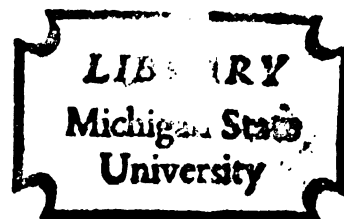


RADIO COMEDY: SIX ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIVE
SCRIPTS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
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ABSTRACT

RADIO COMEDY: SIX ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPTS

By

Gregory Donald Stenen

With the aid of six original radio comedy scripts, this creative thesis investigates and analyzes the Golden Age of Radio Comedy from 1922 to 1949. Included in this thesis are a study of the history, elements, and techniques of American humor; a brief history of comedy programs in the Golden Age of Radio; two original radio comedy drama scripts with accompanying background and analyses; two original radio comedy variety scripts with accompanying background and analyses; and two original modern radio comedy scripts with accompanying analyses.

The major finding of this thesis is in the form of the six radio comedy scripts. These scripts are written from analyses of actual radio programs and are to demonstrate an understanding of comedy and humor techniques used by American radio comedians between 1922 and 1949. The two modern radio comedy scripts are written as a practical application

of the analyses of the Golden Age of Radio Comedy programs. The deduction made from the analyses is that the rise of the popular television entertainment medium and the subsequent loss of radio sponsors to television led to the downfall of radio comedy and the demise of the Golden Age of Radio.

Methods of study included listening to broadcast recordings, and readings on humor and early radio history. The accuracy of the analyses of the radio comedy programs was enhanced by listening to actual program recordings that were broadcast recently on radio or heard from records or audio tapes of early radio broadcasts. Types of comedy, humor techniques, humor content, and audience appeal were noted for programs and compared to the other programs in the same or different categories, the categories of radio comedy being General Variety, Comedy Variety, and Comedy Drama. These broadcast analyses were supplemented by critiques and discussions of radio comedy, radio history, and humor by the comedians themselves, broadcasting historians, program critics, and scholars in the art of humor. The data and analyses were then used as a background for writing the six radio comedy scripts. The rationale of comedy writing techniques used was recorded to accompany the scripts.

The end of the Golden Age of Radio Comedy marked the end of a great period of American humor. This thesis analyzes the radio comedy humor and proposes a rebirth of radio comedy.

RADIO COMEDY: SIX ORIGINAL

ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPTS

By

Gregory Donald Stemen

A THESIS

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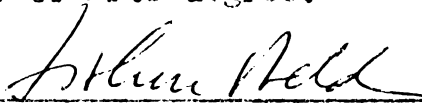
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Director of Thesis

For the family, comedians all.

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Thanks to Professor Arthur Weld for his patience and assistance; to the Department of Television and Radio for use of the Audio Tape Radio Archive of Broadcasting History; and to Mom and Dad for making all of this possible.

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INTRODUCTION

"This drudgery, this shan, this gold mine."¹ A terse statement of fact from a corporate executive about his work? From a Texan oil millionaire? From an advertising agency president? From a college professor? Possibly. Believe it or not, these seven words portray a past radio comedian's attitude toward his work: one of the greatest mirth masters who ever fired volleys of volatile vocal wit and humor at affable and sometimes agape audiences, Fred Allen. Since this is a particular comedian's view of his work, it should not be generalized as applying to all in his field. Certainly no business will deter Jack Benny if there is a gold mine involved. Radio comedy in the Golden Age of Radio did not simply happen to be at the end of a rainbow for millions of Americans to enjoy. Radio comedy grew with its medium, sometimes painfully and awkwardly, but it grew to its full-grown glory in an age now dead--the Golden Age of Radio.

The meaning of "The Golden Age of Radio" is perhaps vague. For this writing the Golden Age of Radio is the age of growth and success in early American radio history between 1922 and 1949. In reference to the Golden Age of Radio Comedy, the specific dates the author has chosen are

¹"The World's Worst Juggler," *Time*, April 7, 1947, p. 75.

from February 19, 1922, the "first" stage show broadcast on station WJZ, Newark, New Jersey, featuring Ed Wynn in "The Perfect Fool," to June 26, 1949, the last trip down radio's "Allen's Alley" on "The Fred Allen Show."² Radio's use, of course, dates before 1920 in uses in point-to-point communication and on an experimental or amateur basis; it dates beyond 1949, but only as a declining medium of live entertainment compared to television. The Golden Age of Radio is a nostalgic reference to memories of a period of American history that produced some of the greatest masters of the air waves in entertainment and information that Americans have heard or seen in the twentieth century.

This is primarily a creative analysis thesis, rather than a historical or scientific study of radio comedy in the Golden Age of Radio. The basic purpose of this creative thesis is to demonstrate an understanding of the techniques, the style, and the content of American humor in comedy programs of the Golden Age of Radio by practical application of that understanding in the form of six original radio comedy scripts. Four scripts are written as examples of the Golden Age of Radio Comedy: two comedy drama scripts, "Amos 'n' Andy" and "Lum and Abner," and two comedy variety scripts, "The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show" and "The Jack Benny Show." The first three scripts are written as if for use sometime in the Golden Age of Radio,

²Irving Sattel, A Historical History of Radio (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1967), pp. 42, 82.

corresponding to their particular success. The early fifteen-minute formats of "Amos 'n' Andy" and "Lum and Abner" are used in this work. The script for "The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show" is a shortened half-hour version of the actual hour-long version of the "Chase and Sanborn Hour" to permit a more condensed study of humor in that show. Although the first three scripts are written as they might have been then, "The Jack Benny Show" is revised somewhat as a script intended to be used today on radio, if that were possible. The half-hour script is, in this case, really two shows in one, because it is a Jack Benny Radio Special tribute to Fred Allen. In the show Jack visits "Allen's Alley," as the late Fred Allen might have done it.

Two fifteen-minute original modern scripts are to demonstrate an understanding of humor as a practical application of that understanding to pilot radio comedy scripts for possible current use. Their style and content were determined by what the author decided would possibly be successful as radio entertainment today.

The four old radio comedy programs selected for this work (including their stars), are, in the author's opinion, the best representatives of Golden Age of Radio comedy programs. Of comedy in the three main kinds of radio programs (general variety--"The Big Show" or "Kraft Music Hall," comedy variety--"The Fred Allen Show" or "The Chase and Sanborn Hour," and comedy drama--"Amos 'n' Andy" or "Easy Aces"--these referring to radio programs with comedy), comedy

variety and comedy drama programs are best representatives of concentrated comedy from 1922 to 1949. Therefore, the two best examples of comedy in each of these two categories of radio comedy programs are used in this analysis. Understand that the general variety category was, in fact, a source of good comedy and humor; however, in the author's judgement the programs were not intended by their producers specifically for regular, consistent, weekly comedy sketches and routines. Comedy was not their primary entertainment theme--variety was.

The selection of these best comedy programs in the Golden Age of Radio was based on stiff selection criteria in the comedy drama and comedy variety categories. First, program popularity. Second, length of time the program was on radio. Third, the talent of the programs' star(s) or host(s), as recognized by historical critics or by fellow comedians. Fourth, the comic talent of guest stars or the cast of the program. Fifth, the comedy material used in the program: originality, delivery, style, technique, and degree of difficulty to produce fresh, funny material each day or week. Sixth, the general reactions of people who heard the actual broadcasts of programs in each category. Seventh, as a member of the audience of programs studied in each category via listening to tape recordings of actual broadcasts, my own judgement.

Perhaps a varied parallel to the Oscar or Emmy Awards may help here. The candidates for the distinction of being

selected for analysis in this composition in the categories of comedy drama and comedy variety were judged by actual broadcast recordings. Criteria for the judge have been stated. The nominees for best comedy drama program in the Golden Age of Radio are: "Amos 'n' Andy," "Baby Snooks," "Blondie and Dagwood," "The Hardy Family," "Lum and Abner," "Vic and Sade," "Joe Penner," "Easy Aces," and "Fibber McGee and Molly." May I have the envelope, please? And the winners are: "Amos 'n' Andy" and "Lum and Abner." The nominees for best comedy variety program in the Golden Age of Radio are: "The Al Jolson Show," "The Phil Harris Show," "The Abbott and Costello Show," "Ed Wynn, Texaco Fire Chief Show," "Duffy's Tavern," "The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show," "The Eddie Cantor Show," "The Bob Burns Show," "Burns and Allen," "The Jack Benny Show," and "The Fred Allen Show." May I have the envelope, please? And the winners are: "The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show," "The Jack Benny Show," and "The Fred Allen Show."

All full-length radio comedy scripts in this work are original applications of completed study of radio comedy and humor in the Golden Age of Radio done for this thesis. Although some historical information is included, the practical analysis of the humor in radio comedy is the core of this work. Since a phrase by phrase analysis of each comedy script would detract from the art of radio comedy, this work's analyses discuss relevant patterns of humor elements and techniques.

Chapter One will discuss history, characteristics, and techniques of American humor. Chapter Two will briefly review radio comedy in the Golden Age of Radio. Chapters Three through Eight will feature the six original radio comedy scripts, each with its accompanying analysis and commentary. Chapter Nine will feature conclusions about the Golden Age of Radio Comedy.

CHAPTER I
CHARACTERISTICS, TECHNIQUES, AND HISTORY
OF AMERICAN HUMOR

One wonders how Americans, or all mankind for that matter, can possibly have a sense of humor after we've almost all gone through such a rude introduction to the world as babies. Really, the nerve of those doctors giving us a slap on the posterior to make us cry. The least doctors could do, is to tell all newborn babies the one about why the chicken crossed the road. Perhaps a healthy guffaw with a newborn baby's first breath would give the poor little chap at least a decent outlook on life. The baby may cry anyway or give the doctor a nasty sneer for insulting him with such a cheap joke right off the bat. Maybe the little fellow knows a better one. Surely, the father could use one. The old man will certainly need something, if his kid's first words are why the chicken crossed the road.

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary may not know why the chicken crossed the road, but it can provide a start in that direction with a bit of help on terminology in this analysis of comedy. Humor is "something that is or is designed to be comical or amusing."³ "'Humor' derives from

³Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, 1963, p. 405.

the Medieval concept of humor, wherein an imbalance of bodily fluids creates eccentricity."⁴ This by no means implies that anyone with a sense of humor is an eccentric, although that possibility most certainly exists. Any humorous eccentrics can blame the Medieval Company for this notion. Wit is defined as "the ability to relate seemingly disparate things so as to illuminate or amuse."⁵ "And the writer Arthur Koestler reminds us that 'wit' is traceable to the Old English gitan or 'understanding.'"⁶ Comedy is "a theatrical, film, radio, or television drama of light and amusing character and typically with a happy ending" or "a ludicrous or farcical event or series of events."⁷ To laugh is "to show mirth, joy, or scorn with a smile and chuckle or explosive sound" or "to find amusement or pleasure in something."⁸ These definitions may be helpful in subsequent discussion.

Jesse Bier, Professor of American Literature at the University of Montana, briefly discusses some interesting psychological theories of laughter. French philosopher

⁴Jesse Bier, The Rise and Fall of American Humor (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), p. 11.

⁵Webster's, p. 1025.

⁶Bier, Humor, p. 11.

⁷Webster's, p. 165.

⁸Ibid., p. 477.

Henri Bergson refers to it as "convulsions of the heart." Scottish psychologist Alexander Bain calls it a deliverance from emotional and moral constraints. Freud refers to wit as resistance to authority. Other theories of comedy and laughter include a deliverance from rationality itself, a sudden surging of a sense of freedom, an evolutionary tool of growing human perspective on life, or a necessary vestige of our predatory nature. Still other theories discuss laughter as release, explosion, energy, superiority, or catching up belatedly with understanding.⁹

Laughter can be a result of humor; for example, when that humor is part of comedy. President Wilson offered May Irwin, one of the top comediennees in the 1880's, "the portfolio of Secretary of Laughter." May's theory of humor was thus:

Humor is spontaneous. It is born with one or it is not. It cannot be acquired and it cannot be forced.¹⁰

One may appraise this tidbit in recalling the famous Benny-Allen feud, Edgar Bergen's always fired wit, the comic genius of W. C. Fields, or Bob Hope's flashy volleys of gags. Their humor may safely be called spontaneous. The successful spontaneous humor of great American comedians did not, however, grow spontaneously overnight. Their own characteristic brand of humor grew like the water of a mighty river going to

⁹Bier, *Humor*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁰William Cohn, The Laugh Makers: A Pictorial History of American Comedians (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1957), p. 48.

the sea: growing from only a small trickle in childhood, gathering momentum at every turn (year), eventually being fed by tributaries (writers), crossing rapids and great spills (losing a sponsor or losing a network), flooding or going dry with the seasons (usually of thirty-nine weeks), and finally majestically flowing as a great river in all its grandeur (consistently high Hooperatings) down to its final destination, the sea (a fond memory of many Americans and a berth in the annals of history). The great radio comedians nurtured their inherent showmanship and humor in various ways as they grew in popularity: W. C. Fields and Fred Allen as jugglers in vaudeville, Eddie Cantor as a singing waiter, Jack Benny playing his violin in World War I (one of the best continental defenses ever devised), Edgar Bergen as a high school ventriloquist, Will Rogers as a vaudevillian cowboy, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll entertaining an Elks meeting, or Bob Hope as a boxer.

"The general impulse of our humor is to enjoy life's conquest over all particular systems of values."¹¹ Humor can cross almost any human barrier that man erects to protect himself. Humor innocently slithers behind the human fortress of emotions with high impregnable walls of hate, anger, prejudice, injustice, poverty, and tension; moreover, instead of lighting the fuse of a dangerous, highly explosive negative attitude of the mind protected by those human barriers,

¹¹Bier, Humor, p. 1.

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humor, with a tickle of the chin, releases a faulty human safety valve to a most pleasant laughing steam from the nasty negative gas in the mind.

"Our humor criticizes all verities and cozy securities, consistently idealized as these have been in America."¹² Humor certainly has fertile fallow fields of these verities and cozy securities in America. Consider the lofty, arrogant, American political pundits perched high and mighty in their glass-bottom boats suspended in their almighty and virtuous fishponds of marsh gas. As they placidly drift about with the tide of public opinion, a comedian mosquito fleet mercilessly marauds the flailing demagogues with razor-sharp, lethal barbed spears dipped in a potent potion of penetrating humor. Senator Claghorn would undoubtedly be in the flagship, which naturally would fly the Stars and Bars. Consider the corporate tycoons, network executives, the military, salesmen, tramps, dissidents, eccentrics, mothers-in-law, or wives. No human verity or institution can long escape the wrath of a comedian's humor. This humor puts a mirror to America and wryly asks, "Well, what do you see?" The ensuing chortles register the comedian's accomplished mission. Humor, then, is not only a check and balance on institutions of human vanity, but also the intrinsic psychological check and balance of the human mind. Humor has been, is, and should be regarded as a healthy, healing spirit in mankind.

¹²Ibid., p. 2.

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Since this is an analysis of radio comedy programs, a classification of humor in comedy should be included here. Seven classifications or ingredients of humor proposed by Jesse Bler are recognized here. First, comic mockery or literalism: the pun, the lowest form of humor, given for a mere sound effect and the result of a simple association or simultaneity. For example, Groucho Marx says, "I've been as sick as a spy. I've had a code in my nose," or he refers to Santa Claus's Helpers as "Subordinate Clauses." Second, reversal-complication, which makes something simple, complex: a clown moving a piano to its piano bench. Or, reversal when the Marx Brothers in "The Big Store" announce, "We'll never come out!" after barricading themselves from gangsters; they then hear a shot from outside and quickly respond, "We're coming!" Third, the obvious: Fibber McGee opening the hall closet, or visually seeing an overflowing washing machine (as long as it isn't yours). Fourth, exaggeration or sheer nonsense: a combination of frustration and complication. For example, "He suffered from a toothache in his big toe after he bumped his elbow against the hot skillet." Fifth, antic, absurd comic freedom: a lack of regard to natural consequences or rational judgement. For example, the impossible antics in children's cartoons of falling off a cliff and walking away or walking on air (radio's "Superman"). Sixth, momentum: keeping the jokes or humor constantly moving forward at a pace to hold one's audience. Seventh, the statement of truth: simply holding a mirror to one's

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assembled audience.¹³

The author adds two more ingredients: verbal combat, such as in the famous Jack Benny-Fred Allen feud, and character humor, as in "Anon 'n' Andy" and "Lum and Abner," that comes from audience understanding of a character's inherent humor and personality or of how a character may act in a certain situation. For example, people laughed at Andy saying, "Buzz me, Miss Blue," because they recognized Andy as the character who had an intercom line to his secretary that only worked from his secretary to Andy.

Bier cites a list of leading modes and devices of humor in American comedy: nonsense, confusionism, reversal, anticlimax, antiproverbialism, and undercutting. Bier remarks that these indicate the predominantly negative, penetrative tendencies throughout its history.¹⁴ Nonsense, antiproverbialism, and confusionism are self-explanatory as used in American comedy. Reversal is one of the ingredients of humor already described. Anticlimax is periodic comic disqualification operating in final words. Undercutting, less frequent in our comedy, is simply initial disqualification. A result of combined anticlimax and undercutting is thus: "If I had some eggs, we'd eat ham and eggs, if I had some ham."¹⁵

Considering these ingredients, techniques, and

¹³Ibid., pp. 3-18.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 28.

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devices of humor, the best periods of American humor are the Jacksonian period (expansion and democratization under Jackson), the Civil War and postbellum period (retention of the Union under Lincoln and the economic consolidation immediately thereafter), and the decade of the 1930's (our redefinition of sociopolitical national character under Roosevelt).¹⁶

What is operative in these periods is a profound security or assurance felt in the pursuit of national goals, an undeniably insurgent or resurgent feeling of power or of encroaching victory. There is the sense of open possibilities, of renewal. If we apply these observations to individual people about us, personal psychology seems to confirm our wider speculations. There are some people almost without any sense of humor at any time; they are always highly subjective, unsure persons in their daily life. Theoricians like Hazlitt ("only very sensible...people...laugh freely at their own absurdities") and practitioners like Al Capp ("The more secure a man feels, the more ready he is to laugh") have called attention to the fundamental disposition necessary to comedy. Objectivity and confidence are the major psychic conditions for a sense of humor, on any level.¹⁷

Our present period in American history, then, is not fertile ground for humor. The racial tension, war worries, busing controversy, and economic crisis hardly foster an assured or highly objective mood. "Comedy seizes its grand opportunity but does not create it, although there may be the barest reciprocal relation."¹⁸ Granted, we do have humor, but this current period of time will not equal or perhaps even come close to one of the three great periods of American humor.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 29.

CHAPTER II

RADIO COMEDY

Humor techniques and devices, of course, depend a great deal on the audience, those who sit in final judgement of a comedian's ability to provoke their cachinnations. Says comedian Harold Lloyd:

But no comedian is ever dead certain what makes an audience laugh. Laughing is the expression of merriment by conclusive sounds accompanied by opening the mouth and wrinkling the face.¹⁹

No matter what techniques a conic uses, he must consider the audience. Successful comedienne Fanny Brice knew this:

If you're a conic you have to be nice. And the audience has to like you. You have to have a softness about you, because if you do comedy and you are harsh, there is something offensive about it. Also you must set up your audience for the laugh you are working for.²⁰

Strangely enough, comedian Will Rogers got his big break in a straight stage cowboy act in vaudeville by not working for a laugh. During a lull in one of his acts, while he was twirling a rope on stage, he carelessly remarked, "Swingin' a rope's all right--if your neck ain't in it." This innocuous remark brought roars of laughter from his audience. But Will was embarrassed and vowed never to speak again

¹⁹Cahn, Laugh Makers, p. 9.

²⁰Ibid., p. 67.

during his roping act. Needless to say, he eventually changed his mind, and his roping and joking acts helped make him a popular comedian on radio, stage, and film.²¹ Popular Al Jolson, who proudly referred to himself as a comedian, recognized how difficult it is to be an effective comedian.

As everyone knows who cares to know, the life of a comedian is very hard. Most of them, I have been told, are trained in infancy. I have no training; therefore, I suppose, "it's a gift" with me. And yet, the stage manager very often reminds me that it isn't; and then I remind him that he isn't. However, early in my meteoric career, I discovered that an audience must be trained to laugh.

An audience of any kind must be made to laugh. You can't coax them, and you can't tell them that you're funny unless you make them believe it. They just hate to laugh when you want them to, and when you want them to cry, they laugh. There isn't anything on earth so obstinate and perverse as an audience. Most of them are untaught, and although my task has not been to educate them, I have sometimes felt that I should like to make them realize how happy they would be, if they would only just try to laugh, just even once.²²

Indeed, radio comedians' tasks were difficult in trying to move an audience to forget their troubles and to laugh.

The all-important radio comedy audience, perhaps, did not appreciate the extensive and sometimes fortuitous early history of the medium of radio. In 1844, Samuel F. B. Morse used his handy telegraph to ask his co-worker Alfred Vail, "What hath God wrought?" This, of course, was just one landmark in communications history. Years of communications advancements later, amateur radio operators and

²¹Ibid., p. 71.

²²Ibid., p. 126.

experimenters helped gradually increase public interest in radio broadcasting. As stations were licensed and began broadcasting operations, radio soon became a popular entertainment medium. Even the rigors of World War I did not defeat the broadcasting growth. Radio and comedy continued growth through the twenties with the public becoming increasingly fond of names like the "Happiness Boys," the "Cliquot Club Eskimos," "A & P Gypsies," H. V. Kaltenborn, Graham McNamee, and "Amos 'n' Andy." But the Depression impinged radio.

Radio had been nurtured on war and, in prosperity, grown like a weed or a teenager. But the broadcasting industry entered the new period with internal tensions and conflicts unresolved. In these the panic would play a telling role.²³

Indeed, it did, because as Bier noted that the thirties were one of the three greatest periods in American humor, radio comedy played an important part in bringing joy to the public in a time of adversity and despair.

"The dominance of comedy and variety on the air at the lowest ebb of Depression seemed to some observers exactly what was needed."²⁴ Radio in the thirties provided a vital link of communication to the public for news, as well as a voice of faith, hope, and joy. Some people listened only to special programs: President Roosevelt's fireside chats or Ted Husing broadcasting a heavyweight championship.

²³Erik Barnouw, A Tower in Babel: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, vol. II 1929-1981 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 254.

²⁴Ibid., p. 273.

Others tuned in especially for daily or weekly favorites: "Amos 'n' Andy," or "Tom Hall Tonight." Still others merely searched the dial for exciting new or different programs from distant clear channel stations. The degree of listener interest varied. Some missed not a word of a favorite program, while others simply turned on the radio, regardless of the program, for background noise for work or play.

