

The Bald Headed News

2020 Virus Edition #4

Table of Contents

The Secret of Success	2
The Freshman Radio Company	3
WPAP Palisades Amusement Park	4
Quarantine Show and Tell	5
Shorty Short Wave Converters	6
The Radio Beginner	8
Micro Tuning	10
Old Radio Show quiz	11
Is it 1929 Again – Fiction by Bud Larson	12
Know Your 1943 Tube Tester	15
Editorially Speaking, You're in Good Company	17
From the other side of the Mic	18
Answers from the Old Radio Show Quiz	19

This is the fourth issue of a fun history hobby e-letter. Share it & pass it around. It's for fun. No commercial content or intent.

The **Bald Letter** is the work of Dick Karman who is solely responsible for its content. He would welcome your comments, complaints and corrections. <u>dick@karmans.net</u>

While we stay at home a little longer let's enjoy memories of radio. Special thanks to Art Redman, Tom Moore, Tony Hauser, members of the California Historic Radio Society, and members of the Puget Sound Antique Radio Association for helping out.

Stay Tuned. If I'm still around in two weeks I'll start another one. If I'm not able to: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in [Him]." John 14:1 [DK]



Bald Letter

June 4, 2020

I<u>N 1926</u>



FRESHMAN RADIO

In 1924, The Charles Freshman Co. of New York was listed as a radio tube manufacturer, and he had named a building after himself: the Freshman Building 240-248 West 40th Street. It was the roaring 20s and there was money to be made. To capitalize on the clamor for inexpensive radio sets, in 1926 Freshman sold his Freshman Masterpiece for \$60, undercutting the competition by 40%.

To make the most of every market share the Masterpiece was also available as a kit for \$17.50 (sans tubes). Note the confusing pricing structure in the ad on page 2. Freshman's business dealings were sometimes less than ethical, and imperfect parts were allegedly used. This was hidden from public view in that Freshman dealers honored his warranties when cut rate audio transformers and the rheostats failed, replacing them during the warranty period.

Stan Watkins on his site stanwatkins.com summarized the Freshman Masterpiece circuitry like this:

The genius (and low cost) of the Masterpiece lay in the simple circuit design. By locating the RF transformers close to the tuning condensers, the set would work without oscillating. Other circuits that prevented oscillation required expensive components and license fees. The Masterpiece circuit was not the best performer, but it worked well enough to satisfy most customers.

In 1926 the Freshman name was popular and Charles Freshman wanted to keep it that way. He advertised in unique ways. Note the ad on the cover boasting "The World's Greatest Radio." The Federal Radio Commission required frequency sharing and WHN, and WQAO (Cavalry Baptist Church) were required to share with WPAP (Palisades Amusement Park). To make WPAP as popular as the Freshman name, Freshman funded the building of the station for WPAP designing it to look like a Freshman Masterpiece (see page 4). It was a trend of architectural design around the country. The building only lasted until 1928, but that was longer than the Masterpiece did.

In December of 1927 Freshman Radio was acquired by Walter B. Chrysler. Clarence A. Earl was installed as president. The name was changed to Earl Radio Corporation. Early in 1929 it showed exceptional sales. By the end of that year it was bankrupt.

THE FRESHMAN MASTERPIECE WPAP, New Jersey, 1926



Designed to represent the Freshman Masterpiece, the studio of Station WPAP, located at the Palisades Amusement Park, New Jersey, is quite novel. The antenna is shown above the studio building

The studio building of WPAP in Palisades Amusement Park, New Jersey was commissioned by Freshman Radio corporation to promote the Freshman Masterpiece (story on page 3). It was one of the ways that Charles Freshman built the value of his radio against his competitors so he could get the most when he sold it a year later. Another was his full page ads (page 2), priced without batteries or tubes.



Bald Letter

June 4, 2020

This small one-tube

Tony Hauser of Saint Helens.

QUARANTINE SHOW AND TELL

From Tony Hauser as told to Dick Karman

device is a short-wave converter from the early 1930s. It was the creation of Shorty Manufacturing Company of Portland, Oregon. See the story on page 6 to learn more about the Short Wave converters built in Portland, Oregon. This piece belongs to Oregon. Tony's wife Jean Louise, considers this her favorite of all of Tony's collection. Tony's

been a vintage radio collector for more than three decades. In that time he has been active in the Portland club, taking his turn at editing their newsletter and then taking on the grueling task of weeding out 35 years of their hard copy archives.

