

# Ace

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEN OF DISTINCTION

JUNE 1964  
FIFTY CENTS

THE MAN WHO  
OUTLIVED HIMSELF

FULL COLOR PHOTOS:  
When The Shades Are Up!



A Riotous Story of  
Sin in the Suburbs:

**THE WIFE SWAPPER**

The most adult, outspoken and intelligent shows on TV and radio are limited to local broadcasts. Here's why:



## Too Hot for the Networks

**T**URNING A MAN with a mind of his own loose on a TV or radio network is like giving a four-year-old child a live atom bomb as a plaything. Sooner or later there's bound to be an explosion.

There haven't been many of these blow-ups in the brief history of radio and video. But what they've lacked in frequency, they've made up in effect. A fallout of mail from Maine to California, an impressive churning of network vice-presidential ulcers, the booming protests of sponsors and the squeaking excuses of admen, the horrified uproar of the pressure groups and the outraged responses of individuals all combine to create the chaotic reaction to one man saying what he thinks on a coast-to-coast hookup.

Perhaps the first such man was Fred Allen. Nearly 15 years ago Fred directed his wit at the hierarchy of the NBC network for which he worked. His show was cut off the air because he refused to delete cer-

tain gags about grey flannel junior executives who "wore tight suits so they couldn't make a move without a conference." As revenge for the network action, Allen planned to hire midgets to picket the network building with signs that read: "This network is unfair to the little man."

The script which followed the cut-off marked the beginning of the end for the Fred Allen show. It opened like this:

**PORTLAND:** *Why were you cut off last Sunday?*

**ALLEN:** *Who knows? The main thing in radio is to come out on time. If people laugh, the program is longer. The thing to do is to get a nice dull half-hour. Nobody will laugh or applaud. Then, you'll always be right on time, and all of the little emaciated radio executives can dance around their desks in interoffice abandon.*

The script further spoofed the NBC veeep's time-saving methods of "cutting off the ends of programs."

**PORTLAND:** *What does he do with all this time?*

**ALLEN:** *He adds it all up—ten seconds here, twenty seconds there—and when he has saved up enough seconds, minutes and hours to make two weeks, NBC lets the vice-president use the two weeks of your time for his vacation.*

**PORTLAND:** *He's living on borrowed time.*

**ALLEN:** *And enjoying every minute of it.*

Radio listeners who liked their humor spiced with satire enjoyed every minute of Allen, too. But those minutes were numbered. On June 26, 1949, the Fred Allen show was dropped from the airwaves. After 17 years, executives had come to the conclusion that the outspoken comic was too hot for the network.

Before the axe fell though, Allen had done something unique in the world of radio. He, a sponsored comedian, had sponsored the half-hour program of another comedian, Henry

Morgan. Allen had good reasons.

Morgan, even more than Allen, was an irreverent nose-thumber at the sacred cows of radio. Once, during a routine program on Mutual, Morgan auctioned off the entire executive staff of the Mutual Broadcasting System, man by man. The group brought \$83, including good will. He then sold the announcers in pairs so they wouldn't get lonely.

While a fledgling announcer in Philadelphia, Morgan inserted the names of the studio manager and other station officials into the daily list of missing persons announcements. A few firings later, Morgan had a show in Duluth, Minnesota where he played nothing but car crashes and catastrophic sound effects.

But it was in New York that Morgan mangled the sponsors by deflating their pompous claims. One victim was O' Henry candy bars. In a serious voice, Morgan exclaimed: "Yes, O' Henry is a meal in itself. . . but you eat three meals of O' Henry and your teeth will fall out." The perturbed candy company dropped the show after Morgan told parents: "Feed your children enough O' Henry's and they'll get sick and die."

Life Savers candy had enough of Morgan after only one show. Morgan groused that the public was being cheated by not getting candy in the middle of the Life Saver. He then proposed to manufacture Morgan Mint Middles, if someone would put up the cash. Another slam at the commercial world was inaugurated by Henry's society for doctors who don't practice but just pose for ads.

Once, when bored, Morgan tried to bring in a portable radio to tune in on Lowell Thomas on another network during his own show. The F.C.C., informed of his intent, foiled his fun with a threat.

