there were seven sons of whom Leslie was the fifth—migrated to the United States and settled in Cleveland, Ohio. (There is no truth to the rumor that they had to leave England because of Leslie's penchant for entertaining the neighbors.)

Young Hope and his brothers had the usual normal boyhood of members of a large family in ordinary circumstances, including occasional sessions with Father in the woodshed. He gained some local fame as a boy singer, but nature put a crimp in that at the proper time. His first real job was working as delivery boy for his brother Fred, who was a butcher. Somewhere along the line he changed his first name from Leslie to Lester, and he went all the way in name-

changing when he entered the Golden Gloves boxing tournament of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* by calling himself Packy East. He won his first fight, drew a bye in the second, and then bade good-by to the ring when he was knocked cold in his next appearance. He went back to being Lester Hope.

Hope negotiated the four years of high school in par. Then he got a job in the spare parts department of the Chandler Motor Company in Cleveland and had an enjoyable time harmonizing with three other fellows who felt that singing was more important than handling auto parts. The Chandler people soon came to the conclusion that both they and Hope would be happier apart.

During his high-school years, Hope had picked up some dancing instruction and a mild acquaintance with the saxophone, and he came to think more and more that he was cut out to be an entertainer. Amateur theater nights gave him experience, if nothing else. He taught dancing for a time. When he was twenty-one, he made his professional debut in Cleveland, helping to fill out the act of the late Fatty Arbuckle when the latter was making a come-back vaudeville tour. Arbuckle encouraged him a little and that was enough.

For a time Hope, who had made his final name change, did a vaudeville act with a fellow named George Byrne of Columbus, Ohio. They met while appearing in a tabloid musical show that toured small towns. They danced, sang, and did a blackface routine. They worked, but didn't set the vaudeville circuits ablaze.

Finally Bob, who had been practicing on his audiences whenever he could, began to fancy himself a comedian, and he went his way alone on that basis. While he polished up his act, he took any bookings he could get in the small-time; then he went to Chicago to hit the big-time. Nobody would listen to him.

"Before long," he recalls, "I was four thousand dollars in debt, I had holes in my shoes, I was eating doughnuts and coffee, and when I met a friend one day who bought me a luncheon featuring beefsteak, I had forgotten whether you cut steak with a knife or drink it out of a spoon."

For no good reason that lunch was the turning point. The friend

extolled Hope's talents to a booker, who happened to have a Decoration Day date open in a small neighborhood theater. Hope did so well that he was offered a booking in a larger theater where he went for three days and stayed six months. After that he got plenty of vaudeville work all over the country and was able to get out of debt and put some money aside.

Naturally, the next step was New York. He played hard to get, rejecting engagements in small houses. Eventually he got what he wanted, scored in a big way, and got an RKO vaudeville contract. The next step up was a Broadway musical show, *Ballyhoo of 1932*. About all anyone remembers of that production now was Hope breezing around in a pair of shorts in a nudist colony sketch, and the first-act finale in which a pair of the brewer's big horses galumphed along on a treadmill. It wasn't a success.

But Hope hit paydirt in his next show in November, 1933—Jerome Kern's *Roberta*. After that, Hope thought he'd better let Hollywood look him over because it seemed to be in a bad way for personable young men with funnybones. He got a screen test all right, but Bob's face didn't fit the Hollywood conception of what could be palmed off on the public, and nothing happened. Bob hustled back to Broadway before the producers would have a chance to forget him and snagged further prominent employment in successful musical shows—*Say When* with Harry Richman, *Ziegfeld Follies* with Fannie Brice, and, in 1936, *Red Hot and Blue* with Jimmy Durante and Ethel Merman. As far as the legitimate stage was concerned he was well established.

Meanwhile he had landed his first radio jobs. From December, 1934, to April, 1935, he was on Bromo Seltzer's *Intimate Revue*. He did a variety show for the Atlantic Refining Company from November, 1935, to September, 1936, and followed this with the *Rippling Rhythm Revue* for Woodbury's Soap from April to September in 1937.

Hope has written in his cockeyed autobiography, *They've Got Me Covered*, that "it was while I was on the Woodbury show that Paramount realized I was very stubborn and was going to stay in

show business regardless of my talents." He got a part in *The Big Broadcast of 1938* despite his refusal to take a test and, by a stroke of luck, was paired with Shirley Ross in singing a song that swept the country—*Thanks for the Memory*. The popularity of the song naturally did its perpetrators no harm.

Paramount apparently discovered that while Hope's features might not fit the classic mold there was something beguiling about them after all; at least they didn't keep people away from the box office. So he made five more pictures of average quality and then hit the film jackpot when he got the hero-coward role in a remake of that old thriller, *The Cat and the Canary*. After that it was the upper movie brackets for him—such films as *Nothing but the Truth*, *Caught in the Draft*, the "road" pictures with Crosby and Dorothy Lamour, *Louisiana Purchase*, and *Let's Face It*.

But back to radio. When Paramount summoned Hope to Hollywood, he began doing a program for the American Tobacco Company which ran from December, 1937, to March, 1938. It was his fourth sponsor in four years. Later in 1938 he moved in on the Pepsodent Toothpaste people, and they haven't been able to get rid of him since.

Late in 1944, Hope signed a new ten-year contract with Pepsodent at approximately a million dollars a year—25,000 dollars a week for thirty-nine weeks annually.

It is as the Pepsodent man that Hope has achieved his high place in radio. Although Bob has a strong reputation as an ad-libber and is at no loss in thinking up his own comic ideas, he employs half a dozen writers on his show. They dig for every laugh they can possibly get out of a given situation; Hope is a court of last resort when it comes to putting the final script into shape. The result is a bull's-eye—or close to it—every time on the 10 P.M. Tuesday spot of the National Broadcasting Company's network.

The general public has heard the Hope broadcasts since 1941, but it hasn't seen them because the comedian started playing his air shows solely for servicemen a few months before the United States got into the war. He and his fellow-players travel to some camp or other service center every week for the broadcasts. His popularity

among the G.I.'s is unsurpassed and is not based solely on his appearances in this country.

Hope made his first USO trip outside the States in the fall of 1942, going to Alaska with singer Frances Langford, guitarist-singer Tony Romano, and Jerry Colonna. The following year, with Jack Pepper replacing Colonna, Hope's troupe went to England, North Africa, Sicily, and Iceland. A little later Hope made a swing around the Caribbean, and during the summer of 1944 he and five others toured some of the Pacific zones. He gave hundreds of shows and traveled nearly 150,000 miles on these jaunts.

Out of these experiences Hope wrote a book called *I Never Left Home*, published in the spring of 1944, which was a top best-seller for months. The royalties from the book went to the National War Fund. Hope's attitude toward his experiences is probably best summed up in the last paragraph of the book:

"It's fantastic. You do just a little bit for them, in comparison to what they're doing and risking for you, and you receive thousands of letters thanking you. *They thank you!*"

This brief resumé of Hope's hops makes it fairly obvious that he has had little if any home life since the war began. Yet he does have a home and family. Mrs. Hope is the former Dolores Reade, a beauty who made a living singing in theaters and night clubs until Hope happened along and assumed the burden. A friend introduced them while Bob was appearing in *Roberta*, and he invited her to drop in and see the show. She went, rather expecting to find him in the chorus or a bit part, but found instead that he was one of the leading players and that he made her laugh. A few months later Hope persuaded her that she should keep him around permanently. He argued that it would be more practical than for him to keep appearing in shows just to amuse her. They have two adopted children, Lena and Tony. Their home is at Toluca Lake near Hollywood.

Hope is a rarity among big money-makers among the acting folk—he handles most of his business affairs. He is reputed to get 150,000 dollars a picture and is supposed to make three of them a year. A slight contretemps developed in his film relations in Novem-

ber, 1944, when Paramount announced he had been suspended because he did not show up for work on a new picture at a deadline time set by the studio. Hope felt his wartime activities would not permit him to make this third 1944 film and outlined the situation for the press in his usual concise fashion:

"The studio says they've suspended me. They've got it all backwards. I've suspended them."

But whoever suspended whom, it is likely that the country could survive a famine of Hope pictures. This is not true of his radio work, however. There are some fans who can scarcely get through the summer when Hope and his troupe are off the air.

Like most comedians Hope has his stooges. Even in his early radio days he had a character known as "Honeychile" Wilder, long on drawl and short on gray matter—one of the most hilarious of this type radio has produced. For several years now his standby has been Jerry Colonna, a fellow who used to play in bands. Colonna's trade-mark is a black mustache of luxuriant dimensions, and he is the one for whom the term "render a song" was invented. His specialty is to tear limb from limb some immensely popular, syrupy ballad dear to the hearts of all. He does it in horrendous fashion—but it's funny.

Hope's radio program has contributed its share of stock sayings to the language, the most popular undoubtedly being "Who's Yehudi?" Some of the others, which do not look like much on paper but which assume a special significance once you've heard Hope say them, are: "That's what I keep on telling them down at the office," "You and your education," "How do you like that traffic cop!"

It may be that one of these days Hope will look at his speedometer and ask himself where in the hell he's going in such a hurry that he hasn't been before. The answer, of course, will be "Nowhere," because he has covered a lot of ground in a short space of time, and it would be logical for him to climb out from behind the wheel and say, "So long, guys, I'll walk from here in." But don't bet on it. He likes action. "Hope springs eternal" is no gag as far as he's concerned.

BOB HOPE . . . *On the Air*

VERA: Yoo-hoo, Mr. Hope!

HOPE: Well, it's Vera Vague!

VERA: Yes, it's me, Mr. Hope, right in my old form!

HOPE: Well, don't worry about it—you wear it well!

VERA: Now, Mr. Hope, you can say those things, but you can't get me all rattled and confused and excited today. No sir! These Marines here beat you to it!

HOPE: Tell me, Miss Vague, who do you like better, soldiers, sailors, or marines?

VERA: I don't know, Mr. Hope. *To me, they're all caviar!* Goodness, some women get older. I just get bolder! Goodness, Mr. Hope, it isn't nice for a lady to say such things, is it?

HOPE: No, it isn't.

VERA: Well, then I guess I can go right on saying them! But isn't it thrilling here, Mr. Hope? You know, these Marines are celebrating their 168th anniversary.

HOPE: Yes, the Marines have a great reputation, Miss Vague. They are an implacable foe. When they have an enemy, they attack from all sides, squeezing and squeezing them till they can't stand the pressure.

VERA: They do that to an enemy?

HOPE: Yes. Miss Vague, stop sticking your tongue out at them!

VERA: Oh, well, it seemed like a good idea at the time!

HOPE: I suppose at one time *you* did, too!

VERA: Oh, bless your heart, Mr. Hope. You say such clever things. Really,

I wish I had your head. It'd look so nice stuffed over the mantelpiece!

HOPE: These Marines are wonderful, aren't they?

VERA: Yes, Mr. Hope, these Marines are so wonderful, I wish my boy friend Waldo had joined up with them.

HOPE: What branch is Waldo in now?

VERA: Usually the one overlooking Hedy Lamarr's window!

HOPE: Say, Miss Vague, what kind of a guy is your friend Waldo?

VERA: Oh, he's a two-fisted fellow, Mr. Hope.

HOPE: A two-fisted fellow?

VERA: Yes. But the only trouble is they're both on the same arm! But Waldo really is tough, Mr. Hope. He's going to join the Marines next week.

HOPE: He is?

VERA: Yes. Someone told him if he went to the Solomons, he might get a few Nips under his belt!

HOPE: While you're down here, I suppose you'll visit Tiajuana, Miss Vague.

VERA: Tiajuana?

HOPE: Yes. That's a Mexican word meaning: *You name it, we've got it, and the custom officials'll take it away from you!*

VERA: Yes, I'm going down to Tiajuana. I've got a surprise for you. I'm going to be one of the women jockeys at the race track down there.

HOPE: Oh, girl jockeys are nothing new, Miss Vague. After all, there was Lady Godiva.

VERA: Lady Godiva?

HOPE: Yeah, the original Gypsy Rose Lee!

VERA: Lady Godiva never won a horse race, did she?

HOPE: No, Miss Vague, she just showed! When did you first start riding, Miss Vague?

VERA: When I was a young girl. A friend of the family took me on his horse, and, goodness, the way we rode you'd think the British were coming!

HOPE: Well, why did you ride so fast?

VERA: The British were coming! Oh, what am I saying!

FRANCES: Hello, Bob. Hello, Miss Vague.

VERA: Hello, Frances.

FRANCES: My, but that dress makes you look graceful and slender, Vera. Honestly, you have a figure just like a greyhound.

VERA: How nice. You mean the kind people bet on?

FRANCES: No, the kind people ride on!

VERA: How can you say that? Why, only last week I entered a beauty contest. And do you know where I came out?

FRANCES: Yes, in all directions!

VERA: Ohhhh, you *sweet child*! You know, Frances, you're so lovely I can't get mad at you—you have a skin like apple honey. It's too bad the Latakia shows through! Oh, I must tell you, Frances, I've got some wonderful news. I'm going to be a jockey at Caliente.

FRANCES: You're going to be a jockey?

VERA: Yes.

FRANCES: Well, that's a switch—wearing pants instead of chasing them!

VERA: Ohh, you dear! I'll bet you were an adorable little baby. Really, it's a shame they didn't just leave you in the incubator!

HOPE: Miss Vague, if you're going to be a jockey, there's a man on this program who can give you some advice—a man who really knows all

about horses. Oh, Professor! Professor Colonna!

COLONNA: Be with you in a minute, Hope. I'm over here looking at some young fillies.

FRANCES: Oh, Professor! (*Slap.*)

COLONNA: *Filly's getting chilly!*

HOPE: Colonna, I hear you know all about horses.

COLONNA: Of course, Hope. I've been riding side-saddle since I was two.

HOPE: Colonna!—Riding sidesaddle. That's a sissy way.

COLONNA: *On an elephant?*

HOPE: Colonna, you ruffle my dignity.

COLONNA: No, you ruffle my dignity. It's got pleats in it!

HOPE: Professor, did you notice? This is Miss Vague!

COLONNA: Eh, Gads, the Marines have landed—feet first!

VERA: Oh, bless your heart, Beaver Puss! Tell me, is that really a mustache, or are you eating a tumbleweed?

HOPE: Do you like Miss Vague, Professor?

COLONNA: Ah, yes, she reminds me of a popular song.

HOPE: She reminds you of a popular song?

COLONNA: Yes—*They're Either Too Old or Too Old!*

VERA: Tell me, Shrub Mug, is that a love light in your eyes, or are the candles still burning from Halloween! Ah, but Professor, can't you just picture the two of us strolling down by the water's edge in the moonlight. . . .

COLONNA: Ah, yes . . . arm in arm . . . while the surf pounds on the beach . . .

VAGUE: And our hearts pound with it . . . and then you sit down . . .

COLONNA: (*Giggle.*)

VAGUE: What's wrong?

COLONNA: Wet sand!

HOPE: Colonna, Miss Vague is gonna race at Caliente. Do you think she has a chance?

COLONNA: Depends on how fast the other horses are!

HOPE: You should be able to tell Miss Vague how to be a jockey, Professor. Haven't you had a lot of experience along those lines?

COLONNA: Have I?

HOPE: Didn't you say you were a great jockey?

COLONNA: Did I?

HOPE: Well, aren't you a great judge of horseflesh?

COLONNA: Am I? No use talkin', I gotta come to rehearsals!

HOPE: Colonna, how do you get by without brains?

COLONNA: I cheat. What's your excuse?

HOPE: You were once a jockey yourself, weren't you, Professor?

COLONNA: Yes, Hope, I once rode Woman o' War.

HOPE: Colonna, you mean Man o' War.

COLONNA: No, Woman o' War. Man o' War was replaced by a Wac!

HOPE: How'd you do as a jockey, Professor?

COLONNA: Had a lotta bad luck, Hope. I won five Derbies.

HOPE: What's so bad about that?

COLONNA: I wear a cap! But I've had some exciting experiences, Hope. I once rode in a race with the famous Headless Jockey.

HOPE: Headless Horseman.

COLONNA: Headless Jockey.

HOPE: Colonna, you fool, how could a jockey get to be headless!

COLONNA: Tall horse, low wire! You should see me ride, Hope. I really ride fast.

HOPE: I suppose when you ride fast you dig in with your spurs and give your horse his head.

COLONNA: What's that?

HOPE: I said, did you give your horse his head?

COLONNA: Nope! *He got it from his mother!*

HOPE: Colonna, are you sure you know anything about riding?

COLONNA: Certainly, Hope. There's a big herd of wild horses right outside. Watch. (*Door opens.*) I'll lasso one and ride it.

HOPE: Colonna, you're going to try and lasso one of those wild horses?

COLONNA: Yes. Here I go!

[*Slide whistle. Sudden roar of plane motor. Machine-gun fire.*]

COLONNA: Whatta you know! I got a *Mustang!*

* * *

HOPE: And now here's a little surprise package we brought along with us—one of Hollywood's finest actresses—Miss Ida Lupino!

IDA: Thank you, fellows. Thank you, Bob.

HOPE: Well, Ida, you look sweet as apple cida'. Yes, sir.

IDA (*To audience*): He weaves a beautiful web, doesn't he?

HOPE: You're a small girl, Ida. You hardly come up to my chin.

IDA: Which one!

HOPE: Those aren't chins—that's a staircase for my Adam's Apple! You're making a picture now, aren't you, Ida?

IDA: Yes, Bob. It's called *Devotion*.

I play the part of a woman who has gone out of her mind. I live in a shadow world. The shadows keep growing deeper around me, I struggle with them, try to fight them off, but they hold me down, press against me, leave me absolutely powerless.

HOPE: They've got the same stuff down here, but they call it San Diego fog! Who's your leading man—Humphrey Bogart?

IDA: No, Paul Henreid. Humphrey Bogart plays in the tougher pictures.

HOPE: Yeah, he's sort of an over-age M.P.! But that Humphrey Bogart is a smart boy. He's even smarter than Roosevelt.

IDA: How do you mean?

HOPE: He had Ingrid Bergman meet him at Casablanca! But, Ida, how come I've never been your leading man? What has this Paul Henreid got that I haven't got?

IDA: Well, Bob, his kisses are like rare champagne.

HOPE: What about mine?

IDA: Three, point, two!

HOPE: Ida, how can you say that? They think I'm wonderful over at my studio. Why, when I started for Paramount five years ago, I was getting buttons, and do you know what I'm getting now?

IDA: What?

HOPE: Zippers!

IDA: Besides, Bob, you're a comedian. To be a good dramatic actor requires years of study. You have to practically *live* in the theater.

HOPE: That's nothing. I once lived in the theater.

IDA: You did?

HOPE: Yeah. But the usher made me take my pup tent off the runway! I hear you've had quite a musical education, Ida. Who are your favorite composers?

IDA: Rachmaninoff, Shostakovitch, and Tschaikowsky.

HOPE: Who?

IDA: Rachmaninoff, Shostakovitch, and Tschaikowsky.

HOPE: Now once more to rinse the soap off! Say, you come from a famous theatrical family, don't you?

IDA: Yes. My folks sang and told stories in English music halls, and they did eccentric dancing and funny little jigs.

HOPE: I had an aunt who was a jigger.

IDA: In a music hall?

HOPE: No, in a burlesque theater. She watched at the door and yelled, "Jiggers, the cops!"

IDA: You were in vaudeville, weren't you, Bob?

HOPE: Yes, I had a wonderful act. I still remember the smell of the greasepaint.

IDA: I saw that act and I, too, still remember the smell!

HOPE: Of the greasepaint, of course. Boy, I had a lot of fun when I was in vaudeville. I used to wear a putty nose.

IDA: When did you find out you didn't need it?

HOPE: Well, it comes in handy for digging foxholes! But I miss the vaudeville days. I must have played every town in the country—big and small.

IDA: You really played in small vaudeville theaters, eh, Bob?

HOPE: Yeah, one of 'em was so small that the orchestra leader waved the baton and sold tickets at the same time! Whaddya say, Ida, let's show the folks how we stole money in those days.

IDA: Okay, Bob.

BOB & IDA (*Singing*): Folks, our names are Bob and Ida.

What a team!

When you hear our funny jokes you'll

Fairly scream!

We'll say, we are mighty swell

You'll say that we really—er—well,
All our stuff is off the cuff, but—
on the track

Like McGee and Molly we are—

Strictly wacks

We'll throw new stuff at you.

Please throw new stuff too—

We're out of points!

HOPE: Say, Jemima.

IDA: Yes, Buckwheat.

HOPE: What is a botanist?

IDA: I don't know. What is a botanist?
HOPE: A botanist is somebody who
sews on *botans*!

IDA: Here's one for you. How is Little
Boy Blue like a somnambulist?

HOPE: I don't know. How is Little
Boy Blue like a somnambulist?

IDA: One is asleep in the corn and the
other gets corns in his sleep!

HOPE: Ha-ha-ha! Laugh it up—don't

let it lay there! Did you hear my definition of a camel?

IDA: No, Mr. Bones.—What is your definition of a camel?

HOPE: That's a cow upside down! Okay, folks, we're just kidding each udder.

IDA: Here's one for you. What song did the cow sing when she found out she was running dry?

HOPE: You got me. What song did the cow sing when she found out she was running dry?

IDA: Yankers Away!

HOPE: Ah, you're sharp as a meatball!

IDA: I don't get it.

HOPE: That's all right. These days no one gets meatballs!

IDA: Say, who was that lady I seen you out with last night?

HOPE: That was no lady. That was my brother. He always walks like that.

IDA: Say, how would you like to come over to my house for a nice dinner of southern cooking. Do you like hominy?

HOPE: Sure, I'm nuts about the Andrews Sisters! (*Laughs.*) I got that joke from my father.

IDA: That's all right, look at the one he got from your mother!

The Fiddler from Waukegan!

**JACK
BENNY**

Jack Benny is the stingiest man in the world—according to his radio program. He has been described by his script writers as the kind of onion who will give a kid an all-day sucker so the kid won't eat any meals. This, of course, is a gross exaggeration. Everybody knows Benny never gave so much as a jellybean to anyone. The following tidbit from one of his broadcasts gives an idea of the miserly character tailored for him:

JACK: Hurry up and shave me. I've got a date.

ROCHESTER: Okay. Wait'll I get the cap off this new tube of shaving cream.

BENNY: New tube! What happened to the old tube? There ought to be one more shave in it.

ROCHESTER: But, boss, you've been saying that since last March.

BENNY: What!

ROCHESTER: I didn't mind when you made me run the tube through the wringer—

BENNY: Now, look—

ROCHESTER: And I didn't mind when you asked Mr. Wilson to sit on it. But when you made me take that tube down to the Union Station and lay it on the railroad track, that was goin' too far!

And this is only one of the things wrong with Benny—on his radio program. He supposedly is so bald that a cue ball feels hirsute compared to him; he's a blowhard who would put a hurricane to shame; and he isn't quite as bright as the law allows.

All these and other attributes have been blended into a character that has been a national radio institution since 1932. It is the type of character that is a little bit of everybody—even yourself. Benny has constituted himself the whipping boy of the airwaves—you can take out on him the laughs at yourself and your friends that you have been saving up. He gets paid to take it.

“Basically our show is built on a foundation of real people,” Benny says. “Not burlesque characters, but ordinary, everyday people. We try to have things happen to us that would happen to anyone. Things that will be interesting and, above all, funny. I’d be willing to bet that there are very few who don’t know people like Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, and Rochester. Therefore, we feel that we represent, to a certain extent, the audience. They see in us, themselves, and they get a laugh out of the jokes that fit them. If someone pulls a gag on me about my having false teeth, 98 per cent of the audience who have false teeth will laugh. The other 2 per cent would, too, but their gums are still sore.”

But there is a secret to this sort of thing. Don’t overdo it. Don’t hurt anyone.

“If it hurts, it isn’t funny,” says Benny, who adds that he reserves the right to revoke this rule in the case of Fred Allen.

Benny is one comedian who feels he doesn’t have to apologize for radio humor. Radio has done much to make gags grow up and clean up, in his opinion.

“In the last twenty years, accelerated by radio, American humor has come out of the barnyard,” Benny explains. “Cleaned up and perfumed, sparked by those unsung heroes, the gag writers, you can get enough laughs to make your mother-in-law seem welcome by just turning on the radio. I will go out on a limb and say that radio has done for American humor what it would have taken vaudeville fifty years to do—even if it hadn’t stayed down for the count when Fred Allen knocked it flat.”

Benny started his thirteenth year in radio in the fall of 1944. He has used one formula, a combination comedy-variety-continuity show, since the beginning; and he set the pattern for his own radio

character with the very first words he uttered into the mike. Making a guest appearance, March 29, 1932, on Ed Sullivan's CBS program in New York, he introduced himself to the unseen audience in these words:

"Hello, folks. This is Jack Benny. There will now be a slight pause for everyone to say 'Who cares?'"

He found out quickly that a lot of people did, including those mighty mortals of the advertising agencies who create radio shows. Benny shortly found himself auditioning for a program for the Canada Dry Ginger Ale people. He got the job—Waukegan papers please copy.

Thanks to Benny, everyone knows about Waukegan, Illinois. It's his home town, although his mother went to Chicago for his birth on February 14, 1894—a St. Valentine's Day baby. He was born Benny Kubelsky, the son of Mayer and Emma. Jack's father gave him a violin at an early age (Benny claims he also gave him a monkeywrench as insurance because "plumbing isn't a bad business") and the youngster was playing in the orchestra of Waukegan's Barrison Theater while he was still in knickerbockers. He also played in the high-school orchestra. By the time he was seventeen, he had teamed up with Cora Salisbury, also from the Barrison pit, as a vaudeville duo. When she had to abandon traveling to stay home with her sick father, Jack teamed up with a Chicago pianist named Lyman Woods, and extended his field of operations.

There were six years of this and then Jack enlisted in the Navy shortly after the United States entered the first World War. He was sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station and shortly found himself in the *Great Lakes Naval Revue*, which was put on to raise money for Navy relief purposes. Benny was an entertainer for the duration, and it wasn't long before he discovered that the talking he was instructed to do was more effective at getting audience response than was his violin playing. By the time the Navy was through with him he was a confirmed monologist, and the violin had become just a prop to gag up his routine.

When Benny returned to vaudeville, he called himself Ben K.

Benny for a time. But there was another young man with a fiddle who was already well known in vaudeville, Ben Bernie, and to avoid confusion Benny changed to Jack Benny.

As Jack Benny, he did better than all right during the twenties. His smooth chatter knit together many a vaudeville bill, and it wasn't long before he was in the big-time. He played night clubs and worked in Shubert Broadway musical shows. While playing with a touring show in Los Angeles, he met Sayde Marks, a department store employee, and they were married on January 12, 1927, in Waukegan, while Jack's show was playing an engagement in Chicago.

The Bennys adopted a twenty-one-months-old baby on April 4, 1936, from a New Rochelle, New York, orphanage and named her Joan Naomi.

Benny is one of the radio stars who got into the movies before he had an air reputation. In 1928 he did a record eight-week vaudeville engagement at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles and was "caught" during the run by a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer official who liked his act and thought he'd be a natural for musical films, which were just cutting their teeth. The result was his appearance as one of the leading players in *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*. He did two other feature films and in 1932 returned to Broadway as a leading member of the cast of Earl Carroll's *Vanities*. It was during the run of this musical revue that Benny appeared on the radio program of columnist Ed Sullivan.

Nine years later, in his column in the New York *Daily News*, Sullivan had this to say about Benny's radio start:

"Much has been written about Jack Benny's radio success, and it has been suggested that he just stumbled into it. Don't believe it. At that time Benny was making himself a very handsome salary as the top comic in Earl Carroll's *Vanities* and he could get all the vaudeville work he wanted. I'm stressing this because as long ago as March, 1932, Jack confided that he was going to take a six-month vacation from the stage to concentrate on radio. 'I'm going to study this thing backward and forward,' he promised. 'The big future in our business is the radio and I want to get in on the ground floor.'

That shrewd analysis and his resolution to abandon the stage, if necessary, so that he could serve a radio apprenticeship argues that Benny did not ask much of Lady Luck.

"Subsequently there arose a Svengali-Trilby row that was to rock Radio Row. First of the Benny script writers was expert comedy writer Harry Conn; and when they split up, Conn argued that it was he who had struck the comedy note which Jack later used to such good advantage. No doubt at all that Conn was a fine writer, . . . but at that time I unearthed the first script which Benny had done on the air with me to prove conclusively that even in that first radio appearance Benny had used the same self-kidding type of humor that thereafter was to distinguish his comedy."

This brings up another point that used to be argued frequently in the years before people had more important things to worry about. It was said by some that Benny was not a creator of humor, that without his writers he would be lost. Now it is a fact that Benny is not the greatest ad-libber in show business by a fair margin, but it also is a fact that as a vaudevillian he used to write much of his own material. He knows comedy. He is regarded as a master at working the lines in his scripts into just the right form and getting the players to utter them with inflections that will be the most effective. This ability is something that you don't buy in a five-and-dime store.

A Benny script is the product of a full week's work. He no sooner signs off at seven-thirty on Sunday nights than he says to his cast and writers: "Now let's get to work on next week's show." And they do by deciding what its theme is going to be. Benny and his writers start the words rolling about nine o'clock Monday morning. The thinking and writing go on the rest of the week, with the writers trailing around with Benny as he attends to his many duties—benefit shows, movie work, and so forth. By Saturday the first draft has been completed, and that night the first reading is held in the Benny home. The players leave after the reading and then Benny and his writers really buckle down, sometimes for an all-night session of rewriting and polishing. Sunday forenoon the cast is in NBC's Hollywood studios rehearsing, and they keep at it until show time.

The people on the Benny program stay with him for years on end. Mary Livingstone, of course, is the Sayde Marks he married. She was never a professional, but today she is one of the best-known performers in the radio end of show business. It came about more or less by accident. Early in Benny's air career she went on one night to do a bit—that of a young woman from Plainfield, New Jersey, who kept interrupting to read crazy “pomes” and make alleged wisecracks. The character was written in only for that particular broadcast, but the public response was such that it—and Miss Livingstone—became a permanent part of the show.

Benny has had several band leaders, but he has had Phil Harris, his current conductor, the longest. On a Benny show, as on many others now, the conductor is part of the family and Harris gets a lot of juicy material. Don Wilson, the portly announcer, is a fixture, and for several years the program benefited from the presence of a young singer named Dennis Day, who had the part of a dumb foil for Benny. Day went into the Service, and Benny began the 1944 season with Larry Stevens.

Then there is Rochester, Benny's Negro handyman for radio program purposes. Rochester is Eddie Anderson, a vaudeville and movie performer picked up by Benny in 1937 to enact a Pullman porter after the troupe crossed the country to the West Coast. The script was built around the train trip. Eddie, or Rochester, was an immediate success, and he stayed with the show to become one of the best-known Negro performers in show business history.

Radio has had Benny selling a variety of products. His first contract was with Canada Dry; then he hooked on with Chevrolet and General Tires in successive seasons. In 1935 General Foods got him for Jello, and he stayed so long that people have been known to ask storekeepers for a box of raspberry Benny instead of Jello. This happy association ended, however, at the close of the 1943-44 season. During that tenure, Benny had risen to a salary of 17,500 dollars a week for his show—he paid everyone out of that—making him the highest priced performer, just as he was usually first in the popularity polls season after season. For the 1944-45 season Benny

and his troupe moved into the Lucky Strike cigarette camp for a reported 25,000 dollars weekly.

The popularity that Benny attained in radio also made him again attractive to Hollywood, and he has made a score of pictures since 1933 for all of the big studios, including such fare as *George Washington Slept Here*, *Buck Benny Rides Again*, and *Charley's Aunt*.

Like most performers, Benny has done a lot of wartime entertaining. He has taken his troupe around to various camps and hospitals in this country and made two trips abroad. In the summer of 1943 he and four others constituted a unit that played for the troops in Africa, the Persian Gulf area, Sicily, and Italy. In the summer of 1944 he went in the other direction, playing for the G.I.'s in New Guinea, Australia, the Marianas, the Marshalls, the Gilberts, the Solomons, and Hawaii.

Only one untoward event has blemished the Benny career since he hit the big-time, and that didn't hurt him any with the fans. In January, 1939, he was indicted in New York on three counts of bringing 2,131 dollars' worth of jewelry into the United States illegally. At first he pleaded not guilty; then pleaded guilty April 5, 1939, and received from the court a fine of 10,000 dollars, a suspended sentence of a year and a day, and a dressing down that had him agreeing with the judge that he felt "very ashamed" to be in such a position.

Benny fans remember fondly many of the sequences in the years of his broadcasting. There was the period in which he and Fred Allen insulted each other—on an entirely friendly basis—for broadcast after broadcast. This wound up with Benny appearing as a guest on Allen's program and getting something the worse of it from the lightning ad-libber that is Allen. Benny remarked that he was at a disadvantage because Allen wouldn't let him bring his writers along. Then there was the series in which Benny was "Buck" Benny of the old Wild West, the broadcasts in which he was the worried owner of an old Maxwell automobile, and "The Bee" sequence in which Benny sought to recapture his days as a fiddler.

The Benny violin, incidentally, was auctioned off in the winter of 1943 for a million dollars in war bonds.

The secret of Benny's radio success, of course, is that he has found a formula that fits him and delights the public. You have to have both of these things—just one of them isn't enough. And the perpetrators of the Benny scripts are never content to let one laugh bloom alone; they try always to top a topper with a topper. As witness:

MARY: You say you just got into town, Rochester? What took you so long? Was the train late?

ROCHESTER: What train? I was out on Highway 99, free-lancing.

MARY: You mean you hitchhiked? Why?

ROCHESTER: Well, instead of a train ticket, Mr. Benny gave me a road map.

MARY: Oh.

ROCHESTER: And a short talk on the generosity of the American motorist.

MARY: You mean that's all Mr. Benny gave you?

ROCHESTER: No. He also gave me a white glove for night operations.

Jack is the worrying type. When he has three toppers, as in the above example, he still worries because the whole script isn't filled with sock stuff like that from beginning to end. He knows, of course, that there has to be a breathing spell or two in any script—but he can dream, can't he?



JACK BENNY

JACK BENNY . . . *On the Air*

ROCHESTER (*at phone*): Hello. Mr. Benny's residence. Star of stage, screen and radio. So whether you go out or stay home, he's got you trapped. Who? Oh, hello Sam, I'm glad you called. Hurry right over and bring back that suit I rented you. *The boss is back!* I know your week ain't up yet, but I'll give you back your money pronto, pro-rata, and *pro-vidin'* I'm alive when you get here. That's right, and Sam, I wish you'd pass the word along to the rest of my clientele. Good-by. (*Receiver click.*) Well, I guess I'm safe now. Oh! oh! I'll have to dig up some excuse about Mr. Benny's tuxedo. Doggone, when I rented it out for Jerome, how did I know they were gonna cremate him!
[*Door buzzer.*]

ROCHESTER: Coming. Oh, it's you, Mr. Milkman.

KERN: Good mornin', Rochester. I see by this note you left, you want me to start deliverin' milk again and stop leavin' cream.

ROCHESTER: Yeah, Mr. Benny's back!

KERN: Say, Rochester, is it true that Mr. Benny's goin' on the air for a new sponsor?

ROCHESTER: Yes, sir.

KERN: Well, tell Mr. Benny I'll be listenin'. Good-by.

JACK: Oh, Rochester, Rochester!

ROCHESTER: Oh, good morning, boss. Sit right down and have your breakfast.

JACK: Thanks, Rochester. Gee, it's good to be home.

ROCHESTER: It's good to have you

home, boss. You'll never know how much I missed you.

JACK: Did you, Rochester?

ROCHESTER: Yeah. The three months you were away, this old house was so lonesome, I'd go into the living room and see your big easy chair settin' there with no one in it, and I'd feel like cryin'.

JACK: Gee!

ROCHESTER: The trees outside were in bloom, but they looked barren to me.

JACK: Aw, Rochester.

ROCHESTER: The birds were singing but I never could seem to hear them. The sun was shining but I never saw it.

JACK: Really, Rochester?

ROCHESTER: Yeah. I never got up till eight o'clock at night!

[*Door buzzer.*]

JACK: Rochester, answer the door.

[*Phone rings.*]

JACK: Rochester, answer the phone.

ROCHESTER: You told me to answer the door.

JACK: Answer the phone.

ROCHESTER: Boss, I can't be in both places at once. I ain't General Patton!

JACK: We'll talk about your rank later. You answer the phone. I'll answer the door.

[*Door opens.*]

MARY: Hello, Jack!

JACK: Mary! Gee, it's good to see you.

MARY: Gosh, Jack, you look wonderful. I gotta give you a great big kiss. Mmmm!

JACK: Oh, Mary, not out here on the front porch.

MARY: Another one. Mmmm!

JACK: Mary, please. You're embarrassing me.

MARY: One more. Mmmm!

JACK: Mary, for heaven's sake, put me down!

MARY: Oh, Jack, what are you ashamed of? I haven't seen you in three months, and that's a long time to go without a kiss.

JACK: Gee, Mary, you mean you haven't kissed anybody for three months?

MARY: Leave me out of it, I'm thinking of you.

JACK. Oh, I see.

MARY: Gosh, Jack, it's good to see you. How was your trip?

JACK: Come on in and I'll tell you all about it. Believe me, Mary, it was wonderful doing shows for the boys overseas. If I were twenty years younger, I'd be right out there with 'em.

MARY: That's what you said during the last war.

JACK: Well, I meant it then too. I mean—Mary, stop mixing me up. I *was* in the last war and if you must know—

ROCHESTER: Oh, hello, Miss Livingstone.

MARY: Hello, Rochester.

ROCHESTER: Mr. Benny, that telephone call was from your sponsor.

JACK: My sponsor!

ROCHESTER: Boss, you act like you're surprised you got one!

JACK: Well, I'm surprised he called. I wonder what it's about. Maybe he wants to—no, he wouldn't be giving me a bonus so soon. I wonder what it can be.

MARY: Maybe he wants to know who you're going to have for a singer.

JACK: Mary, confidentially, I've been considering Bing Crosby for my singer. You know he's starting to get popular now.

MARY: Well, Jack, I don't want to disillusion you, but you're not going to get Crosby for thirty-five dollars a week.

JACK: I wasn't thinking of thirty-five dollars.

ROCHESTER: You ain't gonna get him for what you're thinkin' either.

JACK: Oh, I don't know, I don't know.

MARY: Oh, Jack, what are you talking about? You can't hire Crosby. He makes thousands of dollars a week.

JACK: Well, maybe I can get his little son Larry; he sings too. Or for five dollars more, maybe I could get the twins.

MARY: Why don't you wait another year, you might have more to choose from.

JACK: Oh well, I'm not going to worry about it now. I'll find a singer.

[Door buzzer.]

JACK: Come in.

PHIL HARRISON: Hi ya, Jackson!

DON WILSON: Hello, Jack!

JACK: Philsy! Don!

DON: Jack, that trip did you a lot of good, you look wonderful.

JACK: I feel good, Don, although I lost about ten pounds.

DON: Well, I lost some weight too, but it isn't very noticeable.

JACK: Really, Don? How much did you lose?

DON: Eighty-four pounds.

JACK: Don, you didn't lose it, you just misplaced it. Say Phil, what did you do with yourself this summer?

MARY: Why, Jack, Phil was on the Kay Kyser program.

JACK: Well, that must have been nice.

PHIL: For thirteen weeks.

JACK: *Thirteen weeks?* Now I know you're a jerk.

PHIL: What do you mean?

JACK: If you couldn't answer the questions the first week, why did you keep going back? That, I can't understand.

PHIL: Look, Jackson, you got it all

wrong. They hired me to *ask* the questions. I was the Purfessor.

JACK: Purfessor?

PHIL: Yes, Purfessor. P-U-R-F-E-S-S-O-

JACK: I know how to spell it. Mary, remind me to listen in Wednesday night. I want to hear Phil ask those questions.

MARY: Jack, starting Wednesday night Kay Kyser will be back on the show.

JACK: Oh. Then I'll surely listen. Well fellows, I hate to break this up, but I got a call from my sponsor and I have to go over and see him. But before I go, I want to give you the souvenirs I brought you from the South Pacific.

ROCHESTER: Boss, do you want a hammer to open that big crate?

JACK: No, no; the souvenirs are in the valises.

ROCHESTER: Well, what's in the crate?

JACK: Never mind. Now let's see, where are the valises?

MARY: You're acting kinda funny about that crate, Jack. Why don't you open it?

JACK: I don't have to, the souvenirs are in the valises.

PHIL: Then what have you got in the crate?

JACK: It's something I brought home for myself. I got it on one of the islands in the South Seas.

DON: Well, open it up, Jack. Let's see what it is.

JACK: Don, it's nothing. You wouldn't be interested.

PHIL: Rochester, give me that hammer, I'm gonna open it.

ROCHESTER: Here you are, Mr. Harris.

JACK: Phil, please!

[*Hammer blows, boards ripping.*]

JACK: Phil, it's just a little thing I picked up on one of the islands. It's for me.

DON: Well, it's open.

JACK: Phil, you have no right to—

PHIL: Hey, Jackson, what are you so

excited about? There's nothin' in this crate but a grass skirt.

JACK: Nothing but a grass skirt? Let me—Oh, darn it, she got away! Isn't that awful?

MARY: Why, Jack Benny, do you mean you actually tried to bring back a—

JACK: Help is hard to get and stop leering at me. Now come on, Mary, we're going down to see my sponsor.

* * *

JACK: Here it is, Mary. Here's my sponsor's office, George W. Hill. Let's go in. And Mary, please try and act nice, will you?

MARY: Oh, Jack, stop worrying. Even though he is your sponsor, you don't have to fall all over him.

JACK: Don't be silly, Mary, I'm going to treat him just like any other person.

MARY: But Jack, you never gave a girl an orchid, why bring him one?

JACK: Well, you know, Mary, a man in his position has got almost everything else. Now come on, let's go in.

GIRL: Yes?

JACK: I'd like to see Mr. Hill, please. Mr. George W. Hill.

GIRL: Who shall I say is calling, sir?

JACK: Well—uh—well. Just tell him the star of his radio program is here.

GIRL: Oh, I didn't recognize you. You're not looking so well today, Mr. Sinatra.

JACK: *Sinatra?* I'm not Sinatra!

MARY: Neither am I!

JACK: Now, Miss, will you please tell Mr. Hill that I'd like to see him?

GIRL: Yes, sir. And your name?

JACK: Just tell him it's B-E-N-N-Y.

GIRL: Yes, sir.

MARY: Oh, Jack—

JACK: With men who know comedians best, it's *Benny, two to one!*

MARY: For goodness sake, Jack! Mr. Hill knows that you know all the slogans and that you use the product. So stop overdoing it, especially with that cigarette holder.

JACK: Mary, I'm not overdoing it.

Lots of people use cigarette holders.

MARY: Not one that holds three cigarettes.

JACK: Now Mary—

MARY: You look like the forward turret on a battleship!

JACK: Mary, that's enough. Say Miss, will you please step into Mr. Hill's office and tell him I'm here.

GIRL: Yes, sir.

* * *

[*Door opens and closes.*]

GIRL: Pardon me, Mr. Hill.

HILL: Yes?

GIRL: Jack Benny is waiting in the outer office.

HILL: Oh, good, good. Tell him I'll see him in a few minutes. I'm in conference right now.

GIRL: Yes, sir.

[*Door opens and closes.*]

HILL: Now, as I was saying, your opinions interest me, and I'd like to hear more of them.

FRED ALLEN: Well, first of all, I don't want you to think that I have anything against Benny personally.

HILL: Oh, of course not, Mr. Allen!

FRED: In fact, I've always admired Benny.

HILL: Well, after all, Fred, how could anyone dislike a man like Jack? A man who last year was affectionately nicknamed after General Patton, Old Blood and Guts Benny.

FRED: Old Blood and Guts Benny? You mean Old Toupée and Wrinkles. Old Blood and—Why, last week his doctor took a sample of Benny's blood and sent it to the laboratory to be analyzed. It came back with a note saying, "Congratulations! We think this is even better than *Soil-Off*!" So they ordered a gallon.

HILL: Mr. Allen, hearing you talk, I get the impression that you don't like Mr. Benny.

FRED: Oh, I'm sorry I gave you that impression, Mr. Hill. I'm very fond

of Jack; he's one of my best friends. It's just that I hate to see him go back on the air and be a flop.

HILL: But what makes you think Benny will be a flop? He always gets laughs.

FRED: Mr. Hill, anyone can get laughs who tells a joke and wiggles his ears.

HILL: But Mr. Allen, I'm a businessman. I don't care how a comedian gets his laughs as long as he sells the product. And I think lots of people will sit by the radio, smoke a cigarette, and listen to Jack Benny.

FRED: Mr. Hill, that is an impossibility if I ever heard one. Smoke a cigarette and listen to Benny. How in the world can anyone smoke and hold his nose at the same time? It can't be done.

HILL: You know, Fred, I'm a little surprised hearing all this. You see, when I hired Jack, I thought he had a large following.

FRED: He just looks that way when he's not wearing his girdle. That large following is Benny.

HILL: Well, look, Fred, perhaps it isn't too late. Do you think I could help the program if I got rid of Benny?

FRED: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. By all means keep Jack on the program. Just cut his part down a little.

HILL: Cut his part down a little, huh? Well, how much should I let him do?

FRED: Oh, I think he can easily handle the tobacco auctioneer's chant.

[*Fred chants.*]

HILL: Mr. Allen!

[*Fred continues chant.*]

HILL: Please. Mr. Allen!

FRED: Yes?

HILL: When you do that, take your hat off.

FRED: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought just bowing my head would be enough. Well, look, Mr. Hill, I know you're a busy man, and I want to run down the hall and see your assistant for a few minutes. I may drop back later.

HILL: Okay, Fred. You'll find Mr. Stauffer's office quicker if you go through that rear door.

FRED: Thanks. So long.

HILL: Now let's see. Oh yes, yes.

[Click of inner-office phone.]

GIRL: Yes, Mr. Hill?

HILL: You may send Mr. Benny in now.

JACK: Hello, Mr. Hill, I'm sure glad to see you. Mr. Hill, you know Mary; Mary, you know Mr. Hill. Now I don't mind telling you, Mr. Hill, that—

MARY: Hello, Mr. Hill.

JACK: Now I don't mind telling you, Mr. Hill, that—

HILL: Hello, Mary.

JACK: Now I don't mind telling you, Mr. Hill, that you're one of the swellest guys I've ever met, not because you're my new sponsor, but because you're one of the finest fellows in the world, one of the squarest, grandest guys that ever—

MARY: Jack, stop pinching his cheek.

JACK: Oh, *oh!* Well, Mr. Hill, here we are, yes, sir. Ready to get off to a great start on our new radio series.

HILL: Well, Jack, that's what I wanted to talk to you about.

JACK: Yes, sir! We're—T-t-talk t-t-to me? Is there wrong anything? I mean anything wrong is there, is there, is there? Huh?

HILL: No, no, Jack, nothing wrong, just a routine talk. Sit down.

JACK: Yes, sir.

HILL: That's my chair.

JACK: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know it was your chair.

MARY: Well, you should know. You're sitting on him.

JACK: Oh, yes. Silly of me not to notice you, Mr. Hill. I'll sit here.

MARY: Now you're sitting on me.

JACK: Ha, ha, ha! I guess I'm a little excited, Mary, I'll sit here.

HILL: Okay, if you think you'll be comfortable on that ash tray.

JACK: Oh, pardon me, Mr. Tray. I'll

just get up and—OOOPS! Is this your lighted cigarette, Mr. Hill? I'm sorry I didn't see it, Mr. Lighted, I mean Mr. Hill.

HILL: Now, Jack, I wanted to talk to you about some things.

JACK: Yes, sir, yes, sir.

HILL: Oh, by the way, guess who was sitting in this office just a few minutes ago?

JACK: Well, I haven't the slightest idea, Mr. Hill. Who was it?

HILL: Fred Allen.

JACK: *Fred Allen!* What was he doing here, what did he want, what did he say?

HILL: Well, Jack, for one thing, he said—

JACK: That's a lie! And when I see him I'm going to—

HILL: Now, Jack, that's no attitude to take. Fred doesn't dislike you. Why don't you try to like him?

JACK: How can anyone like a guy who looks like he does?

MARY: Oh, Jack, Allen isn't so ugly.

JACK: How would you know? You can't see his face until you lift the bags under his eyes. And with that pained expression, he looks like a hen trying to lay a square egg. So don't tell me about Allen.

HILL: Now, Jack, don't get excited. And if you must pace back and forth, get down off my desk.

JACK: Why, if I ever meet that sneak face-to-face, I'll—

[Door opens.]

FRED: Say Mr. Hill, I just dropped back to say good-by and—Why, Jack! Jackie Benny!

JACK: Fred! Freddy old boy!

FRED: Jack, old pal, it's certainly good to see you.

JACK: Thanks, Freddy boy. I was just telling Mary and Mr. Hill how much I've missed you.

FRED: Yes, sir, Jack, it's great being together again.

JACK: I'll say it is!

MARY: It couldn't sound more un-

believable if they were Roosevelt and Dewey.

JACK: Please, Mary, Fred and I are good pals. Tell me, Freddy boy, what are you doing here in Hollywood?

FRED: Making a picture. I'm over at United Artists.

JACK: Oh, yes, yes. I heard that Boris Karloff isn't there any more.

FRED: Yes, yes. And I heard that since you've been with Warner's, the *studio* isn't there any more.

JACK: Now listen here, Allen—

MARY: Jack, it's your own fault. You always have a chip on your shoulder.

JACK: I haven't got a chip on my shoulder!

FRED: He's right, Mary. That's his head.

JACK: That settles it, Allen. I've tried to be friends with you, but you won't have it that way. Why, I'd punch you right in the nose if there wasn't a lady present.

MARY: I'll leave, Jack.

JACK: *You sit down! Now you listen to me, Allen—*

FRED: You listen to me, Benny. You'd punch who in the nose?

JACK: I'd punch *you* in the nose, if it weren't for your wife and children.

FRED: I haven't got any children.

JACK: Then why aren't you in the Army? Answer that, civilian!

MARY: Oh, Jack, for goodness sake—

JACK: *You keep out of this. Now listen, Allen, for the last time, I want you to mind your own business.*

HILL: Jack, why don't you and Fred shake hands and—

JACK: *You shut up! Now listen, Allen, I wanna tell you.* Oh, oh my goodness! I said that to my sponsor! Mr. Hill, Mr. Hill, I didn't mean to say "shut up" to you. I meant to say "be quiet," I mean, please be quiet. I mean I didn't mean it at all. I'd never say a thing like that to *you*. Mr. Hill—Mr. Hill—don't stand there with your back to me. Fred, Freddy boy, please tell Mr. Hill I

didn't mean it. It was an accident, it was all a big mistake. Fred, don't stand there with your back to me. Mary, Mary, tell Mr. Hill it was all a mistake, tell him I'm sorry, tell him anything, *but just say something!*

* * *

JACK: Mary, do you think Mr. Hill was really angry at me because of what I said?

MARY: No, Jack, he knew you were excited and nervous.

JACK: Gee, I hope so.

MARY: Say, Jack, what are you going to do about a new singer for our show?

JACK: Well, I don't know, Mary. I thought maybe next Sunday I would talk to Frank Sinatra and see if I can make a deal with him.

MARY: Frank Sinatra!

JACK: Yes.

MARY: But Jack, he's got two programs already.

JACK: Well, then maybe *he'll* hire *me*.

Another Benny Script

DON: Ladies and gentlemen, it has been said that Jack Benny has brought more laughs to more people than any man who ever lived. And now I bring you the man who said it—Jack Benny!
[Applause.]

MARY: Don—Don, you wasted that introduction because Jack isn't here yet.

DON: He isn't? Where is he?

PHIL: Maybe he followed some babe down Vine Street and forgot to look up when he passed N.B.C.

DON: Don't be silly. Phil, Jack doesn't follow girls.

MARY: He doesn't, eh? How do you think he met me?

PHIL: No kiddin', Mary, is that the way you met Jackson?

MARY: Yeah. If I didn't have to stop for that traffic light, I'd still be working at the May Company. But I'm not sorry. I'm making just as much working for Jack.

PHIL: Gee, you're lucky. But where is Jackson anyway?

MARY: Oh, he'll show up in a minute. And fellahs, wait'll you see him. Oh brother!

DON: Why, what's the matter, Mary?

MARY: Well, Warner Brothers called him up and told him they want to make a big feature called "The Life of Jack Benny."

PHIL & DON: The "Life of Jack Benny"?

MARY: Yeah, and you know, fellahs, since Jack found out about it, he's absolutely unbearable. I never saw such conceit in all my life.

PHIL: Well, if that's the case, when Jackson gets here I'm leavin'.

MARY: Leaving? Why?

PHIL: If he's gettin' to be anything like me, there'll be no standin' the guy.

MARY: You said it, Phil.

[*Door opens.*]

MARY: Oh oh, here he comes now.

JACK (*very ritzy*): Well, hello, everybody. Hello, Donald.

DON: Hello, Jack.

JACK: Philip.

PHIL: Hello.

JACK: How do you do, Miss Livingstone.

MARY: Jack Benny, take off that monocle.

JACK: That's not a monocle. I broke my bifocals and managed to save one focal. Here, Donald, take my gloves and cane. Thank you. There.

PHIL: Gloves and cane. Oh boy, are you snooty!

MARY: Phil, the gloves are snooty. The cane is necessary.

JACK: That I shall ignore entirely.

MARY (*mocking*): That I shall ignore entirely, pip pip.

JACK: Go ahead, go ahead, have your little fun, but you'll all apologize when you know what's happened to me.

PHIL: We know, we know.

DON: Yes, Jack, Mary told us that Warner Brothers were going to make a picture about your life.

JACK: Yes, sir, the same studio that made the life of Emile Zola, the life of Louis Pasteur, the life of Mark Twain. And now, the life of Jack Benny.

[*Fanfare of two trumpets.*]

JACK: Now cut that out. Smart-aleck musicians!

PHIL: You know, Jackson, I can't understand any studio wanting to make a picture of your life.

JACK: What do you mean?

PHIL: I'm the guy. Color, glamour, excitement! That's what they should make. "The Life of Phil Harris."

JACK: The Life of Phil Harris!

PHIL: Sure!

JACK: Phil, the story of your life wouldn't pass the Hays Office. So don't be ridiculous.

PHIL: All right, so what's interesting about your life?

JACK: Mine is a story of adventure and courage. The real true life of Jack Benny.

[*Fanfare of two trumpets.*]

JACK: Now stop with that. Enough's enough. Listen, Phil, you may not believe this, but my life has been one adventure after another. It started when I ran away from home to face the world all by myself.

PHIL: How old were you?

MARY: Thirty-two.

JACK: I was twenty-seven. I remember because I didn't want to leave until I finished high school. Thirty-two. And look what happened to me after that. Broadway, vaudeville, musical comedy, radio! Why, when they make the picture of my life

it'll be as long as *Gone With the Wind*.

MARY: It should be, they both started in the same period.

JACK: Miss Livingstone, your adolescent attempts at levity fail to amuse me. Well, fellows, I have to leave you now. Rochester is waiting in the car to take me to Warner Brothers.

PHIL: Hey, wait a minute, Jackson, we got a radio program to do.

JACK (*sarcastic*): Radio—hmmm—radio!

PHIL: Yeah, radio. R-a-rad-r-a

JACK: Oh brother, is he gonna have trouble when television comes in. Anyway—

PHIL: Television. T-e-l-u-

JACK: Never mind. Come on, Mary, you can go with me.

MARY: Okay.

* * *

JACK: Gee, Mary, just to think of it gives me a thrill. Imagine on the marquees of theatres all over the country, in the big bright lights. "The Life of Jack Benny!"

[*Fanfare of two trumpets.*]

JACK: Oh, shut up! Come on, Mary. [*Auto motor and horn.*]

JACK: Take it easy, Rochester. Watch where you're going.

MARY: Oh, Jack, don't be so nervous.

JACK: I'm not nervous.

ROCHESTER: You must be, boss. You're tellin' me to take it easy and you're drivin'.

JACK: What? Wait a minute, Rochester. When we started out you were driving. What happened?

ROCHESTER: Remember that big bump we hit back there?

JACK: Yes.

ROCHESTER: Well, when the people put us back in the car, they put us in wrong.

JACK: Oh—oh—oh. Well, you take the wheel now. And hurry up. I want to get to the studio. Say, Mary, I just thought of something. If they're going to make the story of my life, I

shouldn't only be acting in it, I should direct it.

MARY: Jack—

JACK: And not only that. Who knows my life better than I do? I should write it too.

MARY: Well, if you do all that, you might as well produce it.

JACK: Yeah.

MARY: That'll look fine on the screen.

"The Life of Jack Benny," starring Jack Benny, directed by Jack Benny, written by Jack Benny and produced by Jack Benny.

JACK: Won't that look swell?

ROCHESTER: Swell and monotonous!

[*Mary laughs.*]

JACK: What are you laughing at?

MARY: I'll lend you my girdle and you can be your own leading lady.

JACK: Oh, that'd be going too far. Gosh, imagine. The story of my life. Rochester, let's put the top down so people can see me.

MARY: So people can see you! Oh, Jack!

ROCHESTER: That's nothin', Miss Livingstone. This morning he wanted to ride down Hollywood Boulevard on a white horse like Lady Godiva.

MARY: Lady Godiva?

ROCHESTER: Yeah, but his toupay wasn't long enough.

JACK: Rochester, I was just going to do that to save gas, that's all.

ROCHESTER: Hee, hee, hee, I wonder how I'd look on a white horse?

JACK: Say, here we are at the studio. Stop right at the main gate.

ROCHESTER: Okay, boss.

* * *

JACK: Now let's see. Where's Jerry Wald's office? He's in charge of production for my picture.

MARY: Maybe it's down this corridor.

JACK: Yeah, here are some offices. Let's see—Waterman, Silverman, Overman, Gentlemen, Kern, Kert-chalk, Wald. Here it is.

[*Door opens.*]

SARA: Yes?

JACK: I'm Jack Benny. Mr. Wald is expecting me.

SARA: Mr. Wald's in conference. Would you mind waiting?

JACK: Not at all. Come on, Mary, let's sit down over here.

[Hums "Love in Bloom."]

MARY: Say, Jack, look at the fellow sitting on the other side of the room.

Isn't that Danny Kaye?

JACK: Danny Kaye? Where?

MARY: Reading that newspaper.

JACK: Oh yeah. And he used to be such a nice kid.

MARY: Used to be? What did he ever do to you?

JACK: What did he do to me? Did you see that picture he made, "Up in Arms"?

MARY: Yes, he was a big hit in it. He was sensational. What about it?

JACK: What about it? I'm having enough trouble with Paul Lukas.

MARY: Oh, Jack!

JACK: And now Danny Kaye. Get that nonchalant manner? Sitting there reading that newspaper. And look at that expression on his face. Loaded with confidence. That Danny Kaye burns me up.

MARY: You know, Jack, I can't understand it. Every time somebody makes a little progress, you get sore at 'em.

JACK: I do not.

MARY: You do too. When Mickey Rooney put on long pants you stopped talking to him.

JACK: I did not.

MARY: Why, you even bit Lassie.

JACK: Well, she bit me first! Anyway, this is different. I practically gave Danny Kaye his start. Why, I remember the day he came to me for advice and I was fool enough to—

MARY: Oh oh! Jack, Danny sees you and he's coming over.

JACK: Oh well, I'll just have to hide my feelings. (Hums one strain of "Love in Bloom.")

KAYE: Hello, Jack.

JACK: Hello, Danny.

KAYE: How are you, Jack?

JACK: I'm fine, fine. How's your mother, Danny?

KAYE: She's fine.

JACK: And your father?

KAYE: He's fine too.

JACK: Well, the next time you see them, tell 'em they certainly have a louse for a son.

MARY: Jack!

JACK: Well—

KAYE: Jack, what's the matter. What happened? I thought we were friends.

JACK: Friends! A lot you know about friendship. I heard about that rumor you're spreading around that you're the new comedy sensation.

KAYE: But Jack, I didn't spread that rumor. And I'm sorry my picture was a big hit.

JACK: Oh, sure, sure.

KAYE: And if it'll make you feel any better, I'm sorry that I came to Hollywood.

JACK: Being sorry doesn't help. You made the picture. You were a hit, and the damage is done. It's too late to apologize.

MARY: Oh, Danny, don't pay any attention to him.

KAYE: Mary, what's the matter with Jack?

MARY: He's jealous of any newcomer that's a big success.

KAYE: Gosh, Jack, I wouldn't hurt you for the world. I know how you love show business. I wouldn't do anything to take the bread out of your mouth.

JACK: Go ahead, go ahead, keep talking. I know what you're thinking.

KAYE: No, Jack, you've got me all wrong. I've always been your fan. Why, I've followed your career for years.

JACK: Really? Well!

KAYE: Sure, Jack, and I could never

hope to become as popular as you used to be.

JACK: Used to be?

KAYE (*excited and fast*): I mean used to was—I mean—

JACK: That's better.

KAYE: Honestly, Jack, I think you're great. In fact, every time I pass a theatre where your picture is playing I go in to see it.

KAYE: I could see your pictures every night. I think you're the greatest comedian in the world.

JACK: You do?

KAYE: Yeah, I think you're swell.

JACK: Oh. Well, then I'm sorry I acted the way I did, Danny, I—I think you're pretty swell too.

KAYE: But you're sweller than I am.

JACK: No, no, Danny, you're the swellest.

KAYE: No, Jack, you're the swellest.

JACK: Well—

MARY: As soon as the swelling goes down, can I get a word in here?

JACK: Oh, I'm sorry, Mary. Danny and I were just complimenting each other. Oh, say, Danny. You know Jerry Wald sent for me because Warner Brothers are going to make a picture of my life. And to show you how much I really like you, I'm going to ask them if they can't find something for you to do in my picture.

KAYE: Thanks, Jack, I hope you can fix it.

SARA: Oh, Mr. Benny, Mr. Wald will see you now.

JACK: Thank you. Come on, Mary. You too, Danny.

* * *

JACK: Hello, Mr. Wald.

KAYE: Hello, Mr. Wald.

MARY: Hello, Mr. Wald.

CHRISTIE: Hello, Jack, hi ya, Danny, hello, Mary. Sit down.

KAYE: Thank you.

JACK: Thank you.

MARY: I'll go out and get a chair for myself.

JACK: Oh, excuse me, Mary. Sit here.

CHRISTIE: Well, Jack, I'll bet you're pretty excited now that Warner Brothers are going to make the story of your life.

JACK: Yes, I'm quite thrilled.

CHRISTIE: We've got the whole thing laid out, Jack. We're going to make your entire life story from the day you were born to the day you died.

JACK: Died? How can that be?

MARY: When you start acting and the director says shoot, he won't be kidding.

JACK: Mary, don't be so funny. Anyway, that picture's going to be directed by me.

CHRISTIE: You? You're going to direct the picture?

JACK: I'm going to write it too.

CHRISTIE: Oh, direct it and write it, eh?

JACK: Yes, sir!

CHRISTIE: Who's going to supervise it?

JACK: I am.

CHRISTIE: Who's going to produce it?

JACK: I am.

CHRISTIE: Who's going to finance it?

[*Long pause.*]

KAYE: May I have the next dance with you, Miss Livingstone?

JACK: Danny, please.

CHRISTIE: Now look, Jack, we've been making pictures for a long time, and you're not going to tell us how to run our business.

JACK: Well—

CHRISTIE: Now get this. We're going to make a picture called "The Life of Jack Benny," and you're not going to direct it.

JACK: I'm not?

CHRISTIE: No, and you're not going to write it, supervise it or produce it.

JACK: Well, I guess you're right. I should be satisfied just starring in it. I am going to star in it, ain't I?

CHRISTIE (*slowly*): Well, Jack, that's what I wanted to talk to you about.

JACK: Mary, get me a chair. What did

you want to talk to me about, Mr. Wald?

CHRISTIE: Well, we feel that somebody else ought to play the part of Jack Benny.

JACK: Somebody else? For heaven's sake, what's the matter with me?

CHRISTIE: Well, you've been Jack Benny too long.

JACK: What?

CHRISTIE: We feel that we ought to inject some new blood.

MARY: New blood! Any blood will help.

JACK: Mary, you keep out of this. Well, look, Mr. Wald, if you don't think I'm capable of playing myself in my own picture, who did you have in mind?

CHRISTIE: Danny Kaye.

JACK: Danny Kaye!

CHRISTIE: Yes, that's why I sent for him.

JACK: You sent for Danny! Danny, don't just sit there. Say something. Danny Kaye, you knew about this all the time.

KAYE: No, I didn't, Jack, really I didn't. This is all a surprise to me.

JACK: Imagine even thinking of making the picture of my life without me being in it.

CHRISTIE: Jack, I didn't say you weren't going to be in it. I have something very important for you.

JACK: You have?

CHRISTIE: Yes! You're going to play the part of your father.

JACK: My father?

CHRISTIE: Yes. Danny Kaye will be your son. And I think Mary will be excellent in the part of Jack's childhood sweetheart.

KAYE: So do I.

JACK: You keep out of this.

KAYE: Yes, father.

JACK: Don't father me, you traitor.

CHRISTIE: Now, Mary, you'll be Jack's boyhood sweetheart, Millicent Fairchild.

JACK: Millicent Fairchild? What are you talking about? The name of my

girl friend in Waukegan was Gussie Baglequist. Baglequist—not Fairchild.

CHRISTIE: We can't use Gussie Baglequist. The name doesn't sound romantic.

JACK: Well, she was a darn pretty girl. It so happens I have a snapshot of her right here in my pocket. Take a look at that.

CHRISTIE: Say, she is pretty. But what's that thing she's holding in her right arm?

JACK: That's a horse's hind leg. Gussie was a blacksmith and a darn good one.

KAYE: A blacksmith? What's that?

JACK: For your information, city boy, blacksmiths put shoes on horses, and if you ask me if they need a ration stamp, I'll punch you in the nose. What a guy to play my life.

KAYE: I don't know why you're mad at me, Jack, it wasn't my idea.

JACK: Hmm. And to think, Mr. Kaye, that I loaned you the money to come out to Hollywood. It's the last time I'll ever do you a favor.

KAYE: A fine favor, twenty-two percent interest. I coulda done better at a bank.

JACK: What do you think the Benny Trust Company is—a chili bowl?

CHRISTIE: All right, boys, let's cut out this arguing. Now here's a scene I want you to try, Danny. It's where you come in and ask your father for money to buy a violin. You read the father's part, Jack.

JACK: Okay, but why I'll never know.

CHRISTIE: Stop mumbling. Go ahead, Danny. Remember, you're asking your father for money, and you're Jack Benny at the age of nine.

KAYE: Yes, sir. (*Clears throat.*) Papa—

JACK: Wait a minute. When I was nine years old, I could talk! Now read it right.

CHRISTIE: Go ahead, Danny. Ask the old man again.

JACK: Hmm.

KAYE: Okay. (*Clears throat. Then in Russian dialect.*) Poppa, poppa, could I have it four dollars for to buying a violin?

JACK: Just a minute there. What's the idea of doing Russian?

KAYE: Well, isn't Waukegan in Russia?

JACK: No, it's in Illinois. Jeepers!

CHRISTIE: Try it again, Danny. Remember, you're a little country boy.

KAYE: Okay. (*As goofy rube.*) Hey Paw, Paw—huh. Can I have four uh dollars to buy a violin? Huh, Paw, huh?

JACK: Now stop it, stop it. What do you think I was when I was a kid—a moron?

MARY: And besides, he outgrew it.

JACK: Yes, heavens to Betsy!

CHRISTIE: Danny, you better try it as a city boy.

KAYE: A city boy? Okay (*Brooklyn dialect.*) Hey Pop, Pop, kin I put da bite on yuz fer four frogskins tuy buy a fiddle? Come on, Pop, whatcha say? Whatcha say?

JACK: Now cut that out. Look here, Mister Wald, if this is the way you're going to do the story of my life, you can drop the whole thing.

CHRISTIE: All right, then we won't make the picture.

JACK: Now let's not be hasty, Mr. Wald. What's bothering you?

CHRISTIE: You're bothering me and I'm sick of it. We're not going to make "The Life of Jack Benny."

JACK: Well, that's okay with me. Good-by! Come on, Mary, come on, Danny.

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JACK: Pulling that stuff on us.

KAYE: But Jack, this was a great opportunity for me. I don't know when I'll ever get another chance like that.

JACK: Look, Danny, let me give you a little piece of advice. You're a very clever kid, you're very talented and you've got a lot of charm, but take it easy. Climb the ladder of success slowly, one rung at a time.

KAYE: Yes, Jack.

JACK: And when you get to the top, don't let it go to your head. Don't ever be hammy.

KAYE: I won't, Jack.

JACK: Come on, kid, let's go see *George Washington Slept Here*.

Alter Ego!

BERGEN AND McCARTHY

Charlie McCarthy is not one to toss praise around like a school-boy distributing handbills, so when he says that Edgar Bergen is a fairly nice guy you can take it without the customary grain of salt. In fact, as a disinterested party, you should add a little sugar to achieve the proper evaluation.

"Yes, I suppose Bergen, in his way, is as nice a chap as you'd want to meet," Charlie says. "Of course, if you don't want to meet a nice chap—there's always Bergen."

Charlie is given to these southpaw compliments not because he actually has any feeling against Bergen, but because he thinks someone ought to offset the general public approval to a certain degree lest Bergen get the idea that he should have top billing as well as the lion's share of the money. Charlie says he saw the lion get the short end of that deal and he doesn't want some of the same.

"After all, I'm nobody's dummy," he adds.

Bergen does not resent Charlie referring to him as nobody if it keeps his wooden friend happy. It is Charlie's independence and all-round master-of-my-fate attitude that has made him a unique alumnus of a lumber yard, and Bergen would be the last one to do anything that would change his outlook on life. Besides, Charlie did know him when he was a nobody—not too many years ago.