Picture a weekday late summer evening on a Midwestern farm. The family finishes supper after a hard day's work indoors or outdoors in the hay field in the sweltering summer heat. The girls clear the table and do the dishes. The boys, if lucky and not too tired, may play a little game of baseball outside in the fading sunlight. Dad, however, retires to the living room with the evening paper, and sits in his favorite easy chair by the window next to the Crosley radio or the RCA Radiola. As a cool breeze from a distant thunderstorm begins to rustle the leaves of the large maples outside, he tunes in WLW Radio, Cincinnati, perhaps to "Lum and Abner." Those not owning a radio may get on the party line to hear "Lum and Abner" via telephone from someone's home where a radio is tuned to "Lum and Abner." The static fades in as the large tubes become warm. The "Nation's Station" comes in loud and clear. Or, in small or large towns during a casual summer early evening stroll down any neighborhood street, one may hear the entire "Amos 'n' Andy" program from the sidewalk.

People did listen to radio:

The offer of free "newspapers" from Lum and Abner's mythical Pine Ridge, Arkansas, produced 400,000 requests. Over 150,000 sought souvenir booklets from the sponsor of the Admiral Byrd show. To obtain Kate Smith's portrait 45,000 silver bands were mailed in. Limericks, slogans, jokes drew responses aggregating millions. When Guy Lombardo broke a violin string he got 193 yards of catgut in the mail--a spontaneous shared impulse of his admirers.²⁵

The family radio in the thirties sometimes was the most important piece of furniture in the living room or even in the house.

The American public was spending \$505,000,000 in a single year to buy radio sets, radio tubes, to keep them in repair and to charge them with electrical current. This compared with \$165,000,000 spent for magazines and \$526,000,000 spent for newspapers.²⁶

The family members listening and the number of household receivers depended on program interest and family budget. Landry notes radio's possible importance in the home: "Of all American families eighty-four percent owned radios but only thirty-nine percent had telephones and only thirty-nine percent had bathtubs."²⁷ This, of course, did not mean a good radio was better than a good bath in the thirties, although many little boys may have thought so. On the other hand, Mama may have thought that "John's Other Wife" was more interesting than the party line gossip.

²⁵Robert J. Landry, This Fascinating Radio Business (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943), p. 139.

²⁶Ibid., p. 140.

²⁷Ibid., p. 141.

As previously stated, the Golden Age of Radio for this work is defined as being February 19, 1922, the "first" stage show broadcast on WJZ in Newark, New Jersey, to June 26, 1949, the last radio broadcast of "The Fred Allen Show." When Ed Wynn took part in that "first" stage show broadcast in "The Perfect Fool" in 1922, he was probably the first genuine comedian to be heard on the airwaves. Radio Broadcast gave this account:

Ed Wynn approached the microphone gingerly. He looked at it suspiciously. The time came for him to perform. As with all professionals, he was a trifle nervous. The nervousness, however, wore off, but Wynn was appalled by the silence. He had told some of his best stories and had not even heard a snicker. He asked the announcer to help him and the announcer quickly assembled all the people from around the studio including the electricians in shirt sleeves, scrub-women, with their shirts tucked up, telephone operators and artists who were billed later on the program. They were all invited into the studio to view the show. It was a strange audience, but their approbation turned the trick. With the giggles, guffaws and shouts of merriment to encourage him, Wynn proceeded with the entertainment. He needed only the responsive sight of his hearers doubled over with laughter. Had he been a more frequent radio performer, he would have been able to imagine the fans in their homes tuned in on his program and convulsed with mirth.²⁸

After Ed Wynn, came a long list of radio comedians. These comedians found their medium of radio and an audience that spanned the United States via the National Broadcasting Company, founded on November 15, 1926, and the Columbia Broadcasting System, founded on September 18, 1929. The comedy programming began to bubble for the networks' nightly entertainment brew.

²⁸Settel, Pictorial History, pp. 42-43.

The derogation of audience is intimate and rocking, the exchanges between comics rife with mutual exultant and direct vulgarity. Night after night, week after week, from the night-club floor, on the air, or in the movies, comedians provided steady release for aggression, acting as a collective team in consistent victimization and disrespect. No doubt they reflected post-Depression irreverence and contempt, and their audiences responded strongly. The proprieties and sensitivities of social intercourse were never more vituperatively and freely violated. The satisfactions were enormous.²⁹

Americans followed their favorite radio comedians with sincere loyalty. The radio comedians emerging during the Depression joined American families in their homes nightly or weekly saying in their own ways, "Don't give up! We can make it! you bet we can!"

Radio comedy shows in the thirties came usually in three different program lengths. Regular fifteen-minute broadcasts, five nights a week, were "Amos 'n' Andy," "Myrt and Marge," and "Easy Aces." Weekly half-hour program comedians on Sundays or Tuesdays, were Jack Benny, Fibber McGee and Molly, Burns and Allen, Bob Hope, Red Skelton, Ed Gardner, Eddie Cantor, Joe Penner, Jack Pearl, and Al Pierce. Two weekly hour-long programs were the "Chase and Sanborn Hour" and "Town Hall Tonight." Many of these programs followed a thirty-nine week season for up to eight or nine continuous seasons on some shows.³⁰

Themes or characteristics of popular radio performers or their programs usually changed very little. Jack Benny

²⁹Bier, *Humor*, pp. 272-273.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 258.

had his age and stinginess, Eddie Cantor had his five daughters, and Jimmy Durante had his nose. Listeners expected their favorite program or personality to be familiar to them daily or weekly. Landry, however, recalls:

Pattern and patter shows, once successfully established, are prone to a superstitious reluctance to amend or alter, and yet in the end they may expire on that account for the public is consistent only to a degree. They like the mixture as before but they refuse to be bored in the name of pleasant memories. Ultimately all formats must change. No joke is infinite.³¹

The comedy programs were, with a few exceptions, the most consistently dominating programs in the Golden Age of Radio, but they had inherent problems.³² There was a high demand for comedians, comedy writers, comedy constructionists, and comedy directors. New programs often copied successful existing ones. On the big comedy nights, Tuesdays and Sundays, the same joke or jokes might have been repeated on three or four programs in sequence. While programs had fairly consistent comedy formats, much-needed fresh ideas were difficult and costly to produce. "Comedy cannot be ordinary or fair or mild if the big ratings are in view. It must be socko, colossal, high-powered, boff, full of yaks!"³³

There is and was no formula or answer to the success of radio comedy. Good comedy programs sometimes required eight or nine years on the air to develop their own style and

³¹Landry, Radio Business, p. 184.

³²Ibid., p. 294.

³³Ibid., p. 296.

their own special audience of loyal fans. The success of a radio comedy program often depended on the popularity of the program that preceded it. The success also depended on what program opposed it at its broadcast time on other networks. Radio comedy programs relied on dynamic pace and vigor, possibly a requirement of comedy inherited from vaudeville.

Landry remarks that most "beloved" comedy shows were good-naturedly (never viciously) concerned with deflation of human braggadocio, as in "Fibber McGee and Molly," (Fibber) Edgar Bergen's Charlie McCarthy, and Jack Benny.³⁴

It is now generally taken for granted that the comedian should be sympathetic. He will not be truly popular with the American people if he is unkind, if he crushes other people, if his retorts are clever rather than human.³⁵

Listeners were not easily fooled by what clever writers thought was good; the people knew what they wanted. The subject matter of successful comedy programs, to give the people what they like, often used themes of claims and counterclaims, the braggart with a gift of gab, or the Wild West and American folklore.

However, radio comedy programs could not please everyone. Radio had its critics, such as Gilbert Seldes.

With minor exceptions, radio has not yet created anything for itself. Its sketches are comic strips or minstrel show humors; its music is all borrowed; its great stunts are all independent events. Again, with a few exceptions, radio hasn't even learned a new, purely

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

radio way of handling the material it borrows. By 1914 the movies were so enclaved to the stage and fiction that they were blossoming a great bore and only the development of the movie as an independent art saved the industry. But radio has not yet brought forth a Chaplin, a Sennett, or even a Griffith. Its idea of comedy is still, "My uncle bought a house in the country and he got stucko.--You mean he got stuck.--No, I mean he got stucko."³⁶

Although Mr. Seldes' opinion was possibly true in 1934, it was still a premature judgement of radio comedy in the Golden Age of Radio. Many comedy programs were only one or two years old at the time, and they had not had sufficient time to mature and gather a loyal following of the listeners who appreciated a program's material. Radio comedy was a young art, and it took time to develop to its full potential.

But this is the salient fact: Radio brings the American people together in a common sharing of experience and discussion, laughter and drama never previously possible in a country that is also a continent with a four-hour time differential from coast to coast, with winter prevailing in some sections while it is summer elsewhere and with widely varying racial strains. It is a social reality of the utmost seriousness that tens of millions of Americans guffaw simultaneously at the same jokes and come to understand the same idiosyncrasies of American personality of which this element of brag is not the least self-revealing.³⁷

Radio comedy was indeed a powerful force in uniting listening Americans to common joys in times of doubt, sorrow, and want. Imitation is the highest form of flattery. It is on this premise that the author has attempted to write four original scripts, as they might have been used in the Golden

³⁶Gilbert Seldes, "Male and Female and Radio," Esquire, January, 1934, p. 35.

³⁷Landry, Radio Business, p. 298.

Age of Radio. They are also intended to demonstrate an understanding of humor of these four radio comedy programs. The two modern original scripts are current applications of comedy analysis done for this work. If humor is ever written by a machine, it will sound that way. No machine can replace man's own complex, creative imagination in the art of comedy.

CHAPTER III

COMEDY DRAMA - "LUM AND ABNER"

Program Length: Fifteen minutes

SOUND: OLD TELEPHONE RINGS--TWO LONGS.

LUM: Grannies, Abner, I believe that's our ring....

ABNER: Ah dead it, Lum...Ah believe you're right.

LUM: I'll see. Hello, Jot 'em Down Store...this is Lum
and Abner!

FADE IN ORGAN THREE MUSIC, UP TO FULL, THEN FADE UNDER AND
OUT FOR COMMERCIAL (60 seconds).

ANNOUNCER: ...and now, let's see what's going on down on
Pine Ridge. Well, as we look in on the little
community today, we find Lum and Abner at work in the
Jot 'em Down Store and Library. Lum is doing some
paperwork, and Abner is about to talk on the tele-
phone...listen....

LUM: (Figuring out loud).

ABNER: Lum, is Cedric's ring three shorts and a long?

LUM: Aye Grannies...I believe so, Abner.

ABNER: All right.

SOUND: THREE SHORTS AND A LONG OF AN OLD TELEPHONE.

ABNER: Cedric, is that you?...This is Abner Peabody doin' the talkin'...Say, Cedric,...huh?...yes, Cedric... Wonderful World. Now, Cedric, 'Lizabeth is goin' out of town with Little Pearl pretty soon, so will you go over and get Old Blue and bring him down to the store here? I don't want ta have him there by himself with this stormy weather we've been havin' lately...O.K., Cedric...so long. What? Yes, Cedric, Wonderful World.

LUM: Abner, you treat that dog of yours like he's human. He's no different from any other dog.

ABNER: Why, Lum, Old Blue is a dog, all right, but he's different. He's just as smart and lively as any dog ever was.

LUM: Well then, why does he just lie around all day and night and eat or sleep? I've never seen or heard of him bein' active like most dogs.

ABNER: Why, that's why he's so smart. He's just restin' himself for any excitin' events that might come around home. Why, he's just waitin' and figurin' out what he'll do if somethin' happens, Lum. Poor Old Blue, I just worry sometimes that he thinks too much.

LUM: (Laughs) Abner, all your dog ever thinks about is eating or sleeping.

ABNER: Well, at least Old Blue keeps out of trouble. He doesn't chase chickens like Snake Hagan's dog, Beaugard. Why, Beaugard got into Squire Skimp's chicken coop last week and just raised an awful fuss. Didn't hurt any chickens though...he just wanted to be sociable (Laughs).

LUM: Well, Beaugard did something. I don't think Old Blue can hardly see out of those sad eyes of his to do anything.

ABNER: Now, Lum. Old Blue has the happiest...

LUM: (Interrupts) Wait a minute, Abner. Here comes Grandpappy Spears. Get busy and put away some of those cans, and I'll look like I'm working here. Grannies, let's not get into an argument with him, today.

SOUND: JOT 'EM DOWN STORE FRONT WOODEN SCREEN DOOR OPENS, BELL RINGS. DOOR CLOSES.

SPEARS: Howdy, Lum...Howdy, Abner.

LUM: (unexcitedly) Hello, Grandpap. We're busy.

ABNER: (also unexcitedly) Hello, Grandpap. Ya, you can see we haven't got time to gossip today.

SPEARS: Well, you fellers go right ahead. I'll just go over here and sit down and...

ABNER: (Interrupts) Not there, Grandpap! That rockin' chair's for Old Blue today. Cedric's bringin' him over cause 'Lizabeth and Little Pearl are goin' out of town for a spell.

Sit on that box over there next to the post if you want, Grandpap, and just don't bother us 'cause...

SPEARS: I know, you're busy. O.K., Abner.

LUM: Abner, check how many cans of beans are on the bottom shelf there. We should have...

SPEARS: (Interrupts) Say, you fellers mind if I read your paper?

ABNER: No, Grandpap, go ahead. Now let's see, Lum...How many cans should we have?

SPEARS: I see where Margaret Biddle had her tooth pulled yesterday. Says she's recoverin' O.K., though.

ABNER: Grandpap...

SPEARS: Says she didn't know it was a bad tooth. Says she felt a pain in her big toe every night after supper, so didn't know that...

ABNER: (Interrupts) Grandpap...can't you read the important things first like most people?

SPEARS: O.K., I'll see what else is on the front page. Snake Hogan's dog's been restricted to his dog house by Squire Skimp. (Laughs) That poor dog gets into more trouble. Chasin' chickens this time. Why doesn't Old Blue chase chickens, Abner?

ABNER: Grandpap...

SPEARS: Why, Abner, come to think of it, that lazy dog of yours never does anything except sleep and eat. Why doesn't he ever do any heroic deeds or chase rabbits or something?

ABNER: Grandpap, you know very well that Old Blue is one of the smartest dogs in these parts. He just knows enough to keep out of trouble. He's just waitin' for the right moment to save a little child's life from danger or chase a prowler.

SPEARS: Well then, why doesn't he practice running or hunting to keep himself sharp, Abner?

ABNER: Now, Grandpap. Old Blue can do just about anything. He's just conservin' his strength.

SPEARS: Abner, if that dog's been conservin' his strength all of these years, he should be as strong as an ox.

ABNER: Grandpap...

SPEARS: Why, I heard that Elsie Bricker's cat chased a whole herd of cattle all over Blake Barton's farm one day. Blake said that cat could have tackled a mountain lion that day. It was so mean...

ABNER: (Interrupts) Grandpap...

SPEARS: Elsie claims that all that cat ever did was eat and sleep for five years until that day. Said she fed it some of her special cauliflower pie by mistake.

LUM: Cauliflower pie?

SPEARS: Yes sir. Made it with her own recipe. Mixed up cauliflower, horseradish, onions, wild peppers, garlic, and wheat germ, then boiled it all in tonic water and some of Al Fetter's cider. Said she put it all in a pie for her old man's supper that night, but fed part of it to the cat by mistake.

LUM: Well for the land's sake. (Laughs)

SPEARS: Yes sir. She said that cat never moved so fast in all its life after it ate part of that pie. Said that cat looked as mean as a bull when it tore out o' that house.

ABNER: Grandpap...

SPEARS: Yes sir, that cat went out lookin' for trouble sure enough. He chased Blake Barton's herd of cows up and down that field like a crazy sheepdog for an hour...

ABNER: Sassifrass!

SPEARS: Blake Barton was afraid to go near that old cat for fear of what it might do next. So, he tried to get his dogs to chase it away, but they wouldn't go anywhere near it.

ABNER: S-a-a-sifrass.

SPEARS: Finally, the cat got tired and went home. Elsie says the cat slept for two days straight after that. Didn't seem to bother it otherwise. She threw out the pie though after that. Thought it might not be a good idea to give it to her old man that night.

LUM: Grannies, (laughs) it's a good thing she didn't.

ABNER: Grandpap, where did you hear such a thing? That's just a little far-fetched, if you ask me.

SPEARS: Come to think of it, Abner, I heard it from you.

ABNER: Huh?

SPEARS: Yes sir. I know I heard it from you.

LUM: Granddies, Abner, don't you recollect your own stories?

ABNER: Now, wait just a minute. I never told you that story, Grandpap. I told you the one about Elsie Bricker's brother-in-law.

SPEARS: No sir, Abner. I know it was you.

ABNER: Now look here, Grandpap...

SOUND: BELL RINGS--TWO LONGS.

SPEARS: Yes sir, it was you, Abner.

ABNER: Now, Grandpap...how could I have told you a wild story like that in the first place? Why, I...

LUM: Abner, I believe that was our ring.

ABNER: Huh? Oh, ya. I'll get it.

SPEARS: You told it to me the week before last over at...

ABNER: (Interrupts) Grandpap...be quiet, now. Hello? Jot 'em Down Store and Library, Abner Peabody doin' the talkin'...Huh?...ya...he's here. What?...all right, I'll tell him. Good-bye. Grandpap, Dick Huddleston wants you back at the post office right away.

SPEARS: O.K., but I still say you were the one, Abner.

ABNER: Grandpap...

SPEARS: (Off mike) So long.

LUM: So long, Grandpap.

SOUND: DOOR OPENS, BELL RINGS, DOOR CLOSSES.

ABNER: Doggies, Lum. Why is it we always get in an argument when he comes over? It never fails.

LUM: I don't know, Abner. But that story of yours about Elsie Bricker's cat was a good one! (Laughs)

ABNER: Huh? Oh, ya. (Laughs) I guess it was at that.
(Laughs)

LUM: Grannies, I would have liked to have seen the expression on old Blake Barton's face when he saw that cat chasin' his cows. (Laughs)

ABNER: (Laughs) I believe you're right, Lum. That would've been a sight. (Laughs) That old cat was so ignorant anyway. (Laughs) Yes sir, just goes ta show how misbehaved these animals can be with bad owners. Yes sir. (Laughs)

LUM: Well, it was a good story for you, Abner. (Laughs)

ABNER: (Laughs) Yes...(laughs)...huh? My story? Now, wait a minute, Lum, I never...

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS. BELL RINGS. AND DOOR CLOSES.

LUM: Well, hello, Mousey. What brings you here?

MOUSEY: Hello Lum, Abner.

ABNER: Ya, Mousey. I thought you were helpin' your wife clean your house today.

MOUSEY: Yes sir, I was up to now.

LUM: Well, why'd you quit so soon in the afternoon?

MOUSEY: Well sir, I got word at home about the contest, so I came right in to town to find out more about it.

LUM: Contest? What contest?

ABNER: Ya, Mousey, what kind of a contest is it? It must be awful important if your wife let you out of the house.

MOUSEY: Well sir, it is a big contest from what I hear.

There's supposed to be an article about it in the paper.

LUM: There is? Well got the paper over there on the box, Mousey. Grandpap was readin' it a while ago but didn't mention it.

MOUSEY: Yes sir. It should have all the details.

ABNER: Doggies, this sounds like something big. I wonder what kind of a contest it is?

LUM: Go ahead and read it out loud, Mousey.

MOUSEY: Yes sir. It says "Pine Ridge Pet Contest to Be Held next Friday afternoon." That's the headline.

ABNER: Pet contest? Doggies, that sounds good, don't it, Lum?

LUM: Well, I reckon so, if you've got a pet.

ABNER: Why, sure! Where's it gonna be, Mousey? Does it say?

MOUSEY: Yes sir. I'll read on.

ABNER: Ya-Ya...good idea, Mousey. Go ahead and read the article, maybe it'll say.

MOUSEY: "The Pine Ridge Pet Contest will be held next Friday afternoon in Pine Ridge."

ABNER: Well, now, that's what I call a good idea. Yes sir. Have it right here in Pine Ridge. That's where most of us live anyway. Wouldn't make much sense ta have it anywhere else.

LUM: Abner...

ABNER: Huh? Oh ya...go ahead and read some more about it, Mousey. What's it all about, anyway?

MOUSEY: Yes sir. "The Pine Ridge Pet Contest will take place in front of Dick Huddleston's store on this date."

ABNER: Sounds like Dick Huddleston's in charge of this.

MOUSEY: "Dick Huddleston, store owner, will be in charge of this contest and will judge the pet contestants."

ABNER: Uh-huh...just as I suspected.

LUM: Wait a minute. Dick Huddleston's the judge?

MOUSEY: Yes sir, that's what the paper says. "The contest is open to all pets of Pine Ridge residents. However, only one pet per resident may be entered in the contest."

ABNER: Well now, that sounds fair enough.

LUM: But Dick Huddleston's the only judge?

MOUSEY: Yes sir.

ABNER: Mousey, what does it say about how these pets are goin' ta be judged? Are they gonna have a beauty contest for pets?

MOUSEY: (Chuckles) No sir, I believe not. It says: "Pets will be judged on obedience by their reputation in Pine Ridge. Judging that day will be on appearance, health, and any tricks they can do."

ABNER: Doggies, Lum, Old Blue is just a sure shot ta win that contest!

MOUSEY: "The winning pet will be crowned the Pine Ridge Mascot of the Month and the owner will receive an award of ten pounds of flour and five pounds of sugar from Dick Huddleston's store. Contestants need only be present on day of judging to participate."

ABNER: Doggies, Lum, Old Blue's gonna win that Pet Contest, I just know he is. (Laughs) Doggies, will I be proud, too. (Laughs)

LUM: Well, I guess it's all right, Abner, but I can't figure out why Dick Huddleston's the judge.

MOUSEY: Well sir, I believe it's all right, because, well, he doesn't have a pet, and besides he's giving away the sugar and flour as a prize.

LUM: Well, I reckon it's all right, then.

ABNER: Why sure, Lum! Old Blue's gonna win that contest and be Pine Ridge Mascot of the Month! (Laughs)

LUM: What makes you so sure Old Blue's gonna win, Abner?

ABNER: Why, Old Blue meets all those judgements. Why, he's the most beautiful pet in Pine Ridge...

LUM: An old bloodhound?

ABNER: Why, sure he is, Lum. And healthy as a puppy! And tricks, why, he can roll over and play dead so well, he sleeps for days after he rolls over. (Laughs) And, doggies, Lum, obedience...why, everybody knows that Old Blue's been the most obedient pet in Pine Ridge. Why, he's never caused any trouble.

LUM: Ya. That's because he never does anything except eat and sleep.