But Morgan finally proved that his unorthodoxy could pay off with Adler Elevator Shoes. His kidding of "old man Adler" was a shot in the arm to the sales figures. Soon after O' Henry candy dropped him, he boasted over the air that "an Adler Elevator Shoe is a meal in itself." On another show, he kidded his sponsor this way: "Old man Adler claims the moment you put on his elevator shoes, you'll be two inches taller. The claim is correct. You can be two inches taller—if you

can stand up in them!" said Morgan.

Eventually Morgan's growing popularity won him a choice Wednesday night half-hour over the ABC network. He was sponsored by Schick Injector Razors. A typical commercial delivered by Morgan would have him setting forth Schick's claim that their blades could be changed in seconds. This, he would point out, saves you time in shaving, permits you to leave the house for the office two minutes earlier than ordinarily—and may cause you to be run over by the trolley which passes your house at that time. Schick, cut to ribbons by Morgan's well-honed tongue, dropped him after 13 weeks.

Awhile later Fred Allen became his sponsor. But Morgan was no more the network's cup of tea than Fred was. His end as a radio satirist preceded Fred's by a few months. Today Morgan is a panelist on the CBS panel show "I've Got A Secret," but his acid wit is held well in check.

His place as the burr beneath the headquarters of what's left of radio today has been taken over by Jean Shepherd, an irrepressible iconoclast who is heard locally over WOR in the New York area. The fact that Shepherd is heard only locally is reflective of the fact that the networks are more loathe than ever to risk giving national time to a per-

sonality whose words may prove controversial. Another factor in Shepherds' case is that he falls in an arbitrary network category labeled "Highbrow."

Heard over WOR on Sunday nights from 9:05 p.m. to one a.m., Shepherd opens his show by announcing himself as "Harold Everyman." He then moans eloquently about the "trials in the time and tide of mankind . . . the ebb and flow within a huge vortex of nothingness."

An ex-psychology student, Shepherd may go on to wonder about "the difficulties of explaining Coney Island to a scientist from Venus." Or he may indulge in a harange about "the socioanthropological facts behind wearing paper hats at parties." Or he may ruminate about "the vital role of the Flexible Flyer sled in the U.S. cultural renaissance."

But Shepherd's real claim to fame rests se- Continued on next page





curely on his position as leader of the "Night People," a classification he coined himself. By his definition, "Night People are truly aware of the real world . . . People who live in the day are interested in things; people who live at night deal with ideas . . ."

"Day People," according to Shep, are responsible for "Creeping Meatballism, the adulation of all that is mediocre — the 'nothings' in the world that have become fads, like three-toned, streamlined automobiles with plastic upholstery."

A little over two years ago, Shepherd was about to be dropped by WOR because he was un-sponsored. In a daring move that irked the execs no end, Shepherd pitched an unsolicited three-minute commercial for Sweetheart Soap.

At first the WOR bigwigs flipped at Shep's audacity and summarily dismissed him. Then, in quick order, two things happened that brought him back to the air. One: Shepherd's small, but intensely loyal and highly vocal coterie of fans threatened the life of his successor, "Long John" Nebel for having usurped their idol; and, two: Sweetheart Soap signed with WOR on the condition that Shepherd would deliver their commercials. The station rehired him.

He's still holding forth on East Coast radio, shooting barbs at just

about everything the "Day People" (which is undoubtedly the mass listening audience the veeps are always talking about) hold sacred.

To find Shepherd's match, it is necessary to travel the length of the country to Los Angeles. Here, also on a local TV station, Oscar Levant pokes a vitriol-dipped finger into the underbelly of American mores.

Oscar, famed as a malcontent, hypochondriac, author and concert pianist, traces his career in broadcasting back to the popular radio show "Information Please" where he

served as a panelist in 1938. This stint came to an end when Oscar punched the producer of the show because he thought he had belittled Yankee pitcher Lefty Gomez.

Oscar's fulminating over the airwaves was sporadic after that until his recent signing with KHJ-TV for two ninety-minute shows a week at a salary of \$1,800. He's still got his punch though, as is proved by such cracks as: "The secret of perpetual middle age is Zsa Zsa Gabor."

But he sealed his fate as a strictly local broadcaster by his remarks as a network guest over the coast-to-coast Jack Paar show.