That was when Bergen—and Charlie—were knocking around in vaudeville and the night clubs for ten years; a good standard ventriloquist act but nothing to make an income tax collector lick his chops. From an engagement in the Chez Paree club in Chicago they came to New York in the fall of 1936 for what Bergen considered his finest break (he didn't know the half of it!)—an engagement in the Rainbow Room, the city's smartest night club, up near the stars

in the Rockefellers' Radio City. He was signed for four weeks. He stayed eight. He entertained at one of those fabulous parties given by professional party-thrower Elsa Maxwell and attracted the attention of a man connected with the Rudy Vallee radio program. The result was a guest performance on the Vallee show December, 1936, and immediate interest in him as a radio entertainer, the first ventriloquist ever to score in this medium. After a few months it was the big-time for Bergen—and Charlie.

Year after year they've been on the air selling Chase and Sanborn coffee, always at or near the top in the polls that estimate radio popularity. Occasionally they have made a motion picture for big money, although it is understandable that this cannot be done too often because of the difficulty in getting a story that will be just right for their particular talents. The tax records show that Standard Brands, his sponsors, paid Bergen 282,000 dollars in 1941.

Edgar John Bergen is the baptismal name of Charlie's master. He was born in Chicago on February 16, 1903. His boyhood there, in Decatur, Illinois, and back in Chicago again was uneventful enough. But he did have a talent for mimicking people and a flair for magic and sketching that were straws in the wind of the future. As he tells the story, his first experience with a voice trick was when he was watching his mother work in the kitchen of their Decatur home one day. Probably out of a mixture of boredom and devilment, he rapped on the bottom of his chair and said, way down in his throat, "Hello, hello, in there." His mother went to see who was at the door. He fooled her again and then confessed he was the culprit.

After that, young Eddie began to practice so-called voice-throwing (even now he says he doesn't know whether the voice actually can be "thrown"). He tried it out on his friends and gradually became proficient at speaking without moving his lips and at those little deceptive actions that make a person think a voice is coming from a source other than its actual one. More than once he answered "present" for an absent or late classmate when the teacher called the roll. In high school in Chicago he came to be in demand for amateur entertainments, and from that it was just a step to being able to

demand small fees for working at parties, picnics, and the like.

In 1921, in his last year in high school, Bergen spent the best thirty-five dollars of his life. He got Charlie. A fellow named Theodore Mack carved the now famous head, following Bergen's sketch of the features of a brash newsboy of his acquaintance who operated near Lakeview High School. This boy's first name was Charlie. Bergen named the dummy after the newsboy and Mack, in a manner of speaking. Charlie McCarthy started life as a fresh kid in urchin get-up, much like the newsboy, which wasn't anything particularly new.

Charlie went to college with Bergen, who matriculated at Northwestern University with the idea of becoming a physician. His ventriloquism paid the freight. There were a lot of small theaters around Chicago where he could pick up a few dollars in odd engagements, and during summer vacations between 1922 and 1925 he spent part of the time touring a Chautauqua circuit, doing a bit of magic along with his ventriloquism. Bergen remembers his first theater job well.

"It was on a Saturday in a suburban theater and the contract price was three dollars for five shows," he recalls. "When the manager paid me off about midnight, he said I'd been a tremendous hit and that he was going to give me something extra. He did—a quarter out of his own pocket. And that's the only time anyone in show business has ever paid me more than I contracted for."

Eddie, who had given up his medical aspirations in favor of the school of speech, dropped out of college after a couple of years for a season of vaudeville work and then finally got his degree by going to summer sessions.

Out in the world for keeps, he and Charlie gradually worked their way up in what was left of vaudeville, acquiring polish and larger pay checks along with the experience. Charlie ceased to be an urchin and eventually became a be-monocled, top-hatted, white-tied man-about-town—a sartorial counterpart of Bergen. But, of course, what gave the act its spark was Bergen's ability to think up fresh ideas—to create new lines and situations for the act. It was this that

made it possible for him to keep rising and to be prepared when the big chance came in radio.

But before that happened, Bergen and Charlie had been up and down and across the land and had visited such foreign parts as Sweden, Russia, Iceland, England, and various parts of South America. Bergen felt especially at home in Sweden because he is of Swedish descent and can handle the lingo like a native. In fact, he was good enough at it to play in *Rolfe's Revue* in Stockholm. Years later, on July 1, 1944, to be exact, Bergen was awarded the Order of Vasa, First Class, by King Gustav V of Sweden. This is a decoration given to people living outside Sweden who have contributed to bettering Swedish-American relations.

In Laquara, Venezuela, Bergen played for a leper colony.

"That was the most awesome experience I've ever had," he says. "They didn't laugh. But those people got me. I 'gave' more than in any performance I've ever put on. I got only a few faint smiles in return and some of them thanked me when I had finished."

But the American public found a new depth to its laughter when Bergen and Charlie became radio big-timers on Sunday nights. There were and are people who would cut your throat if you tried to interfere with their session "with McCarthy," which is the way most addicts think of the program. For it is a fact that the dummy is more real to the public than its master. "Did you hear what McCarthy said to . . . ?" is a common greeting among the faithful holding post-mortems on Monday mornings. They all know Bergen is really the guy, but McCarthy is the one they talk about.

And that is the way it is meant to be. Bergen purposely is little more than a "straight man." Charlie gets the gags, or if Bergen or a guest star gets a gag as lagniappe, then Charlie has one that tops it. Charlie's forte is being insulting in a rather polite and well-mannered way, although he can and does let go with both barrels when he ties up with an outspoken adversary such as W. C. Fields.

"Charlie loves Bill Fields," is the way Bergen puts it.

Charlie treats Bergen with a rather fond contempt and up to a certain point achieves a sort of world-weary patience with his mas-

ter's opinions and suggestions. Beyond that, Bergen can expect no favors, and he knows better than to do so.

Although not hipped on the subject to the extent that some fictional ventriloquists have been portrayed as being, Bergen regards McCarthy as a real person and discusses him as such. It is difficult to keep the little woodenhead out of any conversation with Bergen (probably because others like to talk about him even more than does Bergen), and once he creeps in you're as apt to get McCarthy's opinions or feelings about such-and-such as you are to get Bergen's.

Charlie weighs about forty pounds and travels in a special hand-grip. He has a tailored wardrobe that would make an *Esquire* reader envious. It includes overcoats, bathrobes, and sports clothes in addition to ordinary suits and evening dress. He wears size 4 clothes, 2AAA shoes, and a 3¾ hat. He has always had the same head, but the other parts have had to be replaced from time to time. Charlie's face gets a careful paint job whenever it begins to show a little wear. He is insured for three thousand dollars and, press agent stunt or not, it is a fact that Bergen in 1937 drew up a will leaving McCarthy ten thousand dollars. It is a rather remarkable document and was published in the New York *Law Journal*. The money is to keep Charlie "alive" after Bergen passes on. The will reads in part:

"I, Edgar John Bergen, give and bequeath to the Actors' Fund of America the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars to be held as a separate fund, to be known forever as the 'Charlie McCarthy Fund.' It is my sincere wish, and I request, that said fund be managed, invested and reinvested, and the entire income be used in each year by the said Actors' Fund of America to give gratuitous and charitable performances of ventriloquism . . . at orphanages, welfare homes, homes for crippled children and other such similar institutes for destitute, unfortunate and handicapped children as said Actors' Fund of America may designate. . . .

"Especially I make this provision for sentimental reasons which to me are vital due to the association . . . with 'Charlie McCarthy' (the dummy), who has been my constant companion and who has

taken on the character of a real person and from whom I have never been separated for even a day.

"It is my request and earnest desire that the Actors' Fund of America shall forever care for and keep 'Charlie McCarthy' in good and serviceable condition and repair . . . and that the ventriloquist so selected . . . to give such gratuitous performances shall always use 'Charlie McCarthy' when giving such gratuitous performances."

There was one occasion when Bergen was not quite sure for a few hours whether Charlie would be around to claim the legacy. That was the night of March 14-15, 1939, when Bergen was in New York for a visit and, of course, had Charlie along in his special case. They were stopping at the Waldorf-Astoria, where they always stay when in the city. Bergen went out for the evening, leaving the encased Charlie in a clothes closet. When he returned to the hotel about 1:30 A.M., he got a couple of telephone calls from newspapers wanting to know if there was any truth in a rumor that Charlie had been kidnapped. Ridiculous, of course, Bergen said. But after the second call he looked in the closet. No Charlie.

Police teletypes carried the news to eight states in the East. Detectives went to work on the case. The FBI was notified. Then Charlie turned up suddenly at 11:30 A.M., safe and sound, in the custody of the amusement editor of an afternoon newspaper who had engineered the disappearance as a practical joke on Bergen. The editor had been carting McCarthy in his case around the night clubs all evening. Bergen refused to prosecute, considering the gag a good one and no harm done. The police were less jovial but wound up by accepting the situation with grace, mostly bad. The editor had secured the dummy by sending a pageboy from a near-by hotel to the Waldorf to pick up the case and deliver it to Bergen. When the page came out of the Waldorf with the case, two men maneuvered him into a taxicab. The page, bound and gagged in a rather genteel way, was released at a midtown, West Side street corner shortly afterwards.

Bergen is so identified with McCarthy that it would be a major entertainment catastrophe if anything fatal actually did happen to

the dummy, but, of course, there are other dummies in the ventriloquist's life. One bears the name Mortimer Snerd and the other is Miss Effie Klinker.

Mortimer entered the picture some seven years ago to provide an occasional brief change of pace. There never was any question of his replacing Charlie. Mort is a country bumpkin and is described by Bergen as "slow and stupid."

"He is limited to about two minutes at a time," Bergen explains, "because things have to be repeated to him before he catches on and that sort of thing can quickly become a bore if there is too much of it. Charlie at one time may have been a bit jealous of Mortimer; in fact, I'm sure he was. But he quickly got over it. He saw Mort for exactly what he is, someone to be tolerated and, to an extent, pitied. Charlie has told me more than once that Mort should be sent to a home for backward boys."

But the lady is something else again—and she is a lady, make no mistake about that. Bergen began working on the project early in 1944. First there was the problem of getting the right voice. Bergen experimented, made recordings, and achieved something he felt was about right. Actually he did not start from scratch at developing a voice for a female character because for a long time he had been entertaining studio audiences and other gatherings with a character he calls Ophelia. This "girl" is not a dummy, but Bergen makes a head for her with his fist and a bit of makeup. He couldn't use the exact voice as used for Ophelia because that was the voice of a girl. He wanted the voice of an older woman—"you can get more character into it."

Once the voice was set, Bergen hired six cartoonists from Hollywood studios to come in and listen to the recordings and then sent them back to their workshops to turn out sketches of their conceptions of the character. Bergen bought three or four sketches at twenty dollars apiece from each artist, juggled them around a bit, and finally arrived at a sort of composite that seemed to be just right. A plaster model was made and then the final and most difficult job—the carving—was entrusted to a man who had a war job as a pattern-maker

at Douglas Aircraft. A machinist turned out the working mouth parts. Studio experts applied the coloring and clothing.

The dummy was not quite done when Bergen came to New York in mid-summer, 1944, but it arrived by air express a few days later. He got his first look at the completed job when he took the dummy out of its special case in his Waldorf suite. He looked at it with growing appreciation for a minute and then breathed:

"Isn't she a love?"

She was. Effie is forty inches tall and has a thirteen-inch bust. Her chin recedes slightly and her prominent nose tilts upward. She has somewhat the appearance of Sneezy of Walt Disney's *Seven Dwarfs*. Her eyes bug with brightness and her mouth is in a perpetual upsweep. She wears her dark hair in a bun.

In her original getup she wore a black flowerpot hat; an old-style, orchid-colored shirtwaist; a long black skirt; tan shoes topped by gray spats; red, white, and blue striped hose; and pince-nez. The very afternoon he received her, Bergen went shopping in jewelry stores and came back triumphantly with one of those old-fashioned ladies' watches that pin on the shirtwaist.

At the time Effie was finished she didn't have a name. Bergen fans who knew about her impending arrival had been deluging him with suggestions for weeks, and several thousand of these were received before it was decided to call her Effie Klinker. No one suggested this complete name, but there had been several Effie and several Klinker suggestions in other combinations. War bond prizes were sent to all who had suggested either name. If anyone ever kicks about unauthorized use of the name, Bergen can always point out that he got the okay from one of his writers whose name is Klinker. There is a resident of Boston who has been writing Bergen letters for years, threatening dire consequences if he does not forthwith alter the name of Charlie McCarthy. It seems that his wife objects to it. She was a McCarthy and she has an uncle named Charlie.

The Bergen thought processes that go into making a "human being" out of a block of wood are best demonstrated by some of his thinking-out-loud about Effie:

"Effie is a bachelor girl who is pushing forty, and, just between us, I think she's made it. She is a small-town woman, probably from New England. Essentially she is a good woman, very understanding and very busy. She *will* gossip a bit, of course. Effie is a member of women's clubs and she sews, tats, quilts, and cooks. She is a church worker, but she is not a bluenose. I imagine that from time to time she will fancy a bit of port. Above all else she has good sense and humor. She reads the editorials and the book reviews.

"Effie is not rich, but she does not have to worry about money. A little income. I believe there was that well-to-do bachelor uncle who left his money to the girl in the family who never married. That would be Effie. She has nothing against marriage, understand; she is not a congenital old maid. It's just that she's never yet met the man who quite meets her specifications. But she hasn't given up looking. As a matter of fact, on that first plane trip of hers to the East she warmed up considerably to the pilot. She found out later that he was married.

"There can be no question of any romance between Effie and Charlie or Mortimer. She is much too old for them. As a matter of fact, I expect Charlie will not miss the chance to kid Bergen about her a bit—Bergen's about the right age and available."

However, early in 1945, Bergen, who had never married, became engaged. He is just slightly above middle height, has a good Scandinavian face and coloring, including blond hair that has been engaged in a losing rearguard action for a decade. He is as mild-spoken a man as you'll meet and a walking definition of the word "pleasant." In private conversation he is a spinner of gentle, amusing yarns.

Naturally, he is a sentimentalist. On that New York trip in the summer of 1944, one of the first things he wanted to do was visit the Rainbow Room, not only because it was the place he really "started," but also because he just naturally loved the atmosphere of the place. The room has not been open as a supper club since the United States got into the war, but the layout is the same and it is used occasionally for large private parties. Bergen went up to the

room and just sat around for a while, not saying much. The memories were still there, even if the spirit had gone for the duration.

As a writer, Bergen is a painstaking workman. He toils week-long on each radio script. He has "writer" assistants who are primarily gag-men, but he is not beholden to them as much as are some radio comedians. Once a script is prepared, he constantly makes revisions, seeking just the right word here, the proper inflection there. While he seems to be a careless, even diffident person in the broadcasting studio, he is far from that. His think-box is working overtime, and privately he worries about whether things are going to be all right. He sleeps lightly, and if he wakes with a good idea he will get up in the middle of the night to work on a script.

Charlie, of course, sleeps like a log.

BERGEN AND McCARTHY . . . *On the Air*

CHARLIE (*Humming*).

BERGEN: Charlie?

CHARLIE: Bergen, you frightened me. I didn't know you were there. Don't ever sneak up on me like that again.

BERGEN: I'm sorry.

CHARLIE: Lately I'm just a bundle of nerves.

BERGEN: What brought all this on, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Oh, it's unquestionably over-work, Mr. Bergen. My poor little brain is always ticking, ticking, ticking. School work and home work, tests and examinations. Oh, I tell you, it's driving me mad.

BERGEN: Well, Charlie, I'm sorry, but they say hard work never killed anyone.

CHARLIE: There's no sense in taking any chances.

BERGEN: No, no.

CHARLIE: Anyway, my little brain just can't take it, that's all—it's muscle-bound or something.

BERGEN: What brought this on?

CHARLIE: Well, you see, I've got a physiology test tomorrow.

BERGEN: Oh, you have?

CHARLIE: Yes, it's all about the brain and the nervous system.

BERGEN: Suppose you tell me what you know about your brain? Where is it?

CHARLIE: Well, my brain is bounded on the north by hair . . .

BERGEN: Yes.

CHARLIE: On the east and west by ears . . .

BERGEN: Yes.

CHARLIE: And on the south by me.

BERGEN: Yes, that's right. Well, if you're really interested, Charlie, in passing this test, I have a book that you should read.

CHARLIE: Yes?

BERGEN: It's called "The Frontal Convulsions of the Cerebral Cortex."

CHARLIE: Yes, yes.

BERGEN: Would you care to read it?

CHARLIE: I don't think so. I think I'll wait until the picture comes out.

BERGEN: Oh, I see. Well, I'll be glad to help you, Charlie. In fact, it will give me great pleasure to explain it to you.

CHARLIE: Yeah, as long as one of us enjoys it, it's all right.

BERGEN: Now let's take the divisions of the brain.

CHARLIE: Let's do. I think it will be amusing.

BERGEN: You won't mind if I use some Latin terms?

CHARLIE: Do, do. I've read up on this stuff, myself. I lean toward medicine. As a matter of fact, I talk to doctors by the hour. I do.

BERGEN: Very well. Now, the brain is divided into three parts, the cerebrum, the cerebellum and the medulla oblongata.

CHARLIE: What?

BERGEN: That's the way it goes. Now what are they?

CHARLIE: What?

BERGEN: I said, what are they?

CHARLIE: You just said them.

BERGEN: I want you to tell me what I said.

CHARLIE: Oh, weren't you listening?

BERGEN: I repeat—they are the cere-

brum, the cerebellum and the medulla oblongata.

CHARLIE: That's right.

BERGEN: Now what are they?

CHARLIE: You did it again, didn't you?

BERGEN: Give them to me.

CHARLIE: The cereal, the silly-belly and the oblong alligator.

BERGEN: Not at all, not at all.

CHARLIE: Am I warm?

BERGEN: No. They're Latin words.

CHARLIE: Well, make it a Latin alligator.

BERGEN: I thought you had read books on this subject?

CHARLIE: I didn't say that I read all the books on the subject.

BERGEN: How many did you read?

CHARLIE: I read one. It wasn't a very fat book. To tell the truth, it was just a pamphlet.

BERGEN: Was it Hefflinger's "Treatise on Psychoneurology"?

CHARLIE: I don't think it was. I don't think it was Hefflinger's. I don't think it was the other one either.

BERGEN: What pamphlet was it?

CHARLIE: If you must know, it was the back of an iodine bottle.

BERGEN: Just as I thought. You know nothing whatsoever about the subject.

CHARLIE: Yes. But continue, Professor.

BERGEN: Let's take the Latin word "cerebellum"—

CHARLIE: Take it, Professor, take it.

BERGEN: And break it down.

CHARLIE: Let's pull the legs off first.

BERGEN: Now, first of all, just what does "cere" mean to you?

CHARLIE: Oh, nothing, really, she's lovable. More like a sister that I hate.

BERGEN: Now, what about "bellum"?

CHARLIE: Well, she came in with Sarah.

BERGEN: Well, I can see, Charlie, that I'll have to give you a simple illustration of how the brain works.

CHARLIE: Yes, sir, and you've got the brain that can do it.

BERGEN: I say to myself—

CHARLIE: Oh, do you?

BERGEN: I want to move my left arm—see. And it moves.

CHARLIE: By golly, it did, didn't it! Oh, you're so clever. Do you tie your own shoelaces, too?

BERGEN: Now, that was an example of a voluntary action. Now I'll give you an example of an involuntary action. Suppose you put your hand on a hot stove.

CHARLIE: Oh, no, you don't. Take your hands off me. Riff raff!

BERGEN: Well, we'll change it. Suppose I put *my* hand on a hot stove.

CHARLIE: That I like.

BERGEN: I'll put it another way.

CHARLIE: Put it on the stove.

BERGEN: You're standing on a railroad track.

CHARLIE: Oh, it's me again.

BERGEN: And a train comes along. Now, what do you do?

CHARLIE: I get off the track.

BERGEN: No, not yet, you don't.

CHARLIE: Oh, so that's your trick. You're going to tie me to the track. Save me. Help! Murder!

Mortimer Snerd

JANE POWELL: Oh, Mr. Bergen, you know I feel so sorry for Charlie having all that trouble with his school work.

BERGEN: Yes, he is having trouble—but I'm afraid he exaggerates just a little bit. I bet you like school, don't you, Jane?

JANE: Well, it's all right, but I'll be glad when I don't have to go any more.

BERGEN: Well, you'll have to go until you're sixteen—so I'm afraid you have two more years ahead, at least.

MORTIMER (*sings*): "I didn't sleep a wink last night." Hello, Mr. Bergen.

BERGEN: Hello, Mortimer. So you didn't sleep a wink last night?

MORTIMER: Nope, didn't sleep a wink. I had trouble with the mattress.

BERGEN: Oh, you had trouble with your mattress?

MORTIMER: Yup, that's right.

BERGEN: Was it lumpy?

MORTIMER: Nope, nope, it wasn't that. Ask me what was wrong with my mattress. That's the joke, see, and I got a funny answer.

BERGEN: I'll ask you. What was wrong with your mattress?

MORTIMER: The tick-ling kept me awake. That's pretty good.

JANE: Anyway, Morty, I'm glad to hear you singing on this bright spring day.

MORTIMER: Yup, spring is really sprung, ain't it? I got the spring fever, I think that's what I got.

BERGEN: Don't you know what to do for spring fever?

MORTIMER: Well, sure, I just relax and enjoy it.

JANE: Oh, you're so cute.

MORTIMER: Yup.

JANE: You know, I just love spring. Everything is turning green and the flowers are all in bloom. Morty, what does spring mean to you?

MORTIMER: Spring? Well, spring means I can take my long underwear off.

BERGEN: No, no, certainly not!

MORTIMER: Leave 'em on?

JANE: Oh, Mortimer, don't you have any romance in your soul?

BERGEN: Mortimer, how can you be so stupid?

MORTIMER: It's clean living that did it.

BERGEN: Well, would it be asking too much of you to keep quiet while Jane Powell sings "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"?

MORTIMER: What—from here!

BERGEN: No, no.

MORTIMER: Why doesn't she sing over the radio?

BERGEN: That's enough!

McCarthy

GOODWIN: Say, Edgar, what about that golf tournament that you and W. C. Fields were supposed to play off yesterday? Who won?

BERGEN: We didn't get very far, Bill.

GOODWIN: You didn't, Edgar? What was the matter?

BERGEN: Well, I should have known better than to let Charlie caddy for us, of course.

GOODWIN: Do you mean there was trouble?

BERGEN: Well, I'll tell you what happened, Bill. Charlie and I got there first—it was a beautiful morning—it was a great day for golf. . . .

* * *

CHARLIE: Did we have to get out here so early, Bergen? It's awful cold this time of day. You know, I just bet you anything Mr. Fields doesn't even show up.

BERGEN: Oh, he promised to be here at six-thirty.

FIELDS (*singing*): "Give me my books and my bottle . . ."

CHARLIE: Here comes W. C.! You're a walking ad for black coffee, Bill. Hello, Mr. Fields, hello.

FIELDS: Hello, my little chum. I was thinking of you only yesterday.

CHARLIE: No! You were!

FIELDS: Yes. I was cleaning out the woodshed at the time. Reminded me of you.

CHARLIE: Mr. Fields, is that your nose or a new kind of flame thrower?

FIELDS: Very funny, Charles, very funny. What's this kid doing around here anyway, Edgar?

CHARLIE: Well, I'm going to be your caddy, Mr. Fields, and I'm going to keep score, too.

FIELDS: Oh—oh!

CHARLIE: He suspects.

BERGEN: Would you rather I kept score, Bill?

FIELDS: To be perfectly frank with you, Edgar, I've never trusted either one of you.

CHARLIE: What do you mean by that crack? I want you to know that Bergen is just as honest as you are, you crook, you.

FIELDS: That tips off the whole thing. You'd better come out of the sun, Charles, before you get unglued.

CHARLIE: Do you mind if I stand in the shade of your nose?

BERGEN: Let's not start that now, fellows, please. I'm sure Charlie will be a fair scorekeeper for both of us.

FIELDS: Tell me, Charles, if I take three drives and three putts, what's my score?

CHARLIE: Let's see—three and three? That's four, Mr. Fields, four.

FIELDS: Oh, very good, very good, Charles. How do you arrive at four?

CHARLIE: Well, I'll tell you. You see, when you were putting, a quarter fell out of your pocket, you see.

FIELDS: Oh, yes, yes. Well, that sounds like a workable arrangement.

BERGEN: Oh, isn't this a lovely day, Bill? Lovely. You know, the air is so intoxicating.

FIELDS: Intoxicating, is it, eh? Stand back and let me take a deep breath.

BERGEN: Now I want you to be quiet, Charlie. Mr. Fields is going to tee off.

CHARLIE: Oh, yes, yes.

FIELDS: Yes, quiet please. I shall now take my usual stance.

CHARLIE: I wouldn't do that. The ground is a little too wet.

FIELDS: Quiet, you termite's flophouse.

BERGEN: Now, Charlie, I want you to keep quiet. He's getting ready to drive.

CHARLIE: Oh, yes, yes, I'm sorry.

BERGEN: If you don't mind a suggestion, Bill, you're not holding your club right. Bend your elbow a little more.

CHARLIE: Pssh! That's pretty good—telling Fields how to bend his elbow!

That's like carrying coals to Newcastle.

FIELDS: Charles, my little pal?

CHARLIE: Yes, Mr. Fields?

FIELDS: Do you know the meaning of *rigor mortis*?

CHARLIE: No, sir.

FIELDS: Well, you will in a minute.

BERGEN: Now let's try and avoid that sort of thing, and Charlie, I want you to stop it. You have Mr. Fields all unstrung.

FIELDS: Somebody get me a sedative—with an olive in it.

NOBLE: Pardon me, gentlemen, but could I play through?

BERGEN: Well, we'd rather you didn't. You see, we'll be getting along in a minute now.

NOBLE: Oh, I'm sorry, but there's no harm in asking.

FIELDS: I wouldn't be so sure.

BERGEN: All right, Bill. Hadn't we better get on with the game?

FIELDS: Of course, Edgar, half a tick. Did I ever tell you of the time I was caddy master at the Bunkferheiden Country Club?

BERGEN: No!

CHARLIE: Bunkferheiden. I didn't know he could say it.

FIELDS: It was a tough one to say, too. It was at the top of Mount Jungfrau in Switzerland.

BERGEN: All right, Bill. Now there are people waiting to play through.

FIELDS: Oh, I have lots of time left, Edgar. I hit a ball nine and three quarter miles. It rolled into an open manhole in front of Mr. Swobenthalica's rathskeller.

BERGEN: I don't believe I've heard of the place. I don't know where it is.

FIELDS: It's but a stone's throw from Folfinger J. Undercuffler's.

BERGEN: Well, I don't know where that is, either.

FIELDS: Oh, you don't get around much, do you?

NOBLE: I say, old chaps, would you mind awfully?

CHARLIE: Yes, we would.

NOBLE: Oh! Sorry.

FIELDS: By the way, caddy, what's the score? How do I stand?

CHARLIE: I often wonder.

BERGEN: But there is no score, Bill.

We haven't started playing yet.

FIELDS: Oh, so we haven't. Caddy, you'd better give me my ball out of my golf bag.

CHARLIE: Is it in this compartment, sir?

FIELDS: No. That's where I keep my olives.

CHARLIE: You know, this is the first golf bag I ever saw with a faucet on it. What's in there?

FIELDS: Oh, a little snake-bite remedy.

GOODWIN: Excuse me, gentlemen, but I'm the President of the Greens Committee.

CHARLIE: I'll take spinach.

BERGEN: Just what do you want?

GOODWIN: Well, I'm afraid you're being a little too turf on the tough. . . I mean too rough on the truff. I don't know what I mean.

FIELDS: What's the matter with that guy? Has he got D.T.'s?

GOODWIN: You see before you the shattered wreck of a man—an unhappy creature who has ceased to know the joys of human existence.

FIELDS: Oh! A teetotaler, eh?

GOODWIN: Sir. I have no sympathy for a man who is intoxicated all the time.

FIELDS: You don't, eh?

BERGEN: You have no sympathy for him?

CHARLIE: A man who's intoxicated all the time doesn't need sympathy.

FIELDS: That was my line and I forgot it. It was a good one too.

CHARLIE: You don't know how I enjoyed taking it. (*To Goodwin.*) What are you so sad about?

GOODWIN: Six months ago my wife left me, and went back to her mother.

BERGEN: That's too bad, but why are you still crying?

GOODWIN: Tomorrow she's coming back—and bringing her mother with her.

BERGEN: Let's get on with the game, Bill. What do you say?

NOBLE: Oh, I say, chaps, could I please play through?

BERGEN: What are you in such a rush about?

NOBLE: Well, I really should get home—you see, my house is on fire.

FIELDS: There's nothing nicer than coming home to a warm house. Where was I?

BERGEN: You were teeing off.

FIELDS: Oh, yes, I was teeing off.

BERGEN: Now this time keep your eye on the ball.

CHARLIE: If you can get your eye to detour around your nose.

FIELDS: Tell me, Charles, is it true when you slide down a bannister, the bannister gets more splinters than you do?

CHARLIE: Why, you bugle-beak! Why don't you fill your nose with helium and rent it out for a barrage balloon?

FIELDS: Listen, you animated hitching-post, or I'll sic a beaver on you.

BERGEN: You'll do no such thing! You will not harm a hair on this boy's head.

FIELDS: That's not the end I'm going to work on.

CHARLIE: I'll clip you. . .

Effie Klinker

BERGEN: Oh, Bill, here's a note for you.

GOODWIN: Oh, oh! Another one, huh? You know, this is getting a little monotonous, Ed.

BERGEN: Who's it from?

GOODWIN: As if you didn't know—it's from that character you call Aunt Effie.

BERGEN: Oh, yes.

GOODWIN: Listen to this:

Tea for two
And me for you
And you for me
Or else no tea.

BERGEN: Well, that's nothing, Bill. Effie Klinker likes everybody. You know, she's the motherly type. She's no crazier over you than she is over the next fellow.

GOODWIN: Well, why doesn't she bother him for a while?

BERGEN: Maybe she has. Oh, Ray!

NOBLE: Yes, Edgar?

BERGEN: Have you received anything from Aunt Effie?

NOBLE: Well, as a matter of fact, I did. She baked me a nice cake. It was rather flirtatious, of course.

BERGEN: How's that, Ray?

NOBLE: Well, you see, she'd written her telephone number in frosting.

EFFIE: Oh, Edgar! Edgar!

GOODWIN: Well, Jiggers, fellows, it's Aunt Effie Klinker!

EFFIE: Oh, dear. Hello, Eddie! Hello, Billy boy! and Ravié Wavie—

BERGEN: And look at all the soldiers—

EFFIE: Oh, isn't that wonderful! Oh, heavens to skimmed milk!

BERGEN: Yes, yes, there's hundreds of them out there.

EFFIE: Oh, this is Shangri La.

BERGEN: Yes, yes, isn't it? Now, don't tell me that you're that way about servicemen?

EFFIE: What other way is there! Mmmmmmm. I never saw so many men in one lump. Bust my gussit.

BERGEN: Well, I'm not worried about you here, Effie, because all these boys are perfect gentlemen. What's this about a tea you're giving?

EFFIE: That's right.

BERGEN: Effie, why are you holding this party?

EFFIE: Pardon?

BERGEN: I say, why are you holding this party?

EFFIE: Well, I may get some party to hold me. Whoops, I'm so impulsive!

BERGEN: Look, Aunt Effie, don't you think it's time you stopped being so frivolous and got married? After all, you're not getting any younger.

EFFIE: No, no, but I'm getting smarter.

GOODWIN: Say, Effie, I know your party doesn't start till seven, but with all the crowd maybe if I came at six I might hold your hand for a while. [*Effie cackles.*]

GOODWIN: Or if I got there at five I might even steal a kiss.

EFFIE: Why don't you come in the morning?

McCarthy

CHARLIE: Oh, what a wonderful day—wonderful. Only I wish I hadn't eaten those last three pieces of pie.

BERGEN: Charlie! You didn't eat three pieces of pie!

CHARLIE: Yeah, and I mixed 'em too. If I had only stayed with the pumpkin, I would have been all right.

BERGEN: Well, I wasn't at all proud of your table manners; you sailed into that turkey like you were mad at it.

CHARLIE: Well, I was hungry.

BERGEN: That's a fine way to act. The turkey has been the symbol of Thanksgiving ever since the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock.

CHARLIE: No wonder it was so tough.

BERGEN: Well, Charlie, Thanksgiving means more than just eating a big dinner.

CHARLIE: Yeah, it means turkey hash all week.

BERGEN: The first Thanksgiving dinner happened many, many years ago—when the white settlers in America invited the Indians to join them at dinner.

CHARLIE: Did they pool their ration points?

BERGEN: Of course not.

CHARLIE: Weren't they afraid of the Indians?

BERGEN: No. Many of the Indians were very kind to them. They brought them food and helped them. Why, some of the Indians even risked their lives for the white settlers. Take for example, Pocahontas.

CHARLIE: Poka-who-kus?

BERGEN: No.

CHARLEY: Hokey-pokey—hocus-pocus?

BERGEN: Pocahontas. Don't tell me you never heard the story of Pocahontas?

CHARLIE: No, I haven't.

BERGEN: Aren't you interested in Indian tales?

CHARLIE: I didn't know they had any.

BERGEN: You never heard the story of Pocahontas? Well, that would be a very interesting story to tell. Let's go back to Virginia in 1620.

CHARLIE: I haven't a thing packed.

BERGEN: That doesn't matter. I'll tell you the story. Once upon a time. . .

CHARLIE: Would you care to be more definite?

BERGEN: What do you mean?

CHARLIE: Was that before or after long, long ago?

BERGEN: Well, I don't know—

CHARLIE: Let's say it's a quarter of many, many years ago.

BERGEN: Anyway, Pocahontas lived in a wild country with broad, winding rivers and rolling hills.

CHARLIE: Rolling hills?

BERGEN: Certainly. It was Virginia.

CHARLIE: I thought it was Pocahontas.

BERGEN: It is.

CHARLIE: Well, why don't you get your facts straight before you try to tell it?

BERGEN: Never mind that.

CHARLIE: Would you like to go home and read it again?

BERGEN: That'll be enough of that. Pocahontas was the daughter of an Indian chief, Powhatan: He was more than just an ordinary chief.

CHARLIE: He was a super-chief?

BERGEN: You might call him that. One day some of the Indians captured a

white man in the forest and brought him to the village, bound and tied.

CHARLIE: Funny name for a village. Is that anywhere near Flotsam and Jetsam?

BERGEN: The man told the Indians his name was John Smith.

CHARLIE: Smith? The name has a familiar ring.

BERGEN: Why, Charlie, Captain John Smith was immortal.

CHARLIE: Who isn't—once in a while?

BERGEN: No, what I mean is he went down in history.

CHARLIE: As a matter of fact, I didn't do so well myself.

BERGEN: They were undecided what to do with their prisoner, so a powwow was called by the Big Chief. Do you remember his name?

CHARLIE: Chief Sitting-Pretty-with-Three-Aces?

BERGEN: No. no.

CHARLIE: Chief Sitting-Up-And-Taking-Light-Nourishment?

BERGEN: His name was Chief Powhatan, and he said, "What shall we do with this paleface?" Do you know why they called Captain John Smith "paleface"?

CHARLIE: 'Cause he had a face like a pail?

BERGEN: Of course not. Anyway they decided to kill the brave white man.

CHARLIE: Well, scalp me clean and call me Bergen.

BERGEN: He lay on the ground, bound hand and foot, and two Indians stood over him with their tomahawks raised, ready to kill him.

CHARLIE: Gee!

BERGEN: What would you have done if you had been in Captain Smith's place—bound hand and foot on the ground?

CHARLIE: You don't have much choice. I would have gotten a cheap lawyer. Where was Hokey-pokey all this time?

BERGEN: Pocahontas was sitting under a tree, weaving.

CHARLIE: Oh, she had a snootful, eh?

BERGEN: No, but when she saw what they were about to do, she *rushed* up to Captain Smith, threw her arms around him—

CHARLIE: What a cheap display of emotion.

BERGEN: . . . Looked up at the men with the tomahawks and said—

CHARLEY: Lay that hatchet down, Babe.

BERGEN: The Indians were so impressed by this brave deed that they turned Captain John Smith loose. And that is the story of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas. What do you think of it?

CHARLIE: I say, give it back to the Indians!

The Folks from Peoria!

**FIBBER MCGEE
AND
MOLLY**

Mention of Peoria, Illinois, always used to be good for a laugh in the old vaudeville days. The name sounded sort of funny and it figured in a song Eddie Foy used to sing about the "ghost never walking in Peoria." In short, it wasn't a good show town and performers made it a target for their humor up and down the land. No one laughs about Peoria any more, but it is still important in show business. Almost every radio fan knows that Fibber McGee and Molly come from there.

Fibber McGee and Molly, in real life James Edward and Marian Jordan, came to radio success the hard way. As show folk, they were strictly small-timers. After they broke into radio, they stayed there; but it was ten years before they mounted the crest that has taken them to the very top of the popularity heap and kept them there.

Their real success dates from the time they joined forces with a writer named Don Quinn. He's still with them. There is no other combination in radio quite like this one that has made the doings at 79 Wistful Vista so important to millions of listeners who never miss a 9:30 P.M. NBC network broadcast on Tuesday nights.

Quinn has the following to say of the program's success:

"The reason for the success of the Fibber McGee and Molly show—and I can call it successful because of the Hooper and Crossley surveys—is that everyone on it co-operates. There is no bickering. There are no jealousies. The sponsor gives us an almost free hand, even in the writing of the comedy commercial. Once in a while a word is changed.

"We aim to please both the gardener and the professor. We burlesque people, but they are the people who live right next door to you. Quite some time ago we threw out the Greek and Chinese characters. We do not go in for sarcasm or meanness."

Another reason for the success of the program may be in the answer Quinn makes when asked his opinion of the often-heard statement that the radio audience has a twelve-year-old mentality.

"I never did like or believe that statement," he says, and writes accordingly.

In short, the Jordans, like other popular radio performers, play for character, and natural character at that. They are people you know and know well. And they have the warm personalities, as transmitted through their voices, to make what they are doing believable. This ability is just about as important as getting the right script, and it is not something they learned. It's just part of their background.

Jim Jordan was born on a farm five miles from Peoria. He had a great love for music and developed into a singer. Mrs. Jordan, *nee* Driscoll, was born in Peoria and also was something of a singer. They met at choir practice in Peoria's St. John's Church when he was seventeen and she was a year younger, and they claim it was a case of love at first sight.

Both studied music. After graduating from high school, Jim clerked in a wholesale drug house for eight dollars a week and courted Marian, who was slightly more affluent as a piano teacher with a couple of dozen pupils. She was crazy about things theatrical despite her parents' objections, which extended to Jordan himself when he secured an audition with a quartet in Chicago in September, 1917, and became the top tenor in a vaudeville act known as "A Night with the Poets." But Jim hadn't been brought up on the realities of show business, and the routine of one-night stands—overnight train rides, poor hotel rooms, unpalatable food, dirty dressing rooms—offended his comfortable Peoria habits. Besides, Marian was in Peoria. In May, 1918, he returned home and tried to enlist, but the Army was no longer taking volunteers and he had to await

his draft call. He got a job as a mailman meanwhile and asked Marian to marry him.

They were married August 31, 1918. Five days later he was on a troop train bound for Camp Forrest, Georgia. Six weeks later the Peoria private was in France where he promptly became seriously ill of influenza and spent Armistice Day flat on his back. When he recovered, he was assigned to entertainment duty and thus got back in touch with show business. He put on shows throughout France for the troops waiting to go home. Jim himself got back to Peoria July 9, 1919, where Marian had been earning a living by teaching piano.

Jim had a number of so-called jobs in the next year or so. He worked in a machine shop and didn't like it. He sold washing machines and vacuum cleaners until he discovered he wasn't going to get his commissions. For a time he was a day laborer, and then he got a job as an insurance salesman. A daughter, Kathryn, was born to the Jordans and they bought a four-room cottage.

The couple still kept up their music, singing and playing for club affairs from time to time. One of their performances was caught by Ralph Miller, advance man for a theatrical troupe, and he convinced them that they belonged in show business. They needed a thousand dollars for the necessary clothes, props, and traveling expenses to get started; they got it by selling their automobile, borrowing five hundred dollars from Jim's Aunt Kate, and cashing in their home. They played sixteen successful weeks in the so-called opera houses and musty halls of tank towns. Returning to Peoria to get Kathryn, who had been left with her paternal grandparents, they again embarked on a long vaudeville tour that kept them busy until two months before the birth of their son, James, Jr., in the summer of 1923.

Mrs. Jordan went to Peoria for the event, while Jim went to Chicago to line up vaudeville bookings for himself. He lived off his capital for six months without getting anything but an occasional café or club date, usually a one-night affair. It seemed that if Jim wanted to play vaudeville he'd have to do it with his wife; so the

pair of them went out again. This time, however, they didn't click. They went broke in Lincoln, Illinois, fifty miles from home.

Back in Peoria, Jim clerked in a drygoods store for ten dollars a week for a year. To pad this meager income, the two occasionally sang at clubs. The old longing for show business cropped up again when they got fifty dollars for an engagement in Kewanee, Illinois; so Jim, convinced he'd never get anywhere in Peoria, went to Chicago and formed a singing team with Egbert Van Alstyne. Marian and the children remained in Peoria.

It was in 1925 that radio entered their lives. While they were visiting Jim's brother in the Chicago suburb of Rogers Park, they heard a broadcast by some singers.

"We could do a better job of singing than anyone on that program," Jim commented.

His brother bet him ten dollars that they couldn't. Jordan took the dare and he and Marian left immediately for Station WJBO to seek an audition. Those were the free and easy radio days. They got the audition at once and were signed immediately for one of the first sponsored programs in the Middle West.

That may sound big, but it wasn't. They broadcast only once a week and the fee was ten dollars. The program lasted five months and they ran into debt doing it, but this time Jordan was determined to stick to show business. They returned to vaudeville for a time, then they went back to radio on Station WENR, doing three shows a week for sixty dollars. That was in 1927. From then on, things began to look up, albeit slowly at first.

In 1931 McGee became acquainted with Don Quinn, a discouraged cartoonist who had an idea that he could write for radio. He wrote a series entitled "Smackout," and the Jordans played them as a five-times-a-week serial over NBC. Jordan had the role of a garrulous grocery-store proprietor who was just "smackout" of everything and who delighted to tell tall yarns. Popular enough in their own bailiwick, the Jordans and Quinn plugged along for four years before they hit the jack pot.

John J. Louis, an advertising firm executive, had become im-

pressed with the Jordans' work, and in 1935, when the Johnson's Wax people were looking for a new program for a network spot, the Jordans and Quinn got the job. It was for this program that the characters Fibber McGee and Molly were created. Fibber was a colossal liar. Now this sort of character is all right for a short haul, but difficult to keep going. It not only becomes hard to create new whoppers all the time, but it also palls on listeners after a while. When Quinn gradually changed Fibber's character to just the ordinary little man with big talk and ideas, the program really hit its stride and there's been nothing to complain about since.

The Jordans moved to California in 1938 because of Marian's ill health—in fact, her condition kept the program off the air for the 1938–39 season. That they came back not only without losing any ground, but also at a rapidly accelerating pace that took them to Number One spot in the popularity polls in 1941, is testimony enough of the durability of the program.

Not only does Marian play Molly, whose job it is to keep Fibber under as much control as possible, but she is also the voice for Teeny, the exasperating neighbor's child who is always getting in Fibber's hair, and for Mrs. Wearybottom, who speaks in a monotone without pausing for punctuation.

The program has introduced characters almost as loved as the McGees themselves. Among these have been Mrs. Uppington, who is always one-up on Fibber in repartee; Wallace Wimple, the hen-pecked; Myrt, the telephone operator who is only a voice on the program, and Uncle Dennis, a tippling skeleton in Molly's family closet.

Quinn and the players usually get together Friday afternoons to discuss the next show. On Saturday he plays around with whatever idea is decided upon and then on Sunday really gets down to writing, usually from 9 P.M. through the night until dawn. The cast has first reading Monday, and it had better sound good to Quinn because if he doesn't like what he's written he'll toss the whole thing in the wastebasket and sit up all Monday night fashioning a new script.

"I will not willingly sell a bad show," he says.

The program is unique among the big ones, which do not feature an author-actor, in that Quinn is the only writer. But Mrs. Quinn, who used to be a reporter on the Chicago *Daily News*, sits up with him in his all-night writing sessions to offer suggestions and, above all, to correct his copy. Quinn claims he cannot write a grammatical sentence.

Nancy Quinn, aged six, is a self-appointed critic of the program. Recently, when her father returned home, she advised him that she had been displeased with that evening's show because of the way Fibber behaved.

"He wasn't polite," she explained. "He interrupted Mrs. Upington all the time."

The Jordans live now on a modest ranch near Encino, California, a few miles outside of Hollywood. (They have made several films and are in increasing demand.) Jordan served two terms as president of the Encino Chamber of Commerce. He owns a thousand acres of grazing land near Bakersfield, California, where he raises blooded Polled Angus cattle. He also owns a firm that makes sand-blasting machinery, and a bottling plant.

The clerking days and one-night stands are over, but the simplicity of the Jordans is not. Like Fibber McGee and Molly, they remain "just people."

FIBBER McGEE AND MOLLY . . . *On the Air*

FIBBER: Gotta straighten out that closet one of these days, Molly. I don't see that electric cord any place. I must have put it someplace where—Oh my gosh!

MOLLY: Now what?

FIBBER: Look! My old mandolin—remember?

MOLLY: Well, what are you getting so misty eyed about it now for? It falls out of the closet every time you open it.

FIBBER: It always falls outa the closet but this is the first time the case has busted open. My gosh—my old mandolin! (*Plucks the strings.*) Needs a little tuning, I guess.

MOLLY: A little tuning! That's about as melodious as a slate pencil!

FIBBER: I sure used to be a wiz on this thing. Remember how we used to go canoeing on the Illinois River and I used to serenade you with my old mandolin?

MOLLY: I never knew whether you took up the mandolin because you loved music or hated paddling.

FIBBER: And remember the time you dropped the paddle to applaud one of my songs and we had to paddle home with the mandolin?

MOLLY: I wasn't applauding. I was swatting mosquitoes.

FIBBER: Sounded like applauding. Ahhh, my old mandolin! Wonder what would be the best thing to polish it up with?

MOLLY: If you don't know that, dearie, you'd better really learn to play that thing, or take a course in scissors grinding.

FIBBER: Let's see now—how did "Redwing" go? Ohhhh—moon shines tonight (*strum*) on pretty Redwing—the breezes sighing—the night-shirts—the nightmares—the night—

MOLLY: Night *birds*.

FIBBER: Oh, yes, the nightbirds crying—
[*Door opens.*]

MOLLY: Oh, hello, Alice.

ALICE: Hello, Mrs. McGee. Creepers, Mr. McGee—what made that ping-pong paddle swell all up like that?

FIBBER: This, my dear girl, is not a ping-pong paddle. This is my old mandolin. I guess the love of good music is just something that's gotta be born into a person. They probably sneered at Rachmaninoff too, when he first took up the violin.

ALICE: They probably did. He played the piano.

FIBBER: Did I say Rachmaninoff? I meant Benny Goodman.

MOLLY: He plays the clarinet.

ALICE: But we know what you mean, Mr. McGee. Can you really play that mandolin?

FIBBER: Can I play it? I may be a little outa practice, Alice, but I can still dash off a snappy little arpeggio or two. Want me to sing something for you? Like maybe—"Pretty Redwing"?

ALICE: What's it from?

MOLLY: It's strictly from 1910, Peoria, and hunger, Alice.

FIBBER: Ohhhh, I dunno about that! Mark my words, it'll be popular again. I'll never forget the time I first learned to play "Pretty Red-

wing" all the way through. I was so happy I played it all day.

ALICE: How does it go, Mr. McGee?

FIBBER: Like this (*sings*.) Oh, the moon shines tonight on pretty Redwing. . . .

MOLLY: Wasn't that good, Alice? Did you get that Th-r-r-r-ummmm in the middle of it? And he's only using two hands.

FIBBER: I gotta brush up a bit, Alice. My gosh, I haven't seen my old mandolin for fifteen years.

ALICE: Is it a pretty difficult instrument?

MOLLY: To play or ignore?

FIBBER: It is pretty tough, Alice. It ain't like a Hawaiian steel guitar, where you can start any place and sneak up on a note.

[*Door opens and closes.*]

MOLLY: Well, heavenly days—Doctor Gamble.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Hello, Molly. Hello, Neanderthal.

FIBBER: Hyah, Arrowsmith. Kick your case of corn cures into a corner and compose your corpulent corpus on a convenient camp chair.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Thanks, McGee. Your hospitality is equalled only by your personal beauty. And the prosecution rests.

MOLLY: Had a lot of operations, Doctor? You look tired.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: My dear, I've had more people in stitches today than Bob Hope. But tell me, what's our one-string fiddler doing with the pot-bellied Stradivarius?

FIBBER: This, my ignorant bone-bender, is a mandolin. My old mandolin. Just found it again after all these years.

MOLLY: I just love mandolin music, don't you, Doctor?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: I used to, but my love soon ripened into disgust. If you really get good with that syncopating cigar box, McGee, and want to run away and join the gypsies, I'll be

glad to pierce your ears for earrings.

FIBBER: Doc, what you know about music, you could stand across the room and toss thru the eye of a needle. Listen to this— (*Plucks the strings*.) Is that a beautiful tone, or isn't it?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Frankly, sonny, it's brutal.

MOLLY: Well, he's a little out of practice, Doctor. Heavenly days, he hasn't touched the mandolin for fifteen or twenty years.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Let's count it among our blessings.

FIBBER: Oh, don't be so cynical, you narrow minded old muscle-meddler. Lemme play something for you.

MOLLY: What do you want him to play for you, Doctor?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Nine holes of golf, and don't hurry back.

FIBBER: He's just a hardshell, Molly. But I can break him into little, quivering pieces with some simple old folksong—one of those heart-warming melodies that are so close to the soul and spirit of our national entity. The natural rhythm of a new frontier, throbbing with the pulsing energy of a dynamic destiny.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: What's he talking about?

MOLLY: "Pretty Redwing." Play it for the Doctor, McGee.

FIBBER: Okay. You wanna hear "Pretty Redwing," Doc? Or rather I played something else?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: What else can you play?

MOLLY: "The Moon Shines Tonight."

DOCTOR GAMBLE: That's better. Play that, McGee.

[*Fibber plays.*]

DOCTOR GAMBLE: McGee, I don't like to be hypercritical, but I've heard prettier music than that from a beer truck running over a manhole cover.

FIBBER: Oh yeah? And when did you

become a music critic, you big fat epidemic chaser?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Why, you uncultured little faker, I've got more music in the first phalanx of my left pinkie than you have in your entire family tree!

FIBBER: Don't call me a phalanx, you soggy, sap-headed serum salesman! Any time I want any advice from you, I'll ask for it.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: If there wasn't a lady present, I'd give you some right now, you posturing little—don't threaten me with that mandolin!!

FIBBER: I'll bust it over you thick skull so hard . . .

MOLLY: McGee!

FIBBER: Eh?

MOLLY: Behave yourself. You too, Doctor. You're acting like children.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: I'm sorry. Certainly is a beautiful instrument you got there, McGee. Needs tuning, though.

FIBBER: It does? How do you know?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: I can hear it. Here, let me tune it for you.

FIBBER: Okay.

[*Doc tunes mandolin.*]

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Now, let's see how it sounds. (*Plays a fancy selection.*)

MOLLY: My word!

FIBBER: My gosh!

DOCTOR GAMBLE: My hat. Good day.

[*Door slams.*]

FIBBER: Ohhh, that burns me up—that really burns me up.

MOLLY: Well now, don't you feel badly, dearie. I'll bet Doctor Gamble studied a lot longer than you did. You just stay with it. You'll get it.

FIBBER: Well, I'm glad there's one person around here who ain't tryin' to show me up for a chump. Even if you could play this thing, you wouldn't do it.

MOLLY: I certainly won't.

FIBBER: Whaddye mean you *won't*?

MOLLY: I mean no matter how my

fingers itch for a mandolin again, I'll restrain myself.

FIBBER: You mean . . . you . . . you used to play one of these?

MOLLY: Only in high school, McGee, and then only simple little pieces like this—here—let me take it.

FIBBER: Okay.

[*Molly plays "Redwing" skillfully.*]

FIBBER: Oh, this is *really* ridiculous!

Another

Fibber McGee and Molly Script

FIBBER (*on phone*): Yes, yes, yes—I got that, Dinwiddie. Ten thousand red and twenty thousand white. How about green? Six thousand. Okay Dinwiddie. Yes, yes, yes—I'll shoot the order right through. What? Certainly they're pre-war quality! You start gettin' fussy, Dinwiddie, and we won't sell you any more stuff. Okay. Where's my order blanks?

MOLLY: In your hand.

FIBBER: Oh, yes—pencil—pencil—where's my pencil?

MOLLY: Behind your ear.

FIBBER: Which ear, *come, come*—this is my busy day. Which ear?

MOLLY: Your left ear, and don't get executive with me, dearie! I knew you when you thought a dotted line was a leopard.

FIBBER: Well, gee whizz, bein' Western representative for the Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation is no cinch! Hey, why don't that guy from the typewriter company show up?

MOLLY: He's waiting out in the hall now. Shall I bring him in?

FIBBER: Of course not! What kind of a business man would I be to see a guy the minute he arrives? Keep him waiting.

MOLLY: It always makes you angry to be kept waiting.

FIBBER: Okay, but look, I'm very busy today and I don't wanna be dist—

[*Telephone rings.*]

FIBBER: I'll get that.

MOLLY: That's very sweet of you, considering you've got the phone in your hand.

FIBBER: Western branch, Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation. McGee speakin'. Who? Oh, yes, Conway. What? Well, wait till I get one of my employees to look that up. (*Aside.*) Hey, Molly, look in the order file and see when the shipment went out to Conway, at Cleveland—Indiana.

MOLLY: Cleveland is in Ohio.

FIBBER: That must be where I made my mistake. Hello, Conway? Your order was re-routed through Indiana because of shipping difficulties. You'll get it tomorrow. Yes, yes, yes—seventy thousand red and twenty thousand green. Okay, Conway. (*Receiver click.*)

MOLLY: How about the typewriter man? Want to see him now, or shall I put him in the spare bedroom till Thursday?

FIBBER: How long have I kept him waiting? Hmmmm. Ten minutes. Well, that ain't very impressive, but bring him in.

MOLLY: Yes, Mr. McGee.

FIBBER: You don't have to courtsey every time you speak to me.

MOLLY: It's just a mark of respect and a tight girdle.

[*Door opens.*]

MAN: I'm from the Wistful Vista Type—

FIBBER: Just a minute, my man! Miss Driscoll, did that letter come through from Secretary Morgenthau? In answer to my wire?

MOLLY: Yes, sir. He said that just as soon as the time comes, he wants you to act in an advisory capacity.

FIBBER: What does he mean, "when the time comes"? What'd he say exactly?

MOLLY: Well, exactly, he said, "when I want your advice I'll ask for it."

FIBBER: Ahh, good old Henry!

MAN: I'm from the Wistful Vista Type—

[*Telephone rings.*]

FIBBER: Hold it a minute. Western Branch, Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation. Who? Long distance? Okay, connect me. Oh, hello there! How are you? Okay, glad to help you, bud. No, that's wrong. When you land, keep your flaps down, see? That kills your landing speed. Eh? Oh, not at all. Good luck!

MOLLY: Who was that?

FIBBER: Jimmie Doolittle. That's a funny thing, you get to be big business man and people want your advice about everything. Now let's see, oh yes, I gotta call the Snark-Offenback Company in St. Louis. They—

MAN: Look, mister, I'm from the Wistful Vista Typewriter and I brung you a typewriter.

MOLLY: Better take it, McGee. They're pretty hard to get.

FIBBER: Let's see it, bud. Set it on the desk here.

MAN: Okay.

FIBBER: Hmmmm— Seems to have all the letters on it. How about numbers? Hey, where's the figure one?

MAN: Uh—you uh—they always use the letter "L" for the figger one, mister.

MOLLY: Lower case "L," McGee.

FIBBER: Well, I don't want any typewriter that has to use a makeshift number like that! That's ridiculous. I wanna typewriter with *all* the numbers, from one to ten, exclusive.

MAN: They—uh—they don't make 'em, mister. They're all like this.

FIBBER: Well, I don't want it, see. You don't put anything like that over on me!

MAN: Well—uh—what'll I do with it, mister? Take it back?

MOLLY: Yes, I think that would—

FIBBER: It makes no never mind to me what you do with it. Throw it out the window. I don't care.

MAN: I don't—uh—care either. It ain't my typewriter.

[Glass crash. Door opens and closes.

FIBBER: Why, that impudent—stuff something in that broken window, please, Mrs. McGee. We got work to do here. I'll—

[Door opens.

ALICE: Hello, Mr. McGee. Hello, Mrs. McGee. Creepers, what's going on around here?

MOLLY: Hello, Alice. Well, Mr. McGee is now the Western representative for the Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation of New York.

FIBBER: Gettin' this whole territory sewed up, Alice.

ALICE: But what are you selling, Mr. McGee?

MOLLY: Why, the Ay-Jay-Bee Corp—

FIBBER: Ah, ah, ah— we can't tell, Alice. Gotta finish sewin' up the territory first. Hey, Alice, you write shorthand?

ALICE: Shorthand?

MOLLY: Yes, didn't you have Gregg in High School? Or Pittman?

ALICE: I didn't know any Pittman, but Helen Bonfield had Gregg and I had a fellow named Artie, which he was forward on the basketball team and backward at everything else, and—

FIBBER: No, no, no! Can you do secretarial stuff? Can you take dictation?

ALICE: Oh, yes. But not very fast. On account of I never know whether the "i" comes before the "e" or the "e" before the "i" in words like peanut butter.

MOLLY: You don't have to be expert, Alice. Since Mussolini fell on his face, McGee is the world's worst dictator!

FIBBER: Come, come, come!!! Never mind the idle gossip, girls. This is a

business office! Ready, Miss Darling?

ALICE: I'm in a cloud of eraser crumbs.

MOLLY: Who's this letter to, McGee?

FIBBER: It's very urgent. Been tryin' to get this out all week. Here we go, Alice. The address is Mr. Fred Nitney, Starved Rock, Illinois. "Dear Fred—I must say that I don't think going out again with our old vaudeville act will be feasible at this time because I am now exclusive representative in this territory for the Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation of New York, and besides I'd be a little slow at pickin' up our old dance routines."

ALICE: Is that all, Mr. McGee?

FIBBER: No. "So good-by for now, Fred, old man, and Happy New Year. Signed, Your old pal and partner, Fibber (Don't Sent Out Your Laundry) McGee." That's all, Alice.

ALICE: All right, Mr. McGee. Here you are.

FIBBER: Hey, I don't want this. I can't read shorthand.

ALICE: You can't? Can you, Mrs. McGee?

MOLLY: No, I can't, Alice. Can't you?

ALICE: Why, no. I learned to write it, but I never learned to read it.

FIBBER: As a private secretary, Alice, you'd be a little too private. A guy couldn't even read his own letters. But thanks very much, anyway.

ALICE: Oh, that's all right, Mr. McGee. I was glad to help. Good-by.

* * *

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Ahhhh, making paper airplanes, I see. I'm glad there's one man in town who has sense enough to loaf.

FIBBER: I'm not loafing!

MOLLY: He was just showing me how to make a paper airplane because I said he couldn't do it when he said

he didn't have time for that sort of thing, Doctor.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: I see. Now would anybody like to explain the explanation?

FIBBER: Look, Doc, I'm a very busy man today. I just been made Western rep of a very big concern.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: What's a rep? A Reprobate, a Republican or a Reprehensible Representative?

MOLLY: It means he's got this whole territory

FIBBER: Territory!

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Territory!

FIBBER: I got this whole district! For the Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation of New York.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Never heard of 'em. But if it'll help you any, you can reserve me a berth to San Francisco in some plane leaving next week.

MOLLY: Reserve you a berth in a plane?

FIBBER: What's that got to do with me?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: I don't know. I just thought anybody that would hire you as a representative must be a fly-by-night outfit. And I like to fly by night. It's not so bumpy.

FIBBER: I'll have you know, Doctor Gamble, that the Ay-Jay-Bee Corp. does more business per annum than any similar business in its field!

DOCTOR GAMBLE: And what is the field, dear boy?

MOLLY: They make those—

FIBBER: Ah, ah, ahhh!! Easy, Molly. Can't tell anybody for a while, Doc. Day or so anyway. I'm takin' this on trial, see, and until I get the territory sewed up, I'll—
[Telephone rings.]

FIBBER: Excuse me.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Not at all. And I won't pretend that I'm not listening.

FIBBER: Ay-Jay-Bee Corp. McGee speaking. Yes. Who? Zachary, Finston, Plumtree and Gerch? Yes, we

can give you twenty thousand red, fourteen thousand yellow, and nine thousand brown. How about black? Still got a stock? Okay, Plumtree. And don't expect our usual fancy wrappings, see? We're workin' with the government to conserve paper. Eh? Shortage of manpower to cut timber and extra demands for paper in the war. Well, it's as good as done, Plumtree! Good-by.

MOLLY: And what's as good as done for old Plumtree?

FIBBER: He says he wants to save paper, too. Says if we can send him some goods to sell, he can maybe take the cardboard out of his shoes.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: I admit to a burning curiosity, McGee. Just what can you be selling?

MOLLY: He won't tell, Doctor. He's very closemouthed when he wants to be.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Really? He's usually popping off like a Japanese light bulb.

FIBBER: Is that so! If you come in here to interrupt a busy man at his work—

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Busy man, my medulla oblongata! When I came in here you were busy making paper airplanes.

MOLLY: I explained that, Doctor.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Not to my satisfaction, my dear.

FIBBER: And who are you that we have to explain things to, you big epidemic chaser?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Don't take that tone to me, McGee.

MOLLY: Now boys—

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Because in the first place, you can't back yourself up, physically, and verbally I can spot you six million adjectives and still pin your ears back to your oddly-shaped cranium.

FIBBER: Why, you great big—

[*Telephone rings.*]

MOLLY: I'll get it, McGee. Western Office, Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation. Yes—who? Frisby, Cantwell, and Snagg? I'll take the order. Ten thousand red—

FIBBER: Ten thousand red.

MOLLY: Fifteen thousand white—

FIBBER: Fifteen thousand white.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: That's a low count. Must be anaemic.

MOLLY: Twelve thousand green. Is that all? Thank you. Got that, McGee?

FIBBER: I got it. Now lemme see—what was I saying?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Your last words were "Why you great big."

FIBBER: Eh? Oh yes. Why, you great big iodine peddler!

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Come on, McGee. Tell me what you're selling.

FIBBER: I can't tell you, Doc. Not till I get this torritary sewed up exclusive. Besides, don't you know there's a war on?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: What's that got to do with it?

FIBBER: I dunno. But that's gettin' to be the stock answer, so—

MOLLY: Look, McGee, can you take time off for a few minutes to help me? I want to defrost the refrigerator and you can help me take the things out.

FIBBER: Okay. Excuse us a minute, Doc.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Go right ahead, my boy. Mind if I use the phone?

MOLLY: Not at all, Doctor. No use letting it cool off.

[*Door slams.*]

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Hello, operator? Give me Wistful Vista 8976. Hello, Pete? Doc Gamble. Get this the first time. I don't want to repeat. Come to 79 Wistful Vista. Wear that phoney police badge. Man named McGee here. Make him tell you what he's

selling. What? No, no, no, but he's such a cocky little wisenheimer, I want to see him squirm. And look, you and I are strangers, so if he—
[*Door opens and closes.*]

DOCTOR GAMBLE: And if I were you, Mrs. Cladderhatch, I'd take a teaspoonful of citrate of parenthesis every two hours. And let me know if your eyebrows keep twitching. Don't mention it, Mrs. Cladderhatch. Good-by.

FIBBER: Who's Mrs. Cladderhatch, Doc?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: One of my patients. Fine woman. Mind if I wait here a few minutes, McGee? I'm expecting another call.

FIBBER: No, I don't care, Doc. Long's it don't interfere with the business of the Ay-Jay-Bee Corp. They always—

[*Door opens and closes.*]

MAN: Which one of you guys is McGee?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: This gentleman is Mr. McGee. I am Doctor Gamble.

FIBBER: Whatever you're selling, bud, I don't want any. This is a very busy day for me and—

MAN: What's your business, McGee?

FIBBER: Whatever it is, it's none of yours. Now go away and— (*Pause*) Oh. A cop, eh? What's wrong, officer?

MOLLY (*entering*): McGee, where did you put the— Oh, excuse me.

FIBBER: My wife, officer.

MOLLY: How do you do, I'm—officer! Who called the police?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: He just came in, Mrs. McGee. He wants to know what your husband is selling.

FIBBER: That's nobody's business but—whaddye wanna know for?

MAN: Been complaints. Tying up the telephones . . . suspected of running a boiler room.

MOLLY: What on earth is a boiler room?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: That's a high pressure outfit that does a phoney business over the telephone, Mrs. McGee. Of course in this case, there's no—

MAN: You stay out of this, Mister. Now look, McGee . . . we want to know about this. If it's on the up and up, okay, otherwise—

MOLLY: This is a perfectly legitimate business. My husband is the West-

ern representative of the Ay-Jay-Bee Corporation of New York.

FIBBER: Absolutely.

MAN: What are you selling?

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Does he *have* to tell, officer?

MAN: Certainly. Come, come, speak up, McGee. What are you selling?

FIBBER: Jelly beans.

DOCTOR GAMBLE: Jelly beans!! Oh, this is ridiculous! Come on, Pete!

Absentee Ownership!

**ED
GARDNER**

Archie is a New York mugg but a gennelmun. He is also a way of life and a radio formula that have put its creator in what passes for clover these tax-ridden days. Archie, to avoid further bush-beating-about, is Edward Francis Gardner. And Ed Gardner is "Duffy's Tavern"—one of the fresher ideas in radio.

In 1944 "Duffy's" started its fourth season on the air. Its roots are buried in Astoria, Long Island. It was in Astoria that Ed Gardner was born in a flat above a butcher shop on June 29, 1905, and it was there also that he worked as a piano player in an old-fashioned bar where there was sawdust on the floor and hearty, unpolished talk among the customers. These patrons were hard-working people unaccustomed to much leisure but knowing how to enjoy what they had in a convivial atmosphere.

It was largely from the memory of this place that Gardner created "Duffy's," where "the elite meet to eat," a make-believe bar where the owner never appears, but where Archie is always at hand to keep him informed by telephone of what is going on. The fact that Duffy himself is only a name does not prevent him from being a definite character. Gardner once said of Archie's unseen boss:

"Duffy is a thick-headed old gent who might have started as a bartender and built up the place. He is the old conservative type who thinks John L. Sullivan was the greatest heavyweight champion of the world. He doesn't go in for fads and is, in fact, probably waiting for radio to blow over."

Gardner says that Archie "is just Gardner, an easy-going guy with tolerance and a terrific respect for knowledge. He sees right through the phonies." Which will give you an idea that there is a

little something more to "Duffy's Tavern" than just an entertaining half-hour, if you want to look for it. Most of the humor in the show is based on character. Out and out gags are few and far between.

Gardner is of German-Irish stock (name originally Poggenberg). He grew up in a section of the metropolis where life is not too easy and where you can learn an awful lot about it in a very short time. He went to grammar school and attended high school for two years. That made him, by the standards of the neighborhood, pretty well educated.

He got the job in the saloon when he was sixteen. A drummer and violinist completed the musical setup and, as Gardner puts it, "we were rotten." However, no one shot the piano player and he quit with a whole skin under parental pressure to get into some kind of business. Gardner sold things—or at least he bore the title of salesman. He dabbled in paints, electrical equipment, ink, typewriters, and pianos. In 1929, when he was peddling pianos, he met a young actress in the home of a friend. Her name was Shirley Booth and a short time later they got married.

This marital connection aroused Ed's interest in show business, and he made his first connection as a promoter for Producer Crosby Gaige. After several months of this, he quit and went into a round of minor theatrical activity—writing and producing for small stock companies, taking care of the business details for road companies, painting scenery, acting as understudy, typing scripts, and casting for producers.

He did one thing that attracted some attention to himself—producing a play adapted from Dorothy Parker's *After Such Pleasures* for a semi-professional run of three weeks at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel's theater, frequently used for experimental purposes. An advertising firm offered him a good job, but he turned it down for no obvious reason and wound up as a director of the Federal Theater Project of WPA. This lasted until his wife got into a hit play, *Three Men on a Horse*. Then he decided it was about time he was having

some success himself. He found the advertising agency still agreeable and went to work there.

"I was the guy who gave the radio actors the brush-off," he explains.

From there Gardner moved up rather rapidly, and during the late thirties he gained prominence as a radio director, handling such big-time shows as those of Burns and Allen, Crosby, Fanny Brice, Rudy Vallee, and Al Jolson. Anyone else would have been fairly satisfied to see the important money rolling in, but Gardner calmly dropped his 750-dollar-a-week director's job to experiment with building a radio program of his own.

He got his chance in 1939 when the Columbia Broadcasting System inaugurated a policy of presenting on a sustaining basis programs that were all shipshape for any sponsor that might want to buy the package. One of this "forecast" series was "This Is New York," and it was on this that Archie was born.

Archie was not easy to come by. Gardner knew exactly what he wanted, but he couldn't find it. He wanted someone who spoke New Yorkese as to the manner born—a guy who was not a tough, yet on the unfinished side. He was giving applicants examples in his own untarnished lingo until suddenly it occurred to him that he was wasting time. He'd do Archie himself.

"This Is New York" did not snare a sponsor. Gardner went back to work directing big radio shows in Hollywood, but he did not abandon Archie and "Duffy's." He revised the setup and in April, 1941, brought "Duffy's Tavern" to the air with the Schick razor people footing the bills. This time it clicked.

People were fascinated by the earthy quality of the Gardner dialogue spoken in the Gardner manner. They liked the non-appearing Duffy and Duffy's very-much-present daughter, the cashier of the joint. Miss Duffy is a bit on the dumb side and an excellent foil for Archie. They also liked the way in which celebrities were brought into "Duffy's" and given the works.