ABNER: Now Lum, you know that dog is more obedient and trouble-free than any pet in this whole, entire county. Why...

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS, BELL RINGS, DOOR CLOSSES.

CEDRIC: (Out of breath and excited) Mr. Abner! Mr. Abner!

ABNER: Well, Cedric...What's the matter? You look like you've run ten miles!

CEDRIC: Yes mum, almost.

ABNER: What do you mean, Cedric? I thought you were bringin' Old Blue down here ta the store?

CEDRIC: Yes, mum. I started to, but Old Blue saw Elsie Biddle's cat inside Dick Huddlestons store window and he lit out after it into the store like a bolt of lightning and chased it all through the store and broke all kinds of things and then last I saw 'em he was chasin' that cat down to the hollow and...

ABNER: (Interrupts) Oh my goodness! (Off mike as he leaves) Lum, I'll be back in a....

MUSIC: FADE UP TO FULL ORGAN THEME MUSIC, THEN MUSIC UNDER AND OUT FOR CLOSING COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Saint Amelia

The reader should remember that these scripts are original, not actual, and based on character and program study. Certain indentifying phrases that are popular with certain characters in actual programs have been used in these scripts. However, any resemblance of these six scripts in plot and content to any radio comedy programs of the past is strictly coincidental.

"Lum and Abner" started on N.B.C., in 1931, and was aired for twenty-four years on the N.B.C., C.B.S., A.B.C., and Mutual networks. Lum Edwards and Abner Peabody were the two main characters in the program's focal point of the Jot 'em Down Store in Pine Ridge, Arkansas. This was a fictional town, but in 1936, the residents of the real town of Waters, Arkansas, changed the town's name to Pine Ridge-- a gracious gesture to two beloved radio comedians.³⁸

"Lum and Abner" has become probably the lone surviving radio comedy dialect humor program, since it may even today be heard in syndicated form on many radio stations in the United States. "Lum and Abner," of course, was popular in the thirties, too.

The thirties were a time of innocence and ignorance and certainly no pair was better suited to it than Lum Edwards and Abner Peabody. With the single exception of "Amos 'n' Andy," "Lum and Abner" was the most popular dialect show on radio.³⁹

³⁸Frank Huxton and Bill Owen, Radio's Golden Age (New York: Easton Valley Press, 1966), p. 215.

³⁹Jim Henson, The Great Radio Comedians (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), p. 56.

The dialect humor on "Lum and Abner" was regional, not ethnic. Perhaps for this reason, the program has been unscathed by protest groups to this day. The feelings of the people of the region represented in the program were best illustrated when Waters, Arkansas, changed its name to Pine Ridge.

As Freeman Cosden and Charles Correll dreamed up "Sam 'n' Henry," Chester Lauck (Lum Edwards) and Norris Goff (Abner Peabody) originated "Lum and Abner."

Lauck and Goff had been successful businessmen in Mena, Arkansas, before they became radio performers. Lauck was an auto finance company manager and Goff was secretary of a grocery company owned by his father. In 1931, they took part in a radio broadcast designed to raise funds for flood relief for Mena residents. The two boyhood friends thought of doing a blackface act--they were already good at dialects--but someone else beat them to the punch. In a few minutes' time, they dreamed up the characters of Lum and Abner and ad-libbed their way through a routine. There was so much audience response that the two young men got an immediate audition from the Cuckoo Cuts Company, which put them on the air five nights a week. They remained on radio for over two decades. In later years, they worked for Ford automobiles, Horlick's Balted Milk, General Foods, Alka-Seltzer, General Motors, and many local sponsors, appearing at various times on all four national networks and syndicated to independent stations.⁴⁰

Norris Goff's grocery experience must have been a determining factor for the decision of the program's setting. However, the two did not decide the name of their store themselves. Lum and Abner asked listeners to send in suggestions for a name for their store, and, of course, they chose the name of the Jot 'em Down Store. They later expanded its name to the Jot 'em Down Store and Library, as the store became a bit more sophisticated. Lum devised a greeting card

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 57.

company in the store. The store once became a secret nursery for a cute little baby that someone just happened to leave by accident in the store. Lum and Abner even tried to build a rocketship in one series. There seemed to be no limit to their well-meaning plans or projects.

The Jot 'em Down Store was a focal point of activity in Pine Ridge. Visits to the store by the program's other characters, who always seemed to add to Lum and Abner's own insurmountable problems, added an interesting and pleasing variety to each program series. Deep-voiced Chester Lauck played Lum Edwards, Grandpappy Spears, Snake Hogan, and handyman Cedric Wehunt. Norris Goff played the higher-pitched voices of Abner Peabody, Dick Huddleston, Doc Miller, Squire Skimp, and Mousey Gray. Grandpappy Spears, Cedric Wehunt, and Mousey Gray seemed to be the most regular characters of the cast: Grandpap was nosey, full of gossip, energetic, and a little hard of hearing; Cedric was polite, friendly, a Mortimer Snerd character; and Mousey Gray was a soft-voiced, henpecked helper around the store or just a frequent visitor.

Lum and Abner were gentle, innocent, patriotic, devoted, polite, and sincere, but they proved to react as ordinary people also when confronted by their many problems brought about by various combinations of personal vanity, stupidity, and misunderstanding. Perhaps because Lum and Abner were such human and gentle characters, their audiences have for over forty-two years responded to them as favorably as they have.

The predominant technique of humor, as discussed in Chapter I, in this "Lum and Abner" script is character humor. The success of the entire series of programs depended on audience recognition of the characters of Lum and Abner--the audience had to understand the biographical background of characters and why characters did what they did, when they did it. Granted any listener could enjoy "Lum and Abner" at first hearing it, but the program was ideally written for a loyal audience. The other techniques in this script are the obvious, exaggeration, momentum, and verbal combat.

Almost any line of this script is a form of character humor. Humor that comes from how a certain character reacts in a given situation--he has his own pattern of stimulus-response conversation. When Abner asks Lum at the beginning of the script if Cedric's ring is three shorts and a long, Lum does not simply say, "Yep," but uses the phrase, "Aye Grannies, I believe so;" a small bit of humor from Lum just being Lum. Abner, instead of identifying himself, "This is Abner," he says, "This is Abner Peabody doin' the talkin'." In his telephone conversation with Cedric Wehunt, two more examples of character humor are evident: Abner's great love for his dog and Cedric's peculiar greetings or closings, "Wonderful World." Since the script is almost entirely character humor, discussion will now focus on other contributing ingredients of humor.

Lum's first remark to Abner after the telephone conversation is the start of verbal combat. Lum politely ridicules Abner's overprotection of his dog. Then the verbal thrust and parry routine begins when Abner defends his dog. The combat switches to Abner versus Grandpappy Spears on Grandpap's arrival. Lum becomes an interested, non-combatant third party. The combat cools after Grandpap leaves, as Lum and Abner laugh about Grandpap's story. However, a thrust hidden by a laugh, "Well, it was a good story for you, Abner," by Lum (after it sinks in for Abner) starts the verbal combat between them again. Housey Gray's timely entrance in the store prevents any further battle. Although Housey seems to prevent any Lum-Abner conflict, Lum must at times remind an enthusiastic Abner to calm down. Again, the Lum-Abner verbal combat resumes after Housey finishes reading about the contest, as Lum questions Old Blue's chances of winning the contest. Abner just gets a good defense going, when the door opens and Cedric rushes into the store. Lum wins this time in verbal combat, since Cedric's story reveals that Old Blue may not win the contest after all. The verbal combat between Lum and Abner provided an early hint to the episode's climax. The combat reveals a human weakness common to many radio program plots, human braggadocio, that inevitably is deflated. The reader perhaps guessed the climax in the script and, therefore, helped maintain his interest in the plot to see if the guess was correct.

The exaggerations by Abner and Grandpappy Spears contribute to their characters' humor. Abner exaggerates Old Blue's intelligence and manners. For example, few dogs can think too much, purposely conserve strength, or be as perfect as Old Blue. Abner also mentions Beauregard as being "sociable" with Squire Skimp's chickens. Grandpappy Spears provides the exaggerated story about Elsie Bricker's old cat. Grandpap's silly story falls on Abner's disbelieving ears, and only fosters verbal combat between the two.

About the only obvious humor in this script is the front door of the Jot 'em Down Store. The creaking sound of the opening wooden screen door, the tinkle of the small bell attached to it, and the door closing provide visual images marking the entrance or exit of a character--in this script Grandpappy Spears, Mousey Gray, and Cedric Wehunt. The front door opening or closing is a trademark of "Lum and Abner."

The screen door is important for the ingredient of momentum. In the mentioned episodes of verbal combat in the script, the opening screen door provides a useful method of plot transition. Rather than an argument building up, reaching a peak, and leveling off, the screen door opening transition effectively breaks an argument at its peak as it marks the entrance of Grandpap, Mousey, or Cedric. The very dialogue of all characters provides momentum. For example, the short statement and response pattern in the

script increases the momentum in relaying plot information. It enhances listener interest. Each character could have had lengthy statements followed by lengthy responses, but listener interest might have decreased. The humorous remarks injected in the dialogue aid momentum.

Character humor, however, is the key to "Lum and Abner." A description or analysis of this in a complete phrase-by-phrase manner would require a book in itself. Character humor required years to develop as a piece of fine art. This humor must be here accepted for what it is and appreciated for that reason.

Character humor is also the key to "Amos 'n' Andy."

CHAPTER IV

COMEDY DRAMA - "AMOS 'N' ANDY"

Program Length: Fifteen minutes

MUSIC: FADE IN "THE PERFECT SONG" CHIME TO FULL, MUSIC UNDER FOR ANNOUNCER INTRODUCTION, UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR COMMERCIAL (60 seconds), THEN MUSIC UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR PROGRAM.

AMOS: Andy, is you makin' any progress on those financial records?

ANDY: Amos, the only progress I's makin' is turnin' these pages filled with red numbers. We is in big trouble, Amos. The financial record of the Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company is so full of minus signs in these here columns that it looks like every page has a ladder on it.

AMOS: Ya...I think I see's what you mean there Andy. Maybe we oughta start usin' green ink in that book. That way nobody'll know the difference.

ANDY: Ya, Amos. But that won't help our credit none. We've done scrapped bottom and been diggin' a hole there for some time now. You'd think we's drillin' for oil.

AMOS: Hmmm. Drillin' for oil. Ya....

ANDY: Wait a minute, Amos. I don't like that look in your eye. You ain't fixin' on drillin' for oil somewheres, is you?

AMOS: No, Andy. Not for oil. But you may be on the right track.

ANDY: Amos, what's cookin' in that head o' yours?

AMOS: Andy, I think I've got a plan that can get us out of debt for good and put some green stuff in our pockets.

ANDY: Hmmm. Sounds O.K. to me, but this'd better not be one of your wild goose chases, Amos. We've done been in trouble enough already.

AMOS: Andy, you can rest assured that this plan will make the Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company a sideline. We is goin' ta pay a call on our lawyer friend, Algonquin J. Calhoun.

ANDY: What's he got to do with this?

AMOS: Andy, we is about to form the Jones and Brown Weight Reduction Company, where we makes dollars out of pounds!

ANDY: Amos, check and double check!

MUSIC: BRIDGE UP TO FULL TO NEXT SCENE. THEN UNDER AND OUT.

AMOS: Down this hallway hea, Andy.

ANDY: Amos, I sure hopes you knows what you is doin'. I'm beginin' to have doubts about this whole thing.

AMOS: Don't worry about a thing, Andy. I figure all we gotta do now is get some licences or patents or something like that ta get started in our new enterprise. That's why we is comin' ta see ol' Calhoun for some legal advice.

ANDY: Ya, but is you sure he knows about all these legal matters, Amos?

AMOS: Well, why shouldn't he, Andy? He got you out of trouble in the Madame Queen case, didn't he?

ANDY: Ya, I guess so. But sometimes I wonder what would o' happened if...

AMOS: Never mind thea, Andy, we's hea now.

SOUND: DOOR OPENS. IN BACKGROUND, VOICE OF CALHOUN ON THE TELEPHONE. DOOR CLOSING.

AMOS: He's on the phone now, Andy. We'll just sit down hea and wait.

ANDY: O.K., but you do the talkin' when he's finished.

CALHOUN: (Off mike, on phone) Well, what else can happen? What? You say they threatened to file suit against you for fraudulent advertising for two million dollars? And a suit for false practices for three million dollars? And a court fine of one million dollars? And you want to know what to do?

ANDY: (Quietly) Amos, I'm beginnin' to like this plan o' yours less and less all the time.

AMOS: Hold on, thea Andy. This is probably some big corporation deal Calhoun's talkin' about now.

ANDY: Well, if it ain't, this fella better be a cat with nine lives, 'cause he'll need that many to pay all that money off.

CALHOUN: (Still on phone) Well, are you single? I see.

And does this man have an available daughter? Oh, that's too bad. Well, can you swim? Well, you'd better start learnin' right away, 'cause you're gonna need to swim to some deserted Pacific Island 'til this thing's over...and don't call me, I'll call you. Good-bye!

ANDY: Amos, I'm leavin'!

AMOS: Now wait a minute, Andy. We's in this together, you know.

ANDY: Ya, that's what's worryin' me. I just hopes we can afford a rowboat, at least.

CALHOUN: (Approaching Amos-Andy microphone) Well, well, well.

Now what can I do for Mr. Jones and Mr. Brown?

I hope you're not in trouble again.

AMOS: Uh, no Calhoun. Andy and me came ta see you 'bout a new corporation we's fixin' ta commence with hea, an' we wanta know 'bout all those legal mattas we's supposed ta be prepared with.

ANDY: Ya...we wants to know all them limitagations and things like that.

CALHOUN: I see. Well, boys, you have come to the right place, because Algonquin J. Calhoun is at your service, in toto.

ANDY: Well, I don't know who this Oriental helper of yours is, but we needs your help, Calhoun.

AMOS: Ya, Calhoun. Where is it we start, now?

CALHOUN: Well, first of all, I'll have to have you incorporated.

ANDY: Uh, oh! I knew this was gonna happen, Amos! I just knew it! I'm leavin'! They is no way I'm gonna get my head chopped off for no new company that's gonna get us outa debt. It just ain't worth it, that's all.

AMOS: Now hold on there, and don't go jumpin' to confusions. What is this incorporation all about, Calhoun?

ANDY: Ya, Calhoun. This better not hurt 'cause I hates the sight of blood, 'specially when it's mine.

CALHOUN: Don't worry about a thing, boys. There's no pain involved at all. It's only a legal process of corporate indoctrination.

ANDY: I's regusted, Amos. This is gettin' worse all o' the time. First, we gets our heads cut off, then we goes to see a doctor! Now that don't make much sense at all!

CALHOUN: Patience and fortitude, my boys! You are in the hands of Algonquin J. Calhoun!

ANDY: Amen!

MUSIC: BRIDGE TO NEXT SCENE, UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER AND OUT.

AMOS: Hold the door fo' me then Andy, while I pull this hea Jones and Brown weight reducin' machine in the house hea.

ANDY: Well, one good thing--it fits through the door O.K.

AMOS: Ya, Andy. That's because it's made to help people lose weight who can't get through doors like this. Hea, Andy, help me lift this mechanical wonda ova hea by the dining room table. It seems like a good place.

ANDY: Well, it'll make ya think twice before you eats too much with this thing a starin' at ya.

AMOS: Ya. That's the whole idea behind our new machine, Andy. Preventative weight reduction. That's why the Kingfish said it is so old and ugly lookin'.

ANDY: Ya. I'll say its ugly. I'd hate to be left alone in a dark room with this thing. With that glass dome and that big metal cabinet with the arms stickin' out, it looks like one o' those science fiction robots they has in the movies. Is you sure the Kingfish didn't pull somethin' over on us, Amos? Somehow, I gets the idea him an' Calhoun knew too much about corporal stations, patient fees, and weight reducin' frenchfrieses.

AMOS: Oh no, Andy. I'm sure they know'd what they's talkin' 'bout 'cause I checked on 'em myself in a book the Kingfish sold ta me.

ANDY: What book is that, Amos?

AMOS: Why, I can't think o' the title, Andy. It's ova thea on the chair. See for yourself. I'll set this weight reducin' machine up so's we can try it, hea. Ya, this should really start us a new life, Andy. I can see our names in the lights now-- "Jones and Brown Weight Reduction Company, Incorporated. Recognized Everywhere for..."

ANDY: (Interrupts) Say, Amos.

AMOS: What is it thea, Andy?

ANDY: Is this the book the Kingfish sold to you?

AMOS: Ya, that's it, Andy. What's tha title?

ANDY: It says "Quantum Mechanics for the Modern Times."

AMOS: Ya, see thea, Andy? All ya have ta do is read the title thea an' we's O.K. Old Quantum must've known what he was talkin' 'bout 'cause look how thick that book is. Thea must be enough room in thea for him an' all his grandchillin', too. Besides, it's for the modern times, ain't it?

ANDY: Ya, I guess so. I just hope this whole thing's all right though, 'cause I don't want no more trouble like we always seems to have after we see the Kingfish.

AMOS: No worry, Andy. Now, let's see how this thing works. The directions hea say "First, plug in machine." O.K., thea. "Now, set dial to amount of weight ta be lost." Hmmm. You see that dial, Andy?

ANDY: Nope. Not on the outside anywhere.

AMOS: Well, open up this cabinet door where you gets in, Andy. Step inside an' see what you sees.

ANDY: (Echo effect while in machine) Hmmm. Boy, it sure is cramped in here, and stuffy, too.

AMOS: That's the whole idea in it, Andy. Now, stand up once. Ya. You put your arms in these accordin-like sleeves with the gloves on 'em. Ya. Let me stand back hea and look at you, Andy...(Laughs)... Andy, you almost look like one o' those robots when you moves your arms around like that.

ANDY: Ya...well, that's fine, Amos, but I can't see any dial standin' up like this.

AMOS: Well, go ahead and stoop down and look thea, Andy. It's bound ta be thea somewhere.

ANDY: Hey, Amos!

AMOS: What's that, Andy?

ANDY: I can't get myself down! I'm stuck standin' up in here! Get me out o' here, Amos!

AMOS: Hold on, now, Andy! Don't get excited or nothin'! I'll get you out in no time.

ANDY: That's what I'm afraid of...now go easy Amos, and...

SOUND: METAL DOOR CLAMPING SHUT.

Uh-oh...what was that?

AMOS: Uh, just my knee hit this entrance door shut hea, Andy. I'll just open it up.

ANDY: Well...got it open yet? It's gettin' warm in here, Amos.

AMOS: (Grunts) Oh-oh, Andy. I'm afraid it's stuck! I can't get it open. Can you hear me, Andy?

ANDY: Ya, can you hear me?

AMOS: Ya, Andy.

ANDY: (Yells nervously) Then get me outa here, Amos!

AMOS: O.K.! O.K.! Andy...Keep cool and calm. I'll run downstairs and see if I can find some tools ta get that door open in no time at all. (Off mike)
Don't go away, Andy.

ANDY: (Disgusted) Oh, me. Here I's caught in my own weight reducin' machine. Boy, is I hot! Whew! I's just glad this machine ain't on! Boy, I'm hungry. It's about supper time, too. I wish Amos would hurry up.

SOUND: OUTSIDE DOOR OPENING AND SOUND OF TWO WOMEN'S VOICES ENTERING ROOM.

Uh-oh. Somebody's comin'. I think I can just duck my head a little (grunts) so whoever it is won't see me inside here. This is embarrassin'.

RUBY: Well, Mama, we certainly got in a good day of
MRS. shopping.
AMOS
JONES

MAMA: Yes, honey, we sure did...and without that bone-headed husband of yours. Why he...

RUBY: Mama...

MAMA: What's the matter, honey?...you look like you've seen a ghost, or is it that no good husband of yours?

RUBY: No, Mama...what is, or who is that? .

MAMA: Well, I declare I don't know, unless your husband took my advice and turned himself into a broom closet.

RUBY: I don't see Amos anywhere...but he must have left it here and gone out.

MAMA: Listen, honey, I wouldn't be surprised at any of the junk that man of yours might buy.

RUBY: It looks rather frightening, Mama. Almost like one of those robots from outer space.

MAMA: Well, if it is, maybe it swallowed up that man of yours and died from indigestion. I pity the poor thing if it did. Hmmm. Look at this, honey, a switch of some kind.

RUBY: Well, it's plugged in and it has a glass dome on top. I know! It's a surprise gift from Amos! It's probably one of those modern lamps! How darling! I'll turn on this switch and see.

MAMA: Hmmm. Nothing happened.

RUBY: Maybe it's one of those lights that take a while to warm up. Anyway, I'll go in the kitchen and start supper.

MAMA: O.K., honey. I'll put these packages away.

SOUND: A SLIGHT HISSING SOUND.

MAMA: Hmmm. That's funny. Never knew a lamp to give off steam like that.

SOUND: HISSING INCREASES TO A LOUD HISS.

MAMA: Hmm. Something's wrong with this thing for sure.

SOUND: SOUND OF "BOLO" AIRS FRANTICALLY BELLING ABOUT,
AND BUMPING INSIDE CABINET.

MAMA: Honey, this thing's a goin' crazy and...A MAN!!!
AAAAAAAAGHHHHHH!!!

SOUND: HEAVY WOMAN'S BODY FALLING TO THE FLOOR.
BUMPING AND HISSING BECOME EVEN LOUDER.

RUBY: (Off mike) Mama...what's the matter? (On mike)
MAMA!!! A MAN!!! AAAAAAAGHHHHHH!!!

SOUND: A LIGHTER WOMAN'S BODY FALLING TO THE FLOOR, MACHINE
SOUND CONTINUES, VIOLENT BREAKING OPEN OF METAL
DOOR, LOUD CRASH.

ANDY: OHHHH!!!

SOUND: SOUND OF HEAVY MAN'S BODY FALLING TO FLOOR, MACHINE
HAS ONLY SLIGHT HISS NOW.

AMOS: (Off mike) I'm a comin', Andy...I'm a comin'...
(On mike) Here I am and...Honey!...Mama!...Andy!...
Ow Wah! Ow Wah! Ow Wah!

MUSIC: FADE IN "THE PERFECT SONG" THERE UP TO FULL, THEN
UNDER FOR COMMERCIAL (60 seconds), CLOSING, THEN
THERE UP AGAIN TO CLOSE OF SHOW.

