

Peacock North

The Second Generation

SPRING, 2002



Volume 1 Edition 3

Spring Luncheon

Dear Lunch Bunch,

First a big thanks to Pete Peterson who has been a tremendous help in guiding us along the path to getting this annual bash together. And to Jim Reina for all the hours he put in. Now you all do your part and **get those reservations and checks (\$24 per person) in like NOW---PULEEZE!** (You really don't want me to have to ask Pete to get back on the phone again this year, do you?) Check payable to Peacock North Lunch and mail to: PO Box 16755, Stamford, CT 06905.

This year, a new event! (AUDIO: put in trumpet blast here) **THE OLDEST STOPWATCH CONTEST!** There will be a **PRIZE!** Ever since I held up my stopwatch last year, I've had several people tell me (rather boastfully frankly) that theirs is older - including Heino in his article about last year's luncheon. Well, I have a scoop! Going through a box of old "stuff" I found the real stopwatch, broken but still hanging proudly from its pink ribbon. How many of you remember that before those yellow ribbons were tied around the old oak tree and before breast cancer claimed the pink ribbon as theirs, people who believed in the Equal Rights Amendment wore pink ribbons. I had my stopwatch hanging from one.

Rules to enter are simple. All watches have to be brought to the luncheon by their owner and all entries must have "NBC" and the number engraved on the back. Good luck to all participants!

Look forward to seeing you all **Sunday, May 19th, 12 o'clock sharp at La Maganette, 825 3rd Avenue, New York City.** (Parking around the corner at Lexington and 51st for \$10).

Enid Roth

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Reminiscences

by Edwin Newman

When I was in NBC's London bureau in the 1950's, the novelist Evelyn Waugh brought out a new book. Waugh despised America and Americans, but his publishers made him give me an interview for the Today Show. It took place at his home, Stinchcombe, in Somerset. As I was leaving, he said, "I assume you have been given this book." I told him NBC had bought it, whereupon he inscribed it "For Edwin Newman, who bought it. A souvenir of Stinchcombe." Because of his small handwriting, I could not make out the word souvenir. He then told me, in his haughty way, "Souvenir. That's French for remembrance."

The cameraman on this assignment was Guy Blanchard, later to die in a helicopter crash while covering NATO maneuvers off the English coast. This was doubly distressing because it was such an insignificant story. Guy left a wife and a very young daughter, and many good friends, of whom I was one. We all missed him a great deal.

I became the Rome correspondent in 1957. The Papacy was really the only significant story from Italy, which at that time was in about its fortieth post-war government, and NBC News was not terribly interested in Italian politics. I did cover the great Papal story of the time, when Pius XII died and was succeeded by John XXIII. Joe Michaels and I worked on the story together. We were in St. Peter's Square, and waiting for white smoke to emerge from the Vatican, which would signify that the Conclave of Cardinals had agreed on a new Pope. Smoke came up. It looked white to Joe and me. We had a priest working with us. It looked white to him, too. Joe announced that a new Pope had been chosen. Alas, no. The smoke was gray. I had to make the greatest retraction of my career, as I shouted into the microphone. "There is no Pope. There is no Pope."

Soon there was white smoke, and we were able to announce correctly, that a Pope had been chosen. All was well. Years later, I made a comparable mistake: I put the Alamo in Houston. The Mayor of San Antonio was on the phone in a matter of minutes, and invited me to be his guest as he showed me around San Antonio and its most famous monument. I apologized profusely and corrected my mistake on air. Years later, I did go there. It was a most enjoyable visit.

After Rome, it was Paris. One story from France was the rebellion in Algeria, which led to independence. I went to Algiers. Americans were not popular with France at the time, because France felt that America sympathized with the independence movement. That may explain what happened when I tried to get into a building in Algiers where a conference was taking place. A policeman blocked me. Trying to impress him by speaking French, I said, "Mais je suis journaliste," "Oui, Monsieur," he replied, "et moi, je suis policier." "Yes, sir, and I, I am a policeman." I did not get in.

Another recollection: Reuven Frank wanted me to do a documentary about the famous train, The Orient Express. It was, by that time, in the early 1960's, well past its former glamorous condition. On arrival in Istanbul, I really needed a bath, and took one on camera. It became part of the show. Is it the first and only time an NBC correspondent was shown having a bath? By the way, it was a bubble bath.

One last, if I may use the expression, souvenir. I had done an interview with Muhammad Ali at his home in New Jersey. He saw me to the door and said, in the rhyming style he loved, "Mr. Newman, I like your show and I like your style, but your fee is so low, I won't be back for a while."

There was no fee.

Tributes to Silent Microphones

William Alexander Smith, 79 of Palm Harbor, Florida died Sunday, December 9, 2001 at home. He worked as a department manager for NBC television in New York. His daughters remember him as someone who always looked for and found ways to make any situation better for someone else. He gave decades of his free time to the Garden City Park Civics Association. Years later, when he made Florida his home, he gave over 500 hours of service as a volunteer for Mease Hospital. It seemed that he felt a great sense of reward in being such a giving person. His family and friends will always remember him as someone who was strong with a special gentleness, as someone who found beauty and grace in the nature around him, who always took the high road, and defined what character truly means. Survivors include two daughters, Juliann and Victoria, a brother, Roland, and a sister, Mary.

Edward Down passed away December 17, 2001 at age 72. He was a motorcycle courier for the News Department at 30 Rockefeller Plaza for 21 years. He retired in 1987 and moved to the Backwoods of Camptown, PA. He lived and died as he espoused. All his friends will miss him. His twin daughters Linda and Laura and his brother Alfred survive him.