Eddie Green, a Negro actor who has done a little bit of every-

thing on stage, screen, and radio, is the handyman at "Duffy's"; another standard character is "Brains" Finnegan, played by Charlie Cantor, who probably has played more roles in radio shows than anyone else.

When the show is broadcast, Archie wears a soiled apron and a battered gray felt hat that never seems to leave him. He operates behind a small, rough replica of a bar and handles a telephone instrument in his confabs with Duffy.

Archie's mangling of the English language is in a class by itself. It includes malapropisms and twisted phrases, but they are not in the classic mold. They have a quality all their own. The same is true of Archie's accent. It has some of the "dese, dem and dose" flavor, something of the much-publicized "oi" substitute for the "r" sound that is popularly attributed without rhyme or reason as being peculiar to residents of Brooklyn. Yet it is not strictly representative of these things alone. Gardner has evolved a manner of speaking that, while of familiar ring, is peculiarly his own.

The New York *World-Telegram* once said this of Archie's prose:

"It drips in grammatical gore, the shattered infinitive, the participle hanged and left swinging, the venerable quotations impaled on the pikes of blissful ignorance."

Baseball and baseball terms crop up frequently in the scripts. He likes the game and, of course, Archie is just the kind of guy who would be conversant with the box scores. One of the most popular fictional characters ever introduced in the show was Two-top Griskin. Two-top, Archie would explain patiently to Duffy, was a ballplayer with two heads. Moreover, he was a pitcher—he could watch two bases at the same time. The adventures of Two-top have been among the most hilarious ever presented by "Duffy's Tavern."

Miss Booth, who has become one of the more important actresses of the stage, played Miss Duffy the first two seasons. Then she and Gardner were divorced and the role was taken successively by Florence Halop and Florence Robinson. Gardner married Simone

Hegeman in March, 1943, and Miss Booth remarried in September of the same year.

The popularity of "Duffy's," with its ready-made background, naturally appealed to the movies. Paramount got the film rights at a reported price of 150,000 dollars in 1943. Gardner moved the program to the West Coast to assist in the filming, and, of course, to play Archie. Who else?

DUFFY'S TAVERN . . . *On the Air*

[*Phone rings.*]

ARCHIE (*picks up phone*): Hello, Duffy's Tavern, where the elite meet to eat. Archie the manager speaking. Duffy ain't here— Oh, hello Duffy. Tonight? Bahsil Rathbone. Huh? No, it ain't Basal like in nasal, it's Bahsil like in schnozzle. Oh no? You oughta see the guy, Duffy, he looks like two profiles pasted together— Huh? Rathbone? He's the guy on the radio plays the part of Sherlock Holmes—Sherlock Holmes—the English Dick Tracy. He's one of them scientific detectives. He comes in on a murder case, examines the corpse, counts the bullet holes, checks footprints, checks fingerprints, examines the cigarette ashes, questions the servants, and then says "Hmmmmmmm"—Huh? How does he find out who done it? He beats it outa the butler with a rubber hose. Anyways, I just finished writing him a mystery for his radio program. What do I know about mysteries? Well, Duffy, I got a mysterious mind. For instance, I deduce that in a couple of minutes, you are going to get conked over the head by your wife. Well, the clue is that Mrs. Duffy left here a little while ago carrying a baseball bat, and I deduce she ain't gonna try out for the Dodgers—what? She just walked in the door? Hello? Hello? Play ball!

[*Phone up.*]

KEED: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Duffy's Tavern. Come in and meet Miss Duffy, Finnegan, Eddie

the waiter, Helen Ward, Joe Venuti and his orchestra, our special guest tonight, Basil Rathbone, and Archie himself, Ed Gardner.

ARCHIE: Now, let's see, what'll I call this mystery story? "Murder in Westminster's Alley" or "The Body in the Worcestershire." Hey, Eddie, what do you think would be a apropos title for an English mystery?

EDDIE: Who wrote it?

ARCHIE: I did.

EDDIE: Call it "The Murder of the King's English." What's the story about?

ARCHIE: It's about one of them English Earls. He gets pushed in this lake, becomes fatally drowned and dies. Let's see, how about calling it "The Case of the Drowned Earl"?

EDDIE: How about "Earl and Water Don't Mix"? You writing a mystery story! (*Laughs.*)

ARCHIE: Now look, Eddie, someday you'll be laughing outta the other side of your sleeve. Some day when a limousine pulls up to this joint and people will be saying, "There's Archie, a big mystery writer. He used to be just a jerk and now he's got a million dollars and it ain't changed him a bit." And Eddie, you're going to climb right up the ladder of success with me.

EDDIE: How?

ARCHIE: I'm going to make you me valet.

EDDIE: Your valet! What would I have to do?

ARCHIE: Well, the first thing you do

every morning—you draw a hot tub.
 EDDIE: A hot tub every mornin'?

ARCHIE: Yeah.

EDDIE: What do I do after I draw the tub? Try to coax you in?

ARCHIE: Please, Eddie. Then, while the tub is running, you tiptoe into the bedroom and take care of me clothes. You know, untie the knots in me shoelaces, pick me socks up off the floor. By this time the tub is full. Then you wake me up. I take off me pajamas, then I take off me underwear and I hand them to you. You go to the tub and wash everything out.

EDDIE: Boy, for a second there you come awful close to taking a bath.
 [Phone rings.]

ARCHIE: Hello? Oh, hello Duffy. What's that hammering going on? She's still hitting you with that baseball bat, huh? Well, just don't stand there and take it. You'll get conclusion of the brain. Why don't you at least duck? Yeah, move your head, so she'll miss you once in a while. Huh? She hits curve pitching too? Hello—Hello—Mmmm. A homer! (*Hangs up.*) Oh brother, that poor Duffy.

CLANCY: Say, Archie.

ARCHIE: Oh, hello, Officer Clancy.

CLANCY: Duffy taking a beatin' again?

ARCHIE: Yeah, Clancy, she's slugging him with a baseball bat.

CLANCY: Why did she do that?

ARCHIE: Well, she's restless. You know, she's middle-aged, children grown up. She don't like to sit around idle. It makes her very morose. You know, verbatim.

FINNEGAN: Hello, Arch.

ARCHIE: Hiya, Finnegan.

FINNEGAN: Good evening, Officer Clancy. Come on over here and I'll buy you a drink. It's on me.

CLANCY: A drink! Finnegan, please. I'm in uniform!

FINNEGAN: Well, put a napkin around you. It won't stain.

ARCHIE: Just a second. Finnegan, you buying a drink!

FINNEGAN: Why not? I'm a big spender.

ARCHIE: Okay. What'll you have?

FINNEGAN: A coke with two straws.

CLANCY: A coke! A coke!!

FINNEGAN: Well, what did you expect, Clancy?

CLANCY: Well, occasionally a man likes something to warm his stomach.

FINNEGAN: Okay. Hey, Arch, leave the ice out!

ARCHIE: Well, now that I am alone here, I guess I'll look over this detective story. In the meantime, leave us have a little music. Joe, a big fanfare, please!

[Single trumpet blast.]

ARCHIE: Folks, we now present Miss Helen Ward, our new vocaltwist. Miss Ward has sang with such bands as Benny Goodman and Harry James, so I guess she's good enough for youse bunch of crumbs around the place. I thank youse.

[Helen Ward sings "Honeysuckle Rose."]

[Applause.]

ARCHIE: That was great, Helen. Let's see now. (*Reads.*) Sherlock Holmes speaks. I know where the weapon is, Lady Gwendolyn. It's hidden in a jar of— (*Stops reading.*) Hey, Miss Duffy.

MISS DUFFY: Yes, Archie.

ARCHIE: What kind of beauty creams do dames use on their faces?

MISS DUFFY: Well, I personally only use cold cream, a little vanishing cream, some chin cream, wrinkle cream, and a foundation cream. I don't believe in interfering with nature.

ARCHIE: Well, you're the first one who should.

MISS DUFFY: Thanks. But there's a lot of other creams. Youth cream,

vitamin cream, beauty cream, one-purpose cream, all-purpose cream, sunray cream, throat cream—

ARCHIE: Never mind. I'll make it a after-dinner crime and use ice-cream. I thank you, Miss Duffy.

MISS DUFFY: Archie, why don't you make your detective a woman detective instead of a man detective and then she would know what she was talking about.

ARCHIE: Women! What a stupid sex for a detective!

MISS DUFFY: Oh yeah? There have been plenty of great women detectives.

ARCHIE: Name one.

MISS DUFFY: Er—Lydia Pinkerton.

ARCHIE: Well, yeah her. But that's the only one.

MISS DUFFY: Oh yeah? What about a little lady named S.S. Van Dyne?

ARCHIE: S.S. Van Dyne? That ain't a dame. That's a boat.

MISS DUFFY: Archie, when you refer to a boat, do you say "he" or "she"?

ARCHIE: A boat? "She."

MISS DUFFY: There you are. That's two great women detectives.

[Phone rings.]

ARCHIE: Hello? Oh, hello, Duffy. What? She's still up there battin', huh? Well, what are you going to do about it? See Mr. Anthony, huh? Duffy, in your case you better see Judge Landis— But Duffy, she's been hittin' you for fifteen minutes— Oh, you're beginning to get a headache, huh? Hey, Duffy, what happened? Suddenly it got quiet. She stopped, huh? How come? Oh, she went out for a seventh inning stretch. Say, Duffy, I got a idea. Why don't you do like they do in mystery stories? Hide the weapon. Yeah, hide the bat someplace— Well, put it in that hall closet. Sure, try it. Okay, Duffy. (*Hangs up.*)

MISS DUFFY: Archie, speakin' about women detectives—

ARCHIE: Miss Duffy, what kind of a homo sapiens are you? Here you are worryin' about detectives when your poor old mother is emaciating your old man with a baseball bat.

MISS DUFFY: Oh, it's just another little lovers' spat. Momma has never been one to hold a grudge.

ARCHIE: No, huh?

MISS DUFFY: No. I have seen Momma fight with Poppa, and swear that she'll never have anything to do with him no more and the next day she'll be slugging him again like nothing happened.

ARCHIE: Well, anyways I got your old man to hide the bat.

MISS DUFFY: Well, you got your nerve. What right have you got to interfere with their recreation?

ARCHIE: Well, that's up to the individual.

EDDIE: Say, Mr. Archie, gentleman over there give me this letter.

ARCHIE: Lessee. Hey, it's from Charles Laughton. (*Reading.*) "Dear Archie. This will introduce my friend and fellow English actor, Basil Rathbone. Any courtesy you show him will be more than you showed me. Signed, Charles Laughton." Sweet of Charlie to remember. Well, Mr. Rathbone. Hally toe, old Pip-squeak. It's certainly ripping to see you, old rotter. I'm Archie.

BASIL: Oh, how are you, Archie, old man?

ARCHIE: Oh, Pip Pip, Old Fruit—and you?

BASIL: Tip Top, Old Bread.

ARCHIE: Old bread?

BASIL: Would you prefer "crumb"?

ARCHIE: Oh, jolly well put, old boy.

What do you think of ye little tavern here. Top hole, eh?

BASIL: Rathole, eh. Say, do you always talk like this?

ARCHIE: You mean me English accent?

BASIL: Er—yes.

ARCHIE: Well, Basil, a guy can't talk

no different than how he has been learned. Yeah, no matter how long I'll be in this country, I'll always speak English with just a trace of an accent.

BASIL: To me it seems you speak accent with just a trace of English.

ARCHIE: Are you pertaining that I'm a phoney Englishman?

BASIL: I ain't pertaining nothing. It's just that Charles Laughton told me—

ARCHIE: Look, don't try to hide behind Laughton's pants. Not that there ain't room. The nerve of youse guys. I don't mind when a fellow American calls me a phoney Englishman, but when an Englishman calls me a phoney Englishman, I think that's a pretty lousy thing for a foreigner to say to an American citizen.

BASIL: Well, I'm sorry, Archie. I apologize.

ARCHIE: I got a good mind to wire me pal Winnie Churchill about this, or me Uncle Archie.

BASIL: Your Uncle Archie?

ARCHIE: I suppose the Archduke of Canterbury is a phoney too.

BASIL: The Archduke of Canterbury is your uncle?

ARCHIE: He has been for years. In fact I used to be his favorite little dukeling.

BASIL: I bet you were an ugly dukeling.

ARCHIE: Yeah, but you grow out of them things.

BASIL: You may.

ARCHIE: What times them was. Riding through Sussex in me Uncle's Essex, dancing around in a circle on the streets of London, playing "Brooklyn Bridge is Falling Down." Now, do you still think I'm a phoney?

BASIL: No, Archie. Now I can see that you're absolutely spurious.

ARCHIE: Well, thanks. Your apology's accepted. Leave us refrain from no more doubts.

FINNEGAN: Hey, Arch, who's the big skinny guy?

ARCHIE: Oh, Clifton Finnegan. This is Basil Rathbone. Sherlock Holmes, meet Nobody Homes.

BASIL: Howja do.

FINNEGAN (*same way*): Howja do, Basil, if you'll pardon my mentioning it. Basil—that's a dopey name. How'd you get it?

BASIL: I was named after my metabolism. How'd you get the name Clifton?

FINNEGAN: I've only had it for four years. I copied it from Clifton Fadiman. He's my namesake.

BASIL: But not your brainsake.

FINNEGAN: Oh, I don't know. He's a pretty bright guy.

ARCHIE: Well, up until they called you Clifton, what did they call you?

FINNEGAN: Alice.

ARCHIE: Alice?

FINNEGAN: Yeah, my folks wanted a girl.

ARCHIE: Finnegan, you let them call you "Alice" until four years ago?

FINNEGAN: Well, Arch, I couldn't complain until I learned how to talk, could I?

ARCHIE: Please, Finnegan, will ya beat it?

FINNEGAN: In a second, Arch. I just wanna give Mr. Rathbone a tip. Hey, Basil.

BASIL: Yes, Clifton?

FINNEGAN: Now Basil, I—Gee, that's a dopey name, Basil.

ARCHIE: Finnegan, never mind that. What's the tip?

FINNEGAN: Oh, yeah. Well, look Basil, remember in your last picture? A little short guy who sneaked up on ya with a knife and you turned around and shot him?

BASIL: Yes, I remember.

FINNEGAN: Well, watch out for him. He's still alive. I seen him in another picture.

ARCHIE: You'll have to excuse Finne-

gan, Basil. He's a punishment that's waiting for a suitable crime. Now, leave you and me get down to business. Basil, I bet a lot of jerks are always bothering you with scripts for your program.

BASIL: Yeah, they are. Where's yours?

ARCHIE: Hmmm. Nice bit of deduction.

You know, Basil, I'm a bit of a deducer meself. For instance, I deduce that you shaved the right side of your face first this morning.

BASIL: How did you deduce that?

ARCHIE: Well, you're a right-hander, and right-handed people always shave the right side first. It's an automatic human instink, like spit-tin' on your hands before you smooth your hair.

BASIL: What makes you so sure I'm right-handed?

ARCHIE: It's a cinch. When you walked in here, what hand did you grab your nose with? Your right hand. Just the right hand. You ignored your left hand. This, in spite of the fact that yours could be a two-handed nose. Now look, Bassie, old boy—

BASIL: Just a second. Why don't you call me by the nickname they called me back home?

ARCHIE: What was that?

BASIL: Lefty.

ARCHIE: Lefty? Peculiar nickname for a right-handed guy. Now about this mystery I wrote. It's a sensation Sherlock Holmes story. Better than the original ones.

BASIL: Better than what Conan Doyle wrote?

ARCHIE: Better than Cohn and Doyle put together. And I did it all by meself. Look, why don't we read it over. You be Sherlock Holmes, I'll be Doctor Watson, your friend and confidence man. And the rest of the gang here can take the other parts.

BASIL: What have I got to lose? Nothing but my self-respect and my sponsor.

ARCHIE: Yeah, that's right. Okay then, here we go.

[*Chinese gong.*]

ARCHIE: We now present Sherlock Holmes in "Who Done It in Dorset" or "The Murder of the Dead Earl."

[*Mysterious music.*]

ARCHIE: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is your obedient servant Dr. Watson, to relate at you a case that will make your blood corpsuckles curl. One foggy Michaelmas in late Whitsuntide, Holmes and me were sitting in his diggins at Number 40 Basin Street. We sat before a roaring fire, warming our hearths in the blaze. Holmes spoke first:

BASIL: By Jove, Watson.

ARCHIE: By Jove, Holmes. Amazing!

BASIL: Elementary, my dear Watson.

ARCHIE: You know that's the first time I've ever heard the full story of the *Hound of the Basketballs*.

BASIL: Oh, say, I sye, Watson, would you care for a tuppence of tea?

ARCHIE: Thank you, Holmes.

BASIL: Just a second, Archie. It says here "A tuppence of tea!"

ARCHIE: That's right.

BASIL: But a tuppence is two coppers.

ARCHIE: Two coppers! Well, what do you think we are? Go on with the script.

BASIL: Okay. Well, Watson, here's your tea. Cream?

ARCHIE: Thank you.

BASIL: Sugar?

ARCHIE: Thank you.

BASIL: Crumpet?

ARCHIE: No, just drop it in whole. Well, what's new, Holmes?

BASIL: You know, Watson, we ain't solved a murder since almost well-nigh onto nearly a fortnit. Holy smoke!

[*Very loud knock on door.*]

BASIL: Sssh. I think I heard a knocking on the door.

ARCHIE: Amazing, Holmes.

BASIL: Elementary, my dear Watson.
[Door knock.]

ARCHIE: Come in.
[Door opens.]

FINNEGAN: Pardon me for coming so late on such a dreary night, but my name is—er—Marmaduke Hotchkiss.

BASIL: Yes?

FINNEGAN: Well, sir, I am first footman to the Earl of Twickenham, and I fear me master has deceased.

ARCHIE: Dead? Egood gad, man, are you sure?

FINNEGAN: Well, he's been laying on his back for two hours.

BASIL: I sye, there ain't nothing unusual about a man laying on his back for two hours.

FINNEGAN: On the bottom of a lake?
BASIL: Eggnog, old man, I have a hunch that the Earl's death is serious. Leave us away to Twickenham.

ARCHIE: Soon we arrived at Twickenham, at the dead Earl's Earlery, a large gloomy castle crawling all over with moats. Vampire bats was flying all around. We knocked at the door and the butler answered.
[Knock on door.]

EDDIE: Yassuh?

ARCHIE: Who are you?

EDDIE: I am 'arry, 'is 'ighness' 'ead butler.

ARCHIE: We'd like to see your master.

EDDIE: I'm sorry. He's dead, sir, and does not wish to be disturbed. Who's calling?

BASIL: I am Sherlock Holmes.

EDDIE: Not Sherlock Holmes, the great detective?

BASIL: The same.

EDDIE: The man who solved the "Mystery of the Red Band"?

BASIL: The same.

EDDIE: And "The Mystery of the Speckled Band"?

BASIL: Yes.

EDDIE: Tell me, why did Benny Goodman bust up?

ARCHIE: Eddie, stop ad-libbing. Now leave us get on with the play.
[Miss Duffy screams.]

ARCHIE: Egood gad, what was that, Holmes?

BASIL: A woman screaming.

ARCHIE: Astoundishing! Come in, Madam.

MISS DUFFY: Good evening, boys. I am the bereaved widow. Leave us all go down and look at the body.

BASIL: Watson, do you notice that for a woman who has just lost her husband, she doesn't act very disturbed?

ARCHIE: I hadn't really noticed, Holmes.

BASIL: Well, take a look at her face.

ARCHIE: I'd rather go look at the body. So Holmes and I went to the lake and there we saw the Earl, and he was, to put it delicately, floating around like a dead mackerel. We went back to the house and suddenly Holmes said:

BASIL: By Jove.

ARCHIE: Holmes, you mean?

BASIL: Yes, I've solved it.

ARCHIE: Miraculous, Holmes. How did you do it?

BASIL: Well, if you noticed, Watson, the Earl had a knife-wound in his back and two little red marks on his throat which means that while someone was stabbing him in the back—

ARCHIE: A vampire bat was severing his jocular vein.

BASIL: Right! Lady Gwendolyn, you are guilty. Now where have you concealed your private vampire bat, your accomplice in this foul deed?

MISS DUFFY: You got me too right. He is concealed in that hall closet there.

BASIL: Stand back, everyone. Oh, evil vampire bat, come out of the closet.
[Door opens.]

FINNEGAN: Er—er—don't shoot.

ARCHIE: It's Marmaduke, the foot-man.

BASIL: No, not Marmaduke, the foot-man—Marmaduke, the vampire bat.

ARCHIE: How did you do it, Holmes?

BASIL: I suspected from the beginning, Watson. The moment I saw him I knew him for what he was, half-man, half-bats. Watson, the case is solved.

ARCHIE: Well, Basil, what'd you think? Great mystery, huh? Basil, where you going?

BASIL: Archie, be it ever so humble, this is no place for Holmes.

ARCHIE: But Basil—

[Phone ring.]

ARCHIE: Hello—what, Duffy?—I'm fired! Why?—Mrs. Duffy listened to the mystery and she heard the bat was hidden in the hall closet, so she's slugging you again? But Duffy, it ain't my fault— But Duffy—

Another Duffy's Script

ARCHIE: Hello. Duffy's Tavern where the elite meet to eat. Archie the Manager speaking. Duffy ain't here— Oh, hello Duffy. Tonight? Adolph Menjou—Adolph Menjou! Well—you remember Theda Bara? Well, Menjou was a fashion plate when she was still a dish. Oh, he's a terrific guy, Duffy—very suave. Huh? Your wife says you're suave? Duffy, she means a big fat suave. And you know who else is coming here tonight, Duffy? That French Dame, Wyvette. Y-V-E-T-T-T-T-E, Wyvette. She's a female chanteuse—sings too. Look, Duffy, I gotta go now. You know Clancy, the cop? Yeah, Flatfoot Clancy. Well, the club he belongs to is having a meeting here tonight. The name of the club? The Policemen's Tuesday

Night Footbath and Discussion Club. Adolph Menjou is gonna give a lecture on men's clothes. Mmm—I am writing it for him. I call it "Men's Fashions through the Ages—from the Fig-Leaf to the B.V.D." Okay, I'll call you back, Duffy.

EDDIE: Mr. Archie.

ARCHIE: Don't bother me, Eddie—I gotta finish writin' this lecture, "The well-dressed man must watch out how he garbs himself, because he is always judged by his garbiage. Since from time in memoriam."

EDDIE: Mr. Archie, just a minute. You writin' a talk on men's clothes?

ARCHIE: Yeah.

EDDIE: For Adolph Menjou?

ARCHIE: Yeah.

EDDIE: Excuse me, Mr. Archie.

ARCHIE: Where you goin'?

EDDIE: I gotta go draw up the invasion plans for General Eisenhower.

ARCHIE: Eddie, to any other man, that would be an insult.

EDDIE: To any other man, I'd apologize.

ARCHIE: Accepted.

EDDIE: You talkin' about clothes. Look at you. Your hat's bashed in, there's a rip in your pants, gravy on your shirt, a hole in your socks.

ARCHIE: Well, Eddie, I'm wearing sports clothes. Besides, it's underdressed to look too spic and spat; a man's clothes should have an air of carelessness—casual.

EDDIE: Oh, that's why you *look* like a casualty.

ARCHIE: Right. I've always been a snappy dresser. When I was a kid, you know what the gang on the block used to call me? Archie the Fop! And why?

EDDIE: Speech impediment?

ARCHIE: No. Because I was always so well-broomed, always first with the new styles. I remember I was the first guy on the block to come around

with two-tone sneakers. And very fastidious. Eddie, I was the kind of a kid, you know, if my collar got dirty, I'd change the whole shirt! So just because I don't look like I'm standing in a tailor's window like a dummy—

FINNEGAN: Hullo, Arch.

ARCHIE: Finnegan, is your tailor's name Sam?

FINNEGAN: Why, Arch?

ARCHIE: I think he made the pants too long. Finnegan, you can't even see your shoes.

FINNEGAN: Well, I'm trying to hide me shoes, Arch.

ARCHIE: Why?

FINNEGAN: Well, I'm a little ashamed. Two of the buttons are missing.

ARCHIE: Finnegan, are you still wearing button shoes?

FINNEGAN: Well, Arch, I can't get new shoes on account of this rationing.

ARCHIE: What's the matter? Ain't you got an eighteen coupon?

FINNEGAN: Yeah, but what good is it? I wear a twelve.

ARCHIE: Finnegan, that's got nothin' to do with it. You could have got your right size, and taken your change in red tokens. But outside of shoes, you look very nice, Finnegan. That bowtie—very smart.

FINNEGAN: Oh, just something I threw on.

ARCHIE: Yep, very nice. Goes with everything. You could even wear a shirt with it.

FINNEGAN: Hey, that's a very good idea, Arch. You're just the guy to help me with me problem.

ARCHIE: What's the problem, Finnegan?

FINNEGAN: Well, if someday I get a full-dress suit, should I wear gold studs, or silver studs?

ARCHIE: A full-dress suit? It all depends, Finnegan.

FINNEGAN: On what?

ARCHIE: On how much they want to spend on your funeral.

FINNEGAN: Funeral? Who's dead?

ARCHIE: You are.

FINNEGAN: Well, we all gotta go sometime.

ARCHIE: Look, Finnegan, don't bother me. Tell Adolph Menjou your problem when he gets here.

MISS DUFFY: Say Archie—

ARCHIE: Yes, Miss Duffy.

MISS DUFFY: What's this about a new French singer coming down here?

ARCHIE: So what about it?

MISS DUFFY: Well, if you're gonna hire a singer, what's wrong with my singing?

ARCHIE: Just two things, Miss Duffy, and they're both adenoids.

MISS DUFFY: Oh yeah. Well, don't say I didn't warn you, Archie. Papa hates French chanteuses.

ARCHIE: He don't like nothing unless it's an Irish tenor. If you play a Caruso record to him, you gotta tell him it's John McCormack. That dopey, stupid Duffy.

MISS DUFFY: Just a second, Archie. Don't forget that stupid as he is, you are talking of my father's own flesh and blood.

ARCHIE: Granted, but why does he have to have such a maniac over Irish tenors?

MISS DUFFY: Because he's sentimental—just a sweet old softie. You should see him when there's an Irish tenor singing on the radio. He melts. I have even seen him stop hitting Momma till the song was over—and he's right—because the Irish are the best singers in the world.

ARCHIE: That is a very broad statement. Don't forget there are Russians and other Creeds who are pretty good singers too.

MISS DUFFY: Russians? Everybody knows the Russians can't sing.

ARCHIE: Oh no?

MISS DUFFY: No.

ARCHIE (pause): What about Tolstoy?

MISS DUFFY: Well, yes, Tolstoy, but

- that's only one case. What about Gallicurchi?
- ARCHIE: What about Gallicurchi?
- MISS DUFFY: Well, wasn't *he* a great singer?
- ARCHIE: Certainly Gallicurchi was a great singer.
- MISS DUFFY: And where did Gallicurchi come from?
- ARCHIE: From Italy.
- MISS DUFFY: Well, Italy is not *Russia*, is it?
- ARCHIE: No.
- MISS DUFFY: Well, there you are.
- ARCHIE: There I am where, Miss Duffy?
- MISS DUFFY: Well, if Italy is not *Russia*, and Gallicurchi came from Italy, how can you say that the Tolstoy is a better singer than the Irish?
- ARCHIE: Would you mind playing that back again? No, you better not. Look, Miss Duffy, I didn't say that Tolstoy is a better singer than the Irish.
- MISS DUFFY: All right, then go ahead and get a Russian. Go *get* Gallicurchi.
- ARCHIE: Yeah, and if I *did* get Gallicurchi, your old man would want him to sing "*Oui-Oui Machree*."
- MISS DUFFY: Archie, the name of the song is "*Oui-Oui, Mother Machree*."
- ARCHIE: Tobe! Tobe Reed! Say something, will you!
- TOBE: What about, Arch?
- ARCHIE: About anything. I just want to hear the sound of a human voice. Just talk.
- TOBE: All right, Arch, anything to oblige. Ladies and Gentlemen, have *you* ever had this experience? The doorbell rings—
- ARCHIE: I gotta get this lecture finished for Adolph Menjoy. Hey, wait a minute, Eddie. Who is that lovely dish comin' in?
- EDDIE: I think it's that French singer you're expecting, Miss Yvette.
- ARCHIE: Oh! What a hunk of French pastry! (*Wolf whistle*.) Good evening, cherie, Mamsolle, Leave me bid you besame mucho.
- YVETTE: *Merci, monsieur.*
- ARCHIE: The merci is mutual . . . vous are tres ravissant.
- YVETTE: *Merci, monsieur. Ou avez vous appris parler Francais?*
- ARCHIE: Oui.
- YVETTE: *Monsieur n'a pas compris ma question.*
- ARCHIE: Oui . . . parloz vous Franca?
- YVETTE: *Tres bien, monsieur.*
- ARCHIE: Ah, Yvette, you make me feel right at home.
- YVETTE: Are you French?
- ARCHIE: Part—only a small part, of course.
- YVETTE: Was your mother French?
- ARCHIE: Yep.
- YVETTE: And your father?
- ARCHIE: French too.
- YVETTE: Then why are you only *part* French?
- ARCHIE: Oh, we were a very large family, but I was brought up talkin' French. Yeah, I remember I was fifteen years old before I learned to say "*Hot-Dog*" instead of *Crepes Suzettes*.
- YVETTE: Say, are you the manager of this tavern?
- ARCHIE: Yes. I'm Archie, the maitre de.
- EDDIE: Excuse me. Miss Yvette—
- YVETTE: Who are you?
- EDDIE: I'm Eddie, the waitre de.
- ARCHIE: Eddie, please! One doos not interrupt a teet-a-teet unless one wants all one's teet knocked out.
- EDDIE: But the customers would like to hear Miss Yvette sing.
- ARCHIE: Oh. Mademoiselle Yvette, voulez chantoz us a small shanty? Monsieur Venuti.
- VENUTI: Oui, Arch.
- ARCHIE: S'il vous plait a number for Mademoiselle Yvette.
- VENUTI: Okay. Fellows, attention! Un! Deux! Trois!
- [*Yvette sings.*]
- ARCHIE: Oh, that was great, Yvette.

We ought to have a dame like that singing in this joint regular, Eddie. She could attract the French crowd.
 EDDIE: She's already doing it. Here comes Adolph Menjou now!

ARCHIE: Well Adolph! Mr. Menjou, Duffy's is indeed proud to welcome a man of your distinguished haberdashery. And furthermore, it is with humble hospitality that we felice our extentations to your august presence amid these circular glooms.

MENJOU: What is this—a filibuster?

ARCHIE: What's a filibuster?

MENJOU: It's a speech about nothing made by a guy who knows all about it.

ARCHIE: Mmmm. Imagine meeting Adolph Menjoy in person! You know I never used to miss one of your pictures.

MENJOU: Well, it's nice to meet one of the paying public.

ARCHIE: Well, you didn't make much offa me. During most of your career I got in for half price.

MENJOU: Archie, please! Never remind an actor of his age. . . . It's tough enough to face the fact that I'm nearing thirty-nine.

ARCHIE: Thirty-nine? What is this—your second time around?

FINNEGAN: Say, Arch, can I ask him that question now?

ARCHIE: Oh yeah. Mr. Menjou, this is Clifton Finnegan. He has a problem.

MENJOU: I'll say he has!

FINNEGAN: Well, Mr. Menjou, here is my problem. When I get my full-dress suit, should I wear gold studs or silver studs?

MENJOU: Well, that varies according to taste of the undertaker.

FINNEGAN: Undertaker! Mr. Menjou, this full-dress suit is gonna be for me wedding.

MENJOU: A wedding! Well, is it an afternoon or an evening affair?

FINNEGAN: Oh, I expect it to last longer than that.

ARCHIE: Just a second, Finnegan. When are you getting married?

FINNEGAN: Just as soon as I get the license.

ARCHIE: But where'd you get the girl?

FINNEGAN: Arch, don't they give you that with the license?

ARCHIE: And thank you, Clifton Finnegan! Say, 'Dolph, talking about clothes, that's a nice-looking suit you got on. Buy it new?

MENJOU: Why, yes, I had it made.

ARCHIE: You have to have 'em made, huh? I don't. I just walk into a store, put on a thirty-eight suit, have the sleeves lengthened, lengthen the pants, take in the waist, pad the shoulders, reset the buttons, and walk right out with the suit. A perfect thirty-eight.

MENJOU: Well, I have to have mine made. I guess I'm a misfit.

ARCHIE: Yeah, huh? But the one you got on looks pretty good. How do you get that nice sharp crease in the pants?

MENJOU: I have a smooth mattress.

ARCHIE: Oh yeah? I use a damp cloth and a hot rock.

MENJOU: What do you use for a damp cloth—that shirt you're wearing?

ARCHIE: Well, I was just waitin' for you to notice this shirt. How do you like it?

MENJOU: It's lovely. What color was it?

ARCHIE: I don't remember, but it's nice material—beautiful material! Feel it.

MENJOU: Hmmmmm. Broadcloth.

ARCHIE: Yeah, but what's the difference? It's a man's style. Like I said in a lecture I was writing here.

CLANCY: Hello, Archie, me boy.

ARCHIE: Well! Officer Clancy! Excuse me a second, 'Dolph. I'll be right with you. Officer Clancy, I ain't seen flat nor foot of you for weeks. Glad to see you.

CLANCY: Well, it's lucky I am to be here.

ARCHIE: What do you mean?

CLANCY: Well, this morning I was on duty—taking a little nap in the backroom over at Grogan's, when a terrible thing happened.

ARCHIE: What happened?

CLANCY: Grogan's kid sneaked me blackjack out of me pocket and hit me over the head with it.

ARCHIE: Gee, that could be serious, Clancy.

CLANCY: It was. It broke every cigar in me hat.

ARCHIE: Well, I'm glad you're here. What about the rest of the cops in the club? Are they coming?

CLANCY: Of course.

ARCHIE: How many?

CLANCY: Sixteen of them just came in through the back entrance.

ARCHIE: I thought there was going to be nineteen.

CLANCY: A few of the boys couldn't show up.

ARCHIE: Why not?

CLANCY: Well, the Commissioner has ordered a drive against bookies and the boys are busy placing some last minute bets. Well, Archie, when are you starting the lecture?

MENJOU: Say, Archie, I have to be running along now.

ARCHIE: But Adolph, you can't go now—the lecture!

MENJOU: What lecture?

ARCHIE: It's a lecture on clothes that you're giving to the cops. I wrote it for you.

MENJOU: *You* wrote a lecture on clothes—for *me*?

ARCHIE: Now look, Adolph—maybe I look a little sloppy, but remember this—the rip in a man's pants is not the window to his soul. Now, whaddya say?

MENJOU: No. Definitely *no*!

CLANCY: Archie, let me handle this. Mr. Menjou, is that your car outside?

MENJOU: Yes.

CLANCY: You're guilty of parking next to a hydrant.

MENJOU: That's ridiculous! My car's parked at least twenty feet from that hydrant.

CLANCY: Well, there are sixteen cops here tonight and if they ain't detained by hearing your lecture, they might find time to go out and move the hydrant.

ARCHIE: 'Dolph. I think legally you're a dead habeas corpus. Now here's the lecture. Look it over.

TOBE: Say, Archie.

ARCHIE: Oh, Tobe, this is Adolph Menjou. He's going to give a talk tonight.

TOBE: Oh, really, I give talks too.

MENJOU: Does Archie write them for you?

TOBE: Perish forbid.

MENJOU: In that case they must make sense.

ARCHIE: 'Dolph, have you looked over the lecture I wrote?

MENJOU: Yes, Arch.

ARCHIE: What do you think of it?

MENJOU: This would take the Hart out of Schaffner and Marks.

ARCHIE: That's a very corny insult. You just read the lecture. C'mon, Clancy, start the meeting.

CLANCY: Okay, Archie. Here we go! [*Police whistle.*]

CLANCY: The meeting of the Police-men's Tuesday Night Footbath and Discussion Club will now come to order. I now present Mr. Adolph Menjou—no record.

[*Applause.*]

MENJOU: Gentlemen, leave us begin our discourse appertaining to men's sartoriality. Archie, sartoriality?

ARCHIE: Yeah, men's clothes. What did you think it was—a barber shop? Proceed ahead.

MENJOU: Hmmmmm. The first clothes that was known to primitive man was loin cloths, but loin cloths was difficult to get because loins is very

ferocious beasts. They do not stand still while you take off their cloths. So primitive man was dressed very naked until the invention of the sheep. The skin of the sheep is very valuable. From the outside we get wool and from the inside we get diplomas—Archie, this is abominable!

ARCHIE: You ain't read the best part. Continue!

MENJOU: The greatest step in clothing was the invention of the cotton gin machine—a machine for removing the gin from cotton. Previously, on account of the cotton being full of this gin it was good for nothing. But after Eli Whitney's invention, cotton became the equal of wool, which never touched the stuff. Archie, where do you get your facts?

ARCHIE: Research. I dream them up. Go ahead.

MENJOU: Now we come to chapter two—proper dress for policemen. Foot patrolmen should have their shoes stretched so they are large and comfortable. Mounted patrolmen will require other adjustments.

CLANCY: Stop it, Menjou. You're a bum. Who's the crummy fashion expert that wrote that lecture?

ARCHIE: Let's stick together, Adolph. Neither one of us, Clancy. It was written by an expert.

CLANCY: Who's the expert?

ARCHIE: Well, we ain't sure, Clancy. But I think I know how I can find out. I would like to ask the assembled crowd here one interesting question on clothes. When wearing a full dress suit does one wear gold studs or silver studs?

FINNEGAN: Duh—duh—duh—it depends on the taste of your undertaker.

ARCHIE: There's your man, Clancy. Take him away.

[Phone rings.]

ARCHIE: Duffy's, where the elite meet to eat. Archie speaking. Hello, Duffy. Yeah, that's right. Sure, Adolph was here. No, Finnegan left. Huh? I dunno. Something about studs and an undertaker. Sure, Duffy, we had the meeting. No, it was Finnegan—Duffy, listen—Duffy!

Girls, Girls, Girls!

**EDDIE
CANTOR**

They could ration jokes tomorrow and Eddie Cantor wouldn't have to worry. He has told many thousands of jokes in his time, but he has gotten more mileage from a single one of them than from all the rest combined. He probably has cashed this gag oftener than any other comic has offered one joke for sale, yet it has never bounced back from the audience marked "not sufficient fun." People never seem to get tired of hearing Cantor kid himself about being the father of five girls and no boys.

The joke has been perhaps even better for radio than it has for the comedian's other two entertainment media—the Broadway stage and the movies. And there is still television!

And, speaking of television, Eddie already has experimented with that and has the distinction, if you can call it that, of being the first person censored in that medium. It happened May 26, 1944, in New York, where Eddie and his radio troupe were visiting for a few weeks and doing their broadcasts. He and his girl vocalist, Nora Martin, were down for a song number to be televised from WNBT in New York to WPTZ, Philadelphia, where it would be seen by those attending a commercial group's dinner.

Eddie and Nora were well launched on "We're Having a Baby, My Baby and Me," a hit song from a Cantor musical comedy of a few years earlier, when the sound was suddenly cut off. The players were seen during the rest of the number but the sound did not come back until the last line of the song. The lines that were not heard had to do with the wife thanking the husband for the fact that they were going to have a baby, his assurance that he shouldn't be thanked because it was a pleasure, and that the next one would be

on him, and something to the effect that if George Jessel could do it, why couldn't he?

Officials of NBC, where the censoring was done, said Cantor had been told before the broadcast that the lyrics were objectionable; Cantor had said there wasn't time to prepare another number. Rather than abandon the program, NBC simply decided to delete the objectionable lines.

There are few that can match Cantor's years of service as a top radio comic. His first exposure to the new industry was as early as 1921, when he broadcast over a small New Jersey station as an experiment. During that broadcast the comedian said there was no way of knowing that people were listening, so he'd feel better about having broadcast if there was some tangible evidence. He suggested that each person who heard him send in a dime to be contributed to the Salvation Army.

After a visit on the Vallee program in February, 1931, Cantor got his own show in September of that year. Through 1934 he sold coffee for Chase and Sanborn; in 1935 he pitched for a toothpaste; 1936-37 found him working for a gas company; in 1938 it was cigarettes; and 1939-45, inclusive, he was the property of the Bristol-Myers drug people.

Eddie always has had a fast variety show on the air, with plenty of singing both by himself and others. He is proud of such graduates as Gracie Allen, Deanna Durbin, Bobby Breen, and a comic known as Parkyakarkus, a name that was punned into a national menace. Eddie's own peculiar breathless excitement, both in dialogue and song, comes across the airwaves well.

Among air "firsts" he claims the distinction of first using the announcer as a "straight man" to his own comedy and of first employing stooges on the air. He is proud of having been the first comedian to get serious on a comedy program—for example, his "Drive Carefully, We Love Our Children" campaign.

Cantor became the first comedian with his own "package" show—he got all the money and paid everyone on the program. This was in 1935.

The comedian, like many other radio performers, has done a lot of his broadcasting, as well as extra entertaining, for service groups during the war. He is especially interested in what he calls the "Purple Heart Circuit"—the hospitals for the wounded. One of his pet projects is to organize entertainers so there will be a steady flow of them to these hospitals in the years after the war is over and people will be prone to forget that there are thousands of men still being treated and in need of cheering up. In 1944 Cantor conducted a contest to determine the typical G.I. Joe. The five-thousand-dollar award went to Private Charles Peers. During the fall of 1944, his radio campaign, in co-operation with the American Legion and department stores, was directed at getting gifts for the wounded and sick in Army and Navy hospitals.

As a matter of fact, Cantor has always had some pet project on his mind. He is in the vanguard of most charitable and patriotic movements. He sponsors annually a fund-raising campaign for sending poor boys to a summer camp, and he heads the March of Dimes campaigns to get funds to fight infantile paralysis. One of his ideas backfired. In 1936 he offered a scholarship for the best essay on "How America Can Stay Out of War," and the winner was a youth who later confessed he had submitted plagiarized material.

Cantor's interest in the needy and oppressed undoubtedly stems from his own lowly boyhood. He was born in New York on January 31, 1892, as Edward Israel Iskowitz, the son of Russian immigrant parents. Both his father and mother were dead before he was three years old, and his maternal grandmother, Esther, a poor woman, took him in. Life was pretty much hand-to-mouth during his growing years, but he had a disposition that made the best of things and developed a natural aptitude for mimicking people. His interest in summer camp work stems from the fact that he was sent to one and never forgot how much it did for him.

While still in his teens, he got a crush on Ida Tobias, "the belle of Henry Street," who lived in considerably better circumstances than Eddie and whose parents were not too enthusiastic about her

association with the gamin. He was always engaging in shenanigans and gave no signs of having a stable future.

Cantor was firmly trapped by show business when, at the age of sixteen, he won an Amateur Night prize at Miner's Bowery Theater. He did impersonations. A few weeks later he had a job in a burlesque house at fifteen dollars weekly. This ended when the troupe went on tour and became stranded.

The next stop was Carey Walsh's Saloon in Coney Island, where he sang for his supper and met Jimmy Durante, who played piano for him. Eddie turned into a singing waiter when he found out he could make more money than as a mere entertainer.

After that, Cantor did sixteen weeks in small-time vaudeville around New York, joined a well-known vaudeville act, "Bedini and Arthur," and toured with Gus Edwards' "Kiddie Kabaret." He already had discovered advantages in appearing in blackface.

In 1914 Eddie, whose agent had managed to get him and his vaudeville partner, Al Lee, some bookings in England, called at the Tobias home and asked for permission to marry Ida. By this time, Tobias *pere* had become convinced that Ida never would get interested in any of the steady young men with prospects who came a-courting, and he gave in with reluctant good grace. The vaudeville act didn't do well in England, but Andre Charlot put Eddie into one of his revues. The outbreak of World War I cut this career short, and the Cantors hustled back home, where Lee and Cantor put in more time on the vaudeville circuits.

Eddie went into his first musical show when Earl Carroll tapped him for *Canary Cottage*. After that came the beginning of the long and profitable association with Florenz Ziegfeld—twenty weeks in the *Midnight Frolic* on the New Amsterdam Roof. Then came rapid success in three editions of the *Ziegfeld Follies* and other musical shows, including the famous *Kid Boots*. With that, Eddie was a five-thousand-dollar-a-week man. He made this into a movie and followed it with another film, *Special Delivery*. Both of them were highly successful. The biggest stage success of his career came in 1929-30 when he starred in Ziegfeld's *Whoopee*, following this up

with a movie version. At that time Cantor declared he was through with Broadway because he didn't want to wear out his welcome as he had seen some other great stars do. He wanted to leave 'em laughing; so the movies and radio got him.

But he did come back to Broadway. In 1941 he appeared in *Banjo Eyes* (the show that contained the television-censored song) in a fifty-fifty deal with Warner Brothers. After that, Hollywood and radio claimed all of his time. In 1943 he secured a producer's tie-up with RKO and presented himself in a nostalgic film about vaudeville.

In middle age, Cantor seems to have as much energy as a performer as he always had—and that's plenty! His specialty is a bouncy, nervous demeanor that takes him all over a stage. A lot of people have gone through life with the impression that they've seen Cantor dance in his musical shows, but actually he is not a dancer. It's just his bouncing around that gives the impression.

His outstanding physical characteristic, of course, is his eyes. They bug out prominently, and Eddie has made almost as much capital of them as of his daughters and Ida. The story is told that Eddie once fled from a physician's office when the doctor told him that his eyes bulged because something was wrong with a throat gland—a slight disorder that could be easily remedied.

Cantor has quite a list of writings to his credit. In 1928 he published his autobiography, written with the late Dave Freedman and called *My Life Is in Your Hands*. After that he published short, gag-type booklets, one of which, *Caught Short*, helped him recoup some of the considerable losses he dropped in Wall Street in 1929. *Yoo Hoo Prosperity*, *The Eddie Cantor Five-Year Plan*, and *Your Next President* were others.

Cantor used the "running-for-President" gag during part of one radio season, and it was a long time before the echoes of a resounding chant called "We Want Cantor" died out of the air.

The daughters, incidentally, are Marjorie, Natalie, Edna, Marilyn, and Janet. Eddie became a grandfather in 1939 when Natalie and Joseph Metzger became parents. And, of all things, it was a boy!

EDDIE CANTOR . . . *On the Air*

CANTOR: Harry, just think—in a couple of hours we'll be on a train heading East.

VON ZELL: Oh, boy!

CANTOR: You know, Harry, the last time I had to leave the radio station to catch a train, they gave me two motorcycle cops for an escort.

VON ZELL: You must have attracted a lot of attention.

CANTOR: Well, who wouldn't—running between two motorcycles!

VON ZELL: Eddie, I understand this hospital and camp tour you're making takes you all the way to New York.

CANTOR: Yes, New York. I love to go down on the East Side and see the house where I was born. Harry, they put up a plaque over the door, and you should see the crowds passing by it every day.

VON ZELL: What does the plaque say?

CANTOR: "No vacancy!"

VON ZELL: Oh, stop clowning, Eddie. I'm anxious to get started. What train are we going on?

CANTOR: Well, the train I'm trying to get tickets for leaves on tracks seven, eight, nine, and ten.

VON ZELL: That must be a long train.

CANTOR: No, a woman engineer—she brought it in sideways!

VON ZELL: Women engineers. Traveling's a lot different today.

CANTOR: You said it. Diners are so crowded, I'm bringing along a lot of sandwiches.

VON ZELL: So am I.

CANTOR: Harry, if I'm bringing a lot of sandwiches, you don't have to.

VON ZELL: I don't?

CANTOR: No, I'll take care of the sandwich trade—you can sell magazines! But seriously, diners are overcrowded nowadays. In fact, civilians should give up their seats to service men.

COOKIE: Oh, Master—

CANTOR: Yes, Cookie.

COOKIE: Once I gave my seat to a soldier, another time I gave my seat to a sailor.

CANTOR: Well, they're supposed to get traveling priorities.

COOKIE: Who was traveling? My girl friend and I were sitting on a bench in Griffith Park!

CANTOR: Oh, fine. Anyway, Harry, just think, next Wednesday we'll be in Chicago. Aren't you excited?

VON ZELL: Yeah, Chicago, the Windy City. Oh, boy! When the wind blows I go outside, stand on the corner, and *wow*—what fun!

CANTOR: Looking at the girls?

VON ZELL: No, flying my kite!

CANTOR: There's one thing I must do before I leave town. Hand me the phone.

VON ZELL: What is it, Eddie?

CANTOR: I got to notify my draft board. Operator, I want to get my draft board—Jenson four, four, four, four.

OPERATOR: Sorry, Jenson has been reclassified to one, one, one, one!

CANTOR: All right, get me that. I hope they let me leave. Hello?

MAN: Local draft board. Greetings!

CANTOR: Hello, this is Eddie Cantor.

MAN: Who?

CANTOR: Eddie Cantor.

MAN: Sorry, we're only handling World War Two!

CANTOR: But look, I want to notify you I'm changing my address. I'm leaving for Chicago.

MAN: Congratulations!

CANTOR: What do you mean, congratulations?

MAN: After looking at your physical, we didn't think you could move!

CANTOR: Well, I guess it's okay for me to go now. I wish that ticket agent would get here with our reservations.

VON ZELL: Yeah, I'd hate anything to go wrong. I'm all excited about the trip.

CANTOR: So am I. You know what I'm going to do when I get to Albuquerque tomorrow morning?

VON ZELL: What?

CANTOR: I'm going to buy a blanket from the first Indian I see. I'll just walk up to him and say, "*How!*"

VON ZELL: *How?*

RUSSIAN: *How* do you do!

CANTOR: Russian, what are you doing here?

RUSSIAN: I am a travel agent. In fact, traveling is mine hobo.

CANTOR: You don't mean hobo, you mean hobby.

RUSSIAN: You travel on your salary, I'll travel on mine!

VON ZELL: Russian, what do you know about traveling?

RUSSIAN: Mine family led the covered wagons across the country. In fact, I used to be an old Indian fighter, but I had to give it up.

CANTOR: Why?

RUSSIAN: No more *old* Indians!

CANTOR: What a dope. I have to start across the country on a tour. Now, have you ever arranged a trip for anyone else?

RUSSIAN: Yes. I was on a train for eight days with Hedy Lamarr going to San Francisco.

VON ZELL: On a train with Hedy La-

marr eight days? You should have got there in one day.

RUSSIAN: Ah-hah. I was so disappointed!

CANTOR: Never mind that. Tell me what train you can get me on.

RUSSIAN: I can get you on our fastest train. This train stops at the stockyards in Kansas City, the stockyards in Omaha, and the stockyards in Chicago.

VON ZELL: Hmmm, sounds like a cattle train.

RUSSIAN: Smells like one, too!

CANTOR: You mean there'll be livestock on my train?

RUSSIAN: Of course. In your car there'll be a hundred head of cattle, fifty bulls and fifty cows.

CANTOR: But I wouldn't feel right being on a train with fifty bulls and fifty cows.

RUSSIAN: I should get a cow for you?

CANTOR: Russian, you fool, a travel agent nowadays is supposed to think of things to help the railroads in the war effort.

RUSSIAN: That's exactly what I'm doing. To help the war effort I have a train leaving Los Angeles for Chicago on track five, and a train leaving Chicago for Los Angeles on track five.

CANTOR: Two trains coming toward each other on the same track? How does that help the war effort?

RUSSIAN: In Kansas City they're having a scrap drive!

CANTOR: Oh, get out!

VON ZELL: Now the Russian's gone and we still haven't got reservations.

CANTOR: Don't worry, the ticket agent I meant is outside in the hall. Now, Harry, I have to run all the way out to Beverly Hills. If you want me, I'll be at Cary Grant's house, packing.

VON ZELL: How can you be packing at Cary Grant's house?

CANTOR: He doesn't know it, but he's going to have to lend me a suitcase!

* * *

CANTOR: Gee, I hope he's home.

[*Door opens.*]

CANTOR: Hello, Cary.

GRANT: Hello.

CANTOR: Cary, I'm leaving for the East on a tour tonight, and I just stopped over to say good-by.

GRANT: Good-by!

[*Door slams.*]

CANTOR: Wait a minute—Cary, Cary—

[*Door opens.*]

GRANT: Well?

CANTOR: Gee, Cary, you closed the door so fast. Can't I come in?

GRANT: Well, to tell you the truth, Eddie, I was just going out.

CANTOR: Cary, I'll only be a second.

I came over to borrow a suitcase.

GRANT: *Borrow* a suitcase?

CANTOR: Well, I wanted to *buy* one, but the stores close at six o'clock, and I didn't get out of the house until five o'clock.

GRANT: What were you doing between five and six?

CANTOR: Waiting for the stores to close! I knew I could count on you. Well, can I come in, Cary?

GRANT: Okay.

CANTOR: Thanks. Say, Cary, how come we never run into each other? I only live across the street.

GRANT: I always leave by the back door.

CANTOR: Since when?

GRANT: Since you moved across the street!

CANTOR: But, Cary, how come when I was producing and starring in my own picture, we both worked on the same lot and I never ran into you?

GRANT: Over there, *you* had to leave by the back door! Now, let's see, you came here to rent a suitcase.

CANTOR: *Borrow* a suitcase! I'm leaving tonight on a U.S.O. tour, to en-

ertain soldiers in hospitals and camps all over the country.

GRANT: Congratulations! You'll do more toward putting patients back on their feet than any other comedian.

CANTOR: Gee, thanks.

GRANT: Yes, when they hear Cantor is coming, they'll jump right out of bed and be off for the fighting front!

CANTOR: As long as they get up, I'm doing my job. Now, how about one of your suitcases?

GRANT: But, Eddie, all my suitcases have my initials. C. G., on them.

CANTOR: That's all right, I'll change my name.

GRANT: What, again? All right, we'll look in this closet. In that corner, there's some airplane luggage. Are you going by plane?

CANTOR: No. With reservations so tough to get, how could I go by air?

GRANT: After all the business you've given the stork, I should think he'd fly you anywhere!

CANTOR: Hey, this is a nice-looking topcoat. It's long enough on me but where are the sleeves?

GRANT: Take off my vest!

CANTOR: I just wanted to see how I'd look in your clothes. Look, I've got on one of your hats and your shirt. Does the shirt look too big for me?

GRANT: I don't know. Pull up the hat, I can't see the collar!

[*Door buzzer.*]

GRANT: There goes the front door again. I'll have to answer it.

CANTOR: How come you're answering the door, Cary? What happened to your butler?

GRANT: That's probably him now. You see, Monday is his day off.

CANTOR: But this is Wednesday. Where is he on Tuesday?

GRANT: Getting to the bars that were closed on Monday!

CANTOR: Oh, fine. How do you ever get the guy back each week?

GRANT: I take down the front gate, hang up a pair of swinging doors, and when he staggers in for a drink, I put him to bed (*Door opens.*) Well—Lassie's come home!

BARCLAY: Who are you?

GRANT: Cary Grant. You're my butler.

BARCLAY: Then hang up my hat and coat. If you're my butler, I want a little respect!

CANTOR: What's he been drinking, Cary?

GRANT: Martinis, I imagine. His head looks like a stuffed olive!

CANTOR: Oh, yes. And his nose looks like the pimiento sticking out of it!

BARCLAY: Did I hear a strange voice?

GRANT: Of course. Don't you see this little man with the big eyes?

BARCLAY: Yes, and if I keep seeing things like that, I'm going on the wagon!

GRANT: You mustn't talk that way to guests. And what's the idea of coming in the front door? Why didn't you use the back door?

BARCLAY: I started for the back door, and just as I was about to grab the knob—

GRANT: Yes?

BARCLAY: The building turned around, and here I am!

CANTOR: This guy's got more alibis than Rochester!

GRANT: And another thing—are you wearing my Tuxedo?

BARCLAY: No, sir, these *were* your tails.

CANTOR: Tails, now a Tuxedo? What happened to them?

BARCLAY: I tossed and turned in my sleep last night, and I must have rolled over too close to the trolley tracks.

CANTOR: Oh, I see.

BARCLAY: The trolley went "ding, ding," and when it went "dong," I was wearing a Tuxedo!

GRANT: Well, go in and take a shower, and straighten yourself out.

BARCLAY: Very well, I'll take a shower but it's silly.

CANTOR: What's silly?

BARCLAY: Standing under a chaser without a drink in my hand!

CANTOR: Gee, I know that guy from someplace.

GRANT: You should know him, that's Don Barclay.

CANTOR: Of course. We worked together in the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

GRANT: You mean you didn't recognize his face after you worked in the *Ziegfeld Follies* with him?

CANTOR: Listen, Cary, when you're in a show with those Ziegfeld girls, you don't spend your time looking at Don Barclay's face! You notice he didn't know me, either!

GRANT: Here, you can have this suitcase with all the labels on it.

CANTOR: The William Penn, Pittsburgh—The Sherman House, Chicago. Gosh, from your vaudeville days, huh?

GRANT: Yeah. Eddie, remember the bill we played on together in Toledo?

CANTOR: Yeah, you were a big, bashful kid at the time. You used to sit in the dressing room all alone, and I went out with every girl in the show—except that redhead. I wonder where she used to go.

GRANT: Who do you think I was alone with!

CANTOR: Oh, ho! Those were the days, eh, Cary?

GRANT: Yeah, but we had our troubles, too. Remember when we couldn't pay our check in that restaurant in St. Louis? Gee, we'd still be washing dishes if Jack Benny, who was headlining, hadn't come to our rescue.

CANTOR: Yeah, he dried 'em for us! One thing I hated about St. Louis—there were twenty girls to one fellow.

GRANT: Well, what are you kicking about?

CANTOR: You were the fellow!

GRANT: Hey, Eddie, look at the music
I found in this old suitcase.

CANTOR: What is it?

GRANT: An act you did with Don Barclay and myself at a benefit in Providence.

CANTOR: Oh, yeah. Hey, Don—Don Barclay!

GRANT: Come on down!

BARCLAY: Hello.

GRANT: Say, Eddie, did Don ever tell you about the novelty act he had in vaudeville—a chicken that used to dance on one leg?

CANTOR: Now wait a minute, Cary—he didn't give you the old gag that things got so tough that he ate the chicken!

BARCLAY: No, but one day in Bridgeport I ate the leg he wasn't using!

CANTOR: Say, Don, Cary and I have just been looking over the song that we did at so many benefits years ago. Would you like to do it, Don?

BARCLAY: You bet!

CANTOR: Well, Cary and I'll pass out the straw hats and canes—

BARCLAY: Yeah, and I'll just pass out.
ALL (singing):

We are Barclay, Grant, and Cantor,
We have songs and snappy banter,
We are buddies, we are roommates,

BARCLAY:
We are chums!

ALL:
We have traveled near and far
And in every town we star
We are palsies—we are walsies,

BARCLAY:
We are bums!

ALL:
Extra! Extra! Extra!
We're here to bring you all the latest
news . . .

GRANT:
Since to war our silk has gone,
Women paint their stockings on.
You would think they're wearing
nylons, but they ain't.

CANTOR:

Now I don't mean to be mean,
But from some legs I have seen,
I could swear there must be
wrinkles in the paint!

ALL:

Extra! Extra! Extra!

We're here to bring you all the latest
news . . .

CANTOR:

I read in the news today

It says that the O.P.A.

Has raised the liquor ceiling price
once more.

BARCLAY:

When I get that certain feeling

I ain't worried 'bout no ceiling

Just as long as I can lay there on
the floor!

ALL:

Extra! Extra! Extra!

We're here to bring you all the latest
news . . .

CANTOR:

So much trouble now to travel

It's a mess they can't unravel.

Here's the story of a lovely girl
and boy.

GRANT:

They were happy bride and groom

Till that mixed-up honeymoon.

She got safely to Niagara,

But they put him off at Troy!

ALL:

Extra! Extra! Extra!

We've finished giving you the latest
news!

We are Barclay, Grant, and Cantor,

You have heard our song and banter,

We're colossal, we're terrific,

BARCLAY:

So we think!

ALL:

We're tremendous, we're stupendous,

And we know we really send yez

Or to put it more specific.

BARCLAY:

Folks, we stink!

CANTOR: Gentlemen, shall we dance?

BARCLAY AND GRANT: *Let's!!!*

[*Swanee dance effect throughout following.*]

BARCLAY: Say, fellows—

GRANT AND CANTOR: Yes, Don?

BARCLAY: My brother has a truck that's an inch wide and a block long.

CANTOR: A truck that's an inch wide and a block long? What does he deliver in it?

BARCLAY: Spaghetti!

GRANT: Congratulate me, fellows. Today I became the father of a bouncing baby.

CANTOR: What is it, a boy or a girl?

GRANT: I don't know. It hasn't stopped bouncing yet!

GRANT: Say, Eddie, am I on the spot! Last night I was standing in front of the Brown Derby with a beautiful blonde and my wife walked by.

CANTOR: That is a tough spot. How are you going to explain the blonde to your wife?

GRANT: I'm not worried about that. How do I explain my wife to the blonde?

CANTOR: Speaking of babies, I've got to get my wife to stop going to the movies.

GRANT: Why?

CANTOR: A few years ago I took her to see *Two Against the World* and that year she had twins. The next year I took her to see *Three Men on a Horse*, and she had triplets. And am I worried now!

GRANT: Why?

CANTOR: Last night she went to see *As Thousands Cheer*!

Laborers in the Cornfield!

ABBOTT
AND
COSTELLO

The power of radio to help careers has never been better illustrated than in the case of the Rowdy Boys of Stage, Screen, and Airwaves—Abbott and Costello. They came out of burlesque with not much more than appetites, and now they count their joint annual income in seven figures. Radio provided the first big boost that made this possible.

The lightning struck in 1938. They were at the stage of struggling out of burlesque into vaudeville and got a booking at Loew's State Theater in New York. They did their wacky rookie soldier routine in which chubby, comic Lou Costello does everything wrong for his officer, Bud Abbott. Ted Collins, who is the business partner of Kate Smith, caught the act and thought the boys would be good for the following week's Smith broadcast. They played the date and were asked back the following week. They stayed on the program a year and a half.

They became famous almost overnight and the demands for their services were heavy. Hollywood got them for a couple of pictures that are better forgotten; Billy Rose presented them in his Casa Manana night club; and the Shuberts signed them for the leading lights in their musical revue *The Streets of Paris* in 1939. Abbott and Costello were a bit reluctant about this latter. After all, they were doing famously on radio and what if they flopped in a big-time Broadway show? It would hurt them, they felt. So their agent made what they considered impossible demands on the producer, only to have all of them met. Finally in desperation, Costello said they also had to have two tickets to *Hellzapoppin*, the crazy Olsen-Johnson

revue for which it was almost impossible to get tickets. They got the tickets and were hooked.

They need have had no fear. Their stuff went over just as well as anywhere else. The show ran the season out and the next summer was transplanted to the World's Fair grounds for a run there. That same year, 1940, they went their own way in radio, providing the summer replacement program for the Fred Allen spot. And they went to Hollywood where they have been ever since.

Their picture prospects soared with the release of *Buck Privates* about this same time. It had cost peanuts to make and it earned a large fortune—one of the greatest “sleepers” in film history. From then on Universal put out one Abbott and Costello picture after another.

The team admittedly relies on pure “corn” for its humor. Their routines have an ancestry that is hidden in the obscurity of time. Experts who have tried to analyze why they suddenly became so successful profess to believe that it is because at the time they came up, the world was in the jittery year just before the war and people were seeking escapist entertainment, especially something that was simple and at which they could laugh.

There may be something in that, but there is really more to it. You can toss their material aside. Start with the fact that Costello—round-faced, round-bodied, with a look like a belligerent small boy who's been told he can't play ball with the older boys—is funny to look at. When he puts on some odd clothes, he's even funnier. Then take into consideration the type of act—a smart guy picking on a dumb but stubborn one, two fellows always in an argument. That, too, is funny—always has been and always will be. Get two fellows involved in such a routine and you'll laugh just from looking at them. They can speak Sanskrit if they want to. They're still amusing.

The jokes that Abbott and Costello use are not really too important. The formula is. And they have one that is sure-fire, especially in a medium where they can be seen. It is a little different with radio, but so far they've been doing all right for everyone concerned in their 10 P.M. Thursday NBC show for Camel cigarettes. Half of

the battle is their loudness and a sense of constant turmoil. On the radio, too, until television comes along, they benefit from the fact that most listeners have seen them either in person or on the screen and as they hear the dialogue have a mental picture of the pair. That is a big help.

The two, between them, violated most of the rules for standard success stories. Bud Abbott, christened William, was born in Asbury Park, New Jersey, October 2, 1900, the son of Harry Abbott, who was an advance man for Ringling Brothers circus. His mother was a bareback rider in the circus. The family moved to Coney Island where Bud managed to get as little schooling as possible, did a few odd jobs, and caught a Mickey Finn in a Brooklyn beer joint at the age of fifteen. When he came to, he had been shanghaied onto a ship sailing for Norway. He jumped ship at Bergen and worked his way back home.

His father was associated with a chain of burlesque theaters and he got Bud a job as assistant cashier in the Casino Theater in Brooklyn. Bud saved his money, got together a burlesque troupe of his own, and soon was branching out with his brother in the ownership of burlesque houses in Rochester, Buffalo, Toronto, and Cleveland. They overreached themselves and in 1929 he was back in the box office of the Empire Theater in Brooklyn. Costello came into his life there.

This Costello is of Italian parentage. He was born March 8, 1908, in Paterson, New Jersey, where his father owned a small silk mill. His real name is Louis Francis Cristello. He was a cutup as a kid, always in mischief at school. One teacher, Mrs. Bessie Whitehead, at Public School 11, left her mark on him by frequently making him repent for his sins by writing a number of times the statement, "I am a bad boy." Years later this became a Costello trade-mark, the famous bashfully uttered "I'm a b-a-a-a-d boy." Costello says that he was "a perfect brute" in school.

He quit high school for a job, got stranded as an actor, returned home, decided to be a prizefighter, got his ears knocked off, and wound up in Hollywood as a laborer on the MGM lot. When he

heard they were looking for stunt men, he applied and was accepted. For about four years he suffered every indignity known to scenario writers in the names of such stellar persons as Karl Dane, Tim McCoy, and even Dolores Del Rio. "I was thinner then," he explains when eyebrows are raised at the latter claim to fame.

The talkies started him back to New York because he saw a lot of frightened actors trekking there to take voice lessons. He figured he'd take them too. He became stranded in St. Joseph, Missouri, found out that a show troupe there needed a "Dutch" comedian, and got the job by sheer bluff. He made good and from then on he was in burlesque under the name of Costello.

Eventually he turned up for an engagement at the Empire in Brooklyn, and legend has it that when his straight man became ill, Abbott, who was familiar with all of the burlesque routines, stepped out of the box office and filled in so successfully that they just kept on going together. Another version is that they got together by design rather than accident.

Anyway, as Lou has put it, "Bud and I was right for each other." The exact details are unimportant.

So for nine years they knocked around in burlesque and lesser vaudeville until the engagement at Loew's State set them on the main line with a full head of steam.

Their radio success, of course, has been great, but their movie rise has been even more spectacular. In the 1941 popularity poll conducted among exhibitors by the *Motion Picture Herald*, they placed third—excellent for a new team's first real year. In 1942 they astounded everyone by placing first. They were back in third position in 1943.

Illness and tragedy marred enjoyment of their success in 1943. On March 6, Lou, the strong man who never had been sick, never hurt, who scoffed at the frailer Abbott's fancied aches and pains, took to his bed with rheumatic fever. He was a very sick man for a few days, then he began to recover. But the aftereffects of this illness can be disastrous and, to make sure, he was completely rid of the germ and not to overtax his heart, his physicians kept him in bed

until that fall. In November, the same day that he was to return to the air with Abbott (who had refused to do the radio show with another partner), Lou's one-year-old son was drowned in the swimming pool at the family home. Lou went through with the broadcast, as funny as ever, breaking down after it was over.

But soon they were back in their stride, both in the movies and on the air, and 1944 was another big year for them. Income tax figures show that from the movies alone they took 789,628 dollars in the twelve months ended August 31, 1943, and their 1944 fiscal year is expected to be larger.

The two do a lot of friendly bickering in private life, probably just out of habit. Abbott professes to regard Costello as a fellow of low taste and a penny-pincher at that.

"Anything I buy is in good taste," Abbott says. "Anything Costello buys is just pure dog."

For a time they engaged in a bit of rivalry by opening Hollywood restaurants. Among their non-profit activities have been a nationwide tour to raise a half-million dollars for Army Emergency Relief and the financing of a foundation at Palm Springs, California, for the treatment of rheumatic fever victims. This last, naturally, is a project very close to them, and they expect to put a large fortune into it.

Someone is always wondering whether or not they will last in the big-time—how long the public will support them in return for a steady diet of corn. This doesn't bother them. Frankly, they think their stuff will go over any time with the general public, let the arty folk sneer if they will. And if the bubble bursts, they've kept themselves in the proper frame of mind.

"We lived in trunks before we came here," Abbott observes, "and we've still got the trunks."

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO . . . *On the Air*

(A Fragment)

ABBOTT: Wait a minute, Costello. You can't do your play now! The censor has to read it first and cut out the naughty words.

COSTELLO: There ain't no naughty words in my play.

ABBOTT: We'll see, Costello. I'll be the censor. Read your play and if I hear one naughty word I'll blow my whistle.

COSTELLO: Okay—here's my play. A boy and a girl are riding along a country road to see Boulder—
[Abbott whistles.]

COSTELLO: Boulder Darn—fooled you! Suddenly the boy stops the car—
ABBOTT (whistles): They've got to keep riding!

COSTELLO: He's out of gas.

ABBOTT: You'll have to change it.

COSTELLO: He's got a flat tire.

ABBOTT: That's okay.

COSTELLO: The young man looks around for help. Then he sees bright lights and hears music coming from the roadhouse—

ABBOTT (whistles): No roadhouses, please!