Tony and his wife report that they have been making it through this last month of quarantine satisfactorily. Quite early on Tony caught something that had the earmarks of the virus itself and spend a pretty lousy 16 days at home under self-quarantine. But he was able to pull through, and returned to work as part of the semi-conductor manufacturing portion of Maxim Integrated (Beaverton, OR).

Of late, Tony's spent less time with radios and more with his car club Team Continental where he is an officer and newsletter editor. He'd like to find time again to race his '84 Mazda RX-7. He tells me in past years he has raced Hondas, Acuras, Toyotas, and Porsches at tracks in Washington, Oregon, and California.

SHORTY SHORT WAVE CONVERTERS

By Art Redman

In the early 1930s, interest in shortwave listening peaked. The nation was in the midst of the Great Depression, and a low-cost alternative to expensive shortwave radios and converters was needed. In 1933 Sparton and Stewart-Warner were already manufacturing shortwave converters. This demand for economy prompted Ray Reid and his brother George manufacture affordable short-wave adapters. The idea of adding a low-cost, plug-in tuner box to an existing radio was a sure thing.

The Reid brothers' Shorty Manufacturing Company was located in Portland, Oregon, where the market for shortwave radios was especially strong. KGPP or "Government Portland Police," the 500-watt police radio station and the airport radio station (first one) at Swan Island created strong local interest in shortwave, and a strong market for Shorty adapters.

The Shorty Company produced two shortwave adapter models -- the Shorty (picture on page 5 round knobs) and the All-Aire (picture on page 7, hexagonal knobs) which were designed for use with broadcast-band radios that used either a triode or a

screen-grid tube as a detector.

B+ and filament voltages for the adapters are obtained from the broadcast radio by means of a cable and tube socket. The cable and the tube socket with the broadcast radio's triode detector tube plugged into the tube socket. The tube's pins extend through the inverted wafer socket, and the tube and socket are then plugged into the radio's detector socket.

It is a regenerative detector. The antenna and ground wires are connected to the broadcast radio's antenna and ground



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6

June 4, 2020

terminals. The adapter could also be used with receivers having 6.3-volt tube filaments. The company recommended a good 35foot outside aerial and a good ground.

What was unique about the Shorty adapters was that the radio's detector tube remained in place and was not removed and replaced by a socket plug. The wafer connected the adapter to the B+ supply and filament



voltages of the broadcast band radio. Also the antenna and ground wires were connected to the radio receiver, unlike other adapters of the 1930s which had separate antenna and ground posts.

The Shorty model adapters were housed in tombstone style wood cabinets. The label on the underside had a space to write in both the police and airport frequencies. The Shorty model had a 72-ohm RF choke in the plate circuit and two controls - a variable 0.00016 mfd, 7-plate tuning capacitor, which controlled regeneration, and a 2-plate trimmer capacitor.

The All-Aire model used only a Type 24A or 36 screen- grid tube. It measured 7" high x $7^{1}/4$ " long x $4^{5}/8$ " wide and had a "patent pending" stamp. It weighed two pounds, and had an additional variable 92K resistor controlling screen grid voltage and thereby volume. The 2.5-megohm grid leak resistor was made by the International Resistance Company. The 0.00025 mfd grid leak bypass capacitor mounted under a 40-gauge galvanized sheet metal chassis was made by the Girald Hopkins Company of San Francisco.

Special thanks to Art Redman. Art is a charter Member of the NW Vintage Radio Society and publishes excellent research in the manufacturing history of vintage radios in the Pacific Northwest. This story originally appeared in Antique Radio Classified 2007. Used by permission. You can see the whole story at http://www.antiqueradio.com/Mar07 Shorty Redman.html



Don'T BE AFRAID TO TACKLE THE DYSFUNCTIONAL DRIVER

By Tom Moore

At a sale sponsored by the Portland club I picked up a Stewart- Warner Model 435 speaker. It was in a metal case with a brown wrinkle finish. The price was such that I was not expecting



it to work. Sure enough, when I got home there was no tell-tale click when I dragged a small battery across the leads. I put it on the shelf, because other projects and (ugh) work kept me from looking at it until much later.