Thomas J. Maccabe, 74 of Dobbs Ferry, NY died suddenly on November 17, 2001 at home, of a heart attack. He began his career with World Telegram in 1956 and joined NBC in 1964 as a news writer with the Huntley-Brinkley Report. He retired in 1987 while writing for the Today Show. Survivors include his wife, Virginia, two sons, Andrew and Thomas, and two granddaughters.

Pioneer NBC News Producer **Chet Hagan** died Feb. 12 at his home in Pennsylvania. He was 79. Funeral services were conducted Saturday, Feb. 16 in Reading, Pa.

He leaves a wife, Dorothy, of Wernersville, Pa., and a son, Colin, who lives in Virginia.

Hagan worked as a producer/director at NBC for 19 years, mainly in the 1950s and '60s. Hagan began his journalist career in the '40s, as a copy boy on the Reading Eagle newspaper. After work there and another small paper in nearby Lebanon for several years, he switched to radio, writing news for announcers, at two stations in

the area.

His first big chance came when he went to New York City to work for NBC News in May, 1949, starting as assistant manager of news, reporting to the legendary Joe Meyers, then moving soon to producer of the radio network's News of the World, until 1955. From then until 1958, he was director of the Central Division in Chicago, with responsibility for television and radio news coverage in the 15 Midwest states. Hagan was transferred back to New York to become only one of three television news program producers working on special reports and documentaries. The other two were Reuven Frank and Lou Hazam. Over the next ten years, he produced 460 news specials, some of "instant" breaking news stories, or others tied to planned major events, such as Presidential trips abroad.

He was awarded Emmys for producing the NBC 1962 news coverage of Astronaut John Glenn's orbit of the earth, the first such flight by an American, and for a 1963 special for coverage of the Vietnam War. He won a Peabody award, also in '63, for producing a landmark program about another major story of that period, the civil rights movement.

Other honors included two Sylvania Awards, one for space flight coverage in 1955, and other for Russian Premier Khrushchev's visit to the US in '59. Many of these specials featured another pioneer in television news, Frank McGee. They built an unusually close friendship during long stretches of live coverage, with one observer saying, "They worked together so well because they could read each other's mind." Hagan was featured in a TV Guide article for his overall superiority as a producer, for being able to order reports from various places around the world, and bring them alive in a television report.

Also, he baffled his colleagues by remaining in his producer's chair for long periods in the control room, munching on sandwiches and drinking quarts of coffee, without taking breaks. He was personally proudest of his non-stop four days coverage of the assassination of President John Kennedy. Hagan's final program for NBC was as producer of the TV news coverage of the Democratic Nominating Convention in Chicago, in 1968, during tense periods of time of live TV coverage as police attacks upon protesters in a downtown city park competed (**Chet Hagan**) with the convention business several

Tributes to Silent Microphones Cont'd

miles away.

But hard news was not his sole interest. He produced eight annual Country Music Awards programs, and became known personally to many of the big names in country music, Johnny Cash and Dolly Parton, her first TV appearances, and others. He also supervised many Grand Ole Opry shows from Nashville.

He and his wife, and their son, moved to Virginia for several years, where he lived out his dreams about owning and racing horses: he bought and raised them in the rolling-hills "horse country" there, and now his son Colin does the same there, as a veterinarian.

Despite the pressures and energies needed to produce TV programs, Chet also began writing novels in that period. He wrote two about Nashville in 1976, and later wrote a mystery, "The Witching" situated in Berks County, Pennsylvania, his home countryside.

Later, after full-time retirement, he wrote six novels, all selling well enough so the publisher would accept "the next one." In recent times, he has been editor of the Historical Review of Berks County, wrote and edited "Book Ends" for the Township Library, and published a commendable collection of first-person pieces by famous authors whose "country" homes were in Berks County. And, for the Library, he produced a video about it, to promote its contributions to the residents. He brought in a one-time NBC News colleague to "anchor" it: Edwin Newman. A colleague who observed Hagan's style of focus and decision said of him "Chet Hagan was a golden talent in a Golden Age of television."

Arthur Astor Cooper

Almost everyone knew him as "Coop", including his beloved wife Judy, whom he met at an Orange Bowl Game in 1979.

Few, however, knew his *given* first name, *Astor*, which he disliked, and self changed when a teenager, to his middle name, Arthur. Coop was among the very first people I ever met at NBC, (in the Spring of 1978). Little did either of us know, he would one day be my Father-in law, and grandfather to our son, Joshua. *Tom Smiley* assigned me to *Another World* about a week after starting at NBC, and said



August 25, 1917 - December 19, 2001

for the first day I'd be driving to the Brooklyn Studios with Art Cooper.

Coop came to WEA, 660 AM Radio in 1943, and never got over the fact that the company wouldn't release him for military duty because, as they said, "he was essential to the war effort right where he was". "Go figure," he would say. Despite their objections, Coop did get released, and signed up with the Merchant Marine, serving in Italy and other European ports. He returned to WEA in 1945, and in November of 1946 it became WNBC. Coop worked his magic on all the great radio shows of the day including; *The Shadow*, *One Man's Family*, *Fibber McGee & Molly*, *The Goldbergs*, *Mystery Theater*, and all the rest of that era.

Once, in those early days, and during the dress rehearsal of a prime time radio drama, a featured actor had missed his call, and a panicked director called upon Coop to go down the lobby and, "Grab the first actor who looks like he knows what the hell he's doing," ... Pop was always proud of having seized that moment, and discovered a then undiscovered, *Tony Randall*, giving him his first Network acting job, with NBC.

Coop had a pretty good eye for talent. If you knew him, you'd know he would occasionally enjoy a drink with the boys, as the proprietors at Hurleys might attest. Upon returning from a particular road trip back in the late 60's he raved about a young singer he'd caught at one of the local saloons, telling his family to keep an eye out for a young guy named *Willie Nelson*.

