

SPOTLIGHT ON PATTE ROSEBANK • BIG BUSINESS OF BAD BEHAVIOR • DECIMAL SEVEN: THE FUTURIST OF RADIO

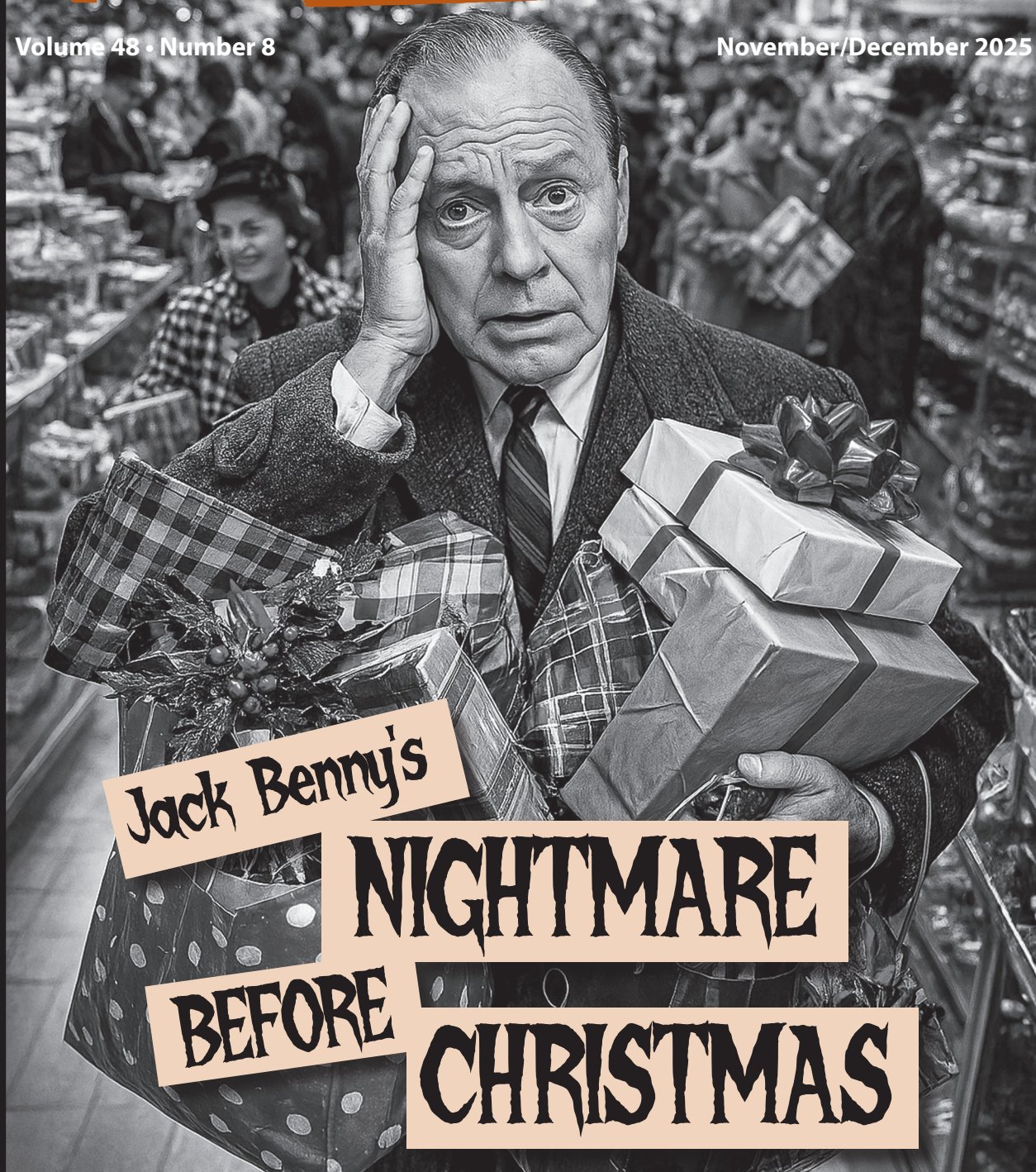
Spervac



RADIOGRAM

Volume 48 • Number 8

November/December 2025



Jack Benny's

NIGHTMARE

BEFORE

CHRISTMAS



SPERDVAC graciously extends its gratitude to these individuals who have contributed \$50 or more to SPERDVAC during the past 12 months. If you wish to be a sponsor of SPERDVAC and join this select group your tax-deductible donation to SPERDVAC can be mailed to Alexander Chamberlain at 2625 Middlefield Road #171, Palo Alto, CA 94306-2516. Thank you!

- ALICE AKINS in memory of Glen Akins
- DAVE AMAREL in memory of Jim Harmon
- ARTHUR J.M. ANDERSON in memory of Orson Welles
- ERIC BAELEN
- JUDIE BARTELL in memory of Harry Bartell, Ben Wright and Vic Perrin
- PAUL M. BENNETT
- OLIVER BERLINER in memory of John Guedel, Martha Tilton and Lena Romay
- FRED BONDY in memory of the whole Gunsmoke gang
- TRISTA BRANT in honor of Larry Gassman and Walden Hughes
- GEORGE BRECKENRIDGE
- DAVID & LINDA BRENINGER
- FRANK & BOBBIE BRESEE dedicated to John & Larry Gassman and Walden Hughes for all they do for us
- BUD BRESNAHAN in memory of Jim and Marian Jordan
- RICHARD A. BROCKELMAN
- DENNIS B. BURK in memory of Phil Harper
- CHRIS M. BUZZARD to those who keep us alive for a new generation
- TROY CASEY to those great masked men of radio, Earle Graser and Brace Beemer
- XAN CHAMBERLAIN
- RICHARD CHANDLEE in memory of Truda Marsen Chandlee
- GEROLD M. CLEMENSEN
- WARD L. COCHRAN in memory of radio ad-man Burt Cochran
- BERT H. COHEN
- RICHARD F. COLAVECHIO in memory of Bryna Raeburn, Craig McDonnell, Bill Zuckert and Florence Robinson
- JOHN COLLINS
- THOMAS W. COLLINS in memory of William Conrad
- TOMMY COOK in memory of Arch Oboler
- IVAN CURY in memory of Bob Novak
- FRANCIS DALY
- DIX DAVIS
- LLOYD DE LLAMAS
- FREDERICK DENNIS in honor of "Mr. Radio" Elliott Lewis
- RICK DENNIS in honor of Gloria McMillan
- ROSEMARY DOBBS
- TED DONALDSON in memory of Rhoda Williams, June Whitley and Ben Cooper
- JUNE FORAY DONAVAN in memory of Hobart Donavan
- DOUGLAS DUE
- WIL DUFOUR
- BOB DUNCAN, JR. in memory of Martha Sleeper
- CHARLES DUNNWAY
- HERB ELLIS in memory of Larry Dobkin, Harry Bartell and Parley Baer
- PATRICIA W. ELLIS in honor of Charlie Lung
- JAY ELZWEIG in honor of the Long Island Radio & TV Historical Society, the WCWP-FM Alumni Association and Staff, John "The Movie Man" Carpenter and Eddie "The Old Philosopher" Lawrence
- HENRY C. ENGELHARDT III in memory of Michael Meredith
- CARMEN FINESTRA
- DAVID FOLKMAN
- ART FORSTER in memory of Gil Stratton and William Conrad
- JACK FRANCE
- GREGORY FRANKLIN