I had heard that repairing drivers was not for the fainthearted. The fine, hair-like windings of the driver coils intimidate the best of us. However, I decided to see what could be done. After removing the speaker from the housing, I examined it closely. The wires from the coils were already disconnected from the terminal lugs; there were no obvious breaks between the ends and where the wire disappeared into the coils. I knew it wasn't going to be easy.

Next, I removed the horseshoe magnet from the driver assembly, and the two machine screws holding the driver to the speaker frame. At this point the armature is still attached to the speaker apex with a stiff wire rod soldered to the armature. With the speaker on its face I kept a gentle but steady pull on the driver assembly while heating the attachment joint with an soldering iron. It pulled apart easily and I was left with a handful of driver assembly. The two parts of the driver housing are separated by two spacers riveted to the housing. I drilled out the side opposite the armature holding screw which left me with half of the housing, the two coils, and the armature.

Bald Letter

Removal of the armature holding screws requires the making of a special tool out of an old flat bade screw driver. The business end of the screw driver is hollowed so that it makes a spanner-type surface. The armature holding screw lock nut was then removed and the entire coil assembly was in my hand. At this point I noted that the two coils are joined at the center, with the junction connection exposed. I put an ohm meter across each coil and found one of them open. I unsoldered the junction and removed the open coil. I carefully peeled off the green tape holding the coil windings to the bobbin spool and prepared for the tedious task of unwinding the bobbin, looking for the break.

What's this? The first turn came apart in my fingers. Had I found the break so soon? I carefully scraped off the insulation and put the meter across the ends of the coil leads. Eureka! 325 ohms, the same as the good coil. I immediately went out and bought a lottery ticket.*

The rest was anti-climactic. I extended the winding lead so that it could be attached to the terminal strip, glued the green tape back on the bobbin, assembled the coil on the armature assembly, resoldered the two coil center ends together and read the meter across both coils: 650 ohms! I was in business.

As I had drilled out the riveted spacers on the driver housing, I had to find a new method of attaching the two halves of the housing. I finally decided to file off the rivet stubs, bore both spacers and tap the holes for a 6-32 flat-head machine screw to replace the rivets. After soldering the speaker driving pin back to the armature, I reattached the driver housing to the speaker frame, installed the horseshoe magnet and resoldered the coil wires to the terminal strip. The speaker was connected to a Radiola 17 and the sound was sweet (or perhaps that was tinny?). Anyhow, it works!

So, don't be daunted by dead drivers. With fortitude, luck, patience and ordinary repair techniques, they are probably no worse than any other project.

(* as expected, I didn't win the lottery.)

MAKE RUBE GOLDBERG* PROUD



MICRO TUNING

From Radio News Magazine 1924

With the aid of a few spare parts from a nearby garage, and a few borrowed tools, anyone, with a little engineering ingenuity and a hack-saw. can construct a very simple Micro-tuner. When carefully adjusted, this condenser control has produced remarkable results, bringing in distant stations in regular alphabetical order. The steering wheel control makes the coarse adjustment on the dial by means of the tire gear and left handed monkey wrench. A finer setting results from the step-down gearing from left-hand large dial, and Vernier rod on the knob. Having reached the zero beat between the squeals, gently press the left foot working the crank control of the kerosene lamp flame. This regulates the beat that melts the ice. The drops of water move the fan delicately. The fan motion is reversed by the puffs of air from the tire pump as the dog moves back and forth, agitated by the cat on the kiddie car. (Avoid bootleg kiddie cars for best results.) [not by Goldberg, Reprinted from Radio News 1924]

*Rube Goldberg (1883-1970) was a Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist best known for his zany invention cartoons. He was born in San Francisco on the 4th of July, 1883 – and graduated from U. Cal Berkeley with a degree in engineering. ... It's estimated that he did a staggering 50,000 cartoons in his lifetime (from RubeGoldberg.com)

OLD RADIO SHOW QUIZ

Compiled by Dick Karman and Reliving Radio

- 1. When listeners panicked about an invasion of New Jersey and the annihilation of the human race on October 30,1938, what show was on the air?
- 2. On March 12, 1933 President Franklin Roosevelt instituted a special series of live national radio broadcast to help smooth the anxiety of the depression. By what name were they referred to?
- 3. Who was he "All American Boy" who attended Hudson High School?
- 4. What syndicated Christmas Children's serial traced the adventures of Judy and Jimmy Barton while they searched for the Silver Star?
- 5. Who played the part of Marshall Matt Dillon on the radio version of Gunsmoke?
- 6. Who played the title role in every episode of the 27 year network run of the soap opera Ma Perkins?
- 7. What comedy role endeared Eve Arden to thousands of high school teachers across America?
- 8. Who were the "battling Bickersons?"
- 9. In the film "The Big Broadcast of 1938" Bob Hope sang a song that would become his theme song. What was that song and who sang it with him?
- 10. Where did Titus Moody, Mrs. Nussbaum and Senator Claghorn all live?