During his years at NBC Art Cooper and his family lived in Stony Point, NY (neighbors to *Mitch Miller*, another of the shows he worked on), and despite some big snow storms, He loved to brag about having never missed a show "cause of the weather". "We had a hell of a snow storm one night after finishing a *Perry Como* Christmas Special, and after we were good-nighted, I go in my Morris Minor (car) and head for home. It took an extra 2 hours 'cause there's a (expletive deleted) blizzard outside, and just after I get home, and settled in with my first martini, there's a knock at the door. "Jeeze, who could that be." It was Perry Como's driver with a gift basket loaded with cheese, and other goodies. Perry was a hell of a nice guy ... a real gentleman. He sent a basket to every family who worked the show."

Because of a NABET requirement, a Sound Effects engineer was assigned to all Toscanini Broadcasts from 8H. Pop was a great "schmooser", and loved ("Coop")

Tributes to Silent Microphones Cont'd

hanging out with the orchestra's musicians. As a result, he was able to acquire some of their retired instruments for his daughters, dazzling their school's music director with extraordinary instruments.

There were lots of stories about the big shows Coop used to do. Among his two favorites were *A Night To Remember*, and the operatic version of *Othello*. The '50s, and '60s, were the most innovative years for television. People were encouraged to be creative, and were given the latitude to do so. By 1955, Coop he had established a notable reputation for himself, and was very proud of having been invited by director *George Roy Hill* to not only create the SFX for the *Kraft Television Theater* production of *A Night To Remember*, but also attend the *pre*-production meeting, unheard of for a Sound Effects Engineer in those days. It was done of course, live, and as we have come to appreciate, was Coop's most shining hour. It was a broadcast of astounding scope, even by today's standards, and the enormous press NBC received after the broadcast, compelled the company to repeat the show two weeks later, again, live. *As a footnote, I was able to locate a kine-scope copy of A Night To Remember from: <http://www.kinevideo.net/>*

Coop's brother, Harold was married to New York's *City Center Opera* diva, Brenda Miller. She starred in the part of Desdemona for the live NBC production of *Othello*. Desdemona dies a very dramatic death at the end of the play. Imagine Coop's surprise when he returned home to find his young, impressionable, utterly inconsolable youngest daughter, *Lisa*, weeping at the loss of her favorite Aunt Brenda.

Coop loved working with Ernie Kovacs, and thought he was consistently the funniest person alive, saying "it was nearly um-possible to hear the director cause you were laughing to bust a gut". Coop was funny by nature, and definitely enjoyed the comedies best; *Steve Allen*, *Johnny Carson*, *Sid Caesar*, *Milton Berle* and even his occasional stint on *Saturday Night Live*.

In Brooklyn, Coop had a dynasty! 'Back in the old days', he was fond of telling us, "we did most all the Sound Effects live! On the big shows, we'd have three triple turntables working at the same time, plus as many live effects as we could put in ... made a lot of the SFX ourselves. In television, it's a lost art." It wasn't all strictly by the book, however. He insisted (to the producers) the only "authentic" car door slam came from

an old "latch door" refrigerator, and the only way to get an "authentic" tea whistle was to have a working hot plate. Once the company authorized his request, he made sure it was a "working" fridge, and a "top of the line" hot plate, (Thank you, *Bob Greenberg*), and Welcome to Coop's Kitchen! He would drive everyone in the building crazy with his culinary expertise, and impromptu gastronomic feasts. A tradition later carried on by his daughter. "You can't do sound effects all day on an empty stomach ... a person's gotta eat" Coop would say.

Bill Miller (head of Brooklyn maintenance) used to bring in his weekend catch. He and Coop would fry up breaded/seasoned blackfish, or a steaming bouillabaisse for themselves, and those lucky enough to be among the chosen guests, which were legion. The Sound effects room was always a fascinating, indeed perfect place to take a break, or be out of the way, and still hear the TD call the next scene, or the end of a "five" ... if you could find the place.

One day, circa 1975, word reached the production offices of *Another World*, by way of the main switchboard at 30 Rock, that "unacceptable language" had gotten out over that day's (taped) air show. My wife Lisa, brand new to NBC, happened to be doing music for *AW* that day, and Coop was doing Sound Effects. All the producers, including EP *Paul Rauch*, gathered round the control room to listen to the back-up tape, and sure enough, just barely audible in the BG was a string of expletives that would embarrass a Brooklyn Stage Hand. Maintenance engineer *Tony Rivera*, ear cocked toward the studio monitor said, "That sounds like Coop." The tape was re-racked, and played again, *Phil Berge* adjusting the filters to better hear the offending expletives, nodded in ascent. All agreed it was Coop having inadvertently gotten through on an open microphone from the Sound Effects room. The only dissenting voice among those gathered was his daughter, Lisa. Having never heard her father talk that way, she said, "That's not my father ... it can't be my father", and Tony Rivera said, "I'm sure it's not your father, but it is *Coop*!"

Author David Weinberg worked at NBC from 1978 to 1985 and later as a freelancer.

Elliott Ramsay Drake born in 1918 died of

Tributes to Silent Microphones Cont'd

natural causes on January 6, 2002 at Beaches Memorial Hospital. He was the son of Arthur and Dorothy Drake and grandson of the founder of Drake's cakes baking company, Newman Drake. Raised in Short Hills, NJ, he went to Pingry Prep School and was a 1940 graduate of Princeton University where he majored in English Literature and was a member of Princeton's notorious theater group, the Triangle Club.

He was a commissioned Army officer in World War II where he was stationed in England and was proud of his service to his country.

