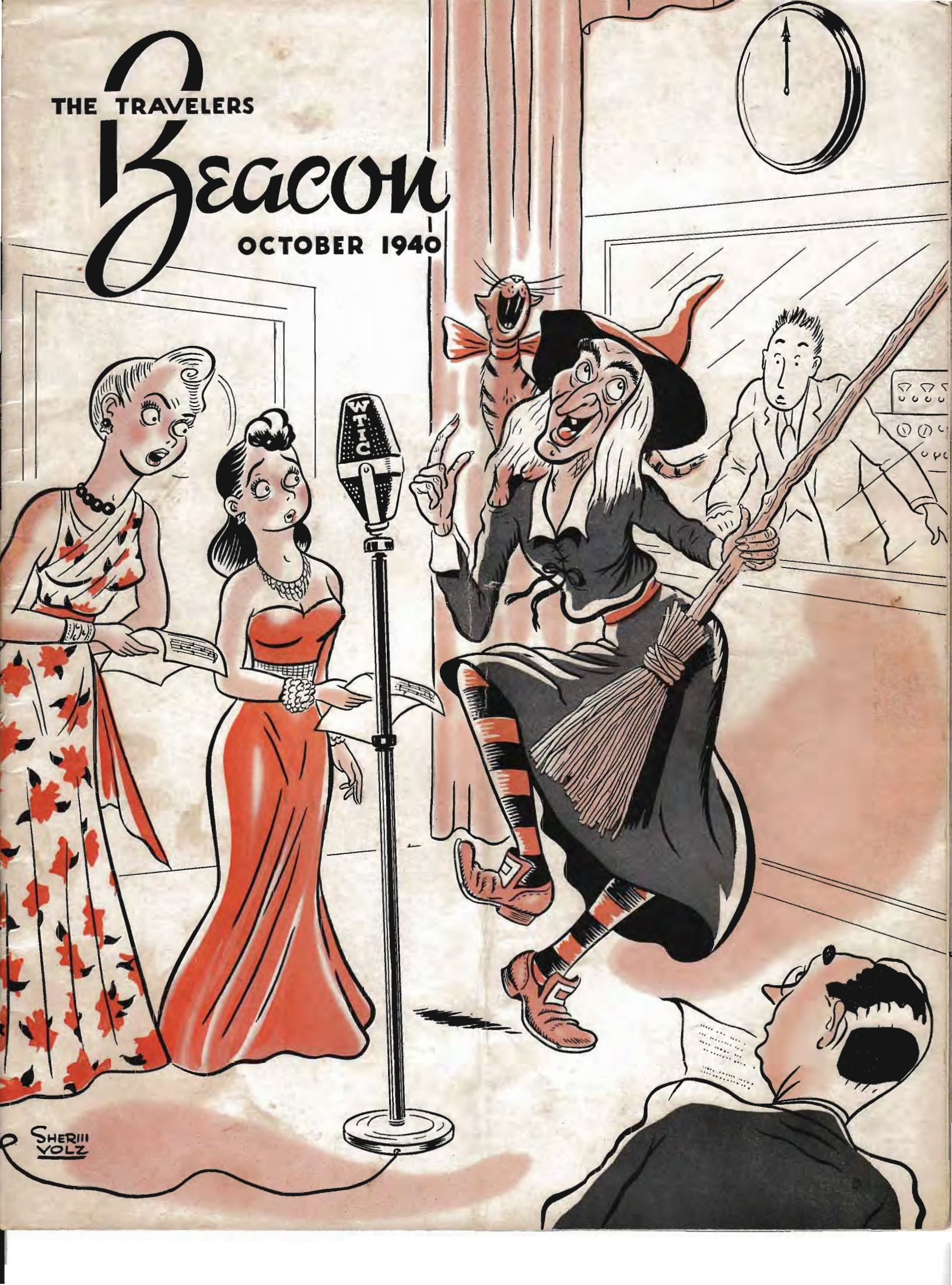


THE TRAVELERS

Beacon

OCTOBER 1940



SHERILL
VOLZ

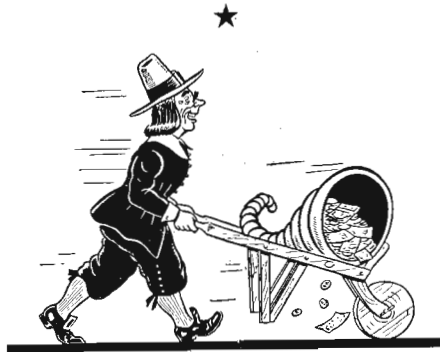
Bringing Home the Beacon

By GEORGE MALCOLM-SMITH

A rather startling headline is that which tops an advertisement published by Station WTIC in several current trade journals. It says: "WTIC Covers the Best Market in the Whole United States."