- LISA FROUG-HIRANO in memory of William Froug
- BARBARA FULLER in memory of John Newland, Peggy Knudsen and Laughter
- JACK GAGNE
- BARRY GERBER
- STANLEY D. GINSBURG
- RICHARD GLASBAND in honor of Bobb Lynes and Barbara Watkins
- NICHOLAS GOODHUE
- KATHLEEN GRAMS-GIBBS in memory of Mary Grams
- FRANK GREGORY
- DON GREWE
- TOM J. GRIMSLEY in memory of Rosemary Dobbs, Art Linkletter and Stuart Lubin
- CHARLES GULLO, JR. in memory of Jim Bannon
- JOHN F. HALLEY
- BARBARA HARMON in memory of Art Hern, Jack Lester and Curley Bradley
- HELPING HANDS FOR THE BLIND
- RICHARD HERD
- KAREN HICKERSON
- BOB HICKS
- GORDON HIGBEE
- JAMES W. HILL
- DR. MICHELE HILMES
- STEPHEN E. HOLDEN
- GERALD A. HOLZMAN
- JAMES F. HORNOR in memory of The KNX Radio Drama Hour
- SEAMAN JACOBS in memory of Fred S. Fox
- ROBERT JANOVICI
- SALLY JANUS
- DENNIS C. JOHNSON
- RALPH M. JOHNSON
- SAM KAMLER
- MRS. JAIMI L.C. KELLER in memory of Frank Lumbert and Roy Hunter
- CASEY KASEM
- GLENDA KELLY in memory of Stuart Lubin
- NILAN L. KINCAID
- DON KING in memory of Lowell Thomas and Paul Harvey
- ALBERT J. KOPEC
- DENIS KRAY in memory of my beloved parents, Norbert and Florence Kray, and in memory of Glenn, Ray, Marion, Tex and all the boys in the band
- RON LANGSETH
- DOREEN LEAF in memory of Jay Ranellucci... thank you, Grandpa
- JEFFREY J. LEBRUN in memory of all departed voice artists
- ALFRED LUCAS
- MICHAEL MAIURI
- LON MCCARTT in memory of Smilin' Ed (Froggy the Grem-lin) McConnell
- ROBY & JOYCE MCHONE
- ESTHER GEDDES McVEY in memory of my leading man, Tyler McVey
- JAN MERLIN in memory of Frankie Thomas and Mona Bruns Thomas
- MELVIN MOREHOUSE in memory of Brace Beemer
- MIKE MORITZ in appreciation for all our preservationists
- JAMES L. MORRISON
- MILLIE MORSE in memory of Jim Harmon
- BOB MOTT to all the SFX artists when radio was still radio
- GEORGE (BOB) & VIRGINIA NEWHART in memory of Bill Quinn

- CHARLES NIREN in memory of Dave Siegel
- JAN ELLIS O'HARE in loving memory of Antony Ellis
- J. PHILIP OLDHAM
- ROBERT OLSEN
- DR. WAYNE OTT
- FORREST F. OWEN
- GARRY PAPERS
- KEN PARKE in memory of Jan Merlin
- DAVE PARKER in memory of John Harlan and Fred Foy
- PHIL PROCTOR in memory of my Firesign partners Phil Austin and Peter Bergman
- BRUCE W. RALEIGH
- BRIAN E. RAMSEY in memory of Ken Darby and Rod Robinson and the King's Men
- CHESTER RAWSKI in memory of Carolyn Rawski
- MARIE RAYMOND
- RONALD M. REISNER, M.D.
- DICK RICHARDS
- DAVID RICHARDSON in honor of Herb Ellis and Peg Lynch
- D.W. RICHARDSON
- NORMAN L. SCHICKEDANZ in honor of Chuck Schaden
- STEPHEN K. SHUTTLEWORTH
- STUART & JANIS SIMON in memory of June Foray
- CHUCK SIVERTSEN
- LOREN SLAFER
- KENNETH L. SLEEPER
- LEE SMITH to my dad, Ray Newton, a big fan
- MICKEY SMITH in memory of my beloved wife, Mary
- C. W. STAUFENBERG in memory of Paul Rhymer and members of the "Vic and Sade" cast
- RICHARD STONE
- BOB SUMMERS in memory of Yogi Yorgenson & Harry Skarbo
- JON D. SWARTZ in memory of Jim Harmon
- PATRICIA RYAN SWINDLER in memory of Stuart Lubin
- RICHARD & MADELENE TEPERSON in memory of Gil Stratton
- JOAN TREMAYNE in memory of Les Tremayne
- EDMUND TOTMAN
- EUGENE J. WARD
- WASHINGTON OLD TIME RADIO CLUB in memory of Jim Harmon
- EDWARD C. WEAVER
- BETSY L. WEINBERG
- LESLIE C. WEST
- JERRY & BARBARA WILLIAMS in memory of Michael Rye
- JAMES C. WORDEN



Volume 48 • Number 8 • November/December 2025

SPERDVAC

A CALIFORNIA NONPROFIT PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

2625 Middlefield Road #171
Palo Alto, CA 94306-2516

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

president

Corey Harker

...

Carl Amari • Constance Campanella • Sean Dougherty
Zach Eastman • Larry Gassman • Doug Hopkinson
Walden Hughes • Sammy Jones • Phil Oldham
James Scully

Officers

Vice-President..... Zach Eastman
Treasurer..... Alexander Chamberlain
Secretary..... Scott Mahan
Activities Chair..... Walden Hughes
Membership Chair..... Sean Dougherty
Digital Assets Director..... Zach Eastman
Acquisitions and Restorations..... Corey Harker
Elections Chair..... Sandi Hughes



Editor

PATRICK LUCANIO

RADIOGRAM is published bi-monthly by SPERDVAC, the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation, 2625 Middlefield Road #171, Palo Alto, CA 94306-2516. Dues are \$20 for first year and \$20 for renewals; \$30 American currency for Canadian members. Annual subscriptions to *Radiogram* only are \$15 in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, and \$20 in all other countries. Editorial submissions are welcome, but the publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited material. All editorial-related photographs and artwork received unsolicited become the property of SPERDVAC. SPERDVAC assumes first serial rights for all submissions accepted. Opinions expressed are not necessarily the opinions of SPERDVAC. All rights to letters sent to *Radiogram* will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication unless otherwise stated. The publishers make every effort to ensure the accuracy of information published in editorial material but assume no responsibility for inconveniences or damages resulting from editorial error or omissions. Publisher is not responsible for typographical errors. All photographs and illustrations are believed authorized for reproduction as set forth within. Entire contents are copyright © 2025 by the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy. All rights reserved. Nothing contained in this issue may be reproduced, in whole or in part, by any means, including the Internet, without prior written permission from the publisher.

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS should be sent to Radiogram, Patrick Lucanio, Editor, 743 Edgemont Way, Springfield, Oregon 97477; e-mail: radiogram@spervac.com. E-mail attachments in Microsoft Word are encouraged for all articles submitted.

ADVERTISING RATES. Sorry, we can no longer accept advertising at this time.

ADDRESS CHANGE. SPERDVAC at 2625 Middlefield Rd. #171, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

AUDIO RADIOGRAM is available. Contact Larry Gassman at (877) 251-5771. This service is for blind members only.



E-MAIL

radiogram@spervac.com



THE EDITOR GETS HIS LAST WORD

YOU JUST KNEW I'd get the last word, didn't you? To be honest, it's hard saying good-bye to a job I've loved for close to 27 years (yep—come March, that would have been 27 straight years at the helm of a publication I adore). But old age has a way of sneaking up on you, and even though you think you can keep doing what you've been doing for all those 26 years . . . well, not exactly.

And so it ends with this November/December 2025 issue. But where did it all begin?

It probably started in childhood. My family subscribed to two morning papers, two afternoon papers, and a weekly. Every Friday night we'd head to the drugstore to pick up *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Life*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. We were a family of readers.

Then came junior high, and two obessions that eventually led me straight to *Radiogram*. First, KEX radio in Portland began broadcasting old-time radio shows—probably those wonderful Charles Michelson reissues—and it was love at first sound. I was hooked. I remember it as if it were yesterday: *The Shadow*, *Sherlock Holmes* (with Sir John Gielgud and Sir Ralph Richardson and Orson Welles as Moriarty!), and *Dangerous Assignment* among so many others.

Next came the late-show movies. One in particular, *You'll Find Out*, with Kay Kyser and his Kollege of Musical Knowledge, deepened my fascination with radio. It featured radio performers trapped in a house haunted by Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, and Peter Lorre. How could anyone resist? And to seal the deal, along came a strange fellow with an even stranger moniker, Ish Kabibble, crooning a song that sums up my parting disposition: "The Bad Humor Man."