For 4 years in the late forties, he wrote, directed and produced two radio dramas, "High Adventure" and "John Steel Adventurers" for WOR Radio in New York City. Both shows helped launch the careers of future stars like Tony Randall and Eva Maria Saint. This is where he cut his teeth as a young writer/director and he frequently referred to this period as one of the most exhilarating of his creative life.

During 1951 he wrote O'Henryesque, mini-dramas for the "Kate Smith Show" an NBC television show where the point of the playlet could only be revealed in the very last line. He thought of this as one of the most difficult puzzles writers can pose for themselves.

He came on board the groundbreaking show 'Monitor' as a producer in 1957. In 1963, he was asked to produce a three-hour live news show, a fore-runner of today's round the clock news formats. This ushered in the most challenging period of his life. Sunday night Monitor represented three pressure packed hours of intense concentration due largely to the fact that most of the program was done live. It also gave him firsthand contact with the most significant personalities of his generation. His work on Monitor became the defining moment of his career.

He directed the 'Nichols and May Comedy Hour' which led to the 1960 Television Daily All-American Award for 'Best Comedy Program' and the classic comedy album 'Nichols and May Examine Doctors' where he can be heard in the background calling out sketch ideas and cracking up at their improvisations.

He was the 1964 winner of the prestigious George Foster Peabody Broadcasting Award for Sunday Night Monitor as outstanding contribution to radio news during 1963. Through his additions, Monitor helped to reshape the nature of broadcast news. It has been said that

without Monitor shows like 20/20 and All Things Considered wouldn't exist.

In 1976, NBC asked 'Bud' to produce and direct 5 one-hour specials celebrating NBC's 50th Anniversary. Hosted by Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Ben Grauer, Arlene Francis, and John Chancellor, the shows were a year long project which brought him back in touch with the legends of broadcasting and won him and his team, radio's equivalent of the Emmy, the Ohio State University Award for broadcast excellence.

At the time of his death, he was close to finishing his first novel, tentatively titled "Remains To Be Seen."

But when it was all said and done after 30 years in Broadcasting, working with some of the most talented people in the industry, he frequently said that what he was really born to be was a father.

He is survived by his loving wife of 46 years, Audrey, his five children, Ellen, Al, Dave, and Peter, and his three grandchildren, Scott, Ross, and Lauren.

Dear Peacock North,

As some of you may have heard, **Clark Jones** died on March 28th. In addition to being someone I always felt privileged to work with—and I'm sure all of you who had that chance feel the same way—we became close friends. He was like a big brother to me and I shall sorely miss him.

Clark was sick for a long time with a debilitating case of emphysema. Those of us who know him and worked with him and knew how meticulously he prepared for every production he directed, will not be surprised to learn that he called me approximately six months ago and asked if I would edit his obituary, one that he had written himself, and distribute it when the time came. I did.

I thought, however, that for Peacock North, for all of you who worked with him and loved him (is there anyone left from the Eddie Condon days or "The Mohawk Showroom"?), and even for those of you who didn't, that reading the unedited version of what he sent me (it reads like a history of the television musical/variety show) would recall many fond memories for everyone.

Clark loved getting his issues of Peacock North and would read them from cover to cover as soon as they arrived in the mail. When the new team asked for start

Tributes to Silent Microphones Cont'd

up money, he sent a check for \$100. Thanks Clark—for everything!

Enid

Clark Reed Jones, 81, died at his home in Key West, Florida on the morning of March 28, 2002. The cause was emphysema.

One of the first television directors in this country, Mr. Jones, in 1949, directed the first simulcast, a telecast of the long-standing radio show, "The Voice Of Firestone," conducted by Howard Barlow, and featuring Eleanor Steber.

He directed the first closed-circuit theater television show, a performance at the Metropolitan Opera House of the opera "Carmen" featuring Rise Stevens, which was fed to an audience at the Guild Theater on West 50th Street in New York.

He directed the first television spectacular, a 2-hour live program aired simultaneously on NBC and CBS, featuring Mary Martin, Ethel Merman, Howard Lindsey and Dorothy Stickney, Kukla and Ollie, Wally Cox, Eddie Fisher, Rudy Vallee, Marion Anderson, Bing Crosby, Maurice Chevalier, Frank Sinatra, two Jerome Robbins ballets, and hosted by Edward R. Murrow, and Oscar Hammerstein, as a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Ford Motor Company.

Mr. Jones began his career in 1941 at the General Electric Company experimental station WRGB in Schenectady, New York. His 6 years there included 3 years of service in the US Army Signal Corps in Africa, Italy, France and Germany.

In 1947, when television moved from its experimental stage to its commercial stage, Jones moved to New York City where he served first with WPIX, directing among others, "The Voice Of The People" and "The Eddie Condon Show." When the Condon show moved to NBC, Jones went with it, joining NBC as a staff director.

His first assignment was a daily 15-minute show called "The Mohawk Showroom" featuring Morton Downey, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and Roberta Quinlan on Tuesdays and Thursdays. He directed several "One Man's Family" soap opera episodes and several "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" shows. And then came

"Your Hit Parade" which was to keep him as director for 4 years, after which he left NBC to become free lance.

Aside from "Your Hit Parade," his first hit of the 1950's was the Broadway hit, "Peter Pan," re-staged for TV, starring Mary Martin and Cyril Richard. That success prompted Mr. Jones to join the effort to win audiences to musicals by directing three that were written especially for TV:

"The Lord Don't Play Favorite's." about a small-time traveling circus stranded in a drought-ridden Kansas town, featuring Kay Starr, Robert Stack, Dick Haymes, Buster Keaton, and Louis Armstrong.

"Jack And The Beanstack," written by Helen Deutsch, and featuring Celeste Holm, Cyril Richard, Peggy King, Arnold Stang, and Joel Grey.