Scribble Analysis

As Chester Lauck and Norris Goff dreamed up "Lun and Abner," Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll contrived "Amos 'n' Andy." They met on August 12, 1919, in Durham, North Carolina, where Charles Correll was staging a musical for the Fraternal Order of Eagles. Freeman Gosden, who worked for a talent agency at the time, was called in to help Correll. Both having Southern backgrounds, they then worked together up the ladder of success to "Amos 'n' Andy." They worked at WEEH, Chicago, doing a program of songs. In November, 1925, they started at WGN, Chicago, announcing, singing, playing the piano, telling jokes, and writing and delivering sketches. In January, 1926, they went on the air as two Negro comedy characters they developed, "Sam 'n' Henry." With the program's success Chicago's WMAQ Radio gave Gosden and Correll a better offer than WGN. However, WGN owned all rights to the names, "Sam 'n' Henry." They changed the character names and made their move.

The first broadcast of "Amos 'n' Andy" came on March 19, 1928. Gosden and Correll did everything. They played not only Amos and Andy but every other character, male or female. They wrote their own scripts, supplied their own sound effects, timed their own shows, and probably even emptied their own wastebaskets.⁴¹

Their success on WMAQ led to their eventually being hired by the National Broadcasting Company for their first network broadcast on August 19, 1929.

⁴¹Harmon, Canadians, p. 81.

Pepsodent was their fifteen-minute series sponsor until 1937. Then, a sponsor change to Campbell soups with a theme song change from "The Perfect Song" to "Angel's Serenade," carried the series to 1943.

The series was on six nights a week for a time, then five, first at 11 P.M., and finally at an earlier hour, 7 P.M. (Eastern Time) so that the whole family could hear it. And whole families listened, many families. The show had forty-two million listeners when there were just over one hundred million people in the nation.⁴²

In 1943 they expanded to a weekly half-hour show for Rinso Soap Flakes, then Rexall Drug Stores. Finally, Amos, Andy, and the Kingfish made their last radio program change to playing popular records and discussing events of the day on "The Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall." Thanksgiving, 1960, on C.B.S., marked the end of Amos and Andy on radio, due to a policy change against dramatized radio programs.⁴³

Long-developed character humor is the main ingredient of humor in "Amos 'n' Andy." Loyal fans could almost predict what each character might do or say in any circumstance in the plot. At least some fans thought they could, but part of the fun in listening was to see if one's predictions were correct. For example, listeners probably anxiously predicted what Andy would do or say, or what would happen to him in the Madame Queen series. However, the clever comedy writers always held the key to a program's or a series' outcome.

⁴²Ibid., p. 82.

⁴³Ibid., p. 83.

Although "Amos 'n' Andy" programs probably used all techniques of humor at one time or another, the major ingredients used in this script are complication, confusionism, statement of truth, momentum, exaggeration, and the obvious. Character humor, as in "Lum and Abner," is strictly inherent and was written in the script only from a basic understanding of Amos and Andy. Other elements of humor may be in this script but are not significant enough to warrant discussion.

Complication, a trademark of "Amos 'n' Andy," is second in importance to character humor in this script. The two men almost always make their lives more difficult than they should be, but this fact makes them human and humorous. We laugh at them because we all sometimes make our lives more complicated than necessary. The entire script is a complication: Amos and Andy need money, but rather than earn it in honest hard work in their Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company, they follow Amos's idea of a chance to get an easy buck by starting an entirely new company. Anyone knows that starting a new company not only without capital but also with a large existing debt is economic suicide. But the easy way out blinds both Amos and Andy. They get deeper in trouble when Calhoun and the Kingfish team up to make some money themselves on the two suckers. Things get more complicated when Amos and Andy fall for the Calhoun-Kingfish scheme. The final complication comes when Andy gets stuck in the weight reducing machine, and Amos finds out he has three unconscious people in his house and a weight

reducing machine failure.

Confusionism is another characteristic of Amos and Andy, especially Andy. First, Andy gets confused in the visit to Calhoun's office. He does not understand the legal talk, and his consequent misunderstanding leads to fear of taking part in the new company. His misunderstanding of incorporated, for example, is innocent but funny. Amos is just as confused about everything involved in the new company but won't admit it, since it was all his idea in the first place. Andy is confused because Amos denies he is confused, when he really is. Andy knows it but can never seem to prove it. Unfortunately, Andy's confusion leads him to be the goat of the script, since he gets stuck in the weight reducing machine.

The innocent statements of truth, which are sometimes understatements of truth, are also sources of humor. For example, Andy remarks that the pages of his financial records appear to have ladders on them. Or, Andy deduces that it does not make sense to see a doctor after one literally loses his head. In this script, in fact, Andy's deductions are usually right, and Amos's decisions are usually wrong. True to character humor, however, Andy in the end suffers for it.

The logical dialogue momentum carries audience interest in this script. The conversations, as in "Lum and Abner," reveal essential plot information. For example, in the first conversation of Amos and Andy one learns that

there is a problem and there is a proposed solution. This necessarily comes very early in the script, so the audience knows where the show is and where it is going. The remaining conversations follow the problem's development and eventual "solution." Musical bridges or movements from place to place by characters between bridges, provide transitions that also aid momentum.

Exaggeration is also a source of humor in the script. For example, Calhoun's telephone description of a client's economic despair is a bit far-fetched. Or, when Mama sees the ugly machine in the living room, she hopes that it swallowed Amos and died from indigestion.

With a weight reducing machine attraction, the obvious is certainly a source of humor. Andy's description of the machine and his work done to start it, prepare the audience for the inevitable climax when Ruby turns on the machine. The hissing sound of steam escaping, with accompanying comments and screams by Mama, Ruby, Andy, and Amos, all provide a visual image of obvious humor. The audio in radio often painted pictures for the listeners to overcome radio's lack of video. For example, Andy's lines describe and help the listener visualize the strange weight reducing machine. Similarly, as in the machine's hissing, sound effects also help overcome radio's blindness.

In the first line of the following script, Edgar Bergen's comment about Charlie being dressed up provides a visual image cue for the humor that follows in the script.

CHAPTER V

COMEDY VARIETY - "THE EDGAR BERGEN AND
CHARLIE MCCARTHY SHOW"

Program Length: Thirty minutes

MUSIC: OPENING THEME, UP TO FULL THEN UNDER FOR ANNOUNCER WHO
INTRODUCES SHOW AND GUESTS, THEME UP THEN UNDER FOR
COMMERCIAL (60 seconds), THEN:

EDGAR: Well, Charlie, I see you're dressed very well,
tonight. Is there some special reason?

CHARLIE: And why not, Bergy old boy? Don't you know who's
coming this evening?

EDGAR: Well, W. C. Fields will be here...

CHARLIE: Why, I wouldn't consider him a guest, Bergen...

EDGAR: You wouldn't, Charlie?

CHARLIE: No...quite frankly, he's a pest in quest of a
bartender's best!

EDGAR: Now Charlie...you shouldn't say things like that
about Mr. Fields. He's one of our guests tonight
along with Mae West.

CHARLIE: Sigh...

EDGAR: Why, what's the matter, Charlie? Do you feel ill?

CHARLIE: No, but if Mae West could be my nurse, I wish I were.

EDGAR: Why, Charlie...you don't mean to say that you've fallen for Miss West, do you?

CHARLIE: Yes, Bergen, I'm just a helpless victim of love.

EDGAR: Well, Charlie, Miss West will be here shortly.

CHARLIE: Bergen, I think I'm a little nervous. Do you think Mae West will like me? I mean, really?

EDGAR: How could she not like you, Charlie?

CHARLIE: You're right, Bergen. I know she'll like me. Why, Bergen, I'll just remember my old motto, "When in love, go West, young man!"

EDGAR: Yes...

CHARLIE: Why, Bergen, I feel better already.

EDGAR: Of course, Charlie. Everything will be just fine.

CHARLIE: Yes, Bergen, I'm beginning to see the sunshine...

RAY NOBLE: Did someone call?

CHARLIE: Well, it sure got cloudy in a hurry. Drafty, too.

EDGAR: Oh, Ray...Charlie and I were discussing Miss Mae West, who will be here soon. I'm afraid Charlie is a bit nervous.

NOBLE: Oh, really? Well, I don't see what you're so nervous about, Charlie my boy. Mae West is just a human being.

CHARLIE: Ya, but all that human being in Mae West is what I'm so crazy about!

NOBLE: Well, Charlie, just imagine that when you're talking to Mae West, that you're actually talking to me!

CHARLIE: What? Why, I couldn't insult her!

EDGAR: Now, Charlie. Ray is only trying to help you relax when you talk with Mae West.

NOBLE: Of course, Charlie. It's all in the mind.

CHARLIE: Not when Mae West is around.

EDGAR: Charlie, you see, just be a gentleman and everything will be all right.

NOBLE: Yes, Charlie. Would you like me to stand by your side when Miss West arrives?

CHARLIE: You'd better not! Why, I'll clip ya! So help me, I'll mow ya down!

MUSIC: SELECTION BY RAY NOBLE AND HIS ORCHESTRA (2 minutes),
COMMERCIAL (60 seconds).

MUSIC: MORTIMER SNERD THEME, UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER.

EDGAR: Well, Mortimer Snerd! And how does this day find you feeling?

MORTIMER: Well, I'll tell ya...uh...up ta now it hasn't asked me.

EDGAR: No, no, Mortimer. I'm asking how you are. I just said it in a different way.

MORTIMER: Oh...ya...well you could o' fooled me! But that's true no matter how ya say it.

EDGAR: Mortimer, you'll just have to get used to such colloquialisms.

MORTIMER: Ya...well, uh...uh...

EDGAR: What's the matter?

MORTIMER: Well, I've had ta get used ta flics and bed bugs but never any o' those things!

EDGAR: Oh, but Mortimer! Colloquialisms are simply ways people who live in certain areas say things.

MORTIMER: Ya...well, where I come from, a fly's a fly and a bed bug's a bed bug.

EDGAR: Well, of course. We all have these little idiosyncrasies.

MORTIMER: Oh...we do, huh?

EDGAR: Of course.

MORTIMER: Even me?

EDGAR: Even you, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Well...uh...I guess I'll just have ta buy a new kind of bug spray for those things. I never heard of 'em before, let alone see 'em.

EDGAR: Oh, Mortimer! You see, idiosyncrasies are characteristic peculiarities.

MORTIMER: They are?

EDGAR: Yes.

MORTIMER: And everybody's got 'em?

EDGAR: Certainly.

MORTIMER: Everybody...

EDGAR: Everybody.

MORTIMER: Well...uh...

EDGAR: What is it, Mortimer? You look rather sad.

MORTIMER: Well...uh...I thought I had enough trouble with flies and bed bugs. Didn't realize they had friends everywhere.

EDGAR: Oh, Mortimer, never mind. Tell me, how have you been this past week?

MORTIMER: Oh...I've been, uh...uh...I've...uh...hmmmm...
let's see now...uh...what was it you asked?

EDGAR: How have you been this past week?

MORTIMER: Oh, ya! I've been just fine, just fine, thank you.

EDGAR: Well good. You haven't been sick at home?

MORTIMER: Nope, nope, nope. Just me at home, nobody else.
Yep...almost always me.

EDGAR: Then you haven't missed any school?

MORTIMER: Nope, nope, nope. I don't miss it at all,...
(laughs) especially in the summer.

EDGAR: No, Mortimer. I mean have you been absent from school?

MORTIMER: Well...uh...let's see now. Come ta think of it,
I was last week.

EDGAR: You were?

MORTIMER: Why, ya. Don't ya trust me?

EDGAR: No, no, Mortimer...why were you absent?

MORTIMER: Why was I absent?

EDGAR: Yes, Mortimer, why? You weren't playing hooky, were you?

MORTIMER: Why, of course not. It was my pal Elmer.

EDGAR: Aha! So you ~~like~~ truant.

MORTIMER: No, I was Mortimer, and he was Elmer. We kind o' liked our names the way they were, ya see.

EDGAR: No, Mortimer. I mean you were absent without leave!

MORTIMER: Leif who?

EDGAR: You!

MORTIMER: No...(laughs)...I'm Mortimer! I don't know this Leif fella anyway, so I guess we left without him all right.

EDGAR: Then what did you and Elmer do the day you were absent from school?

MORTIMER: Ya won't tell nobody, will ya?

EDGAR: Of course not.

MORTIMER: Cross your eyes and hope ta squint?

EDGAR: If you say so, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Well, me and Elmer went fishin'.

EDGAR: I see. And did you catch anything?

MORTIMER: Boy, I'll say we caught it when we showed up for school the next day!

EDGAR: Well, then, Mortimer, I guess you learned your lesson then.

MORTIMER: Nope, nope, nope. Me and Elmer both missed our lesson that day 'cause we were absent.

EDGAR: Mortimer, I just can't believe how stupid you are!

MORTIMER: Well, everybody else can, so I can't see why you should be any different!

MUSIC: THE SONG OF THE S. YOUNG MEN'S CHORUS WITH PAUL MORRIS
AND HIS ORCHESTRA (3 minutes).

EDGAR: Well, Charlie. Are you still nervous about
 Mac West?

CHARLIE:—Oh, Bergy. I don't know if I can stand the suspense.

EDGAR: Well, Charlie, just try to be calm. Mr. Fields
 should be here very shortly, too, you know.

CHARLIE: (Well, that certainly puts a damper on the whole
 evening--damp from alcohol, that is.

EDGAR: Now Charlie. I want you to be nice to Mr. Fields.
 He's our friend, you know.

CHARLIE:—Speak for yourself, there Bergen.

EDGAR: I will, Charlie...but you can't.

CHARLIE:—Touché, Touché.

EDGAR: Listen, Charlie...I think I hear someone coming now.

CHARLIE: Oh, Bergen! Can it be...can it be...? Well, I
 guess not, because there's either a fire engine
 coming around the corner with its flasher on, or
 its W. C. Fields.

FIELDS: Hello, blood poison.

CHARLIE: (I'll take the fire engine any day. At least when
 the fire's out, it's not lit up.

FIELDS: Quiet, young man, or I'll have you attacked by a
 herd of bowling balls.

CHARLIE:—Why you...

EDGAR: Charlie...Hello, Mr. Fields, won't you join us?

FIELDS: Why, thank you, Bergen. Don't mind if I do.

CHARLIE: You didn't ask me.

EDGAR: Now, Charlie, be nice.

FIELDS: Why, the little chap meant no harm, Bergen,
I'm sure.

EDGAR: Why, of course not, Mr. Fields. You see, Charlie
really admires you.

CHARLIE: Ya. What's not there.

FIELDS: Yes, of course, Bergen. I can see that very well.
Why, I'm rather fond of the little nipper myself.
Reminds me of a fence post I once had. Broke my
heart though when a mastodon of gigantic propor-
tions crushed it into tiny splinters. I used them
for toothpicks.

CHARLIE: (Why...I'll bet you saw a pink elephant, you
overgrown olive.

FIELDS: No, my little wooden friend. He was fuchsia, as
a matter of fact. With gleaming red eyes and a
long snout.

CHARLIE: Not as long as yours, I'll bet.

FIELDS: Why you little termite snack, I'll make chopsticks
out of you!

EDGAR: Now, now. Charlie, you apologize to Mr. Fields.

CHARLIE: (Oh, all right. Mr. Fields, I didn't mean that you
have a long nose...

EDGAR: That's better.

CHARLIE: But it's as red as a big ripe tomato!

FIELDS: That does it! I've had enough out of you!

(Off mike) I'm leaving, but you haven't seen the last of me!

BERGEN: Now look what you've done, Charlie. And Mr. Fields is a guest on our show. You should be ashamed of yourself.

CHARLIE: Well, he asked for it.

BERGEN: Charlie, you'll be sorry some day.

MUSIC: BRIDGE--RAY NOBLE AND HIS ORCHESTRA, THEN COMMERCIAL (60 seconds).

CHARLIE: Oh, Bergy, all this suspense waiting for Mae West is making me drowsy. Bergy? Where are you? Bergy?! Don't leave me here alone at a time like this! Wait a minute. What am I saying? This is great! Me alone and Mae West will be here! Sigh! Oh, me. I'm getting so very tired from all this suspense and waiting. I...think...I'll...just...take...a little...nap...while...I'm...(yawn)...waiting...sigh....

MUSIC: DREAMY MUSIC BRIDGE, FOLLOWED BY SILENCE, THEN:

CHARLIE: Ohhh...where am I? Ohhh....

MUSIC: WESTERN MUSIC AND WESTERN STREET SOUNDS.

CHARLIE: Wha? Where am I? Oh...

TWING: Hello, there, I say hello!

CHARLIE: What? Who are you?

TWING: I am Ersel P. Twing, Sheriff of High Noon City,
at your service.

CHARLIE: High Noon City?

TWING: That's right. I don't believe I know your name or
where you came from, but you've been asleep on
your horse here for over an hour now.

CHARLIE: Huh? Oh, ya. So I am...or have been.

TWING: May I ask who you are and what your business is
here?

CHARLIE: Well, gee, I don't know. Last thing I remember,
I was waiting for...Wowee!

TWING: I beg your pardon, mister?

CHARLIE: Who is that gorgeous gal just getting off that
stagecoach over there?

TWING: Why, that's the Rosebud of the West, Miss Mae.

CHARLIE: What a gal!

TWING: I wouldn't get too interested, my friend, if
you value your life.

CHARLIE: Why's that, sheriff?

TWING: Well, you see, Miss Mae is the girlfriend of
Twelve Shot Bill, the meanest outlaw in the West.

CHARLIE: Twelve Shot Bill, eh? Sounds like he's not too
good with his six shooters with that name.

TWING: No, sir. It takes him twelve shots in the saloon
to quench his thirst. That's all it takes before
his showdowns at high noon, too.

CHARLIE: S-s-showdowns?

TWING: That's right. You see Twelve Shot has a bad temper and anybody that gets in his way must face him in a showdown in the street in front of the saloon at high noon.

CHARLIE: Ya, but who's gonna make anybody go out in the street and fight him?

TWING: Nobody has ever disagreed with Twelve Shot and lived to tell about it.

CHARLIE: Sounds like a real friendly outlaw, this Twelve Shot. By the way why do they call this town High Noon City?

TWING: Get mixed up with Miss Mae and you'll find out by high noon today.

CHARLIE: Say, sheriff. Why don't you put this outlaw in jail?

TWING: What? And lose my job? No thanks. So long.

CHARLIE: Ya...what? Lose his...So long, sheriff. Strange place this is. Hmmm. Wonder how I got on this horse? Why am I here, too? Oh well. Hey, pardner, how about helpin' me off this horse?

COWBOY: What's that, sonny?

CHARLIE: I say how about a hand?!

COWBOY: Sorry, I don't need any help today.

CHARLIE: High Noon City. I'll have to warn the Triple A about this one. Ugh...whew! Being up there so long, I got a little saddle sore. Well, looks like I'm all set to see Miss Mae. Hat, boots,

spurs, vest, water gun, and...Wait a minute.
What am I doing with just a water gun?...I...

WEST: Hello, small, cute, and cuddly!

CHARLIE: W-w-what? Who, me?

WEST: Ya, big boy. What's yourname?

CHARLIE: I-I-I'm...I mean, howdee, ma'am! I'm Charlie
McCarthy, Miss Mae!

WEST: Well, a big hello...Chuck.

CHARLIE: Chuck? Oh, ya...Chuck...(sighs)...

WEST: I saw you got rid of the sheriff so we can talk.

CHARLIE: I did? Oh, ya, ya! Why, you bet I did, Miss Mae!

WEST: Say, Chuck...

CHARLIE: Yes, Miss Mae?

WEST: Come a little closer...

CHARLIE: Y-y-yes, Miss Mae?

WEST: You can call me...Rosie.

CHARLIE: Ohhhh...O.K.,...Rosie!

WEST: Ya. It's got a little more...personal tone to
it, don't you think?

CHARLIE: Ya...

WEST: Listen, Chuck. Why don't we go in the saloon and...
talk a little.

CHARLIE: Anything you say...Rosie...(sigh)...

MUSIC: SALOON MUSIC AND SALOON ATMOSPHERE UP.

CHARLIE: May I buy you a drink, Rosie?

WEST: Don't mind if I do, big boy. I'll just stroll on
over to that back table there...and wait for you...
Chuck.

CHARLIE: O.K., Rosie. I'll be right there. Oh, bartender!
Bartender!

DON

AMECHE: Whadya want...kid?

CHARLIE: Who, me?

AMECHE: Well, I ain't talkin' to your shadow, am I?

CHARLIE: Uh, no sir, no sir. Uh, I'll have a chocolate
malted with two straws, please.

AMECHE: Sorry, kid. We only got whiskey.

CHARLIE: Whiskey, eh? O.K., gimme a whiskey with two
straws. Say bartender, does Twelve Shot Bill
come around here very often?

AMECHE: Ya. He's due in any time now. And he's been
in a bad mood lately.

CHARLIE: Oh, I see. How much do I owe you?

AMECHE: Twelve bucks.

CHARLIE: Twelve bucks! Why, that's robbery! I demand a
bill.

AMECHE: O.K., kid. Here it is: Two bucks for the drink,
eight bucks for the straws, and two bucks for the
information.

CHARLIE: Ya. I think I'll go easy on the straws and
questions next time. Here's your money. Hmmn.
Now where's Rosie? Ah, there she is back there.

Oh, my darling,

Oh, my darling,

Oh, my darling Rosie dear.

I have brought you a little whiskey,
And two straws to bring us cheer!

Hah-hah-hah! Oh, no, I'm feeling great!

Here we are, my dear.

WEST: Pull up a chair and rest that big strong body of yours, Chuck.

CHARLIE: Ya...here we are, Rosie...just the two of us.

WEST: That's the way I like it, Chuck.

CHARLIE: Just the two of us like this?

WEST: No. I mean the whiskey...Just the right kind.
Strong and powerful.

CHARLIE: Oh, ya.

WEST: Say, Chuck...

CHARLIE: Yes, Rosie?

WEST: You look like the brave, bold, and daring type.

CHARLIE: Why, sure I am...uh...how'd you know?

WEST: Why, I can see it in those big bold beautiful eyes of yours, you handsome wrangler.

CHARLIE: Sigh!

WEST: Now, listen, Chuck. I've got a little job for ya, if you think you can handle a real he-man's job.

CHARLIE: Rosie, I'm the toughest, meanest, bravest cowboy that ever rode into High Noon City!

WEST: Good, Chuck. I thought you were my kind of man. Now, then...Here's what you have to do. I want you to be my personal guard while I'm here in High Noon City today.

CHARLIE: You mean...your bodyguard?

WEST: Ya, big fella. Stay close and keep me company.

CHARLIE: Ohhhh! What a life! What a life!

WEST: Chuck...you've got to keep this a secret between you and me.

CHARLIE: Ya...what is it, Rosie? You can trust old faithful Charlie, er Chuck.