COSTELLO: What's wrong with a roadhouse? He hears music from a tavern—

ABBOTT (whistles): No tavern!

COSTELLO: The choir is singing "Sweet Adeline"! So he turns to the girl and says, "Do you want to dance?"

ABBOTT (whistles): No dancing!

COSTELLO: He pulls out a package of—

ABBOTT: No smoking, Costello!

COSTELLO: He offers her a drink of—

ABBOTT: And no drinking!

COSTELLO: All right—she doesn't dance or smoke, and she doesn't drink!

ABBOTT: She doesn't?

COSTELLO: No. In fact, Lloyd's of London will give you ten to one she's dead! Well, the hero walks up to the door and decides to step in—

ABBOTT: You can't say "step-in"!

COSTELLO: I'm sorry. It was a slip.

ABBOTT: You can't say "slip"! That also comes under the censor's ban.

COSTELLO: Under where?

ABBOTT: You can't say "underwear"!

COSTELLO: Well, you know how those things creep up on you.

ABBOTT: Will you finish your play?

COSTELLO: Okay—suddenly the boy hears the girl scream. A big animal has come out of the woods.

ABBOTT: Bear?

COSTELLO: No, he had a hat and coat on—shame on you! What kind of a censor are you? Well, to continue—the big beast grabs him and crushes him. He can't breathe—he stands there and pants!

[Abbott whistles.]

COSTELLO: All right. I'll drop the pants.

ABBOTT: Okay. No-no-no-no!

COSTELLO: In the meantime the girl has gone for help and she comes back with the F.B.I. Oh-oh. There I did it. Why did I have to say F.B.I.?

ABBOTT: But what's wrong with the F.B.I.?

COSTELLO: I'll tell you what's wrong. The F.B.I. is a bureau! A bureau is a dresser—a dresser is a chiffonier—a chiffonier is a tall thing with

drawers and "drawers" is a naughty word!

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO

(A Complete Script)

COSTELLO: Hey, Abbottttttttt—!

ABBOTT: Costello, where have you been? And look at you! Your clothes are all mussed. You look like you haven't slept all night!

COSTELLO: You too. I haven't, Abbott! I can't find any place to live. I sat up all night in Griffith Park and this morning I had to get out of there!

ABBOTT: You had to get out of the park?

COSTELLO: Yeah, the pigeons give me twenty-four hours to get a room!

ABBOTT: Costello, it's a wonder you didn't freeze to death, sleeping out in the park!

COSTELLO: Oh, I had my little portable radio with me. That keeps me warm!

ABBOTT: Now how can a radio keep you warm?

COSTELLO: I tune in Gabriel Heatter!

ABBOTT: Will you please talk sense, Costello! How come you haven't any place to live? What's the matter with your house?

COSTELLO: The whole house is full! All my cousins and uncles and aunts moved in on me!

ABBOTT: They did? Good heavens, where do they all sleep?

COSTELLO: I dunno, but this morning I opened a venetian blind and eight cousins fell out! I got ninety-three relatives living with me!

ABBOTT: Ninety-three? How do you ever count them all?

COSTELLO: Oh, I got a great system. I get them all together in one room and sneeze!

ABBOTT: You sneeze?

COSTELLO: Yeah, then I count the gesundheits!

ABBOTT: The gesundheits! Your house must be terribly crowded!

COSTELLO: Oh, Abbott, you ain't heard nothin'! My Uncle Oscar arrived last night and he had to sleep in the refrigerator. He was in there for six hours!

ABBOTT: Six hours in a freezing ice-box? How is he?

COSTELLO: Oh, he makes a nice long drink!

ABBOTT: Costello, you're in a terrible fix! We've got to find you a place to live! What kind of a place do you like?

COSTELLO: I don't care, Abbott! All I want is a bedroom forty feet long and four feet wide!

ABBOTT: What do you want with such a long, narrow bedroom?

COSTELLO: At night I like to bowl!

ABBOTT: Oh, don't be silly! Let's see if we can find a room in the paper! Ah, here's an ad: "Will rent room to sober, reliable gentleman, with references. No pets or children. Room conveniently located near bus-line and bath. \$300 a week!"

COSTELLO: Abbott, does that include *one* or *two* towels? Look, Abbott, all I want is a room for me and my little dog!

ABBOTT: Oh, for you and your dog. Here's a good one: "House-boat for rent!"

COSTELLO: Houseboat? That ain't no good, Abbott!

ABBOTT: Why not?

COSTELLO: Who's gonna get up at two o'clock in the morning and row a dog to shore!

ABBOTT: You mean to tell me your dog gets up at two in the morning?

COSTELLO: Yeah, he's a launcher at the shipyard!

ABBOTT: Your dog launches ships?

COSTELLO: No, while the guys are working he eats their lunches!

ABBOTT: Oh, Costello, you'll never find

- a place to live. Maybe we'd better ask Ken Niles. Oh, Ken!
- NILES: Yes, Bud.
- ABBOTT: Ken, Costello here is looking for an apartment.
- NILES: An apartment for Costello? I know where he can get a small room and bath!
- COSTELLO: A small room and bath! Niles, you forget that *I'm Lou Costello*!
- NILES: Oh, no bath, eh? Ha-ha-ha-ha!
- COSTELLO: Ha-ha-ha-ha! I suppose, Niles, that you live in a classy joint?
- NILES: I'll have you know that my apartment has two stall showers and a stall bedroom!
- COSTELLO: Who do you live with—Elsie the Cow?
- ABBOTT: Costello, please!
- COSTELLO: I shouldn't talk that way about Mrs. Niles—
- NILES: Yes, Costello, when my beautiful wife walks down the street, all the men turn and take a second look at her!
- COSTELLO: Sure, they can't believe what they saw the first time.
- MRS. NILES: I heard that remark, Costello! You—you—you—
- COSTELLO: Don't call me "You"! I don't mind being called "Hey," or "Say there," or even "Pssst"! But don't call me "You"!
- ABBOTT: What are you talking about, Costello?
- COSTELLO: I dunno. I just wanted to see how far I could go without a laugh! I ain't doin' bad, eh?
- MRS. NILES: Costello, if you want a good laugh take a look at yourself in the mirror!
- COSTELLO: Why should I hurt *my* feelings?
- ABBOTT: Now, cut that out, Costello!
- COSTELLO: Well, I mean after all, what right has she got to talk about about my appearance! Get a load of those big ears on her! If she's smart, next week she'll stay in the house!
- MRS. NILES: Stay in the house? What for?
- COSTELLO: It's the opening of the 'rabbit-hunting season'!
- MRS. NILES: I'll have you know I've been taken for Lana Turner!
- COSTELLO: You may have been taken for her but I'll bet you were returned in a hurry!
- MRS. NILES: Lana Turner—Hmmmppppff!
- COSTELLO: Sure, what has *she* got that *you* can't have straightened!
- ABBOTT: Quiet, Costello! Look, Mrs. Niles, Costello is upset today. He doesn't know what he's saying, believe me. He's been forced out of his house and he has no place to live.
- MRS. NILES: Oh, that's too bad, Costello, but I think I could get you a room in the Los Angeles Zoo.
- COSTELLO: Are you crazy? How can I possibly live there!
- MRS. NILES: Leave it to me, I know one of the monkeys!
- NILES (*laughs*): Ha-ha-ha-ha! Oh, darling, you certainly told him off that time! You're so clever! You kill me, my little dove!
- MRS. NILES: Oh, no—you kill *me*, my little dove!
- NILES: No, darling, you kill *me*, my little dove!
- MRS. NILES: No, no, you kill *me*, my little dove!
- COSTELLO: Ladies and gentlemen, you have just heard from a couple of dead pigeons!
- MRS. NILES: Oh! Come, Kenneth.
- [*Door slams.*]
- ABBOTT: Well, you've done it again, Costello! Mrs. Niles might have helped you get a room! *Now* what are you going to do?
- [*Knock on door.*]
- ABBOTT: All right, come in!
- MR. HAMMERHEAD: Good evening, gentlemen. I am Mister Hammerhead, manager of the Paradise Hotel.

Are you gentlemen looking for a room?

COSTELLO: Oh, boy, Abbott—a room at the Paradise! That's somethin'!

ABBOTT: Yeah, Costello, I'll move in with you!

MR. HAMMERHEAD: That's splendid, gentlemen. But all I have left is the bridal suite! Now, Mister Abbott, do you wish to take the bridal suite?

ABBOTT: I do!

MR. HAMMERHEAD: And, Mister Costello, do you wish to take the bridal suite?

COSTELLO: I do!

MR. HAMMERHEAD: Very well, I now pronounce you room and bath, five dollars a day!

* * *

ABBOTT: Come on, Costello, walk faster. We've got to find a room to rent before it gets dark.

COSTELLO: Ohhh, Abbott, I'm tired! Let's sit down for a minute under this tree!

ABBOTT: Wait a minute, Costello, look at this house next door! The sign says "For Sale or Rent"! Come on, let's grab it!

[*Knock on door.*]

MAN: Well, good evening, gentlemen. Looking for a house, are you? Ha-ha-ha-ha! I'm certainly glad to see you boys. Do you smoke?

COSTELLO: Yeah.

MAN: Well, don't get any ashes on the rug. Ha-ha-ha-ha! Oh, I know you boys are going to love this place. Yes, sir, I built this house myself!

COSTELLO: You built it yourself? It looks like the house that *Jerk built*!

MAN: I'm hilarious, ain't I?

ABBOTT: Quiet, Costello! Can you show us through the place, Mister?

MAN: Well, my wife usually does that, but she's A.W.O.L.

ABBOTT: Away without leave?

MAN: No, a welder out at Lockheed! Now, before we go any further,

young fellow, have you got a character reference?

COSTELLO: Yeah, my friend Mr. Abbott, here!

MAN: But he's no reference!

COSTELLO: I know, but he's a character!

ABBOTT: Now stop that! Look, Costello, this lease says that you pay the first twelve months' rent in advance, which applies against the purchase!

COSTELLO: But, Abbott, I haven't got that much money.

MAN: Oh, I wish my wife was here—she'd get you a loan!

COSTELLO: Get me alone? Who wants to be alone with your wife! I don't even wanna be alone with *you*!

ABBOTT: No, no, Costello—he means his wife will get you a loan in the bank!

COSTELLO: Alone in the bank? What does she wanna do, waltz through the vaults?

MAN: I'm trying to tell you that you can get a lien against the house!

COSTELLO: What?

MAN: *Lien against the house!*

COSTELLO: What's the matter with the joint? Is it gonna fall down? Who wants to lean against the house, brother? I wanna go upstairs and lay down.

ABBOTT: What's the matter with you, Costello? To get in this house you must *go through escrow*!

COSTELLO: Now just why can't I go through Glendale?

ABBOTT: Escrow has nothing to do with Glendale!

COSTELLO: Then Glendale will have nothin' to do with escrow!

ABBOTT: Look—when you buy a house, you go through escrow to get a guaranteed title deed!

COSTELLO: What's that?

ABBOTT: Guaranteed title deed, guaranteed title deed!

COSTELLO (*sings*): Title-dee, title-lee,

title-lee, title-dee. No, it's no good, Abbott!

ABBOTT: What's the matter?

COSTELLO: It'll never take the place of "Mairzy-doats"! [Knock.]

MAN: Excuse me, gentlemen, there's somebody at the door. Come in!

RAFT: Who's the landlord here? I'd like to rent this place.

ABBOTT: Say, Costello, look who it is—George Raft!

RAFT: Well, who's got the lease? Where do I sign?

COSTELLO: Not so fast, Raft! I wanna find out somethin'. How did you get here?

RAFT: I came through Pasadena.

COSTELLO: No good—the only way to get this house is to go through es-crow! Raft took the wrong road!

RAFT: Wait a minute, Costello, why do you need this house? I thought you had a suite at the hotel?

COSTELLO: Yeah, but my parents are livin' there!

RAFT: Can't you live with your parents?

COSTELLO: They're still livin' with their parents!

RAFT: Oh, I see—you've got a suite with two pair of parents! Ha-ha-ha!

COSTELLO (*evenly*): Don't get crafty with me, Rafty!

RAFT: Well, you're just yellow, Costello!

ABBOTT: Now, boys—

COSTELLO: Go chase a rabbit, Abbott! I'm a poet, too, you know.

RAFT: Say, you're a fresh little blimp, aren't you, Costello! If you were only half a man, you'd fight!

COSTELLO: And if you were only half a man—

RAFT: Yes?

COSTELLO: Hyah, shorty?

MAN: Now, wait a minute, boys. Don't fight over the house! Why don't all three of you move in together!

RAFT: Well, that's a good idea. I gotta

have some place to live. I'll tell ya what I'll do, Costello. You and Abbott pay the rent and I'll fix the place up! You know, decorate it.

COSTELLO: Well, if you're gonna take care of the furnishings, the first thing I want is a piano!

RAFT: Why? Do you play the piano?

COSTELLO: No, but I like to whittle! Ha-ha-ha. What's wrong with that one?

RAFT: I do a little whittling, too, fat boy, and I may cut you down to my size!

ABBOTT: Now, fellows—forget about the fighting! What would you suggest, George, to brighten the place up a bit?

RAFT: Well, I suggest that we do the living room in squash yellow, the drapes in tomato red and the rug in asparagus green!

COSTELLO: What are we furnishing—a house or a pushcart?

RAFT: Now, wait a minute, Costello—if you'll just act a little more friendly, I may take you along and we'll pick out the furniture together!

COSTELLO: Georgie, this is so sudden!

RAFT: One more crack like that and I'll fill your vest so full of holes you can button it from any angle!

ABBOTT: Now why don't you behave yourself, Costello? George is giving you a chance to help with the furniture. What color would you like to have the sofa?

COSTELLO: I'd like to have it match my eyes!

RAFT: Whoever heard of a bloodshot sofa? Have you any other suggestions, Costello?

COSTELLO: Yes, that corner over by the fireplace looks kind of bare. I'd like to see something hanging there.

RAFT: What?

COSTELLO: You!

ABBOTT: Oh, break it up, Costello! There's one thing more we've got to settle. What about the bedrooms?

MAN: You mean bedroom. There is only one bedroom and one bed.

COSTELLO: Okay, Abbott, you and me will sleep in the bed. We were the first ones here to sign the lease!

RAFT: Wait a minute! This is my home, too! I also signed that lease and that makes me a lessee!

COSTELLO: All right, then you can sleep in the doghouse!

RAFT: The doghouse?

COSTELLO: Yeah—lessee comes home!

* * *

[Pounding on door.]

COSTELLO: Yeh, yeh, yeh. Who is it?

RAFT: It's me—George Raft! Costello, will you get out of that bathroom!

You've been in there for three hours.

COSTELLO: I'm taking a bath!

RAFT: Well, does it take you three hours to take a bath?

COSTELLO: Sometimes longer—sometimes longer. I don't use any water!

ABBOTT: Open that door, Costello.

George and I are getting ready for bed. I'd like to brush my teeth.

COSTELLO: You'd like to brush your teeth? You don't have to come in here for that. Just slide 'em under the door, I'll brush 'em and hand 'em back to yah.

RAFT: Let me at that door, Abbott—I'll get him out of there!

[Door crashes open.]

RAFT: All right, Costello. Get out of that bathtub!

COSTELLO: But I ain't finished my bath yet!

ABBOTT: Costello, you dummy! What's the idea of wearing your long underwear while you're taking a bath?

COSTELLO: I always wear it. The wire brush hurts my skin! . . . Hey, Abbott, get a load of that nightgown Raft is wearing! Woo-woo!

RAFT: What's the matter with my nightgown?

COSTELLO: Aren't you getting a little

stylish—wearing a nightgown with a long train?

RAFT: That's no train! The sheet got caught in my zipper!

ABBOTT: Come on, Costello, we've got to get to bed. It's after one o'clock!

RAFT: Yes, I'm tired. I didn't get a wink of sleep last night. All night long there was a fly sitting on my nose.

COSTELLO: Why didn't you brush the fly off?

RAFT: What for? He wasn't dusty! COSTELLO: This guy's got funnier lines than me!

ABBOTT: Never mind that, Costello. Let's get to bed!

COSTELLO: Okay, Abbott. Wait till I set my alarm clock!

RAFT: Just a minute, Costello. What kind of an alarm clock is that? It's only got half a bell on it!

COSTELLO: That's for when there's two people in the room and only one of them wants to get up.

ABBOTT: Never mind that. The first thing we got to figure out is how the three of us are going to sleep in one bed!

RAFT: Costello, how do *you* like to sleep?

COSTELLO: Alone!

ABBOTT: No, no, Costello! He means do you go to sleep on your right side or your left side?

COSTELLO: Both sides! All of me goes to sleep at the same time!

RAFT: All right, all right, come on, come on. Let's get to bed! Now where's my yardstick? I always take a yardstick to bed with me, you know.

COSTELLO: What for?

RAFT: I like to see how long I sleep!

COSTELLO: One more joke like that and we'll all go to sleep—including the audience!

ABBOTT: All right, Costello—that's enough! Now who's going to turn off the lights?

COSTELLO: I will, Abbott! I'm the fastest man here. I can turn off the lights and dive into bed before the room gets dark!

RAFT: Costello, I'd like to see you do that!

COSTELLO: Okay—get into the bed, you guys! All ready? I'll snap out the light and dive right into bed!

[*Loud crash.*]

RAFT: Hey, Costello, the bed's over here!

COSTELLO: I don't understand it. I miss it every time! Well, as long as I'm on the dresser I might as well sleep here.

ABBOTT: Costello, you can't sleep on the dresser!

COSTELLO: Who can't? I once lived in a room with five guys, and the only thing in the room was a dresser!

ABBOTT: What did you sleep in?

COSTELLO: In drawers!

RAFT: Will you shut up, Costello—and get in bed!

COSTELLO: Please! Please! Do not make so much noise. I am a very light sleeper. Now, you guys spread out—I'll sleep in the middle.

RAFT: Well, if you're a light sleeper, why don't you sleep on the edge?

COSTELLO: Will that help me sleep?

RAFT: Sure, you'll drop right off!

COSTELLO: Are the same guys writing for us?

ABBOTT: Yes. Now listen, stop all this nonsense and let's get some sleep!

RAFT: That's right, Costello, just be quiet! I've got insomnia, and I can't fall asleep quickly!

COSTELLO: Oh, I can fix that, Raft. Just raise your feet up in the air, and let the blood rush to your head.

RAFT: I tried that once. It's no good.

COSTELLO: No sleep?

RAFT: No blood!

COSTELLO: Abbott—brrrrr, it's freezin' in here! Get up and close the window! Brrrr! I'm shiverin'!

RAFT: No wonder you're cold. Your feet are sticking out! Put them under the covers.

COSTELLO: Oh, no, I ain't gonna put those cold things in bed with me!

RAFT: Oh, keep quiet! And go to sleep! Good night, Bud.

ABBOTT: Good night, George—

RAFT: Good night, Costello—
[*Costello snores.*]

RAFT: How do you like that Costello? He's snoring already!

[*Alarm clock.*]

COSTELLO: Huh! Wha! Hey, what's the matter? What happened?

RAFT: You snored so loud you woke up the clock!

ABBOTT: Now this is ridiculous, fellows! I must have some sleep. Let's have a little quiet—quiet—*quiet!*

[*Squeaking of door and small crash.*]

ABBOTT: Costello, did you hear that noise downstairs? It must be a burglar! Costello, did you hear the burglar?

COSTELLO: No, Abbott, I'm asleep!

ABBOTT: Did *you* hear the burglar, George?

RAFT: No, I'm asleep, too!

ABBOTT: Wait a minute! A fine pair of cowards! Somebody has to go down there and catch that burglar. Raft, you go!

RAFT: No, Bud, the floor's too cold!

COSTELLO: What're ya talkin' about, Raft? You got nice warm bedroom slippers!

RAFT: How do you know?

COSTELLO: I got 'em on!

ABBOTT: Look, the three of us will go down together. Now, quiet; don't make any noise!

COSTELLO: But I can't see where I'm goin'. It's too dark!

RAFT: Costello, just follow me! Grab ahold of the tail of my nightshirt!

[*Train whistle.*]

RAFT: What was that?

COSTELLO: I think I stepped on your train!

ABBOTT: Shhh! Quiet, you guys! I can see somebody moving around in the living room.

RAFT: Yeh, look! It's a man, Costello. He's opening up the safe.

COSTELLO: How do you like that? He crawled inside the safe and closed the door!

RAFT: We got him red-handed. Come on out of that safe!

ABBOTT: Wait till I open that safe.

MAN: Well, hello, boys! Ha-ha-ha.

COSTELLO: Look, who it is—our landlord! What are you doing in my safe?

MAN: I sold you the house, didn't I?

COSTELLO: So what?

MAN: Well, I have to have *some place* to sleep! Good night, boys!

COSTELLO: That's the last straw! Abbott, we're gettin' outta here!

ABBOTT: Then where are *we* going to live?

COSTELLO: We're gonna live in escrow!

Blackface!

AMOS
'N'
ANDY

There are some astounding things in the annals of radio entertainment, but nothing there recorded matches the story of the program known as "Amos 'n' Andy." An' dat's de trufe.

The program first went on the air over Station WMAQ in Chicago on March 19, 1928, and it kept going until February 19, 1943. It returned to the air eight months later and is still going strong. The program and its creators are radio history in concentrated form.

Freeman Gosden (Amos Jones) and Charles Correll (Andy Brown) do not see the end in sight. They already are looking forward to television, and are considering the possibility of having the characters portrayed by Negro actors while they continue to supply the all-important voices so familiar to millions of Americans—the voices not only of Amos and Andy, but also of Madam Queen, Brother Crawford, Ruby Taylor, the Kingfish, and Lightnin'. These characters have become a part of the American scene as surely as have any in the most famous books and plays.

The year 1944 was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Gosden-Correll combination, which started as the result of a meeting in Durham, North Carolina, on August 12, 1919. A radio team was not the immediate result; but from then on, the seeds of collaboration began to sprout.

Correll was born February 3, 1890, in Peoria, Illinois, where the families of his parents had moved from the South during Reconstruction. He learned stenography in high school and upon graduation got a job as stenographer in the office of the state superintendent of construction in Springfield, Illinois. After a year, he returned to Peoria to learn the stonemason's trade from his father and, incidentally, to learn how to play the piano. He became quite a player,

worked in a movie house for a time, and then got a job as dramatic coach with a Chicago firm that specialized in putting on amateur shows around the country. He toured the country for a year, putting on pageants and other amateur shows, before he was sent to Durham to stage a musical for the Elks lodge. The job was a bigger one than he had expected, and he sent out a call for help. Freeman Gosden was the reinforcement rushed to the scene.

Gosden was born on May 5, 1899, in Richmond, Virginia, and was educated there and in Atlanta. He became a traveling tobacco salesman, was in the first World War as a radio operator in the Navy, and then decided he wanted to do theatrical work. He had played in amateur performances and was proficient on the then popular ukulele. He started a mail campaign with the Chicago firm that employed Correll and convinced it that he was just what it needed. His first assignment was to Durham to help out Correll.

After the pair had made the Durham Elks happy with their staging of the revue, they went on as a team and finally landed in New Orleans in the fall of 1920. There they had their first taste of broadcasting. An experimental station wanted to test its equipment, and they were invited to sing a song. They sang "Whispering." A woman living four blocks away telephoned that she heard them fine on her crystal set.

They continued with the amateur theatricals and eventually were called into Chicago to become department heads in the home office. This was just about as far as they could go in that field.

The routine and lack of opportunity began to pall on them and, becoming more and more conscious of the advances of radio, they began to wonder if they shouldn't make a stab at it. The Edgewater Beach Hotel had a station called WEBH, and one day in March, 1925, they braced Bob Boniel, who ran it, for a chance to broadcast. They thought they'd probably have to pay a fee for doing so, but this wasn't the case. They used a ukulele to provide accompaniment for their rendition of "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby." Boniel gave them something to eat and said they could sing each night around 11:30 if they cared to do so—no pay, of course, but a meal.

They did this work for eight months, still holding their paying jobs. They found time to prepare a radio sketch for Paul Ash, who was a hot band leader around Chicago in those days. Then Harry Sellinger, manager of WGN, the powerful station of the Chicago *Tribune*, sent for them. They made up their minds to tell Sellinger that they didn't have time to take on another show for nothing, but that they might consider ten dollars a week sufficient inducement to find the time. They were flabbergasted when Sellinger said he was prepared to pay them 125 dollars a week apiece. They began work in November, 1925.

It was good money, but they earned it. From 10 A.M. until sign-off the next 2 A.M., they sang songs, told jokes, served as announcers, played the piano. After about three months of this, they were called in by Ben McCanna, general manager of all the *Tribune's* radio work, who wanted to know if they couldn't take one of the newspaper's comic strips—"The Gumps," for example—and turn it into an air show about married life.

Gosden and Correll felt that this was out of their line—neither was married. They suggested an alternative, a dialogue show with a couple of Negro characters. They were told to go ahead. They created "Sam 'n' Henry," and the characters caught on quickly after the first broadcast in January, 1926. They made a personal appearance tour as Sam 'n' Henry in February, 1928. Right after that, their contract with the *Tribune* ended and they made a better financial arrangement with Station WMAQ, operated by the Chicago *Daily News*. But it developed they couldn't be Sam 'n' Henry any more. The *Tribune* owned the title and wouldn't give it up. The *Tribune* hired two other fellows to carry on Sam 'n' Henry, but they didn't last.

The pair had to do something at WMAQ, so they dreamed up a couple of other characters, called them "Amos 'n' Andy," and made their first broadcast March 19, 1928. The new show caught on quickly and it was not long before other stations wanted to carry it. So they went into the business of supplying recordings of their programs and soon they had a forty-five-station makeshift "network."

The National Broadcasting Company, which by this time gave evidence of being here to stay, in the summer of 1929 called in Gosden and Correll. They were offered a contract calling for their exclusive services for the sum of 100,000 dollars annually. Is it necessary to say that they accepted? On August 19, 1929, they made their first sponsored broadcast, for the Pepsodent Company. From then on, it was a snowball going downhill.

After a few months the program time was changed from 11 P.M. to 7 P.M. because of the complaints of listeners in the East that the original time was too late. Kids had no chance to hear it at all. When the change was made, the West Coast squawked because it was too early. So the pair made a repeat broadcast to quiet the Westerners.

For years, Correll and Gosden did all of the work themselves. They didn't broadcast in blackface. There was no studio audience. In the early days they wrote the script a few hours before going on the air, five broadcasts a week, Mondays through Fridays. Later they worked a day or so ahead. Correll typed out the script as it was conceived.

It has been estimated that at its peak the program had more than forty million listeners. Other programs since have had fanatical fans, but none has had such rabid listeners as "Amos 'n' Andy." People just had to be at their radios when 7 P.M. arrived, come hell or high water.

In 1937 the comedians moved their families to Hollywood and settled down. Pepsodent backed the show for nine years and then dropped it because of the firm's change in policy as to the type of program it wanted. The Campbell Soup Company quickly picked up the team. When that contract ended in February, 1943, the two decided to take a rest rather than start a new series at the tag end of a season.

When "Amos 'n' Andy" returned to the air in the fall of 1943, the format had been changed. The program was a thirty-minute one and was broadcast Friday night only, at ten o'clock, on the NBC network. Also, guest stars were used frequently and the broadcasts were before studio audiences.

"We don't use guest stars just for the sake of having guest stars, however," Gosden explains. "They have to be people who can fit into natural situations with Amos 'n' Andy and the rest of our characters."

The program is big business now in the way it is run. Gosden and Correll have an office in Beverly Hills, California, where they keep two secretaries busy. They keep regular hours five days a week, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. They no longer write alone. They employ a staff of five writers and idea men. And the old days of last-minute preparation are out. Now they try to keep six to nine weeks ahead on their scripts. Not that the two of them aren't still capable of sitting down and turning out a script themselves in short order. They help contribute to the program ideas, parcel the different parts of the program out to the various writers best fitted for them, and exercise complete final revision rights. There are twenty-three minutes of dialogue in each of the thirty-minute shows. About a fourth of the programs have no guest stars.

Aside from its characters, this program will be remembered for the dialect words and phrases it has contributed. The best known of these—one that you heard people using on every side a decade ago—was "I'ze regusted." Others included: "Well, I be dog-gone," "Ain't dat sumpin'?" "Restin' my brain," "I'ze gonna lay down an' think," "Splain it to me." Writing dialect for so many years has made it almost impossible for Amos 'n' Andy to write correct English.

AMOS 'N' ANDY . . . *On the Air*

(A Fifteen-Minute Script of 1934)

LIGHTNIN': Well, de fashion show was a financh success?

KINGFISH: Oh, yeh, it was great all right. Made close to a hundred dollars fo' de lodge, an' we is done paid our rent wid dat, an' light bill an' phone bill—all de utiliries.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah—dat's good.

KINGFISH: Den it was voted last night to send some money oveh to de Harlem Boys' Club, oveh on 134th Street, on account o' de openin' to-day.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah—dat's a big thing oveh dere fo' de chillun.

KINGFISH: Where's Amos 'n' Andy?

LIGHTNIN': I seed Mr. Amos' taxicab, an' I was oveh talkin' to Mr. Andy dis mornin'—he was goin' home an' go to bed. He didn't feel good.

KINGFISH: Too bad. Now, Lightnin', de reason I ast yo' to come by heah, I want yo' to pay some o' yo' dues dat yo' is back in. De record show dat yo' ain't paid but thirty-five cents in de last two years, an' dat's a disregrace to de lodge dat's puttectin' yo' like it is.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah, well, I is behind wid ev'rything; my coffin money's even back now. Insurance man come oveh dis mornin' lookin' fo' ten cents—I had to duck de man—I think dat's done lapsed on me.

KINGFISH: Well, now, wait a minute heah, though, don't fo'git dat dis lodge is givin' yo' puttection.

LIGHTNIN': Well, I just ain't got it. If yo' would lend me some money, I would pay the lodge.

KINGFISH: Whut yo' mean, *me* lend yo' some money? I is flat as a pancake. I got about fifteen cents, an' I gotta git a dollar by tonight somewhere. We goin' have comp'ny fo' supper. De butcher done tighten up on me. I gotta git a couple o' po'k chops in dat house some way. Yo' can't ast de people comin' to supper to eat gravy *all* de time.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah.

KINGFISH: Money is bad wid me. Just talked to my wife—she's puttin' de pressure on *me*.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah, it sho is a mess all right. I wonder where all de money is now?

KINGFISH: I seed a banker de other day. He had a funny look on his face.

LIGHTNIN': It done gone somewhere.

KINGFISH: Well, now, look heah, Lightnin'. Yo' can' be a member o' dis lodge an' act like yo' is actin' 'bout de money.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah.

KINGFISH: Can't yo' go to some friend?

LIGHTNIN': I ain't got no money friends—all my friends is sympathy friends—dey listens an' feels sorry fo' me, but den dey's gone.

[*Telephone rings.*]

KINGFISH: Wait a minute. If dis is my wife, I gonna tell her dere's a chance.

LIGHTNIN': Don't tell her it's wid me.

KINGFISH: Hello.

ANDY: Hello. Kingfish?

KINGFISH: Who dis?

ANDY: Dis is Andy. I bad off.

KINGFISH: Well, whut's de matter?

ANDY: Oh, I's sick—I's sick all oveh.

I need a doctor.

KINGFISH: Where is yo'—home?

ANDY: Yeah. I need a doctor. I kin pay him. I got enough money to pay him.

KINGFISH: Yo' is, huh?

ANDY: Who is a doctor, Kingfish? Who is de best one fo' me to git? I'll pay him cash.

KINGFISH: Hold de phone.

LIGHTNIN': Whut's de matter?

KINGFISH: Lightnin', did yo' know dat I studied medicine at one time? Did yo' know dat I been keepin' up my study? An' did yo' know dat some day I knowed it would come in handy? Study don' never hurt nobody. Look in de closet dere an' see if yo' see a doctor's case in dere.

LIGHTNIN': In dis closet?

KINGFISH: Yeh.

ANDY: Kingfish, where is yo'? Oh me!

KINGFISH: Yo' see it, Lightnin'?

LIGHTNIN': Yessah, it got spider webs on it an' a lot o' dust an' dirt.

KINGFISH: Dust it off an' bring it out.

Wipe it off good. We gotta be sanitary, yo' know. (*Phone.*) Hello.

ANDY: Hello. Where yo' been?

KINGFISH: Brother Andy, yo' is called de right man. I is cured more brothers wid whut yo' got dan any other doctor in de country.

ANDY: Well, whut mus' I do 'bout a doctor?

KINGFISH: Andy, I tell yo' whut—I done retired from de medical puf-fession, but as close as yo' is to me, I can' see yo' sufferin' like yo' is. I is goin' back *in* it, an' I gonna rush to yo' side now.

ANDY: Well, come oveh heah quick an' do whut yo' kin.

KINGFISH: Comin' right oveh, Andy—Dr. George Stevens'll be dere in a minute.

ANDY: Hurry up, will yo'? I kin hardly hold my haid up.

KINGFISH: Leave yo' room door unlocked, put a chair by yo' bed, git a pitcher o' water, an' unlace yo' shoes. I is comin'.

ANDY: All right. Good-by.

KINGFISH: Good-by, Andy.

LIGHTNIN': Whut's de matter wid him?

KINGFISH: Sick as a mule.

LIGHTNIN': I can't open dis thing. Is yo' got a chisel?

KINGFISH: Wait a minute—Lemme see de thing heah, Lightnin'.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah. Maybe yo' kin take dat letter opener dere an' jimmy de thing open.

KINGFISH: No, no, de thing is just rusty. Lemme see it. Dere 'tis. Now it's open. Let's see whut's in heah.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah.

KINGFISH (*to himself*): Pills, pills, pills.

LIGHTNIN': Where yo' git dis?

KINGFISH: I let another doctor have five dollars once, an' he left dis heah fo' me to hold.

LIGHTNIN': Dat's whut yo' call holdin' de bag, ain't it?

KINGFISH: Now, dis thing heah yo' put in yo' ears an' yo' listen. I know dis. Dis is a stethascope. Dere's de thermomeler. Now, dere's a thing dere. See dis thing heah? Yo' wrap dis round a man's arm an' yo' pump it up an' yo' watch dat speedometer—dat's de blood pressure. Come on, let's go. Wait a minute. I gotta look at his throat. You go wid me as my 'sistant. On de way over we'll stop an' git one o' dem ice-cream things on a stick, an' den I kin use de stick to hold down his tongue when he says "ah."

LIGHTNIN': Yessah. Come on, I's wid yo'. I hope he's feelin' better.

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ANDY: Do sumpin' fo' me, Kingfish.

KINGFISH: All right, Andy. Lightnin', where is de ah-stick?

LIGHTNIN': By de way, Kingfish, dis is a lucky stick. Yo' kin git one ice cream fo' nuthin' wid it.

KINGFISH: Yeah? Wait a minute. I got a pencil in my pocket. Open yo' mouth, Andy.

ANDY: O-o-oh.

KINGFISH: I'll hold your tongue down wid dis pencil. Don't worry; I won't stick de rubber in yo' mouth; I'll put de other end in.

ANDY: Ohh-h-h. Ah-h-h-h.

KINGFISH: Lemme see yo' tonsils. Umphum-yeah. Yeah.

LIGHTNIN': Kin yo' see all right?

KINGFISH: Strike a match, Lightnin'—'bout three inches under his nose.

ANDY: Wait a minute! Yo' is pokin' me in de back o' de mouth wid dat pencil.

KINGFISH: Light de match.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah.

KINGFISH: Open yo' mouth, Andy.

ANDY: Ah-h-h-h.

KINGFISH: Uh-huh—purple spots on de back o' yo' throat.

LIGHTNIN': Dat's a indelible pencil yo' got dere.

KINGFISH: Yeh, dat's right. Take it easy now, Andy. Lemme put de things in my ears an' listen to yo' stomach. See, Brother Andy, dis is a stethoscope.

LIGHTNIN': Don't yo' want to take his clothes off?

KINGFISH: Dis thing listens through anything.

ANDY: Oh, me! He'p me.

LIGHTNIN': Whut hurts yo', Mr. Andy?

ANDY: Ev'ything—my haid, my stomach. I got Charley hosses all oveh me.

KINGFISH: Wait a minute heah. Yo' got a knock in yo' 'pendix. Boy, it's really goin' to town.

ANDY: Yo' is pressin' dat thing on my watch.

KINGFISH: Yeh.

LIGHTNIN': Whut yo' think it is he got?

KINGFISH: Look heah, Andy. How much money yo' got?

ANDY: Ten dollahs—in de mattress.

KINGFISH: De thing fo' yo' to do is to take a series o' treatments.

ANDY: When will I git well if I take 'em?

KINGFISH: Well, now, let's see. (*Mumbling.*) Today's Tuesday. You got ten dollars. Two dollars a treatment. Sat'day yo'll be well.

ANDY: Well, do sumpin' fo' me now, won't yo'? Oh me!

KINGFISH: Wait a minute now. I gonna send out an' git some pills fo' yo'.

LIGHTNIN': I'll go, if yo' want me to.

KINGFISH: Wait a minute. Suck on dis glass tube heah an' we'll see how de red thing goes.

LIGHTNIN': Yo' is supposed to shake dem things first.

KINGFISH: Oh, yeah, I heard of dat befoh—shake well befoh usin'. Lightnin', how long is yo' supposed to keep dese things in de mouth?

LIGHTNIN': I don't know. I guess about ten seconds.

KINGFISH: Well, we'll keep it in fifteen, to be on de safe side. Heah, wash it off in dat bowl of hot water first. I wants dis thing to be clean. O. K. Andy, put dis thing in yo' mouth.

ANDY: Ooooh me! Don' gimme too much of dis stuff now.

LIGHTNIN': Boy, he sho lookin' bad, ain' he?

ANDY: I feels awful!

KINGFISH: Well, I guess we keep it in dere long enuff. I gonna see whut your temp'rature is now.

LIGHTNIN': Whut does it say, Kingfish?

KINGFISH: Hmmm—a hund'ed an' ten. Andy, either de ten-cent store done cheat me on dis thermomeler, or yo' is daid!

AMOS 'N' ANDY

(A Thirty-Minute Script
of 1944)

ANNOUNCER: Tonight our story opens in the home of George Kingfish Stevens. It is evening. The Kingfish is comfortably settled reading the evening newspaper and his wife Sapphire is busy chattering away—as wives always do when their husbands are reading—

SAPPHIRE: —And then, George, after Mrs. Van Porter tried on my new hat, guess what she had the nerve to say?

KINGFISH (*grunts*.)

SAPPHIRE: She say: "Sapphire, that hat is simply adorable. I remember when dat hat was in style." George!

KINGFISH: Huh? Whut's dat? Whut was yo' sayin', honey?

SAPPHIRE: Yo' ain' heerd one word I said.

KINGFISH: Yo' think dat's bad?

SAPPHIRE: What?

KINGFISH: I didn't mean dat, honey. I didn't mean it. It jus' slipped out.

SAPPHIRE: If dere's gonna be any slip-pin' out you better stop loafin' aroun' dis house and slip out an' find yo'-self a job.

KINGFISH: Oh, I been thinkin' 'bout gittin' a job, honey, but dis ain' de right time.

SAPPHIRE: Is yo' gonna tell me January is a slow month like yo' said about December an' November?

KINGFISH: Honey, it ain't so much de *month* as it is de *year*. Dis ain't de right year for gittin' a job.

SAPPHIRE: Does yo' mean to tell me, George Stevens, dat yo' ain't goin' to work till 1945?

KINGFISH: Now wait a minute, honey, don't try to pin me down to no perticular year.

SAPPHIRE: George Stevens, I done come to de end o' my rope. I can't

stand no mo'. Ev'ybody in town knows dat yo' is a loafer. I is 'shamed o' yo'. Git yo'self a job or git out!

KINGFISH: Honey, I can't git no job right now.

SAPPHIRE: Den git out o' dis house, I can't stand no mo'. *Git out!*

KINGFISH: Now listen, honey—

SAPPHIRE: I mean it, George—*git out!*

KINGFISH: Okey, if dat's de way yo' feel about it, I is packin' my suitcase right now.

SAPPHIRE: Listen, Mr. George Kingfish Stevens—git out o' dis house, you big bum, git out!

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[*Snoring*.]

ANDY: Hey—hey—who dat snorin'? It can't all be me. Hey, hey, who dis in my bed wid me? Git dem covers off yo' head. Hmm—ain' no head—it's feets—an' if I ain't wrong dey is de Kingfish's. Kingfish, whut yo' doin' in my bed?

KINGFISH: Lemme sleep a little longer, honey.

ANDY: Honey? Git up, Kingfish.

KINGFISH: Er—Andy, whut is yo' doin' in my bed?

ANDY: *Your* bed? Kingfish, one of us is crazy an' I ain't sayin' which one it is, but it ain't me. Whut yo' doin' here in my room?

KINGFISH: Oh yeah, now I 'member.

ANDY: 'Member whut?

KINGFISH: Oh, Andy, me an' de Battle-ax done open up a second front las' night. To tell yo' de truth, Andy, she done throwed me out on my ear. 'Course all my frien's coaxin' me to come stay wid dem. But I figgered dat yo' is my best friend an' if I went any place else to sleep, yo' would be mad.

ANDY: Well, I don't git mad dat easy.

KINGFISH: Yo' door heah was unlocked, so I done snook in an' crawled in bed wid yo'. Er—it's okay

if I stays here wid yo' till dis trouble blow over, ain't it?

ANDY: Well—

KINGFISH: Good, den it's settled. I knowed you'd be overjoyed.

ANDY: Yeah.

[Door opens.

AMOS: Hello, Andy, I— Oh, hello, Kingfish.

KINGFISH: Hy'a, Amos?

ANDY: Come in, Amos.

AMOS: Oh, so yo' slept here las' night, huh, Kingfish?

KINGFISH: Yeah. Me and my wife had a fight an' she kicked me out.

AMOS: Oh! Dat's too bad.

ANDY: An' yo' didn't bring no clothes wid yo', did yo', Kingfish?

KINGFISH: Well, I done packed a suitcase full o' stuff, but I didn't wanna lug it around Harlem wid me so I checked it at de 125th Street Railroad Station.

ANDY: A lot o' good it do yo' up dere. KINGFISH: Look, Amos, could you do me two favors?

AMOS: Whut is dey, Kingfish?

KINGFISH: My wife likes you. Go up and talk to her an' see if you can't git me back in wid her. An' on yo' way up to see my wife, stop by Lightnin's house and give him dis baggage check. Tell him to go up to de station and pick up my suitcase an' bring it up here to Andy's room.

AMOS: Okey, Kingfish. I'll take care o' ev'ything. An' good luck to me on dis mess.

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KINGFISH: Dat was Amos on de phone, Andy. No soap. She don't want me back. She ain't proud o' me an'—

[Door opens.

LIGHTNIN': Here's yo' suitcase, Kingfish.

KINGFISH: Dat's de stuff. Put it up dere on de chair, Lightnin'. I'll git a clean shirt. Look, Lightnin', remind me in de—hey, whut's dis?

ANDY: Whut's de matter, Kingfish?

KINGFISH: Dis ain't my suitcase. Dese ain't my clothes.

ANDY: Yeah, dat's a soldier suit dere, ain't it?

KINGFISH: Lightnin', where'd yo' git dis suitcase at?

LIGHTNIN': It ain't yours, huh? I bet I knows whut happened, Kingfish. When I was carryin' yo' suitcase at de depot, a feller come along an' he musta thunk I was a porter, 'cause he ask me if I would carry his suitcase, too, to de train—it was one jes' like yours.

KINGFISH: Look, Lightnin', all I wanna know is, where is *my* suitcase *now*.

LIGHTNIN': I don't know where it is *now*, Kingfish, but tomorrow mornin' it's gonna be in Chicago. Yo' see, I was carryin' both suitcases an' de man was rushin' fo' de Chicago train an' he musta grabbed de wrong suitcase.

KINGFISH: Lightnin', yo' sho mess things up. Git on outta here.

LIGHTNIN': Yessah.

KINGFISH: Trouble, trouble, trouble—wrong suitcase, my wife done throwed me out. (*Crying.*) My own dear wife ain't proud o' me. I gotta do sumpin'.

ANDY: Yeh.

KINGFISH: I guess Sapphire's right after all, Andy. I ain't done much nobody could brag about. If I could only think o' sumpin' dat would make her proud—hey, wait a minute, a idea just hit me in de head. Dis might be sumpin'.

ANDY: Whut?

KINGFISH: Dat soldier suit dere!

ANDY: Whut about it?

KINGFISH: Listen, Andy, if Sapphire thunk I was in de Army, dat would make her proud o' me, wouldn't it?

ANDY: Yeh, but how is yo' gonna make her believe de Army would take a old goat like yo'?

KINGFISH: Andy, I see de whole thing bloomin' out in front o' me now. Listen, de man dat owns dis uniform is on his way to Chicago so we can't get it right back to him now, anyway. Whut I gonna do is go way downtown where nobody knows me an' go in one of dem photographer's places, put on dis uniform an' have my picture took. Den *you* kin show Sapphire de picture an' dat'll prove to her I is in de Army.

ANDY: Dat's great. But where did I get de pitcher at?

KINGFISH: In de mail. Yo' tell her yo' done got it in a letter from me from overseas.

ANDY: Yo' think dat'll do de trick?

KINGFISH: Oh, sho'. Sapphire couldn't help bein' proud o' me, if she was to to think I was oveh in Africa fightin' dem Japs.

ANDY: 'Course she couldn't. You'd be de only man in Africa doin' dat. In Africa yo'd be fightin' de Aleutians.

KINGFISH: Andy, dis is gonna work great! An' listen, I'll write a letter an' yo' kin show it to *her*, an' tell her dat yo' jus' got it from me from overseas. Is you got any writin' paper, Andy?

ANDY: No, Kingfish, I fresh outta papeh.

KINGFISH: All right, den let's go over to de office an' I'll take dis uniform wid me 'cause afteh we writes de letter, we kin go right down to de photographer's an' have my picture took.

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KINGFISH: Well, I think dat's it, Andy.
ANDY: Yo' got de letter all writ, Kingfish?

KINGFISH: Yeah. See how dis sound: "Dear Andy: Jus' a line to tell yo' I has done arrived in Africa an' I has already done driv de enemy back eight miles—"

ANDY: I thought de enemy was driv out o' dere already.

KINGFISH: Hmmm, yeah. Well, dese is some of, de enemy dat outflanked demselves an' got passed up in de rush.

ANDY: Dat's good. I'll 'splain dat to Sapphire.

KINGFISH: Uh huh. Den I go on to say here: "Andy, yo'd sho' be proud o' me if yo' coulda been here dis mornin' when General MacArthur decolated me wid de Croiks de Gare an' de Extinguished Service Cross."

ANDY: General MacArthur, huh? Where is yo' now?

KINGFISH: I'se still in Africa.

ANDY: Oh. Dat's okay den. Sapphire's really gonna be proud o' yo' when I reads dis to her.

KINGFISH: I'll say so. Git a load of whut I writes here-- "Since de last paragiraffe I is been called to Italy by General Isinglass. I is sittin' in a shell hole an'—"

ANDY: Hey, Kingfish, look at dat ink-spot yo' got on de papeh right dere. Can't yo' rub dat out?

KINGFISH: I put dat blot dere on purpose. Yo' see I switches to writin' in pencil here.

ANDY: Oh yeah, whut yo' do dat fo'?

KINGFISH: Well, lemme read yo': "Andy, please 'scuse de rest o' dis bein' writ in pencil, but my fountain pen was just shot outta my hand."

ANDY: Oh, I see.

KINGFISH: Den I say: "Must close now. Yo' fightin' pahdneh, de Kingfish." How's dat, Andy?

ANDY: Kingfish, dat sound so real, I is missin' yo' already.

KINGFISH: I gettin' kinda homesick myself. It'll feel good to get back. Well, Andy, it's time to go into action. We wants to go down to de photographer's so we kin git dat picture took o' me in de uniform an' put it in de letter.

ANDY: Yeah.

KINGFISH: I ain' gonna put dis uniform on 'til I gits down dere 'cause I don't think dat nobody dat ain't a soldier is s'posed to wear a uniform in de street.

ANDY: Yeah, you'd be kinda takin' a chance dere, I guess.

KINGFISH: I tell yo' whut, Andy, I'll go downtown to de photographer's—heah's de address right here—an' yo' go oveh to Honest Joe's an' borrow a gun an' some 'signias fo' de shoulders an' all de otheh 'quipment I gonna need. Yo' see, I can't be seed floatin' 'round Harlem if I supposed to be in Europe.

* * *

MAN: Something I can do for you, sir?

ANDY: Yeah, I lookin' fo' a man by de name of George Stevens. I suppose to meet him here to have his pitcher took.

MAN: Oh, yes, he's putting on his uniform in this room right here. Go right in.

ANDY: Yessah. Thank yo'.

[*Door opens.*]

ANDY: Hello, Kingfish.

KINGFISH: Hy'a, Andy. How does I look in de uniform?

ANDY: It look good all right. Say, whut is dem two stripes on yo' arm?

KINGFISH: Oh, dat mean I is a corporal. If dis feller dat owned de suitcase had any 'bility, I'd be a sergeant. Tell me, Andy, did yo' git ev'ythin'?

ANDY: Yeah, I think so. Honest Joe didn't have no army rifles. All I could git was dis double-barrelled shotgun.

KINGFISH: Hmmm.

MAN (entering): Now just what kind of a picture do you want taken?

KINGFISH: Well, I wants to be standin' on a gangplank or alongside a troop ship dat look like it's leavin' in a couple o' minutes fo' de front. Yo'

got a background scenery like dat, Mister?

MAN: I may have something in the store room like that we can use. I'll be right back.

KINGFISH: Andy, did yo' git dem 'signias like I told yo' to?

ANDY: Yeah, I got medals an' decorations. An' here's two silver bars I got too.

KINGFISH: Whut do two silver bars mean?

ANDY: I ain't sho'. But whutever one silver bar means, dis means yo' is twice as good.

KINGFISH: Yo' ain' got one wid three silver bars, is yo'?

ANDY: No. But here's a silver eagle fo' *one* shoulder. Dat mean yo' is an American.

KINGFISH: Oh, yeah. Hold dose, I'll put 'em on later.

MAN: I'm sorry, boys, I haven't got a thing with ships or anything like that. It has to be that, huh?

KINGFISH: Yeah, it do.

MAN: Look, why don't you go right down the street here a half a block to my son's place. I think he'll have what you want. He's got a lot of that stuff down there. Tell him I sent you.

KINGFISH: All right, we'll do dat. Thank yo', Mister. Come on, Andy. I'll git my grip here.

ANDY: Is yo' gonna walk out on de street wid dat uniform on?

KINGFISH: Yeah, it's jus' a half a block. Andy, you carry de gun.

KINGFISH: We'll walk fast.

ANDY: Yeah.

KINGFISH: It's only right down—oh, 'scuse me, Mister.

COLONEL: Look out there, soldier. Where do you think you're going?

KINGFISH: Oh, I is sorry, Mister. I jus' wasn't lookin' where I was going.

COLONEL: And another thing, don't yo' know enough to salute an officer?

KINGFISH: Well, look, Mister, I ain' really a—er—yassuh, I'll salute yo', Lieutenant.

COLONEL: Lieutenant? Doesn't this eagle on my shoulder mean anything to you?

KINGFISH: Yassuh, yo' is an American.

COLONEL: I also happen to be a Colonel. Colonel O'Brien. All right, *attention!*

KINGFISH: Oh, I payin' attention.

COLONEL: Heels together, toes out, straighten up. Now salute!

KINGFISH: Yassuh.

COLONEL: Not with your left hand.

KINGFISH: Well, I got dis suitcase in my right. Jus' a minute, I'll switch de suitcase oveh.

COLONEL: What kind of a yardbird are you? Where are you stationed?

KINGFISH: Well—er—me an' my friend here kinda goin' 'roun' on maneuvers right now.

ANDY: Yassuh, dat's whut we doin', Mistuh Colonel—suh.

COLONEL: Are you stationed out here at Camp Yaphank?

KINGFISH: Er—yassuh—dat's where I stationed.

COLONEL: Well, I'm going to turn you over to the Military Police right now.

ANDY: Mistuh Colonel, he kin 'splain ev'ythin'.

COLONEL: He can do his explaining before a military hearing tomorrow morning. And it might interest you to know that *I'll* be the presiding judge.

* * *

SERGEANT: All right, soldier. Out of the guardhouse. You're goin' over to see Colonel O'Brien. Put on your shoes. These court-martials are formal.

KINGFISH: Yessah, I'll put 'em on right now.

SERGEANT: Shake a leg.

KINGFISH: Whut you think de Colonel will do to me?

SERGEANT: Oh, for not salutin', he'll give you a goin' over for about thirty minutes.

KINGFISH: Yessah. I's sho' glad to hear dat. I was a little worried fo' a while.

SERGEANT: *You're* worried! Hah! There's a guy they got down in the other end of the guardhouse that's *really* got trouble. He was picked up wearin' an Army uniform, an' he's not even *in* the Army. They'll probably give him twenty years.

KINGFISH: Yeh, well, I glad da—a—*twenty years!*

* * *

SERGEANT: Sergeant Smith reporting, sir. I have a prisoner here.

COLONEL: Right. Step forward, Corporal Stevens.

KINGFISH: Yessah.

COLONEL: All right, you can stop saluting now, and besides, it isn't necessary to salute with both hands.

KINGFISH: Yessah.

COLONEL: Stevens, pull in that stomach! You're a soldier—not a sack of flour. Stevens, your wilful neglect in failing to salute an officer is a serious offense. This act of yours is not only a breach of the army code and contrary to soldierly procedure, but the manner in which you have conducted yourself is a disgrace to the United States Army.

KINGFISH: Yessuh. I ain' much good, is I? I'll resign out if yo' wants me to.

COLONEL: Oh, you want to hand in your resignation, is that it?

KINGFISH: Ain't no use fo' me to mess up de Army.

COLONEL: Nobody resigns from this Army. Pull in your stomach!

KINGFISH: Colonel, I'se afraid it's out dere permanent.

COLONEL: What a soldier!

KINGFISH: I wonder if I could ask you a question, Colonel O'Brien?

COLONEL: Go ahead. Be quick.

KINGFISH: Well, s'pose a feller done put on an Army uniform, but he didn't really mean to do it, would he git twenty years in de guardhouse or sumpin' like dat?

COLONEL: Are you referring to a civilian who impersonates a soldier?

KINGFISH: Yeah, dat's it. 'Course I jus' s'posin' now. Jus' playing like, you know.

COLONEL: Wait a minute. There's something a little fishy about this whole thing. Sergeant, search the prisoner and get his credentials.

SERGEANT: Yes, sir.

COLONEL: I'll get to the bottom of this.

KINGFISH: I don' know whut all dem papers is dat yo' dug outta dis inside pocket. But I'd like to keep de letter I got over in dis side pocket here.

COLONEL: Let me have that letter, Sergeant. Give the rest of those papers to the officer of the day and have him check them. Well, what's this. "Dear Andy: Just a line to tell you I has done arrived in Africa and I has already done driv de enemy back eight miles." Well, what took you so long, Superman?

KINGFISH: Colonel, I kin 'splain all dat.

COLONEL: I wish you would. Because if a fellow like you can do all that, we'll call the Army home so they won't get in your way.

KINGFISH: No, I mean I wanna 'splain to yo' how dat letter happened to be writ. Colonel, you is a married man, ain' yo'?

COLONEL: Yes.

KINGFISH: Has yo' wife ever throwed yo' out on yo' ear?

COLONEL: What was that?

KINGFISH: No, I guess she ain't. Well, my wife said to me, "Mr. George Kingfish Stevens"—yo' see, when-

ever she says dem words I know I is gone. Anyway she called me a big bum an' throwed me out an' de way I figgered to git back wid her was to make her proud o' me.

COLONEL: Go on.

KINGFISH: Colonel, I guess sometime in yo' life yo' is done done sumpin' dat you wouldn've done 'less yo' had to do it 'cause yo' wanted to do somethin'—er—dat if yo' hadn't done—er—yo' wouldn' done whut yo' didn' wanna do, but had to do 'cause dat was de thing to be done done it—ain't yo'?

COLONEL: By any chance are you talking in code?

KINGFISH: Colonel, I'm gonna tell yo' de truth—

COLONEL: Well, I'm gonna get the truth out of you before you leave here.

KINGFISH: Yessah. Well, de truth is, I is really a civilian—I ain't in de Army.

COLONEL: Then what are you doing wearing an Army uniform?

KINGFISH: I done it so I could make my wife proud of me. Yo' see, I put on dis soldier uniform dat was in a suitcase dat a friend-a mine brung me by mistake. De uniform belongs to some man dat's on his way to Chicago now.

COLONEL: What was your purpose in disguising yourself as a soldier?

KINGFISH: Yo' see, Mister Colonel, your honor, I was jus' gonna have my pitcher took in it, dat's de whole story, on my word.

COLONEL: Stevens, in wearing an Army uniform, you have committed a grave offense, and despite the fact that you didn't know what you were doing, it is my duty to turn you over to—

[Door.

MAJOR: Colonel O'Brien!

COLONEL: Yes, Major Morse?

MAJOR: I think we have something

here. May I ask the prisoner a question?

COLONEL: Of course.

MAJOR: Stevens, do you have any idea where the man is who owns this uniform you're wearing?

KINGFISH: Yassuh. He got on a train last night.

MAJOR: And where was that train headed for?

KINGFISH: Chicago.

MAJOR: Great! Colonel, we've got something here. I would like to call Intelligence at once, tell them to commandeer that train and not let any passengers off until the United States Army takes over!

* * *

COLONEL: And so, George Stevens, your government absolves you of any and all guilt in connection with wearing the Army uniform illegally. This is a serious offense, and one for which there is a drastic penalty. And yet, the seriousness of it is offset by the fact that had you *not* worn that uniform, one of a group of enemy alien saboteurs would have worn it to gain admittance to a large war plant near Chicago, which they had planned to blow up. Through coded papers found in the pocket of that uniform, messages were deciphered which led to the discovery and apprehension of the entire gang of saboteurs. And so, George Stevens, the Army absolves you of the charge.

KINGFISH: Now wait a minute. Mr. Colonel—I is a American citizen an' yo' can't absolve me without a fair trial.

COLONEL: By "absolve," I mean we have cleared you of any guilt, and

the Army thanks you for the services you have rendered.

KINGFISH: Oh, thank you, Colonel O'Brien. Does dat mean dat I is forgive fo' not salutin' yo' too?

COLONEL: It does. In fact I salute you for the good work you've done. You can go home now. I think your wife will be very proud of you. Even more proud than if you had done driv' the enemy back eight miles.

* * *

KINGFISH: So, honey, I done captured all o' dem saboteurs.

ANDY: He got ev'vy last one o' 'em, an' he come out widout a scratch.

SAPPHIRE: Oh, George, I'm so proud o' yo' I don't know whut to do.

ANDY: He's a hero all right.

KINGFISH: I is de biggest man in town. I think I'se gonna git a medal too.

ANDY: Yeh, dey'se gonna measure him fo' it soon as his chest stops swellin'. Oh, he done a great thing fo' his country.

SAPPHIRE: Well, dat sho' is a step in de right direction, George. Now, whut about de job yo' was gonna git?

KINGFISH: Now, wait a minute, honey, I can't do ev'rything at once. I busy now fo' a while bein' a hero.

SAPPHIRE: George, is yo' gonna start lookin' fo' a job, or ain't yo'?

KINGFISH: Honey, I jus' ain't got time right now.

SAPPHIRE: Yo' ain't?

KINGFISH: No, I *ain't* got time.

SAPPHIRE: Listen, Mr.—George—Kingfish—Stevens—

KINGFISH: Hold it, honey, hold it. Git de suitcase, Andy. We's packin' again.

The Fire Chief!

**ED
WYNN**

Ed Wynn came to radio as a star buffoon of the theater—a great clown used to hearing the laughter of thousands. He wanted to hear that laughter as he worked before the microphone, but in those days there was no audience participation of any kind in broadcasts; the cast performed behind “glass curtains” and the spectators were not permitted even to titter. Wynn said that if radio wanted him, all that would have to be changed. And so came this actor’s greatest innovation in radio—the barriers between performers and their audiences were removed.

In addition, Wynn cites this record:

The first actor to use facial make-up during broadcasts.

The first to change costumes during broadcasts. (“I simply cannot work unless there is a theater atmosphere,” he says.)

Originator of “comedy” advertising.

The first to play a stage production and at the same time continue his broadcasting; he closed the show the night of the broadcast.

The first to charge admission to broadcasts (for charity); in 1932–33 he distributed over 82,000 dollars in cities he visited.

The first to broadcast an entire stage show, *The Perfect Fool*, on June 12, 1922, almost ten years before he became a regular radio performer.

Ed Wynn became a regular radio player the night of April 26, 1932, when he appeared for the first time as the Texaco “Fire Chief.” This program ended in May, 1935. It was one of radio’s most successful programs, and to this day Wynn is the “Fire Chief” to thousands who have never known him as anything but a radio entertainer. In the course of his broadcasting appearances in many cities around the country, Wynn has been made an honorary fire chief of

127 fire companies. He is an honorary chief of the International Fire Chiefs Association.

After the "Fire Chief," Wynn became "Gulliver" for another sponsor; and in 1937, for still another sponsor, he was "The Perfect Fool," the designation he had made famous in the theater. He left radio that same year, fed up with it.

Wynn was off the air seven years. He came back in the fall of 1944 as the star of the Blue Network's "Happy Island," a Borden Milk Company program based on a fantasy concocted by Wynn some years before. He appeared as King Bubbles, ruler of a mythical place where everyone was happy, and, as before, appeared in make-up and with several changes of costumes throughout the half-hour show. Other members of the cast also were in costume, and the broadcast was from the stage of a theater adorned with a special set. The show was heavy with situation when it first opened, but a good deal of this was jettisoned after a few broadcasts demonstrated that it wasn't helpful. The show left the air after twenty-six weeks.

A large staff of writers worked on the latest Wynn program, but when he was the "Fire Chief," Wynn and the late Eddie Prebble did all of the writing. Wynn still thinks that the best method is to confine the writing to a couple of persons, but radio isn't run that way these days.

The famous high-pitched voice that Wynn uses on his broadcasts came about entirely by accident. On the stage, Wynn has always spoken in natural, medium register.

"But the night of the first 'Fire Chief' broadcast I was pretty well keyed up," he recalls. "When I rushed out and started to speak, it was in that high register, and unconsciously I stayed with it throughout the broadcast. It wasn't until afterward that I realized what I had done. And do you know I had the devil's own time duplicating that pitch for a while? I had to play back the recording of that first broadcast and listen to it several times before I had it down to the point where it became second nature to me. And I've broadcast in that voice range ever since."

There is one phase of Wynn's radio career that most people have

forgotten—if, in fact, they ever knew it. In 1933 he started a third coast-to-coast chain, the Amalgamated Broadcasting Company, with twenty-three stations. Today's flourishing WNEW was the New York outlet (the "EW" stands for "Ed Wynn"). It was a sort of absentee ownership. Wynn was busy as radio, movie, and stage performer, and had no time to devote to it. He was in Hollywood for a film when it began business in September, 1933. Returning to New York a month later, Wynn discovered, so he says, that the people in charge had quickly run it behind the eight ball, antagonizing all and sundry, and generally ruining a potentially valuable property.

Wynn was disgusted. He washed his hands of the whole affair, taking his very substantial loss and letting the effects be sold to satisfy creditors. He had never set foot inside the offices he created, and it wasn't until more than ten years later that he was to visit WNE(d)W(ynn) to be interviewed by Paula Stone, daughter of his old friend, Fred Stone, the comedian.

Ed Wynn came to the theater from a comfortable home in Philadelphia, where he was born November 9, 1886. He was christened Isaiah Edwin (the source of his stage name) Leopold, the son of a manufacturer of hats. Ed didn't take to millinery as a career, but the crazy hats featured in his costumes would seem to indicate an influence. He owns hundreds of them, as well as scores of fantastic coats and pants. In the matter of footgear he is constant—a pair of shoes he bought in 1909 have been repaired and patched through the years until not a single bit of the original material remains. He has spent upward of fifteen hundred dollars on having the shoes repaired. He feels funny in them.

Ed's father didn't fancy a thespian in the family, so the boy ran away at sixteen for a job with the Thurber-Nasher Repertoire, and made his first professional appearance in Norwich, Connecticut, August 8, 1902. After twenty-one weeks he was stranded in Bangor, Maine, and returned home to enter the hat business. For seven months he traveled for his father and then ditched the job for another go at show business, this time vaudeville. He teamed up with Jack Lewis and for eleven years was a vaudeville headliner in

acts for which he wrote the dialogue, music, and lyrics. Ed recalls eight such acts. He appeared in his first musical comedy, *The Deacon and the Lady*, at the New York Theater in 1910, and then returned to vaudeville.

Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., hired him for the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1914*. He was in fifteen Broadway shows after that—six of them under his own sponsorship. Among them were *The Perfect Fool*, *The Grab Bag*, *Manhattan Mary*, *Simple Simon*, *The Laugh Parade*, and *Hooray for What!* In 1917 Wynn appeared in two shows at the same time—*Doing Our Bit* at the Winter Garden and *Over the Top* at the Nora Bayes Theater—shuttling back and forth between them.

A highly paid star in the Shuberts' *Gaieties of 1919*, he walked out to lead the famous actors' strike that resulted in the formation of Actors Equity Association. He received the charter for the group from the late Samuel Gompers, then president of the American Federation of Labor. As a result, the managers and producers put him on their blacklist and swore never to do business with him again.

Wynn took a few weeks off and wrote the dialogue and songs for the *Ed Wynn Carnival*, which he produced himself. He remained his own boss until 1927, when he did *Manhattan Mary* for George White. After that, he alternated between producing his own shows and working for other producers. In all of the shows he has either collaborated on the book or written it in its entirety. He has written the words and music of eighty-two songs. He made one silent movie, *Rubber Heels*, and two talkies, *Follow the Leader* and *The Chief*.

If you go to a Wynn show, you're apt to see him in full costume before the curtain goes up. He likes to saunter around in the lobby, up and down the aisles, or visit the box office to greet his customers, beaming at them from behind the famous shell-rimmed specs that give him such an owlish look. Ed claims that he used the shell rims for a comedy touch long before anyone else, even before Harold Lloyd.

Wynn refers to himself as a "method comedian"—i.e., he gets laughs from the way he works rather than from gags. However, he is well known for his reliance on puns. He is proud of the fact that

he never uses off-color material. Using costumes and facial make-up, Ed gets his laughs by a sort of befuddled earnestness and a masterful telling of stories that ramble on and on, making no sense whatever. His own versions of the stories of the famous operas, fairy tales and novels are classics of nonsense. He plays the piano and several other musical instruments, but—a rarity among musical show performers—he doesn't sing or dance.

Like many comedians, Wynn has a "trade-mark." His is a long-drawn-out "So-o-o-o-o" interpolated in the telling of some unlikely yarn. He first used it in his own revue, *The Laugh Parade*, in 1931. His mother and some of her friends were up from Philadelphia for a performance, sitting down in the front row. Near the end of the show, Wynn thought he'd give the party a little private laugh by mimicking his mother's peculiarity of interjecting an occasional "So-o-o-o-o" into her conversations. The front row laughed and so did everyone else. He kept it in the act. The lithp that Wynn uses in performance is solely for working hours.

One of the funniest men of our time, Wynn has had a tragic private life. His first marriage to Hilda Keenan, daughter of the late Frank Keenan, one of the country's celebrated dramatic actors of thirty years ago, ended in divorce in 1937 after several years of trouble in and out of courts. Their son, Keenan Wynn, is a rising young actor of stage and screen. In 1937 Wynn married beautiful Frieda Mierse, former *Ziegfeld Follies* showgirl. They were divorced two years later, and for almost two years Wynn stayed close to his apartment, a morose recluse. But under the constant prodding of his friends, he finally snapped out of it and returned to Broadway.

Wynn regards his career as a funmaker with deadly seriousness. He believes the comic is an artist. "The true comedian," he says, "makes you laugh, but you hardly know why—at least the reason is not as obvious as the point of a gag. That's a gift, completely. Either you've got it, or you haven't."

He has it.

ED WYNN . . . *On the Air*

(From a Fire Chief Script, May 31, 1932)

WYNN: As the curtain goes up on the opera *Carmen*, you see Carmen, the heroine of the opera. She is very pretty but very thin. She is so thin she's just like a bone; in fact her own dog buried her three times in one week. The opera is all about gypsies, and gypsies, as you know, are not very clean people.

GRAHAM: What do you mean, Chief? Don't they wash themselves?

WYNN: Oh, yes, they wash clean but they dry dirty. And in the first scene Carmen says to her father, "Papa, your wash is back; the laundry refused it." Her father is the king of the gypsies and he is a very old man. He's so old he gets winded playing checkers. He decides to go fishing. It seems he can only eat soft foods as he has a pullman mouth.

GRAHAM: A pullman mouth?

WYNN: Yes, a pullman mouth. My goodness, Graham, don't you know what a pullman mouth is—no lowers and very few uppers. He is fond of mussels and is going fishing for them. Carmen says, "Are you going fishing, Papa?" and the old man says, "Yes, I'm going to fish for mussels." The next scene shows the mussel-bound old man going to the river. SoOoOoOo. . . . The gypsies gather around the fire just as the hero enters. His name is Joesay.

GRAHAM: You mean Hosay. It isn't pronounced "J" in Spanish; it's pronounced "H."

WYNN: Oh, that's ridiculous, Graham.