And "Ruggles Of Red Gap," a classic tale of an English butler, who is "lost" in a poker game by his noble English employer to a nouveau riche couple from out west, music by Julie Styne, lyrics by Leo Robin, and featuring Michael Redgrave, David Wayne, Imogene Coca, Jane Powell, Peter Lawford, and Paul Lynde and hosted by Garry Moore.

In the mid 1950's, Mr. Jones teamed up with Sir Frederick Ashton to adapt the Royal Ballet production of "Sleeping Beauty" for television, starring Margot Fonteyn. They teamed up again, two seasons later, to televise the Royal Ballet production of "Cinderella."

With Michael Benthall, he staged "Romeo And Juliet," performed by the Old Vic Company, featuring Claire Bloom and John Neville.

"The Four Poster," the roadway comedy hit starring Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy, tracing a marriage of 35 years, was re-enacted in a TV studio set featuring their venerable 4-poster bed.

He directed two seasons of "Ceasar's Hour" featuring Sid Ceasar, Nanette Fabray, Carl Reiner, and Howard Morris. The, as both producer and director, he directed one season of "The Patrice Munsel Show," written by Larry Gelbhart. Continuing as producer/director, he moved on to do two seasons of the "The Perry Como Show" series, after which—feeling uncomfortable being both producer and director—he chose to continue his career as director only.

In the 1960's, except for a series of 26 "Bell Telephone Hours" and 10 "Sammy Davis, Jr." shows (the first hour show to be hosted by a black) and the first

Tributes to Silent Microphones Cont'd

season of "The Carol Burnett Show", Mr. Jones directed special observing NBC's 60th anniversary. He retired in 1987.

mostly musical/variety specials, including "The Dreamhouse of Mr. Blanding," "25 Years Of Life," starring Bob Hope, "The Chrysler Rainbow Of Stars From Rockefeller Center," the "Fred Waring Easter Special," Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic in Japan (for "Omnibus," "The Dinah Shore Special." "An Hour With Robert Goulet," "The Play Of Daniel" for PBS," "Sammy And his Friends" (which preceded the Sammy Davis series), "Annie Get Your Gun" with Ethel Merman, two specials with Carol Channing, "Peggy Fleming At Madison Square Garden," "Festival At Fords," "Jimmy Durante Presents The Lennon Sisters," the first of two Frank Sinatra specials, and the first network telecast of "The Tony Awards." He was to continue with "The Tony Awards" for nineteen years.

In the 1970's, Mr. Jones directed a pilot called "The Americans" which resulted in a series of sitcom episodes called "The Funny Side," hosted by Gene Kelly, written and produced by Sam Denoff and Bill Persky.

He directed the Broadway comedy hit, "6RmsRivVu" re-staged for TV, starring Carol Burnett and Alan Alda; Likewise the Broadway hit "Twigs," restaged for TV, starring Carol Burnett.

He directed a 3-hour NBC News special, "Of Women And Men", featuring Barbara Walters and Tom Snyder. In London, he directed for TV Marlene Dietrich's stage show, "I Wish You Love."

During the decade of the 70's, he managed to fit in a series of "Monsanto Presents" specials, devoting one hour each to Jose Feliciano, Tony Bennett, George Carlin, Robert Goulet and Carol Lawrence, Anne Murray, Benny Goodman, Engelbert Humperdink, Jack Jones, Johnny Mathis, Red Skelton, and Arthur Fiedler with the Boston Pops at Carnegie Hall.

At the end of the decade, he spent most of 1978 mounting 5 specials in observance of the CBS 50th anniversary, plus an Emmy Awards show, and his first pageants, "Miss Universe" and "Miss USA" which he repeated for the next 7 years.

In the 1980's, in addition to the pageants and the Tony Awards, he directed a "Peoples' Choice Awards," then his second Sinatra special, then a 2-hour "Night Of 100 Stars," a telecast of a Broadway production of "Sophisticated Ladies," and "Night of 100 Stars II."

In 1987 he directed his 19th "Tony Awards" and a spe-

Clark Reed Jones was born April 10th, 1920, to Hazel Helene Simmons and Arch Jones in Clearfield, Pennsylvania. He grew up in Albany, NY and was educated at the Northwestern University School of Speech. He is survived by his sister, Mavis Little, and his friend, Paul Daniel.

Milton Berle, television's first superstar and the man who came to be known as "Mr. Television," died at his home April 27th at the age of 93. With Mr. Berle at the time of his death were his wife, Lorna, and other family members. The performer was diagnosed with colon cancer last year and had been in hospice care the past few weeks.



Now that Milton Berle is gone, one really realizes that the history of television is the kind of thing you're going to put in museums and talk about as history. He is that seminal a figure and really did mark the flash point, or beginning, of television. Born in New York in 1908 as endel Berlinger, he was onstage performing in vaudeville as a child. By the early 1930s, he was

working full time as a comedian in vaudeville and such Broadway reviews as The Earl Carroll Varieties and Ziegfeld Follies. But he was never a headliner.

In the early 1940s, he went to Hollywood and managed to land roles in several films, such as Margin for Error in 1943. But again he was not a major player.

All that changed on June 8, 1948, when he auditioned as host for The Texaco Star Theater on NBC. His guests that night included singer Pearl Bailey, tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and ventriloquist Senor Wences. Mr. Berle was an instant hit and took over as permanent host in September. For three seasons, Tuesday nights belonged to Mr. Berle, and Texaco Star Theater was the highest-rated variety show on television.

By the start of 1949, the number of TV sets jumped to 1 million, and then doubled again by 1950.

The consensus among television historians is that Mr. Berle, along with Mr. Sullivan and Sid Caesar, drove those sales. Early research services found that 80 percent of the homes with televisions were tuned to Mr. Berle on Tuesday nights on NBC.