WEST: Chuck, I'm carryin' valuables.

CHARLIE: Boy, I'll say...I mean...oh, you are?

WEST: Ya...and I want you to guard 'em with your life, Chuck.

CHARLIE: And Bing Crosby thinks he's got it good.

WEST: Now, then. Here's my plan. You and I'll sneak out of here the back way. If we make it out of town safe and sound, I'll give you a big reward.

CHARLIE: Reward! What's the reward, Rosie?

WEST: Tell ya later, big boy.

CHARLIE: I see. Say, Rosie, this all sounds too easy. Why so much worry, anyway?

WEST: You see, Chuck...

CHARLIE: Yes, Rosie...

WEST: Somebody's after me.

CHARLIE: Ya, I can see why, too.

WEST: No, I mean they're after my money.

CHARLIE: Why, if anybody threatens you, Rosie, I'll tear 'em apart, I'll...I'll...I'll...

WEST: It's Twelve Shot Bill.

CHARLIE: I'll cry, that's what I'll do.

WEST: What's that, Chuck?

CHARLIE: Er...I mean I'll try, I'll try, Rosie.

WEST: That's what I like, Chuck...a good fightin' spirit.

CHARLIE: Ya...the way it looks now, that's all that's gonna be left of me pretty soon.

WEST: Well, Chuck, you haven't changed your mind, have you?

CHARLIE: Why, no, Rosie. Why, for you, I'd do almost anything.

SOUND: SIX GUNS BEING SHOT OUTSIDE SALOON.

CHARLIE: Uh-oh. What's that?

WEST: Sounds like Twelve Shot Bill's arrived.

CHARLIE: Or else somebody's celebrating the fourth of July a little early.

COWBOY: It's Twelve Shot Bill!

CHARLIE: Well, it certainly isn't Santa Claus.

COWBOY: He just shot somebody!

CHARLIE: What did the poor man do to Twelve Shot?

COWBOY: He didn't say "Howdy."

CHARLIE: Uh-oh.

FIELDS: I never liked an unfriendly cowboy. Never will, either. Bartender! Give me twelve shots! One at a time! I'm in no hurry.

WEST: That's him, Chuck.

CHARLIE: Ya. I gathered that.

WEST: Chuck...I'm getting out of here the back way.

I think he's seen me already. Keep him busy,
while I make a getaway. See you later...
if...well, good luck.

CHARLIE: Ya...what? Uh-oh. I think he's seen me here
with Rosie.

FIELDS: Hey, kid!

CHARLIE: Who, m-m-me?

FIELDS: Ya, you. Come 'ere.

CHARLIE: Now?

FIELDS: Now!

CHARLIE: Ohhhh...

FIELDS: Did I see you over there with Miss Mae, the
Rosebud of the West?

CHARLIE: Well...I...I...

FIELDS: Oh, so you won't talk, eh?

CHARLIE: But...

FIELDS: What were you doing with my girl, stranger?

CHARLIE: Er...I was just passing the time of day,
Mr. Twelve Shot.

FIELDS: Oh, just passing the time of day, eh? Why, I'll
have you know that I've had a showdown with
cowboys for less than that!

CHARLIE: I was afraid of that.

FIELDS: Now, what were you up to?

CHARLIE: I-I-I won't talk.

FIELDS: Won't talk, eh?

SOUND: LACK OF IT, ALL BECOMES QUIET.

FIELDS: You know what that means?

SOUND: CHAINS AND TANKS MOVING, DOORS RUSHING OUT OF SALOON.

CHARLIE: Well, for one thing, you just lost this saloon some business, Twelve Shot.

FIELDS: Don't get smart with me, stranger. I'll see you out in the street at high noon, or else I'll come in a shootin'!

SOUND: SLOW, HEAVY FOOTSTEPS WALKING OUT.

CHARLIE: Ohhh, me. Oh, my. Boy, I'm really in trouble now. Oh, bartender, can you help me? Please?

AMECHE: I'll sell you our High Noon Last Chance Special for half-price.

CHARLIE: Ohhh, no! I'm too young to die!

AMECHE: Take it or leave it, kid.

CHARLIE: O.K., O.K., I'll take it.

AMECHE: Want some straws?

CHARLIE: No!

AMECHE: Half-price?

CHARLIE: Why, you'd rob a dying man, wouldn't you?

AMECHE: Doesn't make much difference after you go out there, does it kid?

CHARLIE: No, I guess not. What time is it, or do you charge extra for that, too?

AMECHE: No. It's on the house this time. It's one minute before noon, kid. Better have your drink. It may be your last.

CHARLIE: Ya. I guess you're right. Boy, what a bad drink. Can't you do any better than this for my last one? Oh me...oh, my. Why didn't I listen to Bergen? Oh, why? Boy...this drink...it...kind of makes me...feel drowsy...and...oh no...I can't feel that way now...oh, no...I...I...Oh!...Bergen...Help!... Bergen! Bergen!

MUSIC: DREAMY MUSIC BRIDGE.

CHARLIE: Bergen! Bergen! Help!

EDGAR: Charlie! Charlie, wake up!

CHARLIE: Ohhh...Bergy...is that you?

EDGAR: Yes, Charlie, I'm right here.

CHARLIE: Oh, Bergy...I'm so glad to see you. Where am I?

EDGAR: It's all right, Charlie. You've been dreaming. You must have fallen asleep while you were waiting here for Mae West.

CHARLIE: You mean...it was all a dream? No showdown?

EDGAR: Yes, a dream, Charlie. What showdown?

CHARLIE: Oh, it was terrible. I think I'll be nice to Mr. Fields from now on, Bergen.

EDGAR: Well, I've always told you to, Charlie.

CHARLIE: I know, Bergen, but I've learned my lesson, now.

EDGAR: I certainly hope so, Charlie.

CHARLIE: But what about Mae West? In my dream...

WEST: What about me, small, cute, and cuddly?

CHARLIE: Oh, Bergen, catch me. I think I'm going to faint.

MUSIC: RAY NOBLE AND HIS ORCHESTRA BRIDGE TO COMMERCIAL,

(60 seconds), ANNOUNCEMENTS, THEME UP AND OUT.

Script Analysis

Many radio comedy programs in the Golden Age of Radio featured a straight man and a comic or dummy. Usually the comic held the strings of a joke's outcome and got the laughs. But straight man Edgar Bergen literally held the strings of his jokes, because Charlie McCarthy was a dummy dummy, or more carefully worded, a comic's dummy. Charlie may have pulled the laughs, but Bergen pulled the cords. Charlie McCarthy is probably one of the richest dummies in the world.

Edgar Bergen was born in Chicago on February 16, 1903. For date of birth of Charlie McCarthy the reader should check the records of his family tree. Actually, Bergen got the idea of his dummy as a senior in high school, when he sketched the face of Charlie McCarthy on the flyleaf of his history book. His model was a street urchin newsboy that Bergen once knew. As a boy, Bergen had been proficient in throwing his voice and tricking friends into thinking that someone was outside the door. Working as a paid performer with Charlie, Edgar Bergen went to Northwestern University to become a physician, but successes in local theaters faded his ambition. Transferring to a speech course, he earned his degree by going to school in the summer sessions and working winter months in vaudeville. On visits to Europe, Russia, and South America, during his ten years in the vaudeville circuit with Charlie, Bergen polished his act and soon found himself on radio.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Landry, Radio Business, pp. 7-8.

Dummies have certainly brought Bergen much happiness and success, not to mention money.

The ventriloquial dummy, Charlie McCarthy, is completely fresh, impudent and know-it-all, constantly bragging. His alter ego (and proprietor) has an unending struggle to tame the dummy's stupendous self-esteem. The master, Edgar Bergen, is one of the great comedy talents of this generation but it is significant that the rich vein which he cleverly works is the vein of braggadocio. Tens of millions of Americans listen to the cross fire between him and the dummy every week.⁴⁵

Bergen introduced Mortimer Snerd in 1938. Slow, repetitious Mortimer originally may have been out of place in Bergen's fast-paced comedy, but the dumb rural boy idea was successful.

Not everyone Bergen had on his show was a dummy. As in this script, W. C. Fields and Mae West were guests.

Bergen respected Mr. Fields:

Fields was the most talented man I ever worked with anywhere. He could read a joke somebody wrote for him. He could write his own joke and deliver it masterfully. And he was a master of pantomime--which had no part in radio, of course, except for the occasional benefit of our studio audience.⁴⁶

In 1937 Fields appeared on "The Chase and Sanborn Hour" with Bergen and Charlie as a chance guest, but stayed on as a regular until the summer of 1939. Mae West, a frequent guest on the show, wrote much of her own material. She aroused much controversy when she performed her own Adam and Eve skit with Don Ameche.

Bergen also had a regular cast for his weekly shows. Don Ameche was Master of Ceremonies and appeared in

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 300-301.

⁴⁶Harmon, Comedians, p. 9.

"The Bickersons" skits with Frances Langford. The program characters were Pasquale (Don Ameche), Ersel Twing (Pat Patrick), Charlie's principal (Norman Field), Vera Vague (Barbara Jo Allen), and Professor Lemuel Carp (Richard Haydn). Also, there were vocalists, an announcer, and an orchestra and conductor (Ray Noble).

The basic character humor is inherent in Bergen, Charlie, Mortimer, Mae West, and W. C. Fields: each responds in a complex, prescribed manner that fits the character. Feeding into this character humor in this script are mainly the humor techniques of literalism, exaggeration, momentum, statement of truth, confusionism, and verbal combat.

Edgar Bergen and W. C. Fields are known for their literalism or puns. For example, when Charlie remarks that he's beginning to see the sunshine, Ray Noble makes his timely entrance. Ray Noble relates to Charlie that his apprehension is all in the mind; Charlie retorts, "Not when Mae West is around." W. C. Fields makes frequent use of literalism in his remarks to Charlie (a wooden dummy), referring to blood poison, bowling balls, or chopsticks. Charlie counterattacks with literalisms about Fields' large red alcohol nose--a red flasher or a big ripe tomato.

Some exaggeration is used in the script. W. C. Fields, noted for this technique, refers to the giant mastodon crushing his fence post into chopsticks. The High Noon City episode is a bit of exaggeration of the old West. This episode also employs a little comic freedom for it to occur as Charlie's dream.

The fast-paced momentum is an Edgar Bergen trademark. Throughout the script, lines are usually short and pointed quips of normal conversation. But the momentum is dictated by the character humor element. The momentum must follow the character's natural talking habits, which are fast and impudent for Charlie and slow and dumb for Mortimer. But whenever Charlie or Mortimer are involved, Bergen ultimately controls the momentum.

The statement-of-truth element of humor helps make Charlie and Mortimer lovable characters; they are at times very honest and human in their remarks. For example, Charlie admits he loves Mae West and is nervous about her arrival. Or Charlie remarks, "Touché, touché," when Bergen reminds him that he cannot speak for himself. Charlie's honest expressions of fear contrasting with his usual braggadocio provide bits of humor. Mortimer Snerd's remark that a fly is a fly and a bed bug is a bed bug, is certainly truthful, but in context it is funny.

Mortimer Snerd is a good example of confusionism. He responds to Bergen's first question that the day had not found him yet. He then is confused about colloquialisms, thinking that they are insects. The word "peculiarities" gives him the same trouble. Mortimer by an unintentional play on words misunderstands what Bergen means by missing school. When Bergen asks if he was truant, Mortimer replies that he was Mortimer, not Mr. Truant. Confusionism about

vocabulary, then, is a trademark of Mortimer Snerd.

Verbal combat could be Charlie McCarthy's middle name. The little impudent urchin always seems to be asking for trouble in his conversations, especially with W. C. Fields or Ray Noble. Although he does exchange a few verbal shots with Bergen, almost nothing can equal the raging fury of verbal combat in the famous Charlie McCarthy-W. C. Fields feuds. As in this script, the fight is no holds barred. Radio audiences must have surely looked forward to the imminent battle when W. C. Fields appeared with Charlie.

CHAPTER VI

MODERNIZED COMEDY VARIETY -

"THE JACK BENNY SHOW"

Program Length: Thirty minutes

MUSIC: THEME SONG UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR:

WILSON: It's the Jack Benny Radio Special! Starring Jack Benny with Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Eddie Anderson, Mel Blanc, Frank Nelson, Phil Harris and his Orchestra with special guests Sheldon Leonard, Andy Devine, Kenny Delmar, Minerva Pious, Parker Fennelly, and Peter Donald. This is Don Wilson speaking.

BENNY: Jell-o again!

WILSON: JELL-O 60 SECOND COMMERCIAL, LIVE.

MUSIC: THEME SONG BRIDGE UP TO FULL, APPLAUSE, THEN UNDER:

BENNY: Thank you. Thank you very much and welcome to our show tonight. You know, it's been so many years now since we've been together on radio. It's been over fifty years since radio began this wonderful medium of entertainment and information. So tonight, the Jell-o people have made possible

this program to perhaps bring back some pleasant memories.

As you all know, some of the greatest stars of early radio we remember and loved so much are gone now. Fred Allen was one of them. Through the courtesy of the Jell-o people, we are dedicating this special radio broadcast in memory of Fred Allen. Later in the show we'll pay a special visit to his own "Allen's Alley," as he might do it today.

And you'll be happy to know that I'm going to play my violin tonight. So, to get the show off to a great start, I'll play it now. Oh, Don...Don... Don Wilson...

WILSON: Yes, Jack?

BENNY: Oh, Don...I'd like my violin now.

WILSON: Your violin?

BENNY: Yes. You brought it, didn't you?

WILSON: Well, Jack...

BENNY: What's the matter? You either have it or you don't! Now where is it?

WILSON: Jack, I don't know how to tell you this, but...

BENNY: What is it, Don? You haven't lost my Stradivarius, have you?

WILSON: Well...I'm afraid someone sat on it, Jack.

BENNY: Oh...well, maybe it was Dennis Day. He wouldn't hurt it.

WILSON: It wasn't Dennis, Jack.

BENNY: Let's see...who...wait a minute! You didn't sit on it, did you?

WILSON: I'm afraid so, Jack. You see, I was in the...

BENNY: Never mind how it happened! How is it, now?

WILSON: In a thousand pieces.

BENNY: How terrible! My very own Stradivarius! And it was only as old as I am, too.

MARY: Well, if that's the case, you're about due for a replacement anyway, kiddo.

BENNY: Now cut that out...oh...Mary Livingstone!

MARY: Yes, Jack...and I'm really sorry to hear about your violin.

BENNY: Yes...I'll bet you are. Say, Don, go out and see if you can find another violin. I just can't see starting the show without a violin selection by me.

WILSON: O.K., Jack, I'll see what I can find. Excuse me, Mary.

MARY: Yes, Don. Look for one with strings on it...you know Jack can't sing a note.

BENNY: I can't get over it, Mary.

MARY: Why Jack, you shouldn't have to worry...you can always buy another one.

BENNY: That's what bothers me.

MARY: Why, Jack, certainly you can afford at least one more.

BENNY: No, Mary. The point is, I got that one from my uncle.

MARY: Oh, I see. Sentimental value.

BENNY: No, Mary. You see, he thought that Stradivarius was almost worthless because his uncle gave it to him.

MARY: So...

BENNY: So, my uncle sold it to me for two dollars, and that included the bow. I just can't get over it. I'll never find another bargain like that in a million years.

MARY: Did your uncles play the violin, Jack?

BENNY: Oh, they both tried, but most of the time they hung them over their fireplaces for decorations. They never realized the true value of a Stradivarius.

MARY: Well, how did you buy the violin, Jack?

BENNY: You see, I was the only member of our family who showed any musical promise.

MARY: Hmmm. What a shame.

BENNY: One day, my uncle wanted to get rid of it. So, as he was about to throw it in the fireplace, I offered to buy it.

MARY: So he offered it to you for two dollars?

BENNY: No...he offered to sell it for a hundred.

MARY: One hundred dollars?

BENNY: Yes...outrageous, wasn't it?

MARY: But Jack. Didn't your uncle live in an old cabin in the wilderness?

BENNY: Yes.

MARY: And didn't you tell me you had a small fortune in savings when you were young?

BENNY: Yes.

MARY: But, Jack, how could this poor man have sold you a Stradivarius for two dollars when you could have given him enough for a hundred times its worth?

BENNY: But Mary, you don't understand!

MARY: Jack, really. How could you have done such a thing?

BENNY: Well...I was almost penniless at the time.

MARY: Only two dollars, I suppose.

BENNY: That's right, Mary. I never carried more than two dollars in my pocket at any time. It made me sick to think about the possibility of losing any more than that...let alone spend it.

WILSON: Oh, Jack...Jack...

BENNY: Oh, Don. Did you find a violin?

WILSON: Yes, Jack. I found this one back in the dressing room.

BENNY: Oh, good. Now we'll get this show off to a good start. I really hate to disappoint our audience.

WILSON: Careful, Jack. I don't know who owns this.

BENNY: Oh, I see...

DAY: Mr. Benny! Mr. Benny!

BENNY: Oh, Dennis Day.

DAY: Hello, Mr. Benny, Mary, Don. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but my violin is missing.

BENNY: You brought a violin?

DAY: Yes, Mr. Benny. I brought a violin with me and haven't been able to find it.

BENNY: You brought a violin?

DAY: That's right, Mr. Benny.

BENNY: But Dennis...why you? Of all people...you're supposed to be a singer!

DAY: And you're supposed to be a comedian.

BENNY: Now, cut that out! I'm the boss here and don't forget it!

MARY: Yes, Dennis, and be careful. This old boss is becoming a little cantankerous in his old age.

BENNY: But I'm not cantankerous! I'm not old!

MARY: And my name isn't Mary Livingstone, I suppose.

DAY: Say, Mr. Benny, is that a Stradivarius you have there?

BENNY: Huh?...it looks like one. Hey! This is my Stradivarius! I can tell by the dark spot on the bottom. It got that way from hanging over the fireplace.

MARY: Well, Jack. It looks like you didn't lose your bargain after all.

BENNY: No! This is just great! But Don, what about that violin you sat on. I wonder who it belongs to? Do you have it, Don?

WILSON: Yes, Jack, it's right here in its case, or what's left of it.

DAY: Hey! That looks like my violin!

BENNY: Your violin?

DAY: Yes, Mr. Benny. I'm sure it is.

MARY: Oh...that's too bad, Dennis. It looks like it was a very good violin.

DAY: Yes, it was. It was a Stradivarius that was given to me by my grandfather.

BENNY: Your grandfather gave it to you?

DAY: Yes, Mr. Benny. It was a gift. He was a very generous man.

BENNY: No charge?

DAY: No, Mr. Benny.

BENNY: Well...

MARY: Why did you bring the violin with you, Dennis?

Were you going to play it on the program tonight?

DAY: Oh, no. I knew Mr. Benny always plays his violin.

BENNY: Well, that was thoughtful of you, Dennis.

DAY: So, I knew that things were bad enough already.

BENNY: You know, you can be replaced!

MARY: Well, Dennis, if you weren't going to play it, why did you bring it?

DAY: Well, I have a rich uncle that lives nearby who offered to buy my Stradivarius for five hundred thousand dollars.

BENNY: Five hundred thousand dollars?!

MARY: Why, Dennis, you must feel terrible!

WILSON: Yes, Dennis. I'm terribly, terribly sorry I ruined your Stradivarius.

BENNY: Five hundred thousand dollars.

WILSON: Dennis, if there's anything I can do...

DAY: Don't worry about it, Mr. Wilson. My uncle will probably find another one to buy.

WILSON: Well, Jack, are you going to play that selection now that you have your own Stradivarius?

BENNY: Hmmm. I wonder...Oh, Dennis.

DAY: Yes, Mr. Benny?

BENNY: Dennis...do you have your uncle's address with you now?

DAY: Why, yes, Mr. Benny. I just happen to have it here. But why?

BENNY: Oh...well, I thought I would just stop by for a minute now, and tell him to be sure to tune in our program this evening. It shouldn't take me too long. Meanwhile, Dennis, why don't you go ahead and sing a song. I'll be back. Five hundred thousand dollars. Hmmm.

MUSIC: DENNIS SINGS, ACCOMPANIED BY PHIL HARRIS AND HIS ORCHESTRA, THEN (3 minutes):

WILSON: LIVE JEIL-O COMMERCIAL (60 seconds).

BENNY: Oh, Rochester! Rochester!

ROCHESTER: Yes, Mr. Benny?

BENNY: Get the car started and hurry; I've got to pay a quick visit to Dennis Day's uncle.

ROCH: But boss, what about your show?

BENNY: Never mind about that. Don, Mary, and Dennis will think of something. Now let's get going.

ROCH: O.K.

SOUND: MEL BLANC PLAYING JACK'S OLD MAXWELL CAR STARTING UP.

ROCH: Say boss, aren't you ever gonna trade this car in? It's gettin' kind of old, if you ask me.

BENNY: What? Why, this is a classic car, Rochester. Besides, a new one would be so expensive. Now, here's the address.

ROCH: Oh, ya. That's not too far from here.

BENNY: Well, just hurry, Rochester. I've got to get there before somebody else does. I can't believe I've got this break. Say Rochester, you don't have a Stradivarius, do you?

ROCH: No, I don't think so, boss. My grandfather gave me a banjo when I was twelve.

BENNY: He gave it to you?

ROCH: Ya. He was a good musician. Spent a lot of time teaching me how to play, too.

BENNY: I can't understand it...

ROCH: What's that, boss?

BENNY: Oh, nothing, Rochester. How much farther is it?

ROCH: Not much farther, but boss we're gonna have to stop for some gasoline.

BENNY: But that's impossible. You just filled it three weeks ago.

ROCH: I know, but all those trips you sent me on for grocery store specials since then has used it all up.

BENNY: Oh, I forgot about that. But I just couldn't resist them all.

ROCH: Ya, but I still can't figure out why you had me buy ten pounds of tropical fish food last week. We don't have any tropical fish!

BENNY: I know, Rochester. But it was such a good buy. You never know...somebody might give me some tropical fish someday, so we'll be all set.

ROCH: Say, boss, where should I stop for gasoline?

BENNY: Hmmm...we've got to make a quick stop and can't spare much time. Let's see, they all look the same. Wait...here's a small clean one. Maybe they won't charge so much.

ROCH: O.K.

SOUND: CAR SLOWING AND PULLING TO A HALT.

ROCH: I don't see anybody around, boss.

BENNY: Well, honk the horn once, Rochester.

SOUND: CAR HORN HONK.

BENNY: Oh, good...here comes someone.

ANDY

DEVINE: Hiya, Buck!

ROCH: Uh-oh.

BENNY: Ya, hello and give us a dollar's worth. We're in a hurry.