According to that if you saw a donkey pulling a carriage in Spain you'd call it a "hack-ass." Well, all right, Graham, I'll say Hosay but it sounds silly to me. The king returns with the fish for the evening meal. He picks out the biggest fish for himself. Just as he sits down, a cat jumps on the table and eats the king's fish. This makes the king mad. So to get back at the cat the king goes over to the cat's saucer and drinks the cat's milk. The second act takes place in New York on Sixth Avenue. Carmen has rented a small store and is now a gypsy fortuneteller. She's a mind reader. She is writing her diary and being a mind reader. She is writing her diary two weeks in advance. As she writes she is singing and laughing. A stranger walks in. He says, "Are you a mind reader?" She says, "Yes." He says, "Then you're a medium." She says, "Yes." He says, "I heard you singing. Are you happy?" She says, "Yes." And he slaps her in the face. Carmen says, "What are you doing?" And the man says, "I'm taking my father's advice. He said I'd be a success if I could strike a happy medium." This appeals to Carmen and she says, "Who are you?" And he says, "I'm a bull-fighter from Brooklyn." And Carmen says, "What's your name?" He says, "Well, my father gave me a Spanish name but I don't know what it is because I can't speak Spanish."

Carmen says, "Come sit on my right hand." He does but jumps right up again because she had a large ring on. She says, "So you are a bullfighter. Have you any scars on you?" He says, "No, I have no scars on me but I can let you have a cigarette." SoOoOoOoOo—Carmen lights the cigarette and the way she smokes fascinates the bullfighter. He says, "You are lovely. Will you kiss me?" And Carmen kisses him but she forgets to take the cigarette out of her mouth. What an exciting scene that is, Graham. This kindles a spark in the bullfighter and he realizes he loves Carmen and he proposes to her. Nine different times he asks her to marry him, and still he keeps on asking her. He will not take "yes" for an answer. He realizes he is hooked unless he finds a way out. He racks his brain. The mental strain is terrific. All of a sudden something snaps. It's his garter. SoOoOoOo—he fixes his garter and Carmen asks him to call. That night the bullfighter calls to see Carmen. He has on a Tuxedo suit which he rented but the rent is in the wrong place. Like all bullfighters he is stout and has very short legs. Carmen sees the funny-looking man in the Tuxedo and faints. She thinks he is a penguin. The last act of the opera takes place in Madrid, Spain. It is the day before the bull fight. The bullfighter from Brooklyn, who we now know as Escamillio, has left a call at his hotel to be awakened at eight o'clock. The clerk calls him at six o'clock to let him know he has two hours more to sleep. As this is his last day of training, he decides to work very hard. He starts shadow boxing but stands perfectly still for a half hour. He is waiting for his shadow to hit him first. The door opens. It is Hosay, Carmen's sweetheart of the first act. He says to Escamillio, "How dare

you try to steal the love of my Carmen?" And Escamillio says, "Your Carmen?" And Hosay says, "Yes, I've known her for years. She sat on my lap when she was a child." And Escamillio says, "Well, I know her better than you do. She sat on my lap last night." SoOoOoOoOo—Hosay rushes out of the room down to the cigar factory where Carmen works. He sees her. She has on a Havana wrapper. He says, "Carmen, how can you treat me like this? After all, I have given you the ten best years of my life." And Carmen says, "My, goodness, were they your best?" Hosay says, "I will fix your new sweetheart. I will put the toughest bull in Spain in the arena against him. This bull is so tough that even cyclones ask permission to pass him." The next scene is the bull fight. The arena is gaily decorated. Royalty and peasants are turning out for the great battle of the year. A carriage drives up to the entrance. A nobleman steps out. He is a pillar of society. The crowd knows this and they lean on him. He is the Earl of Wintergreen. He buys five bags of peanuts to take in the royal box with him. He hates peanuts but he loves to blow up the bags and break them. Carmen too is in the royal box. It is a day when rich and poor mingle. In fact you see Carmen, the cigarette girl, rubbing shoulders with the Earl of Wintergreen. SoOoOoOo—in his dressing room, Escamillio is pacing the floor. His toreador's costume hasn't come back from the cleaners. The spectators are yelling for Escamillio. He cannot wait for his costume to come, so he rushes into the arena in his underwear and the bull sees red. Escamillio wins the fight and so he will not also win Carmen. Hosay shoots her but she does not die. That night she calls up Escamillio

and says, "Did you read in the paper that I have been killed?" And he says, "Yes, I know you're dead. Which place are you calling from?"

ED WYNN

(From 1944 "Happy Island"
Scripts)

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to Happy Island. Here is Ed Wynn as his Majesty, King Bubbles!

WYNN: Hello, everybody! (*Laughs.*)

ANNOUNCER: What are you laughing at, your Majesty?

WYNN: The darnest thing happened. I was just carrying a jar of jelly wrapped in a newspaper when it fell on the floor and broke. You should see the jam Dick Tracy is in today! The devil is in me tonight!

ANNOUNCER: So you have Dick Tracy on Happy Island, eh? In America we even have him on the radio.

WYNN: Don't talk to me about American radio. The programs never have the right sponsors. If I had my way, bald-headed men would sponsor *Can You Top This*, waiters in restaurants would sponsor *Take It Or Leave It*, and the right program for women who can't get girdles, *Let Yourself Go*.

ANNOUNCER: America's a great place, King Bubbles. There's something new every day. Did you ever hear of liquid stockings?

WYNN: Liquid stockings! Happy Island goes America one better. We even have liquid stockings in curved bottles. That's for women who are bowlegged. What an island for women. For instance. We advertise a big bargain sale on Wednesday and all the women come in the store and tear each other to pieces for three hours. The funny part of it is the store has nothing to sell on

Wednesday, that's only the rehearsal for the real sale that takes place on Thursday. America has something new every day. . . . Why, only today I invented a new recipe for chocolate cake. My chocolate cake is made out of yeast and shoe polish. That's so people who eat it can rise and shine. And another thing, I hear there's a big shortage of matches in America. . . . Even if you get cigarettes you can't get matches. You don't need matches on Happy Island. Instead of 20 cigarettes to a pack we put in only 19. In that way every pack is a cigarette lighter. And in our apartment houses, we have a very scientific plumbing system. Every apartment has three pipes running through it. One for hot water, one for cold water, and one to bang on when there is no hot or cold water. I understand in America one of the big issues is trade relations. There's no issue here on Happy Island about trade relations. On our island when people don't like their relations they trade 'em. . . . And I just sent to General MacArthur my invention to do away with gasoline for his army cars. . . . You put two Japanese tires in front and two American tires in the back and boy, will that car go!

* * *

GATEKEEPER: Right this way, folks.

This is Worry Park. Are you worried about something? When you play Postoffice are you always stuck with a dead letter? Did you have to move in with your maid's family so you wouldn't lose her? Whatever it is, come in and shoot your troubles to King Bubbles. Step mournfully, please.

WYNN: Hello, Smiley. How's business?

GATEKEEPER: Oh, we've got flurries of worries today, your Majesty. That

woman over there has been waiting for you.

WYNN: What's troubling you, Miss?

DOWAGER: Pahdon me, your Majesty.

I have avoided beauty shops all my life, but I have been advised to go to one and get a mud pack. Do you think mud packs make women more beautiful?

WYNN: Well, I don't know if mud packs make women more beautiful.

All I can say is that I used to raise pigs and it didn't do them any good.

GATEKEEPER: Look over there, your Majesty. There's a man with his head in his hands.

WYNN: Yes, and it'd look much better if he would put it back on his shoulders. What's your problem, Mister?

RABBIT MAN: King Bubbles, my wife wanted to make a rabbit stew for dinner last night. She went to the butcher store for a rabbit, and the butcher looked at her in astonishment. And all she asked for was one rabbit. Can you tell me why?

WYNN: Why, sure. The butcher was surprised when your wife asked for one rabbit because everybody knows there's no such thing as one rabbit.

GATEKEEPER: There's a woman who is very anxious to speak to you, your Majesty.

WYNN: What's your worry, Madam?

MOTHER: King Bubbles, my child is always biting his fingernails and I want to break him of the habit. I was told to paint the nails with iodine. Do you think I ought to do this?

WYNN: My heavens, no! That's brutal. . . . The best way to stop the child from biting his nails is to have his teeth yanked out.

GATEKEEPER: Over there, your Majesty, there's another woman who seems to be in need of your advice.

WYNN: Unburden yourself, Madam.

WIFE: My husband is an actor. He is such a bad one he can't keep a job.

He's the meanest man you ever saw. He has mortgaged the house and squandered the money. He sold my automobile. He stole money from his father. He hocked all my jewelry. He strikes me continually, and last night he beat up his own mother because she wouldn't give him any money.

WYNN: I can tell you exactly what to do with a man like that. You send him to Hollywood to see Walt Disney. If Disney made all those millions with a mouse, think what he can do with a rat.

GATEKEEPER: There's one person left in Worry Park your Majesty. . . . That's Mr. MacMurray. He looks as though he has a fret.

WYNN: Oh, Fret MacMurray. I've heard the name. What's your trouble?

MAN: King Bubbles, I have an unusual problem. I own an automobile supply store and every time my brother becomes a father, I give him a gift from my store. So far I have given him a speedometer, a pair of fenders, and seventeen other things. Now he is going to be a father for the twentieth time and I don't know what to give him.

WYNN: Well, if you own an automobile supply store and you've given your brother a different thing for each of his nineteen children and you you say he is going to become a father for the twentieth time, by all means this time give him a stop-light!

* * *

BEULAH: Uncle Bubbles, Uncle Bubbles, will you tell me my bedtime story now?

WYNN: My story tonight reminds me of a movie, Beulah. Did you see *Going My Way* with Bing Crosby?

BEULAH: No, I saw it with my mother.

WYNN: If I had any sense I'd quit

right now. Tonight's story is called *The Common Cold*. Isn't that a catchy title? This story is the silliest thing you've ever heard. Our heroine reminds you of radio programs.

BEULAH: Uncle Bubbles, what do you mean she reminds you of radio programs?

WYNN: For goodness sakes! She reminds you of radio programs. Her face shows *The March of Time*, her figure is like *We, the People*, and her nose is like a pelican's—it's *Just Plain Bill*. She's an old maid and one day she says, "I want to go out West where men are—"

BEULAH: Go on.

WYNN: That's all. She wants to go out West where men are—well, she goes West and meets a man. He used to be a bottle neck in a defense plant. All he wanted was to be at his bottle and neck. But now he has a fifty-fifty partnership with another man in a rich gold mine.

BEULAH: Uncle Bubbles, what do you mean a fifty-fifty partnership in a rich gold mine?

WYNN: Well, it's a sort of a bonanza split. Anyhow they meet at a dance. She is so fat, he dances with her for half an hour before he realizes she is still sitting down. He tries to impress the girl. He says, "You know I speak six dead languages" and she says, "You ought to make a very sociable corpse." This makes them sweethearts. He proposes to her. She says, "I have a confession to make—I have false teeth." He takes off his toupée and says, "Thank goodness you told me. Now I can cool off my head." See how complicated this is getting?

BEULAH: Yes. Uncle Bubbles, how do

you ever get these stories so mixed up?

WYNN: Well, it's not easy. Now the girl makes him run to a preacher. He runs like a centaur.

BEULAH: Uncle Bubbles, what do you mean like a centaur—what's a centaur?

WYNN: A centaur? That's a mythical animal. I don't know how to describe it. A centaur is a man with a horse where his pants ought to be. They're at the preacher's house now and the preacher says to the boy, "Do you like ice cream?" and the boy says, "I do." The preacher says to the girl, "Do you like chocolate sauce?" And the girl says, "I do." The preacher says, "Then I now pronounce you hot fudge sundae." Now of course, she is a married woman.

BEULAH: Uncle Bubbles, what's a married woman?

WYNN: A married woman? My goodness everybody knows what a married woman is. That's someone who has absolutely nothing to wear and six closets to keep it in. The wife likes clothes so much that one day when her husband comes home she says, "How do you like this new skunk fur coat I bought? It's genuine skunk. I bought it for a song." He says, "What's the song? 'I Walk Alone'?" Here my mood changes, Beulah, and the finish of the story takes place ten years later. They have an eight-year-old boy. He is always fighting with the other boys. If he isn't fighting on one side of the street he is fighting on the other side of the street and he always gets beaten up. His mother nearly goes crazy because she never knows which side her brat is battered on.

The Brat!

**FANNY
BRICE**

Peck's bad kids ever have been the stuff of comedy. Whether they bat others around or get batted around themselves, it's a laugh. They're the type you'd murder within the hour if you had to live with them, but when they happen to someone else, especially in make-believe, it's funny. Baby Snooks is radio's prime contribution to the long line of brats that passes beyond ken down through the years of show business and literature.

How effective Snooks would be in the hands of anyone other than Fanny Brice can lead only to one of those futile arguments that begins nowhere and proceeds furiously to the same locality, but the chances are strong that anyone you asked for a snap judgment would reply that the kid couldn't possibly be so funny if someone other than this great lady of the stage took over the job of intoning that drooling, coy, insinuating, half-insulting "Daa-d-d-y." For Miss Brice *is* Baby Snooks. They form one of the most inseparable combinations of character and player in any branch of modern show business.

It is proper to refer to Miss Brice as a great lady of the stage because, despite the fact that she has been in radio almost exclusively since 1938, she will always be remembered best for her work behind the footlights. Great comedienues are rare, and she touched the heights in the legitimate theater for more than two decades. Other fine performers have gone into the films or radio and in a few brief years it is almost impossible to remember them as ever having meant anything to the stage. But Miss Brice is different. People on Broadway can still see her, even on cloudy days.

The chief reason for this difference is that much of Miss Brice's entertainment magic is visual. She possesses the art of making people laugh on sight. A grin, an eyebrow lift, an arm gesture, a walk—all

these and other things can bring gales of laughter for Miss Brice. She is a skilled pantomimist, considerably more than a voice for those who have seen her.

As a matter of fact, Snooks herself comes from the stage and can lay claim to the legitimate birth that some of the people whose paths she crosses Sunday nights on the Columbia Broadcasting System's network feel disinclined to attribute to her.

Miss Brice always has been a fine mimic, either for profit or for fun. Once at an after-the-show party she did an impromptu characterization of a small child she called Babykins. It stuck in her mind and in the minds of those who saw it, with the result that playwright Moss Hart wrote a skit for her in which she appeared as Baby Snooks in a *Follies* revue. A couple of years later, when Miss Brice appeared as a guest star on the Good News radio show in 1938, the late Dave Freedman, a great writer of radio material, dusted off Baby Snooks and prepared a special script for her. The appearance was so successful that Miss Brice and Snooks moved in on the program, went from there to Maxwell House Coffee time for five seasons, and then went on their own with undiminished malice.

Actually, Snooks is not anything particularly different in the way of fictional brats. She is precocious, but most of them are. She is willful, revengeful, prying, dissembling, and just generally hell on a tricycle headed for an open manhole. So the explanation for her popularity must invariably come back to Miss Brice, whose career has been the sort that makes fiction turn green with envy.

Borach was the family name. Fanny was born on New York's lower East Side near Delancey Street. Her father, an Alsatian Jew, operated several saloons. The family moved to Newark, New Jersey, when Fanny was very young, and then trekked to Brooklyn when she was twelve. She evinced the first signs of showmanship when she used to gather a bunch of kids and sing in neighborhood backyards for any small coins that might fall their way.

One night she went to Keeney's Theater in Brooklyn. It was amateur night and Fanny got up on the stage and sang "When You Know You're Not Forgotten by the Girl You Can't Forget," win-

ning the first prize of five dollars—probably in recognition of her ability to sing through the title line without running out of breath. After that, she was a confirmed amateur-night bug; the theater bee was firmly planted in her bonnet. School was finished. The next stop was a stereopticon parlor in East 83rd Street, Manhattan, where twenty times a day she sang the illustrated songs shown on the screen and at other moments worked as ticket-seller, cashier, and pianist. She toiled from 11 A.M. to 11 P.M. for eight dollars weekly.

Fanny had her eye on Broadway even then. When the opportunity presented itself, she walked blithely into an audition for a revue being put on by the great producing firm of George M. Cohan and Sam H. Harris and said she was just what they needed in the way of a chorus singer and dancer. She didn't last long. She had neglected to learn how to dance.

After that, she went to work for Rachel Lewis, who had a vaudeville act that played one-night stands in Pennsylvania. Next came a job with a Hurtig & Seamon burlesque troupe. She started as a singer, picked up some dancing, and wound up as the company soubrette.

By 1910 she was singing dialect songs (written by a fellow named Irving Berlin) as one of "Spiegel's College Girls" in the famous old Columbia Burlesque Theater in Manhattan. In those days fine new talent was frequently to be seen at the Columbia. Legitimate producers like Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., Charles Dillingham, Sam Harris, and others scarcely ever missed a new Columbia show, and so it was that Ziegfeld came to see Fanny Brice. She was seventeen. He hired her for the even then fabled *Follies*. She changed her name to Brice, which was the handle of a neighbor.

Ziegfeld signed Fanny to a seventy-dollar-a-week contract for the 1910 edition of the *Follies*, and she made good instantly. She also was in the 1911 edition. In the next few years, she played in other musicals and vaudeville here and abroad, and was back with Ziegfeld again in the 1916 *Follies*. She was in the subsequent editions of 1917, 1920, 1921, and 1923. Those were the days of great musical

comedy personalities and most of them worked in the *Follies*—Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, Bert Williams, the Dooleys, W. C. Fields. This was the fastest theater company it was possible to keep, but young Fanny had no difficulty maintaining the pace. In fact, there were many times when she set it.

In 1924 Miss Brice starred in *The Music Box Revue*, working for the man who once had fired her—Sam H. Harris. Producer David Belasco, who had made a great dramatic actor out of a burlesque comic, David Warfield, thought he saw possibilities of duplicating this feat with one of the distaff set, and in 1925 he and the actress signed a contract. Although many said it would ruin her comedy career, she had her nose bobbed to improve her looks and in 1926 appeared for Belasco in a play called *Funny*. It was only a moderate success. She went back to the musicals where she could mimic and mug to her heart's content. Subsequently she made several Hollywood films, but for some reason she and the movies never quite hit it off; she kept coming back to the stage until the radio bug bit her.

Miss Brice has been married and divorced three times and has a son and daughter by her second husband, Julius Wilford Arndt Stein, better known as Nicky Arnstein. Her third husband was the now famous producer Billy Rose, whom she married in 1929 when he was simply a successful song writer. They were divorced in 1938.

Concerned chiefly with her radio work, the actress leads a quiet existence in her Hollywood home. Not even Baby Snooks bothers her very much, for she is the one person who can keep that female Katzenjammer under control.



Fanny Brice

FANNY BRICE . . . *On the Air*

[*Phone rings.*]

BRICE: Hello.

MAN: Hello, I want to talk to Mr. Higgins.

BRICE: He ain't here. Who's calling, please?

MAN: This is Mr. Mudge from across the street. Who is this?

BRICE: This is Hortense, the maid.

MAN: Well, listen, Hortense. You tell Higgins to call me as soon as he gets in, see? It's about that brat kid of his.

BRICE: About Snooks, Mr. Mudge?

MAN: Yeah. She went and tied up my little boy with some wire from a radio aerial. I just found him in the coal bin.

BRICE: Imagine that!

MAN: You tell Higgins to call me, understand?

[*Door opens and closes.*]

BRICE: I'll tell him, Mr. Mudge. G'by.

[*Hangs up.*]

Hello, Daddy.

FATHER: Hello, Snooks. Did I hear you talking to someone?

BRICE: Did you?

FATHER: Well, maybe I just thought I did. What are you doing up on that chair?

BRICE: I'm waitin' to give you a great big kiss!

FATHER: A kiss? Well, sure, honey. There!

BRICE: Lemme hang up your coat, Daddy.

FATHER: Huh? My coat?

BRICE: I'll brush it off later.

FATHER: Snooks, is something wrong?

This doesn't sound like you.

BRICE: Who does it sound like?

FATHER: Well, never mind. Run along upstairs, dear. Daddy wants to listen to the radio.

BRICE: The radio?

FATHER: Yes. I'm in a hurry to turn it on because the fight's almost started. Now let's see—station KBX—

BRICE: Daddy!

FATHER: What is it?

BRICE: Did you lose three ten-dollar bills?

FATHER: Three ten-dollar bills! Good Heavens, I must have dropped them out of my pants this morning.

BRICE: Was there a rubber band around them?

FATHER: Well, yes, there might have been.

BRICE: A thick red rubber band?

FATHER: Yes, now that you mention it.

BRICE: Well, I found the rubber band!

FATHER: Snooks, don't start with me tonight, please. I told you I wanted to listen to the radio.

BRICE: I know, Daddy.

FATHER: Then why don't you go upstairs and leave me alone?

BRICE: 'Cause you look so tired. Lemme take your shoes off.

FATHER: You want to take my shoes off?

BRICE: Yeah, I got your slippers all ready for you.

FATHER: My slippers?

BRICE: Yeah. Sit down, poor little tired Daddy. I'll put them on.

FATHER: Snooks, you—er—didn't stick chewing gum in the baby's hair again, did you?

BRICE: Of course not, Daddy. Hold your little foot still.

FATHER: Well, I don't get it. Why are you being so sweet?

BRICE: 'Cause you're a very sweet little daddy, Daddy.

FATHER: Well, this is certainly a pleasant surprise. Say, it's taking an awful long time for that radio to warm up. What in blazes is wrong with the thing?

BRICE: Daddy, wanna hear a poem?

FATHER: No, I don't want to hear any poems. I just want to listen to the fight. Maybe if I shake this thing. (*Commotion as he shakes radio.*) Come on, say something.

RADIO VOICE (*abruptly*): —the ringside of Madison Square Garden, ladies and gentlemen, and what a fight! It's the first round and Killer Kosciusko just took a terrific— [*It stops abruptly as it started.*]

FATHER (*frantically*): What happened? It was playing and it stopped. You heard it, Snooks.

BRICE: Yeah.

FATHER: The voice was talking and it stopped.

BRICE: It didn't stop, Daddy.

FATHER: What do you mean, it didn't?

BRICE: I can still hear it.

FATHER: You can? You mean you can hear a voice coming over the radio?

BRICE: Uh-huh.

FATHER: Well, that's funny. I don't hear anything. What's it saying now?

BRICE: He's down.

FATHER: Who's down?

BRICE: Killer Kosciusko.

FATHER: Snooks, I can't hear a thing. This is eerie.

BRICE: Yeah, it's eerie.

FATHER: Maybe I've gone deaf. Snooks, tell me, do you still hear that voice?

BRICE: Sure, Daddy.

FATHER: Stone deaf! Just like that! Don't get scared, Snooks.

BRICE: No, Daddy.

FATHER: I'll manage, somehow. Lots of great men have been deaf. Beethoven wrote his *Ninth Sym-*

phony and couldn't hear his music.

BRICE: Poor little deaf daddy!

FATHER: Me, Lancelot Higgins, earless at the age of thirty-five. (*Suddenly.*) What am I talking about? I can hear you!

BRICE: You can hear *me*?

FATHER: Of course.

BRICE: But I ain't talkin'.

FATHER: Snooks, don't drive me crazy! (*Then catching on.*) Oho! So that's it!

BRICE: Oho! G'by, Daddy.

FATHER: Just a minute, young lady! I want to look into this radio.

BRICE: I shined your shoes today, Daddy.

FATHER: Uh-huh, just as I thought! The whole aerial wire is missing!

BRICE: I brushed your hat, too, Daddy!

FATHER: Snooks, look me in the eye! What did you do to the radio? [*Phone rings.*]

BRICE: Let's talk about this tomorrow, Daddy.

FATHER: Stay right where you are, young lady! We're going to get to the bottom of this. Hello. Yes, this is Mr. Higgins. Oh, Mr. Mudge! Yes, Mr. Mudge. *She did, did she?* Uh-huh. Well, I'm certainly glad you called, Mr. Mudge. Good-by, Mr. Mudge. (*Hangs up.*)

BRICE: Was that Mr. Mudge?

FATHER: Yes, Snooks, it was.

BRICE: The Mr. Mudge who tells such awful fibs?

FATHER: Never mind that. What did you do to little Brentwood Mudge?

BRICE: I didn't tie him up, Daddy.

FATHER: What did you do?

BRICE: I just held him. Red tied him.

FATHER: And why, pray, did you use the wire from my aerial?

BRICE: 'Cause there was clothes on the clothesline!

FATHER: Well, it may interest you to know that Mr. Mudge just found little Brentwood in the coal bin. He says you bit him on the leg, too!

BRICE: He bit me first.

FATHER: Snooks, Brentwood is only four years old. He doesn't know that biting hurts.

BRICE: Well, now he knows!

FATHER: Snooks, I'm gonna have to punish you for this. But I haven't the time now. We're going across the street to get that wire back! Come on.

* * *

BRICE: Do you think we'll get the wire, Daddy?

FATHER: That's why I'm taking you along. You're going to apologize to little Brentwood.

BRICE: Suppose he bites me?

FATHER: He won't bite you unless you give him reason to.

BRICE: You don't know Brentwood. He'll think of something!

FATHER: Well, whatever he does, I want you to remember the time-honored principle, "A gentle answer turneth away wrath." Well, here we are. (*Knocks at door.*) Now remember, Snooks. Make your apology sound convincing.

BRICE: Awright, Daddy.

FATHER: Oh, hello, Mr. Mudge.

MUDGE: Oh, it's you, Higgins! Well, if that kid of yours ever—

FATHER: Now don't get excited, Mudge. I brought Snooks over to apologize to Brentwood. You don't mind, do you?

MUDGE: Just so she don't try any of those Higgins tricks!

FATHER: Higgins tricks! (*Laughs.*) Very good. Come on in, Snooks.

BRICE (*undertone*): He don't like you, Daddy.

FATHER: I know, but you see the way I handled him? "A gentle answer!" There's Brentwood over there! Go ahead.

BRICE: Hello, Brentwood.

BRENTWOOD: Hahwo, Took.

BRICE: I came over to apologize, Brentwood.

BRENTWOOD: He gobboo bobby mome!

FATHER: What did he say, Snooks?

BRICE: He says you look like a bogey man.

FATHER: Ha-ha, very cute! Ask him for the wire!

BRICE: Brentwood, I'm sorry about this afternoon. My daddy wants to know if he can have his wire back.

BRENTWOOD: Nome bike ibboo.

FATHER: What did he say now?

BRICE: He says he don't like you.

FATHER: Now, Brentwood, we want to be friends. I want you and Snooks—owww! He bit me in the leg!

BRICE: What did I tell you, Daddy?

MUDGE: Higgins, why don't you go home?

FATHER: Now just a minute, Mudge. I don't want little Brentwood to dislike me. After all, he has my wire, and—(*Screams in pain.*) Owww! He bit my other leg!

BRICE: Brentwood!

MUDGE: He didn't bite you. You deliberately stuck your leg in his mouth.

FATHER: I did nothing of the kind, but it's an idea.

MUDGE: Higgins, you're just a fat-faced trouble-maker!

FATHER: Oh, I am, am I?

BRICE: Sock him, Daddy.

MUDGE: Yeah. Now get out of here and take that brat kid with you.

FATHER: Just a minute, Mudge. I resent your attitude.

MUDGE: Well, what are you gonna do about it, Higgins?

FATHER: This! (*Sock!*)

MUDGE: Ohh! My nose!

BRICE: Tie him up with the wire, Daddy.

FATHER: Come on, Snooks. Let's get out of here. (*Slams door.*)

BRICE: Daddy.

FATHER: What?

BRICE: Was that a gentle answer?

FATHER: Never mind that, Snooks, what I just gave you was an object lesson. I wanted to prove that there are times when appeasement doesn't

work. Now forget the whole thing,
and here's a quarter.
BRICE: A quarter! Gee, Daddy!
FATHER: You can go out and buy some
more wire tomorrow.
BRICE: For the radio?
FATHER: No, for Brentwood!
BRICE: Oh, Daddy!

ANOTHER BRICE SCRIPT

BRICE: Daddy.
FATHER: What?
BRICE: Is this Miss Gooseberry's
School?
FATHER: Snooks, the lady's name isn't
Gooseberry! It's Shrewsbury! And
I want you to be very careful when
we're inside. Miss Shrewsbury
doesn't admit every little girl. She's
very meticulous.
BRICE: She's very meticklish?
FATHER: Not ticklish—meticulous!
There are only a hundred and ten
students in her private school.
BRICE: That ain't so private!
FATHER: Snooks, we speak of a pri-
vate school as opposed to a public
school which admits anyone. A pub-
lic school has a large body of stu-
dents. Miss Shrewsbury has a small
body.
BRICE: Is she a midget?
FATHER: No. She happens to be a very
cultured and dignified lady.
BRICE: Who?
FATHER: Who have we been talking
about?
BRICE: Miss Gooseberry.
FATHER: *Shrewsbury!*
BRICE: Oh.
FATHER: Well, here's her office.
Straighten your dress a bit, Snooks.
BRICE: It's straight, Daddy.
[Door opens.
WOMAN (*veddy high class*): Ah! Mr.
Higgins, I presume?
FATHER: How do you do? This is my
little child, Snooks. Snooks. this is
Miss Gooseberry.

WOMAN: *Shrewsbury!*
FATHER: I mean Shrewsbury. Sorry.
Er—say hello to the lady, Snooks.
BRICE: Hello.
WOMAN: Snooks! What an odd name!
Are you a little boy or a little girl?
BRICE: A little boy.
WOMAN: Really! And what are you
going to be when you grow up?
BRICE: A big fat man with a mustache.
FATHER: Snooks, stop that nonsense!
You know you're a girl and you're
going to grow up to be a woman.
BRICE: I know, Daddy.
FATHER: Well, why didn't you say
so?
BRICE: She asked me a silly question,
so I gave her a silly answer!
FATHER: Snooks! That's no way to
talk—
WOMAN: Please, Mr. Higgins! In a
progressive school we don't shout at
children or lose our temper.
FATHER: Sorry.
WOMAN: Now before we accept your
daughter's enrollment, we'd like to
ascertain, if possible, her I.Q.
BRICE: What's an I.Q.?
FATHER: Don't be stupid, Snooks. The
lady wants to know if you wear
glasses.
WOMAN: Very amusing, Mr. Higgins,
but I'm much more interested in
her Intelligence Quotient. You don't
mind if I ask you a few questions,
do you, Snooks?
BRICE: No, ma'am, Miss Gooseberry.
WOMAN: Shrewsbury, dear.
BRICE: Shrewsbury, dear.
WOMAN: Now tell me. When you've
finished your studies for the day,
what do you do for recreation?
BRICE: What's recreation?
WOMAN: Recreation is any pleasurable
pursuit. For example, at night, when
your daddy is tired from working,
what does *he* do?
BRICE: That's what mummy wants to
know!
FATHER: Snooks!
WOMAN: No, no, dear. I'm referring to

your hobbies. Isn't there some pastime you like very much?

BRICE: Yeah.

WOMAN: What is it?

BRICE: I like to make spitballs!

FATHER: Spitballs! Of all the asinine answers—

WOMAN: Please, Mr. Higgins. Let the child respond any way she sees fit.

FATHER: But she has other interests, Miss Shrewsbury. Constructive interests. She likes to put her baby brother to bed, for one. Tell her about that, Snooks.

BRICE: How I put Robespierre to bed?

WOMAN: Yes, dear. What do you do?

BRICE: I sing him a lullaby.

WOMAN: How charming! And what do you sing?

BRICE: I sing, "Rock-a-bye, Robespierre, in the treetop—"

WOMAN: That's very sweet. Then what do you do?

BRICE: Then I tuck him in and go to my own little bed.

WOMAN: Yes.

BRICE: And I take my geography book with me.

WOMAN: Yes, and then what?

BRICE: Then I open the book—

WOMAN: Yes?

BRICE: And I tear out the pages and make spitballs!

FATHER: Snooks, you just invented that story!

WOMAN: Please, Mr. Higgins! Remember what I said about temper.

FATHER: Excuse me.

WOMAN: Well—er—let's get on with this intelligence test. Now I'm going to read you a sentence and I want you to tell me what's wrong with it.

BRICE: Awright.

WOMAN: Here's the sentence. "The toast was *drank* in silence."

BRICE: The toast was drank in silence?

WOMAN: Yes. What should it be?

BRICE: The toast was *eat* in silence!

FATHER: That's wrong, Snooks.

BRICE: No good?

FATHER: Awful.

WOMAN: Please, Mr. Higgins! I'll handle—

[*Phone rings.*]

Hello. Oh, yes, Miss Graham, I'll be right over. Pardon me a moment, Mr. Higgins. I'll be right back.

FATHER: Certainly.

[*Door slams.*]

FATHER: Well, I hope you're satisfied!

Not one single question did you answer right!

BRICE: Miss Gooseberry scares me!

FATHER: Scares you? That's the worst excuse—

BRICE: Please, Mr. Higgins! We don't shout!

FATHER: Forget that nonsense! I wish there were some way I could make you get a few answers right.

BRICE: I know, Daddy.

FATHER: How?

BRICE: Let's look at the questions!

FATHER: Snooks! Say, that's an idea.

Where did she put them?

BRICE: Right on the desk.

FATHER: I'm sure there won't be any harm in our peeking. Hmm. Here they are. (*Lowers voice.*) Snooks, listen!

BRICE: I'm listenin'.

FATHER: I'll coach you in some of these answers and you can snap 'em right back at Miss Shrewsbury. She'll think you're a wizard.

BRICE: What's a wizard?

FATHER: Never mind that now. Quick! Here's the first question. It's the same type as the last one she gave you. Ready?

BRICE: Ready.

FATHER: Correct this sentence. "It was *me* who broke the window."

BRICE: It wasn't *me* who broke the window!

FATHER: No, no. The answer is, it was *I* who broke the window.

BRICE: It was you?

FATHER: No, it was you, but you must say it was *I*.

BRICE: I gotta tell her you broke it?

FATHER: No, *you* broke it?

BRICE (*cries*): Boo hoo.

FATHER: What's the matter now?

BRICE: I didn't break any window!

FATHER: I know you didn't, but say so anyway. Say *I* broke it.

BRICE: *I* broke it?

FATHER: That's right. Now remember—

[*Footsteps.*]

FATHER: Quiet, here she comes!

WOMAN: I'm terribly sorry for the interruption.

FATHER: Quite all right.

WOMAN: But we'll make up for lost time now, won't we, Snooks?

BRICE: Uh-huh.

WOMAN: Now I think perhaps I've been on the wrong track with the questions I've been asking you. I'm going to try something else. Listen closely.

BRICE: I'm listenin'!

WOMAN: There are three eggs on my desk—

BRICE: I don't see any eggs.

WOMAN: We're just imagining it, dear. There are three eggs on my desk. Take one away and how many do you have?

BRICE: Miss Gooseberry, I gotta confess somethin'.

WOMAN: What, child?

BRICE: I broke your window!

WOMAN: You broke my window?

FATHER: Ha-ha. She's only fooling, Miss Shrewsbury. Forget the window, Snooks.

WOMAN: This is all very confusing. I don't see any broken window.

BRICE: Then I guess everythin's all right. 'Cause I don't see any *eggs*!

WOMAN: That's just a figurative statement. It's part of a test.

BRICE: Is it?

FATHER: Try to answer, Snooks. For heaven's sake!

WOMAN: Mr. Higgins! Lower your voice. Now, dear, there were three

eggs on the desk. Take one away and what do you have?

BRICE: A broken window.

FATHER: Snooks, figure it out. Take one egg from three eggs and how many do you have?

BRICE: Four.

WOMAN: No, no, from the original three on the desk, you're taken one.

BRICE: Have I?

WOMAN (*exasperated*): Yes.

[*Snooks cries noisily.*]

FATHER: What's the matter?

BRICE: Now she says I stole her egg!

WOMAN (*yelling*): I didn't say anything of the sort!

BRICE: Yes, you did.

FATHER: Snooks, stop snivelling. Who said anything about stealing eggs?

BRICE: Miss Gooseberry did!

FATHER: Not Gooseberry—Flutesbury!

WOMAN (*through her teeth*): Shrewsbury!

BRICE: I wanna go home!

FATHER: You can't go home. You're gonna stay here and finish this intelligence test.

BRICE: I wanna go home!

FATHER: Snooks, I'll take you over my knee—

WOMAN: Mr. Higgins, that's no way to bring up a child. Perhaps your training is the reason she—she's so backward.

FATHER: There's nothing wrong with my training.

WOMAN: Don't bark at me, Mr. Higgins.

FATHER: Who's barking at you?

BRICE: Waaahhh!

FATHER: Shut up!

WOMAN: Mr. Higgins—

FATHER: You shut up too!

WOMAN: Oh! What a father for a helpless little child!

FATHER: Helpless, is she? Well, maybe your experimental school ought to experiment with this— (*Sock.*)

BRICE: Wahhhhhh!

Peck's Bad Berle!

**MILTON
BERLE**

The day that Milton Berle isn't engaged in half a dozen things at the same time, he'll probably lapse into a nervous breakdown out of sheer boredom. Being just a radio headliner couldn't possibly keep him happy.

Berle is a stage star of the first magnitude—primarily in revue or musical comedy, but a straight dramatic part doesn't intimidate him—a movie actor, song writer, play producer, and writer. He is as hard to keep track of, once he leaves his home late in the forenoon, as a snowflake in a sack of flour. He has an office for his enterprises, but if you ever find him there, set it down as a dull day in which he had nothing to do for half an hour.

Even if you locate Berle and pin him down to your own particular business for a while, the chances are that he is juggling three or four other matters around in his head while he's taking care of you—working out a song lyric, thinking up a radio idea, deciding whether to go to Hollywood or appear in a Shubert musical, combing his mental files for a sequence of gags to be used at a benefit performance in a couple of hours.

But whatever he is thinking about, Milton's thoughts are never far away from gags. They creep into his conversation almost unbidden. He has few peers—some people claim none—at getting up before a crowd—anywhere, any time—and rattling off a series of rib-ticklers on any subjects that scamper through his restless mind. He is a monologist supreme and unique. Milton's gags come as fast as bullets; no rambling build-ups. His stock in trade is called the one-line joke.

Berle is a strong believer in situation comedy, even if he is not its foremost practitioner; he contends that the joke is still an important ingredient of such comedy.

"Go through the scripts of the best of the situation comedy radio shows," he says, "and you'll find them well sprinkled with out-and-out gags. Jokes are still the lifeblood of any type of comedy. They've changed in style a little through the years, but they're still there."

Milton ought to know whereof he speaks insofar as radio is concerned. He has been at it pretty steadily for almost fifteen years and has watched and helped microphone humor develop from its earlier forms. He started out doing guest shots with Rudy Vallee and claims to have been the first to do a string of one-line jokes on the air.

"I started doing that type of monologue on radio when people used to say it couldn't be done," he recalls. "They called it suicide."

Berle has had a series of air shows through the years—"Shell Chateau," "Ziegfeld Follies of the Air," the Gillette "Community Sing," "Stop Me if You've Heard This One," "Three Ring Time," and others. Since March, 1943, he has been engaged as star of the Eversharp show, "Let Yourself Go," which started out as an almost scriptless, audience-participation thing and has gone through two or three changes in the process of hammering it into a successful program with the aid of writer-producer Hal Block. On January 10, 1945, the program was moved from the Blue Network to CBS.

The comedian has a very definite idea of what makes a popular radio program.

"I don't care what they say, the most important factor is the time element—the hour you're on and whom you're up against," he says. "That can make or break any program insofar as the popularity ratings are concerned."

Contrary to most of the topnotchers, Berle has not let radio dominate his life. He has continued to grow as a stage and movie performer, and an example of the esteem in which he is held on Broadway is that his is the first name ever to get billed atop that magic show title, *Ziegfeld Follies*. The Shuberts accorded him that

honor in the 1943 *Follies*, which ran almost eighteen months—more than six months longer than any other edition of the *Follies* had ever lasted in New York. And Berle really carried that show to success on his own shoulders, a Herculean feat for which he started training at an early age.

Milton was born July 12, 1908, in a Harlem tenement, one of four sons and a daughter born to Moe and Sarah Berlinger. Not long after Milton's birth the father became ill and was a semi-invalid most of the rest of his life. This meant that the mother had to support the family, and this she did with a determined energy that is one of Milton's most important heritages. She worked off and on as a detective in Wanamaker's department store.

The future comedian started his career informally by imitating Charlie Chaplin around the neighborhood. His mother decided he was cut out for the theater when he won an amateur contest at a theater, and shortly after that she began taking him to the motion picture studios then centered around New York. He worked pretty consistently in a number of films, including the old Pearl White series, *The Perils of Pauline*, Marie Dressler's *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, and others. He played with John Bunny, Ruth Roland, and Mabel Normand, to name a few of the stars of those days. Another of his pictures was *The Mark of Zorro*, in which a fellow named Douglas Fairbanks also played.

Mrs. Berle put Miltie into vaudeville in an act called "Melody of Youth," and vaudeville became his career for the next ten years. "Mom" was with him constantly, battling for more money and better billing, coaching the boy and otherwise furthering his career, which had now turned into the channel of comedy. They played up and down the land, almost anywhere it was possible to make a dollar. Milton got his schooling largely through correspondence courses with the Professional Children's School in New York.

By the middle 1920's, Milton was making good money—up to 150 dollars a week. He kept going up. All show business knew the fresh Berle kid and anticipated big things for him. In 1931 he got his big chance at New York's Palace Theater, then in its last glory

of two-a-day vaudeville. One of the headliners of a new bill became ill shortly before the opening. Berle was hired to fill his place—and he was made.

The following year he had his first role in a Broadway show, Earl Carroll's *International Vanities*. While he was appearing in this show, he suffered a nose injury that required an operation some eight years later—an operation that contributed not only to his well-being but also to his appearance. Now, when he keeps his weight under control, he can palm himself off as a reasonably handsome leading-man type. But he will beef up occasionally. He likes food.

Next to his association with his "Mom," probably the greatest one-woman claque in history, Milton got the largest amount of his publicity in those first years of Broadway success by fostering a reputation as a gag-stealer. Walter Winchell dubbed him "the thief of bad gags." Milton made capital of this situation for a time. One of his cracks was: "I listened to Jack Benny on the radio last night. He was so funny that I dropped my pad and pencil." But eventually he wearied of this reputation and earnestly denied that he ever had knowingly stolen jokes from any of his contemporaries. He says it all started as a made-up job between himself and the late Richie Craig, and points out that it doesn't stand to reason that a person could build himself into stardom on such a larcenous foundation.

Berle keeps a large library of joke material, as do most comedians and comedy writers. He also closely scans current events for topical subjects that can be turned into a laugh. He frequently writes song lyrics and has had several hits, one of them being "You Took Me Out of This World." Not many people know that he also is the author of the hilarious "Sam, You Made the Pants Too Long," which another comic has sung to fame. In the winter of 1944-45, he and two others gave birth to a song called—believe me—"I Wuv a Wabbit" (I Love a Rabbit) for those who have outgrown their first childhood.

Once established on Broadway, Berle was never idle. There were radio shows, night-club engagements, vaudeville—all at steadily increasing prices until he was making thousands weekly. He had one

musical-show flop, *Saluta*, but after that came *Life Begins at 8:40* and the first of two *Follies* he has been in. There was a film now and then and on September 25, 1939, he made his debut in a straight play, a comedy produced by George Abbott and called *See My Lawyer*. The critics went to scoff, but they came away impressed.

You get the real Berle, with no holds barred, when he's in a musical show. He stops at nothing to get laughs. He is a master at working with specialty acts—acrobats, jugglers, dancers—and will take any amount of mauling around from them so long as it adds to the general hilarity. During those years of the small-time, he picked up at least a smattering of almost every kind of routine, and this accounts for his versatility. He works with an intensity that keeps fellow-players constantly on their toes. As one of his fellow-workers in the last *Follies* put it:

"Milton is a perfectionist. Once a bit of business is worked out just the way it should go, he expects it to be played just so every time, even after several hundred performances. If there is the slightest thing different, a second off in the timing, he will be aware of it. He may not realize immediately what was wrong or who was in error, but he'll think back over it until he does find the flaw. Then it is fixed."

Berle married beautiful Joyce Matthews, a showgirl, on December 4, 1941, in Beverly Hills, California, while he was there making a film. With his encouragement, she has essayed roles in a couple of plays.

"Mom," of course, has been taking it easier for several years now. But she is still her son's greatest fan; and, though he has expert legal advice on business, Milton likes to get her reaction to his projects. After all, she didn't exactly ruin his career.

MILTON BERLE . . . *On the Air*

BERLE: Ever hear some of those cigarette commercials? Try a pack of Smudge Pot queen size cigarettes. Each cigarette is six feet long! Smoke one in bed and keep your feet warm. Smudge Pot contains no harsh irritants, no nicotines, no tobacco, no nothing. Just a hunk of paper. Yesterday I went to a night club and they had a wonderful floor show, and saw some pretty chorus girls. You know what a chorus girl is? That's sixteen beautiful girls—all named Mrs. Manville. Everybody in those Cuban night clubs dances the rhumba. You know what the rhumba is? That's a bustle released for active duty. For some reason I can't forget my school days. What memories. I can still remember that little black schoolhouse. It was in Pittsburgh. I may not have been the smartest boy in the class but I wasn't far away from the smartest—about three seats away. How we kept the teacher on her toes. We put tacks on her chair. Mathematics was a pipe for me. One and one is two, and two and two is four, four and four is eight, eight and eight is sixteen, sixteen and sixteen—and then there's geography.

* * *

BERLE: And now, my friends, I would like to say that in every clime there are certain men who rise above the crowd—men who lift their voices against intolerance, injustice and foul play. We have such a man with us tonight. It is my great privilege

to introduce to you the Robespierre of Red Hook, the Patrick Henry of Prospect Park, the Anatole France of Flatbush, Mr. Leo (Shut My Mouth and Call Me Lippy) Du-rocher.

LEO: Why Mr. Berle, I'm quite shocked. My finer sensitivities are deeply piqued by your sullen innuendos and your shocking insinuations are most intemperate. In short, Mr. Berle, if I may say two words—

BERLE: Yes.

LEO: Shut up.

BERLE: Ah, that is more like the Du-rocher we all know and love, the scourge of all umpires in both leagues. By the way, Leo, how are you making out with the umpires these days?

LEO (*pouting*): They never talk to me.

BERLE: Why?

LEO: They don't want to interrupt me.

BERLE: Why don't you quit having all that trouble with umpires?

LEO: I don't any more. Milton, I've made all kinds of resolutions about umpires.

BERLE: Yes, and before the end of the game your resolutions are usually carried out. But tell me, Leo, what happened with that Giant game last night?

LEO: The Giants? Hmmm—where are they from?

BERLE: Remember? They're from New York.

LEO: New York? Oh, yes. Isn't that the place where Brooklyn people change trains for Yonkers?

BERLE: Yes. You can't miss it when

- you come out of Macy's basement. It's on your right. Look, the Giants are a team.
- LEO: Oh, certainly. I remember seeing them play the Green Bay Packers.
- BERLE: For your information the Green Bay Packers do not play baseball.
- LEO: Neither do the Giants.
- BERLE: If my friend Phil Weintraub is listening to me I hope he didn't hear that.
- LEO: If Weintraub is listening to you he deserves to hear it.
- BERLE: Now steady here, Leo, I'm beginning to lose control.
- LEO: What's that?
- BERLE: I said I'm beginning to lose my control.
- LEO: Maybe you should pitch for the Giants.
- BERLE: What? And throw my grandmother out of a job? What am I saying?
- LEO: Why don't you come down and see a real team play once?
- BERLE: How do you get to Ebbets Field?
- LEO: You take the B.M.T. first to Prospect Park. Then you get out. Then you stand on any street corner. Wait until a crowd gathers and then yell, "Hurray for Bill Terry—Hurray for the Giants."
- BERLE: But where do I go?
- LEO: Don't worry. They'll tell you.
- BERLE: What kind of a team have the Dodgers got this year?
- LEO: The team is doing swell. We've got a great club.
- BERLE: I know that. But how would the team make out if you didn't have a club?
- LEO: Are you trying to insinuate that we try to influence the umpire?
- BERLE: I wouldn't say that. But it does happen that Ebbets Field is the only place in the world that serves right and left-handed pop bottles.
- LEO: You're wrong about that, Milton.
- In case there's a question about a decision, I merely point out our side of the argument and then listen with quiet and restraint as he presents his views.
- BERLE: And what if his views shouldn't happen to coincide with your views?
- LEO: You can look that up in the records of the Polyclinic Hospital.
- BERLE: Umpires really get in your hair, don't they, Leo?
- LEO: They sure do.
- BERLE: Well, I shouldn't worry about that. Soon your troubles will be over.
- LEO: No more umpires?
- BERLE: No more hair.
- LEO: Say, you're not much of a Dodger fan, are you, Milton?
- BERLE: Are you kidding? My whole family are Dodger fans. Why, I had an uncle who made a fortune out of the Dodgers.
- LEO: You mean betting on them.
- BERLE: No, he serves neon hot dogs at the night games.
- LEO: I'll bet you've never seen a Dodger game.
- BERLE: Never seen a Dodger game, huh? I remember one at Ebbets Field last year. What a thrill I got watching the entire Dodger outfield running for the same fly ball, with all three wheel chairs meeting in dead center.
- LEO: Well, it's not as bad as all that, Milton.
- BERLE: Well, how is the manpower situation affecting the team?
- LEO: I'll admit they're a little tough to handle.
- BERLE: Why is that?
- LEO: Well, you see they don't have to play baseball. They've almost got their old age pensions.
- BERLE: Well, if you're having any trouble I might be inveigled to play a little ball for you.
- LEO: Have you played professional ball before?
- BERLE: Have I played professional ball

- before? Why, I started with the Black Sox.
- LEO: You mean the White Sox.
- BERLE: Black Sox.
- LEO: You don't know the baseball situation.
- BERLE: You don't know the laundry situation. Why, when I was a kid the other fellas couldn't play ball without me.
- LEO: Why not?
- BERLE: My stomach was third base.
- LEO: Are you much of a pitcher? Have you much of a slow ball?
- BERLE: Slow ball? I have a ball that goes so slow that after it leaves my hand, both teams can autograph it before it reaches the plate. Would you like to see an outcurve? An incurve? Would you like to see a screwball?
- LEO: Oh, Milton. You're just self-conscious.
- BERLE: Leo, you should see the team that I have all rigged up. It's called the "Ziegfield Fillies." Why, we've won every game. You see I got nothing but A.F.L. and C.I.O. umpires.
- LEO: Union umpires? Well, what good does that do?
- BERLE: No strikes. You should have seen us playing that "Follow The Girls" team the other day.
- LEO: I saw that game.
- BERLE: Did you notice when their pitcher threw a fast ball at my head. I didn't bat an eyelash.
- LEO: You didn't bat anything else, either.
- BERLE: You keep telling those kind of jokes, Leo, and you'll wind up having circles under your eyes like Fred Allen.
- LEO: Really?
- BERLE: Yeah, and a good two-bagger wouldn't hurt you either.
- LEO: Well, let's not fight, Milton. If you really want to play ball with us, let's see if you can answer this simple baseball question.
- BERLE: Okay. Shoot.
- LEO: Supposing the Giants are at bat, the Dodgers are fielding. What happens if the bases are full and then the Giants batter bunts.
- BERLE: Against Brooklyn, three men score.
- LEO: I can see you know nothing about baseball. No big league team would ever have anything to do with you.
- BERLE: Oh, no? I'll have you know the "Fillies" (chorus girls in *Ziegfeld Follies* in which Milton starred) follow all my pictures. The Cards follow all my stage appearances. And there's another team that never miss one of my broadcasts—
- LEO: Oh, the Braves!
- BERLE: Well, enough of the persiflage. The object of this show is to give vent to your secret ambition. Leo, what is your secret ambition? Come on, let yourself go.
- LEO: Well, last winter Danny Kaye and I were getting an act ready to take overseas to entertain the boys and my greatest ambition is to go overseas and entertain them with that act.
- BERLE: What kind of an act would you like to do?
- LEO: I've always had a hankering to do an old time vaudeville act like this—
- BERLE AND LEO (*both sing*): Dinah, is there anyone—
- BERLE: Don't you think it would be nice if we had a keg of ice?
- BOTH: In the state of Carolina
If there is and you.
- LEO: Mary, Mary, you must get up.
- BERLE: Mother, I'm not able.
- LEO: But, Mary, Mary, you gotta get up.
- BERLE: We need the sheets and the table.
- BOTH: I know that every night why do I—

BERLE: Shiver and shudder and shake
with fright—

BOTH: Because my Dinah might
change her mind about—

LEO: Scratch me, Sarah, with a salad
fork.

BOTH: Dinah, if you wandered to China,
I would hop an ocean liner just to
be with Dinah Lee.

BERLE: Speaking of riddles, why is a
peppermint stick like a race horse?

LEO: I don't know, Mr. Bones. Why
is a peppermint stick like a race
horse?

BERLE: The more you lick it the faster
it goes.

LEO: You tell 'em, gold fish. You've
been around the globe.

BERLE: Twenty-three skidoo. Oh, you
kid checker inspector.

LEO: Lace up your shoes, your tongue
is hanging out.

BERLE: You know, you ought to pull
down the shade at your house. Last
night I passed your place. I looked
up at the window and saw you hug-
ging and kissing your wife.

LEO: The joke's on you. I wasn't home
last night. Yak—yak—yak!

BERLE: If you please, professor. You
sang very well, Leo, but you weren't
funny with jokes.

LEO: I wasn't?

BERLE: No.

LEO: Well, I'm a baseball player. What's
your excuse?

The Colonel!

COLONEL STOOPNAGLE

On October 10, 1930, a well-padded, harassed man of thirty-three named F. Chase Taylor was pecking away at a typewriter in Radio Station WMAK, Buffalo, New York. His stubby fingers were turning out a peculiar type of prose (known as continuity) that would have made Shakespeare turn in his Dramatists' Guild membership card. Suddenly a blond, slim fellow named Budd Hulick, the station announcer, burst into the cubbyhole where the writer was trying to dream up new ways to introduce old songs.

"The CBS line has broken down," Hulick said, acting as if he was about ready to follow the line. "There's a hurricane along the coast. We have fifteen minutes to fill. What are we going to do?"

Taylor didn't look stunned. He was. He contributed a profound echo to the dialogue: "What *are* we going to do?"

"I've got it, Chase," Hulick finally said. "Let's just talk. Whatever we say will be better than silence—I hope."

So the continuity writer and the announcer, a couple of obscure fellows at the mercy of a hurricane, went on the air. They had no script or notes; they had had no time to discuss what they were going to say. They just talked. Whatever popped into their heads went on the air. Apparently it was funny.

Listener response to the impromptu program was remarkable. They got fifteen letters the following day. At first they sort of circled around the mail like Indians around a wagon train, half-afraid to close in and have it out. Then they took the plunge and came up with things like: "Wonderful!" . . . "How long you birds been on?" . . . "When's your next program?"

The upshot was that officials of WMAK decided to put them on

the air regularly, and they adopted the billing of "Stoopnagle and Budd." They specialized in madcap, uninhibited, impromptu humor. For example, they gave Buffalo listeners an alleged eyewitness account of a daredevil stunt man walking up the side of a building, a description of a man trying to deliver a kangaroo to a housewife.

"The Gloomchasers," as they also called themselves, would run out of talk occasionally and they made no bones about it. Listeners would hear Taylor lament:

"Budd, I'm stuck. I can't think of anything to say."

"Don't worry, Stoop, you always think of something."

"But, Budd . . ."

And so on until they were off on some other mad discussion of a subject that would crop up by the merest chance. This business of letting the listeners know that it wasn't always easy to be funny caused a lot of comment, which did the pair no harm. They were unpredictable. Stoopnagle might suddenly break into any part of the program with some such sudden request as: "Budd, will you please scratch my back." The microphone would pick up the sound of scratching and then they'd be off again pursuing the interrupted train of thought, or possibly forgetting about it altogether and following a new line.

In 1931, CBS brought the team to New York and to country-wide attention. They quickly built up a faithful following. It is nothing against them that they did not become the most popular comedians in the business during the seven years or so they were together. The type of humor that Taylor dreamed and wrote was and is a bit on the special side. Some people just don't go for it; those who do, swear by it and at those who don't.

Frederick Chase Taylor was born in Buffalo on October 4, 1897, the scion of a lumber business. As a child, he was more of a student than a neighborhood cutup, although from the age of twelve he was dabbling in amateur theatricals. He got his first laughs when, while

singing before a large audience, he forgot the words and plowed bravely through to the end with something that might have been the forerunner of the boop-a-doop, vo-do-de-o-do type of vocalizing. The crowd loved it. They thought he was a comic.

He attended Buffalo's Nichols School and subsequently went to the Montclair (N. J.) Academy, where he collected such things as a medal for excellence in Latin and the all-around championship in swimming for two years. After that he went to the University of Rochester (N. Y.) and escaped with a B.A. At the age of twenty he joined the U. S. Naval Reserve, serving from April 12, 1917, to December 24, 1918. When he was discharged, he joined his father in the lumber business, which meant to him little more than a lot of board feet. Later he joined a stock brokerage house as vice-president. (Those were the days when stock brokers were popular fellows.)

Taylor didn't let business interfere too much with his hobbies of amateur dramatics and writing. As early as 1925 he was heard over WMAK in a comedy act called "Nip and Tuck." This, of course, was a time when hardly anyone thought of radio as more than an avocation. When the stock market crash came along and the lumber business fell off in the subsequent depression, Taylor began to look at radio with an eye to its possibilities as a livelihood and didn't hesitate when he had a chance to catch on with the Buffalo Broadcasting Corporation, which ran WMAK. He was an actor, continuity writer, announcer, and production man, and, fortunately, there was enough of him to go around. That was where Hulick found him on that fateful October day. Taylor and his first wife, whom he married June 21, 1919, were divorced in Nevada in February, 1936, after a separation of several years. They have a son. Taylor married Kay Bell, a former newspaper woman and secretary to orchestra leader Paul Whiteman, in Baltimore a few days after obtaining his divorce.

The Taylor-Hulick team was so unorthodox that for a time after they came to New York they didn't attract a sponsor—a state of suspension which they used to publicize on their program by

chanting, "They haven't got a sponsor." However, they did get sponsors subsequently and were in the big money for about five years as a team. In the *Radio Mirror* magazine, Taylor once had this to say about sponsors:

"First we built up a reputation for doing our stuff—stuff we thought funny on the air. Then a sponsor would come along and hire us for his show. Right away he would start to change our act. He would insist on our doing what he thought was funny. Naturally, when we did this we weren't funny at all because we weren't ourselves."

(Confidentially, what happened to Stoop and Budd back in the 1930's still goes a decade later—only more so, if that is possible. There are a few specific molds for radio comedy, and if you don't fit, brother, it's just too bad.)

Taylor believes there is such a thing as being too "commercial," a word which is the clincher to any argument with the program builders.

"A program built on plain jokes has no flavor, no tone," Taylor argues. "Anyone can tell a joke if it is handed to him in a script. Of course, that is only my opinion." (And, of course, he's being a bit too arbitrary there.)

Trying to pin down the particular style of comedy of Colonel Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle is not easy. Fred Allen, in a preface to Stoopnagle's book, *You Wouldn't Know Me from Adam*, which was published in the fall of 1944, has this go at it:

"Life to him is the tilt of the cuckoo's wing. Today the Colonel is known to his millions of radio fans as the titan of trivia. . . . He has been chosen pinup boy in many of the country's leading psychopathic wards."

Incidentally, the book, which sold very well, brought the Colonel a lot of fan mail from people wanting to know why he wasn't on the air (sponsors, please note). But there was one crabbed individual, undoubtedly a poor thing indeed, who wrote that he believed it would be a fine idea if, in the future, Allen wrote the books and Stoopnagle the introductions. Which gave Stoop an excellent idea

for the title of his next literary effort. It will be called simply *Introduction by Fred Allen*.

Writing humor is a serious business with the Colonel, just as it is with most people who dabble in the trade.

"You keep seeing things in a distorted light," he explains. "You look at a scene or an object cold-bloodedly, wondering if it really will turn out to be as funny in the script as you think it is at the moment."

The Colonel is long on whimsy as a source of comedy, and he says it's something that can't be learned: "It may be latent or dormant, but instructors and classes can't teach it." And he deplors the popular insult type of comedy.

"Anybody can do that," he argues, while looking around ready to duck any flying missiles. "It's not creative—just an easy way out."

The whimsical side of the Colonel is best demonstrated by a couple of his stand-by formulas. First, there are his inventions: upside-down lighthouses for submarines; red, white, and blue starch for keeping American flags waving when there is no wind; rungless ladders for people who want to wash ground-floor windows; round dice for those who would rather play marbles.

The Colonel is also a man of definitions. These consist of taking an ordinary sentence describing something, and turning it around into a quaint form that almost sounds like some language other than English.

There is one development in radio comedy that has the Colonel's approval. That is the "kidded commercial."

"Before, a comic would slave to get the audience in a light frame of mind, only to see it murdered by a dreary, dull commercial," he says. "Now copy writers have thrown away the bludgeon and are using the rapier. This helps the comic overcome this stop-and-go tempo."

Stoopnagle has by no means been inactive since he and Budd split up the team. He has done radio shows; he writes prolifically on radio and humor for magazines; he writes books and does humorous

newsreel commentary. He is neither gone nor forgotten. Budd also has had some good radio spots in recent years.

The Colonel will go down in radio history as an individualist—an individualist being, by definition à la Stoopnagle, “a guy who, when he is in a crowd, is never lonelier than, only more so.”

STOOPNAGLE AND BUDD . . . *On the Air*

HARRY: An Hour of Smiles in Town Hall Tonight, folks. Sixty minutes of fun and music—fun with Col. Stoopnagle and Budd and music with Peter VanSteeden—new voices, new music, new fun. It's Town Hall Tonight! Listen to that crowd cheer. They're following the parade down the street to the old Town Hall. Stoopnagle and Budd are leading the parade and cutting funny didoes and bingos. The band is blowing away on a rousing march and everybody's on the way to the old Town Hall. Let's join this cheering throng. Everybody's going—everybody's going—The parade goes by. Here's Philo Kribble, the town dude. Going in the hall, Mr. Kribble?

KRIBBLE: You bet your life. I wouldn't miss Stoop and Budd's interview with the Never Man tonight. It's the apple of my eye.

HARRY: And look here—here's Omar Scrub, the public affairs expert. Hi, Mr. Scrub.

SCRUB: Evenin', Von. I'm covering the Colonel's campaign tonight. It's the cream in my coffee.

HARRY: And here are Col. Stoopnagle and Budd themselves. Hello, boys.

STOOPNAGLE AND BUDD: Hi, Harry! Boy, wait'll you hear our version of *Romeo and Juliet*. It's the sand in your spinach.

HARRY: Yes, sir, a great show. Everybody's going—everybody's going. Well, here we are in the old Town Hall and we're all set to begin the show. Featuring tonight a new Stoopnagle invention—an interview with

a famous Never Man, latest developments in the Colonel's campaign and a Stoopnagle and Budd version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Here they are, ladies and gentlemen, those two old time cutter-uppers, Colonel Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle and Budd.

STOOPNAGLE: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, and may I say that it pleases us very much to see such a splendid attendance here in the hall this evening. What was that thing about the special announcement you were going to remind me about a plate?

BUDD: Oh, yes, Colonel, I was going to remind you to make that special announcement about the plate—

STOOPNAGLE: The plate? Oh, yes, the plate, to be sure. Er—a—ladies and gentlemen—if the lady who sat in the plate of syrup here in Town Hall last Wednesday will kindly return the plate nothing further will be said about the syrup. Thank you. 'Vell, now what, Budd?

BUDD: How about an invention or two?

STOOPNAGLE: Well, I have a sort of a double invention, Budd. It is salt that looks like pepper and pepper that looks like salt, so if anyone takes the wrong one by mistake, it's all right.

BUDD: I suppose you use salt shakers without twenty-five holes for not putting salt on things that are too salty already.

STOOPNAGLE: Oh, yes, only I like the ones without fifty holes better, but they're too expensive. You see, the

more holes they're without, the more expensive they are. But the best invention of my career is a new kind of bicycle I just invented.

BUDD: The bicycle craze is coming along in leaps and bounds, isn't it?

STOOPNAGLE: Yes, and falls, too. This bicycle of mine has only got one wheel.

BUDD: One wheel, eh? That's economical, to say the least.

STOOPNAGLE: Unh huh. And then next to this wheel are three other wheels.

BUDD: Your bicycle has only one wheel, with three other wheels next to it. I see.

STOOPNAGLE: But it's sort of tiring, trying to pedal along on four wheels, so I have added an engine to it.

BUDD: These bicyclers are so lazy, they have to sit down while they walk.

STOOPNAGLE: How did that go again?

BUDD: You've added an engine to your bicycle, you say.

STOOPNAGLE: Yes. Then there's a steering wheel instead of handle bars, because it's a little easier to steer with it. Then I got to thinking that a seat might be nice—you know—for sitting, so I put a seat in it—one in front and one in back. I call the back seat a rumble.

BUDD: Always doing something new, Colonel, aren't you?

STOOPNAGLE: You just bet. The funny part about it all is that I found when I got through that instead of a wheel, I had an automobile. So I threw everything away except one wheel.

BUDD: Why?

STOOPNAGLE: Because I wanted a bicycle with one wheel.

HARRY: Now the Colonel has promised an interview with one of the famous Never Men.

STOOPNAGLE: I'm glad you brought that subject up, Harry, because tonight I have invited to the studio one of the oddest Never Men you ever saw.

There he is sitting right in the front row there. Call him up.

BUDD: Hey, Mister, will you come up here to the microphone, please?

STOOPNAGLE (*high distance*): You just bet I will.

BUDD: That's the proper spirit! And be careful you don't trip over Von Zell there.

[*Trips and falls.*]

BUDD: Too bad. I warned you. Hurt yourself?

STOOPNAGLE (*out of breath*): No, I shinned my skin a little, that's all. It's all right.

BUDD: What is your name, please?

STOOPNAGLE: Noah Goo. I never talk baby talk to babies.

BUDD: You never talk baby talk to babies. Well, that's wonderful if it's really true. Usually when people see babies in their carriages, they say, "Whose 'tittle tweetie pie is oo?"

STOOPNAGLE: I say, "Hello, baby. Pleasant weather we're having, isn't it?"

BUDD: You say that to babies?

STOOPNAGLE: Yes. They can't understand what you say anyway, so I figure it's a waste of time to say a lot of stuff that nobody else can understand, either, but—

BUDD: Don't you ever say, "Itchy witchy, kitchy," even?

STOOPNAGLE: Well, once I said, "Itchy," but it wasn't to a baby. I wanted my wife to scratch my back.

BUDD: And did she?

STOOPNAGLE: No. She said it didn't itch. She knew more about my back than I did, I guess.

BUDD: Well, tell us, Mr. Goo, tell us, how did you happen to learn not to say baby talk to babies?

STOOPNAGLE: Oh, I guess it was from kittens—calling kittens.

BUDD: How did you used to call kittens?

STOOPNAGLE: I just used to say, "Come here, small cat, and take a bite of

this catnip." They wouldn't come anyway, so I figured I might just as well say that as, "Li'l titten, pss wiss wiss wiss wiss." Now ask me about canaries.

BUDD: What about canaries?

STOOPNAGLE: I don't say, "Peep, peep, peep, li'l birdie, peep, peep, peep," when I see a canary. I say something else to them.

BUDD: What, for instance?

STOOPNAGLE: I say, "Come to me, my pretty fellow, barefoot bird with feathers yellow."

BUDD: That sounds very cute, Mr. Goo.

STOOPNAGLE: Of course *now* I say, "Peep, peep, peep," because my business now is not talking baby talk to babies. Canaries and kittens, though, I can talk to, like everyone else. But babies, that's different.

BUDD: Shucks. That's too bad. I wanted to show you my nephew, Icabod.

STOOPNAGLE: Oh, I'd like to see him. How old is he?

BUDD: Seven months, Mr. Goo, and the cutest youngster you ever saw. Hey, Harry! Carry Icabod over here. I want Mr. Goo to meet him.

[Baby noise.]

STOOPNAGLE: Well, isn't he cute! Kitchy witchy, smitchy, koochy poochy moochie! (*Whisper.*) Kitchy, kitchy, kitchy, kitchy!

[Harry cries.]

BUDD: Harry, you'd better give Icabod his bottle.

STOOPNAGLE: Yea, Harry. Good-by, Icabod. And remember—don't take any wooden *nipples*!

* * *

HARRY: And now Stoopnagle and Budd give you their burlesque of radio. A Stoopnagle and Budd version of what Shakespeare's immortal story of *Romeo and Juliet* would have been like if radio had seen it first. I'm going to ask Col. Stoopspeare to

give a brief little resumé of the story and plot before our play gets under way. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure and an honor to present the author—Mr. Shakenagle.

STOOPNAGLE: Thank you, Butch. Romeo and Juliet were two people the Capulets and the Montagues were always fighting and stood on a balcony and made love to each other but she took poison and so did he. Take it, Budd.

BUDD: Poison?

STOOPNAGLE: Yes. Budd and I portray all the characters ourselves. As the scene opens, there is a terrific argument between Lord Montague and Lord Capulet, the heads of two old families between whom there has been a feud for many years, the very feud which we are advertising on this program. As the play opens, we find Capulet and Montague engaged in a bitter quarrel.

STOOPNAGLE (*as old man*): Avaunt, Capulet, you old roustabout!

BUDD (*as old man*): Did you say "Avaunt," Montague?

STOOPNAGLE: I said "Avaunt!" And avaunt say it again. Avaunt! Fie on you and your whole ilk.

BUDD: One more word out of you, Montague, and I'll sic my nephew Tybalt on you.

STOOPNAGLE: Bring on your Tybalt, Capulet, and I'll bring on my boy Romeo.

BUDD: The dickens with Romeo and the double dickens with Tybalt. I'll cross swords with you right here and now, Montague. Touché!

STOOPNAGLE: Touché! And may the devil take the what-you-may-call-it!

BUDD: Watch out!

[*They cross swords unevenly for a moment, then into rhumba rhythm.*]

HARRY: Well, that marks the first real scrap between the Capulets and the Montagues. This report came to

you from the distressed radio bureau. Read your newspaper for further details. The next scene in our *Romeo and Juliet* play is at a ball given by the Capulets for their daughter Kerosene, with whom Romeo is supposed to be in love, but isn't. Being a Montague, Romeo comes to the affair masked, where he meets Juliet, loveliest of the lovely, another daughter of Lord Capulet. It's a beautiful sight.