Television changed quickly in those years, and The Texaco Star Theater was gone by the start of the 1954 season. His final guest was Elvis Presley. Mr. Berle headlined other variety shows on NBC in the 1950s, but none was as successful. At the height of his fame, he had signed a 30-year contract with NBC guaranteeing him \$100,000 a year. By 1960, NBC had him working as host of a bowling show, Jackpot Bowling With Milton Berle, to try to get him to end the contract. He renegotiated for a lower annual fee and the right to work on other networks. The Guinness Book of Records listed him as having given more benefit performances than any other entertainer.

Berle was twice married to and divorced from Joyce Matthews. His marriage to Ruth Cosgrove also ended in divorce. Survivors include his wife, Lorna Adams, whom he married in 1991; two children from his marriages to Matthews; and two children of his marriage to Cosgrove.

NBC's FIRST FABULOUS FIFTY

These notes were taken during the production of the show NBC made of the first fifty years of broadcasting. We transferred the show to a 3-CD set and only 5 sets remain unsold. If this story should generate any new interest for additional sets, I will need at least 50 to 60 confirmed orders before ordering any new production at the original price of \$22, including mailing and handling. My original intent was to proliferate this wonderful product to those who might most appreciate it...and to pass it on to their children and grandchildren. I know that is why the late Bud Drake ordered 8 sets from me...he wanted the family to know what they worked so hard on...for so long. Don Blair

NBC's FIRST FABULOUS FIFTY

Notes by Don Blair.

It took a lot of players to make the team that spent at least a year pouring through the NBC Radio Network archives and listening to the comedy, drama, music, news and sports that kept us all hard by our radios throughout those memorable years.

Those involved, remember that the idea most likely originated with Russ Tornabene, then the network's GM and Vice President. But Russ doubtlessly had to get his green light from Jack Thayer—the top man in that era. We should be grateful to both.

As for those who actually got down and did the digging, they turned out to be good friends whose talents for producing, the network's leaders quickly recognized writing and editing.

Having arrived at NBC in the spring of 1974, I was already very familiar with Elliott "Bud" Drake, Charley Garment and Warren Hogan by the time they were picked to do the job. Bud became overall producer. He was right out of the ranks of the fading Monitor weekend radio service that ended in mid 1974. He had produced many segments of Nichols & May for Monitor as well as entire three and four hour segments. Charlie Garment was another Monitor alumni and also a brilliant writer and, from my own experience, a total pleasure to work with in radio news. In other words, he laughed at my jokes.

Warren Hogan became the choice as the main man with the editing razor blade in his hand...a wizard at editing and excerpting, coupled with the imagination and the "ear" to know when to edit and why. Pete Flynn, who was kept busy obtaining clearances for the use of this gold mine of material, recalls Hogan being labeled their "creative technician" and indeed he was.

Pete Flynn, by the way, was Director of Programs at the time and found himself immersed in the huge task of negotiating for the rights to all the archival material and the host talents for the series. As Pete recalls now, every one of the estates contacted, agreed to the use of material without charge to the network. When it came to the hosts and they heard that their talents were desired for a 50th anniversary show, all became eager to participate and the bottom line became \$5,000.00 apiece.

Imagine yourself sitting amidst hundreds and hundreds

of priceless 18-inch discs and tapes of NBC's legendary existence. Try to choose between what to keep

NBC's First Fabulous Fifty—Cont'd.

and what to leave out. Bud Drake recalled a lot of give-and-take (arguments I guess) and downright anguish over choices in this treasure trove. Warren Hogan stepped in when a particular piece of music seemed right for the continuing theme heard throughout the series. With his superb editing, he created the ribbon of sound, the music bed, which they used again and again.

Bud, Charley and Warren were joined in their endless hours of listening and selecting by Pauline Barfield and Angela Hope Smith as production assistants. Bud Drake called them "researchers extraordinaire." Pauline had been on the Monitor staff while Angela stepped out of a very nice secretarial position to join the team.

In a phone conversation with Bud, who lived over in Ponte Verde at the time, I asked if they had had any difficulties with the famed individuals they would be working with. Absolutely none, said Bud, and I could tell by his tone that he wasn't trying to paint anything over. As my upcoming notes will reveal, even giants like Bob Hope and Bing Crosby warmed to the task and were very easy to work with.

Pete Flynn remembers a time when Bud was getting ready to head west and record Bob and Bing—reminding Bud to carry his taped excerpts to the sessions so the hosts could really get into the project. Bud counters that he would never have left New York without them. As it turned out, Hope initially displayed just a bit of reticence about the sessions, which took place in a cavernous Hollywood sound stage. Soon, however, after hearing some of the decades-old gems Bud brought with him, Mr. Hope's enthusiasm grew by leaps and bounds. He launched into some recollections that Bud regretted not being able to include with everything else.

Now—catch this. Charley Garment had written a special version of Hope's theme song "Thanks for the memories" and had tied it to a nice slow orchestral arrangement. Bob had trouble with the pacing and Bud ended up, through Bob's earphones, coaching the great one on how to sing his own theme song! Drake laughed heartily at the recollection. What gall I had, he said, adding that Hope was not offended at all.

Then it was north to San Francisco and Der Bingle's estate in a plush region known (I believe) as Hillsborough. A gated mansion with an endless gorgeously landscaped driveway emptying into a cobblestone courtyard. The massive oak doors were opened into a cobblestone courtyard. The doors were opened by (what else?)

a British butler. Bing was still out golfing, but Bud and his audio engineer were led into the study, which left them both with their mouths gaping. Very big...very nice. Katherine Crosby made a brief appearance, Bud well remembered, in skin-tight leather pants. A short time later, the golfing Crosby entered with his old porkpie hat perched on the back of his head and his golf shoes in his hand.