DEVINE: O.K....What kind would you like? We've got super special super, super speed super, premium super, super regular, super, super premium regular, super premium...

BENNY: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I haven't got time for all that! I'm in a hurry!

DEVINE: Well, then, whadya want?

BENNY: Just give us a dollar's worth of the cheapest stuff you've got!

DEVINE: O.K.

BENNY: Who does he think he is, anyway? Super special super! I never heard of such a thing.

DEVINE: Well, nice day isn't it?

BENNY: Yes, yes, yes...did you put in a dollar's worth yet?

DEVINE: No, not yet. My pump has been running a little slow lately. Excuse me, I'll be back in a minute.

BENNY: That's all I need! Do what you can to get it to hurry up! I get a chance to sell a Stradivarius...

SHELDON
LEONARD: Pssst...hey buddy.

BENNY: What? Who said that?

LEONARD: Over here.

BENNY: Who me?

LEONARD: Ya...I heard ya say you're gonna sell a Stradivarius.

BENNY: Well...I...

LEONARD: Hey, buddy...I've got a Stradivarius here, if your interested.

BENNY: You do?! I mean...oh.

LEONARD: Ya...and how'd ya like ta buy it from me?

BENNY: Hmmm...I'm really in a hurry, but...how much?

LEONARD: Fifty bucks.

BENNY: Hmmm...I'll take it. Now, I'll pay you later, you see I...

LEONARD: Pay me now...cash.

BENNY: Cash?

LEONARD: Ya, cash. Which will it be, buddy? Take it or leave it.

BENNY: O.K., O.K., I hate to, but...here.

LEONARD: Thanks, buddy. I thought you looked like a man who couldn't turn down a bargain like this... So long.

BENNY: Ya, thanks. Thanks a lot. Gee...what a nice guy, selling me a Stradivarius for only fifty dollars.

DEVINE: O.K., Buck! You've got a dollar's worth.

BENNY: O.K., here.

DEVINE: Thanks, and be careful what you buy around here.

BENNY: What do you mean?

DEVINE: Well, word's out that there's a band of crooks operating in this area trying to sell stolen merchandise.

BENNY: Stolen merchandise? Well, I'll be careful.

DEVINE: Good. All the stolen goods had an "XYZ" stamped somewhere, so be on the watch. The police around here are trying to track down the goods.

BENNY: I see.

DEVINE: Ya. And if they catch anybody with this stolen merchandise, there's a five hundred thousand dollar fine, just like that. And they'll run ya in, too.

BENNY: O.K., thanks for the warning. Now, we've got to get going. Let's go, Rochester.

DEVINE: So long, Buck!

SOUND: CAR STARTING AND PULLING OUT.

ROCH: Mighty unusual station.

BENNY: Yes, and we lost valuable time. I've got to get that five hundred thousand dollars from Dennis Day's uncle for my...Wait a minute!

ROCH: What's up, boss?

BENNY: But I've got two Stradivarius violins, now! That's, that's...WOWEE!!! Rochester, step on it! We've got to get there fast! If I get there and his uncle buys both of these...ZOWEE! Let's see now, I wonder how much all that money would weigh?

ROCH: Hey boss, you think I'm goin' too fast?

BENNY: No, Rochester, go ahead and go faster. I'm not worried about a ticket now. Besides, there's not much traffic on the freeway.

ROCH: O.K.

BENNY: A million dollars...a million dollars...a million dollars. It has such a nice ring to it!

ROCH: Don't look now, boss, but there's a siren ringin' away behind us now--and a flasher, too!

BENNY: Oh, no! Why us? And at a time like this!

ROCH: I'd better pull over here.

SOUND: CAR SLOWING TO STOP, FOLLOWED BY SIREN AND ANOTHER CAR SLOWING AND STOPPING.

BENNY: Let me do the talking, Rochester.

ROCH: O.K., boss.

BENNY: What is that officer doing? He's just walking around looking at the car. What's he looking for? Oh, officer! Officer!

FRANK
NELSON: Yeeeeees?

ROCH: I see trouble on the horizon.

BENNY: What's going on?

NELSON: Well, that's what I'd like to know. Are you on your way to a fire? Or are you about to have a baby?

BENNY: Now don't get funny!

NELSON: Weeeeeeell, I've heard them all, Mister. Now, what's yours? Or can I guess?

BENNY: Now look officer, I'm a taxpayer!

NELSON: Yeeeeeoes, aren't we all.

BENNY: But I demand an explanation!

NELSON: Oh you do, do you? Very well. I'm giving you a ticket for speeding. How's that? Or would you also like a lecture? I do that for some lawbreakers.

BENNY: But you can't do that! I'm Jack Benny!

NELSON: Weeeeeeell, now, isn't this a privilege, Mr. Benny. I've heard a lot about you.

BENNY: Well, you should. I'm famous, you know.

NELSON: The officers at the station thought about taking up a collection for you, you know.

BENNY: You did? For me?

NELSON: Yes. We took all twenty-five cents of the collection and bought some peanuts for the elephants at the zoo. We knew you would appreciate such a kind gesture of generosity.

BENNY: Yes...Now, give me the ticket so we can get going. I'm late already.

NELSON: Not so fast, Mr. Benny. You know there have been some stolen goods sold in this area.

BENNY: Now officer, do I look like the type that would do that?

NELSON: You don't really want to know, do you?

BENNY: Now look, officer...

NELSON: Keep quiet or I'll give you another ticket for disturbing the peace.

BENNY: Well!

NELSON: Now, then. Is this your car?

BENNY: Of course it is.

NELSON: I wasn't positive you could afford one. Now, what are in those boxes?

BENNY: They're Stradivarius violins. Now look officer...

NELSON: May I see them, please?

BENNY: Here...but be careful, they're very valuable.

NELSON: Oh they are, are they?

BENNY: Well...kind of...

NELSON: Hmmm. I see. Well...this one's O.K.

BENNY: Officer, what's the idea? These are my violins! I got them fair and square!

NELSON: Hmmm...

BENNY: What's the matter?

NELSON: Mr. Benny, are your initials by any chance, "XYZ"?

BENNY: Now, look officer, you know very well my initials are...what?

NELSON: This Stradivarius has "XYZ" stamped on it. Would you care to explain?

BENNY: I...I...

NELSON: I don't believe any explanation is necessary, Mr. Benny. I'm running you in for dealing with stolen property.

BENNY: But officer!

NELSON: Now, now, Mr. Benny. We don't want to make a scene here do we? Now come with me.

BENNY: Wait! You can't do this to me! I'm Jack Benny! I've got a show on right now!

NELSON: I'll say you have.

BENNY: No! Wait! Please! It's all a mistake! Wait!

MUSIC: BRIDGE TO COMMERCIAL (60 seconds), THEN (2 minutes)
MUSIC BY PHIL HARRIS AND HIS ORCHESTRA.

WILSON: Well ladies and gentlemen, we don't know where Jack is. Apparently he just went out for a minute, but there's no sign of him anywhere. I really don't know what to say...

BENNY: Well I do!

WILSON: Jack! What happened?

NELSON: To put it bluntly, he's under arrest.

WILSON: Arrest?

NELSON: Yes. Your friend Rochester got a ticket for speeding, but I'm afraid Mr. Benny is under arrest for buying stolen goods.

WILSON: Oh, Jack, how terrible.

BENNY: Yes, I know. And in front of all these people, too.

NELSON: All right, Mr. Benny, you can go ahead and finish your show. But I'll be waiting for you, right after you finish here. Understand?

BENNY: Yes, yes, of course, officer. You don't have to worry about me.

NELSON: Yes. That's what worries me. I'll be waiting.

WILSON: Oh, Jack. You really didn't...

BENNY: No, of course not! You know me better than that!

WILSON: Well then, how did it happen?

BENNY: Oh, Don, it's a long story. I'd rather not talk about it now. And besides, we've got a show to do.

WILSON: O.K., Jack. I just hope everything turns out all right.

BENNY: Yes. So do I...Gee, I'm still so nervous. I need to rest a minute. Oh Dennis, Dennis Day. Come out and sing another song, will you?

DAY: Oh, hi, Mr. Benny. Where have you been? Did you miss my first song?

BENNY: Never mind, Dennis. Just sing.

DAY: O.K., Mr. Benny.

MUSIC: DENNIS DAY SINGS WITH PHIL HARRIS AND HIS ORCHESTRA,
(3 minutes).

BENNY: Now, ladies and gentlemen, I mentioned earlier in the show that this special program tonight is dedicated in memory of Fred Allen. Some of you may well remember the feuds we had when radio was king of the airwaves.

Now, our programs and our feuds are only memories. But Fred and I were really the best of friends. And I respected Fred as a friend and as a very talented comedian and entertainer. We all miss him, his humor, and his wit very much.

So, on this program tonight, in honor of "The Fred Allen Show," we have Fred Allen's old "Allen's Alley." It will never be the same without Fred, but for memory's sake, will you join me in a visit down "Allen's Alley?"... as Fred might have done it.

Ah, it looks like Senator Claghorn still lives here. I see the old mule is still out back and there's a board loose on the front porch here. I'll knock and see if he's in.

SOUND: THREE KNOCKS, DOOR OPENING.

CLAGHORN: Did somebody, ah say, did somebody rap their knuckles on mah door?

BENNY: Ah, Senator Claghorn!

CLAGHORN: Who are you, ah say, what are you all doin' a hammerin' ya fist on mah door, Yankee stranger?

BENNY: Why, Senator, I'm Jack Benny!

CLAGHORN: Penny, eh? Jack Penny. Nevah heard of ya befoah son. What's ya trade, ah say, whatdya do fer a livin', son? You ain't one o' those coppaheads ah ya? Speak up son, speak up! I ain't got all day, ya know.

BENNY: Why, Senator, I'm Jack Benny...Benny. I'm a famous Hollywood star on radio and television.

CLAGHORN: Benny, eh. Ah, see. Well, Benjamin, mah boy, ah still don't recall, ah say, ah don't recall your name at all, son. No, sah, not at all. Ya say you're a Hollywood stah, eh? Ah'll tell ya son, the only stahs I know ah the stahs on that flag ya see a hangin' thea on mah porch, son. The Stahs and Bahs, that is. Stahs, son.

They represent the highest honah of tha South. Why, tha only stahs in this country today are those flamboyant sons o' tha South in tha Senate and tha House, House that is. Why, son, if it weren't for us Southernahs up thea in Washington a keepin' an eye on you Yankees, this country would be in an awful fix.

Why these Southern Senators ah bright... Fulbright, that is. Yes, son, we can raise a lot o' thunder in Congress, thunder Strom Thurmond, that is. That's a, ah say, that's a joke! Ha-ha! Come on boy, quit holdin' it back! Don't hold it in, ah say, let it all out! What's tha mattah, son? Has a cat got ya tongue? Speak up, boy! If it's a polecat, wash ya mouth out fast, ah say, clean it out good! Ha-ha-ha!

Now you take the wind, son, wind that is.

Most people up North say it's a prevailin' wind from tha west ta east. We know betta down heah, son, because it's tha prevailin' South! Why, the sun nevah rises in the east, son, it rises in the southeast, and when it reaches high noon, it's a shinin' its full glory south o' tha Mason-Dixon Line! Line, that is. Now you take Southern Fried Chicken...the South provides the Southern Fried and the North supplies the fowl, odor that is. You Yankees don't know how ta cook! Couldn't fry a snowball in a fryin' pan! That's a jcke, son! Ah keep a flingin' 'em out and you keep on droppin' 'em, son. Laugh, ah say, laugh, son! It'll do ya some good. Use your, ah say, use your mouth and stretch it out, long-wise, that is. Otherwise, ya may get a bloody nose! Ha-ha-ha! Son, you need an uplift, lift, that is. Now, you take, ah say, take some yeast, any kind of yeast ya use fo' bakin'. Son, it's no good at all unless it's from tha South! Because, son, the South will rise again! So long!

BENNY: Well...(pause)...Maybe I should go to the next door here, maybe there won't be so much hot air on the porch.

SOUND: THREE KNOCKS, DOOR OPENS.

MRS.
NUSSEBAUM: Hello?

BENNY: Mrs. Nussbaum!

NUSSBAUM: You were expecting maybe Neil Armstrong?

BENNY: Well, how have you been all of these years?

MRS. N: Oh, Mr. Benny, if you only knew all the troubles I've had!

BENNY: Oh, really. What are they?

MRS. N: My husband Pierre.

BENNY: Your husband Pierre?

MRS. N: Oh, yes. It's always Pierre. Pierre, what's wrong, what is the problem, and all these things all of the times.

BENNY: You've been taking good care of Pierre?

MRS. N: Oh, Mr. Benny, you don't know what I've been through. Pierre, he's grown older, you know, and he has the growing old problems. Do you know what I mean, Mr. Benny?

BENNY: Well...not really.

MRS. N: You see, Pierre has got the gray hair blues.

BENNY: The gray hair blues?

MRS. N: Oh, I'm afraid so, Mr. Benny. Pierre is going around all of the time trying to dye his hair blue.

BENNY: Doesn't that look rather silly?

MRS. N: Yes, and I tell Pierre, I say "Pierre, you crazy old man. Your hair is growing old like you are." So I say, "Pierre, you have got to face the facts of life and leave your hair gray. Don't make it blue," I tell him.

And Pierre he says, "And why not? I've got hair on my head, so why should the color make any difference at all?"

And I tell Pierre, "Pierre, you're a grown man, so act your age, already." I tell him, gray hair is a sign of wisdom, I say.

And Pierre, he says, "Well, if it's a sign of wisdom, how come it is that so many old folks are running around with the gray hair?"

Then I tell Pierre, I say, "O.K., go ahead and dye your hair blue. See what I care." And I tell Pierre, "Don't come running to me when the young gentlemen in the white coats come after you."

Then Pierre, he says that he doesn't care because he doesn't like the ice cream anymore, anyway.

BENNY: Well, anyway, Mrs. Nussbaum, you're looking very spry and healthy.

MRS.N: Oh, Mr. Benny, you're so kind. But I'm not just as young as I used to be. And I ask myself, "Why am I putting myself through all this? Why am I breaking my back these days?" And then I think to myself and I say, "And why not? Look at Mr. Benny and then be thankful you are still young!" Good-bye!

BENNY: Now wait a minute! Wait a minute! This is ridiculous! I'm not even forty, and people are almost calling me Grandpa Benny! I can't understand it. And I feel so young. Maybe I should have my hair dyed blue.

Well, let's try this next door.

SOUND: THREE KNOCKS, DOOR OPENS.

MOODY: Howdy, bub!

BENNY: Ah, Titus Moody! How are you?

MOODY: Oh, just fine, I guess. And how about yourself, Grandpap?

BENNY: Now cut that out!

MOODY: Well, bub, just tryin' to tell you the truth.

BENNY: Well, don't be so truthful! This is a case where a little white lie never hurts!

MOODY: O.K., Bub. You look not a day over 58.

BENNY: Now let's just forget the whole thing! Now, Mr. Moody, how have you been over the years?

MOODY: I've been just fine. Wife's been doin' O.K., too. She's a little stronger now, though.

BENNY: A little stronger? How's that?

MOODY: You see, she's been helpin' me with the grain sacks at harvest time. She's been feelin' her oats.

BENNY: I see. Any other changes, Titus?

MOODY: Well, Bessie, that's my cow, had twin calves last year.

BENNY: Oh, really?

MOODY: Yep! Identical twins. Called one Better and the other one Worse.

BENNY: Better and Worse.

MOODY: Yep. The thing is, they always seem to cause trouble together, never just one or the other. But I think Worse starts it all the time, but sometimes it's Better.

BENNY: Is that right?

MOODY: Yep. Trouble is, I can't tell which one is Worse.

BENNY: I see, Mr. Moody.

MOODY: Yes sir. Had some trouble with my barn door, too.

BENNY: You did?

MOODY: Yep. I bought one of those automatic garage door openers, and I had it installed myself on my big barn door, you see.

BENNY: Well, that sounds like a good idea, Titus.

MOODY: Yep. I thought so, too. Well, I hooked it up myself, you see, because I thought it was nothing special. So, I fixed up this electric motor to the barn door like the directions said. And I put in all the rods and pulleys myself, too. Then I took the little gadget you use to open the door, and put it on my tractor, you see, because I was fixin' to open the door when I pulled up on my tractor.

BENNY: Well, what happened, Titus?

MOODY: Well, I'll tell you. I must have done something wrong when I hooked up all of those gadgets.

BENNY: Something went wrong?

MOODY: I'm afraid so. When I pulled up in the tractor and pushed the button to open the barn door, my tractor stalled.

BENNY: Well, Titus. Did you fix it then?

MOODY: Nope. 'Cause when I pushed the button again, the tractor started itself, drove itself in the barn, turned itself off, and the door shut. So I left it alone, and it's worked that way ever since!

BENNY: That sounds like a strange tractor you have, Titus. Have you given it a name?

MOODY: Yep. I named it after my cow.

BENNY: You call it Bessie?

MOODY: No. I call it Dear. So long, bub!

BENNY: Well, O.K., Titus...Now, I wonder who's down here at this last door?

SOUND: THREE KNOCKS, DOOR OPENS.

ROCHESTER: Howdy, boss!

BENNY: Rochester! What are you doing here? Ajax Cassidy is supposed to be here. Besides, I thought I told you to wait with the officer.

ROCH: Ya, boss, I know. But after you came back here on the show, I overheard this Mr. Cassidy say he lost a Stradivarius while he was here.

BENNY: Ajax Cassidy lost a Stradivarius? Here?

ROCH: Ya, but he thinks someone stole it.

BENNY: Stole it?

ROCH: Ya...But he had a bronze copy made when he got it, in case something like this happened. So, he left to find his bronzed copy so the police can identify the thief.

BENNY: Well, it was a good thing he did.

ROCH: Wait, here he comes now.

BENNY: Ajax, what's the matter?

AJAX: Oh, Mr. Benny, I'm not long for this world!

BENNY: Well, I know you must feel terrible about the whole thing. I'm terribly sorry this happened to you on my show. I don't know what to say.

AJAX: Oh, Mr. Benny, it's not your fault at all. I loved my Stradivarius so well, I brought it here with me. I thought maybe, maybe we could have played a duet together. A little Irish tune, if you please.

BENNY: Well, I...wait a minute. May I see your bronze copy of your Stradivarius?

AJAX: Sure, sure, sure. What is it, Mr. Benny?

BENNY: Ajax...why this has the letters "XYZ" on it!

AJAX: Why sure as I'm Irish, it does Mr. Benny. Those are my initials.

BENNY: But, Ajax Cassidy?

AJAX: No. Ya see, I take the last letter of my names, "X," "Y," and "Z."

BENNY: Oh. Well, I see the "X" from Ajax, and the "Y" from Cassidy, but what about the "Z"?

AJAX: But "Z" always comes after "Y," doesn't it, Mr. Benny?

BENNY: Then, that fellow at the gas station sold me your violin! It's the same one! I know it! I can tell by the crack in the bridge.

AJAX: I'm afraid I'm a bit confused, Mr. Benny.

BENNY: Never mind, now. I think I know where your violin is, Ajax. Oh, Officer...officer!

NELSON: Yeeeeeess?

BENNY: Officer, I just...wait! That's him! That's the guy who sold me that violin you've got with the "XYZ" on it. That's him! Arrest him, officer!

NELSON: Calm down, Mr. Benny. I already have.

BENNY: You have?

NELSON: Yes...While I was waiting backstage for you to finish this show, I caught him trying to steal someone's violin.

BENNY: He's the one who...

NELSON: I know. He confessed everything. Here's your violin, Mr. Cassidy. And here's yours, Mr. Benny. I hope you're happy now.

BENNY: You mean...I'm...not under arrest? No charges?

NELSON: You're a free man, Mr. Benny. No charges against you. So be a good boy and behave yourself. Good-bye.

BENNY: Ajax...you've got your violin. Isn't that wonderful?

AJAX: Aye, Mr. Benny, but I'm still not long for this world...I feel I need a bit of rest after all this excitement. So long.

BENNY: Good-bye, Ajax. Ha-ha! I'm free! I'm a free man! Whoopee! Rochester, go find Mary. I think we'll all go out and celebrate after the show.

ROCH: O.K., boss. But let's not be in such a hurry this time. I've still got my ticket, you know.

BENNY: Oh, that's right. Well, don't worry about it. Go ahead. I'll see you later.

ROCH: O.K., boss.

BENNY: Gee, what a great feeling!

DAY: Hi, Mr. Benny!

BENNY: Oh, hello, Dennis. You look rather cheerful after you've had your Stradivarius broken--and your uncle was going to give you five hundred thousand dollars for it.

DAY: Oh, I just called my uncle.

BENNY: Is he offering more money for a Stradivarius?

DAY: No, Mr. Benny. I was wrong before.

BENNY: Oh...less money?

DAY: No, the same amount of money...but for a rare cello, you see...

BENNY: Out! Out! Get Out!

DAY: But Mr. Benny...

BENNY: Out! Out, I say! You and your rich uncle!
I never heard of such a thing!

MUSIC: FADE IN BENNY THEME, UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR:

BENNY: Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you all for listening to our show tonight. I'd like to thank the Jell-o people for making it possible. May we all remember and may we always cherish the moments that many of us spent in the early days of radio with perhaps the greatest comedian and wit in radio's history--Fred Allen. Good night everybody!

MUSIC: THEME UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR DON WILSON AND CREDITS, THEN COMMERCIAL.

Script Analysis

Fred Allen might not have liked to ever have had "Allen's Alley" on "The Jack Benny Show," but the respect the two men had for each other and their firm bond of friendship would warrant such a special show. Nevertheless, Jack once remarked about Fred Allen, "You look as if Santa Claus slid down your nose and left a bag under each eye."

Many loyal fans of "Allen's Alley" miss Fred Allen's own brand of humor, but people still must put up with Jack Benny's stinginess and violin.

Bob Hope of course is the beau ideal of a conceited young man who fancies himself devastating to the opposite sex. The comedy formula of Jack Benny is perhaps more subtle. Benny is a bit of a poseur, pretending to knowledge or social standing that is not his. Invariably he is exposed as a fake. Benny is a fool but a loveable fool, the constant victim of his own human idiosyncracies, a man who aspires to a deference his colleagues and the world withhold from him. When he thinks he is being utterly charming his wife will instruct him "Fix your toupee, Jack--it slipped."⁴⁷

Whatever Jack Benny is or was, it was his own fault.