BUDD (*falsely—as Kerosene*): Romeo, you are not yourself tonight. Your eyes are looking afar, instead of into mine, as is your custom on moonlit nights and stuff.

STOOPNAGLE (*tiredly and with lack of emotion*): Oh, Kerosene, why go any further with this mock engagement of ours? We really have never loved each other, even that time last year when I held your hand and called you Gasoline by mistake.

BUDD: Yes, Romeo, why go any farther with this thing? I saw you ogling my sister, Juliet—saw you glancing at her with those come-hither eyes of yours. Go to her, Romeo, but take care lest our father sees you, as he is mad as all get-out at you Capulets, and you know it.

STOOPNAGLE: Ah, thanks, Kerosene, and may Fate bring you riches and incense. Odds bodkins, Kerosene, and I'll see you sometime.

BUDD: Farewell, O, Romeo. Now go get Juliet and take her Homeo.

HARRY: The Capulet ball is over now, and it is the next night. There is a full moon and the faint odor of honeysuckles. Romeo has made violent love to Juliet, who has made violent love right back at him. As the next scene opens, we find Juliet on her balcony. Romeo is down below somewhere.

BUDD (*as Juliet*): Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo? Now where can that man be? Romeo,

Romeo, for the fifteenth and last time, wherefore art thou, Romeo? (*Louder.*) Oh, Romeo, Romeo!

Wherefore art thou, Romeo?

STOOPNAGLE: I'm down here.

BUDD: Where?

STOOPNAGLE: Over here, behind the eight-ball.

BUDD (*not noticing him*): Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, be my sworn love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.

STOOPNAGLE: How didst thou know my name, how didst?

BUDD: Scarce a hundred words did I have with you, Romeo, yet I'd know that voice among a million. It's Stoopnagle and I've heard you on the Town Hall Show.

STOOPNAGLE: No publicity just now. Juliet. This is a serious matter. I am here for your hand and your heart.

BUDD: Goody, Romeo. Help me down from this balcony.

STOOPNAGLE: But first, dear heart, let me finish my speech. Oh bless-ed, bless-ed night! I am afeard, being in night, all this is but a dream, too flattering-sweet to be substantial.

BUDD: Where'd you get that speech?

STOOPNAGLE: I picked up a book of Shakespeare in the South Norwalk library.

HARRY: Romeo and Juliet take leave of each other and Romeo hies himself to the home of the good Friar Lawrence to get a marriage license. He knocks on the door.

[*Knock on door.*]

BUDD (*deep voice*): Who's there?

STOOPNAGLE: Doctor Lee.

BUDD: Doctor Lee who?

STOOPNAGLE: Doctor Lieber Augustine. Heh, heh—some nifty, believe me. [*Door opens.*]

STOOPNAGLE: How now, Friar Lawrence! It is I, Romeo, having a little joke.

BUDD (*English*): Ah, Romeo Montague. How well you look! How your eyes

sparkle. Come now, tell me, is it love, my boy?

STOOPNAGLE: Yes, Friar Lawrence. It is love. Love—grand, glorious love.

BUDD: But where is the fair Juliet?

STOOPNAGLE: She is at her home, but here she is now, inasmuch as we haven't much time before the amateurs.

BUDD (*as Juliet*): Hello, Friar Lawrence—I mean hello, Romeo, first. You should get top billing.

STOOPNAGLE: Yes. Hello, Juliet my sweet. Friar Lawrence, will you marry us two up at once?

BUDD (*as Lawrence*): Why, bless you, my children, practically immediately. Join hands. So—now—do you, Juliet, and do you, Romeo, promise to take this man for (*Double talk.*) bortzer and framble in blazem from this time forward and vice versa?

STOOPNAGLE: What's that?

BUDD (*as Lawrence*): I pronounce you man and wife.

ANOTHER STOOPNAGLE AND BUDD SCRIPT

BUDD: Colonel, what was all that pounding I heard the other day in that vacant lot you own?

STOOPNAGLE: That isn't a vacant lot, Budd; that's my new building going down.

BUDD: Your new building going up, you mean.

STOOPNAGLE: No, no, no. It's a new kind of a building. It starts at the surface of the ground and goes down. You see, it's going to have the reputation of being the lowest building in New York, like the Empire State Building being the highest.

BUDD: What are you going to call the building?

STOOPNAGLE: The Lbiny.

BUDD: Lbiny, huh. How do you spell that word?

STOOPNAGLE: L-b-i-n-y. Lowest-Building-In-New-York. Not bad, eh?

BUDD: No, and not good, either.

STOOPNAGLE: You see, when a visitor comes to my building, I meet her at the door and I say: "Good day, Mrs. Quintessence [or whatever her name might be]. You are now entering the portals of the Lbiny Building, the lowest building in New York. As we step into the subtivator—"

BUDD: What's a subtivator?

STOOPNAGLE: It's the opposite of an elevator. It takes you down first, instead of up first, like an elevator. . . . "As we step into the subtivator, we go down until this floor is reached—the tenth. This floor is noted because you can't see the Grand Central Terminal Building from here. And as we travel farther down into the ground, we come to this floor, the seventieth. From this floor you are guaranteed not to be able to see the top of the Chrysler Building. And now, as we continue down in the subtivator, we come to this floor, the hundred and thirtieth, where we guarantee you cannot see the top of the Empire State Building. Isn't that fascinating, Mrs. Quintessence?"

BUDD (*falsetto*): Yes, sir, it certainly is. How far down does the building go, Colonel Stoopnagle?

STOOPNAGLE: Oh, about three miles down into the ground, Mrs. Quintessence. That's one of the advantages we have in building down instead of up. We have no casualties among our steel workers because they certainly can't fall *up*. We are never afraid of being bumped into by blimps or airplanes and we never worry about windstorms blowing the building down. It's quite an idea, don't you think?

BUDD: Very delightful, I'm sure, Colonel. One thing, among others, I'd

like to know, Colonel, if you don't mind.

STOOPNAGLE: I don't mind.

BUDD: I notice there's sunlight in the building. How does the sunlight get in when the building is so far down into the ground?

STOOPNAGLE: Well, that's a little patent of mine, Mrs. Quintessence. You see, on real bright sunshiny days, I have my superintendent raise the whole building up into the sky on a specially constructed round steel shaft, like an elevator. When the building gets full of sunshine, my superintendent releases a lever and the whole building goes back into place in the ground before the sunlight gets a chance to get out. It stays in for several weeks at a time that way.

BUDD: I should think it would make it quite uncomfortable for the tenants when they are whirled back into the ground so suddenly, Colonel.

STOOPNAGLE: Yes, it is quite uncomfortable, Mrs. Quintessence—in fact, very uncomfortable. However, we don't have many broken legs and things, and if we have a few, like we did the last time, we have our own hospital, anyway. Last time there were forty broken legs and seventy broken collarbones, but the people didn't seem to mind much. They're glad enough to have the chance to live in such a novel building.

BUDD: Hm.

STOOPNAGLE: What's that?

BUDD: I just said hm, that's all.

STOOPNAGLE: I don't blame you. Well, here we are now at the bottom.

BUDD: Why, you have a mooring mast at the bottom, just like the one at the top of the Empire State Building, Colonel Stoopnagle. How come? Surely you don't expect any dirigibles to fly down into the ground, do you?

STOOPNAGLE: Well, you can never tell,

Mrs. Quintessence, what with this machine age of ours and all. That mooring mast is there just in case some dirigible *might* fly down here. Always ready for emergencies, that's me. And meanwhile, of course, we are using it for a mooring mast for submarines. It's quite convenient for them. Of course, there isn't any water down here, but you can never tell. There might be someday.

BUDD: And what would you do in case of an earthquake?

STOOPNAGLE: Now we'll go back up so I can meet another party who wants to see around the building, Mrs. Quintessence.

BUDD: I said what would you do in case of an earthquake, Colonel?

STOOPNAGLE: Earthquake? Why, naturally, we'd just let the building shake like a bowlful of.

BUDD: Bowlful of what?

STOOPNAGLE: Jelly! What did you think we were building it out of?

STOOPNAGLE PATENTS

HARRY CLARK: What's this I hear about a new Stoopnagle hat?

COLONEL: Yes. This is an ordinary hat, but it has a cellophane crown. It's for men who are losing their hair and want to see where it's going.

HARRY: Could you tell us a little about the Stoopnagle bed?

COLONEL: This is a bed with a live snapping turtle attached to the bottom. It's designed for people who like a quick bite before going to bed.

HARRY: What's this about luminous butter?

STOOPNAGLE: Well, this luminous butter gives off a bright, shining glow. It is especially useful for people who never know which side their bread is buttered on.

HARRY: I understand you're delving into architecture, Colonel.

STOOPNAGLE: Yes. I've already chosen a site. And on this site I am going to build a forty-story building to house nothing but eye-doctors and opticians. It will be a site for sore eyes.

HARRY: Many people are talking about your shoe with the built-in bad taste, Colonel.

STOOPNAGLE: Yes. That's a shoe that has been soaked in vinegar and red pepper. It's to cure people who every time they open their mouth put their foot in it.

HARRY: They tell me you're going into finance lately, Colonel.

STOOPNAGLE: In a way. I've just invented a new dollar bill, equipped with an air mail stamp and addressed to the South Pole. It's for people who like to see a buck go a long way.

STOOPNAGLE DEFINITIONS

BUDD: Colonel, before you go back to your cell, I wish you'd give me a couple of definitions.

STOOPNAGLE: But first, Budd, what would you say a definition is?

BUDD: Well, so you'll understand it, Colonel, I'll put it in your own words. A definition is a thing that tells what a thing is like, or isn't like, so that people can get an idea of—of the average, say. . . . Let's see, what is *summer*?

STOOPNAGLE: *Summer* is between spring and fall to make you sorry you complained of the cold last winter, when you were sorry you complained of the heat last summer, last winter.

BUDD: Now what's *winter*?

STOOPNAGLE: *Winter* is stuff that rich people go South during.

BUDD: And *spring*?

STOOPNAGLE: *Spring* is a thing that when it's snowing out and cold as the dickens, it won't be long until but usually is.

BUDD: One more, Colonel, and we're through. What is *fall*?

STOOPNAGLE: *Fall* is something that when a guy likes a girl he hopes she will for him.

Aces!

EASY ACES

Radio is one of the few things, aside from the divorce courts, that ever benefited from the game of bridge. The card game gave it "Easy Aces," for the past fourteen years consistently one of the most amusing, literate programs on the air.

"Easy Aces" falls into the family narrative, folks-next-door category of radio humor, yet it has a distinct flavor of its own. It has the dumb wife and the patient, smarter husband combination to be found elsewhere, and it can hardly claim to have the theme of married perplexities under exclusive contract. But, without seeking to detract from any other program, it can be said truthfully that there is more bite, more incisiveness, more "real life" in "Easy Aces" than in others of this type. Some of the others may have more and easier laughs, but, make no mistake about it, "Easy Aces" is funny, too.

It is a foolhardy person who tries to apportion credit for a show's success among the performers and writers, because both are likely to take umbrage and pot shots at the evaluator, no matter what he writes. But it is a fact that most of the big air comedy shows are based on the personalities of the performers. Of course, they have to have material, but so did Babe Ruth have to have a bat. Nobody cared who made the bat. (Dear Radio Writer: This, naturally, does not mean *you*; it means the other fellows.)

But in the matter of "Easy Aces," it is clearly a case of material first. The script is the thing. There are fans who would draw and quarter anyone daring to say that others besides Goodman Ace and his wife, Jane, could portray the two leading characters on this show, and there is no intention here of trying to suggest that they are anything but wonderful. However, it doesn't take an expert to discover, by listening to a few of the broadcasts or scanning some of the

scripts, that here is something that would be just as effective in the hands of any capable acting duo. It is as close to being actor-proof material as radio can offer.

The writing, of course, is the work of Goodman Ace himself, alone and unincorporated. It always has been and, if he is as smart as he has given every sign of being up to now, it always will be. The man is one of those rare persons who not only is a witty, conversational companion, but also is capable of transferring his wit to paper. His humor is the type that stems from character and situation; no bright lines à la Noel Coward simply for the sake of being devastating. Nor is his humor plain American corn. It has a special quality that is simply Goodman Ace observing the scene with an amused tolerance, just as others like Ring Lardner, George Kaufman, E. B. White, and Frank Sullivan have given to their own works distinctive flavors that can be labeled with nothing but their own names.

For purposes of recognition, it may be that Ace is unfortunate. For years he has been writing a commercial show that has come to be taken for granted. He is competition to his own reputation as a writer by being a mouthpiece for what he writes. He goes his own quiet, modest way and doesn't write anything but his radio material. Yet the fact remains that he can write rings around the glamour authors of radio who get their own programs and build-ups befitting the second comings of Shakespeare and Ibsen. . . . Life is funny; radio, funnier.

Ace has been making the words march since he was seventeen years old and a student at Northeast High School in Kansas City, Missouri. His first recognition was when he received a prize for his paraphrase of Guy de Maupassant's short story, *A Piece of String*. Naturally, he edited his school paper in his senior year.

At nineteen, he was the George Jean Nathan of K. C., drama critic on the *Post-Journal*. He got the job through his cousin, Hy White, a press agent, who figured that it would be nice to have a member of the family in a spot where he could do the most good for a person having a number of clients who liked to get their names in the papers. One of Ace's vivid recollections of drama criticism

concerns the time he got a five-dollar-a-week raise only to have it canceled when the manager of a show he blasted protested to the editor about the panning.

Ace got into radio because it represented a way of making more money. He went on Station KMBC in Kansas City as "The Movie Man," getting ten dollars a program for talking about Hollywood stuff. There didn't seem to be any prospect of getting more money for this type of chatter, so Ace found himself an extra radio chore, reading the funnies for the kiddies.

In 1928, Ace persuaded Jane, his high-school "girl," to marry him. She was with him in the radio studio one night early in 1930 when Ace did his movie broadcast. The act that was to follow failed to show up and the program director of the station told Ace to keep on talking for another fifteen minutes. He worked Jane into the conversation and they talked mainly about a bridge game they had played recently, holding the usual post-mortem, only this time in public. The fan mail that came in was unusually heavy, and the Aces found themselves broadcasting regularly.

Their popularity was such that shortly Ace figured they were worth more money and he asked the station for a fifty-dollar-a-week raise. No go; no broadcast. However, they already had attracted the attention necessary to achieve success. An advertising agency representative braced them on the idea of going to Chicago and broadcasting "Easy Aces" over the CBS network. Ace took a deeper breath than usual and said they'd go—for five hundred dollars a week. The alacrity with which the offer was accepted convinced Ace that he had not been too astute.

The couple started a thirteen-week trial period over CBS in Chicago in October, 1931. Two weeks before option-renewal time, another agency man visited them with the news that the sponsor wasn't too sure he wanted to employ them again. He suggested that it might be a good idea if they made a mail appeal to their fans, a stunt that had just netted another program twenty-two thousand letters, saving its life. The agency man said he felt that if the Aces could get twenty thousand letters, the sponsor would renew.

They got the twenty thousand—and eighty thousand more. The sponsor didn't even struggle. He remained quiescent for years, only showing signs of life by occasionally raising the contract figure until the Aces were sailing along at around 3,500 dollars a week. The parting of the ways came at the end of 1944, and Ace immediately found himself busier than ever before. He was fighting off would-be sponsors, looking for an opening to clip the right one in the pocket-book.

The program, of course, uses other characters constantly, some of them for long periods, others for particular spots or sequences. A fixture, however, is Madge, Jane's best friend. This role is played by Mary Hunter, whom the Aces enticed away from WGN in Chicago in the early days. One of the characters who has been standard for several years has been present in spirit only since the war, because the actor used for the part went to the Army. So did Cokey, the character he portrayed. Cokey, incidentally, is the Aces' (for radio purposes) adopted son. Jane set out during a program some years ago to adopt a child and came back with one aged nineteen years. She explained her failure to get an infant in arms by saying that as long as they were about it they "might as well get one big enough to be useful as well as Oriental."

Jane, in her radio character, is the Mistress of Malapropism. Other people do it, of course, since it is a pretty common method of getting laughs for not-too-bright types, but none does it with the elan, appropriateness, and originality that is Jane's. She does it so smoothly that after you hear her a few times you begin to wonder if the way she misuses words isn't right and Webster is wrong. Some of her famous utterances include: "We're insufferable friends" (which isn't as crazy as it sounds), "In words of one cylinder," "Time wounds all heels" (also pretty sound), and "He's a ragged individualist." Actually, of course, these are the creation of writer Ace.

Ace himself drops casual gems in conversation and, if he wanted to work at it, could become as much quoted as Dorothy Parker and George S. Kaufman were a few years back. Even so, he doesn't do badly in his own quiet way. Once an inveterate player of the horses,

he is credited with the authorship of that imperishable remark, "I have the horses right where they want me." Early in his radio career another fellow had a "piece" of Ace's earnings, and Ace went to some lengths to break the contract. "I beat the guy out of every cent I had," is the way he described it.

"Easy Aces" for years was on the air in fifteen-minute spots three and four times a week. After war began, it has been turned into a half-hour, once-a-week broadcast. Ace writes his scripts a week in advance and claims he sweats blood over his typewriter. The cast has a minimum of rehearsals because the scripts are in pretty good shape to start with, and the players usually work seated around a bridge table bearing a concealed microphone.

Since the Aces moved to New York several years ago, he has been a popular member of the Friar's Club, where he is a prominent gin-rummy player. In fact, both of them are gin fans and frequently wind up an evening with a session of it. But they are not complete turncoats; they still regard bridge as an excellent game.

EASY ACES . . . *On the Air*

ANNOUNCER: There comes a time in every woman's life when she feels she simply cannot go on another day unless she gets a new mink coat. That time has come to Jane Ace, whom we find now in the living room at the Aces' bungalow discussing this crisis with her best friend, Marge.

JANE: Now, look, Marge, after he comes in, sits down and starts reading his evening paper, all I want you to do is start the conversation off by saying: "It certainly is getting cold out; winter isn't far off." You can certainly do that little favor for a pal, can't you?

MARGE: Yes, I suppose so—but what's it leading up to?

JANE: A mink coat.

MARGE: Jane, a mink—

JANE: Hush! Not so loud, he'll hear you.

MARGE: Did he say he'd buy you one?

JANE: Not yet. That's where you come in.

MARGE: Me! Now wait a minute, Jane.

That's not my department. I don't want to get mixed up—

JANE: Marge, how long have we known each other?

MARGE: Yes, I know, Jane—

JANE: How long *have* we known each other?

MARGE: Well, it's been—

JANE: Don't say it. I don't like to *think* about all those years. But we started out at school, didn't we? We were playthings. We were always together. Insufferable, weren't we?

MARGE: Haha! Yes, at times I think we *were* insufferable.

JANE: Whenever one of us was in trouble, didn't I always help *you* out?

MARGE: We always have stood by each other.

JANE: Damon and Runyon, that's us.

And now that I ask you to help me out, you say no.

MARGE: But you're not in trouble.

JANE: Well, I haven't asked him for the mink coat yet, but you know what'll happen the minute I do unless I lead up to it in a nice, pleasant roustabout way. And that's where you come in.

MARGE: Where? What do I do?

JANE: I told you. All you have to do is to say in a sort of a loud clear voice, "It certainly is getting cold out. Winter isn't far off."

MARGE: Is that all?

JANE: That's all. Leave the rest to me, unless he gets tough.

MARGE: Oh, unless he gets tough.

JANE: But he won't.

MARGE: Hasn't he any inkling at all about this mink coat?

JANE: Not an ink.

MARGE: But I don't see how my saying "It's getting cold out and winter's coming" is gonna help any.

JANE: A very good question, Marge.

MARGE: What's the answer?

JANE: That leads the conversation around to keeping warm. And how do you keep warm?

MARGE: Order your coal early.

JANE: Yes. No. A mink coat, I'm talking about.

MARGE: Oh, yes, excuse me. But Jane, why don't you just come right out and ask him?

JANE: Marge, it's easy to see you've never been married, much less tried to get something important from your husband. You don't come right out with things like that. Anything important like this you kinda sneak up on it. Like the time he proposed to me for instance. It snuk up on him.

MARGE: It did?

JANE: Sure. He was signed, sealed, and kissed before he knew what hit him. And that's how I'm gonna do this. You just watch the way I do it. Before he knows what happened he'll be saying yes.

MARGE: You sure he'll say yes?

JANE: If you do it right. (*Door opens.*)

Here he comes. Now don't forget.

MARGE: Okay.

JANE: Hello, dear.

ACE: Well, hello, Jane. Haven't seen you in five minutes.

JANE: Yes, it has, hasn't it. Sit down, dear.

ACE: Thank you.

JANE: Okay.

ACE: Okay.

JANE: No, not *you* okay.

ACE: What?

JANE: Okay.

MARGE: Oh! It certainly is getting cold out. Winter isn't far off.

JANE: Speaking of winter, dear, that reminds me—

ACE: No.

JANE: No? No what?

ACE: No new coat.

JANE: Will you please wait till you're asked!

MARGE: Ha! Ha!

ACE: Oh, excuse me, go ahead and ask me.

JANE: How about a new mink coat this winter?

ACE: Well, to tell you the truth, Jane, there is one ray of hope. If a certain big paint company gives our company its advertising business, I make a nice commission out of it, and you

can get your mink coat. It's the Crown Paint Company, biggest outfit in town.

MARGE: There, Jane; you see.

JANE: Wait a minute. That's too easy.

Are you sure you're gonna get the Crown Paint Company's business?

ACE: I have a fifty per cent chance of getting it.

MARGE: There, Jane, there's half your coat, already.

JANE: Half a coat. What good is that?

* * *

JANE (*dialing phone number*): 5—6—5—6— Uh—hello, is this the Davis Fur Company?

DAVIS: Yes. Who is this, please?

JANE: This is Mrs. Ace.

DAVIS: Oh, good morning, Mrs. Ace.

JANE: Just fine. Mr. Davis, you remember that mink coat I was looking at yesterday afternoon?

DAVIS: I certainly do. A lot of women have been looking at it.

JANE: It certainly is. And I want you to hold it for me.

DAVIS: You mean you're buying it?

JANE: Well, practically.

DAVIS: What do you mean practically?

JANE: Well, my husband said it's sixty per cent certain I can buy it.

DAVIS: Well, good for you, Mrs. Ace. That is if he'll really let you have it.

JANE: Oh, he will. Because if he wouldn't, he'd have come right out flat-headed and said so. But he said it's sixty per cent certain I can get it. So will you hold it for me?

DAVIS: Well, for you, Mrs. Ace, I will. That's a rather expensive coat, and I don't mind telling you I'm as thrilled about making the sale as you are about getting the coat. A sale that big comes in mighty handy at this time. My wife'll certainly be glad to hear I made the sale. I'm gonna call her right now and—

* * *

[Phone rings.

MARY: Hello.

DAVIS: Hello, Mrs. Davis. This is a man named Davis who claims to be married to you.

MARY: Hello, John, you silly thing.

DAVIS: Oh, silly, am I? Not too silly to buy you that home up in the country you've been wanting so bad.

MARY: John! Not really!

DAVIS: Now who's silly?

MARY: John, you don't mean it. Are we really gonna buy that home?

DAVIS: Well, it's practically ours.

MARY: Oh, practically. What do you mean practically?

DAVIS: Well, it's seventy per cent ours, honey.

MARY: Seventy per cent?

DAVIS: I think I've sold that expensive mink coat I've had in the shop so long. Mrs. Ace just called me and said her husband promised her he'd buy it for her.

MARY: That's wonderful. But what do you mean seventy per cent?

DAVIS: Well, I guess he's just trying to make it look hard. You know how husbands are when it comes to mink coats. But you can go right ahead with that house.

MARY: Oh, John, that's the best news I've heard in years. I'm gonna telephone Mr. Herman right now. He called just a little while ago and said I ought to come out and see how beautiful it is out there this time of the year and I told him there was no use making myself feel sick about not being able to get it—

* * *

[Phone rings.

HERMAN: Herman Real Estate Company, Mr. Herman speaking.

MARY: Good morning, Mr. Herman. This is Mrs. Davis speaking again.

HERMAN: Oh, hello, Mrs. Davis. What's the good word?

MARY: The good word, Mr. Herman, is we're going to buy that home.

HERMAN: Really?

MARY: Aren't you thrilled?

HERMAN: As much as you are Mrs. Davis. Your husband changed his mind suddenly, didn't he?

MARY: He certainly did. But it's practically ours now.

HERMAN: What do you mean practically?

MARY: Well, John said it was eighty per cent certain we'd buy it. Just waiting for a minor detail. I'm sure it's going to be all right. I wanted to come out and see it again and talk over all those details you said you'd attend to.

HERMAN: You mean fixing it up?

MARY: That's right. You said you'd paint it. It certainly needs painting.

HERMAN: Oh, yes. It's going to be painted. As a matter of fact, that's the last house I have in that subdivision out there and now that I've sold that, I'm going to order a paint job for every house in the section.

* * *

[Phone rings.

GIRL: Crown Paint Company, good morning.

HERMAN: This is Mr. Herman. May I speak to Mr. Crown please?

GIRL: Mr. Crown? One moment please.

CROWN: Hello.

HERMAN: Hello, Mr. Crown. This is Mr. Herman again.

CROWN: Yes, Mr. Herman. How are you this morning?

HERMAN: Fine. Got good news for you. On that paint order—looks like I'll be needing about five hundred gallons to start with.

CROWN: Yes? Did you sell that last house?

HERMAN: Well, it's about ninety per cent sold. Just a matter of closing the deal. But I want to get my order in in plenty of time so I can make the necessary arrangements.

CROWN: Good. And I have some arrangements of my own to make. Been waiting to hear from you on this order before I did anything. Thanks for calling.

* * *

[Phone rings.]

ACE: Hello.

CROWN: Hello, is that you, Mr. Ace?

ACE: Yes.

CROWN: This is Mr. Crown.

ACE: Oh, yes, Mr. Crown. Good morning. What's new?

CROWN: Well, looks like we're going to do business.

ACE: You mean on that paint campaign?

CROWN: I think so.

ACE: Oh, you think so.

CROWN: Well, it's about ninety-nine per cent sure. I've been hesitating because we've been expecting a big paint order from a certain source and it looks like we're getting it now. As I say it's about ninety-nine per cent sure. But I thought I'd call you and tell you to stand by so we can get together on a minute's notice.

ACE: I'll be at your service. When do you think . . .

CROWN: Well, you ought to hear from me this afternoon.

ACE: I'll wait for your call.

CROWN: You might be thinking of an idea for this new paint of ours. It's a one-coat paint.

ACE: One-coat. Haha! That's an appropriate name.

CROWN: Yes, because it only takes one coat.

ACE: Well, no, I meant because I promised to buy my wife a coat if I landed this account.

CROWN: Oh, I see. One coat. Haha! Yes, that's pretty good. Well, she'll be warm this winter . . .

* * *

[Door opens; closes.]

JANE: Are you home already, dear?

ACE: Yes, Jane.

JANE: Well, what happened? Do I get my mink coat?

ACE: Well, I'm afraid not, Jane.

JANE: Why not?

ACE: Because I expected to hear from a man this afternoon and he didn't call.

JANE: Oh, dear.

ACE: Well, I'm sorry, Jane. I thought it was a cinch, the way he talked. He said he was ninety-nine per cent sure, but that extra one per cent must have got him. I think I'll call him up at his home right now.

JANE: Yes, call him up.

[Dials number.]

ACE: He sounded so sure he was gonna give us the account, and then I didn't hear from him.

JANE: I thought it was sure too. I even called up and told the furrier to hold the coat for me.

ACE: Well, if I don't land this account, you can't get it, Jane. That's all there is to it.

JANE: Oh, don't be such a tightrope.

ACE: I'm not being a tightrope—uh—a—

CROWN: Hello.

ACE: Oh, hello. Is that you, Mr. Crown?

CROWN: Yes.

ACE: This is Mr. Ace. What happened on that account?

CROWN: Well, I was waiting to hear from a certain party about a deal I'd expected to put over and I didn't hear. I think I'll call him up and find out what goes. If I hear anything definite, I'll let you know at your home.

* * *

[Phone rings.]

HERMAN: Hello.

CROWN: Mr. Herman, this is Mr. Crown.

HERMAN: Oh, yes, Mr. Crown. I guess

you're wondering why I didn't call you back.

CROWN: Yes, I am.

HERMAN: Well, I had expected to hear about that last house I had for sale out there. The woman was interested said it was ninety per cent sure, but I haven't heard any further from her.

CROWN: Oh, I see. Well, does it depend on that?

HERMAN: Oh, yes. I wanta get that sold before I start any painting out there. Suppose I call her up and find out what's holding things up. I'll let you know.

* * *

[Phone rings.

MARY: Hello.

HERMAN: Hello, is that you, Mrs. Davis?

MARY: Yes, who is this, please?

HERMAN: This is Mr. Herman.

MARY: Oh, Mr. Herman. I guess you're wondering why I didn't call you back about the house.

HERMAN: Well, you sounded this morning as if you were all set.

MARY: Well, my husband said it was eighty per cent sure we were going to take it, but he just got home and now he tells me he was waiting to hear from a certain party about a deal he expected to make and he hadn't heard.

HERMAN: Oh, I see. Well, do you think there's any chance?

MARY: I hope so. I've told him to call up this woman and find out if she's made up her mind yet. I'll call you the minute I hear anything definite.

* * *

[Phone rings.

JANE: Hello.

DAVIS: Hello. Is that you, Mrs. Ace?

JANE: Yes, who is this, please?

DAVIS: This is Mr. Davis.

JANE: Oh, Mr. Davis.

DAVIS: What happened?

JANE: Just fine. I guess you're wondering why I didn't call you back about the coat.

DAVIS: I certainly am. I thought you said it was seventy per cent certain you were taking it.

JANE: Well, I thought it was, but now we have to wait to hear from a certain party first.

DAVIS: Well, you're the certain party I have to hear from because a certain party is waiting to hear from me before she calls a certain party who's waiting to hear from her.

JANE: All those parties for one mink coat. Sure is making a mountain out of a moleskin.

* * *

[The next day.

DOROTHY: Well, Jane, I don't like to interfere in anything as personal as trying to make your husband buy you a mink coat.

JANE: Yes, I know, Dorothy. But—what? Go ahead.

DOROTHY: But what, Jane?

JANE: I don't know, but there's usually a "but" at the end of "I don't like to interfere." But what? Go ahead.

DOROTHY: Oh, Jane, there's no but. I just don't like to interfere.

JANE: No, I thought there was gonna be a "but."

DOROTHY: Oh, no.

JANE: Oh!

DOROTHY: But now that you remind me, Jane.

JANE: I thought so. You don't like to interfere, but what?

DOROTHY: But I think when Mr. Ace said he was fifty per cent sure you could have the coat, you should have ordered it right away. Then it would have been too late to change his mind.

JANE: You mean I should get the coat without waiting for him to say it's all right?

DOROTHY: Well, he didn't say no, did he?

JANE: Well, no, but he didn't say yes.

DOROTHY: He said maybe, didn't he?

JANE: He said fifty per cent.

DOROTHY: Fifty per cent is maybe.

Frank always says no to me; if he ever said maybe, I'd have a mink coat so fast he couldn't make me take it back—on account of my initials in the lining.

JANE: Oh, yes, initials. I wonder.

DOROTHY: Every winter I dream of a certain mink coat I saw once, with my initials in the satin lining. He couldn't make you take it back then.

JANE: Oh, no, I couldn't do it without his saying yes.

DOROTHY: I could.

JANE: Well, if you're gonna talk me into it.

DOROTHY: Oh, I didn't mean to talk you into it, Jane. Don't quote me to Mr. Ace. I just mentioned the initials in the satin lining that's all.

JANE: Get thee behind me, *satin*, I'm gonna call up that furrier right away. (*Dials.*)

DOROTHY: You are?

JANE: Well, he didn't say no, did he?

DOROTHY: No, but he didn't say yes, Jane.

JANE: Well, he said fifty per cent, didn't he? That's maybe and maybe's good enough for me. Oh, I'm so excited. A mink coat! Dorothy, you're a godspend, honestly you are. Oh, I'm so excited.

DAVIS: Hello, Davis Fur Company.

JANE: Hello, Mrs. Ace, this is Mr. Davis.

DAVIS: Who?

JANE: Mrs. Davis—D-A-V—I mean A-C-E—Davis—Jane Dav—I mean Jane Ace.

DAVIS: Oh, Mrs. Ace.

JANE: Yes. About those initials, Mr. Davis, I'll take that coat.

DAVIS: What's that?

JANE: J.A. in the lining, Will you put the initials in?

DAVIS: Oh, you're gonna take the coat?

JANE: Yes, sir. I'll be right down for another fitting.

DAVIS: That's fine. I'm sure glad you called. I appreciate it, Mrs. Ace. My wife appreciates it too.

* * *

[*Next four sequences on phone.*]

MARY: John, dear, is it really true?

DAVIS: It sure is, honey.

MARY: I'll call Mr. Herman right away.

* * *

HERMAN: Well, Mrs. Davis, am I glad you finally made up your mind!

MARY: Isn't it wonderful, Mr. Herman?

HERMAN: I'll attend to the paint job right away. Good-by now.

* * *

CROWN: Yes, sir, Mr. Herman, this is Mr. Crown.

HERMAN: That order for five hundred gallons of flat paint—it's official now.

CROWN: Thank you. I've got a call to make myself now.

* * *

ACE (*in his office*): Hello.

CROWN: Is that you, Mr. Ace?

ACE: Yes, sir. Mr. Crown, isn't it?

CROWN: Right you are and I've got good news.

ACE: The account?

CROWN: We can go right ahead on it. It's all definite now.

ACE: Oh, that's wonderful. When can I see you? I'd like to get—

CROWN: How about lunch—say, about one o'clock?

[*Door opens.*]

ACE: That's fine. I'll meet you at your office, Mr. Crown.

[*Door closes.*]

CROWN: I'll wait for you. Good-by.

JANE: Hello.

ACE: Oh, hello, Jane. Didn't hear you come in. What are you doing downtown this early in the day?

JANE: Dear, I just did the most terrible thing I've ever done in all the years we've been married and ten months.

ACE: Uh? What did you—

JANE: But first I want you to know I feel terrible about it and I'm gonna cancel it.

ACE: Cancel wha—

JANE: And I also want you to know I didn't do it of my own violation. I was talked into it, by somebody I should have *known* better.

ACE: But what did you—

JANE: And you know me when somebody talks me into something. When I get the urge to do it, I'm completely uninhabited.

ACE: Uninhab—

JANE: But no sooner had I done it when I realized what a mistake it was.

ACE: What mistake?

JANE: And I realize now that I could never wear it with a clear conscience no matter how cold it gets.

ACE: Never wear—

JANE: So I'm gonna cancel the whole thing right this minute. May I use your phone?

ACE: No. Wait a minute. What did you do? Do you mean to say you ordered that mink coat without even waiting to find out if my deal went through or not?

JANE: In other words, yes.

ACE: In other words—

JANE: But don't worry, dear. I'm gonna cancel it. I told him to go ahead with it, but there's still time to stop him. I may have to pay the initial cost.

ACE: The initial cost—

JANE: I told him to put my initials in the lining.

ACE: Oh, the initial cost.

JANE: But, there's still time to cancel

the coat. And no sooner said the better.

ACE: Well, Jane, look. You don't have to cancel it. I just put over that deal I was telling you about. So now you can get the coat with a clear conscience.

JANE: Oh, no, too late. I already did it. I'm going to cancel it as a lesson to me. A wife must take the bitter with the better, I always say.

ACE: Yes, you do always say.

JANE: A person can't just run around half crooked buying every little trinket and junket that comes to her mind.

ACE: Mink coat—trinket—

JANE: Exactly. And I'm gonna teach me a lesson if it's the last thing I do.

ACE: But look, Jane, I put the deal over. I can afford it now.

JANE: No—no—this hurts me more than it does you, dear, but it has to be done. I'll call him up right now. [*Dials.*]

ACE: Well, if that's the way you feel about it.

JANE: I'm sorry but it has to be this way. And maybe after this I'll remember to at least ask my husband before I buy a mink coat. I don't know how I came to do such a thing. If I keep doing things like this, I'll be kissing my happy home good-by.

DAVIS: Hello.

JANE: Oh, hello, Mr. Davis.

DAVIS: Yes?

JANE: This is Mrs. Ace. About that fur coat. It's all off.

DAVIS: All off! Oh, this is terrible. Good-by, Mrs. Ace, I've got to call my wife right away.

* * *

[*Next three sequences on phone.*]

MARY: Oh, no, you can't *do* that, John. What do you mean it's off?

DAVIS: Sorry, Mary, but that woman canceled the mink coat just now. It's off.

MARY: Oh, this is terrible. Now I've got to call Mr. Herman right away.

* * *

HERMAN: But Mrs. Davis. You can't do that now. I thought I had the house *sold* to you.

MARY: Yes, and my husband thought he had a mink coat sold too, but the customer canceled it.

HERMAN: And now you're canceling the house. Well, I've some canceling to do myself.

* * *

CROWN: What's that? What did you say, Mr. Herman? Cancel the order?

HERMAN: Sorry, Mr. Crown, but that's the way it is.

CROWN: But why? I thought you *sold* that last house to a Mrs. Davis, you said.

HERMAN: I thought I had it sold to her, just like Mrs. Davis thought Mr. Davis had sold a mink coat to another woman, who just called up and canceled the coat.

CROWN: You mean the whole thing depended on somebody's mink coat?

HERMAN: That's right. That's why I have to cancel this paint job.

CROWN: Oh, that reminds me. Got some canceling to do myself.

* * *

ACE: Well, as you say, Jane, it will be a lesson to you, and maybe it's best at that. (*Phone rings.*) Excuse me. Hello.

CROWN: That you, Mr. Ace?

ACE: Yes.

CROWN: This is Mr. Crown again.

ACE: Yes, Mr. Crown, how are you, Mr. Crown? What's the good word?

CROWN: There is no good word, unless you call *cancel* a good word.

ACE: Uh? Cancel?

CROWN: Yes. Cancel that advertising campaign we talked about.

ACE: Why, what's the matter? What happened?

CROWN: You wouldn't believe it if I told you. Just cancel it.

ACE: Well, wait a minute, Mr. Crown. There must be some reason. You can't just leave me holding the bag like this? What'll I say here at the office?

CROWN: Say I had to cancel it, that's all.

ACE: But why?

CROWN: Oh, you wouldn't believe it, Mr. Ace. I can hardly believe it myself.

ACE: Believe what? Why did you cancel it? What's the reason?

CROWN: Mink coat.

ACE: Uh—what?

CROWN: You see, I told you, you wouldn't believe it.

ACE: Yes, I will. I just didn't understand you. Sounded as if you said mink coat. Haha! What *did* you say?

CROWN: Mink coat.

ACE: Hahaha! Oh, you did say mink coat.

CROWN: I did. Mink coat—mink coat. There! I said it again.

ACE: But what about a mink coat? What's that got to do with this advertising campaign?

CROWN: It has this to do with it. Some lunkhead promised his wife a mink coat. He backed out. He didn't buy it for his wife, so the woman's husband, who *sells* mink coats, had *his* wife cancel a house she was going to buy, and the man who was going to sell her house called *me* up and canceled a big paint order, and I called you up and canceled the advertising campaign. Silly, isn't it?

ACE: Well, I really think it is, Mr. Crown. I mean after all, just because some woman doesn't get a mink coat, I don't see why I—

CROWN: And I don't see why I should have to suffer for it. But I am suffering. I lost a big paint order.

ACE: But Mr. Crown—

CROWN: There's no use taking it up with me. It goes back to Mr. Davis now.

ACE: Davis? Who's Davis?

CROWN: He's the man that didn't sell the mink coat whose wife didn't buy the house from the man who didn't order the paint. So take it up with Davis.

ACE: But I don't see how I can talk paint to a furrier named Da—named Da—named Da—

CROWN: I told you you wouldn't believe it.

ACE: Uh, just hold the phone one minute, Mr. Crown.

CROWN: Okay.

ACE: Jane.

JANE: Yes?

ACE: Did I hear you call Mr. Davis just now to cancel that mink coat?

JANE: Yes, and it's gonna be a lesson to me because I always say—

ACE: Isn't that awful.

JANE: Yes, it is, but it'll be a lesson to me.

ACE: Oh, Jane, you ruined a whole advertising campaign for me.

JANE: Me! For you! Me! For you!

ACE: And me for you, and tea for two.

JANE: I didn't have anything to do with your advertising campaign.

ACE: I know you didn't have anything to do with it. And still you ruined it.

JANE: How can I do that?

ACE: I don't know. It's a gift you have.

JANE: Well, thanks dear, but I won't take the coat.

ACE: You *will* take it.

JANE: I will not.

ACE: Jane, I insist that you buy that mink coat.

JANE: Well, this is an argument I never would have believed my own ears.

ACE: It certainly is. You're gonna buy that mink coat right now, understand?

JANE: Now, you're just being mean. You're stubborn. You're cruel. All men are beasts.

ACE: Hello, Mr. Crown, it's gonna be okay. That lunkhead you mentioned just bought that coat for his wife.

Be Dumb, Sweet Maid!

**BURNS
AND
ALLEN**

As far as George Burns and Gracie Allen are concerned, it is the dumb who inherit the earth, mortgage free. They have made a simulated blank space between the petite ears of Miss Allen pay off with regularity and increasing potency for twenty-two years and, if Gracie doesn't crack under the strain of pretending to be a garrulous nitwit when she actually is a very astute person, they should go on until the day after forever, any old watch time.

The pair, of course, has just about the most sure-fire routine it is possible to conceive—the dumb woman and the exasperated smarter male. Even that rare man who is thoroughly convinced that females are the equal of his sex when it comes to gray matter still has in his make-up a taint of the old male-supremacy theory, and it will crop up now and then in the most unexpected manner. And since most men make no bones about the fact that they think themselves superior, it is obvious that the Burns-Allen formula has the male population right in its corner. The women go for it for two reasons: first, even the most backward of them can feel superior to Gracie; and second, Gracie, in spite of her lack of savvy, usually manages to come out on top.

Burns and Allen got their schooling in that grand old academy—vaudeville. The distaff member practically grew up in the proverbial dressing-room trunk. Her father was Edward Allen, a song-and-dance man, and Gracie was already working on the stage at the age of three and a half. She took time out for some schooling, but was back in the game by the time she was fourteen, hoofing in vaudeville with her three older sisters.

Next, Gracie, whose complete handle is Grace Ethel Cecile

Rosalie Allen, got a job with the touring Larry Reilly company, doing jigs and other dances, and playing Irish colleen parts. This lasted long enough for Gracie to get so accustomed to speaking with a brogue that she had the devil's own time shaking it off later. She finally left Reilly over a question of billing and, since this happened in Hoboken, New Jersey, it was no problem at all to cross the river to New York. She decided to become a secretary and began taking a course in a secretarial school. One day she went to Union Hill, New Jersey, to see a friend who was appearing in a vaudeville bill there, and it was then that she met Burns.

Burns is his stage name. He was born Nathan Birnbaum in Manhattan. He entered show business with the Peewee Quartet when he was a little kid. Gus Edwards took over the act after a time, but George had to drop out because nature altered his tenor voice. So he gained proficiency as a roller skater and got a job with another act. The first night out he slipped and spilled and the audience roared. He liked that laughter and kept the pratt fall in. During his growing-up years he worked in many vaudeville acts, learning every aspect of this exacting branch of show business and gaining invaluable knowledge for the big years still in the distant future.

When Gracie met Burns backstage, he had a partner in a comedy patter, song-and-dance act, one Billy Lorraine. The team was on the verge of dissolving and, learning of Gracie's background, George asked her if she'd like to be his new partner. Stenography hadn't gained much of a hold on her, so she accepted readily.

That was in 1922. George was the guy who had all the funny lines. Gracie was the "feeder" or "straight man." But for some reason the pert, pretty girl began to get the laughs whether she had funny lines or not. The way she talked, the way she looked at George in their verbal exchanges—well, whatever it was, the audiences thought she was funny. George was neither a prima donna nor stupid. They laugh at you and not at me; okay, I'm the straight man. It was as simple as that. And if anyone ever tells you he has never heard of a really smart actor, tell him about George Burns.

They worked together almost three years and George became a

suitor as well as a partner. Gracie couldn't make up her mind. Finally on Christmas Day in 1925 he told her that she had just ten days to give a final answer. She waited nine days and said okay. A justice of the peace married them and they opened a new act called "Lamb Chops" at the Jefferson Theater in New York, supposedly for a one-day stand. The new act was a riot and they stayed three. A Keith-circuit scout saw them and they signed a six-year contract on the big-time. They weren't the biggest draw in vaudeville, but they became as strong a "second act" as a bill could have and, of course, made the Palace Theater in New York, the outstanding home of the two-a-day and the objective of all vaudevillians. They played there many times and were on that great bill with Eddie Cantor and George Jessel that ran for nine weeks in 1931. It was impossible to put together a show that could equal or top that one, and so the Palace passed out as the queen of the two-a-day, taking most of what was left of declining vaudeville along with it.

By this time Gracie and George were making slightly under a thousand dollars weekly, and had been for some time. They played in Europe; and in 1930, when they were in London, the British Broadcasting Corporation put them on the air and they stayed on it for twenty-six weeks. It was their first brush with the mike.

But back in this country they did nothing about radio until during that Palace engagement in 1931, when Cantor, who had his own air program, suggested that Gracie appear with him as a guest artist. She did and stole the affair right from under Eddie's bulging eyes, much to his satisfaction. Burns and Allen were sought out immediately by the program-makers. They appeared on the Rudy Vallee and Guy Lombardo programs, and then they got a show of their own. Since February 15, 1932, they have been off the air only for vacations and brief lapses involving changes of sponsors.

Almost a year before they became radio performers, they had signed a contract with Paramount Pictures. Their first was the *Big Broadcast of 1932*. Radio success naturally did them no harm at the film box offices, and they were in steady Hollywood demand from then on. They moved to Hollywood in 1934, building at last the

home Gracie always had wanted to settle down in. It is a twelve-room affair in Beverly Hills and nothing at all pretentious, according to Burns. They do have a swimming pool, however, and they consider it an excellent investment because it has made expert swimmers of the two children they adopted—Sandra Jean, born in July, 1934, and Ronald John, born a year later. They lead the simple life except when they can break away for a week or so in New York each year; there they are lost in a mad whirl of shopping, theater, and night clubs.

Despite the fact that they have been partners for so long, Burns and Allen never appeared in performance as husband and wife, either in vaudeville or on the radio, until 1942 when they took on a new sponsor, Swan Soap. Now they are a married couple in all their air shows, suffering the trials and tribulations to which all such are heir.

"It is a much better setup this way," Burns says. "There are more opportunities because when you're playing with a partner who is just 'a girl,' there are certain limitations. This change has helped us immensely as radio performers."

Burns, although he doesn't get the headlines that Gracie does, is the king-pin of the combination. He is the idea man and is accounted one of the shrewdest showmen in or out of radio. Of course, the program has its writing staff, and George works only in an advisory capacity. But nothing goes in the show without his okay.

He likes to prepare the air programs at the last minute—doesn't believe in getting several weeks ahead, as do some performers.

"Some people get jittery if they aren't 'way ahead, but that doesn't bother us," he explains. "We think that we function better under the gun. Besides, we use a lot of topical stuff and we can't afford to be far behind the news."

Their CBS network show is broadcast on Tuesday nights. The writers begin preliminary work on the next program the following day, but it is not until the week-end that they really begin to beat the script into shape. The cast doesn't see the script until the day before the broadcast, and there is no pre-broadcast performance before an audience.

"That's another thing I don't believe in—previews," Burns says. "After you hold one of them, you begin to go over the script to check the audience response and you decide that you've got to have a few more sock laughs here and there. The only way you can get them in is to cut and, of course, the only things that can be cut are the little natural phrases of dialogue or words that link the exchanges together as normal conversation is linked. To us it is more important that our dialogue hangs together naturally than that we add maybe two or three more laughs. So, no previews. In my opinion they're just a temptation to tamper with something that more often than not has hit the target in its original form."

Burns has his own very definite ideas about comedy.

"No pressure; that's my philosophy of comedy," he explains. "It goes for life in general, too, I guess. I'll give you an example of what I mean. Gracie will say that her sister Bessie used to go around with a movie star, but she discovered she was a little too old for him. Someone asks her who the star was and she says William S. Hart. Now, with that you've stuck your neck out. The laugh, if any, has to come with the utterance of Hart's name. You've pointed it up and if it doesn't score you're a dead duck. Now, you take the same joke but this time you keep the pressure off the windup. Gracie says something about it being true that her sister stopped going with a movie star because she found she was a little too old for him, but that she and William S. Hart are still the best of friends. In that way you haven't built yourself up to a climax on which you have to stand or fall. You just sort of seem to 'throw it away.' If you get your laugh, fine; if not, you haven't made yourself look foolish."

Gracie, of course, is a fabulous figure. George and the writers are always dreaming up things for her to do that inevitably develop into a series of events lasting through weeks of broadcasts and keep the fans following proceedings avidly. There was the time in 1933 when Gracie made the rounds of various programs inquiring for a supposedly lost brother, a fellow about whom she told fantastic fables. The thing reached the point where her real brother George, a San

Francisco accountant, virtually had to go into hiding until the gag was played out.

She has had quite a political career on radio. Once she was running for governor of the state of Coma, and she graduated from this in 1940 as the presidential candidate of the Surprise Party. *How to Become President*, by Gracie Allen, was published in 1940. She had a devastating answer for those inquiring as to what party she belonged to. "Same old party—George Burns," she would say.

Gracie covered the Democratic and Republican conventions in Chicago in 1944 for a newspaper syndicate, doing a short daily piece that gave a slightly cockeyed, but nevertheless pointed, view of the proceedings. This led to her doing a five-day-a-week syndicate piece of comments on anything and everything that struck her fancy.

There is also Gracie the musician—a stage in her career that developed somewhat by accident. One of the programs had her taking piano lessons and getting six notes right and one wrong consistently. This went on as a running gag for about six weeks, and Burns saw there would have to be a payoff on it pretty soon. So Felix Mills, an arranger for Walt Disney, was called in and he evolved the now famous "One-Finger Concerto," in which an orchestra plays a compilation of well-known melodies while Gracie sits at the piano and contributes an occasional note with her index finger. The concerto was first done on the Burns and Allen program with Paul Whiteman directing the orchestra. Since then, it has been played, with Gracie as guest artist, in the Hollywood Bowl by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra; in Carnegie Hall, New York; in Boston; and in Philadelphia.

The comedienne also paints, when she has the time and the urge to record her own special brand of surrealism. She once gave an exhibition of her work in New York; two typical titles probably won't convey the slightest idea what her work is like: *Gravity Gets a Body Scissors on Virtue as Night Falls Upside Down* and *Eyes Adrift as Sardines Wrench at Your Heartstrings*.

All of these things, of course, are extremely good business for Burns and Allen. Offstage, Gracie is a pretty, unassuming person of

quiet ways who is a good conversationalist and never happier than when she is puttering around the house. Burns says that "Gracie reads books, bakes cakes, and ties up the telephone, just like other women." She is five feet, one inch tall, and weighs a little over a hundred pounds.

Burns is average height, has retained his figure, and looks—well, he looks just like an average guy. Nothing remarkable about his face, one way or the other. He likes to play golf and invariably attends story conferences with a club in hand. During the conference he paces, swinging the club back and forth and occasionally halting to take a swipe at an imaginary ball. He is a lousy bridge player, so he says. Gracie prefers gin rummy.

She calls him Nattie and Georgie, and he calls her Googie. There's a story goes with that.

One night years ago Gracie woke up about 2 A.M. and couldn't go back to sleep. She shook George into what had to do for wakefulness and said, "Georgie, say something funny."

"Gogie-gogie," mumbled George, already on the way back to dreamland. She laughed.

"Of course," Burns remarks dryly when he relates the story, "we were married at the time."

"Well, I hope," says Gracie.



BURNS AND ALLEN

BURNS AND ALLEN . . . *On the Air*

BILL GOODWIN: Well, tonight we find George and Gracie just leaving their neighborhood movie where they have been watching a romantic Charles Boyer picture. Gracie is still under the spell of her screen idol.

GEORGE: Gracie, could you walk a little faster?

GRACIE: If you wish, Charles.

GEORGE: Gracie, I'm George Burns, your husband—remember? I'm not Charles Boyer.

GRACIE: Oh. Well, that's life.

GEORGE: Come on. I want to stop in the cigar store.

GRACIE: My, I'll never get over the way Charles Boyer kissed Barbara Stanwyck. I wonder how it feels to be kissed like that.

GEORGE: As soon as we get home I'll show you.

GRACIE: Mama's little dreamer.

GEORGE: Never mind, never mind. Here's the cigar store.

[*Door opens.*]

STANLEY: Good evening, Mr. Burns.

GEORGE: Good evening, Stanley. Give me three Perfecto Royales, please.

STANLEY: Yes, sir. Why, hello, Mrs. Burns.

GRACIE: Hello, Stanley.

STANLEY: My, you're looking positively radiant tonight. There's a sparkle in your eyes and a glow in your cheek that only a man could put there.

GRACIE: It was a man, Stanley.

STANLEY: Well, well—there must be more to Mr. Burns than meets the eye.

GEORGE: We've just been to see Charles Boyer.

STANLEY: Oh! Well, here are your cigars.

GRACIE: Oh, George, pay Stanley for these ten movie magazines, too.

GEORGE: Ten movie magazines?

GRACIE: They all have articles about Charles Boyer.

[*Door opens.*]

BOLEY: Greetings, Stanley. 'Tis I—Bolingbroke.

STANLEY (*disgusted*): Hello, Cueball.

GRACIE: Well, hello, Mr. Bolingbroke!

BOLEY: Why, bless me, if it isn't the Burnses—both the lovely one and the other one. Well, well, this is a most fortuitous happenstance!

GRACIE: It is?

BOLEY: Yes, I have great news for you, dear lady! The Bolingbroke Little Theatre is about to open its winter theatrical season. I shall want you as the leading lady, naturally.

GRACIE: Oh, naturally. Say, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get Charles Boyer for my leading man?

GEORGE: Oh, sure, sure. You could get him easy for around twenty-five thousand dollars.

GRACIE: We wouldn't have to pay him a cent, George—he's Free French.

GEORGE: Well, anyway, you're not going to get mixed up with Bolingbroke's theatre. All he wants is your money.

BOLEY: Sir, you insult me. I would not touch one cent of her money.

GEORGE: No?

BOLEY: No. She can give it directly to my landlady.

GEORGE: I thought so. Nothing doing. Get your movie magazines, Gracie, we're going home. And Stanley, I'll take this copy of *Cowboy Love Tales*.

BOLEY: Oh, that's your favorite magazine, isn't it?

GEORGE: Yes.

BOLEY: What a coincidence. My opening play will be a dramatization of *Cowboy Love Tales*.

GEORGE: Really?

BOLEY: Yes. I can just picture your lovely wife in the role of Lucy, and you as the half-breed, Dirty Sam.

GEORGE: Does the part of Oklahoma Tex happen to be open?

BOLEY: Why, certainly, dear friend! Of course, there's that little matter of—uh—

GEORGE: Money?

BOLEY: Yes—yes!

GEORGE: Okay, here's five bucks.

BOLEY: Ah, cabbage from Mr. Morgenthau's victory garden.

GEORGE: Well, Gracie, I'm going to be your leading man. You and I are going to be the lovers of the old Bar-X.

* * *

GEORGE: Gracie, it's one o'clock in the morning! Put away those silly movie magazines and let's get some sleep!

GRACIE: George, did you know that Charles Boyer was awfully bashful as a boy?

GEORGE: Oh, turn out the light.

GRACIE: It says here he didn't get his first kiss until he was nineteen and even then he wasn't thrilled.

GEORGE: No, huh?

GRACIE: No. I guess those French generals aren't very attractive.

GEORGE: Turn out the light.

GRACIE: The article I'm reading now is fascinating—"Charles Boyer's Ten Rules for Being a Successful Lover."

GEORGE: Turn out the light.

GRACIE: That's the first rule.

GEORGE: Turn out the—oh, go to sleep.

[Door buzzer.]

GEORGE: Oh, nuts! Now there's someone at the door.

GRACIE: Could it be Charles Boyer?

GEORGE: Of course not.

GRACIE: Then you answer it.

GEORGE: Aw! . . . Ooooh! The floor's cold.

[Door opens.]

BILL: Hi, George. I saw the light on.

Is something wrong?

GEORGE: Yes, something's wrong. I want to sleep and Gracie wants me to listen to Charles Boyer's advice on love.

BILL: Let's face it, Daddy—you can use it.

GEORGE: Now look, funnyman—

GRACIE: Oh, Bill—it's you!

BILL: Hello, Gracie.

GRACIE: Listen to what I just read about Charles Boyer. It seems that years ago in France a man named Pierre Dumont befriended him.

GEORGE: Good night. I'm going to bed.

GRACIE: Good night, dear. Well, this Dumont has a daughter named Marie who lives in America now and Mr. Boyer has been looking for Marie so he can repay his debt to her father.

BILL: Marie? Say, I'm engaged to a girl named Marie!

GRACIE: Is her last name Dumont?

BILL: I didn't catch her last name.

GRACIE: Gee, I wish I were Marie Dumont. Then Charles Boyer would be glad to play my leading man. Say! Why couldn't I be Marie Dumont?

BILL: Gracie, you wouldn't!

GRACIE: Oh, wouldn't I? I wonder what time Frenchmen get up in the morning—

* * *

[Knock on door. Door opens.]

BOYER: Yes?

GRACIE: Good morning, Mr. Boyer.

BOYER: Is there something you wish?

GRACIE: Don't you recognize me, Mr. Boyer?

BOYER: No, I'm sorry.

GRACIE: I'm little Marie—you know, Marie Dumont.

BOYER: No!

GRACIE: Yace.

BOYER: You are actually the daughter of my dear old friend?

GRACIE: *Beaucoup* why not?

BOYER: Oh! *Mais c'est merveilleux! Entrez donc, ma petite Marie! J'avais presque abandonné l'espoir de vous retrouver, et vous voilà! C'est magnifique!*

GRACIE: Somehow I knew you'd say that.

BOYER: *Asseyez vous ma petite et écoutez moi! Il y a longtemps que vous êtes en Amérique? Qu'est ce que vous faites? Où habitez vous?*

GRACIE: Well, yes and no.

BOYER: Why do you not speak to me in French, Marie?

GRACIE: Oh, I've gotten in the habit of speaking American. This country is full of Americans, you know.

BOYER: Still the same Marie. As a girl you always made the little jokes.

GRACIE: I did?

BOYER: Yes, and you told terrible fibs.

GRACIE: I guess I haven't changed a bit.

BOYER: You were quite small when I saw you last, but I seem to remember that your hair was black.

GRACIE: They have beauty shops in America.

BOYER: And I thought your nose was longer.

GRACIE: They have plastic surgeons too.

BOYER: And instead of blue, I thought your eyes were brown.

GRACIE: A wonderful country, isn't it?

BOYER: Perhaps my memory fails me. It has been so many years since I held you on my lap.

GRACIE: You—used to hold me on your lap?

BOYER: Of course. And now I want to hear all about your dear papa. How does he look?

GRACIE: Papa? Let's see. How long since you've seen him?

BOYER: Fifteen years.

GRACIE: Well, he looks fifteen years older.

BOYER: Distressing, but it could happen to anyone.

GRACIE: Poor papa, he's gotten very gray.

BOYER: Gray? That is strange. Fifteen years ago he was completely bald.

GRACIE: Well, so much for papa.

BOYER: But how could a bald man become gray?

GRACIE: Oh, you're talking about his hair.

BOYER: Yes.

GRACIE: I was talking about his complexion.

BOYER: A gray complexion?

GRACIE: Not so good either, huh?

BOYER: Very bad.

GRACIE: Well, so much for papa.

BOYER: My friend sounds like a sick man. Has he given up his hobby?

GRACIE: Oh, no. He's sick in bed but he keeps up his hobby right in his bedroom.

BOYER: Amazing!

GRACIE: Why?

BOYER: His hobby is raising goats.

GRACIE: Well, so much for papa.

BOYER: One other thing I would like to know about him—

GRACIE: Mr. Boyer, I hate to change the subject. Why don't you change it?

BOYER: I understand. It troubles you to speak of poor Dumont.

GRACIE: It certainly does. Let's speak of me and the play I'm going to be in.

BOYER: Ah, so my little Marie has gone on the stage?

GRACIE: Yes, and I'd love you to be my leading man. Would you?

BOYER: Well—

GRACIE: Please do it for me. You'd play the hero, Oklahoma Tex.

BOYER: Oklahoma Tex?

GRACIE: Yes. Say you'll do it.

BOYER: How can I refuse? It is a small way in which to repay my debt to Pierre.

GRACIE: Who?

BOYER: Your papa.

GRACIE: Oh, him. Well, if you'll come to 202 Canon Drive this afternoon, we'll rehearse our parts.

BOYER: I will be there, Marie.

GRACIE: And by the way, at my house you'd better call me Gracie. My husband always does.

BOYER: Your husband? You are married?

GRACIE: Yes, so don't mention how I used to sit on your lap.

BOYER: Why does your husband call you Gracie instead of Marie?

GRACIE: Well, he can't speak French. But George is a wonderful man.

BOYER: I'm sure he is. Did you keep your promise to your father?

GRACIE: My promise? Oh, of course I kept it. What was it?

BOYER: Why, you promised to marry a man in the same business as your father.

GRACIE: Oh, that promise. Sure I kept it. I wouldn't disappoint papa.

BOYER: Well, well. So my little Marie is married to a wine merchant.

GRACIE: Wine merchant? Oh, yes!

BOYER: I can't believe it!

GRACIE: It's hard for me, too.

BOYER: What is his name again?

GRACIE: George—George Burns—George Burns, the wine merchant. Well, I'll be running along. See you at my house this afternoon.

BOYER: It will be good to taste real wine again.

GRACIE: Won't it, though? How do you like your wine—straight or with soda?

BOYER: Again you joke with me. *Au*

revoir, ma petite. Je me rejouis de vous revoir cet après midi.

GRACIE: How true!

* * *

[Door buzzer. Door opens.]

BOYER: Why, Charles Boyer!

BOYER: How do you do? Your wife is expecting me.

GEORGE: Really? Well, come in.

BOYER: Thank you. Your wife is a remarkable woman. She speaks English awfully well, don't you think?

GEORGE: Why—uh—yeah, I have no trouble understanding her.

BOYER: She told me about the business you're in. It must be fascinating.

GEORGE: Oh, sure. We have our good years and bad years, of course.

BOYER: Naturally, I understand that 1927 was the finest recent year.

GEORGE: 1927? Yeah, I did pretty well that year. Made a big success in Altoona.

BOYER: Altoona? I'm not familiar with it. Is it anything like Sauterne?

GEORGE: Sauterne? That's a new one on me. Is it near Scranton?

BOYER: Possibly, but it's closer to Claret.

GEORGE: One of us must be on a detour.

BOYER: Perhaps I can clear it up. Is this Altoona light?

GEORGE: Well, it's light in the daytime. Then it gets pretty dark.

BOYER: Light and dark? I don't think I would like this Altoona.

GEORGE: It didn't seem so bad in 1927, but I liked Bridgeport better.

BOYER: Which port?

GEORGE: No, Bridgeport. It had more bright lights.

BOYER: Ah, more sparkle, eh?

GEORGE: Yeah, you could put it that way.

BOYER: This Bridgeport must be similar to champagne.

GEORGE: Well, Champaign is a lot farther west—Illinois.

BOYER: Naturally, you mean the American champagne.

GEORGE: Yeah. Ever been in it?

BOYER: Been in it? Don't tell me people bathe in champagne.

GEORGE: Why not? They bathe in Altona.

BOYER: But don't the bubbles tickle?

GEORGE: Bubbles?

BOYER: Yes. Didn't you ever hear of bubbles in champagne?

GEORGE: No, but I knew a girl named Ginger in Peoria.

BOYER: I am speaking of champagne, the wine. You seem rather dense for a man who is in the wine business.

GEORGE: I'm not in the wine business.

BOYER: That's funny. Your wife told me—

GRACIE: Well, well, Mr. Boyer. I'm so glad to see you!

GEORGE: Gracie, did you tell Mr. Boyer I was in the wine business?

GRACIE: The—oh! Oh, no, I meant I used to be in it. I used to press the grapes with my bare feet, but George was never in the wine business.

BOYER: What a pity. He could have made a fortune with those feet of his.

GEORGE: Gracie, you used to press grapes with—

GRACIE: Please, dear. Mr. Boyer wants to discuss our play. He's going to be my leading man, Oklahoma Tex, a rootin' tootin' cowboy.

BOYER: But never in my life have I rooted or tooted.

GEORGE: Gracie, I thought I was going to play Tex.

BOYER: Yes, let your husband play the part, Mrs. Burns. I really don't believe I'm the type for a cowboy part.

GRACIE: Oh, Mr. Boyer, you'd be a perfect cowboy. You've even got the eyes for it—big, dark brown eyes just like a cow's.

BOYER: Well, all right. I'll do it for your papa.

GEORGE: Oh, you know Gracie's old man?

BOYER: My best friend.

GEORGE: Gracie, where did Mr. Boyer meet—

[Door buzzer.]

GRACIE: Thank goodness! I mean someone's at the door. Come in.

[Door opens.]

BOLEY: Greetings, good people.

GRACIE: Hello, Mr. Bolingbroke. Did you finish the play?

BOLEY: Yes, here are copies of the script, still damp with the dew of my genius.

GRACIE: Good! Mr. Bolingbroke, this is our new leading man, Charles Boyer.

BOYER: How do you do?

BOLEY: Sir, permit me to assure you that it is an honor and a privilege to meet such a celebrated actor as Nigel Bolingbroke.

GEORGE: Oh, murder!

BOLEY: Here's your script, Charlie. and yours, Mrs. B.

GEORGE: Hey, how about me? Haven't I got a part?

BOLEY: Uh—no. However, I might create a role for you. Is your wallet on your person?

GEORGE: No, it's in the den.

BOLEY: Then let us wend our way thither. I create so much better in the presence of money.

GEORGE: Okay, come on.

* * *

BOYER: Mrs. Burns, forgive me if I seem to doubt, but are you sure that you are the daughter of Pierre Dumont?

GRACIE: Oh, absolutely.

BOYER: Have you a picture of him?

GRACIE: A picture?

BOYER: Yes, a picture.

GRACIE: Oh, a picture. Uh—is that him on the wall?

BOYER: No, that is Abraham Lincoln.

GRACIE: Oh, no—no. I meant the other wall.

BOYER: That is George Washington.

GRACIE: You're very well educated, aren't you? But I assure you, Mr. Boyer, I am Marie Dumont.

BOYER: Is there someone who could confirm your story? Some Frenchman who knew you and your father back in France?

GRACIE: Some Frenchman? Well—
[Door opens.]

BILL: Hi, Gracie. Oh! You have company.

GRACIE: Why Marcel Goodwin!

BILL: Huh?

GRACIE: Hello, Marcel!

BILL: Oh, it's just a finger wave. Say, isn't this Charles Boyer?

GRACIE: See, Mr. Boyer, that proves he's a Frenchman; he recognized you. Mr. Boyer, I want you to meet Marcel Goodwin, who knew my father, Pierre Dumont, and who will tell you that I am his daughter, and who probably can't stay long after he tells you.

BILL: How do you do, Mr. Boyer.

BOYER: *Bon jour*, Marcel, *bon jour*.

GRACIE: And who no longer speaks French.

BOYER: Well, well, Mr. Goodwin, so you knew my old friend, Pierre Dumont.

BILL: So I've been told. That is, I've been told that you know him too.

BOYER: How did he look when you last saw him?

BILL: Uh—well—I had to talk to him through the door; he was taking a bath.

GRACIE: Well, Mr. Boyer, see, now do you believe me?

BOYER: But I would still like to know—
[Door opens.]

BOLEY: Well, Mrs. Burns, everything is settled. For an additional three dollars I created a splendid part for your husband.

GEORGE: Yeah, as the curtain goes up I sing a cowboy song off stage.

BOYER: Gracie, I'm sorry, but I cannot do this play. Even for the daughter of my best friend.

GEORGE: Say, that's been bothering me. Where did you know Gracie's father?

BOYER: He lived outside of Paris.

GRACIE: Sure.

GEORGE: He lived in San Francisco!

GRACIE: Well, isn't that outside of Paris?

GEORGE: Gracie, your old man has never been out of this state.

BOYER: So! My suspicions were correct. You are not the daughter of Pierre Dumont.

GEORGE: Of course not. She's Jughead Allen's daughter. So you're up to your old tricks again, huh, Gracie?

GRACIE: Well, I just did it so Mr. Boyer would play Oklahoma Tex, but I guess I was wrong.

GEORGE: You certainly were. Now apologize to him.

GRACIE: I'm sorry, Mr. Boyer. And besides you're much too fine an actor—much too handsome and romantic to play Oklahoma Tex. You wouldn't be believable as such a stupid character.

BOYER: Thank you.

GRACIE: Here, George, you've got your part back.

GEORGE: Oh, fine!

ANOTHER BURNS AND ALLEN SCRIPT

GEORGE: Gracie, you've been making notes all during breakfast—what are you scribbling?

GRACIE: Oh, I'm going to write an article for our club magazine.

GEORGE: Oh, The Beverly Hills Uplift Society has a magazine now?

GRACIE: Yes, we call it *Friday Evening Post*.

GEORGE: Great name.

GRACIE: We figure that if we come out a day earlier, people won't wait for the other one.

GEORGE: You mean this thing is on the newsstands?

GRACIE: Not yet. It's being handled by Mr. Egges, the butcher.

GEORGE: That's a funny way to circulate a magazine.

GRACIE: Oh, it gets into the most exclusive homes in Beverly Hills. Mr. Egges has promised not to wrap any cheap cuts of meat in it.

GEORGE: Well, I'm glad it's doing so nicely.