Not long after, I saw a different sort of film—a serious drama directed by Jack Webb in his unmistakable style. It showed the inside of a big-city newsroom: reporters, editors, photographers, even copy boys racing to push out a 30-page

newspaper in eight intense hours. Like so much of Webb's work, it wasn't about personalities but about process—how words and images were shaped into something meaningful. I found it riveting.

From then on, my career goal seemed obvious: I wanted to be a radio journalist. But life, as it usually does, took a few turns. Despite a brief stint in a metro newsroom—and another as a high school journalism teacher—I ended up a stuffy college professor of film and literary theory. Not quite the same thing, but not too far off, especially with my brief stint as director of student media, supervising a newspaper, yearbook, literary journal, and a student-run TV station.

Then came *Radiogram*. A dream come true? Absolutely. It combined my two lifelong loves: print journalism and old-time radio. For someone like me, it was the perfect assignment. And now, after 26 years, this long love affair draws to a close.

What's next? *Radiogram* turns the page with Jeff Adams, a forward-looking editor ready to steer it confidently into the digital age. I know he'll be a great editor, and I look forward to reading the darn thing for a change.

And as for ol' Ed... well, my wise journalism mentor once told me back in the days of print, "A journalist and his work are one and the same. What you write—and design, and create—is what you are." By that measure, my years with *Radiogram* speak for themselves, though exactly what they say is anyone's guess.

That same mentor had another saying, delivered with a wink: "Listen, son, old editors don't die, they just end up lining the bottom of the birdcage."

My thanks to President Corey for donating his space so I could extend "the long goodbye." He'll return next year with great news about SPERDVAC.

And the title of that Jack Webb film I mentioned? You already know. It's what ol' Ed has finally reached...

—30—



It's that busy time of the year. The president's column will return next year.
HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM SPERDVAC!





Patte Rosebank

by Sean Dougherty

SPERDVAC MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Voice actress Patte (with a silent e) Rosebank, like Remley on her favorite classic radio series *The Phil Harris/Alice Faye Show*, knows a guy—it's Elliott Lewis and she still looks to his career and performances for inspiration today. Like her hero, she wears many hats—acting, directing, podcasting and researching

her way to being a vital part of the hobby. Patte is Canadian, where dramatic radio persisted through the 2010s and gave her the opportunity to see live recordings of shows including *Royal Canadian Air Farce* and *Frantic Times* as a youngster, which launched a lifelong interest in voice acting, that she realized on shows such as *Mighty Machines* and in being part of the stock company performing classic radio re-creations with SPERDVAC's own Larry Groebe and Project Audion. We sat down with her to discuss acting, classic radio and why Elliott Lewis was the coolest.

Q. So what got you interested in classic radio, being born after that era had already passed?

I remember listening to shows on CBC Radio, which was producing stuff in-house to very high standards. In the 70s and 80s, they were still creating new shows, including *Nightfall* and *Vanishing Point*, and the production and acting standards were so high. In the UK, the BBC will still try out a new show, especially comedies, on radio and if it works, they'll give it a series (6-8 episodes) on TV. I remember in the 70s, listening to *Royal Canadian Air Farce*, and *Frantic Times* and thinking that was so cool. In 1984, I started attending tapings of them, always sitting in the front row. They did eventually move to TV but it was so much better on radio. There were things on the *Air Farce* radio show where, if you're listening at home, there is a funny pause—it sounds like someone is kind of sniffing. And the audience is killing themselves laughing, and you wouldn't know what the heck was going on. And it was usually the cast cracking each other up, bringing the audience along with them. Once they moved to TV, they couldn't play like that. Cast member and head writer John Morgan always said radio is preferable to the visual media, TV, film, etc, because on radio you can say "I want 10,000 bagpipers coming over a hill," and you can get it with just sound effects and music. At the radio tapings, they'd have a live sound effects person. Some of the effects were recorded but they also used a lot of sound effects dating back to the 1920s when the CBC was founded—like a frame with pegs hung from a grid of straps in it, for the effect of marching feet. So, I got to see all this stuff that's the same as back in the Golden Age.

Q. You first got involved in classic radio re-creations because you were transcribing shows for the Generic Radio Script Library, correct?

It was a great way to study the shows. When I first read a script, I can "hear" the characters and action—like a skilled musician can read a score and "hear" all the instruments. I'd send my transcribed scripts to Larry Groebe, at Generic Radio.com. When the pandemic hit, he started Project Audion to do shows online over Zoom, and invited me to join. I'd been organizing a radio drama workshop with people who worked in show business, including some who had acted in CBC radio shows. It never really got going before the COVID lockdowns scuppered it, but it helped me be ready when Larry called.

Q. What is most special about radio acting for you?

I have a terrific voice for playing femmes fatales, but I don't look like one. The only way I can do it and be convincing is on the radio. With Project Audion, I can play romantic leads and villains. It's funny, but I can't handle watching intense, scary movies or TV shows, but with radio, it's different. I can keep a safe distance from all the overwhelming stuff, by picturing it being done in the studio instead of picturing the action of the story. When I listen to OTR, I'm actually studying acting, writing and sound techniques. I can even drift off to sleep, listening to *Lights Out* in bed at night, and have pleasant dreams. But I wouldn't try that with Project Audion's re-creation of the first Arch Oboler episode of *Lights Out*—"Burial Services," even though I was in it! When I was voicing the children's show *Mighty Machines*, I was just doing silly voices. But now,

I'm doing heavy, serious acting, and the main reason for that is discovering the work of Elliott and Cathy Lewis and their natural, conversational style. The first time I heard it, it blew me away—they're just talking, not acting. Even when they did wild comedy, like their old west version of Chekov's "The Bear," it was still believable. I have to work so darn hard to make my acting seem as effortless as theirs.

Q. And you direct too?

Direct and perform at the same time! I've directed a few Project Audion episodes, including the Arch Oboler Play "Special to Hollywood" and the lost *On Stage* episodes "A Month of Sundays" and "Interlude," using scripts I'd gotten from SPERDVAC. We worked very hard to get the conversational feeling the originals would have had. Just looking at the Lewis' *On Stage* episodes—"Interlude" is one where they could take a lot more risks because the series was unsponsored—the story of a man who leaves his wife and hooks up with a woman in a bar, and they spend the night together. These two lonely, unhappy people meet up and the things they learn, just talking with each other, changes their lives.

Q. How have you found moving from a radio fan to radio participant?

I can't just sit back and enjoy a show like I used to. My mind is always analyzing everything, thinking, "They could have done that better" or "That's an

interesting choice." You lose your amateur status.

Q. Let's keep going down the list of all the ways you're involved in the hobby—please tell us about the "OTR Essentials Podcast."

Pete Lutz reached out to me and said, "We've lost our third member and how'd you like to join us?" We get very silly, but with real research and unusual bits of trivia. It's like playtime, but the important thing is, we do have the information behind it. And learning's easier when it's fun.

Q. Are there any episodes you recommend for people who want to jump into the podcast?

It's nice to discuss shows that are really good, but we have a lot more fun with shows that aren't quite up there like *Hall of Fantasy* or *Dangerous Assignment*, where the sound effects don't sound like what they're supposed to or the acting is phoned in. You're thinking, "Why did Brian Donlevy even bother to do this?" and you can be class clowns and smart-alecky about it. We take turns picking the show. One of my choices was "Heartbeat" from *On Stage*. It's a very heavy episode, especially because we're all at that age where we have to worry about our hearts, our cholesterol, all the rest of that.