Back to the Big Apple where the retired announcing legend Ben Grauer had already committed his part of the project to tape.

Next up, the always refreshing and delightful Arlene Francis to take listeners through NBC Radio's fourth decade. It was a time when radio, as what we used to call "theater of the mind," was in its descent and becoming more and more our source for music, news and weather. Arlene took us breezily through the mid-fifties into the mid-sixties—the end of the Korean War and the beginnings of our involvement in Vietnam. It wasn't Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy anymore, but it did get our attention.

Now it was time to sit down with John Chancellor who, Bud Drake told us, was a perfectionist and not given to reading anyone else's words besides his own, including those we heard on NBC Nightly News during John's tenure there. Nonetheless, he picked up the script Charley Garment had prepared for him and read it perfectly and without changing a word. This was a nice tribute from one old pro to another. John was the icing on this celebratory cake and he took us right into the mid-1970's and the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter. And with words describing Carter's arrival at the Whitehouse from his roots in little old Plains, Georgia, we had completed the journey from 1926 through a remarkable, turbulent, ever changing half-century.

When this series was completed in 1976, it was then broadcast over five consecutive Sunday evenings after which some 1600 two-pocket LPs were pressed and distributed to colleges and universities all across the country. It was always my understanding that many LPs also went to then NBC Radio Network advertisers. The complete series never did fit entirely on those LPs so the CDs possess something those other folks never had... the whole enchilada. Who knows where all those LPs are today? Not too many turntables hanging around. In any case I have only sought to perpetuate what I feel is the essence of a once-great medium that I am immensely proud to have been a tiny part of—albeit at a time when radio's glory days had come and gone. We hope all will enjoy our product. Good friends labored long, hard and devotedly to give it life.



By Frank Vierling

Spring 1950

Households with TVs were treated to Bob Hope's network television debut. Bob hosted a ninety-minute "Star Spangled Review" on NBC starting at 5:30 in the afternoon. His guest was Beatrice Lillie.

The cost of Bob Hope's holiday show on NBC television this afternoon (April 9) is expected to run to about \$135,000, including fees for talent, rehearsal expenses and payment for the hour and a half of time on the air. By comparison, the cost of bringing the musical "South Pacific" to Broadway was about \$180,000.

Other TV fare included CBS covering Easter Morning Worship from Central Park and later WPIX and all the networks covered the Easter Parade on 5th Avenue (this writer was there).

On the radio dial CBS aired an adaptation of the Kaufman-Ferber play, "Dinner at Eight" with a cast including Charles Boyer, John Garfield, Deborah Kerr, Dorothy McGuire, Otto Kruger and Jan Sterling. NBC broadcast the Sistine Chapel Choir from Rome, WQXR pre-ented "Par ifal" and WOR offered "Triumphant Hour" with Bing Crosby, Fibber McGee and Molly, Jimmy Durante among others.

Baseball was on the TV screens and WOR-TV was covering the Dodgers with Red Barber. WABD covered the Yanks with Dizzy Dean, Mel Allan and Curt Gowdy and WPIX aired the Giants from the Polo Grounds.

Under the headline "Let's Slow Down TV Clean-up...Threatens to get out of hand" TV critic Jack Gould wrote, "In the wake of inexcusable actions by a single comedian, television is embarking on a "clean-up campaign" that rapidly is getting out of hand. ...TV has marched further down the road toward censorship by outside pressure groups and "purity" code than it ever did in the past ...It is time that everyone cooled off a little and thought more of television's long-range artistic freedom and less of its short-term indiscretions." What would he be writing today?

At the movies: "The Reformer and the Red-head" with June Allison and Dick Powell was at the

Capital. On the stage: Sammy Kaye and his orchestra and added attraction, Nancy Walker. Alan Ladd was starring in "Captain Carey, USA," Walt Disney's "Cinderella" was playing at the Mayfair and the Strand had "Barricade" with Ruth Roman, Dane Clark and Raymond Massey and in Person and Billie Holiday and Count Basie and his orchestra. The WORLD Theater had the "Bicycle Thief." Kirk Dougla , Lauren Bacall and Doris Day with Hoagy Carmichael were at the Brooklyn Fox in "Young Man with a Horn" with a co-feature "Tarnished." At the Music Hall Ray Milland and Rosalind Russell could be seen in "A Woman of Distinction." DeMille's "Sampson and Delilah" was on the RIVOLI screen and Red Skelton was at the Capital in "Yellow Cab Man."

In the theaters: "South Pacific" with Martin and Pinza was at the Majestic while Dorothy Gish starred in "The Man" at the Fulton. Nanette Fabray, George Guetary and Pearl Bailey were on stage at the 46th Street Theater in "Arms and the Man" and Kate Hepburn played Rosalind in "As You Like It." Cedric Hardwicke and Lillie Palmer were in a limited engagement of "Caesar and Cleopatra" while Shirley Booth starred in "Come Back, Little Sheba." Other how on Broadway included "Death of a Salesman" with Gene Lockheart, Ralph Bellamy in "Detective Story," "Gentleman Prefer Blondes," Henry Fonda in "Mister Roberts," Irving Berlin's "Miss Liberty," Ethel Waters in "The Member of the Wedding" and Helen Hayes' "The Wisteria Trees," a new play by Joshua Logan.

Books: According to the New York Times "Best Sellers" list for April 9, 1950, America was reading: "The Wall" by John Hersey, Mika Waltari's "The Egyptian" and "The Parasites" by du Maurier. In nonfiction: Louise Hall Tharp's, "The Peabody Sisters of Salem" and Eleanor Roosevelt's, "This I Remember" (TV Field televised a show from Mrs. Roosevelt's New York City apartment where she pre-ented each crew member a signed copy of her book.)