GRACIE: Yes. Well, I'll have to get busy on my article now. At the last club meeting I asked the girls to pick out the subject that interests them most—cooking, sewing, gardening or decorating.

GEORGE: What did they pick?

GRACIE: Herbert Marshall.

GEORGE: Nice subject.

GRACIE: Isn't he though? In fact, our club voted Herbert Marshall the man they'd most like to—

GEORGE: Like to what?

GRACIE: Well, at that point the discussion went in all directions.

GEORGE: I wouldn't be surprised.

GRACIE: I've already written a poem about Mr. Marshall. It's a sort of a tribute from the girls. Would you like to hear it?

GEORGE: No.

GRACIE (*clears throat*):

Herbert Herbert, Herbert Herbert,
We love you more than orange
sherbert;

Your voice is sweet—just like molasses

We wish at us you'd make mo-passes.

GEORGE: Mo-passes?

GRACIE: George, please—don't interrupt.

Bart Bart, handsome Bart,

You're the man who steals our heart;

To the sofa we'd like to maneuver,
Because we love you, Herbert Hoover.

GEORGE: Herbert Hoover!

GRACIE: Marshall didn't rhyme.

GEORGE: Oh, fine.

GRACIE: Well, I'd better get started on my article, "The Daring Love Life of Herbert Marshall."

GEORGE: The daring love life?

GRACIE: Spicy, huh? I'll probably spread it over several issues. I'm sure there's more than one installment in him.

GEORGE: Gracie, what do you know about Herbert Marshall's love life?

GRACIE: Nothing. Isn't that lucky?

GEORGE: Lucky?

GRACIE: Yes, that way I'm not tied down.

GEORGE: Gracie, you wrote an article about Loretta Young and almost got us sued. I absolutely forbid you to write a word about Marshall unless you interview him and get the facts.

GRACIE: But George, I wouldn't know how to interview anyone.

GEORGE: It's easy. Now pretend I'm Herbert Marshall.

GRACIE: I thought you said it was easy.

GEORGE: Go ahead—just ask me some questions.

GRACIE: All right. How do you do, Mr. Marshall. I'd like to—uh—I'd like to—

GEORGE: Go on.

GRACIE: Could we try it with a napkin over your face?

GEORGE: You don't have to look at me. Just ask a question.

GRACIE: Yes, dear. Mr. Marshall, what is it that makes you so fascinating to women?

GEORGE: Well, I suppose it's my charm. [*Gracie giggles.*]

GEORGE: Stop giggling. You sound silly.

GRACIE: How do you think you sounded?

GEORGE: All right—all right—

[Door buzzer.

GRACIE: Excuse me, dear. Someone's at the door.

[Footsteps—door opens.

POSTMAN: Good morning, Mrs. Burns.

GRACIE: Why, Mr. Postman! You're back! Where have you been all these weeks?

POSTMAN: They transferred me way up in the hills.

GRACIE: How awful.

POSTMAN: Oh, I didn't mind. The high altitude sent the blood racing through my veins at a glorious tempo.

GRACIE: You do look pretty healthy.

POSTMAN: Yes, I'm even more vigorous than ever, if such a thing is possible.

GRACIE: Are you glad to be back on this route again?

POSTMAN: Oh, yes, Mrs. Burns. I missed the laughs we used to have together.

GRACIE: Would you like to have one now?

POSTMAN: I'd love to. You go first.

GRACIE (laughs): Now you.

POSTMAN (laughs): My, that was fun.

BILL: Hiya, Gracie—hello, Mr. Postman.

POSTMAN: Hello, Mr. Goodwin.

GRACIE: Hello, Bill. Say, will you two boys excuse me for a moment? I want to telephone Herbert Marshall and make an appointment to interview him.

BILL: Certainly, Gracie. Well, Mr. Postman, where have you been? As the fellow said when the ration board cut down his gas stamps, "Long time no C." (Laughs.)

POSTMAN: You're corny but you're cute. You know, Mr. Goodwin, you shouldn't tell jokes. Well, good-by, Mr. Goodwin and remember—keep smiling.

[Door slams.

GRACIE (excited): Oh, Bill—Bill—have you got your car here?

BILL: No, Gracie, why?

GRACIE: Oh, dear, I'm going to interview Herbert Marshall and I'll have to hurry to see him before he joins the Marines.

BILL: The Marines?

GRACIE: Yes. I just heard on the radio that the Marines are taking the last of the Marshalls.

BILL: I see—I see—

* * *

TOOTSIE: Oh, Gracie, Gracie!

GRACIE: Well—Tootsie Sagwell. Hello, Tootsie.

TOOTSIE: Where you going, Gracie?

GRACIE: I'm on my way over to interview Herbert Marshall.

TOOTSIE (thrilled): Ooooh—Herbert Marshall! My dream man.

GRACIE: Tootsie! Calm down.

TOOTSIE: Oh, Gracie, I'd just give anything if I could interview Mr. Marshall.

GRACIE: Well, Tootsie, if it means that much to you, I guess you could go in my place.

TOOTSIE: Oh, Gracie, could I?

GRACIE: Well, why not? He's expecting Mrs. George Burns, but how does he know you're not Mrs. George Burns? Nobody thinks I'm married to George. Even on our honeymoon, people thought my mother was the bride.

TOOTSIE: Oh, Gracie, you're wonderful. I'll interview Mr. Marshall like he's never been interviewed before.

GRACIE: All right, Tootsie. Now remember, you're Mrs. George Burns. And also remember to be nice to Mr. Marshall. He's the perfect gentleman in the drawing room.

TOOTSIE: He is? Well, maybe I can get him in the library. Good-by.

* * *

[Door knock. Door opens.

TOOTSIE: Hello, Mr. Marshall. I'm here for the interview.

MARSHALL: Oh, come in, Mrs. Burns.

TOOTSIE: Thank you, Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL: Now, where would you like to start?

TOOTSIE: The couch looks like a nice place.

MARSHALL: Very well. Let's go over and sit down.

TOOTSIE: Let's do.

MARSHALL: Mrs. Burns, are you anxious to get this interview over in a hurry?

TOOTSIE: Why, no.

MARSHALL: Then why are you pushing me?

TOOTSIE: I'm sorry.

MARSHALL: Now, here we are. I'll just start at the beginning. I was born in England in—Mrs. Burns, you're crowding me.

TOOTSIE: Oh—I'm sorry.

MARSHALL: As I was saying, I was born in England—Mrs. Burns, it's difficult for me to speak unless I can breathe—and it's difficult for me to breathe unless you uncoil from about my mid-section.

TOOTSIE: I guess I'm too anxious to make good.

MARSHALL: By the way, you should have a pencil if you're going to make notes. Now let's see, where was I? Oh, yes—I was born in England in—now what are you doing?

TOOTSIE: Looking for a pencil.

MARSHALL: I doubt if you'll find one running your fingers through my hair. Are you Mrs. George Burns?

TOOTSIE: Yes, but don't let that bother you. Come on, let's neck!

MARSHALL: Please, Mrs. Burns. You can't do this to George!

TOOTSIE: Who wants to do it to George! Come here, Herbie.

MARSHALL: Mrs. Burns—unhand me—Mrs. Burns—please—Mrs. Burns—

* * *

[Door buzzer. Door opens.

MARSHALL (panting for breath): How

do you do. Is Mr. Burns at home?
GRACIE: No. My goodness, Mr. Marshall, you look like you've been chased by a Zombie.

MARSHALL: I have, believe me.

GRACIE: Can I help you?

MARSHALL: No, what I have to tell Mr. Burns is rather personal. I presume you keep house for him.

GRACIE: Yes, and you can tell me anything. My Boopsie Boy and I have no secrets.

MARSHALL: You—uh—refer to Mr. Burns as your—Boopsie Boy?

GRACIE: Sure. Sometimes I call him sweetheart—or dream lover. He calls me his lambie pie.

MARSHALL: But how about Mrs. Burns?

GRACIE: Oh, Mrs. Burns is too formal and old-fashioned to suit us.

MARSHALL: Little do you know. Well, well, so this is the how of it. Mr. Burns has a wife and housekeeper. A very cute trick.

GRACIE: Oh, thank you. You're pretty cute yourself.

MARSHALL: I don't mean to be inquisitive, but just what do you do?

GRACIE: For Boopsie Boy? Oh, I wash and cook and sew and rub his back and keep his feet warm.

MARSHALL: He must pay you a rather fancy salary.

GRACIE: Oh, no money. He just gives me a kiss now and then.

MARSHALL: And you're satisfied with that?

GRACIE: Well, money's not what it used to be either, you know.

MARSHALL: Mr. Burns sounds like a cad and a bounder. Making a sweet innocent girl like you work for nothing.

GRACIE: Oh, I don't mind the work. Why it's a thrill to wash his little shirts and socks and his—whatchamacallits—because I love him.

MARSHALL: But don't you object to the—the triangle?

GRACIE (*giggles*): Oh, he hasn't worn those since he was a baby.

MARSHALL: I don't wish to meddle in other people's affairs, but why don't you leave this man?

GRACIE: Oh, I couldn't leave George. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't see that graceful little figure coming down the stairs every morning in his night shirt.

MARSHALL: In his night shirt?

GRACIE: Yes. (*Sighs.*) He looks just like a parachute floating gently to earth.

MARSHALL: Young lady, don't you blush with shame to tell me these things?

GRACIE: Why should I? I'm his wife.

MARSHALL: You're his wife? Then that woman who came to my house to interview me must be an impostor.

GRACIE: Oh, wait a minute. I mean. I'm his wife's best friend, Tootsie Sagwell.

MARSHALL: You're his wife's best friend and you're in love with him?

GRACIE: Sounds exciting, doesn't it?

MARSHALL: To say the least. Where can I find Mr. Burns?

GRACIE: At his office in the Plaza building. Why?

MARSHALL: Tootsie Sagwell, I am going to save you from a fate worse than death.

GRACIE: You are?

MARSHALL: Yes. (*Angrily.*) I'll teach George Burns to make love to you!

GRACIE: Oh, wonderful and you're just the man who can do it!

* * *

[*Door opens and closes.*]

GEORGE: Well, Herbert Marshall, what brings you to my office?

MARSHALL: You Bluebeard!

GEORGE: Bluebeard?

MARSHALL: You boulder!

GEORGE: Boulder?

MARSHALL: You reprobate!

GEORGE: Reprobate?

MARSHALL: You philanderer!

GEORGE: Philanderer!

MARSHALL: Look, can't you think of your own names?

GEORGE: But—I don't understand.

MARSHALL: No wonder your wife threw me on the divan and tried to kiss me!

GEORGE: My wife? Oh, Mr. Marshall, I can't believe that my wife would make advances.

MARSHALL: Advances! My dear fellow, she made the Russians seem positively backward . . . Oh, not that I blame her, with you carrying on shamelessly with Tootsie Sagwell!

GEORGE: Tootsie Sagwell?

MARSHALL: If there's a decent bone in your body send Tootsie Sagwell away. Release the evil spell you've cast over that beautiful innocent child.

GEORGE: Beautiful? Tootsie Sagwell is a homely man chaser.

MARSHALL: That's what I can't understand. Why does she insist on chasing homely men?

GEORGE: Mr. Marshall, aren't you mixed up?

MARSHALL: No, but you are. Now once and for all, what do you intend to do about Tootsie Sagwell?

GEORGE: Nothing.

MARSHALL: Burns, I should thrash you within an inch of your life, but in your case that wouldn't be much of a thrashing. However, you haven't seen the last of me. To teach you a lesson I've got half a mind to take Tootsie away from you. Good day.
[*Door slams.*]

GEORGE: Gee. He's only got half a mind all right.

* * *

GRACIE: Oh, Tootsie, Mr. Marshall's right in the next room, and if we play our cards right, you can become Mrs. Herbert Marshall!

TOOTSIE: Ooooh—mark the cards—
stack the deck!

GRACIE: You see, he thinks I'm you,
so I'll get him to propose, get the
license made out to Herbert Mar-
shall and Tootsie Sagwell, then you
put on a veil and marry him.

TOOTSIE: But how about after the
ceremony when he lifts the veil?

GRACIE: Then you sue him for alimony.

TOOTSIE: Wonderful! But do you think
you can get him to propose so fast?

GRACIE: Sure. You wait here.

* * *

[*Door closes. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GRACIE: Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL: Yes, Tootsie?

GRACIE: Do you believe in wartime
marriages?

MARSHALL: Well, I've nothing against
them.

GRACIE: Oh, this is so sudden! Now
hurry out and get the license.

MARSHALL: Why, Tootsie! This is a
proposal!

GRACIE: It is? Well, I accept!

* * *

[*Door closes. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GRACIE: Oh, Tootsie, it was as easy as
falling. George! What are you doing
home?

GEORGE: I want to talk to you. Her-
bert Marshall came to my office and
said that when my wife interviewed
him she threw him on the divan and
tried to kiss him!

GRACIE: Really?

GEORGE: Yes! I think I'm entitled to
an explanation!

GRACIE: You certainly are!

GEORGE: I certainly am!

GRACIE: You certainly are!

GEORGE: I certainly am!

GRACIE: You certain—

GEORGE: Never mind that. What have
you got to say?

GRACIE: George, you're entitled to an
explanation.

GEORGE: I certainly am!

GRACIE: You certainly—

GEORGE: Oh, stop it! Now tell me the
truth. During that interview, did
you or did you not try to kiss Her-
bert Marshall?

GRACIE: Uh—you wait here, I'll be
right back.

GEORGE: Where are you going?

GRACIE: To get my notes.

[*Door slams. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GRACIE: Mr. Marshall, haven't you
gone for the license yet?

MARSHALL: Well, you see, Tootsie,
one must think about a thing like
this. A man doesn't get married
every day.

GRACIE: You don't know Tommy Man-
ville, huh?

MARSHALL: But really—

GRACIE: Oh, you're so slow! I'll be
right back.

[*Door slams. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GRACIE: George, are you still here?

GEORGE: Gracie, I want you to tell me
exactly what went on at Herbert
Marshall's house.

GRACIE: All right, George. I'll tell you
the whole shameful story.

GEORGE: Good.

GRACIE: But there's one little part I
don't remember.

GEORGE: Well, tell me what you do
remember.

GRACIE: All right. I walked in the
house and said, "hello."

GEORGE: Yes?

GRACIE: That's all I remember.

GEORGE: Well, I'd like you to remem-
ber this. You're married to me, not
Herbert Marshall.

GRACIE: Oh, that reminds me. I'll be
right back.

[*Door slams. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GRACIE: Mr. Marshall, haven't you
gone for that license yet?

MARSHALL: Well—uh—Tootsie, I don't
want to hurt your feelings, but—
well—I had always planned to
marry an English girl.

GRACIE: Well, pip pip and get the license.

MARSHALL: You are English?

GRACIE: Well, tuppence ha'penny.

MARSHALL: Just where did you live in England?

GRACIE: Uh—mm—on the outskirts of Alfred Hitchcock.

MARSHALL: Oh, yes, I know the place well. There's a little pub on the corner.

GRACIE: It almost bit me. Now go get the license.

[*Door slams. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GEORGE: Gracie, stop running out of the room and tell me why you tried to kiss Herbert Marshall.

GRACIE (*dramatic*): How did I know it wasn't lemonade he served me!

GEORGE: You mean?

GRACIE: Yes! Four quarts!

GEORGE: You drank four quarts?

GRACIE: Happy New Year!

[*Door slams. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GRACIE: Mr. Marshall! Haven't you gone for that license yet? I don't believe in long engagements.

MARSHALL: But really—I can't—

GRACIE: Oh, I know. George was in the same spot. Here—here's the two dollars.

[*Door slams. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

GEORGE: Gracie, tell me more about what happened at Herbert Marshall's.

GRACIE: I don't remember, George. I really got cemented.

GEORGE: Cemented?

GRACIE: Stuccoed?

GEORGE: You mean plastered?

GRACIE: Happy New Year!

[*Door slams. Footsteps. Door opens.*]

MARSHALL: Now, Tootsie—

GRACIE: Happy New Year!

MARSHALL: What?

GRACIE: Oh, pardon me—wrong room. Did you get the license?

MARSHALL: Well—no—look, Tootsie, we've only known each other thirty minutes.

GRACIE: Well, this is Hollywood. We could have been married and separated in that time.

[*Door opens.*]

BILL: Oh, here you are, Gracie. I just—oh, hello, Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL: Hello, Bill.

GRACIE: Bill, give Mr. Marshall a little pep talk on marriage. I'll be right back.

[*Door closes.*]

BILL: What's the problem, Bart?

MARSHALL: I'm trying to work up enough nerve to take a wife.

BILL: Well, that doesn't take so much nerve, if her husband isn't looking.

MARSHALL: No, no—

BILL: Say! Are you thinking of taking the little girl who was just in here?

MARSHALL: Yes. I'd like to take her away from George Burns.

BILL: Well, that doesn't take nerve even if he's looking.

MARSHALL: I feel sorry for her. Do you know that she works like a dog and doesn't get a penny?

BILL: Everybody in Hollywood knows it . . .

[*Door opens.*]

GEORGE: Say, Mr. Marshall, my wife has just explained to me about you thinking she's Tootsie Sagwell.

MARSHALL: What?

GEORGE: Explain it to him, Gracie.

GRACIE: Well, it's really very simple, Mr. Marshall. You see you thought Tootsie Sagwell was married to George, but the Mrs. Burns who came to your house was Tootsie because I'm George's wife. Understand?

MARSHALL: No.

GRACIE: Well, look, if Tootsie Sagwell were Mrs. Burns I couldn't be Gracie Allen because I'm married to George and Tootsie wanted to marry you.

GEORGE: Yeah. Is it clear now, Mr. Marshall?

MARSHALL: Oh, sure, sure. I'll be running along. Good-by, young lady and good-by to you, Mr. Marshall.

[*Door slams.*]

GRACIE: I don't think he had it straight. I'd better go catch him.

GEORGE: Stay away from the man.

GRACIE: But I didn't even get my interview.

GEORGE: There'll be no interviews and

no articles. And promise me you'll never go near Herbert Marshall's house again.

GRACIE: I promise, dear.

GEORGE: Good.

GRACIE: George—

GEORGE: What?

GRACIE: Where does Ronald Colman live?

GEORGE: (*Groans*).

Squeeze Play!

PHIL
BAKER

Like some other famous comics, Phil Baker started his professional career with a musical instrument—didn't say a word. The story ends in the usual fashion—now they can't get the fellow to stop talking.

At first Baker used the piano. Then he employed the accordion, chiefly because it was a handy instrument that permitted him to move around (it's harder to hit a moving target) while he did a bit of talking and singing. When the "man in the box," his vaudeville stooge, came into his life, he put the squeeze on the portable organ only at short intervals and scarcely ever got to play a complete composition. Finally came radio, and eventually music was pushed from the picture altogether.

Baker has had two separate and distinct careers in radio, both of them highly successful. From 1933 to 1940 he was the star of one of those elaborately scripted variety productions complete with band, stooges, guest artists, and writers. His programs were among the most popular in the land. At the end of the 1939-40 season he decided it was time to take a rest—if the fans didn't need it, he did. He vowed he wouldn't come back until he found something out of the ordinary. He returned in 1942 as the pilot of a quiz show on the CBS network that was known as "Take It or Leave It." The fans took it. This program started its fourth season in the fall of 1944.

For all his success on radio and in vaudeville and musical comedy, Baker's heart is set on the drama. And he's sort of been conditioning himself for the moment when the right combination of script and other circumstances will make his Broadway debut as a legitimate actor possible. In the late thirties Baker toured in Robert Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight*, in which Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne were so

successful on Broadway. Baker played Lunt's role, that of a man in charge of a chorus-girl troupe touring Europe, and made an extremely good go of it. Later, after the venerable *Charley's Aunt* was revived successfully on Broadway, he took that on tour and again was successful. Having proved to himself that he's got the stuff for drama, he's just biding his time.

He was not always so patient. Born in Philadelphia in 1898, later a resident of New York, he early had attacks of wanderlust that resulted in his running away and being sent back. He loved music, but there was no money in the family to provide him with music lessons. Whenever he could, he would buy harmonicas and ocarinas and teach himself to play by the trial-and-error method. Once when he ran away to Boston he entered the Bowdoin Square Theater, where an amateur show was in progress, and managed to win fifty cents. The management, discovering his status and not wishing to be accused of contributing to juvenile delinquency, sent Baker home, much to his disgust.

There were other amateur contests after that, but it became necessary to earn a living; so Phil went to work as office boy for the late Carl Laemmle, who then was operating in New York with the old IMP film company which had Mary and Lottie Pickford and King Baggot on the payroll. He became a sort of secretary to Laemmle, but found this no less of a bore and spent all the time he could around theaters. One of his favorite haunts was a neighborhood movie house where he liked to sit in the front row and watch the skilled playing of the girl pianist. One night she failed to show up, and Phil, unable to resist the temptation an unemployed piano always presented to him, slipped down to the piano and began to play.

"I knew only about three tunes," he explains, "but I could make the proper hullabaloo for the Indians going on the warpath, or for trains rushing through the night. And there was always 'Hearts and Flowers' for the love scenes. The manager gave me a regular job and I was on the way."

His first real show business venture was in a vaudeville act with

a fellow named Ed Janis, who played the violin. Baker played the piano, meanwhile saving his money for the purchase of an accordion. He eventually achieved a secondhand affair for a hundred dollars. The Baker-Janis team was none too successful; it broke up and Baker started looking for another partner. This turned out to be a fiddler named Ben Bernie. They were doing all right when World War I came along and Baker enlisted in the Navy.

He was giving some of his meager Navy pay to relatives, and occasionally he would do a bit of extra-curricular work at a party to earn pocket money. These slight breaches of the regulations did nothing to lengthen the war.

Baker relates how, when he got out of the Navy, he didn't have a dime and desperately needed some material with which to get back into vaudeville. Bernie had gone his solo way, and Baker thought he would do the same. He finally cornered Lew Brown, prominent lyricist and gag-writer whom it was difficult to pin down to any actual work, and shanghaied him into a hotel room in the Times Square district. Brown promptly retired to the bathroom, whence he would fire out ideas every once in a while. Baker sat in the room through the night, jotting down the gems that could be worked into an act and get him some employment again. Early the next morning the whistles began to blow. Baker rushed downstairs and outside to see what it was all about. It was the Armistice. People were yelling and throwing things out of windows. He got back to his room just in time to see the excited Brown leaning out of a window and tearing up and throwing away as confetti the precious notes Baker had written. Baker rushed back to the street in an effort to retrieve some of the scraps, but this was impossible. Brown departed and Baker sought material elsewhere.

Real success was not long delayed after that. He played, in addition to vaudeville, such high-class night spots as Ziegfeld's "Midnight Frolics" atop the New Amsterdam Theater, and at Morris Gest's Century Roof. Then he got into the musical end of the legitimate theater by appearing in the *Greenwich Village Follies* and *The Passing Show*. The Shuberts, who produced the latter, placed him

under contract for six years, and during most of the twenties he was starring in such musical comedies or revues as *Artists and Models*, *A Night in Spain*, and *Pleasure Bound*.

Baker married a *Follies* girl, Vivian Vernon, on March 11, 1921. It was a secret affair because neither of their families approved; and when they sailed shortly afterward for Europe, they continued the deception by securing separate passage and staterooms. The beautiful Miss Vernon, ostensibly an unmarried woman, was much sought after by the wolves on board, some of them prominent figures in show business, and the newlyweds had a perfectly miserable time.

The Bakers were divorced three years later. In 1932 he married Peggy Cartwright, an English actress, and they have four children. They were divorced in Florida in 1941. Three years later, in May, 1944, he married Irmgard Erik, a dancer.

The stooge, who has become an essential to almost every comedian, it seems, may or may not have been invented by Baker, but he certainly had a lot to do with making the fall-guy what he is today. It was in the early twenties when the top entertainers in town were participating in Sunday night "concerts"—actually vaudeville bills that no producer could afford to put together under ordinary circumstances—at the Winter Garden. Baker was on, doing his usual singing-talking-accordion stuff when a character known as Jo-Jo began to heckle him from one of the upper boxes. Baker took it in stride, even if he did not always have a topper to one of Jo-Jo's cracks, and the act went over bigger than it ever had. Baker hired Jo-Jo immediately.

There were other "men-in-the-box" after Jo-Jo. The one who lasted longest and became the best known was little Sid Silvers, a quick-witted dynamo with acting and writing ambitions, who eventually wound up in Hollywood. Baker and Silvers were always sure-fire entertainment.

Year after year, Baker was welcome at the Palace two-a-day vaudeville theater in New York. In one engagement there he set a record of twelve consecutive weeks, during which he functioned as master-of-ceremonies in addition to doing his own act. This accomplishment made him a five-thousand-dollar-a-week attraction.

After he had served his time with the Shuberts, Baker was employed for a couple of seasons with *Crazy Quilt*, in which he was starred with Fannie Brice and Ted Healey. Then followed another revue, *Calling All Stars*, which was Baker's last show to date on Broadway.

But before that, in 1933, he had gone into radio. His first program was for the Armour packing people, a tie-up that Baker points out was exceedingly apropos because he was selling ham.

Baker took the stooge idea into radio with him. The chief supporting characters on his programs for years were the impeccable, oh-so-veddy-British butler, Bottle, played by Harry McNaughton, and a voice belonging to one Beetle, who never was seen. Beetle was radio's "man in the box."

There is an amusing story about how Baker got a couple of the writers he used in his early radio days. It's told by Hal Block, one of the writers concerned. Once when Baker was in Chicago where Block and his side-kick lived, he met these two young men with writing ambitions. In one of those polite gestures that no one ever takes seriously, Baker told them that if he got a radio show, he might be able to give them a job. Some time later Block discovered in the theatrical trade paper *Variety* that Baker had snagged a show and was about to start work. He and his friend hopped the first train to New York.

They discovered upon arrival that they didn't know how to get in touch with Baker. With no connections at all in the city, they couldn't find out where he lived. Doing it the hard way, they decided he probably would be visiting various well-known clubs and restaurants, so they left word all around town for Baker to call Block at his hotel. Nothing happened. Eventually they discovered that Baker lived in Mamaroneck, New York; so they entrained to that luxurious suburban center, finagled his address out of the Western Union office there, and presented themselves at the door.

"When Baker answered," Block recalls, "I mentioned our names and that was as far as I got. Baker said, 'So you're the guys who've been leaving messages for me all over New York. What in the devil do you want?' Well, we told him and he remembered. Then we told the story of how we tried to find him and he doubled up laughing.

'If you can write as funny as you've acted, you've got a job,' Phil said."

Block has since become one of the most successful radio writers in the business.

When Baker came back to radio after a two-year lapse, it was to a program that attracted him because it met his specifications of being different. The accordion which had played an occasional part in his old radio shows was completely discarded for "Take It or Leave It," and so was a conventional script. But he was still using stooges.

"The best stooges today are the amateur contestants," Baker says, and it is true that radio fans never seem to tire of the many quiz-audience-participation shows in which John and Mary Jones answer or don't answer questions, get kidded around by the master-of-ceremonies, and collect prize money for their efforts.

Of the ten people chosen by lot from the "Take It or Leave It" studio audiences, Baker is pretty sure to get a majority who have sufficient poise and command of words to serve as good foils. But he keeps at hand a ready supply of jokes to fit particular situations in case the questioning of a contestant doesn't lend enough spontaneous entertainment. His long vaudeville training comes in mighty handy in conducting this type of show where anything may—and sometimes does—happen. No one is more expert at talking his way out of an unexpected situation than is Baker. A suave speaking voice that falls pleasantly on the ear is also an asset.

"Take It or Leave It" is the show that brought the term "the sixty-four-dollar question" into the language. Although he popularized it, Baker did not create it.

Baker thought of retiring in 1931, but the condition of the stock market knocked that out of his head. He had to keep working. And in spite of the huge sums he's earned in the years since then, he still has to keep at it, especially since in 1944 he bought one of those four-story private homes on the upper East Side.

"I'll be asking questions for the next ten years to pay for that," he says.

PHIL BAKER



PHIL BAKER . . . *On the Air*

BAKER: Bottle, what are you mumbling about?

BOTTLE: Oh, forgive me—me, sir? I was just looking through these circulars. I'm looking for a place for us to go on vacation.

BAKER: What are they, resort ads?

BOTTLE: Yes, sir. Here they are.

BAKER: Well, we ought to be able to find some nice quiet spot . . . Let's see. "Inns, hotels, cabins—" Ah, here's one: "Hodge Podge Lodge. Come to our hotel and get beautiful views of Yellowstone Park, Grand Canyon, and Lake Michigan. Only five cents a postcard." And here's another: "Hotel Eight Ball, Pocket Corners, Cue Beck."

BOTTLE: Oh, look. It says "Very low rats."

BAKER: That's "Very low rates." . . . Ah, here's another: "Termite in the Woods. Only twenty minutes from New York—by telephone. Elegant tables with chairs to match. . . ."

BOTTLE: "Lunch served twelve to two. . . ." What's that, "twelve to two"?

BAKER: That's the odds you'll live.

BOTTLE: Oh, Mr. Baker, perhaps you will like this place at the bottom of the page: "Petty Coat Inn on the outskirts. Dance to the music of our three-piece orchestra. They are now learning another piece—"

BAKER: "Enjoy healthy sports. Beautiful rooms. Eighteen-hole golf course—"

BOTTLE: "Fifty-foot pool, water supplied on request—"

BAKER: "We make it easy for you to pay. Special rates on European plan, American plan, and the Morris plan."

BOTTLE: Ah, listen to this one: "Are you tired of being cooped up? Come to the Hotel Swiss Cheese and live in the open spaces—"

BAKER: "Swanky place. Formal dress required for all occasions. Guests will please wear riding habits when pitching horseshoes. All baths newly remodeled. Hot and cold running leaks." Ah, look at this one: "Hotel Zweibach. Room with window overlooking a nudist colony. Venetian blind."

BOTTLE: Oh, the poor Venetian!

FROM ANOTHER BAKER SCRIPT (1938)

BAKER: This is your Professor Dizz, your questionable comedian, bringing you another in our series of "Who, What, When, Why, How." To the winners of tonight's question bee we're handing out several awards. The first prize will be two tickets on the fifty-yard line at the Rose Bowl, or one ticket on the hundred-yard line. We will also hand out tickets to the Phil Baker broadcast.

BOTTLE: I say, sir, who will they go to?

BEETLE: The losers!

BAKER: In this milk bottle I have several questions sent in by my listeners from the four corners of Vine Street. Those wishing to participate in this quiz, please stand up— Ah, thank you, mister, would you like to answer a question?

MAN: No—

BAKER: Then why are you standing up?

MAN: I've just been horseback riding.

BAKER: Too bad, too bad. Bottle, get this gentleman a pillow.

BOTTLE: I'm sorry, sir, there's a woman in the last row sleeping on it.

BAKER: Ah, there's a prospective contestant. You, the short stout fellow with the red nose under Seat Twelve—what's your name?

HARRY VON ZELL: Martin G. S. Perkins.

BAKER: What does G. S. stand for?

VON ZELL: Gas Stove. I'm an incubator baby.

BAKER: Tell me, Mr. Perkins, were you hatched here in California?

VON ZELL: Yes. I have a farm in Long Beach, California, and I raise potatoes.

BAKER: Raise potatoes? But the ground in Long Beach is full of oil.

VON ZELL: That's all right, I raise French fried potatoes.

BAKER: Quick, Bottle, get me a hammer.

BOTTLE: Why, sir, do you want to raise mashed potatoes?

BAKER: And now for the question bee. Mr. Perkins, reach into this milk bottle and take out a slip of paper.

VON ZELL: Very well, here goes.

BAKER: What does it say?

VON ZELL: No milk today.

BAKER: Pardon me, I meant to leave that for the cat. The question is on the other side. It's from Mrs. Al Reck of New York City. She says: "If eggs cost thirty-eight cents a dozen, butter twenty-four cents a pound, vinegar eighteen cents a bot-

tle, and if I bought the same things every day for two weeks, what would the bill amount to?"

VON ZELL: —Er—mmmm—er—mmm—mmmm.

BAKER: Right. Ah, here's another likely-looking contestant. Pardon me, Miss, Miss—but what's your name?

YOUNG LADY: Mah name is Clara Belle Sugar-plum Jefferson.

BAKER: Where did you get that Southern accent?

LADY: I've been drinking out of a Dixie Cup. . . .

BAKER: And now we have our next contestant.

ART AUERBACH: Look where you're going! You're stepping all over my feet.

BAKER: Oh, pardon me. Why don't you put your feet where they belong?

AUERBACH: You mean back in my shoes?

BAKER: Tell me, what's your name?

AUERBACH: Waterman.

BAKER: Waterman?

AUERBACH: Yes, that's my pen name.

BAKER: But before we get on with the question I'd like to tell you that this program is sponsored by the California Grapefruit Company. And I'd like to get a testimonial from you, Mr. Waterman. You do enjoy your half-grapefruit in the morning?

AUERBACH: Well, I used to until somebody got the idea of putting cherries in it.

BAKER: What was wrong with that?

AUERBACH: I didn't mind when the grapefruit squirted in my eye, but when it started shooting cannon balls, that was too much.

BAKER: Now think, Mr. Waterman. What nationalities are represented by these two stars: Anna May Wong and Phil Baker?

AUERBACH: That's easy. The Orient and the Accident.

FROM A THIRD BAKER SCRIPT

BAKER: Incidentally, Harry. Do you know today is Mother's Day?

VON ZELL: Oh, I know it is. In fact, I have a big surprise for my mother, Phil. I'm sending her this five-hundred-dollar check.

BAKER: Lemme see it. Why, Harry, this check isn't signed.

VON ZELL: Sh. That's the surprise. I don't want her to know who it's from.

BAKER: Ah, what sentiment! You know, Harry, I too have a little gray-haired mother. And every year I send that silver-haired mother of mine a telegram with just three little words.

VON ZELL: Just three little words? What are they, Phil?

BEETLE: *Hi ho Silver!*

BAKER: Isn't that awful, Harry. Beetle is grumpy enough to be one of the seven dwarfs!

VON ZELL: Say, that's good, Phil.

BAKER: Oh, I just thought of—a—
(*Laughing.*)

VON ZELL: What are you laughing at, Phil?

BAKER: You know, before the last dwarf was born his mother received a bouquet of goldenrod.

VON ZELL: What's funny about that?

BAKER: That's how she got sneezy.

VON ZELL: I don't get it, Phil.

BAKER: You don't get it?

VON ZELL: No, and I've been working on this program for five years.

BEETLE: Yeah, that's how he got dopey!

BAKER: Bottle, what did your father say to your mother after you were born?

BOTTLE: Er—I give up!

BAKER: That's what I thought. By the way, Bottle, I hope you remembered your mother on this day of days.

BOTTLE: Oh, rather. My sweet little old mother! I bought her flowers, candy, dinner; and then we went rowing on Central Park Lake until after dark.

BAKER: You went rowing until after dark—did you have a good time?

BOTTLE: I did, sir, but my mother got blisters on her hands.

BAKER: Now look, Bottle, that's no way. . . . Well, what did you do in honor of Mother's Day, Oscar?

OSCAR BRADLEY: Well, Phil, it used to drive me crazy to see my poor old mother washing the dishes and scrubbing the floor every night when I came home at six o'clock. So I decided to put an end to it.

BAKER: Swell. What are you going to do?

BRADLEY: I'm going to come home at seven o'clock.

The Man Who Laughs!

THE GREAT GILDERSLEEVE

The Great Gildersleeve, a character created and played by Hal Peary on the program bearing the same name, is just the type who would relish a turn on the witness stand where he would be the center of all eyes. So here is his day in court (Peary interpreting):

Q. What is your attitude toward comedy? A. I think it should be funny.

Q. Do you lean toward situation comedy, gags, or a blend of both? A. We prefer to call our type of comedy "character comedy." "Situation comedy" is a much-abused term.

Q. How about use of fantasy in comedy scripts? A. We often use fantasy, sometimes in Gildy's dreams—he dreams a lot. Often his dreams decide his future moves. He has had dreams of dying, marrying, and so forth. Also, his conscience often speaks to him.

Q. Any trouble with network censors over material? A. We rarely have trouble with the network censor. We censor our material before it's ever presented. The obvious reason is that our show is a family type program.

Q. To what is the success of the Gildersleeve characterization attributable? A. The success of the Gildersleeve character, and Gildy uses the word "success" modestly, can be traced to the fact that Gildy is a familiar person. There is one, if not in every family, at least in every block. The familiar blow-hard, an earnest, sincere man who fumbles a great deal in his enthusiasm to get ahead. Gildy realizes his errors, but is constantly trying. He's an "average American."

Q. On the average how often are your scripts rewritten prior

to broadcast? A. According to John Whedon and Sam Moore, they are continually rewriting prior to broadcast time in order to get the finished product as nearly perfect as humanly possible. Gildy sometimes doubts this.

Q. What kickbacks, if any, have there been from professional people and socially-minded groups on your treatment of situations which might conceivably become controversial? A. We have a good record with our fans. We rarely receive a kick from cranks, sociologists, betterment groups, and so forth. We have received much approval of the way we handle Birdie, our Negro maid. We are particularly careful not to misrepresent any groups.

Q. What formula is used in fashioning the scripts? A. We have no formula.

Q. What about television? A. I would welcome it. I believe my physical appearance is exactly what people expect of Gildersleeve. I have already played Gildersleeve in eight movies.

Q. Any comment on fan mail? A. Our fan mail naturally has increased since our debut in 1941. It represents a definite cross-section of our listening audience. We also note this cross-section in mail from servicemen overseas. They hear the broadcasts by short wave and are extremely loyal as well as critical in their letters.

Q. What are some of the vices of modern radio comedy?
A. No comment.

Witness excused, since he apparently refuses to be co-operative to the extent of sticking out his neck, climbing out on a limb, or otherwise committing professional hara-kiri by answering that last question.

The thing that everyone remembers about the Great Gildersleeve is the laugh. There is nothing like it this side of bedlam, which is probably a good thing because, if there were a few more exponents of this type of mirth projection around, the thing probably would get out of hand and everyone would be doing it. Gildy's manner of expressing worryment with his "dee-ugh" pronunciation of "dear" also is a familiar and laugh-provoking trademark.

Peary explains the laugh as being simply a singer's scale. He used to vocalize and that's how it came about.

Peary was born Harrold Jose Pereira da Faria in San Leandro, California, forty years ago. The professional need for changing the name is obvious. He is of Portuguese descent and speaks five languages.

While he was still in his teens, he became interested in the work of the Little Theater group in San Leandro and soon was a participant. He had a good singing voice and used it to earn money by singing while he was planning to be a doctor. Show business soon got him, however, and he served a varied apprenticeship for several years. At one time he even played the Palace vaudeville theater in New York—but as a stooge for a headliner. He worked in stock and had small roles in the films. His entertainment education was pretty thorough.

In the middle thirties he caught on with radio in Chicago, playing parts in many dramatic broadcasts. One of the programs with which he was connected was that of Fibber McGee and Molly, and it was during his work on it that the character of Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve was born.

Despite his good connections in Chicago, Peary decided to take a gamble when the Jordans of the McGee show moved their headquarters to Hollywood. He went along, determined to rise or fall with Gildersleeve. It was a wise move. He got a Hollywood contract for several Gildersleeve movies and in 1941 put the great man on the air with his own show, sponsored by Kraft products on NBC's 6:30 P.M. Sunday spot. Peary assists John Whedon and Sam Moore in writing the scripts. They try for naturalness and see to it that Gildy is usually kept in lukewarm water at least. Peary, having been a singer, is extremely voice conscious and casts his program to get a balanced voice pattern.

To aspirants for show-business careers, he has this to say:

"Join your home town community theater. It's ideal because bankers, grocery clerks, and shopgirls are working side by side to create a play, and you can't help but learn what appeals to all classes in the way of entertainment."

GILDERSLEEVE . . . *On the Air*

ANNOUNCER: It's a fine cold morning, and we find the Great Gildersleeve setting out for a brisk walk downtown. Those who know him well might observe a subtle change in him today. There is a spring in his step and a fire in his eye, a touch of grandeur in his manner and an added richness in his voice. Under his arm he carries a bundle of posters, and in his overcoat pocket he has a stack of theater tickets. The first place he stops is Peavey's drugstore.

PEAVEY: Hello, Mr. Gildersleeve.

HAL: *Good morning, Peavey! Good morning, good morning, good morning.*

PEAVEY: What have you got there, Mr. Gildersleeve?

HAL: Posters! Just had 'em printed up. I'm going to let you have one for your front window.

PEAVEY: Well, that's real nice.

HAL: I suppose you saw the story in this morning's papers?

PEAVEY: Story? No, I didn't.

HAL: Why, it was on the front page.

PEAVEY: Well, I don't usually get to see the paper till evening, Mr. Gildersleeve. Mrs. Peavey likes to read the lost and found at breakfast. What *was* the story?

HAL: Well, it tells all about it on the poster. There you are!

PEAVEY: Hm! (*Reads.*) "The Little Theater in the Dell presents *Cyrano de Bergerac*, starring Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve."

HAL: That's right, Peavey!

PEAVEY: I didn't know that you had dramatic talent, Mr. Gildersleeve.

HAL: I didn't know it myself till two days ago.

PEAVEY: Well! Congratulations. Mrs. Peavey and I will have to try to get to that.

HAL: Come one, come all—and bring your friends! Here, I'm going to leave you some tickets too, in case you can sell any.

PEAVEY: I'll be glad to try.

HAL: I'll leave you a dozen to start with. You'll find the prices printed on them—dollar ten and a dollar sixty-five.

PEAVEY: Those are mighty handsome tickets, Mr. Gildersleeve. You ought to be able to sell a lot of those.

HAL: Well, anything you can do will be appreciated, Peavey.

PEAVEY: You know, it's so long since I've been to see a real live play. I used to go all the time, as a younger man.

HAL: You did?

PEAVEY: Every time Maxine Elliott came to town. I never missed. She was lovely, Mr. Gildersleeve. Lovely!

HAL: Yes, I've heard she was.

PEAVEY: She was what you call a real beauty, Maxine Elliott. She was lovely!

HAL: That must have been a long time ago, Peavey. Thirty years at least.

PEAVEY: Well, now, I wouldn't say that—I guess it was, though. Thirty years. How time flies! She was lovely!

HAL: You seem to have had quite a crush on her, Peavey.

PEAVEY: I would have married Maxine Elliott—if she'd asked me. Of course, I was unmarried at the time.

But I still think of her sometimes, even to this day. I think of Maxine Elliott, and then I look at Mrs. Peavey. Oh, well, we all have our points.

HAL: Well, I've got to get along and spread these things around town. (Door.) Oh, you've got a customer. So long, Peavey.

PEAVEY: Good-by, Mr. Gildersleeve.

HARGRAVE: Well! Mr. Gildersleeve!

HAL (coldly): Good morning, Doctor.

PEAVEY: Hello, Doctor Hargrave.

HARGRAVE: Good morning, Mr. Peavey.

Have you got that prescription?

PEAVEY: Oh, yes. I made it up the minute you phoned.

HARGRAVE: Little chilly this morning.

PEAVEY: Yes. By the way, Doctor, you wouldn't like to buy a ticket, would you?

HARGRAVE: Ticket to what?

PEAVEY: Well, it tells on the poster there. They're giving the performance.

HARGRAVE (incredulously): Gildersleeve? In *Cyrano*? (Laughing.) I wouldn't miss it!

* * *

[Door opens.

FLOYD: Well! If it ain't Mr. Gildersleeve, the famous actor!

HAL: Hello, Floyd. I guess you heard.

FLOYD: Yeah, I read it in the paper. What'll it be—a haircut?

HAL: No, I'm on my way home. I just stopped in to leave you one of these posters.

FLOYD: Oh—thanks.

HAL: You don't think I need a haircut, do you, Floyd?

FLOYD: Well—I got the Judge coming in a few minutes. I guess you'll keep a couple of days.

HAL: Mustache looks a little ragged, though. You might just give it a little trim.

FLOYD: Sure. Climb up in the chair there.

HAL: Well, we're having our first rehearsal this evening, Floyd.

FLOYD: That so? Say, what kind of a play is this here now *Cyrano*, Mr. Gildersleeve?

HAL: It's a love story, Floyd. The greatest love story ever told on the stage.

FLOYD: Oh-h-h! I guess those actors in those love scenes—I guess they do plenty of schmoozin', hey, Mr. Gildersleeve?

HAL: I don't know what you're talking about, Floyd.

FLOYD: Oh-h-h, yes you do! You still haven't told me what the play's about.

HAL: Well, to tell the truth, I haven't had time to read it yet, Floyd. I've been so busy with getting the tickets printed, and getting the posters out, and one thing and another.

[Door.

FLOYD: Oh, here's the Judge.

JUDGE: Sorry, if I'm a bit late, Floyd. Well, Romeo Gildersleeve!

HAL: Oh, shut up!

FLOYD: Be right with you, Judge. Just giving Mr. Gildersleeve's mustache a little trim.

JUDGE: Trim it pretty, Floyd. Trim it pretty. He's a matinee idol now, you know.

HAL: The old goat! Tell him to keep his remarks to himself, Floyd.

JUDGE: Our friend seems to be getting a trifle temperamental these days, Floyd, but I suppose you have to expect that of an actor.

HAL: Humph!

JUDGE: Who's this Bruce Fairfield, Gildy?

HAL: He's the director.

FLOYD: Ever heard of this play they're doing, Judge? Mr. Gildersleeve tells me he don't even know what the play's about.

HAL: I didn't say that, Floyd. I said—

JUDGE: *Cyrano*? Why, it's a classic. Every school child knows *Cyrano*.

And for all my joshing, it's a play that is really very well suited to our friend, here.

HAL: That's more like it, Judge.

JUDGE: I can see why Mr. Fairfield chose Gildersleeve for the part.

HAL: Now that's funny, I never would have thought of me as the type.

JUDGE: The story, Floyd, is about a man so homely—in fact, so repulsive in appearance, that no woman would ever look at him!

HAL: Ooopf!

FLOYD: Oh, you mean like *The Phantom of the Opera*?

HAL: Floyd, let me out of this chair!

FLOYD: Yes, sir.

JUDGE: Now Gildy—

HAL: Hooker, is that true, what you just said?

JUDGE: So help me, Gildy! That's the story of the play.

HAL: Well, I'm going to do a little checking up. And if you're right—

JUDGE: Yes?

HAL: I'll kill that Bruce Fairfield!

* * *

EVE: Throckmorton!

HAL: Eve, have you got a minute?

EVE: Certainly. Come in.

HAL: I can't. That is, I can't stay. I've got to get down to rehearsal. We're having our first reading of the play tonight. But before I go down there, there's one thing I want to know.

EVE: What's that?

HAL: That Bruce Fairfield—is he trying to make a monkey out of me?

EVE: Why?

HAL: Because if he is, I'll punch him in the nose!

EVE: Goodness! Whatever gave you that impression, Throckmorton?

HAL: Well, this play he's got me into, this *Cyrano*. I hear where it's about a fellow who's so ugly the women won't even look at him.

EVE: Well, not ugly exactly. It's just

that he has a big nose. Enormous, in fact.

HAL: Eve! Do you think I have a big nose?

EVE: Oh, no, Throckmorton. It's not at all big—considering the rest of your face. You have a very patrician nose. Very noble and well-proportioned.

HAL: Oh.

EVE: But they'll change it to fit the part. You know—build it up with putty and make-up.

HAL: Well! I don't know that I want to be going around with a big nose in front of a lot of people. After all, I'm Water Commissioner in this town. I have a reputation.

EVE: But Throckmorton, in this play you're not playing the part of a Water Commissioner. You're *Cyrano*.

HAL: *Cyrano*! I still don't see why I can't play the part with my regular nose!

EVE: Throckmorton, I'm afraid you haven't read the play.

HAL: What do you mean, I haven't read it? I've got it right here with me. Why, only last night, I—I—

EVE: Throckmorton—

HAL: Well, I've been busy!

EVE: Perhaps I should explain, then, that without *Cyrano's* grotesque nose, there would be no play. His disfigurement is the whole cause of the tragedy.

HAL: Tragedy?

EVE: Yes.

HAL: You mean I die in the end?

EVE: Of course. At the end of the fifth act.

HAL: Well! I don't know that I like that so much!

EVE: But all the great actors die. Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth—they all die, in the end.

HAL: All right, I'll die then.

EVE: It's a beautiful story, really. Cy-

rano is a soldier—one of the greatest swordsmen in France—

HAL: Well!

EVE: And he is also a poet, and very romantic. He has a comrade named Christian, and both of them are in love with a beautiful girl named Roxanne.

HAL: Mm! Roxanne—

EVE: But here's the sad part—while Cyrano is ugly, even grotesque-looking, Christian is very handsome.

HAL: I think I'd rather play the part of Christian.

EVE: But Christian is really a very empty-headed young man.

HAL: I don't care—those fellows do all right!

EVE: Wait till you hear the rest of the story. Christian is so stupid that when he makes love to Roxanne from beneath her balcony at night, he can't think of anything to say. So he persuades Cyrano to hide in the bushes and make romantic speeches to her.

HAL: And Cyrano does it?

EVE: He even writes Christian's love letters for him.

HAL: And you think *Christian* is stupid?

EVE: Oh, but don't you see? Cyrano is so aware of his own ugliness, that he would never dare to tell Roxanne of his love for her. The only way he can make love to her is through Christian, as it were.

HAL: Oh, that is kind of tough.

EVE: It's tragic. Because it's Cyrano's voice, Cyrano's words, Cyrano's passion that win Roxanne—for Christian.

HAL: Well, doesn't she ever catch onto this fourflusher?

EVE: That's just the point. Before she has a chance to find out that he is not the man she thought he was, he's killed in battle—dies a hero's death. And for years she goes on believing that he was the great love

of her life, while she just treats Cyrano as a kind and amusing friend.

HAL: Well, gosh. That doesn't seem very fair.

EVE (*eagerly*): Oh, but then there's the most wonderful scene. Have you the script there?

HAL: Yes. Here.

EVE: Thanks. There's the most wonderful scene, where Cyrano is dying. He's been attacked by an assassin, and he's dying. It's in a garden, and he's alone with Roxanne. Here it is! Oh, sit down here beside me, Throckmorton, and let's read it.

HAL: Sure. You be Roxanne.

* * *

HAL (*reciting*): "I doff my chapeau. . . I doff my chapeau. . ."

LEROY: Watcha doing, Unk? Rehearsing?

HAL: Yes, Leroy. And I'll thank you not to interrupt my concentration.

LEROY: Okay. I can listen, can't I?

HAL: If you'll be quiet.

LEROY: Oh, sure.

HAL: "I doff my chapeau . . ."

LEROY: Would you mind telling me what the story's about?

HAL: Oh, for heaven's sake! I've told you a thousand times, it's about a man named Cyrano. In this scene, he's fighting a duel. Now be quiet.

LEROY: Okay. Are you gonna do the fighting on the stage?

HAL: Certainly. Mr. Fairfield showed me all about fencing. One more lesson and I'll be able to cut his head off. Well, let's see. . . .

LEROY: Just a second, Unk. What's the duel about?

HAL: Well, this fellow insulted Cyrano.

LEROY: How?

HAL: He makes fun of Cyrano's nose.

LEROY: That's very funny!

HAL: It is not funny. There's nothing funny about it, it's psychological.

- Cyrano *thinks* he has a big nose. He's very sensitive about it.
- LEROY: I don't get it. Why does Cyrano think he has a big nose?
- HAL: Because it—well, because he has. Leroy, I can't possibly learn this part if you're talking all the time. Why don't you go out and play?
- LEROY: Nobody to play with.
- HAL: Well, call up Piggy and ask him to play with you.
- LEROY: He has a cold; his mother won't let him out.
- HAL: Then call up somebody else! Only for Heaven's sake leave me alone!
- LEROY: I'll call Piggy.
- HAL: All right. Now let's see. . . .
- LEROY (*off at phone*): Hello, Piggy, this is Leroy.
- HAL: By George, I might as well try to rehearse in a boiler factory!
- LEROY: Can you come over, Pig?
- MARJORIE: Gosh, Uncle Mort, I might as well be rehearsing my play!
- HAL: Now Marjorie, tonight's my dress rehearsal and your play doesn't go on till next week.
- LEROY: We could have lots of fun over here, Pig. Can't you sneak out?
- HAL: None of that, Leroy!
- MARJORIE: I've got some difficult scenes too, but nobody helps me.
- HAL: Let's do *Cyrano*, Marjorie.
- LEROY: Did you hear Uncle Mort is gonna be in a show, Pig? Yeah, he's gonna be an actor. (*Pause.*) You better not let him hear you say that.
- HAL: What did he say, Leroy?
- MARJORIE: All right, do your old play. I'm going to rehearse mine. "Fleetwood, there's something I must know. I've got to know it or I simply can't go on."
- HAL: "I doff my chapeau . . ."
- BIRDIE: Mr. Gilsleeve, you got any special desires for dinner?
- HAL: Yes, Birdie, I want to have it somewhere far, far away.
- BIRDIE: You mean you're going out?
- HAL: No, no, I'm just speaking figuratively.
- LEROY: I don't know what the story's about, exactly . . . A Cary Grant part? No, it's more like Jimmy Durante.
- HAL: Leroy! Terminate the conversation!
- LEROY: But, Unk! He can't come over! I thought we could have a little chat!
- HAL: We'll have no chats!
- MARJORIE: "Oh, if you only knew how I've lain awake night after night!"
- BIRDIE: Miss Marjorie! What's the matter with you?
- MARJORIE: "Night after night, my pillow was wet with tears."
- BIRDIE: You poor child!
- LEROY: I think my uncle is wacky.
- HAL: Leroy!
- BIRDIE: If you ask me, the whole family is.
- HAL: What's that, Birdie?
- BIRDIE: If you ask me, the whole family is hungry!
- * * *
- FAIRFIELD: No, no, no! The fireplace goes over here! Cast, just relax for a moment, will you, till we get this set right.
- HAL: Ah, good evening, Fairfield!
- FAIRFIELD: Oh, hello, Mr. Gildersleeve.
- MARJORIE: Good evening, Bruce.
- FAIRFIELD: Hello, Kitten.
- HAL: Hello, everyone.
- [*Ad lib greetings.*]
- HAL: Well! All ready for the dress rehearsal? (*Confidentially.*) I've got all my lines perfect now. Let's have some light here, shall we? Larry! Lights! Would you mind moving that chair back a little, please? Thank you. Now—
- FAIRFIELD: Oh, Mr. Gildersleeve—
- HAL: Say, uh—isn't this setting a little modern for *Cyrano*, Mr. Fairfield? Not that it's in my department, of course.

FAIRFIELD: I wanted to talk to you about that, old man. We're not going to be able to do *Cyrano*.

HAL (*in same tone*): We're not going to be able to do—(*Loud.*) What did you say, Fairfield?

FAIRFIELD: We can't do it. You see—

HAL: Well, this is a fine time to tell anybody! The night before it's supposed to go on!

FAIRFIELD: I'm sorry, old man. It's just—

HAL: Why, everybody in town expects me to appear tomorrow night. We've sold all these tickets. There are posters all over, advertising me.

FAIRFIELD: That was *your* idea. If you hadn't rushed out and had them printed up—

HAL: Listen! *Why* can't we put on *Cyrano*? *Why*? Give me one reason!

FAIRFIELD: Well, I don't feel that it's ready yet.

HAL: What do you mean, it's not ready? I know every line in the play. I've worked hard.

FAIRFIELD: I say it's simply not ready for production. I have my professional reputation to think of, you know.

HAL: Well, what about mine? I've been rehearsing for two weeks, I've told all my friends, and now—By George, I'm going to do it!

FAIRFIELD: Listen, you fat idiot, if you think I ever for one moment intended to sully my professional reputation by allowing you to appear on any stage whatsoever, under my direction—

HAL: Owpf! So that's it! You've just been using me. Well, from now on—

FAIRFIELD: I didn't mean it! Not a word of it! Forgive me! My nerves, you know—all these rehearsals—the strain! I could bite my tongue out.

HAL: Well, go ahead!

FAIRFIELD: Mr. Gildersleeve, if you'll only listen to me for a moment—

HAL: No!

FAIRFIELD: Marjorie!

MARJORIE: Yes?

FAIRFIELD: Come here a moment, Kit-ten. Ask your uncle to listen to me.

MARJORIE: I don't understand, Uncle Mort. What's going on?

HAL: Well, this weasel—

FAIRFIELD: I'm merely suggesting that we defer *Cyrano* till our second production.

HAL: Oh.

FAIRFIELD: That's it! *Cyrano* will be our second production! What I propose to do, with your Uncle's permission, of course, is to put on *Delicate Adventure* tomorrow night.

MARJORIE: My play!

FAIRFIELD: We've been rehearsing it for a month. It's in much better shape than *Cyrano*. What do you say, Mr. Gildersleeve?

HAL: You knew you were going to do this all the time!

FAIRFIELD: Let me put it this way. It's a chance for Marjorie. She plays the lead. You don't want to stand in the way of an opportunity for her, do you?

HAL: Of course not. Only—

FAIRFIELD: I'll tell you what. We'll find something for you to do in tomorrow's production. It will have to be something you can learn quickly, of course. Will you do it?

HAL: Well—for Marjorie.

MARJORIE (*gratefully*): Oh, Uncle Mort, you're a lamb! And don't you mind if your part is small, I know you'll be great!

* * *

LEILA: My, these are lovely seats, Arthur.

HARGRAVE: Well, we don't want to miss any of Gildersleeve's artistry!

LEILA: Oh, Arthur—hush!

HARGRAVE: Here's a program. Can't tell the hams without a program.

LEILA: Arthur! Mercy, Arthur, what's this? (*Reads.*) "The Little Theater

in the Dell presents *Delicate Adventure*, starring Bruce Fairfield!"

HARGRAVE: What! Say, we've been swindled! Judge! Did you see this?

JUDGE: Well, I'll be darned! There's nothing about Gildersleeve!

FLOYD: No Gildersleeve!

EVE: What's happened, Leroy? I thought your uncle was the big attraction tonight.

LEROY: They switched at the last minute. But Unk's going to be in it.

* * *

VOICE: Lower that backdrop! Little more—little more— That's right! One side, there, mister! Heads up!

HAL: Oh, my goodness! How do I look, Marjorie?

MARJORIE: Just fine, Uncle Mort! How do I look?

HAL: Just like an actress. I wouldn't know you.

MARJORIE: Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it *fun*?

HAL: It's horrible! Marjorie, don't go away!

MARJORIE: Why not? What's the matter?

HAL: I'm nervous! I'm nervous as a bride!

MARJORIE: Oh, Uncle Mort! You can't be!

HAL: I am! I'm not going to be able to remember what I'm supposed to say. I just know it!

MARJORIE: Of course you will!

HAL: I can't! I can't remember it now! The whole thing's gone out of my head! Completely!

MARJORIE: Uncle Mort, pull yourself together!

HAL: I can't!

MARJORIE: You've got to! Look, they're dimming the house lights. They're ready for you.

HAL: Marjorie, I can't!

FAIRFIELD: Ready with the curtain? All right Mr. Gildersleeve. Now!

HAL: Eugh!

MARJORIE (*in loud whisper*): Go ahead, Uncle Mort. You'll be all right when you get out there.

HAL: Well, here I go.

MARJORIE: Good luck!

[*Scattered applause.*]

HAL: Uh . . . Ladies and gentlemen, because of a local fire ordinance, I have been asked to request that there be no smoking in the theater—I thank you!

JUDGE: Yea, Gildersleeve!

FLOYD: Nice work, Commissioner!

LEROY: H'ray for Unk!

BIRDIE: That's my boss!

FLOYD: Hey, where's Gildersleeve?

[*Rhythmic stamping and calling.*]

CAST: We want Gildersleeve! We want Cyrano! We want Gildersleeve!

MARJORIE: Oh, Uncle Mort, how can we go on? This is awful!

FAIRFIELD: Gildersleeve, you'll have to go out and quiet them. They're your friends, evidently.

HAL: Well—I'll do what I can.

[*Rhythmic stamping and chanting rises to a climax.*]

CAST: We want Gildersleeve! We want Cyrano! We want Gildersleeve! We want Cyrano! We want Gildersleeve!

HAL: All right, folks! Quiet, please!

CAST: Yea, Gildersleeve!

HAL: Ladies and gentlemen, the management has just asked me to make a small announcement.

FLOYD: You tell 'em, Commissioner!

HAL: Hi, Floyd. Owing to circumstances beyond our control, ladies and gentlemen, we were unable to present *Cyrano de Bergerac* tonight, owing to circumstances beyond our control. Instead, we were forced at the last minute to substitute a very fine little production called—uh—*Delicate Something-or-Other*. But we're going to give you *Cyrano* next time, ladies and gentlemen! *Cyrano* will positively be our second production.

JUDGE: Give us a sample of it, Gildy!

HARGRAVE: Yes, give us a sample!

HAL: Well, I—don't know that I could do that.

FLOYD: Aw, come on!

HAL: But I'll tell you what I *will* do—

I'll sing you a song! Oh, conductor, you know—bzbz bz bz bz bz. In the key of "C." Fine. Well, do the best you can. This is the kind of song Cyrano might have sung to a lady—if he didn't sing through his nose. (*Sings.*) "I kiss your hand, Madame."
[*Applause.*]

FLOYD: Give us another, Commissioner!

HAL: Another?

FAIRFIELD: Psst! Psst!

HAL: Just a minute, please. Mr. Fairfield, our director, has something to say to me. Yes?

FAIRFIELD (*sotto*): You unutterable ham! Get off the stage so we can get on with the play.

HAL: You sent me out here—now go chase yourself!

FAIRFIELD: Gildersleeve, if you think I am going to let you play *Cyrano* after this performance—

HAL: Listen! Either I play *Cyrano* next week or I'll sing "Chloe" right now!

FAIRFIELD: You beast! Ladies and gentlemen, let me remind you—next week Throckmorton Gildersleeve in *Cyrano de Bergerac*!

The Sweetest Guy in the World!

**DURANTE
AND
MOORE**

Comics are esteemed, enjoyed, laughed at, frequently hailed as "great," even respected on occasion. And once in an infrequent while, one of them is truly loved by the public. Jimmy Durante is one of these chosen few.

His countenance has something to do with this. That great jutting nose surmounting a true clown's face, the wispy hair, the prominent ears are smile-provoking on sight, not in derision but in appreciation of a comic masterpiece of nature. Then he talks, and the voice and the grammar match the face. The tones have a quality like gravel going down a drain, and they come in explosive gusts. The grammar is of the "dese, dem, and dose" school. He is the true low-brow, and Americans are suckers for the type.

But there are other low-brows in the business—fine fellows all. Why doesn't the public hold them in the affection that it does the Schnozzola? There must be something else about him. There is, but it is an intangible. It's a spark that communicates itself to audiences and bounces back to Jimmy carrying their best brand of good will. It is, perhaps, the mark of greatness, a quality that can be defined from hell to breakfast and still remain as elusive as an eel in a tub of oil.

Jimmy himself wouldn't need so many words to discuss the matter. He'd simply say "it's da condishuns dat purvail" and let it go at that. He is one of the world's truly simple, unaffected men—and that is part of the answer, too.

Anyone who has seen the Durante of the night clubs and the

vaudeville and Broadway musical shows is bound to feel a little sorry for those who know him only via the microphone, because he is an eyeful as well as an earful; but, actually, when you stop to think it out, you realize that most of the quality of the guy comes across from the voice alone. His coattail-flying rushes across the floor, his stalkings, his acrobatic rages, his astonishment at his own precocity, his mock belligerency—all of them are conveyed by the voice in graphic if not total fashion.

Jimmy uses gags, but he doesn't need them. He could read names and addresses from the telephone book and get just as much laughter. In fact, gags are so unimportant to Durante that he has used the same ones for years. It isn't what he says, but how he says it.

Durante had been in show business for thirty-three years, working his way up from a Coney Island honky-tonk to the musical stages of Broadway and the sound stages of Hollywood, and had been in the top brackets for almost fifteen years before he and radio really got to going steady. He was on the air, sometimes for extended periods, at various times during the thirties, but the combination never jelled to the point where he became an air fixture as other famous comics were becoming. Radio did not know quite how to handle him, and Jimmy felt that maybe he just wasn't cut out for that branch of the amusement business.

But the tide turned as the result of a guest appearance he made on the "Camel Comedy Caravan" in 1942. Also guesting on the program was a young fellow with a crew haircut called Garry Moore. They didn't work together on the show, but subsequently advertising agency experts, playing a recording of the broadcast in a search for ideas, were struck by the contrast in Durante's and Moore's types of comedy, and decided it might be a good idea to put the two of them on a show together.

The Camel-sponsored program began in April, 1943, and the public took to it immediately. At first they were on the NBC network as a replacement for the Abbott and Costello show, but their success brought them their own spot on CBS in the fall. However, during the month of October, 1943, they did both programs because

the long illness of Lou Costello kept that team off the air and the spot had to be filled until they could return. It was the first time in radio history that a team of comedians had attempted and succeeded in being on the air with an entirely different type of program twice in one week.

This Moore is a boy from down Baltimore way. He was born there January 31, 1915, and christened Thomas Garrison Morfit, son of an attorney. His first experience was as a writer; he did a play with novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, but it was never produced. However, Moore got a job writing continuity on a Baltimore radio station and was moderately happy until one day he filled in for a sick comedian and did well enough to make the management want to make a comic out of him. This was contrary to his ambitions, so he shoved off to St. Louis for a job as news and sports announcer. When the station found out he could deliver comedy via the mike, they put him to work at it despite his protests. He quit after seven months and then got an offer from the Club Matinee show originating in Chicago. It was a network affair and carried prestige. Garry gave in to what looked to be his fate; he worked on the program two years before jumping to New York and real success.

Moore is a friendly fellow of ready wit and manages to satisfy some of his writing ambition by having a considerable hand in the preparation of the script. Jimmy doesn't do any writing, but he knows what's right for him to do when the writers submit a script for his perusal. He reads it over aloud in conference and then proceeds to criticize. His chief complaint is that certain phrases are not as he would say them. So they're fixed in the true Durante pattern.

While Durante and Moore sound as different as a factory whistle and a bo's'n's pipe, actual inspection of their material shows it to be pretty similar; in many cases they could trade scripts and be just as effective with the words written for the other. Both are given to a bit of hifalutin language and picturesque wordage, the chief difference being that Moore pronounces the words as indicated in the dictionary while Durante uses his own freewheeling style, espe-

cially on anything over three syllables. As far as he's concerned, Noah Webster lived in vain.

Jimmy's early life was not conducive to a polished exterior and correct pronunciation. He was born February 10, 1893, on the Lower East Side where his Italian father was a barber. Jimmy early helped his father by lathering the faces of customers. He quit school in the seventh grade and took various jobs. He also had some piano lessons, but not enough to bother him in later years.

His first professional work as a pianist came at the age of seventeen when he went to work in Diamond Tony's saloon at Coney Island. He got twenty-five dollars weekly, playing in the particular "ragging" style of the period. There were other jobs in similar joints—at Carey Walsh's club where he played for a would-be singer named Eddie Cantor, and at Chinatown's Chatham Club.

The next step was organization of a Dixieland type band of five men and a job at the Alamo Club in Harlem about the time the United States entered the first World War. Here he met part of his future—Eddie Jackson, a swarthy former singing waiter, and pretty Jeanne Olson, a singer from the Middle West who had a job at a near-by club. Jimmy eventually took Clayton on as a partner and made Miss Olson his wife. Other club work followed, and then Jimmy was persuaded to open a place of his own with the backing of a waiter named Frank Nolan. The Club Durant was opened in a room above a garage the night of January 22, 1923, with Durante and his band doing the honors. Among those present were Jackson and a soft-shoe dancer of repute named Lou Clayton. Clayton liked the setup and invested in the joint.

Jimmy started singing in his own inimitable fashion and gradually Clayton and Jackson, who were around all the time, worked into the proceedings. Thus was born the great knockout act—Clayton, Jackson, and Durante.

Those were Prohibition days and occasionally the boys would have a club shot from under them by the federal agents. But there was always another for them to go to. In those free-spending times their reputation grew rapidly, and by the time the twenties were

drawing to a close, they were headliners at several thousand dollars weekly in top spots such as the *Rendezvous* and the *Silver Slipper*.

It was a truly magnificent act and almost defiant of description. Jimmy, of course, was at the piano. It was never the same piano for very long because during the course of a night's work he'd do everything to it but put it under a steam roller. Clayton would dance and Jackson would sing. The three of them would be working away at the same time—seemingly at cross purposes, although actually beautifully integrated—when a prop phone would ring or Jimmy would suddenly jar the piano's teeth clear back to the molars by slamming down the lid. All action would stop on a dime and Jimmy—sometimes using the phone, sometimes not—would shout that he was through for the day, that he was going out to the insane asylum and get himself a ravin' beauty. Or one of the others would answer the phone and report to Durante that so-and-so had kidnaped a girl and wanted to know if Durante would hold her for ransom.

"Tell Ransom to hold his own women!" Jimmy would roar.

Each gag was followed by immediate resumption of whatever musical work had been in progress at the point where it left off. Sometimes they were concerned with some popular musical number, but more often it was one of Jimmy's little compositions such as "Who Will Be with You When I'm Far Away, out in Far Rockaway?" The routine was the maddest anyone could conceive and depended for its laugh on the speed and slam-bang manner in which it was put across.

There were more complicated songs for Jimmy's own use, some of them of his own composition and some not. These included "Jimmy, That Well-Dressed Man," "I Know Darn Well I Can Do without Broadway (But Can Broadway Do without Me?)" "I Ups to Him," and "Did You Ever Have the Feelin' that You Wanted to Go, Still You Have the Feelin' that You Wanted to Stay?" Long portions of these songs were recitative blank verse hooked together by occasional rhymes and snatches of melody.