Q. Finally, you've also been a volunteer for SPERDVAC, helping us build the library of digital scripts.

Whenever I buy an actual vintage OTR script, I'll scan it, and send a psf of it to SPERDVAC, because a lost script is still lost if nobody can access it. I had some scripts from Chicago shows that were never recorded, only broadcast live. I don't know why Elliott Lewis was in Chicago at that time, but there's a bunch of these scripts, and he's written his name on them, several times, like doodling, and he's marked his lines. He wrote his name on a few *Dupont Cavalcade* scripts too, but he's not in the actual broadcast, so it looks like he was a rehearsal reader for them. He was doing so many shows a week; it's fair to guess that it had something to do with his marriage to Cathy failing. During the weeks before he and Cathy separated (on their anniversary), he was spending long hours at CBS, including working on an episode of *CBS Radio Workshop* called "Nightmare," which he wrote, directed, produced, and starred in. To me, it sounds like a form of personal therapy, full of Freudian imagery. Cathy later did an episode of *Suspense* called "This Time Will Be Different" about a crumbling marriage. To me, it sounds like her character's pain is Cathy's own; she's not just acting. This is why I like doing research. Once you know the backstory and some details about how elements of the story existed then—like how linotype works or what a newsroom would look like adds to your understanding.👏

Play Voice Artist at Work

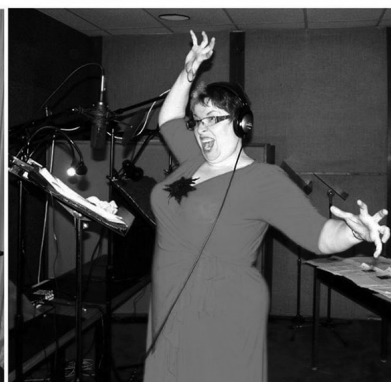
"Hello, Ernie. This is your mother.
Do you remember me?"



(villainous laughter)



"I'm a FISH!"



The many moods of a talented voice artist named Patte (with a silent e) Rosebank

THE BIG BUSINESS



by Jim Cox

Radio thrived on tales of crime and justice—an inexpensive, wildly popular formula that proved that crime did pay, at least for sponsors

FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, the radio programmers of yesteryear certainly understood the desire for stories about evil—the evil that lurked in the hearts of men, women, boys, and girls—and they made infinite attempts to satisfy our quests for it.

Very early in their professional careers the producers, directors, and authors of radio broadcasting and those who stood behind them determined that the public would develop a ravenous absorption with subject matter that was tinged by any form of wrongdoing. Audiences craved stories that compared right and wrong, reflected on

crime and punishment, and exhibited good guys upholding law and order. The result of that exposure was the surplus of sequencers destined to thrill audiences of every age airing over three decades of the twentieth century.

These features appeared in innumerable forms, most often as private detectives but also frequented by unprofessional snoops, cops and robbers, cowboys, espionage and reconnaissance agents, space travelers, and a multitude of diverse classifications that seemed particularly calculated to amuse adults. Alongside them were the juvenile adventurers—in the air, on land, and sea—who

SS OF BAD BEHAVIOR

surfaced from hypothetical or actual history, in modern scenarios and peculiar stimulations about life of the future. It was an enduring and profuse exposition of truth and consequences, of peace and justice that American radio delivered to millions of faithfully returning enthusiasts.

In 2002 this scribe put together more than 300 features from the Golden Age with the title *Radio Crime Fighters*. In it were most of the broadcast tales in which one or more protagonists appeared in occupations or avocations combatting criminal offense. The examples of such figures ran the full extent of the breed. There were private detectives, police officers, western lawmen, amateur sleuths, and lots more designations exhibiting a penchant for crime prevention. Juvenile fiction was included in that exposition in which a principal persistently thwarted evildoers of varying stripes. Anthology sequences with a crimefighting theme were added if a recurring host narrated or presided over gripping pursuits.

Beyond the loyal audiences for series of this nature, those paying the medium's bills concluded quite early that—with the excessive number of fans tuning in—crime shows posed a gargantuan cash cow for their commercial interests. Adding favorably to it was that those features could be produced at a miniscule fraction of the investment commanded by some of radio's other entertaining formats. To many underwriters, crime series appeared to have arrived from the land of plenty.

In 1950 *Variety* projected that the sponsor of *The Jack Benny Program*, the American Tobacco Company hawking its Lucky Strike cigarettes, was shelling out \$40,000 in producing the show every week. Additional fees were tacked on with the expense of network time to transmit each junket. Meanwhile, all but a handful of detective dramas were emerging in that same era as prime time broadcasts at something between a cool \$4000 and \$7000 production costs weekly. While those narratives didn't entice the throngs that Benny collected, they readily supplied more listeners per sponsor dollar than any of the renowned comedy and variety shows. That tallied a lot of clout.

In the same period industry figures claimed that 123 American homes could hear a radio concert music series for the expense of a single sponsor dollar. A comedy-variety show, on the other hand, could attract 163 homes for a similar dollar. And an unadorned theatre performance might be heard in 187 homes for a dollar. At the same time a musical-variety showcase could air at that rate to 215 households. Topping it all, an evening mystery series would be absorbed in 267 dwelling places as avid listeners tuned in for the very same sponsor dollar. Could there be any serious argument that—while crime might not pay for the culprits—it usually *did* for the sponsors?

As an aside, would it interest you to know which commercial

enterprises purchased the most airtime on the quartet of coast-to-coast U.S. broadcasting chains over the long haul? The advertisers contributing most profusely to that endeavor are depicted here. Some of their wares were featured on copious radio crimefighting series. Several of those organizations no longer exist or have been absorbed by other entities, of course. Time purchases—including series and the number of seasons they aired—were underwritten by 10 top advertisers in this descending order: 10) Procter & Gamble, 9) General Foods, 8) Sterling Drug, 7) General Mills, 6) American Home Products, 5) Colgate-Palmolive-Peet, 4) Lever Brothers, 3) Miles Laboratories, 2) R.J. Reynolds, 1) Standard Brands.

Another fascinating sidelight pertains to the audience measurement systems applied back in the day. While the Nielsens as a ratings tool are familiar to us in contemporary times, they were preceded from 1934 by C.E. Hooper Company's "Hooperatings," calculating not only numbers of listeners per show but myriad added applications as well (competitor A.C. Nielsen bought Hooper in 1950).

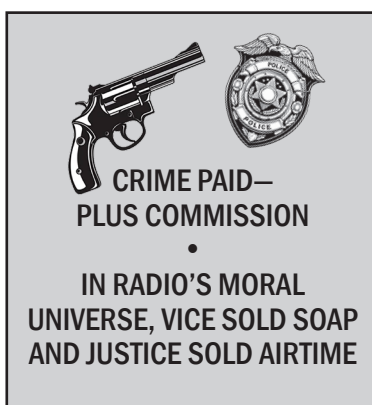
One of the concentrations of Hooperatings involved comparing talent costs linked with radio programming categorized into 16 disciplines. A

typical analysis conducted in February 1946 at the peak of old time radio's popularity is pertinent to our thesis. That study revealed that the lowest cost for procuring professional artists per Hooperatings point was a disbursement of \$361.99 weekly. The breed that it encompassed was the women's daytime serials which flooded radio's matinee agenda during that epoch.