You might think that a fan club for an unher-

The Bambi Tascarella Fan Club

alded New Yorker, started in 1977 on a lark by a Sioux City Boy Scout executive, would make for a good laugh and then die a natural death.

But the Bambi Tascarella Fan Club took on a life of its own.

Tascarella was a production associate with NBC Nightly News in 1977 when her name—crawling past on the credits each night along with John Chancellor and David Brinkley—caught the fancy of D.R. “Duck” Smith, executive director of the Prairie Gold Council, Boy Scouts of America.

The seed for the Bambi Tascarella Fan Club was planted. It grew, complete with membership cards, rules and chapters in New York, Washington, DC, Los Angeles and nine states, plus Sydney, Australia, and Cairo, Egypt.

Meetings of the club were defined as “Every time one member of the club sits down with another member of the club.” National headquarters was, of course, Sioux City.

The whole thing received national media attention, including the front page of the Chicago Tribune and, after her Sioux City visit, a first-person account by Tascarella for “TV Guide.”

And in 1978, Tascarella came to Sioux City for Bambi Tascarella Day—which happened to fall on the wry-humored Smith’s birthday, April 1.

Tascarella was greeted at the one-gate Sioux City airport by George and Clara Wobken squeezing out polka music on their accordions, and a crowd of fans decked out in Bambi T-shirts.

“Everybody was just happy to see her,” said Ed Porter, a retired journal photographer who met her at the airport. “It was like we said, ‘We don’t have a celebrity, so you’re it!’”

After George Cole, former mayor, gave her a key to the city and a certificate of honorary citizenship, Tascarella was whisked into a red Cadillac and given a tour of the town. Bank signs all over the city flashed “Welcome Bambi... Welcome Bambi...”

On to a luncheon where her name was spelled out in the dessert, each letter on a separate cake. There was a news conference and autograph party at a Ford dealership followed by a stop at KTIV-TV, the local NBC affiliate, where she “guested” on the 6 o’clock news.

That night, Tascarella was presented with a set

of polished steer horns and a cattle prod, Jolly Time Popcorn, Sue Bee Honey and other souvenirs. She still has most of them, plus a box of press clippings under her bed.

From Sioux City, she flew to Hollywood, where she appeared with Tom Snyder on his NBC program, “Tomorrow.” By that time, Snyder had become president of the Los Angeles chapter of the Bambi Tascarella Fan Club.

And it had all started so simply.

“Well, we were wondering what a lady would look like if her name was Bambi. And she had an interesting last name, too,” recalled Mardelle Corrigan, who was the Boy Scout Council’s registrar at the time.

“Things just snowballed from there,” said Corrigan, who now lives in Denver. She still exchanges Christmas cards with Tascarella each year.

Tascarella recalled Corrigan’s first letter.

“I just thought it was a joke,” she said. “It was kind of a snowy day and I thought, ‘Let me follow up with this.’” That led to an exchange of letters and the invitation to visit Sioux City.

“I thought, ‘Oh my God, this is just more exciting than anything,’” Tascarella said. “I hadn’t done anything but have a name.”

Months before Tascarella visited Sioux City, David Brinkley caught wind of the fan club and contacted Corrigan, asking to join. He was named president of the Washington, DC, chapter.

John Chancellor also wrote asking to join:

“Along with a lot of other people around here, we’ve been fans of Bambi’s for a long time. Do I get a membership card?” He was made president of the New York chapter.

Tascarella said her trip to Sioux City brought her fame.

“After I came back, I had some guy want to write a Broadway show about me. Somebody asked me if I wanted to endorse pasta products. Then I got all these letters; some were interesting, some were a little weird, but man, hundreds and hundreds of letters.

“The most amazing thing is that I actually had people I worked with every day wanting to know if I would autograph an 8-by 10 glossy, which I thought was extremely funny,” she said.

• Bambi Tascarella Fan Club Cont'd.

Now 54, Tascarella has been with NBC News for 36 years. She is in charge of telecommunications and data networking. Her responsibilities include arranging satellite time and other hook-ups around the world.

At NBC, the Bambi Tascarella Fan Club story has matured to lore. New hires seem to learn of it and seek out Tascarella for confirmation.

A couple of years ago, she met then-presidential candidate George W. Bush in a hallway at NBC News. "I stick out my hand and say, 'Governor, Bambi Tascarella,'" she recounted. "Without skipping a beat, he jumps back and at the top of his lungs blurts out my name." Her friends heard it around the corner in the newsroom. "They said, 'Of my God, you know him, too?'"

Eight years ago, Tascarella was working the remote broadcast from the New Hampshire primary when a young free-lance cameraman approached. In his wal-

let was an original Bambi Tascarella Fan Club card.

"He pulls out of his wallet a card that was right next to his draft card as he says to me, 'I've been carrying this card around since the very first day and can't believe I'm finally meeting you.'"

In September, Tascarella and her husband were traveling in Wyoming and found themselves in the mountains in a covered wagon with a group of people from—you guessed it—Sioux City.

"My husband, who is very shy, is expecting me to blurt out the whole story in 10 minutes," she said. "I didn't say a word about it. I just said, 'I love Sioux City.'"

Memories

Two of the greatest things that happened to me while working at NBC was working for the greatest boss, Max Buck, and meeting and marrying my husband, Manny Sternfeld. **Mary McNulty Sternfeld**

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December 21, 2001

Mini, mini lunch in Tucson, Arizona -- Frank Vierling, Joyce and Aaron Traiger, Donna and Stu Rudick. Bob and Diane Juncosa and Dottie and Bob Bartnik were unable to join us.

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