Jack Benny created himself of a lad born as Benny Kubelsky in Waukegan, Illinois, on February 14, 1894. At a youthful age, the boy was given two presents by his father: a violin and a monkeywrench. The violin was for if he had talent; the monkeywrench for if he had not.⁴⁸

As a young entertainer, he progressed with his violin from the vaudeville circuit to the "Great Lakes Naval Revue" in World War I. To eliminate confusion with Ben Bernie's

⁴⁷Landry, Radio Business, p. 301.

⁴⁸Harmon, Comedians, p. 155.

violin joking, Ben K. Benny (Benny Kubelsky) changed his name to Jack Benny.

Jack Benny must rank with Fred Allen as one of the great radio comedians. Where Fred Allen was a good comedy writer, Jack was and is a good comedy editor. He has a keen sense of what is good for him in selection of content and delivery.

As the editor of my own material, I have always had an advantage. My writers have always given me the best of material. It's easy when you only have to deal with good material, picking the best from the best. I think I put together a very good show, with the right timing and proper pacing. It's as an editor I have this sense of what will work and what won't. I make my decision based on which line or sketch or piece of material I will enjoy doing the most. If I don't enjoy doing it, how can anyone enjoy hearing it?⁴⁹

This is a good sound philosophy for any comedian. Jack Benny proves it can work.

Jack Benny's comedy revolved around real people in everyday situations; his audience could identify with the Benny brand of comedy. Jack, however was careful about his humor.

Benny was one of the gentlest gentlemen in radio comedy, and one of the most successful. "Frustration can be funny, not pain. If it hurts, it isn't funny."⁵⁰

Is this why Jack is always thirty-nine?

If someone pulls a gag on me about my having false teeth, ninety-eight per cent of the audience who have false teeth will laugh. The other two per cent would, too, but their gums are still sore.⁵¹

⁴⁹Bob Talbert, "He May Look 39 and Stingy, But He's Not--Just Ask Any Cabbie," Detroit Free Press, April 16, 1972, sec. A, p. 15.

⁵⁰Harmon, Comedians, p. 155.

⁵¹Ibid.

Perhaps we find Jack funny because there is a little Jack Benny in all of us. If not, why do we chuckle when Jack asks, "For how much?" when asked to help a little old lady across the street, or when he one day borrows a cup from a neighbor and the next day returns it to have it filled with sugar. Most people would be too polite to do such things, but they can vicariously laugh at themselves doing such things.

The theme song of "The Fred Allen Show" was "Smile, Darn Ya, Smile!" This is probably the sum of the purpose of his efforts on "The Fred Allen Show" and "Town Hall Tonight."

...Fred Allen's "Town Hall Tonight," the closest radio ever came to sponsoring a single genius of comic enterprise, since Allen wrote, acted in, and presided over a week-in, week-out program year after year with unflagging invention and wit....⁵²

Fred Allen is probably best known for "Allen's Alley."

"Allen's Alley" was a democratic cross section of boobs as well as wiseacres. And Allen had a penchant for comic documentary "interviews" with nonentities: somebody who held the coat of a somebody who held the coat of a great man's retainer's secretary, or someone who stations himself overnight at Yankee Stadium to count the overnight crowd for this year's opening game of the World Series, pitiful exceptionalisms that disastrously cut the ground from beneath sentimental democracy.⁵³

Fred Allen had been doing jokes and sketches in his comedy-variety shows since 1932, but he introduced "Allen's Alley"

⁵²Bier, Humor, p. 258.

⁵³Ibid., p. 261.

in 1943, and gave himself probably his biggest success as a comedian. His major characters of Senator Claghorn, Mrs. Nussbaum, Titus Moody, and Ajax Cassidy followed him through his radio success.

Allen's forte was wit and words: a potent power of pleasing performance in the mouth of a skilled comedian craftsman. His jokes were relevant; he attacked the issues of the day from politics to poetry and New York subways to California oranges ("California is a nice place to live-- if you're an orange"). He was a true wit, often seemingly creating jokes as his show progressed: "Benny couldn't ad lib a belch at a Hungarian banquet...." When a few jokes fell flat in one show, Allen relied on a little boy in the first row of the radio studio audience, following a theory of some entertainers that if you get the first few rows of an audience, you've got the entire audience on your side. Allen apparently noticed the little boy laughing at an opening joke, but noted to the entire audience that the boy missed a later joke. Immediately after another subsequent line failure, sharp Fred Allen spotted the boy giggling and before firing a quick salvaging joke, Fred blurted out, "Wait a minute, the little boy got that one!" or something to that effect. Also, the audience might have howled after another fizzled joke when Allen may have quipped, "As that one lone laugh goes ricocheting around the studio, we move to a selection by Al Goodman and his orchestra...." In this case we go to a script analysis of "The Jack Benny Show."

Obviously, this script relies mainly on character humor. To fully appreciate this script, the reader should be familiar with all characters involved, because the lines themselves simply do not fully convey the character humor. For example, one must have at some time heard the funny, "Yeeeeees?" of Frank Nelson; funny due to the way he says it--his personality provides the humor, not necessarily the line. Or one should have an idea who Don Wilson is; from previous broadcasts listeners would know Don is rather corpulent (references to his size by words in scripts--he sounds fat, too), which explains why he demolished the violin when he sat on it. Jack Benny, of course, is the main source of character humor: stinginess, greed, jealousy, and always thirty-nine. The entire "Allen's Alley" segment is written as character humor. However, as in past scripts, other elements of humor contribute to the character humor.

The entire plot of the script uses the humor element of complication. Early in the script, the subject of concern is introduced--the Stradivarius violin. As his traditional character and show format predict, Jack desires to play a tune on his violin for the audience. The introduction of this subject and ensuing conversation about it leads to the humor of complication. Certainly, when he found out Don supposedly broke his violin, he simply could have expressed regret and gone on with his planned show. But Jack Benny would not drop the subject. He made a big thing out of something simple. Each discussion and character entrance

complicates the smashed violin accident more and more. Eventually, the problem is resolved, and Jack has his violin. Nevertheless, the show ends in a peculiar twist of anti-climax humor, when Dennis Day reveals to Jack that his uncle was not looking for a Stradivarius, but a rare cello.

The main example of the element of exaggeration is Jack's story about how he got his Stradivarius. Unless told by Jack Benny, however, this element of exaggeration might not have been as effective as it was intended to be.

Momentum is another element of humor used in this script. The pace is usually the speed of a normal everyday conversation, but the timing of the entrance of characters is a key to the momentum. For example, Mary Livingstone enters and makes a sly quip about Jack's age, when he remarks that his Stradivarius was only as old as he was. When Don Wilson informs Jack that he does not know who owns the violin he found, Dennis Day makes his timely entrance. Dennis sings a song, providing a bridge to a change of scenes with Jack and Rochester searching for Dennis's uncle; the timing itself is not humorous, but it contributes to momentum carrying other elements of humor, such as the character humor.

Statement-of-truth humor can also be found in this script. Mary Livingstone contributes a few tidbits of this humor: that Jack is really old and he needs to be replaced, not his Stradivarius; that Jack can't sing a note; that it was a shame Jack's uncles did not show any musical promise; and

that if Jack was not old and cantankerous, she was not Mary Livingstone. Dennis Day's clincher statement that his uncle wanted a rare cello, of course, is statement of truth as part of the humor of complication.

Verbal combat humor is usually not as strong in a Jack Benny program, as in verbal combat between Jack Benny and Fred Allen. Mild verbal combat erupts between Jack and the police officer. Also, mild exchanges occur when Benny visits "Allen's Alley." Had Fred Allen appeared behind a door, another battle in a long feud of verbal combat would have been renewed.

CHAPTER VII

MODERN COMEDY DRAMA

"CHISELER'S COUNTRY STORE"

Program Length: Fifteen minutes

MUSIC: CHISELER'S THEME UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR:

ANNOUNCER: Chiseler's Country Store...Starring Paul Lynde and
Don Knotts. Brought to you tonight by.....

COMMERCIAL (60 seconds), MUSIC THEME UP TO FULL,
THEN UNDER AND OUT.

SOUND: OUTSIDE ATMOSPHERE SOUNDS OF BIRDS CHIRPING AND
DOGS AND WIND, ALSO HAMMERING.

ANNOUNCER: This is Chiseler's Country Store in Hocking Hollow,
Ohio. Snidely G. Chiseler, the store owner, and
his old bloodhound, Ulysses, have just moved into
this quiet, friendly little community to start a
new life. We find Snidely putting up his sign
on the front of the store....

HAMMERING STOPS.

SNIDELY: Whew! I hate this kind of work, Ulysses. It
takes so much out of me. Besides, I hate this
sunshine in the summer like this. Everything is
so blasted cheerful. The birds are singing, the

sky is clear, the air is fresh...I hate it. I wish I was back in New York. It was so dismal and miserable and polluted and foggy and, mercy, it was...my kind of town! Hah-heh!

We should've stayed there, Ulysses. You know, we had a decent life there...The night clubs, the parties, the dancing, the restaurants, and best of all, I was unemployed. It was just too bad that Uncle George found me a job out here. You'd think he did it on purpose. He must love to see me suffer like this. Work, how terrible!

Well, Ulysses, the sign's up now. I'll just sweep off the front porch here a bit and....

ELMER: Chiseler's Country Store...

SNIDELY: Ya, sure is, and...who said that? You haven't learned to talk have you, Ulysses?

ELMER: Oh, excuse me. I'm back here admiring your sign.

SNIDELY: Admiring, eh? What's so good about it? Haven't you ever seen a sign before?

ELMER: Well, ya. Of course I have. I was just readin' out loud. Are you Mr. Chiseler?

SNIDELY: Yes, they call me that. What about it?

ELMER: Well, my name's Elmer Jumper. I live here in Hocking Hollow!

SNIDELY: (Aside) What a pity.

ELMER: Pardon me?

SNIDELY: I say what a fine city you have here.

ELMER: Oh! Why thank you, thank you...(laughs)...We're real proud of it. Ya...just a real down-to-earth town this is! (Laughs)

SNIDELY: Yes, I can see that.

ELMER: Tell me, Mr. Chiseler, how long have ya been here?

SNIDELY: (Aside) Too long.

ELMER: Pardon me?

SNIDELY: Er...just drove in last night. Been working to get ready to open since last night. This is my first time outside here in daylight.

ELMER: Last night? Why, it's no wonder I haven't seen you before. I usually walk up and down this street at least twice a day.

SNIDELY: (Aside) How sad.

ELMER: Yep...at least twice a day up and down old Main Street here (laughs)...yep...good old Main Street. Not a nicer street anywhere. No sir. Wouldn't you say so, Mr. Chiseler?

SNIDELY: Oh, absolutely. There's nothing like it...anywhere. Absolutely...nothing like it.

ELMER: (Laughs) Ya...Yessiree! Old Hocking Hollow. Nestled in the valley of the Hocking Hills. Real flat here. Nice small farm town. Real nice small town we've got. Real friendly.

SNIDELY: (Aside) How terrible.

ELMER: Yep...real friendly. Now, Mr. Chiseler, take just a minute from your sweeping there and just step out here in the street and take a look up Main Street. Now, you're bein' on the far end of the row of stores here on this side of the street... just look up the street and tell me what you see... Well?

SNIDELY: Nothing.

ELMER: What?

SNIDELY: Absolutely nothing. Now leave me alone. I've got work to do here.

ELMER: Oh, now Mr. Chiseler! Mr. Chiseler! Now come back here and take a real good look up this street. Stand farther out here and look.

SNIDELY: Oh, all right, but I'll scream if I don't see the Washington Monument, Monticello, and the Taj Mahal.

ELMER: Yep...that's it...stand right here now and look. Whadya see?

SNIDELY: Oh, I'm gonna cry, I'm gonna cry! Why did I leave New York, oh why? This is my punishment for being an honest to goodness full-blooded American unemployed! (Sobs) I want my welfare back! Please! Oh, what a cruel fate, owner of a country store in Nowhere, U.S.A.! (Sobs)

ELMER: Oh, now, Mr. Chiseler! Mr. Chiseler! Don't cry... I know you must be homesick, but you'll like it here. This is Hocking Hollow, a friendly place to live.

SNIDELY: (Cries louder)

ELMER: Now dry your tears, Mr. Chiseler. Dry your tears now, and look at this town. Now just goin' up your side of the street, right next to your store is an old beat-up vacant building... where the old grange hall used to be.

SNIDELY: Used to be?

ELMER: Yep. They moved into a new building across the street.

SNIDELY: Which one is that?

ELMER: Oh, well do you see that little park-like place with the broken bench and the rooster sittin' on the cannon next to the big piece of granite rock?

SNIDELY: How could I miss it?

ELMER: Well, now, the building just east of that, is the new grange hall!

SNIDELY: You mean the one with the "NRA" and "Keep Cool with Cal" banners in the window?

ELMER: Nope. That half of the building is the Hocking Valley Gazette office. The half just west of it is the Grange Hall.

SNIDELY: Oh, I would never have known if you hadn't told me, Elmer. Really, I wouldn't.

ELMER: Well, now, I can see how it would be difficult for a stranger. See the "R" and the "N" and the "E" are missin' from the sign. You see, Charlie Nutter is the Building Superintendent, but he just

never got around to replacin' those letters.

(Laughs) I suppose the sign looks kind of peculiar to you, Mr. Chiseler.

SNIDELY: No, Elmer. It doesn't surprise me in the least... really, it doesn't.

ELMER: Well see? You'll get accustomed to this town sooner or later!

SNIDELY: Oh mercy, I hope not! Oh, Mother Chiseler, a Gag Hall. I feel like it, I really do.

ELMER: Now, look back over on your side of the street, Mr. Chiseler. You're on the good side of the street.

SNIDELY: How lucky can I get? I'm on the corner of Main Street on the good side.

ELMER: Ya boy! I'll say! You see all the parking places in town are on your side of the street. City Council only allows it on one side of the street because of the traffic on Saturdays, you know.

SNIDELY: Oh, I see. One side of the street because of heavy traffic on Saturdays.

ELMER: Oh ya. Saturdays are big days for all the stores here on Main Street here.

SNIDELY: I can imagine.

ELMER: Yessiree! Real heavy. The farmers load up all of their families in their cars and pick-up trucks and drive into town. Ya. It's a big day for the whole family. The kids love it. (Laughs)

SNIDELY: Kids?

ELMER: Ya. Children.

SNIDELY: How terrible!

ELMER: Oh, Mr. Chiseler. These kids are all good and well-behaved.

SNIDELY: I'll bet they are.

ELMER: Why, these are Hocking Valley children!

SNIDELY: Poor kids. Never had a chance.

ELMER: Why, look at me! I'm a product of Hocking Valley!

SNIDELY: I would never have guessed, Elmer.

ELMER: Well, now like I was saying, you've got a great place for your store here, Mr. Chiseler, with the parking spaces on your side of the street.

SNIDELY: Oh, I didn't realize it would make that much difference.

ELMER: Well, maybe not a whole lot, but still, if they pull their cars in to park, they're bound to see your store.

SNIDELY: Why, you're real observant there, Elmer. But tell me...why aren't the people shopping along Main Street now? The town looks deserted all up and down the street. Or does everyone wait until after dark to swing around here?

ELMER: Swing? Swing what? A baseball bat? The Little League plays every Monday and Wednesday nights in the...

SNIDELY: No, no, Elmer. I mean why aren't there any cars parked along the street now?

ELMER: Oh...well...this is Sunday morning, you know... and well...you know.

SNIDELY: You don't mean the stores are closed on Sunday?

ELMER: Why, of course. It's Sunday.

SNIDELY: They stay closed...all day?

ELMER: Well, why sure, why not?

SNIDELY: Oh, I get it. All tuckered out after a big night on the town on Saturday nights. How many night clubs ya got here, Elmer?

ELMER: What's a night club?

SNIDELY: Elmer, you don't have any night clubs here?

ELMER: Well...Mary Jenkins has a Social Club meeting on Tuesday nights in her house. Sometimes she alternates with Mrs. Baker when Mary has relatives in for supper or something. You know how it is.

SNIDELY: Yes, yes. I believe I do. Well, then what about your bars and taverns? How many?

ELMER: Why, none, Mr. Chiseler. This is a dry town. And a peaceful one, too, I'll have you know.

SNIDELY: Yes. It's peaceful all right. But is it alive, is what I'm worried about. No night clubs, no taverns, no bars...Elmer, what do people around here do for entertainment? Walk down Main Street for a few laughs?

ELMER: Oh, shucks no, Mr. Chiseler. Why, Hocking Hollow is the entertainment center of this area!

SNIDELY: O.K., Elmer. Let's hear it. I can hardly wait.
What have you got...Disneyland, the Astrodome,
Marineland of the Midwest and what else?

ELMER: Nope. Better than that.

SNIDELY: Oh mercy! The French Riviera!

ELMER: Now you take Monday nights...

SNIDELY: Terrific! Every night's a winner I'll bet...

ELMER: Now on Monday nights, they have all of the Scout
meetings over at the church on Cherry Bottom
Road out east of town...

SNIDELY: O.K., let me write all of this down here, Elmer.
Scout meetings...Monday nights...boys or girls,
Elmer?

ELMER: Both.

SNIDELY: O.K.,...no sex discrimination...and what's the
address?

ELMER: Well, let's see now. You go out east on Main
Street until you reach the railroad tracks...

SNIDELY: East to railroad tracks...

ELMER: Then turn right down the gravel road out past the
grain elevator and go...oh...about a mile less a
stone's throw...

SNIDELY: ...right on gravel road at grainy escalator and
watch out for kids throwing stones for miles
along the road...

ELMER: Then take a hard left across the tracks, but watch
out for the tracks 'cause there's no grade
crossing. Go real slow unless you walk.

SNIDELY: Hard left hook to the jaw of kid who hits you with a stone; don't leave tracks unless you walk, otherwise go real slow.

ELMER: Then follow this dirt road out past Blake Summers' big barn with the tobacco sign on it and turn right down that road on the other side of it... and watch out for his cattle 'cause his fence is down along there.

SNIDELY: Follow tobacco leaves on road to big barn with dirty sign on it, turn right and watch out for wild buffalo herd on stampede.

ELMER: Then all you have to do is go another three miles past the city dump and past Herbie Slatter's place to the covered bridge, cross it and turn left, and, presto! You're there in no time at all!

SNIDELY: Then, another three miles, but watch out for Herbie's place--it's a dump...cross the bridge when you come to it, turn left, and splash! You turned too soon...and you're wet in no time at all... O.K., Elmer. Got it.

ELMER: Now, on Tuesday nights, its the International Order of Odd Fellows Meeting in the Grange Hall.

SNIDELY: Extraordinaries on Tuesday nights in the Gag Hall...O.K....

ELMER: Ya...and on Wednesday nights its the Fraternal Order of the Eagles in the back of Carl Edwards' Hardware...

SNIDELY: The Eagles fly in the hardware on Wednesday nights...O.K.

ELMER: And Thursday nights are Legion nights in the Legion Hall.

SNIDELY: French Foreign Legion recruits on Thursday nights at local post...O.K.

ELMER: And on Friday nights and Saturday nights, anything goes!

SNIDELY: Want to be a little bit more specific there, Elmer?

ELMER: Well...

SNIDELY: Oh, come on, Elmer, admit it.

ELMER: Well, O.K....Ice Cream Socials, Spaghetti Suppers, Pot Luck Suppers, Firemen's Ball, Barn Dances, Corn Festivals, and Family Reunions.

SNIDELY: You're kidding.

ELMER: You mean you didn't have any of these back in New York, Mr. Chiseler?

SNIDELY: No, not that I recall, Elmer.

ELMER: Oh, you poor soul! Why, you just haven't lived until you go to one. Absolutely haven't enjoyed life at all. Not one bit. No sir.

SNIDELY: Oh, Elmer, is it too late? Am I too old already?

ELMER: (Laughs) Why no, of course not.

SNIDELY: How lucky can I get? On the good side of Main Street and yet there's more.

ELMER: Why, Mr. Chiseler, my guess is that you've got a good many of these that you can attend from now on.

SNIDELY: (Aside) I hope not.

ELMER: What's that?

SNIDELY: Oh...(laughs)...I hope I have many to look forward to.

ELMER: Oh, ya. Indeed you will.

SNIDELY: Yes...well, if you'll excuse me, Elmer, I've got to get back to work here. And besides, we're standing in the middle of Main Street. We might get run over by a horse or something.

ELMER: No. Not likely today. Usually any other day, though.

SNIDELY: What, run over?

ELMER: Well, not likely, but Jake Thurston rides his surrey in about any other day.

SNIDELY: What is this surrey bit, a campy new electric car or something?

ELMER: Oh, no. It's an old-fashioned surrey--a carriage. Lulubelle brings him.

SNIDELY: Oh, he can't drive?

ELMER: No, Lulubelle's a horse.

SNIDELY: Why, Elmer. I didn't think you were the type to call people names like that. Really, she can't be all that bad, even if she does drive.

ELMER: No! You don't understand. She really is a horse.

SNIDELY: I got the message, but don't rub it in, Elmer.
She can't be all that bad.

ELMER: No. It's a horse-drawn surrey. Lulubelle's
the horse.

SNIDELY: Why, what a novel idea. A horse-drawn carriage.
Very ecologically minded, this Jake must be.
However, I shudder at the thought of people in
New York going that direction. Especially at
rush hour. And the parking...Mercy!

ELMER: Oh, Jake is just a swell fellow, for sure. Just
like all of the rest of the townfolk.

SNIDELY: I'm beginning to see a pattern here.

ELMER: Yep, Mr. Chiseler, you are just going to really
like it here. I know you will!

SNIDELY: Well, as Fiorello said, patience and fortitude.

ELMER: That's the spirit! (Laughs) You'll do just fine!

SNIDELY: Thanks, Elmer. Now, excuse me, I've got a lot
of work to do here. So long.

ELMER: Wait a minute, Mr. Chiseler.

SNIDELY: What is it, Elmer. Did I miss something on
Main Street? You know I really don't have time
for the deluxe tour right now, I really don't.

ELMER: Oh, no. I can show you the rest of the town
later. But what I was wondering...

SNIDELY: Yes, Elmer? If it's that Scout meeting, not
tomorrow, anyway, please...

ELMER: No, no, no. Not that. I was...uh...just wondering if, you know, you could use some help in your store here. I can do a fair amount of work and...

SNIDELY: You want a job, Elmer? In my store?

ELMER: Well...I really like to work and I'm reliable...

SNIDELY: You mean this town has unemployment? Hocking Hollow has unemployment? Mercy! What's the world coming to?

ELMER: Oh no, no, no Mr. Chiseler! Hocking Hollow doesn't have unemployment.

SNIDELY: Well then, Elmer, what's your job?

ELMER: Well, I'm the deputy sheriff here in Hocking Hollow.

SNIDELY: Deputy sheriff? Where's your badge, Elmer?