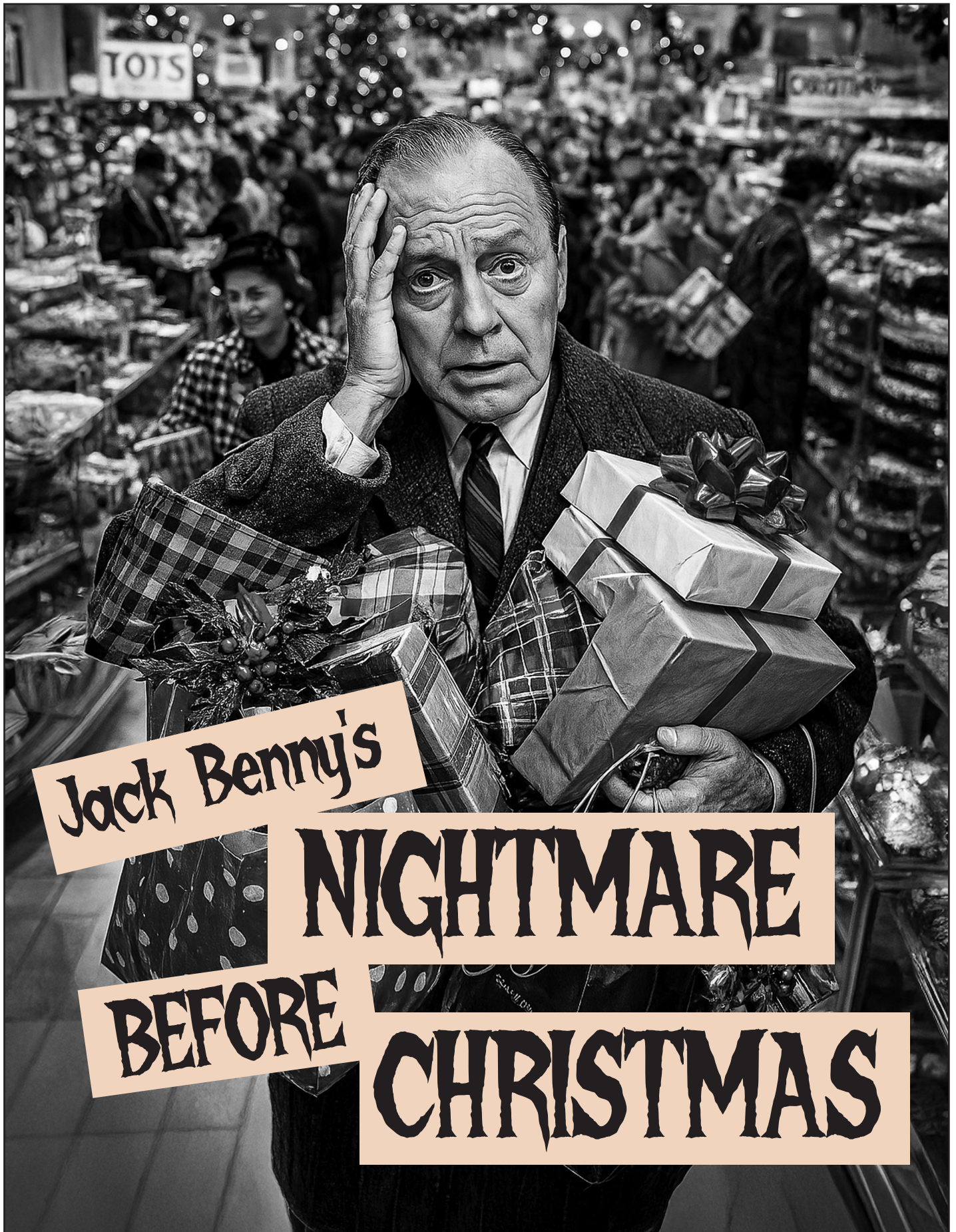
But it was the category next to that one, the second lowest-cost tariff for performance fees, that is reflective for our purposes. The 1946 probe revealed that the sizable grouping of mystery-detective-horror dramas typically furnished talent at \$397.21 per Hooperating point. Of the 16 programming categories analyzed in this study, crimefighting shows were number 15 in outlay for talent fees. The most expensive artists, meanwhile, aired on serious or classical musical radio concerts, to the tune of \$3,156.43 per Hooperating point every week. That figure was nearly eight times the expense of securing actors for a lawbreaking sequence.

Revelations like this once again reinforce the fact that crimefighting series were a princely bargain to advertisers of that day. That surely contributed substantially to the reason there were so many of those features on the ether. Once again it signifies that corruption made steady influences prevalent, becoming a powerful and pervasive feature of old time radio.

Those thrilling days of yesteryear were more than a treat for loyal listeners—they were music to the ears of the sponsors who paid the bills.♣



We are honored to present, posthumously, Jim Cox's final article for *Radiogram*. On a personal note, I had reached out to Jim during one of our dry spells, asking if he might contribute something for an upcoming issue. True to his generous spirit, he promptly sent this thoughtful piece on the business of radio's crime programs. It feels especially fitting that I close my own tenure as editor by publishing Jim's work—just as, 26 years ago, I began that tenure with another of his articles, one on the history of four soap operas.



Jack Benny's

NIGHTMARE

BEFORE

CHRISTMAS



Jack Benny turned Christmas shopping into comic ritual. His annual department store misadventures mirrored postwar America's consumer frenzy and timeless holiday anxieties

by

Patrick Lucanio and Gary Coville

DURING RADIO'S GOLDEN AGE, Christmas brought with it familiar rituals. Each December, the airwaves filled with the same comforting sounds: carols, laughter, and the familiar voices of radio's brightest stars. Listeners could count on Bing Crosby singing "Adeste Fideles"—always in Latin—and Lionel Barrymore reprising Scrooge.

Yet amid these annual broadcasts, none so perfectly balanced humor and humanity as the Christmas shopping episodes of *The Jack Benny Program* in which Jack wanders through a department store in search of the perfect Christmas present for Don Wilson. This routine was so well received that it established itself as a cherished holiday tradition, valued as highly as the individual himself.

When *The Jack Benny Program* debuted on radio in 1932 as a vehicle for Canada Dry, America was in the depths of the Great Depression. Millions of listeners faced uncertainty and hardship, and Benny's developing radio persona reflected that world. As he later explained in an oft-quoted interview, "I played a character that included all the faults and frailties of mankind. Every family had somebody like me—either they had an uncle who was stingy, or one who thought he was very sexy, and he wasn't." It was that stinginess that would forever define his image on both radio and television.

During the Depression, Jack's parsimony struck a sympathetic chord. He wasn't simply a caricature of greed; he

represented the cautious, penny-pinching instincts that many listeners themselves had developed out of necessity. Audiences could recognize their own uncles and neighbors in him and quietly see reflections of their own struggles to save, stretch, and survive. What made Benny's thrift comic rather than cruel was his self-awareness. He made the audience laugh at their shared predicament and, in doing so, offered a kind of collective therapy.

Radio, at its best, had the power to lift spirits by creating a shared national mood, and that power was never more evident than at Christmastime. Radio, at its best, had the power to lift spirits by creating a shared national mood, and that power was never more evident than at Christmastime. Yuletide programming emphasized the very things audiences longed for: faith, laughter, warmth, and gatherings of friends and family around a lighted tree and the dinner table. These were the simple sounds and images conveyed by Benny and his fellow radio artists through Depression and war, and when the bad times ended, the public was ready for something new, and *The Jack Benny Program* would be prepared with a new Christmas tradition.

When prosperity returned after 1945, Americans were ready to spend. The post-World War II years were the golden age of the American department store. City streets glittered with elaborate window displays, and *Life* magazine published photo essays of holiday crowds surging through Macy's and Gimbels. Prosperity had returned, and so had the thrill of spending, and *The Jack Benny Program* was ready to satirize that newfound

In the spirit of innovation—and mild recklessness—*Radiogram* proudly unveils another AI illustration. Don't worry. No artists were harmed, just offended. Some will call it the end of civilization; others will call it Thursday. We'll excuse it as progress. Photos from the December 15, 1957, Jack Benny television Christmas episode were used to illustrate this article courtesy of the Coville Archives.

abundance. Out of that moment was born one of the most enduring of all radio rituals: Jack Benny's annual Christmas shopping expedition, a mix of laughter and lunacy that perfectly reflected America's changing relationship to money and meaning.

Jack Benny, ever the contrarian, stood as the anti-consumer in a modern culture built on consumption. His elaborate stinginess became a sly commentary on national anxieties: the fear of buying the wrong gift, the fear of waste, the fear of appearing either too cheap or too extravagant. When Jack spent hours debating whether to buy Don Wilson a gopher trap or a shoelace, listeners recognized themselves and their own paralysis in the face of the season's moral and financial contradictions.

Among radio's many seasonal traditions, none better captured the absurdities of American consumer life than Benny's recurring Christmas sketches. Each year, the formula remained simple but devastatingly effective. Jack, determined to buy gifts for his friends and co-stars, would head into a crowded department store only to be undone by his own thrift, indecision, and vanity. There he would encounter a long-suffering clerk, played by Mel Blanc, and an insufferably superior floorwalker, performed by Frank Nelson. Between them, Benny's attempts at holiday generosity would descend into comic chaos.