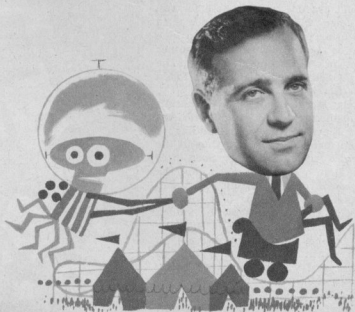
"I feel as out of place here as Gerald L. K. Smith at a B'nai B'rith meeting," opened the irrepressible Oscar, adding, "You have the most responsive audience since Adolph Hitler in the good old days."

Then, talking about President Eisenhower, Levant said: "Tke and I are very much alike. Once we make up our minds, we're filled with in-decisions."

Commenting to Jack on the Eddie Fisher-Liz Taylor romance, then in the headlines, Oscar sneered, "How high can you stoop?"

Such remarks are still spicing up Oscar's local show, but it will be a long time before the networks risk airing him on a national hookup. His vinegar wit is too apt to antagonize large segments of the public.

Nor is wit the only thing they fear in large-scale broadcasting. They've found that certain earnest interviewers are capable of prodding their guests into making statements which



will also cause a clamor among listeners. Prototype of such interviewers, and the only one who has been aired nationally, is Mike Wallace.

Wallace devised his hard-hitting interview techniques for "Nightbeat," a local, late-night TV show in New York. Exciting and controversial chats like the one with Mr. John, the famous milliner, about homosexuals in the arts, brought Mike to the attention of the American Broadcasting network. They signed him up to do the "Mike Wallace Interview" at a choice Sunday night time. Almost immediately, the show was in hot water.

Mickey Cohen, an ex-Capone hood, rapped the L.A. police department for being corrupt, naming names and bringing on a slander suit.

On November 30, 1957, Drew Pearson, a Mike Wallace guest, accused Senator John Kennedy of not writing his own best seller, "Profiles in Courage." Pearson alleged that Kennedy used a battery of ghost writers. The following week, Oliver Treyz, executive spokesman for the network, publicly apologized.

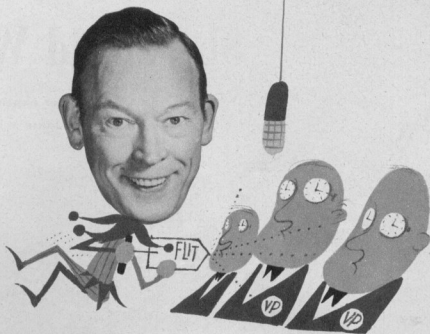
The biggest uproar, one which almost began a congressional male-storm, was caused by the interview with Cyrus Eaton. The millionaire chairman of the board of directors of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad accused J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I. of being "unnecessarily sacrosanct" and said that the U.S. was becoming a "police state" with F.B.I. men "breathing down the backs of citizens."

ABC was finding Wallace too hot to handle. The only surprising thing about this is that they hadn't realized it before.

Wallace isn't on in person any more, but his spirit still haunts the airwaves in a show he co-produces over ABC's local TV station in New York. Starring Ben Hecht, it's on from 10:50 to 11:50 nightly, and it's one of the most explosive shows around.

Take the time that Hecht had Grace Metalious author of *Peyton Place*, on his show. It sizzled with sex. Hecht asked Grace if the vast amount of open sex in books was harmful:

**METALIOUS:** Ben, if you're not going to have sex in the bedroom you might as well have it in the library. You have to have it somewhere.



**HECHT:** *Has virginity become anything of a necessity for modern girls as a wedding gift?*

**METALIOUS:** *Well, I only know what I hear around and I hear that virginity is terribly unchic.*

Such frankness is typical of Hecht's shows. Also frequent are his harangues against government officials from the President on down, moral and cultural leaders, youths who don't rebel and adults who rebel too much, labor leaders, bosses and just about everybody else.

Few of his listeners agree with Hecht all the time, but all of them

find his iconoclasm most refreshing.

They are resigned to the fact that like Levant and Shepherd he will probably never be aired on a network show. Men like these are too hot for the networks. After all, the company executives reason, why take a chance with ideas? Nobody ever got their corporate fingers burned by a Western show. Let's hope they don't extend that line of reasoning to local broadcasting. If they do, the only thing you'll find that's hot on your TV or radio set will be the lighted match that introduces the cigarette commercials! ●