ELMER: Oh, well, I carry it in my shirt pocket. You see, when I wear it, I keep catching my shirt sleeve on it when I blow my nose. Hay fever, you know. But otherwise, as you can see, I wear this tan uniform.

SNIDELY: Well, I understand, Elmer. You picked a great place for hay fever. But if I hire you, what will your boss say? The sheriff here is your boss, isn't he?

ELMER: Oh ya, sure he is. Yep. Sheriff Riley. Preston Riley. Yep. Just a real great guy.

SNIDELY: But don't you have to stay on the job in your office, Elmer?

ELMER: Well, sometimes. We don't have all that much trouble here, you see. Real peaceful. We're here just in case, you know. Besides, my job is to mingle with the people here and let 'em know the law is here!

SNIDELY: Well, from the looks of you, Elmer, that last statement would be debatable.

ELMER: Now just watch yourself there, Mr. Chiseler. I can be real mean and tough when I have to! Don't you underestimate me! Why, if I'm called upon to enforce the law, I'm the roughest, toughest...

SNIDELY: Cool it, Elmer. I get the picture in patriotic colors. Your face is turning red, white, and blue.

ELMER: Well, do I get the job?!

SNIDELY: O.K., Elmer. You get the job.

ELMER: I do?! Hey, that's great! When do I start?

SNIDELY: Well, you come in tomorrow, Elmer. That's soon enough for you.

ELMER: Gee, thanks, Mr. Chiseler! (Off mike) I'm goin' home and spread the good news!

SNIDELY: Well, Ulysses, whadya think? Ya...that's what I'm thinking, too. Well, here we are anyway. Yep. Hocking Hollow...mercy!

MUSIC: FADE IN CHISELER'S THEME UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR ANNOUNCER, CLOSING, COMMERCIAL (60 seconds).

Script Analysis

"Chiseler's Country Store" is purposely written to derive its humor from character humor alone. The decision to use only character humor in this script stems from a number of reasons. First, character humor has a strong record of success, as evident in the popularity of comedians like Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, and Lum and Abner. Second, character humor has mass appeal and usually will not offend any one segment of the audience (as it is used here), as opposed to risks of a program of telling jokes. Third, character humor is slower to develop audience acceptance than so-called gag humor (telling jokes), but has greater potential and endurance when accepted by a loyal audience.

"Chiseler's Country Store" is a new radio comedy program. The character humor of Snidely Chiseler purposely violates almost all standard rules of humor etiquette. Chiseler's humor is mean, brash, cynical, ugly, and hypocritical. In short, Chiseler is a negative character. His negative humor would shock Fanny Brice, Al Jolson, Jack Benny, or Eddie Cantor, who would not support humor that hurt anyone. Chiseler's humor, however, only seems to hurt Elmer, not the audience. But Elmer Jumper is good-natured and can take the bitter replies of Chiseler. Today, a new radio comedy program must be different to succeed, although not necessarily in this negative humor style.

The program has potential. There is contrast between the rather sinister Chiseler and the innocent, polite, friendly Elmer Jumper. This script establishes the situation of potential conflict between Chiseler and Elmer and his whole beloved town. The script dictates that Chiseler is stuck in the town; he hates it already, and he appears to be doomed to suffer friendly, sincere people like Elmer. Also, with the setting of a store, Chiseler is bound to meet more residents of Hocking Hollow, which provides opportunities for the introduction of many new characters and problems--potential plots involving more character humor. This script may not be accepted by a radio station, perhaps because it just is not funny enough. However, good character humor requires time and exposure to an audience to build a loyal group of listeners. The program series would improve like a fine wine with age.

CHAPTER VIII

MODERN COMEDY DRAMA

"THE NEW TEXAS RANGERS"

Program Length: Fifteen minutes

MUSIC: FADE IN THEME UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR:

ANNOUNCER: From out of the past, from the days of yesterday
when the West was wild and Texas was young come
the New Texas Rangers of the twentieth century!

THEME UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER:

Join us now for the thrilling new adventures of
the New West with Ranger Frank Morgan and his
wise old companion, Ranger Amos Brown, as they
cross the blazing highways and freeways of Texas
as...The New Texas Rangers!

THEME UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR COMMERCIAL
(60 seconds), THEN:

SOUND: INSIDE OF CAR CRUISING ON HIGHWAY.

VOICE: Calling 8X 2YW, 8X 2YW. Come in, please.

MORGAN: ...8X 2YW here, come in.

VOICE: Report to headquarters immediately for assignment.

MORGAN: Roger dodger, HQ. I'm on my way.

SOUND: CAR QUICKLY PICKING UP SPEED.

MORGAN: Hmmm. Wonder what it is this time? Maybe I'll run an errand for the boss again. Last night it was groceries, the night before it was taking his dog to the vet. This is really becoming a drag. Nobody needs the New Texas Rangers anymore. We're obsolete. No more cowboys and Indians. Just the usual city crime. Ah, for those glorious days of yesteryear when a Texas Ranger would go for miles on his horse to catch the bad guys. Sigh...not any more.

SOUND: CAR PULLING IN TO A STOP. CAR DOOR OPENS, CLOSES.
FOOTSTEPS. ANOTHER DOOR OPENS, CLOSES.

MORGAN: Well, Frank, what is it this time?

FRANK: I don't know. The boss wants to see you in his office. He says it's important.

MORGAN: I'll bet. Well, I'll see.

SOUND: TWO KNOCKS. OFF MIKE, "COME IN," DOOR OPENS.

BOSS: Oh, hello, Morgan. Come in, please. I want to have you meet your new partner, Mr. Amos Brown.

BROWN: Hiya, bud! How's it goin'?

MORGAN: Huh? Oh, ya, how do you do?

BROWN: Oh, I'm fine. My dog here, Andrew Roosevelt Johnson, is fine, too. Shake hands with Mr. Morgan, Andy...that's it. He's a real smart dog. Real friendly. But he can be mean, too. Terrible mean. Why, on my last...

BOSS: Uh, maybe some other time, Mr. Brown. Since you two will be on your first assignment right away, why don't you go out in the patrol car and wait for Frank. He'll be out shortly. I just want to have a few words with him in private.

BROWN: Oh sure, sure. Go right ahead. Andy and I'll go out and wait in the patrol car. Ya, won't we, Andy? Ya...see. He shook his head. He's a real smart dog, he is. Come on, let's go.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSES.

MORGAN: I don't get it. That guy's old enough to be my grandfather...what gives? We can't be that desperate, can we?

BOSS: Well, Frank. It's a new ruling passed down from higher up. It goes along with the new Ranger policy of no discrimination because of old age.

MORGAN: What?

BOSS: That's right. It's in the wind across the nation. It's bound to become a law sooner or later, so the New Texas Rangers will incorporate it into Ranger policy now--kind of a public relations prestige point, you know.

MORGAN: I can't believe it. Why, how will this guy keep up? These old people are so sickly and weak. Why, he'll break down, get tired easily, or even worse become seriously ill on the job.

BOSS: You're wrong, Frank. You underestimate the older generation. They're a tough lot, even though they don't appear to be so on the surface. Real strong character, like solid steel. They've been through a lot in their lives, these senior citizens. But it's made them strong and wise--real tough. If we can use their wisdom, like we want to with Amos, why, think what it will do for people his age across the nation. A new spirit of hope! And Frank, this country needs that now.

MORGAN: Ya, but...

BOSS: Don't worry about Amos. He's been a policeman all of his life. He knows this business better than any of us.

MORGAN: But the New Texas Rangers aren't...

BOSS: Don't worry. As of today, we're taking a new course. A more active role in this area. We'll go from town to town by teams of two like you and Amos, going wherever the New Texas Rangers are needed. Our job is to help the local authorities in a new war on crime. The New Texas Rangers will do their job.

MORGAN: But Amos is so old, why...

BOSS: He's young at heart, Frank, and acts it. That's what counts. Oh sure, he takes his medicine and has peculiarities, but he's a wise man, Morgan. You'll be surprised how much you'll learn just working with him.

MORGAN: And the dog?

BOSS: They've been working as a team, Frank. The dog is his enforcer. Ames doesn't carry a gun. He just has Andy, his dog. Don't worry, Frank. You'll like them both.

MORGAN: Well, I hope you know what you're doing.

BOSS: Just do your job, Frank. We're doing ours. Now, here's your first team assignment. You are to go to Galveston to look for a small but powerful smuggling ring. It's a big job and may take you a long time working on it, but it will lessen the burden on the local police. Good luck, Frank. We'll be checking with you from time to time.

MORGAN: O.K., boss. So long. I hope this works out.

BOSS: It will, Frank. It will.

MUSIC: BRIDGE BETWEEN SCENES.

SOUND: ONGOING SOUND OF CAR AT CRUISING SPEED.

BROWN: Yes sir, I'm really glad to be back on the job again. Really makes me feel good. Do you know what I mean, Frank?

MORGAN: Oh ya, sure. Always nice to have a job.

BROWN: Ya. That's what I say, too. Work and be happy. Of course, that doesn't mean you have to work to be happy. Now, you take yourself, for example. Do you think driving this car to Galveston is work?

MORGAN: Well, why wouldn't it be? I'm sure not doing it for fun, and I'm being paid for it.

BROWN: That's what I mean and...Andy Roosevelt!...quit licking Frank's neck!

MORGAN: Oh that's O.K., Amos. It keeps me awake. Just so he stays in the back seat is all I care.

BROWN: Well, he's a good police dog. He just gets playful and friendly at times, that's all. I guess all dogs are like that.

MORGAN: Ya...I guess so.

BROWN: Now, where was I? Oh ya. Now, what about race drivers? Now they drive for a living, but I don't know too many that think that driving in an auto race is not fun...they like it, or they wouldn't do it.

MORGAN: Really.

BROWN: Ya, sure. But like I say, you don't need to work to be happy. Now take Andy Roosevelt there. Now he is doing a variety of things as a dog riding in the back seat of a police car, and he is happy.

MORGAN: Well, I wouldn't know.

BROWN: Well, now just look at ol' Andy sitting there looking out the window.

MORGAN: No, I can't. Got to watch the road.

BROWN: No, no. I mean ~~me~~ watch him. Now, it being dark outside, you would think he wouldn't be too interested in what's going on. Not Andy. He's real smart, because he's watching out the window of the car in the back seat there.

MORGAN: Check again. I think he's licking my neck.

BROWN: Oh, ya. So he is now. Well, you see, he's got to take a break now and then. Doesn't want to strain his mind thinking too much.

MORGAN: Oh, I take it he's thinking, then?

BROWN: Well, that would be my estimation. You see, he's a smart dog.

MORGAN: Why is that?

BROWN: Well, I think I know what he's thinking about.

MORGAN: You do?

BROWN: Ya. I think he's thinking about what I'm thinking.

MORGAN: You think he's thinking about what you're thinking?

BROWN: Ya. That's what I think.

MORGAN: Know what I think?

BROWN: No, what do you think?

MORGAN: I think you're both wrong.

BROWN: About what?

MORGAN: I think you're both thinking wrong.

BROWN: How's that?

MORGAN: I think that you're thinking about what he's thinking about your thinking about his thinking.

BROWN: Wait a minute. You mean you're thinking that I'm thinking about what he's thinking about my thinking about his thinking?

MORGAN: Right.

BROWN: You know what I think?

MORGAN: I'm afraid to ask.

BROWN: Go ahead. It won't hurt.

MORGAN: O.K., what do you think?

BROWN: I think we're all thinking too much.

MORGAN: You think so?

BROWN: Watch it now, I feel the boat shaking.

MORGAN: O.K., let's drop the whole thing.

BROWN: Good. I like it that way. No sense in getting all huffed up about nothing. No sir. Not at all. Why, just look at Andy back there...I mean imagine him back there, Frank. He's watching out the back window. Watching all of the traffic on the freeway here.

MORGAN: Well, I always say four eyes are better than two.

BROWN: Ya. And Andy's back there doing something.

MORGAN: Oh no! I hope not! I just had this car cleaned inside and out!

BROWN: No, no. I mean he's doing something with his brain.

MORGAN: Just so it isn't anything else, is all I care.

BROWN: Yes sir. Andy is thinking.

MORGAN: Uh-oh. Here we go again.

BROWN: Yessiree. Thinking about smuggled goods.

MORGAN: Where?

BROWN: Oh, I would imagine in some of these trucks we've been passing.

MORGAN: Are you sure?

BROWN: Well, I think so.

MORGAN: Watch it.

BROWN: Oh, now look. Old Andy takes a good look at these trucks we pass. He knows smuggled goods would more than likely be hauled in trucks.

MORGAN: Possibly. But the trucks we pass going our way would be going to Galveston, not from it. Any trucks with contraband would probably be leaving Galveston, not going to it.

BROWN: Well, now, don't you underestimate old Andy.

MORGAN: How could I, he's a thinking dog's dog.

BROWN: Now Andy knows all the facts, see. He realizes that trucks leaving Galveston would be more likely to have contraband than ones going into Galveston.

MORGAN: Check. Smart dog.

BROWN: However,...

MORGAN: I knew this was coming.

BROWN: However, Andrew Roosevelt Johnson goes one step further.

MORGAN: If he does, he'll be on my lap, now get off, you mutt!

BROWN: Well, he's just being friendly. Now, like I was saying...Andy realizes that some of the trucks we pass on this side of the road may be going to Galveston.

MORGAN: Good reasoning there, Andy.

BROWN: And he knows that one of them may be going to Galveston to pick up a load of contraband.

MORGAN: But how can he tell which one would be likely to be going to Galveston to pick up contraband?

BROWN: He looks the drivers in the eye as we pass. Haven't you been watching him?

MORGAN: No, I've been keeping my eyes on the road. This car doesn't steer itself, you know.

BROWN: Well, he does it. I've been watching him.

MORGAN: Well, just how does he know so well?

BROWN: Oh, he's been around for a good number of years now. And he's seen many a truck driver and what they're like.

MORGAN: Well, he's licked enough of my neck so far... you'd think he were going to taste me next.

BROWN: Oh, Andy's a good dog.

MORGAN: O.K., now just how does he know a truck driver is about to pick up a shipment of contraband?

BROWN: Well, as you know, it doesn't take a whole lot of time to pass a truck.

MORGAN: Check.

BROWN: But it does take some time to approach it and go beyond it.

MORGAN: Two checks.

BROWN: Now, Andy, he watches how that truck is going along the road. He can tell by the way the driver steers it as we approach it, what kind of a driver he is.

MORGAN: You mean experience in driving?

BROWN: Right. He knows a real steady fellow will be more than likely be an O.K. driver. But if he's a little nervous, Andy picks up a clue and gets suspicious.

MORGAN: I see.

BROWN: Ya...And then when we pass the truck so he can look in the window at the driver, he makes his second observation.

MORGAN: O.K., and what's that?

BROWN: Well, if the guy smiles at Andy and looks confident and steady, he's probably O.K.

MORGAN: What if he doesn't smile or doesn't look steady? He still may be O.K.

BROWN: That's where Andy's instinct comes in. He can tell. Just by looking at the eyes. It's his review check.

MORGAN: O.K., then is that all?

BROWN: Nope. He gets his third check as we go on past the truck. He watches the driver's reaction after we pass him. If he wipes his forehead or gives a sigh of relief, Andy really gets suspicious.

MORGAN: But there are always exceptions to all of those.
How does...

BROWN: Instinct. Pure instinct.

MORGAN: Well, what good will all his suspicions do us, Amos? Here we are driving along and Andy sees a suspect, but he can't tell us anything. What will he do, bark or something?

BROWN: Nope. Andy, he's quiet about the whole thing. He doesn't jump to conclusions.

MORGAN: He'd better not do any jumping in this car, that's for sure.

BROWN: (Laughs) No, he won't. Andy'll just wait until the right time. He remembers all of the suspicious drivers that we pass. Remembers their faces and their trucks. Then, if we ever see one of these fellows in person, Andy will practice his last but surest test of a suspect.

MORGAN: What's that?

BROWN: He'll sniff him.

MORGAN: O.K., but doesn't his system break down sometimes?

BROWN: Ya. Whenever we pass a meat truck, everything breaks down! (Laughs)

MORGAN: Say, Amos. How is it that you know so much about dogs?

BROWN: Why...I'm a New Texas Ranger!

MUSIC: FADE IN THEME, UP TO FULL, THEN UNDER FOR:

ANNOUNCER: Tune in again next week for "The New Texas
Rangers," as they drive across the West in a
never ending struggle against crime!

MUSIC: FADE UP THEME TO FULL, THEN UNDER AND OUT FOR
FINAL COMMERCIAL (60 seconds).

Script Analysis

"The New Texas Rangers," intended as a radio comedy script for current use, depends on character humor. Frank Morgan and Amos Brown provide a more subtle, quiet humor than that in "Chiseler's Country Store;" however, it also is to appeal to a general audience. Frank Morgan, the first character introduced in the script, plays the straight man: he operates on a low energy level, is an efficient officer, and has a subtle sense of humor. In contrast Amos Brown plays the comic: he is old but spry, energetic, vocal, and honestly funny. These two characters are the core of this script and of any future series from this program. The main elements of humor, besides character humor in this script are literalism, complication, exaggeration, statement of truth, the obvious, and momentum.

The conversation of Frank Morgan and Amos Brown in the patrol car uses literalism humor. For example, Amos says to look at Andy looking out the window. Amos did not mean for Frank to turn around and look; Amos was actually talking out loud to himself. When Amos remarks, "And Andy's back there doing something," Frank cries out in dismay, thinking the dog is making a mess in the back seat. Amos meant the dog was just thinking in the back seat.

The element of humor of complication comes in one portion of the patrol car conversation between Frank and Amos. Amos makes an apparently harmless statement: "Well, I think I know what he's thinking about." Then, Frank

gives him a standard, subtle cue by saying, "You do." What follows, due to Frank's thinking he can out do Amos talking about nothing, is a simple statement being made unnecessarily complex. As the conversation progresses, Frank concludes that he is no match for Amos in nonsense chatter.

Statement of truth, a little exaggeration, and the obvious combine to, again, provide subtle humor. For example, when Andy shakes Frank's hand.. It did happen and it was rather obvious (in the audience's mind), but it was a little exaggerated. In the car Andy is described in the conversation as licking Frank's neck and almost jumping into the front seat. Andy actually doing these things and the visualization of a large dog trying to jump into the front seat of a car are funny. In contrast, Ulysses, in "Chiseler's Country Store," did not significantly contribute to obvious humor. Amos describing Andy's technique of watching for trucks involved in contraband is a bit of exaggerated humor.

Momentum contrast is the key humor element in this script. Frank Morgan's lines are rather slow and lethargic, contrasted to Amos Brown's energetic, wordy lines. The quickened tempo of the lines when Frank gets a little annoyed at Andy licking his neck, or in the segment on thinking what Andy thinks, are examples of humor of momentum.

As in the "Chiseler Country Store" script, "The New Texas Rangers" relies on a general audience appeal. The subject of different, modern police is currently popular on television. With a theme of helping local police,

"The New Texas Rangers" has the potential of being a kind of modern comedy drama with a plot similar to that of "The Lone Ranger." A variety of settings, characters, and situations are possible. Amos would be the hero of senior citizens--his age is hinted but never revealed. The comic-straight man teams like radio and television's "Dragnet" have been successful. Also, how can a comedy show lose with a dog hero like Andrew Roosevelt Johnson?

Nevertheless, one may see this script has more drama than comedy. True, but it is different, it is relevant, and it has potential. Once the characters are somewhat better established after three or more episodes, the comedy and drama may balance. Recall that character humor requires time to develop.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Fred Allen once forecast an ominous future for radio comedians.

There was a certain type of imaginative comedy that could be written for and performed only on radio. But we are living in a machine age, and for the first time the comedian is being compelled...to compete with a machine...Whether he knows it or not, the successful comedian is on a treadmill to oblivion.⁵⁴

He knew from experience the limitations of radio comedy.

Allen was very fearful that the radio released such a huge number of machine-made jokes per night that it dulled the average person's responses. "Before radio," he said, "when Will Rogers or a Peter Finley Dunne made a wisecrack, it would be quoted from one end of the country to the other and everyone repeated it for a month. Today, nobody remembers what I said on the radio last week, except some gag writers who are figuring ways to steal the jokes."⁵⁵

The rise of television ultimately brought the decline of radio comedy and the end of the Golden Age of Radio. Advertisers left radio for the increasingly popular medium of television. It was just a common sense business move, but it marked the end of an age of radio comedians. Ed Wynn warned: "Being a comedian is an art and not a business. It should not be judged exclusively by

⁵⁴Harmon, Comedians, p. 183.

⁵⁵Cahn, Laugh Makers, p. 165.

business standards."⁵⁶

With the decline of radio comedy imminent, comedy moved to television, Fred Allen predicted:

Television is nothing like vaudeville. In vaudeville you had one act and a constantly changing audience--TV, like radio, is just the opposite. You have the same audience all the time, so the act must be changed after each performance. Naturally, the quality of the material gets low.⁵⁷

Nor was comedian Steve Allen entirely optimistic about comedy's future on television.

TV has helped and injured the development of comedy. It has helped it by stimulating it to a prodigious growth, but the very speed of that growth in the long run seems to have worked to the disadvantage of the art of comedy. The industry seems to wear many of the comics out and to cut off the progress of newcomers before they have a fair chance to develop.⁵⁸

Today, television has almost entirely replaced radio as the broadcast medium of comedy. Television's effectiveness in this role depends on the viewer. The younger generation may have no basis of comparison. The older generation, the often ignored category on advertiser's audience surveys, has only memories of the past, realities of the present, and prayers for the future.

"In the decade of the thirties, obstinately perhaps, candor, freedom, and comic potency found their fullest representation."⁵⁹ The upsurge cannot be attributed to the technological advances of radio or talking movies alone.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 176.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Bier, Humor, p. 283.

a feeling of confidence in national undertaking in the thirties--the New Deal era followed by World War II. One would think that the postwar sense of victory, national pride and confidence, and free-world leadership would have injected a spirit of new hope, enthusiasm, and success in radio comedy and American humor. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

"An uncertainty, a deepening mood of frustration, other thralldoms and insecurities, however, in combination with internal comic exhaustions, have reduced comic gaiety and enterprise."⁶⁰ The postwar mood marked the beginning decline of American humor. However, this decline, together with the waning popularity and importance of the entertainment medium of radio and the advancement of this new ethereal electronic receiver called television, abetted the untimely, unmerited demise of the Golden Age of Radio. And gone forever are those knightly witwrights of mirth into the eternal necropolis--wisps of memories of ever-attentive celestials.

⁶⁰Bier, Humor, p. 283.

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