Beginning in 1946, Benny's Christmas storylines began to coalesce around a single comic situation: the search for the perfect gift for announcer Don Wilson. That December, Jack entered a local Beverly Hills department store intending to buy Don a pair of shoelaces. By then Americans had more money in their pockets and the pent-up urge to start spending again. Jack, on the other hand, still preferred to keep as much of his money out of circulation as possible. Jack's dilemma that particular Christmas was whether to buy Don shoelaces with plastic tips or metal tips. The dilemma unfolded



"Christmas shopping gets worse every year," sighs an exasperated Jack Benny, struggling through a mob of frantic bargain hunters in search of Black Friday deals and so begins the December 15, 1957, episode of *The Jack Benny Program* television program.

into an escalating series of exchanges that drove the salesman, played by Mel Blanc, into a nervous breakdown. By the following week, the audience learned that the poor clerk had been committed to a sanitarium, babbling incoherently about "plastic tips" and "metal tips."

Each subsequent year, the pattern repeated itself, yet the material never grew stale; audiences expected it not unlike small children who eagerly anticipated Christmas itself. In 1947, the same store and the same traumatized clerk appeared again. When Jack approached the clerk Jack was quickly recognized. He began to recall the harrowing details of Jack's previous visit, and as he recounts the details, the salesclerk suffers a psychotic breakdown repeatedly mumbling, "plastic tips, metal tips . . ."

In 1948, Jack returned to the store looking for a wallet for Don. He had a choice between a \$1.98 wallet or a \$40 version. With prodding from Mary Livingstone, Jack purchases the \$40 wallet but makes repeated returns to change the handwritten card tucked inside the now wrapped package. Ultimately, Benny

returns to switch to the \$1.98 wallet. The audience is then privy to the sound of a gunshot and the thud of the salesclerk's body dropping to the floor. Incidentally, this script was the basis of Benny's December 15, 1957, TV show.

During the 1949 episode, Jack visits the department store without encountering the usual overwhelmed clerk. Instead, Mel Blanc appears as Jasper, a store worker responsible for letting the crowd in. Jasper ushers customers through the door by cracking a whip and singing "Mule Train."

By 1950 Mel was back behind a counter, this time in the sporting goods department when Jack shows up to purchase golf tees for Don. The clerk instantly recalls Jack. He had recovered, he explained, but his hair never did grow back. Jack's constant indecision in switching between wooden and celluloid tees leads to another psychotic breakdown for Mel.

Jack's familiar cast are all on hand: Mary Livingston, Rochester, Dennis Day, Frank Nelson as the floorwalker, and Sheldon Leonard as the racetrack tout. By now they had become like the treasured ornaments listeners routinely displayed on their yearly Christmas tree.

Many of the jokes were recycled year

Jack Benny Goes on Annual Shopping Tour This Evening

Jack Benny goes on his traditional Christmas shopping tour in a riotous takeoff on the confusion of John Q. Public trying to catch up on last-minute yule gift buying during the Jack Benny program at 6 o'clock today over KSCJ.

For years past, the Benny holiday show has found him affluter in a downtown department store, selecting presents for his gang. While there, he encounters the gang itself, one member working as a clerk, another as the floorwalker, another as Santa Claus and still others in other capacities. The merry-makers include Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Rochester, Dennis Day and Don Wilson, who also announces.

Sioux City Journal (IA) Dec. 18, 1949



When Jack Benny met Frank Nelson's impeccably rude floorwalker, whose syrupy "Yeeesss?" became radio and television shorthand for seasonal suffering, Christmas commerce turned comic. Their yearly sparring became a hallmark of holiday mirth.

after year, but it all seemed part of the comforting nature of Christmas.

In 1951, the storyline was revised once more, serving as an updated version of the 1948 script with the only change being the replacement of the wallet with cufflinks. The same absurd cycle of buying, returning, re-engraving, and rewrapping ensued, ending once more in catastrophe with the sound of a gunshot and the thud of a body.

In 1952, the storyline moved to the gardening department, where Jack's indecision over gopher traps—one humane, one lethal—drove the clerk into the arms of his psychiatrist. This year the clerk is working in the gardening department because he thinks the "little blue-eyed old man" didn't appear to be the gardening type. Jack arrives to buy Don a gopher trap but can't decide between the trap that captures the gopher alive or the trap that kills them instantly. Jack once again drives the clerk over the edge through repeated exchanges.

By 1953, the frazzled salesman had transferred to the Palm Springs to get away from a blue-eyed old gentleman. Jack shows up in Palm Springs where the clerk is working in the date department. Jack wants to buy a box of dates for Don

but can't make up his mind between a box of plain dates or a box of dates stuffed with nuts. The clerk once again descends into madness, pulls out a gun to shoot himself and we hear the sound of an unsuccessful gunshot. Jack had made the clerk so nervous that he missed.

The December 12, 1954, broadcast wrapped up the series with another bout of chaos as Jack struggled to choose between oil paints and watercolors. His indecision frustrated both the clerk and, later, the clerk's wife, portrayed by regular Bea Benaderet, who stepped in to help but ended up just as exasperated.

Through all these episodes, repetition became part of the humor. Audiences knew the beats, anticipated the breakdowns, and took comfort in their inevitability. The sketches became as integral to the holiday as wrapping paper or mistletoe. Each year, fans tuned in not for surprise but for the reassurance of hearing the familiar.

The magic of these episodes lay not only in their clever writing but in the interplay of Benny's ensemble cast. By

the late 1940s, the nation knew each character as if they were members of the family: Mary Livingstone, the girlfriend whose dry wit deflated Jack's pomposity; Rochester (Eddie Anderson), the valet whose quick wit and sardonic humor gave the show its heart; Dennis Day, the naive tenor perpetually oblivious to the chaos around him; Phil Harris, the boisterous bandleader; and Don Wilson, the genial announcer and perennial victim of Jack's stingy gift-giving.

But two characters in particular made these episodes pivotal: the floorwalker and the clerk.

Each Christmas shopping episode began with the innocent Mr. Benny attempting to navigate a large department store by dodging hundreds of shoppers all vying for sales. Lost and dazed by the pandemonium, Jack eventually seeks assistance from the floorwalker, played by Frank Nelson, who was the master of condescending sarcasm. Nelson's signature role in most of Benny's comedy was that of an over-the-top, disdainful official who would greet Benny with a drawn-out, sneering "Yeeees?" Nelson's characters, whether a department store floorwalker, hotel desk manager, railroad station manager, train conductor, or grocery store clerk, were always dripping with barely contained contempt, making him a perfect foil for Benny's character. By

the end of each encounter, Nelson would inevitably blow up, often launching into a tirade against Benny, his penny-pinching ways, or his apparent lack of common sense.

The tension between Benny's obliviousness and Nelson's cutting wit created some of the funniest moments in the series. Nelson's comedic style

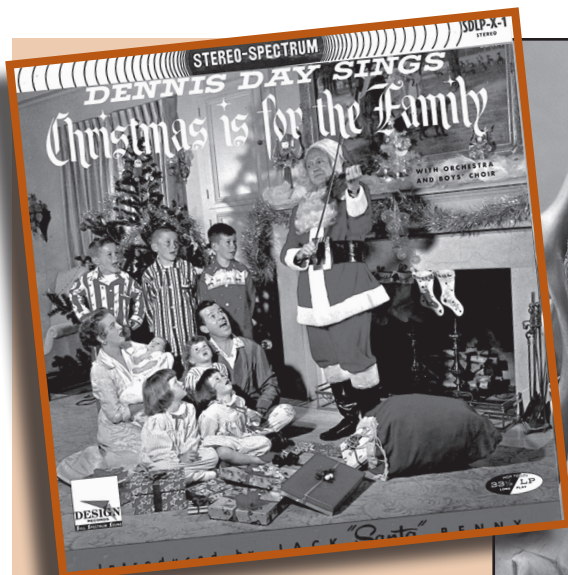
became so memorable that even outside of the Jack Benny program audiences would associate Nelson with the drawn-out "Yeeees."