Authenticated by John Dunnings, *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, Oxford Press, 1998 and *505 Radio Questions your Friends Can't Answer*, by Harry Castleman & Walter Podrazik, Walker & Co, 1983

The answers are discussed on page 19.

Is IT 1929 Again?

Fiction by Bud Larson Chief Electronics Technician, U.S. Navy Retired. Silent Key

Our heroes, Carlos Espinoza and Jeremy Taylor are teenaged radio amateurs. Jeremy's father, Leon, had been given permission to search the old Roman Bros. Department Store for anything of value, or maybe a long-forgotten antique. The building was slated to be torn down for a new shopping mall. Leon left the attic to the boys.

The Roman Brothers had closed the store years ago. No one in the family wanted to continue the business during the depression. Then the war . . . Now it was the 90s and the rundown part of town was being cleared for a mall. Old

frail Mrs. Roman remembered Leon from long ago and invited him over to pick up the longunused key to the back door of the faded brick building. One morning on his way to work, Leon took the boys to the



building, unlocked it, and left them with the warning "Be careful."

It was almost pitch black in the old attic. Cobwebs and dust were everywhere. Crunch! "Oh darn!," exclaimed Carlos.

"What is it?" Jeremy inquired, holding steady so he wouldn't step on a similar object.

"Shine the flashlight over here, Jeremy. See that carton? It's a Cunningham C350 tube, smashed! Old-time Electronics in Arizona would have given us some bucks for that one. Too bad! Let's see what else we can find in this creepy place." Carlos said as he pushed aside some disheveled boxes to reveal a dark brown door emblazoned with the letters 7ZZ.

He pulled open the door to the screech of rusty hinges.

"Wow! Look at that. I bet it's an old ham radio station."

"Yeah, Carlos," Jeremy said, "I remember Dad talking about hearing of an early ham radio station. But I didn't know it was up here. It's got to be over sixty years old. See the coil of copper tubing, and, yeah, there's a UX 210 tube. This must be the transmitter. Grandpa used to tell us about those triodes they used back in the 20's. Some guys used to run them red hot. I bet the note they put out was terrible."

On the right side of the old, dust-covered bench was a small black panel with two National Velvet Vernier dials. Behind it on a board were two old globes with UX-201As on them. Between the tubes the basket-weave coils of the low-loss Schnell circuit were mounted, a pair of Baldwin phones hung from a coat hook and a rusty hand key was screwed down in from of the transmitter. The breadboard "rig" was hooked on an open-frame transformer. The rectifier tube and Mershon electrolytic filter were still there. The stripes on the receiver's batteries were still recognizable. An open notebook listed the calls made so many years ago. It was as if they had traveled back to 1929.

Since the building was to be demolished, Jeremy and Carlos carefully packed the equipment in boxes and carried it down the narrow stairs.

It took time to get the gear out of the building and to Jeremy's place.

Later, the boys laid out the receiver on Jeremy's work bench. They used a squirt of WD-40 on the dials and tuning "condensers" of the old regenerative receiver to free them up to turn again. Jeremy had blown off the dust and polished the black panel till it shined once more.

A regulated 5-volts power supply was connected to the Fahnestock clips marked "FILS" and the warm glow of the old triodes greeted our modern-day adventurers. Setting the bench power supply to 45 volts, Jeremy hooked it to the binding posts labels B+ and B-. The old phones let out a squeal. "I guess it's going to work, Carlos. Let's string some hookup wire over the door for an antenna." Jeremy said, trying to contain his enthusiasm.

"What do you think you'll hear?" Carlos asked.

"Let's see." Said Jeremy as he slid the "Baldies" over his ears. He had read about regenerative receivers and set the control to point where the squeal disappeared and the gentle "plop" and hiss greeted his ears as the set went into oscillation.

"Chow pit chow pit, chow chow pit chow." It was W6NVN, in Arizona. The band seemed to be filled with old fashionedsounding CW this evening.