In 1929, when Ziegfeld got ready to do *Show Girl*, featuring Ruby Keeler, he sent for the boys and gave them their first job in

the legitimate theater. They followed this successful debut with an even better show, *The New Yorkers*, in which they used a hilarious number from their club routines. Jimmy had read somewhere an article on how important wood was in the lives of all of us, and his antic mind conceived a number glorifying it. After a verbal build-up the boys went into a chant: "Wood, wood, wood," while they made a mad scrambling search for articles of wood which they appropriated from any and all sources and dumped into the middle of the floor. Nothing portable made of wood was safe from them. They usually climaxed the routine by decorating the top of the huge pile with an outhouse.

The New Yorkers was the end of the trio as an act. Hollywood wanted Durante and he went it alone, with Clayton sticking as his manager. Jackson joined another act but soon found his way back to Jimmy as adviser, general all-round assistant, and occasional partner in night club or vaudeville appearances.

Hollywood was not kind to Jimmy the first few years. Somehow they had the idea out there that he was a comical fellow to look at and that was enough. The good material he received in the several movies he appeared in could have been placed in the eye of a midget gnat. Any time his studio had a film that needed a hypo, they'd stick Jimmy in, with nothing much to do, of course, and expect this to keep the film out of the red.

During the thirties Jimmy managed to keep his self-respect and the loyalty of his true fans by starring in several top-notch Broadway musical shows: *Strike Me Pink*, *Stars in Your Eyes*, *Red Hot and Blue*, *Jumbo* and *Keep Off the Grass*. He made a tour of the British Isles and tickled Sir Harry Lauder no end.

In 1942 he returned to a night club, as star at the lush Copacabana in New York. Surrounded by the old atmosphere, he blossomed out with numbers new and old and had a sensational engagement. He was still with the movies and they were beginning to do right by him now. He was back for a 1943-44 Winter engagement at the Copa and by now, of course, his radio program was at the top. He was more successful than he had ever been, and busier.

Durante has to be seen in a place like the Copa in order to be fully appreciated. Good as he is on the air, stage, or screen, you don't quite get all of the real Durante in any of those mediums. The full flavor of that fine frenzy of the night club floor is missing. In a night club, Durante regards everyone connected with the joint, except possibly the customers, as his mortal enemies, especially the musicians and waiters. He'll interrupt a musical number at any time with a happy sort of malice to castigate an oboe player for not having stayed on the farm where he belonged, or to point out the less attractive habits of the waiters. Nor is he any respecter of the management—"Dere goes a load of ice wit' t'ree olives. Twelve-fifty! Somebody's gotta pay for da cocktail room!" And at times, when it seems that things have become too much for him, he'll slap his arms to his sides, shrug, and say resignedly, "Surrounded by assassins." But all this is in the nature of good clean fun (incidentally, Jimmy's humor even in a club is not "blue") and no one gets hurt. People know that Jimmy doesn't hate anyone, even if he does moan that "everybody wants ta get in da act" whenever a chorus girl, musician, or attendant performs some necessary function connected with the show.

Jimmy has contributed one of those lovable, mythical characters to the nation in the person of Umbriago, who has had a prominent part in the radio program for many months. Umbriago is a figure from Italian folklore—an inoffensive little fellow who is fond of his bottle. He is Jimmy's pal and may assume many characteristics in the course of a few weeks. According to Jimmy, Umbriago can do anything and probably has. No one ever sees him, except Durante, but he either has just been somewhere or is about to arrive.

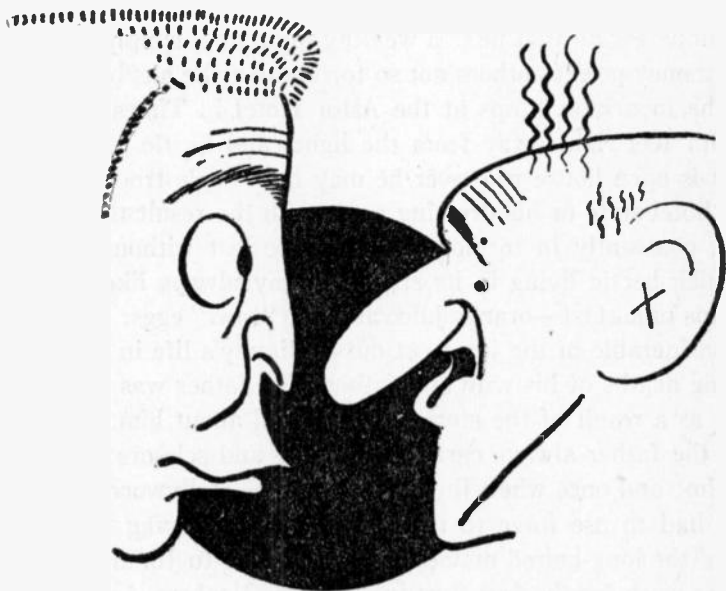
Among other things, Durante likes the sound of Umbriago's name. It's the sort of thing that he can roll out with gusto. Jimmy has a weakness for resounding syllables. There was one period in his career when he was fascinated by the musical term pizzicato. It was practically a production number the way he would roll it out—"pittttssss-IKATO!" And certain phrases are dear to his heart.

"It's da condishuns dat purvail" is one of them. "I love dat expresshun," he'll tell you. When it comes to mangling the larger words, it is a case of no malice aforethought. It isn't planned at all. When Jimmy sees a new long word in his radio scripts, he just pronounces it the first way it comes into his head, sometimes ignoring whole syllables or with carefree disregard for their sequence. The result is always hilarious.

Jimmy, for all that he is a wealthy man, lives simply; and much of his money goes to others not so fortunate as he has been. In New York he invariably stops at the Astor Hotel in Times Square—he wouldn't feel right away from the lights and bustle of Broadway. And it is open house wherever he may be. People troop in and out of his hotel suite or his dressing room with the result that he seems to live constantly in turmoil. But he'd be lost without it. He can take such hectic living in its stride. Jimmy always likes to recommend his breakfast—orange juice and two "rawr" eggs.

Considerable of the joy went out of Jimmy's life in recent years with the deaths of his wife and father. The father was a Broadway legend as a result of the stories Jimmy told about him. Retired for years, the father always carried the comb and scissors of his trade with him; and once when Jimmy took him to Hollywood, they practically had to use force to restrain him from tidying the locks of some of the long-haired movie idols. According to Jimmy, his father saw him work for the first time in *The New Yorkers*. Asked what he thought of the performance, the old man said: "Lissen, son, le's not get in an argument."

So in view of the fact that he has no immediate family now, the rush of work of recent years has been welcome to Jimmy. It keeps him from being lonely. Clayton, Jackson, and Jack Roth, Jimmy's drummer, valet, and friend for a quarter of a century, watch over him constantly. To them—and to many others—he is "the sweetest guy in the world."



DURANTE AND MOORE

DURANTE AND MOORE . . . *On the Air*

DURANTE: Now the Friday-night show brings you a drama of college life entitled:

MOORE: "Johnny was the best dressed art student at college, or every day he sits at his easel in his top hat, white tie, and draws." Now Jimmy, in tonight's play, you and I are college students.

DURANTE: Ah, college students!

MOORE: Yes, I'll never forget my first day at school. I went to kindergarten in Baltimore.

DURANTE: I went to kindergarten in Brooklyn.

MOORE: I went to grammar school in Baltimore.

DURANTE: I went to grammar school in Brooklyn.

MOORE: And I graduated.

DURANTE: Too much education is a dangerous thing.

MOORE: Well, let's not waste any more time. We're off to the college hurry-scurry.

DURANTE: You hurry—and I'll take the scurry with the fringe on top.

[*Phone rings.*]

MOORE: Hello, Boy's Dormitory, Student Moore speaking.

LANG: Mr. Moore, this is the head of the Biology Department. I want to find out how you spend your time after classes.

MOORE: Right now, Professor, I'm very busy making notes on flora and fauna.

[*A laugh.*]

LANG: What was that?

MOORE: Flora's ticklish.

[*Hangs up receiver.*]

MOORE: What a nosey guy. Gee whiz!

[*Door slams.*]

DURANTE: Drop everything, Junior. I just came from the science class and what a stiff examination I took. The professor asked me a question and it went like this! He said, "If you were forty thousand feet up in an airplane going four hundred miles an hour and suddenly your oxygen tank broke, your wing ripped off, your motor dropped out, and you had no parachute, what would you do?"

MOORE: Well, Jimmy, what was your answer?

DURANTE: What answer? From the question alone I fainted!

MOORE: Jimmy, the final exams are coming up this week and we really need some help. Gee, I wish the school had an advisory board—someone we could ask questions of, like Lana Turner or Betty Grable.

DURANTE: Lana Turner and Betty Grable? What question could we ask them?

MOORE: He's led such a sheltered life.

DURANTE: Well, I don't know. You know, Junior, this year college is a serious thing with me. I get to the classroom every morning at four o'clock.

MOORE: Four o'clock in the morning! What do you take?

DURANTE: Oh, the usual thing—a pail and a mop. But Junior, I'm worried about the examination. What'll you charge to *too-ter* me.

MOORE: To tutor you? Well, my rates are five dollars for upper-classmen, four dollars for lower-classmen, two dollars for high school, one dollar for

grade school, fifty cents for morons, and twenty-five cents for idiots.

DURANTE: Then what will you charge me?

MOORE: Well, to avoid embarrassment let's just say that this one's on the house.

DURANTE: First, last, and always, I'm a gentleman of culture.

[Sings.

Seeking my favorite diversion last night, and feeling in the pink,

I steps into my plush-upholstered hansom,

With my two footmen commanding the poop deck

And my Arabian steeds going at a gentle trot.

We approaches the theatre marquee and what happens?

The red carpet is rolled out, my two footment descend from the poop deck

They open the door and I steps out. (Crash!)

Looking up from the gutter, I says, Who told you to remove the running board?

Picking myself up and ignoring the stares of the hoi poloo,

I makes my entrance gallantly into the Diamond Horseshoe.

Removing my top hat, my nylon gloves, my skunk muffler, and my patent-

Leather galoshes with the neon buttons,

I looks around. Mrs. Van Schuyler is whispering to Mrs. Murray Hill;

Mrs. Murray Hill is whispering to Mrs. Susquehanna. And what are they saying?

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it Superman?

No—it's a bum!

You see a vicious rumor has been circulated, just because I worked in a saloon.

They say I'm not fit to mingle in any other circle.

That's ridiculous! Nightclubs is just the Mr. Hyde part of me, You have yet to meet the Dr. Jerkyl. Yes, I'm Durante, the patron of the arts,

An opera critic and a man of parts. Last week I went to the opera, I loved it all but one scene, That's where the three-hundred-and-fifty-pound soprano sings to The baritone. She sings:

"Take me in your arms and hold me close."

Why, to hold her close the bum'd have to be curved like a banana! Those opera-lovers all rave at Handel's "Largo,"

Why, I've heard better music written by Umbriago.

Now what I say may sound absurd, but believe me it's true, I've seen every opera and I'll name them for you.

"Tales of the Vienna Rolls," "Madam Buttermilk," "The Sextette from Lechee Nuts,"

And "The Quartet from Rigor Mortis," which I know from memory. I coach sopranos and tenors in their parts,

Cause I'm Durante, the patron of the arts.

Now just the other day they held a meeting at the Metropolitan in the cellar.

They said "Jimmy we're in a hole, you gotta help us out."

Stepping up on a soap box (left over from *La Boheem*).

I said, "Gentlemen, let's analyze this:

Now take *Romeo and Juliet*. Romeo has to leave Juliet,

But does he say shoo baby? No, in opera he says:

I have but a moment to spend with you

A moment, my dear, to spend with you,

A moment to spend, a moment to spend.

A moment, a moment, a moment, a moment, a moment, a moment, a moment, a moment. . .

He's got one moment to spend and he's taking three hours to tell her about it.

The guy's making a Federal case out of it. Then she says:

I will give you a kiss, my love—a burning kiss upon the lips.

A burning kiss, a kiss, upon the lips a burning kiss.

A kiss—a kiss—a kiss—a kiss.

Upon the lips a burning kiss!

By the time the palooka's ready to kiss her the fire's out!"

Facing the committee, I said, "There's only one way to save the opera—

Get yourself new lyrics that have class and propriety,

Like 'Mr. Milkman Keep Those Bottles Quietly'."

They all gave thanks from the bottom of their hearts,

To Durante, the patron of the arts; a connoisseur Durante, the patron of the arts!

ANOTHER DURANTE AND MOORE SCRIPT

DURANTE: And now a drama of the Old West. Entitled:

MOORE: "The Cowboy Had a Gold Saddle," or "Everytime He Rode, He Struck It Rich." Now Jimmy, in tonight's play you and I own a ranch. Are you any good at cow-branding?

DURANTE: I've got a reputation.

MOORE: Are you any good at hog-tying?

DURANTE: I've got a reputation.

MOORE: Are you any good at bull-throwing?

DURANTE: I've got—don't believe everything you hear.

MOORE: Well, then, pardner, let's hit the trail to the old D Bar M. We're off to rope a steer.

DURANTE: You rope and I'll steer.

[*Moo and cow bell.*]

MOORE: Ah, the telephone. Hello. Durante-Moore Ranch, Moore speaking.

KEARNS: Mr. Moore, I'm looking for a job. Do you need any new hands?

MOORE: No, pardner, I do all my own gopher-punching.

KEARNS: Gopher? Don't you mean mean cow-punching?

MOORE: No, gopher—they don't punch back.

[*Door slams.*]

DURANTE: Ya-hoo, wa-hoo, buck-a-roo, and lass-oo a kazoo.

MOORE: What's all the excitement, Jimmy?

DURANTE: I just come from the corral and you know, partner, I gave the joint a Hollywood touch. I put *slacks* on all the *cows* and then I milked them.

MOORE: Hold on, James, how can you milk a cow that's wearing slacks?

DURANTE: Shhhhh. I'm a pickpocket.

MOORE: Well, while you were out, I decided to see how many cattle we had.

DURANTE: That's fine. How many head have we got?

MOORE: I dunno how many head we got. When I counted they were facing the other way.

DURANTE: My boy suffered a reverse.

[*Door slams.*]

PETRIE: I wanna die with my boots on. I gotta die with my boots on. Please let me die with my boots on.

MOORE: Why must you die with your boots on?

PETRIE: I got a hole in my sock.

[*Door slams.*]

DURANTE: Believe me, I'd like to in-

vite that guy over to play on my barbed wire fence.

MOORE: Jimmy, look in the corral. Someone's broke in and made off with our livestock.

DURANTE: Yeah, ten of our cows are missing.

ALLMAN: Well, howdy, men.

DURANTE: Make that nine, Junior. One just wandered back.

ALLMAN: I'm from the Cattlemen's Association, and I'd like to welcome you into the organization. My name is Alfalfa Annie.

MOORE: Well, howdy, ma'am. My handle's Tex Moore.

ALLMAN: Tex Moore.

MOORE: Yes. But you can call me Tex.

ALLMAN: Where do you hail from, Tex?

MOORE: Massachusetts.

DURANTE: Permit me to introduce *myself*, Miss Alfalfa. They used to call me Eight-Gun Durante, but I changed it to Two-Gun.

ALLMAN: Why?

DURANTE: Because with eight guns, everytime I took a step, my pants fell down. A *catastastroke*!

ALLMAN: I just came down to warn you that the Cactus Kid just broke out of jail, and there's a ten-thousand-dollar reward for his capture.

BOTH: Ten thousand dollars?

MOORE: I reckon that'll buy a powerful heap of food.

ALLMAN: Well, sonny, don't you think of anything else but eating?

MOORE: Yeah, sometime I think about girls.

ALLMAN: When do you think about girls?

MOORE: When I'm eating.

DURANTE: My boy will never grow up.

ALLMAN: What about you, Two-Gun?

Don't you ever think about girls?

DURANTE: Not me! I'm off girls for life. I went with one girl for fourteen years and she never spoke a word to me.

ALLMAN: Fourteen years and she never spoke a word.

DURANTE: Yeah, then one day she sneezed so I shot her. I never could stand a chatterbox.

ALLMAN: Well, I gotta go, men, and be careful if you run into Cactus Kid. He's dynamite.

MOORE: Thanks for the tip, ma'am, but I reckon I can handle him. I'm mighty rugged. Why, only this morning, I ate a whole steer. (*Hiccups*.) Darn them horns.

ALLMAN: Well, good luck.

MOORE: Jimmy, we got ten thousand dollars if we capture the Cactus Kid.

DURANTE: You mean—?

MOORE: Yes, we're off to town to capture the Cactus Kid.

* * *

MOORE: Maybe we can find the Cactus Kid in this saloon, Jimmy. They say it's the toughest joint in town.

DURANTE: It can't be so tough. Look at the clean sawdust on the floor.

MOORE: That ain't sawdust. That's the furniture from the night before.

DURANTE: Hey, piano-player, stop the music.

[*Piano continues*.]

DURANTE: When Two-Gun says stop, he means *stop*.

[*Gun shot. Piano continues*.]

MOORE: Jimmy, you killed the piano player, but he's still playing. How come?

DURANTE: Strong union.

GIRL: Hello, Gringos. I am the dancer here. Come on, let us have some fun, eh?

MOORE: Jimmy, why don't you go back to the ranch and see if the fudge is burning.

DURANTE: Junior, this is the Cactus Kid's girl friend. I'll ask her some questions in her native tongue. *Senorita, es-ta quand-do ah-see vee-ay-ho.*

GIRL: Hable usted se llama Hollywood and Vine muy peunte.

DURANTE: Vamos sabay mucho todo tea-en-ay es-quaila?

GIRL: La tia es grande Hollywood and Vine como muy Hollywood and Vine.

MOORE: Jimmy, tell me, what did she say?

DURANTE: I don't know, but I'll be there! Now there's a bes-a-may with plenty of mucho.

MOORE: Look outside the window, Two-Gun. The Cactus Kid is riding up to the saloon in a cloud of dust.

DURANTE: What kind of a horse is he riding?

MOORE: No horse, just a cloud of dust.

DURANTE: Look at him. He's got a gun in his left hand, a gun in his right, a cigarette in his mouth, and all three are smoking.

KEARNS: All right, stand where you are. I'll kill the first man that moves.

MOORE: You can't scare me. I ain't afraid of a varmint like you.

KEARNS: Oh, yeah! See this skull and crossbones? That's my brand.

MOORE: It is, eh?

KEARNS: Yeah. Now, tough guy, what's your brand?

MOORE: Elizabeth Arden.

DURANTE: Don't worry, Junior. I've got a gun, so git in *back* of me. If he starts shooting, git in *front* of me. [Shot.]

MOORE: Jimmy, there goes your right ear.

[Shot.]

There goes your left ear. •

[Door slams.]

Jimmy, the Cactus Kid got away. Why didn't you shoot back at him?

DURANTE: I couldn't see. My ears were holding up my hat.

Jo's A-Muggin'!

**JOAN
DAVIS**

Joan Davis just sort of sneaked up on radio and before you could say Rudy Vallee, she had a body scissors on the funny-bone of the poor helpless industry. And a very pleasant body scissors it was, too, for all concerned. The fans were happy and Joan had no particular objection to the pay or hours.

It seems that whenever you investigate the background of a radio performer, somewhere you'll find the name of Rudy Vallee mentioned, frequently getting No. 1 billing. This is no accident, for the smart Rudy, when his own vogue as a "vagabond lover" had passed, kept his radio program right around the top for years by virtue of seeking out good, but new-to-radio, talent and putting it on the air. Joan Davis is a Vallee graduate—in fact, she graduated so vigorously that she took over the maestro's program.

Joan appeared on Vallee's Sealtest "Village Store" show on the NBC network in 1941. She sang a song satire, mugged and clowned around, and did everything but take the program home in a paper bag. Vallee put her under contract to co-star on his show regularly, and she's been there ever since.

When Vallee entered active service in the Coast Guard in 1943, Miss Davis inherited the program and got star billing by having her name hitched on the front of the program title. She brought in Jack Haley, one of the country's finest comics, to help her out.

Joan made a lot of quick hay. She was voted radio's top comedienne in such 1943 polls as those conducted by the Scripps-Howard newspapers and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in the Middle West, and she won the *Motion Picture Daily's* Fame Poll, which represented the votes of six hundred radio editors, in 1943 and 1944.

In December, 1943, as a result of her poll prosperity, she appeared as guest star on eight big programs within a week. The Crossley and Hooper ratings of January, 1944, placed her program among the five most popular of all of radio's programs. In January, 1945, she signed one of those fabulous million-dollar-a-year contracts for four years with United Drug Company, Inc. The new contract starts in the fall of 1945.

The comedienne is an out-and-out clown, with no inhibitions when it comes to entertaining the public. To see her before the microphone is to watch a lot of action because she doesn't like to keep still. The mugging she does is greatly appreciated by studio audiences, and it will take television to give the full flavor of Miss Davis' work to listeners.

Not that Miss Davis isn't comely. She is. She has reddish-brown hair, green eyes, is five feet and five inches tall, weighs 120 pounds, and knows how to wear clothes. But the general public has formed its impression of her from seeing her in films. There she usually is racketing about in such robust fashion, wearing catch-as-catch-can attire, that the movie public doesn't get a chance to see what she actually looks like. That's one of the prices a knockout comedienne has to pay—the public is too apt to take it for granted that she's no ball of fire in the looking glass or she wouldn't be playing comedy.

The radio career of Miss Davis has climaxed a will to entertainment that began to bloom at an early age. She was born in St. Paul on June 29 about 30 years ago, the only child of Le Roy and Nina Davis. Her father was and still is a railroad man. She showed more talent than the usual three-year-old when it came to singing and reciting in church entertainments and the like, and she was trained with the idea that she would become a professional performer. She achieved this goal at the age of seven when she was doing a fourteen-minute comedy act on the Pantages vaudeville circuit. She was billed as "The Toy Comedienne." Her mother and a tutor toured with her. From time to time she'd turn up in St. Paul for a few months' schooling, but she was never idle very long. Her

biggest St. Paul thrill was being named to the Mechanic Arts High School debating team.

Joan says that she always wanted to be a movie actress. She studied the work of all actors—both stage and screen—that she could lay eyes on, and looked forward to the day when Hollywood would send for her. She didn't exactly get an engraved invitation, but she did get to make a short called *Way up Thar*, a hill-billy piece, naturally, and for no less a director than Mack Sennett. A feature-length picture, *Millions in the Air*, followed; and then Twentieth Century-Fox gave her a long-term contract. For six years it seemed that almost every other picture this studio turned out had Joan Davis in it. In a way, this over-use of a performer can do more harm than good, and in 1941 Joan asked for and received her release. She felt she would be better off free-lancing, and since then she has indeed had all the film work she has cared to handle.

The free-lance period ended when she got from RKO-Radio a contract calling for two pictures a year for 1944-45-46, with star billing and the best efforts of the studio available for each film.

Miss Davis is the wife of Serenus (Si) Wills. He was her vaudeville partner in the act "Willis and Davis" from 1931 to 1936, the year Joan settled down solely to pictures. They were married August 13, 1931, and a daughter, Beverly, was born in 1933. Beverly, incidentally, gets a bit of work these days on the Sealtest program, being billed as Joan's kid sister. Wills manages affairs for his wife and is one of the writers on her radio show.

The comedienne likes excitement. She rarely misses a Friday night boxing show at the American Legion Stadium in Hollywood, and she likes to be in the front row. She also is susceptible to quieter pastimes, such as golf (which she plays well) and fishing.

She does a lot of reading, too, and always with both eyes open for comedy material. She has a gag file that fills more than a dozen volumes. Even Joan Davis needs gags for her radio work. But when she's entertaining in the flesh, she doesn't need them; for she is primarily a clown, a buffoon—a role that rates high in the history of entertainment.

JOAN DAVIS . . . *On the Air*

DAVIS (*at the phone*): Hello, Sealtest Village Store. Oh, hello, Sally. What? The Mayor and the manicurist? Well, that certainly is a choice bit of gossip. No, I won't breathe a word to anyone. Good-by. John, wait till you hear this—the Mayor took the manicurist out last night! What do you know, the old guy's a wolf.

LANG: I always thought he was a gentleman.

DAVIS: He is, but you know the old saying, "A gentleman is nothing but a wolf with his ears pinned back!"

* * *

LANG: Each year at this time the citizens of our little community hold their annual County Fair and Rodeo. It is the day before the Grand Opening. Contestants are starting to arrive, booths are being constructed and the race track prepared. Joan Davis and Jack Haley have just delivered a big order of groceries and provisions to the fair restaurant, and are now looking around the grounds.

DAVIS: Gee, Jack, we've been walking around the Fair Grounds for two hours, and I think it's very dull. Let's go.

HALEY: But, Joanie, I love County Fairs.

DAVIS: I don't. Especially after what happened to me here last year. It was very embarrassing.

HALEY: Really? What happened, Joanie?

DAVIS: Well, I was standing in front

of the poultry exhibit when some wise guy grabbed me by the ankles, threw me over his shoulders and yelled, "Hey, Joe, this certainly is a scrawny turkey we're raffling off this year!"

HALEY: Joanie, that didn't happen to you. You have an over-active imagination.

DAVIS: Well, maybe you're right, Jack. Can we go now?

HALEY: Oh, let's stick around for a little while. There's—

SI: Excuse me, folks, but you'll have to move along. We're putting up a tent here.

HALEY: What for?

SI: The poultry exhibit. We're gonna raffle off a turkey.

DAVIS: A turkey?

SI: Yeah. Hey, Joe—

DAVIS: Don't you dare lay a hand on me!

HALEY: Joanie, he's nowhere near you.

DAVIS: Please, Jack, let's get out of here. I don't know why you're so interested.

HALEY: I like fairs. Besides, the Governor has invited me to sit in his box and be the guest of honor on opening day tomorrow.

DAVIS: You're going to be guest of honor? How do you like that?

HALEY: Hey, Joanie, look at those beautiful horses.

DAVIS: I don't like horses. When I was a kid, one of them kicked me.

HALEY: Where did he kick you?

DAVIS: In St. Paul—I was living there at the time.

HALEY: Naw, I mean where did he kick you?

DAVIS: Well, I ain't saying—but if I were a map of the United States, I'd be black and blue "a little bit south of North Carolina."

HALEY: Joanie, you just don't understand horses. A horse is kind and gentle and loyal.

DAVIS: Oh, to hear you talk you'd think horses were more important than women.

HALEY: They are.

DAVIS: To whom?

HALEY: To other horses! Look, Joanie—look at the old swayback nag pulling that broken-down rig.

DAVIS: Yeah. Hey! Look at that handsome cowboy driving that swayback nag! Isn't he terrific!

HALEY: Aw, he isn't so handsome!

DAVIS: Look, he's stopping. I guess he wants to make a date with me. He's probably one of those fast-talking cowboys who'll give a girl a terrific line. Hello, Cowboy.

NELSON: Hooooooooooooooooowdy!

DAVIS: Say, did anyone ever tell you you're handsome?

NELSON: Awwwww, shuuuucks!

HALEY: Boy, what a terrific line!

DAVIS: Quiet, Jack, I'll have him talking in no time with my feminine charms. Did you just get in town, Cowboy?

NELSON: Yep!

DAVIS: Do you know any girls in town?

NELSON: Nope!

DAVIS: Would you like to go out with a girl?

NELSON: Yep!

DAVIS: Would you like to go out with me?

NELSON: Nope!

DAVIS: Why, pardner, how can you stand there and say that to me? Me, Gower Gulch Gertie!

NELSON: But, ma'am, you don't look like you've ever been on a horse.

DAVIS: Never been on a horse? Look

again, pardner—I didn't get these yere bow-legs from ridin' a pickle barrel!

NELSON: I'm sorry, ma'am.

DAVIS: Cowboy, if you're a stranger in town—er—you're probably lonesome and would like a date tonight, humm?

NELSON: Shucks, no, I wouldn't know how to act.

DAVIS: Never had a date, huh?

NELSON: Nope. Fact is, my horses take up so much of my time, I've never had a chance to be alone with a girl.

DAVIS: Never been alone with a girl, huh?

NELSON: Nope. Why, I've never even kissed a girl.

DAVIS: Never kissed a girl?

NELSON: Nope!

DAVIS: Oh, mother, put a bit in my mouth, I'm headin' for the last roundup!

NELSON: Wal, you'll have to pardon me, folks. I have to go over and take care of my pretty little horse. You see, I'm ridin' in the rodeo tomorrow.

HALEY: Don't tell me you're going to ride that old swayback nag in the rodeo?

NELSON: Oh, no, I ain't ridin' Nellie here. I got another horse. A good horse. Well, see you later, folks. Okay, Nellie, *mucilage*!

DAVIS: What's the idea of saying "mucilage"?

NELSON: That's the only thing that'll make Nellie go. I reckon mebbe it's because she's scared stiff of the glue factory. So long. Come on, Nellie, *mucilage*!

DAVIS: Well, I'll be darned! Look, Jack, that horse actually moves when he yells "mucilage." Oh, well, let's get back over to the store now.

HALEY: All right, if you want, I—hey, wait a minute, Joanie—look at that girl sitting over there with that beautiful horse and rig. Isn't that Penny Cartwright?

DAVIS: It looks like her.

PENNY: Hello, Jack. Hello, Miss Davis.

HALEY: Hello, Penny. Come on, Joanie, let's go over and see her.

DAVIS: Oh, every time I'm with a man she shows up.

HALEY: Oh, stop being so jealous, Joanie.

PENNY: Oh, I'm glad you two walked over—especially you, Miss Davis. I wanted to show you this beautiful new horse and rig father bought me.

DAVIS: Horse and what?

PENNY: Rig. It's a shay . . . a shay.

DAVIS: That's different—why didn't you shay sho in the firsh plache!

HALEY: Boy, what a beautiful horse!

Gee, I'd love to ride that horse sometime, Penny.

PENNY: You're perfectly welcome to, Jack. But do you know anything about riding?

HALEY: Do I? Er—let me get up on this horse and I'll show you.

PENNY: Jack, you're supposed to mount from the left side of the horse.

HALEY: What's the difference? It's the same horse on both sides!

PENNY: Jack, are you sure you know how to ride?

HALEY: Of course. Why, for years I rode in professional races.

PENNY: You did?

DAVIS: Certainly. He was known as "Jackie, the Jerky Jockey."

PENNY: Miss Davis, I doubt if you've ever been on a horse yourself.

DAVIS: Who hasn't? Why, I can ride a horse better than anyone around here—especially you.

PENNY: Is that so? Well, I'll just show you! I challenge you to a race right now.

DAVIS: I accept.

HALEY: But Joanie, you haven't got a horse.

DAVIS: I'll get one.

PENNY: Very well, Miss Davis. We'll hold the race right here at the Fair

Grounds Race Track at two o'clock this afternoon.

HALEY: Tell you what, girls—as an added incentive I'll let the winner sit with me in the Governor's box on opening day tomorrow.

PENNY: Oh, that will be wonderful, Jack. I hope you're a good loser, Miss Davis.

* * *

STREET: Hello, Miss Davis.

DAVIS: Oh, Dave Street. What are you doing here in this empty grandstand, kid?

STREET: I'm going to sing at the opening tomorrow and I came over to rehearse my number with the band. By the way, what are you doing here?

DAVIS: I'm looking for a horse.

STREET: What do you want a horse for, Miss Davis? Do you want to ride him?

DAVIS: Do I want to ride? No, I'm going to plant her in my victory garden and grow stallions!

STREET: Say, I have a good sense of humor, too, Miss Davis. In fact, I just made up a joke.

DAVIS: Oh, this I gotta hear.

STREET: Okay. Tell me, when is a singer not a singer?

DAVIS: I don't know, Mr. Bones. When is a singer not a singer?

STREET: When he's a little horse.

DAVIS: Oh, no! Go out and tear down the front steps, father, I found a bigger stoop! Davey, you're wasting your time as a singer.

STREET: I am?

DAVIS: Yeah. Anyone who can lay eggs that size should be a chicken.

STREET: Chicken? Lay eggs? What do you mean?

DAVIS: Never mind, forget it.

HALEY: Joanie, I've been looking all over the fair grounds but nobody's willing to lend us a horse.

DAVIS: But, Jack, I've got to get one

- by two o'clock. I've just got to beat that Penny Cartwright!
- HALEY: I'm sorry, Joanie, but nobody would lend me a race horse.
- DAVIS: It doesn't have to be a race horse. I'd take anything. Couldn't you even get a dray horse?
- HALEY: Believe me, I couldn't get a dray horse, a bwown horse or a gween horse! I said it and I'm glad I said it.
- DAVIS: But I've only got an hour left. Let's go over to the stables once more and see if we can borrow a horse from somebody.
- HALEY: All right, but let me do the talking this time.
- DAVIS: Okay. Let's hurry.
- HALEY: Can we borrow your horse?
- STREET: Sorry! No!
- HALEY: Hey, you got a horse we can borrow?
- ST: I should say not!
- HALEY: Please, Mister, can we borrow your horse?
- LAING: Go on! beat it!
- HALEY: Have you got a horse I can borrow?
- SHIRLEY: What all is on yo mind, honey chile?
- HALEY: Were you talking to me, Miss?
- SHIRLEY: I sho' nuff was. What can I do for you?
- HALEY: I was going to ask if we could borrow a horse.
- SHIRLEY: Ah'm sorry, but I haven't got a horse, Handsome.
- HALEY: Awwwwww, who wants a horse anyway?
- SHIRLEY: But I-all heard you say you want a horse.
- HALEY: You did? Then I guess I want a horse.
- DAVIS: Now I've seen everything. A jackass looking for a horse! Look, sister, I'm the one who's looking for a horse.
- SHIRLEY: Why are you-all looking for a horse? Are you-all going to ride him?
- DAVIS: I-all is gonna melt him-all down to glue, so I-all can paste you-all in the mouth.
- HALEY: What are you doing here, at the Fair Grounds, honey?
- SHIRLEY: Ah'm going to work on the Midway. I'm Little Egypt.
- HALEY: Little Egypt? What do you do?
- SHIRLEY: What do ah do? I shimmer and shake, I quiver and quake.
- HALEY: Well, don't worry. Just go to a service station and they'll tighten you up.
- DAVIS: Come on, Jack. This girl hasn't got a horse, and it's getting late. It's almost two o'clock.
- HALEY: Okay, Joanie. Well, so long, beautiful.
- SHIRLEY: Well, so long, sugar-plum.
- HALEY: Hey, wait a minute! How about that cowboy we met? He had a horse.
- DAVIS: You mean that swaybacked old nag? Oh, no, not that!
- HALEY: But he said he had another horse. I'll go over and see him. I'm sure I can talk him into letting us have it.
- DAVIS: Well, I suppose he's our last chance. You go over and get his good horse and I'll stay here and wait for Penny.
- HALEY: Don't worry, Joanie.
- DAVIS: That cowboy will probably loan me his beautiful little Western horse, and that's what I can ride best, a Western horse. Not many people know it, but I used to live out West. You know, I was raised on a ranch. Of course, living on a ranch has a lot of inconveniences. For instance, the cowboys have to roll their own cigarettes. Here in this city it's a lot simpler—you just walk into any store, tell the clerk the name of your favorite brand . . . and in no time at all he laughs right in your face. When I was eighteen I met a certain cowboy I was very much in-

terested in. I guess all cowboys are bowlegged, but this one was the most bowlegged guy I ever saw. He was the only fellow that ever came over to sit around the house that could actually sit *around* the house. Gee, but that cowboy certainly could ride. In one rodeo they put him on the worst bronco they had. That horse kicked, rolled, leaped, and tossed but he couldn't throw that cowboy. Finally, the nag stopped, turned to the cowboy, lifted his hoof and pointed to a sign that said . . . "Is this trip necessary?" We always had a lot of relatives on our ranch. Like that uncle of mine. My uncle was one of the West's most famous scientists. He spent his whole life trying to cross a porcupine and a sheep. He was trying to get an animal that would knit its own sweaters! I always had to help out on the ranch, and I was just a kid when I learned how to milk a cow. I'll never forget that first time I milked a cow. I didn't even mean to. I was crawling around the barn looking for a penny I'd lost and I reached up to pull on a light.

* * *

HALEY: Hey, Joanie, I got a horse! That cowboy loaned you his horse.

DAVIS: That's wonderful. Gee, thanks, Jack.

HALEY: Well, here he is.

DAVIS: Okay, I'm anxious to see him. Take the blanket off.

HALEY: This I hate to do. But—oh, well—there you are. She's your horse!

DAVIS: Oh, brother, and I thought I was skinny. Are those her ribs or did she swallow a harp? It took you all that time to get this broken-down swayback for me?

HALEY: I would have been back sooner, but I had to carry her half way.

DAVIS: How do you expect me to win

a race with this thing? She's so swaybacked, every time she walks her stomach bounces along the ground like a basket ball. I can't ride her—I'll have to dribble her around the track.

HALEY: Joanie, I just got an idea. Let's turn her upside down, and she'll look like a camel. Joanie, you'll have to make the best of it.

DAVIS: But Jack, how in the dickens will I ever get her to start?

HALEY: Oh, yeah, the cowboy reminded me. Whenever you want her to go, you just yell *mucilage*. Now, remember that. *Mucilage*.

DAVIS: Okay, okay.

HALEY: Hey, Joanie, here comes Penny on her horse.

DAVIS: Oh, gosh. How am I going to explain this awful horse I've got.

PENNY: Well, Miss Davis, I'm all ready if you are. I— Is that your horse?

DAVIS: What are you laughing at?

PENNY: Miss Davis, he's so swaybacked.

DAVIS: He is not. He merely happens to be the only race horse in the world whose stomach starts from a kneeling position.

HALEY: Okay, girls, get ready. The race will be one lap around the track. The automatic camera's all set in case it's a photo finish. All right, get on your horses, girls.

PENNY: All right Jack, I'm on mine. Well, Miss Davis, don't just stand there. Get on your horse.

DAVIS: I am on my horse! She just happens to be built a little too close to the ground, and my feet touch.

HALEY: Penny, you haven't got a chance to beat Joanie's horse.

PENNY: Why not?

HALEY: She's running with six legs—four of her own and two of Joanie's. Joan, that's not fair. Pick your legs up.

DAVIS: I did but it doesn't help. My knees still drag.

HALEY: Don't be silly. Ready girls.

DAVIS: Steady, Nellie. We'll break fast, and take to the rail.

HALEY: On your mark! Get set! *Go!!!*

DAVIS: We're off! That's it, girl. Easy now, we're gaining on them. They're only a length ahead of us.

HALEY: Joanie! Joanie!

DAVIS: What?

HALEY: Come back here and get your horse!

DAVIS: My horse? Oh, in the excitement I forgot her. Hmm, I wondered why I was breathing so hard! Jack, help me mount again. I better hurry. Penny's half way around the track.

HALEY: Okay. There you are.

DAVIS: Thanks. Now we're off. Come on, Flora, get going. Giddap! I said giddap! Jack, how do you start this thing? Where's the choke?

HALEY: She won't start unless you use that particular word. What is it again! Oh, I've forgotten. I know it's something sticky!

DAVIS: Okay. Limburger cheese!

HALEY: I said *sticky*.

DAVIS: Oh, *sticky*? Okay. Fly paper! Chewing gum! Jack, that's not it.

HALEY: I just thought of it. It's "mucilage!" At last, Joanie's horse is off. Look at her go. She's got a determined look on her face, Joanie, not the horse. Boy is she flying. Her legs are tearing up the track—either that or her stomach's plowing it up—the horse's, not Joanie's! Ah, but I'm afraid it's Penny's race. She's already at the three-quarter pole—but wait, something's happened. Penny's horse has stopped. She's puzzled, she's scratching her head—Penny, not the horse. Now she's

rearing on her hind legs—the horse, not Penny. And here comes Joan. She's caught up with Penny. Now Penny's horse is running again. Here they come down the home stretch, neck and neck. And there they are over the finish line. It's a photo finish! As soon as the picture's developed we'll know who won.

DAVIS (*panting*): Well, Jack, I won, didn't I?

PENNY (*panting*): You did not. I won!

HALEY: We'll know who won in a second. Here comes the guy with the picture.

NELSON: Well, here's the photo, Mr. Haley. It was a close one but Miss Davis's horse won by a nose.

DAVIS: Oh boy, I won. I knew it! I knew it!

HALEY: Let me see that picture. Hmmmm, wait a minute. Why, Joanie, you're disqualified! Penny's the winner.

DAVIS: What do you mean, Penny's the winner? Look at that picture. Anybody can see I won by a nose.

HALEY: That's just it—that's not the horse's nose! That's your nose!

PENNY: Oh, then I am the winner. Jack, that means I will sit in the Governor's box with you tomorrow.

HALEY: That's right, Penny. Come on, I'll walk you home. Gee, I'm sorry, Joanie. It's really too bad, kid. Well, I'll see you back at the store.

DAVIS: Yeah. Oh, well, everything happens to me. I never win anything. With me everything has been like a horse race. Why, in the race of life I was left at the post. In the race for love, I was scratched, and in the race for matrimony, huh! I can't even get out of the stable for that one!

The Early Bird!

JACK
KIRKWOOD

Ever try to be funny in the morning along about the time the bodily functions should be confined to getting the orange juice and eggs acquainted and the mental processes limited to thinking up a new excuse to explain office lateness, or to reaching a decision on whether to do the breakfast dishes immediately or later? This isn't recommended for general practice, but there is one fellow who tried it and made it pay off—off to a more reasonable time of day.

When Jack Kirkwood headlined "Mirth and Madness" on NBC, 9 to 9:30 A.M., Monday through Friday, he achieved the enviable distinction of being an early morning comedian who was really funny. His success is attested by the fact that NBC practically strained a space band trying to keep him when the time came for him to move into an evening spot, but it just couldn't find time for him on its crowded schedule. Reluctantly NBC saw him go to CBS where the gray-eyed zany, who is robust, six-foot-three, and has a voice that seems to come from the bottom of a rain barrel, goes his merry way.

Kirkwood's catch-all style is built on a rich and varied background.

Drama: He saddened audiences in Canada and the United States in *Camille*. Dumas did a bit of grave-revolving.

Musical Comedy: When USO were just letters in the alphabet, he was a comedian with a globe-trotting troupe that toured the Philippines, Australia, China, and Japan.

Writer and Producer: From 1925-29 he wrote and produced more than four hundred original shows that played cities and towns of the Middle West and West Coast.

Vaudeville: He played the Keith-Pantages circuit for thirteen

months. Disclaims any responsibility for the death of vaudeville.

Burlesque: A top comic for four years, 1933-37, in San Francisco's famous Bella Union. Did not invent the strip-tease.

All this taught him one thing and he'll never forget it—use every comic device in the book and some that aren't. He followed this method when he started turning out radio scripts, mixing dramatic monologues with snap endings, involved comedy situations, character bits, poetry, parody, and any corn-tasseled humor that popped up in his active mind.

While some comics may pretend to scorn quips that are arthritic with age, Kirkwood is their sworn friend.

"I always put two or three corny jokes in my scripts," he explains. "Burlesque taught me that. The psychology is that listeners pride themselves in thinking, 'Huh, I knew that one all the time'."

Kirkwood also likes plot in radio humor.

"Get a basically funny situation and you're okay," he explains. "Gags are fine within the framework of a nutty situation."

If Jack Kirkwood hadn't turned to building comedy situations, he might be building skyscrapers and other more material things today. He started out to be an architect. A native of Belfast, Ireland, he took his drawing board and blue-print aspirations with him to Winnipeg, Canada, in his early twenties, and there helped plan the building of the Union Depot.

"But I got disgusted," he relates. "A desk job and a future spent hunching over a drafting board didn't appeal to me. Seeing a performance of *Madame X* helped me make up my mind. Three days later I had a job with that touring company."

From then it was onward, but not always upward. As he puts it:

"Don't turn me into one of those darn fool success stories. I've had years of heartbreak. If I have had some luck, it's because I've worked hard and stuck to what I liked."

This sober admonition stems partly from those catastrophic days that began with the stock market crash of 1929. Kirkwood didn't lose his shirt in Wall Street, but he might as well have, because the effect was the same. The depression that followed ushered

in an era of bankruptcy for the great farming sections across the land where Kirkwood had been making his money producing those musical tabloid shows.

"My wife and I had picked up a bad habit—eating regularly," he explains. "Our musical shows weren't drawing gnats. I decided to go to California and maybe get into pictures. Several thousand others had the same idea. Enough people for a De Mille mob scene turned up for every bit part offered."

Of course, he got some work as an extra—at ten dollars a day.

"We lived on canned food," Kirkwood recalls, shuddering. "And our clothes—well, it's a good thing California was sunny and warm or we would have caught pneumonia."

One night in Los Angeles in 1932 the marquee of a burlesque theater attracted him. He had never seen a burlesque show. He bought a ticket. Three days later he had a job as a comic at seventy-five dollars a week—a ten-strike for him at that time.

"In those days," he says, "burlesque was still something. We had real revues with good comedy and some dramatic material as well as the girls. The scenery and costumes were not to be scoffed at. Later, of course, it turned into a nightmare of strip-tease and off-color jokes, and the scenery looked like flattened dixie cups."

While he still was in burlesque, station KRFC, a CBS affiliate in San Francisco, asked him to write and present a variety program for the air. This was the "Frivolity Show." His first broadcast was on January 16, 1938, and he went on from there until on March 13, 1943, NBC enticed him into its yard.

When he was doing "Mirth and Madness," his fan mail came not only from General Public but from many big shots, some of them in the same business. NBC can show you fan letters to Kirkwood from such people as Bing Crosby, Stoopnagle, the Great Gildersleeve, and congressmen. On August 26, 1944, NBC got a letter from a group of California doctors which read: "Our first prescription for any patient is to listen to Jack Kirkwood and 'Mirth and Madness'."

Radio agency executives were not insensitive to the Kirkwood

following. Commercial offers increased with his listeners, and finally he succumbed to a Procter and Gamble offer in September, 1944. It runs for one year with options on the next nine, and there is a clause that says it can't be canceled until after the first year is up. It calls for salary increases every three months, and the pay starts in the four-figure bracket. The sponsor stands to spend one million dollars on the Kirkwood show in the first year.

"I'm still black and blue from pinching myself," Jack says.

Up to the time he got this contract, Kirkwood, who is now forty-five, had written much of his own material.

"It was a cinch writing humor. All I had to do was to learn to go without sleep. I put in nine to seventeen hours a day at my typewriter."

But now he can afford to engage more helpers, and he isn't so vain that he'll pass up the opportunity.

"I'll teach young writers my style," he says. "I've been carrying the load by myself long enough. Even a comedian ought to be entitled to get a little fun out of life."



JACK KIRKWOOD

JACK KIRKWOOD . . . *On the Air*

JACK: Now don't forget. When I come to that gag about the weather give Uncle Max the cue to come running down the aisle in his baggy pants.

LIL: Okay.

JACK: And when I pull the confetti gag, give him the cue to walk along the balcony rail with a duck perched on top of his head.

LIL: I get it.

JACK: And another thing. Tell the orchestra leader to fall off the platform a couple of times during the sketch. And tell him to do a better job than he did the last time. It hardly got a laff.

LIL: You know why don't you? No blood.

JACK: I know—the cheapskate. And by the way that guy Slim Skimp we've got in the show is getting too funny, I heard a fellow at the Derby today talking about what a howl he is. That's not right. I'm supposed to get the laffs.

LIL: Your writers fixed that. Slim hasn't anything to say tonight except uh-huh.

JACK: I guess that'll be okay. As long as he doesn't take too much time with the uh-huh. Where's my man that stands right up against the mike and guffaws into it?

BILL: Here I am chief. The mike I laff in is all ready. But the technician said I oughtta get a couple of inches away from it. When I do those barrel laffs he said the ribbon in the mike can't take it.

JACK: Tear the gosh darned ribbon to threads if you have to, and if it still

isn't loud enough, we'll shove the mike down your throat and hang it onto your tonsils.

BILL: Gosh, I've been huggin' that mike for so long now, I feel that I oughtta marry it. Me conscience is hurting me.

JACK: Yeah? Say Lil tell the announcer to hold those laughter and applause cards up a little higher. And tell him if they don't roar loud enough, to take out his gun and threaten them.

LIL: Okay, I'll take care of it.

BILL: We're about ready to go, chief.

JACK: Okay okay. Is my toupée on straight?

BILL: Yeah. Come on.

LIL: Wait a minute, chief. You forgot your newspapers.

JACK: Oh yeah. Here Bill. We've got to build up that opening routine for laughs. So right after the salami gag, I'll slap you across the puss with this folded newspaper. You do the same to me. That'll get 'em. Then we'll put on the funny hats and false noses.

* * *

JACK: And now for another episode in the thrilling and heart-warming drama . . . the exciting Story of Sadie Black. Today is a holiday for our lovers, and they are preparing to go on a picnic at Poison Oaks Park. Sadie is bringing the sandwiches, pickles, potato chips, ice cream, cake, pie and pepsicola and Roger is bringing his uncle. Roger and Sadie are now in the kitchen

at her home. Roger has insisted that Sadie bake one of her famous radish and raspberry pies to take along. Sadie has prepared the pastry and suddenly discovers there are no canned raspberries in the house. So she says to Roger—

SADIE: Roger, I'm sorry to disturb you when you're having so much fun reading, but I wish you'd run down to Kroveny's delicatessen and get a couple of jars of raspberry preserves.

ROGER: Okay. But wait till I finish this story.

SADIE: Oh, they got stories in there too? But I can't wait that long. The pies are all ready to go into the oven. Hurry up.

ROGER: Oh, all right. Strawberry preserves.

SADIE: Raspberry preserves—and don't forget either.

ROGER: Give me a kiss before I leave.

SADIE: I'll give you a hit in the head if you don't hurry.

ROGER: Oh, very well.

JACK: Roger leaves for the delicatessen, quite perturbed. Will Roger get the raspberry? Tune in next week, folks. We don't know.

* * *

ANNOUNCER: The Madhouse Tabloid is on the air with a big story on matrimony. And here is your Tabloid commentator or Phineas "Dog House" Deadline. Shoot the gag to me, hag.

PHINEAS: Howdy, Mr. and Mrs. San Marital County, and all the drips on the sea of matrimony. I'll be back if I'm able with a fable.

ANNOUNCER: Open Face, Nevada. Noted educator and counselor on marital problems lectures at town hall.

PHINEAS: Speaking before a huge crowd at the Open Face Town Hall tother night, Professor Tugwell Corset, well-known expert on affairs of

the heart gave a highly interesting dissertation on married life and its many problems. "The chief fault with most married folks," the professor claims, "is that both husband and wife have their own ideas as to how a successful marriage should be managed." First, the professor painted the following scene showing the husband's idea of a happy wedded life. Take it away, Cosmo.

JACK: Gee, that sure was a fine dinner, dear. Think I'll go into the living room now and read the paper a while. You don't need any help with the dishes, do you?

LIL: Why of course not, sweet. You just relax.

JACK: Want me to empty the garbage can?

LIL: Now dear, I wouldn't think of having you lift that heavy old garbage can. I'll do it. You go in and sprawl on the chesterfield. Want me to run down to the corner for a few cigars?

JACK: No, I'll just smoke my old pipe. You don't mind the odor, do you?

LIL: Of course not. You just make yourself comfortable on the chesterfield. Take your shoes off.

JACK: Think I'll take my shirt off too.

LIL: Yes. And let your suspenders down. Make yourself comfortable. The Smiths might drop in later for a visit. But, oh well, they won't mind.

JACK: Yeah. They're okay.

LIL: I just love your friends. They're all such nice people. Say, why don't you run down to the pool hall and ask a few of them to drop over for dinner tomorrow night?

JACK: Well, I'm a little tired. I don't think I—

LIL: Oh, go on. It'll do you good to get out of the house. I am sure there's a poker game going on there.

JACK: Well, I don't know.

LIL: Oh, go on—go out and play poker with the boys. Have a few drinks.

Enjoy yourself. Here's twenty-five dollars I was saving for a permanent. Spend it. Have a good time.

JACK: Thanks, dear. Sure you won't mind if I leave you all alone?

LIL: Oh, of course not. And don't bother about coming home too early. If you feel like it, stay out all night. Have fun.

JACK: Okay.

LIL: If you feel in the mood you can stay lit for a few days.

JACK: Good. I'll be on my way then. Good night, dear.

LIL: Good night, sweetheart. Enjoy yourself.

JACK: Good night, dear.

[Door closes.]

ANNOUNCER: And now, folks, here's how some wives would like to have married life according to Professor Corset. Take it away Cosmo.

LIL: Hello, dear. I'm home again.

JACK: Well, hello, sweet. Where have you been? I had to open up a couple of cans of beans for dinner.

LIL: Oh, I was going the rounds of the cocktail bars with—oh, I want you to meet Julius. He's my boyfriend.

JACK: Well, how are you old man? Glad to know you. Yes, sir. Ha ha ha.

JULIUS: Hi. I don't know if you remember me or not. I'm the man who comes around to check the gas meters.

JACK: Why, of course. Say, I've heard a lot of things about you. Ha ha ha. Yes, sir.

JULIUS: And I've heard a lot of things about you too.

JACK: Really?

JULIUS: You bet. It sure is a pleasure meeting you.

JACK: Ha ha ha. Well, how about a drink, folks?

LIL: Haven't time, dear. We're dashing

right out again. I just came in to get my wrap. You two boys get chummy while I run up and get it.

JACK: All right, sweet. Ha ha ha. Great girl, isn't she?

JULIUS: You bet. Yes, sir. We're going to go night-clubbing tonight.

JACK: That's fine. Say, how are you fixed for money?

JULIUS: Well, I'm—I *could* use a ten spot. But I wouldn't think of asking.

JACK: Not at all. Not at all. Here's fifty. Go out and have a good time. Wait—here's another fifty.

JULIUS: Thanks, old man.

JACK: Don't mention it. Here take this dime too: it's all I got left.

JULIUS: Thanks.

JACK: Well, well, well, ha ha ha. So you've been running around with my wife, eh?

JULIUS: Yes, sir. Great girl your wife. I'm crazy about her.

JACK: I can see she likes you too.

JULIUS: And she always speaks well of you, old man.

JACK: Really, well that's nice.

LIL: Oh, sweetheart.

JACK AND JULIUS: Yes, dear, ha ha ha. She probably means you.

LIL: Dear, may we borrow the car tonight?

JACK: Why, of course. The tires are pretty well worn down but what's the difference? Here are the keys.

JULIUS: Gee, you look beautiful in that fur coat. Say, old man—do you mind if I kiss her?

JACK: Not at all, ha ha ha. Go ahead. Ha ha ha, yessir. That's my wife.

LIL: Well, come on Julius, let's go. You don't mind staying home all alone, do you, dear?

JACK: Certainly not. You folks go out and play, and I'll stay home and play solitaire.

LIL: Good night, dear.

JULIUS: Good night, old man. Nice to have met you.

JACK: Nice to have met you, too.

Good night, folks. Good night. Ha ha ha.

ANNOUNCER: And now according to Professor Corset, married life as it really is.

LIL: Hey, where the heck have you been?

JACK: And where have you been?

[*Crash of glass, pots and pans.*]

* * *

ANNOUNCER: Now lovers of well-worn whimsy, will you join us at the poet's nook.

JACK: Greetings.

ANNOUNCER: Ah, yes. Here is our modern Falstaff shaped like an old giraffe. Ah, but listen.

JACK:

Along the moonlit highway
Is the home of my dreams.
My little wife and I live
Where the moonlight brightly
gleams.

I pass my days in dreaming
Of the hour when I return
To the cozy little cottage
Where the candlelight will burn,
And with the darkness falling
I wend my weary way
Toward the simple little building
At the end of every day.
Yes, my little house keeps calling
And my wife waits at the door
But that's not why I'm rushing—
You should see the blonde next door.

Cuckoo!

RAYMOND KNIGHT

For eight years, from 1930 to 1938, Raymond Knight did a radio variety show for NBC called "The Cuckoo Hour." It left no visible marks on him, which makes it unnecessary to offer further proof here that he is a man of a great resiliency.

Knight prepared for radio the hard way. He soaked himself in education until it ran out of his ears. He earned an LL.B at Boston University and took postgraduate courses at Harvard and Yale. At the latter academy he studied scenic design and playwrighting in Professor George Baker's famous "47 Workshop." Then he made the considerable leap into radio comedy, doing it so successfully that Groucho Marx once called him "the best comedian on the air." The *New York World-Telegram's* nation-wide poll of radio editors in 1932 selected Knight as the "No. 1 radio wit in the United States."

Raymond Knight is a native of Salem, Massachusetts. He is six-foot-three and big-framed, and he needed both robustness of body and mind to cope with the famous "Cuckoo Hour."

Sometimes sponsored, sometimes sustaining; sometimes thirty minutes long, at other times fifteen, this program was practically a national institution in the opinion of millions of listeners. It and Knight practically grew up with radio comedy, and he had no little to do with this growth. Both as writer and performer, he brought to it a refreshing light touch and a sense of the ridiculous.

His technique for writing this milestone in the history of air-waves humor was deceptively simple; he'd just put a clean sheet of paper in the typewriter and start pounding away. After filling twenty pages, he stopped. However, there was one drawback; it took him nine to fourteen hours to complete the twenty pages.

"Usually I would start with a phrase or a snatch of dialogue on some topic," Knight recalls. "I didn't write gags and I didn't have any gag files. So I had to depend on my own imagination."

Satire was his forte. When "The Cuckoo Hour" started on January 1, 1930, Knight turned it into what might be regarded as an anti-radio program. He poked fun at those who broadcast setting-up exercises. He badgered women commentators, radio orators, and symphonic music programs. He referred to the latter as "music depreciation."

But almost any subject was fodder for his typewriter. He cut loose on Hollywood, rodeos, books, advice-to-the-lovelorn sages, and on any commonplace event that seemed to him to have a humorous or ridiculous angle. One of his most amusing programs was given in August, 1933.

"The heat spell was getting everybody down," he says. "To give you an idea, it was 96 degrees—in the shade. Suddenly I got an angle. People want to feel cool, huh? Okay. I sat down and wrote a script about a winter sports carnival. It was all about ski races and bobsled competitions. Even brought down a ski champ from Dartmouth to speak. Almost every fourth word in the script was 'snow'."

During this broadcast Knight would keep interrupting to inquire, "Are you any cooler?"

Knight has the pleurisy to thank for getting interested in radio.

"Up to then I thought it was like an erector set—kid stuff," he admits.

He came down with pleurisy in 1928, and during his convalescence a friend brought him a radio. Ray had it on for four to six hours a day and "I became a hot radio fan." When he had recovered, he braced NBC about a writing job and got it. But it wasn't much of a job—hack-work, guest star interviews, public service programs, news bulletins. One day Bertha Brinnard of NBC, who had a reputation for spotting writers, sent a memo for Ray to see her.

"We have a thirty-minute spot open in the afternoon," she told him. "How about writing us a comedy program?"

"What kind of a program?" Knight managed to blurt out after partially recovering from the shock.

"Something zany, something cuckoo."

And that is how it began. Knight wrote himself into his script as "Ambrose J. Weems, the Voice of the Diaphragm." Later he came out from behind his shield and admitted his responsibility.

Knight drew on his play-writing studies to help him with the program. That was why he had able characterizations and situations that had some foundation to them. The element of conflict that is so important to stage writing was also used in his scripts. He has this to say of the matter:

"In studying play writing I learned to develop a complicated comedy situation. You've heard of pulp writers who can take an ash tray and fashion a weird plot around it. Well, my play-writing background worked that way. Beginning with a line of dialogue, I was able to build an entire script."

Knight is still a playwright at heart. He once wrote a one-act play called *Strings* that won the 1927 award of the Drama League of America. Every once in a while he'll sit down and write plays; he has not been discouraged by failure to have any resounding success at it so far. One that he wrote, *Run, Sheep, Run*, had a three-week engagement on Broadway. *Cold Storage* attracted an option but no production so far and *Mr. Smith* received some summer theater productions. These he wrote when he shoved aside all radio work and in 1938 retired for almost three years to a rustic house on Lake Champlain.

When the simple life had palled sufficiently, Knight returned to New York in 1941 to write for NBC. He did a comedy program known as "A House in the Country," built around the experiences of a city family transplanted to a rural area. He drew on his own experiences for much of the material. One program was not to keep him busy, so he also took on the jobs of writing programs called "The Three R's" and "Gibbs and Finney." In 1943 he joined the Blue Network in an executive capacity, overseeing all programs.

He resigned thirteen months later to direct Ed Wynn's "Happy Island" show for the Young & Rubicam agency.

Knight is warm, easy to talk to, and doesn't put on airs. He has an excellent, youthful voice that doesn't quite match his forty-five years. One day as he was striding down an NBC corridor he passed two high school girls. A page nabbed him in front of them, saying, "Telephone, Mr. Knight." The girls were still there when he had finished with the phone and, with youthful directness, one of them informed him:

"Gee, Mr. Knight, you're not as good-looking as your voice."

Knight concurs in the general conception of comedy writing held by the profession.

"Comedy is a serious business," he says.

RAYMOND KNIGHT . . . *On the Air*

ANNOUNCER: Good evening, friends—and what of it? The next fifteen minutes are to be devoted to a broadcast of the Cuckoo Hour, radio's oldest network comedy program, and if you don't think that's something—well maybe you're right. The Cuckoos feature Raymond Knight, the radio humorist, as Station KUKU's Master of Ceremonies, and Ambrose J. Weems, and there are a lot of other disreputable things about the Cuckoo Hour which are too numerous to mention at this time. Are you still with us? Ho hum, there's no accounting for tastes. We now turn you over to Station KUKU.

KNIGHT: Good evening, fellow pixies, this is Raymond Knight, the Voice of the Diaphragm e-nun-ciating. I thought up the Knight plan for old joke pensions one evening while listening to a phonograph record which was made recently of one of the Cuckoo programs. And it suddenly occurred to me, how many old jokes there were on the radio which really ought to be pensioned. Now here's the way my plan works. After a joke has been in use on the radio for sixty years, and this takes in ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths of them, then it becomes automatically entitled to an old joke pension. The last person to use the joke immediately begins to receive an income of two hundred dollars per month. The comedians will naturally seize the opportunity for three square meals a day, and half of them will overeat

on the first meal and die from digestion. This will leave only twenty-five per cent of the radio comedians alive. I think by now you are beginning to get the idea.

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KNIGHT: We now send you a little story of life in the musical world entitled, "He wasn't popular—but his song was." The scene is a hotel room. The characters are Mr. Bernelli, a theatrical gentleman, and Mr. Twilling, a business man who would like to be a theatrical gentleman—and is willing to pay for it—if it doesn't come too high.

BERNELLI: Mr. Twilling, I gotta big surprise for you tonight.

TWILLING: Yes? I've had a lot of surprises since I started to finance this musical comedy, Mr. Bernelli.

BERNELLI: Yes—haha. I see your point, Mr. Twilling, but on the level this surprise is going to be a real one.

TWILLING: How much is it going to cost me this time?

BERNELLI: Haha. Gee Mr. Twilling, you gotta swell sense of humor. No, you got me wrong, Mr. Twilling, this one is going to be an investment that's goin' to pay dividends, believe me.

TWILLING: Well, Mr. Bernelli, my friends advised me not to back a musical comedy and I guess they were right, but I'm in it now and I'm going to see it through.

BERNELLI: That's a-talkin', Mr. Twilling.

TWILLING: What is this—surprise?

BERNELLI: Mr. Twilling, tonight I got Johnnie de Beck comin' up here.

TWILLING: Johnnie de Beck?

BERNELLI: Yessir, right in this room here. I thought you'd be surprised.

TWILLING: And who is Johnnie de Beck?

BERNELLI: What! You mean to say you don't know who Johnnie de Beck is, Mr. Twilling?

TWILLING: I have been denied the privilege.

BERNELLI: Why, he's the biggest songwriter in the game.

TWILLING: Oh. A music composer.

BERNELLI: Naw! Anybody can write the music. He's the guy that writes the lyrics—you know, the woids of half of the big song hits that have ever been published.

TWILLING: My, that must be very depressing.

BERNELLI: It is, Mr. Twilling. The other guys ain't got a chance. He wrote—"Big Red Lips You Make Me Blue," and "My Red Hot Mama's Got a Frigidaire" an' "Sugar Coated Daddy—You're Only a Pill After All," an' lots of others.

TWILLING: And is Mr. de Beck going to write the lyrics for our show?

BERNELLI: That's the idea, Mr. Twilling. You got it. I got him to promise to do it. He comes high. But oh boy. Wait till you hear them woids. (*Phone rings.*) That's probably him now. Hello—hello—who? Oh, yes, send her right up. That's Teddie Torrid. The girl who's going to croon this stuff, and boy, can she sing and has she got S.A.!

TWILLING: Can she—er sing well?

BERNELLI: Sing well? And how! And what's more she's one of the nicest, most refined little girls in the business. (*Knock.*) Come in. Hello, Teddie.

TEDDY: Hello, Mr. Bernelli. Howsa kid?

BERNELLI: Okay Teddie. Howsa kid?

TEDDIE: Okay.

BERNELLI: This is Mr. Twilling, he's backin' the show.

TEDDIE: Oh, isn't this lovely. I've been wanting to meet you for so long, Mr. Twilling. It's so nice of you to let me sing in your lovely show.

TWILLING: How do you do, Miss Torrid. It was Mr. Bernelli who hired you but I'm sure I confirm the engagement.

TEDDIE: Oh, Mr. Twilling, you do say the cutest things.

[*Bell.*]

BERNELLI: Here's Johnnie now. Hello, yes, send him right up.

TEDDIE: Is Johnnie bringin' my new songs, Mr. Bernelli?

BERNELLI: And how! I been tellin' Mr. Twilling about the swell stuff he writes.

TEDDIE: Oh, Mr. Twilling. He writes the loveliest songs. And the cutest lyrics. Just the type of thing, I do, you know.

BERNELLI: He sure does. Every song tells a story! (*Knock.*) Come in. How are you, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE: Lo, Mr. Bernelli. Lo, Teddie.

TEDDIE: Hello, Johnnie.

BERNELLI: This is Mr. Twilling, our backer.

TWILLING: How do you do, Mr. de Beck.

JOHNNIE: How are you, Big Boy. Always call the guy with the bank roll, Big Boy. Okay, eh? They pay for it before they get through. You know what I mean.

BERNELLI: That's all right, Johnnie. That's all right. Did you bring them new songs with you?

JOHNNIE: Did I! I'll tell a music-mad public I did. Three new wows that'll knock 'em for a row of duplex apartments.

TEDDIE: Oh, Johnnie. I'm just crazy to begin singing them.

JOHNNIE: Well, Teddie, after you finish you'll be nuts, just plain nuts—they're hot and how.

BERNELLI: Good lyrics, eh Johnnie?

JOHNNIE: Good? Best lyrics Johnnie de Beck, Incorporated, ever tore from a reluctant pen. Wait'll you hear 'em.

TEDDIE: Oh, Johnnie, hop on that piano. Let's go. I'll just per-spire. JOHNNIE: Okay, kid. An' do 'em justice. Do 'em justice. (*Runs a few scales.*)

TWILLING: Did you write the music, Mr. de Beck?

JOHNNIE: Uh-uh, Big Boy. I have guys woikin' for me does that. I write the lyrics. Put all my time on that, I do.

BERNELLI: An' is he good. Say, Mr. Twilling, he cleans up over 50 grand a year. Don't you Johnnie?

JOHNNIE: Oh, well, so I hear. You know what I mean.

TEDDIE: Johnnie, play the first one. I'm in a rash!

BERNELLI: An' listen to them woids, Mr. Twilling. Listen to them woids.

JOHNNIE: This foist one's a love ballad. (*Playing and singing.*)

I'm nuts about ya, Baby,

I'm nuts about ya, Baby,

I'm nuts about ya, Baby,

Say you'll be mine.

I'm crazy for ya, Baby,

I'm crazy for ya, Baby,

I'm crazy for ya, Baby,

Won't you be mine?

TWILLING: But isn't it a bit repetitious?

JOHNNIE: Emphasis. Now get this middle part:

I want to cuddle-uddle-duddle-muddle-buddle woo-woo,

Abookazooka, copadooka, maresee bowcoo—

French. An' get this finish:

I'm nuts about ya, Baby,

I'm crazy for ya, Baby,

I'm nuts about ya, Baby,

Say you'll be mine!

* * *

KNIGHT: There will be a brief pause, ladies and gentlemen, while we throw at you Mrs. Pennyfeather's Personal Service for Perturbed People, in which Mrs. George T. Pennyfeather brings to you her weekly talks on *The Home and What to Do with It*.

MRS. PENNYFEATHER: Dear friends. Why do babies catch cold so easily? I know. It is because they are bald. You and I have hair on our heads to protect us but poor little baby has no hair at all and that is why he is so susceptible to drafts. Hm, yes. So. I have come to baby's aid with one of my little inventions. It is Pennyfeather's Toupee Service for Babies. If every baby would wear a toupee until his hair grew it would save him a lot of trouble. So I invented this little toupee. I even have a little slogan for it. It is "toupee or not toupee." Isn't that cute? Now I've brought a little baby into the studio so that the audience here can see just how much better a baby looks with a toupee on. Bring him over please. (*Baby gurgling.*) Isn't he cute? His name is Baby Benny. Now see how bald Benny is—

BABY: Hey!

MRS. PENNYFEATHER: Ha ha. I'm not going to hurt you, dear. See his little head has no hair at all.

BABY: Sez you!

MRS. PENNYFEATHER: Isn't he cute. But with the little Pennyfeather toupee I have here he will appear quite normal. Just like me, for example.

BABY: Blah.

MRS. PENNYFEATHER: Ha ha. Now I shall put the toupee on Baby Benny's head and we shall see the improvement.

BABY: Blah.

MRS. PENNYFEATHER: What is it, Baby. Don't you want nice hair on your head like mine?

BABY: Blah!

MRS. PENNYFEATHER: I don't know what's got into him. What do you want, dear? I'll bend over and see what's the matter. What is it, dear? Oh! Oh!

BABY: Ha, ha, ha.

MRS. PENNYFEATHER: My hair. My hair. Oh! (*Screaming.*)

KNIGHT: This concludes Mrs. Pennyfeather's demonstration of her Baby Toupee. It seems that Baby Benny made a grab at her hair and unfortunately it came off. Benny is now using it as a beard, which now leads me to call him the *Heir apparent*.