Nelson's floorwalker—drawling that immortal "Yeeees?"—was the distilled spirit of customer-service contempt. His elongated vowels and silky sarcasm transformed a simple greeting into a sneer. In postwar America, when department

Jack Benny Takes Annual Christmas Shopping Tour

As is his custom, Jack Benny meanders through a department store in search of low-priced Christmas gifts for the members of his troupe, and encounters most of them in the place, during the CBS' "Jack Benny Program" broadcast tonight at 8:00 o'clock over KWKH. It gradually dawns upon the comic, through pointed remarks, that the members of his gang would be made happier at this Yule season if the boss presented them with gifts other than shoelaces.

The Times (Shreveport, LA) Dec. 17, 1950



As in most Jack Benny program episodes, the commercials and musical numbers were neatly woven into the storyline. In this television Christmas outing, Dennis Day moonlights as a department-store singer, explaining to Jack that he can't live on what Jack pays him. For the children waiting to see Santa, Dennis performs "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." His rendition of the song later appeared on his 1958 album *Dennis Day Sings Christmas Is for the Family*, introduced by Jack himself.



stores were temples of aspiration and prosperity, Nelson's character inverted the promise: beneath the glittering display counters lurked annoyance, fatigue, and class friction. His exchanges with Benny were duels of self-importance—the prissy employee and the self-absorbed customer, each convinced the other was an idiot. That contrast made the sketch not only funny but sociologically sharp.

If Nelson embodied sarcasm, Mel Blanc personified breakdown. The recurring gag of returning Don Wilson's gift worked like a ritualized farce: each encounter began with forced politeness and ended in total surrender. As the clerk driven mad by Benny's indecision, Mel Blanc delivered a masterclass in vocal comedy—his voice cracking, climbing, and finally collapsing in helpless hysteria. It was vaudeville distilled into radio form—a duet of rising tension and controlled oblivion. The chemistry

between Benny's serene self-absorption and Blanc's frantic desperation was comic perfection.

When Benny transitioned to television in the 1950s, he carried many of his beloved radio gags with him, including his Christmas shopping misadventure, which is apparently in the public domain and is available online and through various media outlets. The sketch, now visualized, lost none of its power. Audiences could see what they had once imagined—the crowded aisles, the frantic clerks, the slow burn of Nelson's contempt, the quiet panic of Blanc's salesman. The television version stayed faithful to the radio original, even echoing the most infamous moments. Indeed, the television version brings the whole Christmas shopping series to a tragic end as the salesclerk, again played by Mel Blanc, shoots himself after what could be described as years of abuse at the hands of a kindly blue-eyed

gentleman who was always seeking the perfect gift for someone named Don.

For fans, these annual episodes became more than entertainment; they were ritual. Listeners awaited the Christmas shopping misadventures as faithfully as later generations would await *A Charlie Brown Christmas* or *It's a Wonderful Life*. The sketches gave radio, an ephemeral medium, a sense of permanence. The same characters, the same gags, and even the same sound effects returned like ornaments on a tree, familiar and cherished.

Yet beneath the laughter lay social insight. Benny's Christmas shopping adventures captured America's uneasy relationship with prosperity. They mocked greed without cruelty and satirized consumption without cynicism. In an age when advertisers equated happiness with spending, Benny's paralysis offered a gentle counterpoint: humor as humility.



Listeners awaited the Christmas shopping misadventures as faithfully as later generations would await *A Charlie Brown Christmas* or *It's a Wonderful Life*.

From Cheer to Chaos

A customer? Yeah. He first came into the store in 1946. He was a kindly-looking blue-eyed old gentleman. He bought a Christmas present, and then six times during the day he came back, tested me and exchanged it for a different model. . . . He bought shoelaces . . . for someone named Don. First he bought the laces with metal tips. Then he came back because he thought plastic tips looked more modern. Soon he was back again. He was afraid the plastic tips might crack. So he went back to metal tips. Then he got to thinking the metal tips might rust. So he came back to change them to plastic tips. Six times he changed his mind. Plastic tips, metal tips, plastic tips, metal tips, plastic tips, metal tips. . . . Every year since then, this man has been back buying gifts for Don and exchanging them. One year it was a wallet. Once it was cufflinks. [Last Christmas it was] a gopher trap.

— Mr. Blanc, the clerk, to Palm Springs store manager

December 13, 1953



All begins in holiday harmony as Jack, Rochester, and clerk Mel Blanc trade cheerful greetings while Jack shops for a wallet for Don Wilson—until Christmas chaos strikes!



Each show ended with a reminder of what truly mattered. After the last round of chaos, the music would swell, the cast would gather for closing wishes, and Benny's voice would soften. Though his character never learned generosity, the warmth of the program itself—its camaraderie, its shared laughter—embodied precisely that. The stingy man became the vehicle for the generous spirit of the show.

JACK BENNY'S Christmas sketches endure as master classes in character comedy. They demonstrated that the richest humor grows not from plot but from personality, not from surprise but from timing. Their influence extends across decades of television comedy—from the situational absurdities of *I Love Lucy* to the neurotic spirals of *Seinfeld*. In each, one can trace Benny's structure: the obsessive loop, the moral blindness, the social tension expressed through petty behavior.

They also function as cultural time capsules. To hear Benny navigating the aisles of a department store is to step back into postwar America—the hum of crowds, the murmur of clerks, the tinkle of cash registers, and the faint static of overhead carols. Beneath the comedy lies an anthropology of manners: the performance of politeness, the anxiety of class, the choreography of buying and selling. Humor became both mirror and release, allowing audiences to see themselves and forgive themselves in the same instant.

In the end, the significance of the Christmas episodes lies not just in their laughter but in their humanity. Through repetition, caricature, and impeccable timing, Benny transformed an ordinary shopping trip into a national folk ritual. The sketches mocked greed yet celebrated kindness; they skewered commerce yet honored companionship. Every return trip to the store, every sarcastic “Yeeeee?” from Frank Nelson, every nervous breakdown from Mel Blanc became part of America's shared seasonal soundtrack.

And perhaps that was Benny's final and most enduring gift: proof that the best Christmas present wasn't bought, wrapped, or exchanged. It was something you tuned in to, together. 🎁



Decimal Seven: The Forgotten Futurist of Radio

WHEN THE JOE HEHN MEMORIAL COLLECTION was being digitized and made available to the public, one of the first programs released at Archive.org was the only surviving episode of *Dr. Decimal Seven*. An intriguing science fictional set piece described as a “short-lived” serial dated 1933; the series starred Fred Shields as Dr. Decimal Seven and featured Gale Gordon and Jeanette Nolan in key roles. Beyond that and the episode itself, little else was known of the series at the time. Now, however, with the surfacing of an original 13-page prospectus and cover letter prepared by developers of the series we can take a glimpse into the background of the elusive *Decimal Seven*.

The series was conceived by two men, Frederick Shields and Art Kane. Fred Shields would produce, direct and star in the proposed series. Kane, writing as Sharrard Kane, was tasked with scripting the series. A native of Kansas City, MO, Shields started out in his hometown performing in a local theatre company and working at station WDAF. Later, he moved to Los Angeles to work for KFI followed by KTM and then KNX. Art Kane, also a native of Kansas City, was a staff writer for Paramount Studios before shifting over to writing for radio. In 1933, both men were employed at KNX. Kane was working primarily as a script writer. Shields functioned variously as an announcer, actor, host, and writer. The two men would sometimes blend their talents.

Three serialized adventure programs had already debuted on radio: *Buck Rogers in the Twenty-Fifth Century*, *Chandu the Magician* and *Tarzan of the Apes*. The latter two were both transcribed series. *Chandu the Magician* had gotten its nascent start over at rival station KHJ in 1931.