They were sending slow so our general-class hams could pick up quite a few calls. The notes were sort-of harsh, some wobbly, some chirpy.

"Carlos, I think I tuned in 1929, like that last entry in the old log. Listen!"

Carlos sat down and started to write down what he was hearing. Calls from all over the U.S. describing their equipment: Hartley, TPTG, TNT. "What's that, Jeremy?"

Just then Mr. Taylor drove up. "Hi Boys. What's going on?"

They explained their find and how they got the old receiver going. Leon Taylor then told them of what he had heard when he was young; how young Vern Roman had gone off to college leaving the Ham shack just like it was, and never returned.

He even knew why those chirpy signals were on the air. "This must be the Antique Wireless Association's 1929 contest. Let's get some dinner, and I'll tell you about the old days."

(All Rights retained by the estate of the Author.)

Bud Larson was an electronics technician in the Navy and in the 1980s and 1990s wrote some detailed Getting Started pieces for young people who wanted to learn about electronics. But alas, they were so basic, that today with digital meters and test equipment, even the "how tos" are out dated. When these were contributed to another newsletter that I edited he also sent along some fiction. This is a piece of his fiction from 1994. I could not confirm word of his passing, but I am sure that this many years later Bud has gone on to the final ham shack where he is a silent key.

KNOW YOUR TUBE TESTER

Reprinted from the 1943 Sylvania Radio Service Manual

Generally speaking tube testers may be divided into three types: Those which apply direct current voltages of approx.imately correct values to the various elements under test; Those which apply ac voltages to the various elements with correct phasing of grid and plate; and those which connect all elements together except the cathode and apply ac voltage between the cathode and the other elements, commonly referred to as emission testers. The cost of these instruments decreased in the order named.

The dc style of instrument requires a rectifier and filter together with a voltage divider to apply proper voltages to the various elements of the tube being tested. This test more closely approximates the service conditions and hence is likely to be more accurate than others. This type of tester is usually called a "mutual conductance"- type. The indication is obtained by changing the grid bias and reading the change in the plate current, or by introducing an ac signal on the grid of the tube and reading the signal component of the plate current. The definition of mutual conductance is the change in the plate current produced by a change in grid voltage, so that either of the above systems meets the requirements. Obviously this type of tester is more difficult to keep up to date, since new tubes may have added elements and will require added controls and sockets.

The next type of tester mention is that which employs ac voltage on the various elements of the tube, but with proper phase relations so that the grid is negative when the plate is positive. With a tester of this type the indication is



This I-177 Military Tube Tester was built by Hickok and Supreme (and others) and is a "Mutual Conductance" type, capable of testing tubes from early 4 pin UV/UX vacuum tubes through tubes manufactured up into the 1950s

usually obtained by changing the grid bias and reading the corresponding plate current change. This is generally known as a grid-shift type of tester. This change is somewhat proportional to mutual conductance; but since ac voltages are applied, and since the values are not the same as those employed in receiver service, the indications usually do not mean as much as a true mutual conductance reading. This fact is largely overcome, however, by supplying a calibration of various types of tubes with the tester. Intelligent use of this calibration, as well as a complete check of the performance of the tester with the different makes of tubes will usually permit quite accurate readings to be obtained. This type of tester usually requires an additional control to set the meter to zero. Otherwise two readings must be taken to obtain the difference in plate current caused by shifting of the bias. In order to properly test all types of tubes a variable grid bias must be provided, which increases the cost of the tester, and also further complicates the operation. If, however, these devices are provided it is not difficult to keep the tester up-to-date as new tube types are announced.

At the present time the so-called "emission" type of tester or one of its modifications is most popular. This type of tester usually connects all the elements of the tube together except the cathode, and ac voltage is applied between the cathode and the other elements. A meter is supplied to read the required current which flows each time the elements are positive with respect to the cathode. The cost of this type of tester is relatively low since only one value of ac voltage is usually supplied, in addition to the filament. Since the elements are all connected together a minimum number of sockets are required for testing. The tester

has the further advantage of requiring very few changes to adapt it to new tubes. It is obvious that such tests do not approximate operating conditions. Consequently a set of limits must be run for each type of tube, and perhaps for each make of tube as well.





EDITORIALLY SPEAKING-

From Editor Dick Karman

I'll ask you to forgive a short toot on our own horn.