It is easy to see Shields and Kane deciding to collaborate on a transcribed serial of their own and hoping for a commercial payoff. Kane wrote a script for the opening episode of *Decimal Seven* as well as synthesizing the first 25 planned episodes in the series. Shields kept busy with other details. There was a cast to assemble once the principal characters were fleshed out. A recording studio needed to be selected, and a clear-eyed vision developed for promotion of *Decimal Seven*.

An audition record was made and copies sent out to prospective clients. This is the recording made available through the Joe Hehn Memorial Collection on Archive.org. Three of the

principal characters in that recording, aside from Fred Shields as Dr. Decimal Seven, have been identified. Gale Gordon (Warwick Jones) and Jeanette Nolan (Dis-ta) were both then appearing in *Tarzan of the Apes* along with Shields and Kane. Playing KO-



Production illustration from prospectus for KO-TO the Martian played by silent-era movie comedian Vic Potel.

TO, a Martian, and Dr. Decimal’s right-hand man, would be Vic Potel, a film comedian from the silent era. Like Shields and Kane, Potel was working at KNX. He was starring in a comedy series, *College Daze and Knights*, which he was also writing and directing.

In the audition, and prospectus, Dr. Decimal Seven is pictured as an “inventor, super scientist and man of mystery.” In their pitch to prospective clients, Shields and Kane claimed they had taken the greatest care in “selecting a most unusual and unique cast for *Decimal Seven*.” They additionally claimed the sample recording being tendered for evaluation had been made “by one of the most up-to-date recording laboratories in the west.”

Through this document we have a clear conception of what *Decimal Seven* would have looked like if the series had come to fruition.

It was designed as 15-minute serial running three or more episodes per week depending upon the sponsor’s wishes. The prospectus outlines an ambitious merchandising plan, a synopsis for the projected first year of the series, and an introduction to key cast and characters. Also included was a rate chart for participating sponsors and ideas for merchandizing tie-ins with the program.

The audition recording, indeed, precisely matches the content of the audition recording. Dr. Decimal Seven and his crew board a space and time machine with Mars as their destination. In later chapters, after landing on Mars, Decimal Seven and his crew confront dinosaurs, sabre-toothed tigers, and a race of gorilla-men. Dista is carried off by a flying lizard but survives only to be captured by the gorilla-men. The explorers ultimately return home at the precise second in time that they had left. They find an urgent summons from another scientist seemingly opening the door to a continuation of their adventures.

In reality, of course, there were no adventures beyond the audition chapter. No merchandising tie-ins as suggested in the prospectus ever came to pass. There would be no *Dr. Decimal Seven* novels, no Martian Tarkon Clubs and no scientific toys offered by sponsors.👊

With this issue, the Mysterious Traveler concludes his 17-year run of commentaries on all things OTR.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, everyone!

- LEGAL NOTICE -

- California:** The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC), 2527 Duke Place, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 and phone number 877-251-5771. Funds raised will be used to preserve and digitize historic radio programs, produce educational publications, and host public events that promote and develop vintage and modern audio theater.
- Florida:** A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, WITHIN THE STATE, 1-800-HELPFLA, OR VIA THE INTERNET AT www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. Registration # CH80134.
- Georgia:** A full and fair description of the programs and financial statement summary are available upon request
- Maryland:** A copy of The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC), current financial statements may be obtained by contacting us at 2527 Duke Place, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 and phone number 877-251-5771. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available from the office of the Secretary of State, Annapolis, MD for the cost of copying and postage.
- Minnesota:** The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC),—Costa Mesa, CA 92626; any gift may be tax deductible; Funds raised will be used to preserve and digitize historic radio programs, produce educational publications, and host public events that promote and develop vintage and modern audio theater.
- Mississippi:** The official registration and financial information of The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC) may be obtained from the Mississippi Secretary of State's office by calling 1-888-236-6167. Registration by the Secretary of State does not imply endorsement.
- New Jersey:** INFORMATION FILED WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL CONCERNING THIS CHARITABLE SOLICITATION AND THE PERCENTAGE OF CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED BY [SPERDVAC] DURING THE LAST REPORTING PERIOD THAT WERE DEDICATED TO THE CHARITABLE PURPOSE MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY BY CALLING (973) 504-6215 AND IS AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET AT www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/charities. REGISTRATION WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT.
- New York:** Upon request, a person may obtain from The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC) or from the Charities Bureau on the Attorney General's website a copy of the last financial report filed. Description of SPERDVAC's programs & activities for which contributions are requested or will be expended. (973) 504-6215 & website of NY AG.
- North Carolina:** Financial information about The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC) and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 1-888-830-4989 (within NC) or (919) 807-2214 (outside NC). The license is not an endorsement by the State.
- Pennsylvania:** The official registration and financial information of SPERDVAC may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.
- Rhode Island:** A description of the programs/activities for which the funds will be expended, or that such description is available on request; a statement whether contributions are tax deductible under federal law.
- South Carolina:** Financial and other information about our charity's purpose, programs and activities can be obtained by contacting us at The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC), 2527 Duke Place, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 and phone number 877-251-5771, or for residents of South Carolina, from the Secretary of State at 1-888-242-7484 or www.sos.sc.gov. Registration with the Secretary of State does not imply endorsement.
- Virginia:** A financial statement is available from the Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, address, upon request.
- Washington:** The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC), located in Costa Mesa, California, is registered with the Washington State Secretary of State as a charitable organization. Registration number: 2011933. Additional financial and other information is available from the Secretary of State at 1-800-332-4483 or www.sos.wa.gov/charities. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.
- West Virginia:** West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305. Registration does not imply endorsement. The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC), 2527 Duke Place, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 phone number 877-251-5771. SPERDVAC (Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy) is a nonprofit educational public benefit corporation dedicated to preserving classic radio material, encouraging the re-creation of historic programs, and supporting the development and promotion of new audio theater for public enjoyment and education. Funds raised will be used to preserve and digitize historic radio programs, produce educational publications, and host public events that promote and develop vintage and modern audio theater.

CHRISTMAS ON THE OLD RADIO FRONTIER

CHRISTMAS on old-time radio wasn't confined to urban department stores, snowbound New England towns, or Dickensian morality. Some of the richest, most affecting holiday broadcasts appeared far from city lights in the dusty, wind-scoured landscapes of American frontier drama. Radio westerns, despite their reputations for gunplay and grit, regularly embraced the season as a moment to soften hardened hearts, restore justice with compassion, and remind listeners that even the roughest cowhands understood the meaning of Christmas.

One of the finest examples is *The Six Shooter*, starring James Stewart. Its 1953 holiday episode, "Britt Ponset's Christmas Carol," reimagines Dickens on the frontier without leaning into parody or sentimentality. Stewart's Britt serves as a quiet moral compass, leading a feuding family toward reconciliation by invoking Christmas as a time for forgiveness rather than vengeance. The episode uses the vastness of the West—lonely trails, dimly lit cabins, wide open skies—to heighten the emotional stakes. Christmas, here, becomes not a commercial holiday but a spiritual pause, a moment of human connection in an unforgiving landscape.

Other westerns followed suit. *Gunsmoke* approached Christmas with characteristic toughness. In *Gunsmoke's* "Christmas Story," Marshal Matt Dillon finds himself stranded on the frontier without a horse on Christmas Eve. A lonely traveler shares his horse. Matt recounts past Christmases in Dodge prompting the stranger to reevaluate his self-imposed exile.

Likewise, *The Lone Ranger* produced several Christmas dramas built around rescued travelers, misunderstood outlaws, and communities learning to trust again. These stories often placed the masked rider in the role of a biblical messenger—announcing peace, restoring families, and ensuring that no one faced the holiday alone.

Across the genre, Christmas served as a civilizing moment, a narrative pressure point where even hardened men reconsidered old grudges, strangers became allies, and justice was tempered by mercy. For listeners in the 1940s and 1950s, western Christmas episodes offered a uniquely American holiday mythology: the idea that even on the very edge of the frontier, the season's values—generosity, forgiveness, and second chances—could flourish like a lantern glowing against the cold.

— Alan Irving





SPERDVAC
2625 Middlefield Rd. #171
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Presort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Albany, OR
Permit 188