The *Bald Letter* is for Fun. The internet makes spreading that fun affordable and places *Bald Letter* readers in good company. In eight weeks, 6 collector's groups have distributed the magazine and have been very complimentary on content and style.

Your editor hears routinely from members of the Puget Sound Antique Radio Association (Seattle) and the NW Vintage Radio Society (Portland), to name a few. The California Historic Radio Society (Alameda, CA) has been so good at passing on the *Bald Letter*, that their members have sent it on to their friends from coast to coast.

The Colorado Radio Collectors have emailed it to their membership who have had kind words to say. If you didn't know, the CRC began as Rocky Mountain Antique Wireless Association in 1979 – it was reincarnated as the CRC in 1990 with the FLASH as their publication ever since. Thanks for the kind words via Steve Touzalin, FLASH editor in Colorado.

Most recently, The New England Vintage Electronics Club has been reading the *Bald Letter* and will continue. Howard Mariotti is their president and hails from New Hampshire. We knew them for decades as the New England Antique Radio Club, but times have changed . . . ©

Lastly, we send an e-copy to the Mid-Atlantic Antique Radio Club each issue that comes out. MAARC had an excellent event planned to commemorate the 100 anniversary of KDKA election news broadcast in 1920. They are hoping to move the event to October. We wish them good luck and good health.

June 4, 2020

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIC

By Dick Karman

To many radio collectors the idea of hearing vintage programs on their sets is new. With hundreds of AM radio stations out there it is no trouble getting any one of them to come in on your 80 year old receiver.

Those of us who know what radio sounded like 70 years ago, we hardly think AM today is worth listening to. Some of you reading this probably have tried small AM transmitters like your editor. Do any of these sound familiar?

In the 1970s he bought a toy called "Mr. Microphone." With some impedance matching he could receive it on a '35 Philco.

In the 1990s there was the CAKE PAN CW-5 (pictured). It could be modified to broadcast an AM signal. Your editor owned one. It used a crystal and a coil to determine frequency.

Somewhere about 2002 he bought a British device called a GIZMO: a frequency synthesized crystal oscillator transmitter. Its signal came in on the Sparton



Blue Bird quite nicely and still it can cover a fairly large room.

The most recent and longest lasting has been the SSTRAN AMT3000 transmitter. It was a well-engineered transmitter kit with settings for frequencies across the AM band. Its demise: it became so popular that the hearty soul who assembled and sold the kits couldn't keep up with demand. In 2017 he stated he would take no further orders, and that was the end of that.

There are new offerings coming out, and new kits on the market. If you are like me, you'll keep trying to make your radios sound like the *Way Radio Was*. That's it from the other side of the mic.

June 4, 2020

Radio Quiz Answers

For the quiz questions on page 9

Reliving

Radi

- The Mercury Theater of the Air "War of the Worlds" produced by 1 Orson Wells. If it was a promotion stunt, it worked. Soon the Mercury Theater of the Air was sponsored by Campbell's Soup and it became the Campbell's Playhouse. Many great and memorable productions were brought to us by Campbell's soup.
- 2 Fireside Chats live from the White House
- 3. Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy
- The Cinnamon Bear, A time-honored children's show came out of 4. the Transco studios in Hollywood California. One of the first radio stations to air the show was KALE here in Portland, and the show has been on the air every Christmas season since then, even though there was no syndication license for 1940.
- 5. William Conrad played Matt Dillon on Radio. Bill Conrad did not play the cowboy role on TV. James Arness played Matt Dillon when the show moved to Television
- Virginia Payne took the role of Ma Perkins at the age of 23 in 6. 1933. She had to "act old" as a widow in a small town. She never missed an episode in 27 years of the radio. When the last show was aired Friday, November 25, 1960, she was 50 years old, and it was the only time that she introduced herself as Virginia Payne.
- 7. Our Miss Brook (English Teacher at Madison High School)
- Francis Langford as Blanche Bickerson and Don Ameche as John 8 Bickerson
- 9. Thanks for the Memories, written for the movie and sung by Bob Hope and Shirley Ross. It won the academy award for best original Song. Dorothy Lamour was also in the movie and casual observers errantly say that Lamour and Hope sang the song. Because of the popularity of the song a movie by the same name was released (1939).
- 10. These three and others resided in Allen's Alley on the Fred Allen Show, which was also known as Town Hall Tonight.