"Who says so?" the text inquires, than answers: "**Sales Management** in its September 1st issue. Here is why: The estimated current effective buying income for the twelve months ending October 31, 1940, shows the ratio of change for Connecticut to be 108.8, the highest of any state in the Union, (U.S.A.—100). The per family annual effective buying income for Connecticut is estimated at \$3,423.00, the highest of any of the United States, and 39 percent higher than the average, which is \$2,460.00."

Now, then, is the time for all of us to give thanks not only that we live in the Good Old U. S. of A., but also that we are members of the Commonwealth of Connecticut.



P I X



Painters apply new coat to radio towers atop Grove Street building now used by Hartford Police Dept.

HE'S A GREAT GUY

THE HEDLUND PLAYHOUSE
EMBARKS ON ITS TENTH
YEAR ON THE AIR



WHAT is quite probably the oldest sustaining program in radio last month embarked on its tenth year on the air. Other programs have come and gone, have burst into popularity and then faded into oblivion, have ripened into commercial success and then dropped to earth with the familiar "dull, sickening thud"—but the Guy Hedlund Playhouse of Station WTIC goes blithely on, winning more and more friends with each broadcast.

During their nine years and more on the air, Guy Hedlund and his fellow thespians have presented almost 1,000 plays. To insurance people, who tend to look upon all considerations from the statistical standpoint, a visual impression of what 1,000 manuscripts amount to may be conveyed by stating that if all the plays the Playhouse has produced were stacked one on top of the other, the pile would reach from the Main Street sidewalk to the fifteenth floor of the Main Building. If the number of hours that the Playhouse has been on the air were added together in one, uninterrupted broadcast, the program would last more than eleven days.

Liberty magazine last month summed up the success of the Guy Hedlund Playhouse rather neatly when it said: "Without resorting to flamboyant publicity, conservative Hartford, Connecticut, has built up for Guy Hedlund and his WTIC Playhouse a great community following. Mr. Hedlund has some forty actors on call for his productions—a sort of local stock company with a local stock company's appeal." (Guy would like to see the "forty actors," but believes that *Liberty* has spotted the reason for the program's appeal.)

It must not be inferred that Mr. Hedlund's "great community following" is confined to Hartford, or even

to Connecticut. The community that enjoys the Playhouse encompasses every state in the Union and every province in Canada. The players have received fan mail from all parts of North America and even from admirers in foreign lands, including the British Isles, Australia, New Zealand and other remote places.

The program seems to have a consistent audience in England, where a group of London policemen were at one time following a play divided into a number of weekly episodes. Just as the seventh instalment was about to begin, the bobbies were called out on some sort of unusual assignment. Forced to miss the seventh episode, the policemen wrote immediately to Mr. Hedlund, expressing their disappointment. Always ready to help in any possible manner, Mr. Hedlund immediately mailed to London the script of the seventh chapter, thereby



Guy Hedlund and his Playhouse devour scripts faster than an invalid devours detective stories. Here he is with a few of the plays they have presented in recent months. During their nine years and more on the air, the players have presented nearly 1,000 plays.

completing the story for a grateful group of distant listeners.

Members of the Playhouse say that a small army could be fed on the cakes, cookies, pies and other gustatory gifts they have received from grateful listeners in many parts of the continent. One box contained a delicious assortment of cookies, each inscribed with a Playhouse member's name in sugar icing.

Food is not the only means by which Playhouse fans concretely express their appreciation. Among the gifts Guy has received are a monogrammed cigarette lighter, a metal statue of himself at a microphone, a



Guy interprets a part which is to be played by Lucille Clark, one of the younger members of the Playhouse troupe. "Do it this way," says Mr. Hedlund, then gets into the mood. Some of the foremost dramatic players in radio owe their success to his tutelage.

geranium plant fashioned in glass, a live rabbit and many photographs. One admirer mailed him \$2.10, saying that she had paid that much to see many a legitimate show that she enjoyed less than one of the Playhouse broadcasts. (Reluctantly he returned the two-ten.) One faithful follower of the Playhouse programs is blind. She sent Guy a complete outfit for writing in Braille, so that he might write her personal letters.

The Playhouse troupe has included and still includes some of the best talent in radio dramatics. One old stand-by is Eddie Begley, whom many regard as the finest character actor on the air, not excepting those on the networks. Eddie, a splendid mimic, has played literally hundreds of parts, ranging from boys in their 'teens to crochety oldsters. To him are usually assigned the "heavy" roles, though occasionally he gets a "sympathetic" part. Eddie O'Shea is another veteran of the company. He now majors on the sound effects, but has played many parts, his forte being "tough guy" characterizations. Network casting offices have chosen him for a number of such roles on chain broadcasts. Eunice Greenwood is still another Playhouse favorite of long standing. Especially good in the role of a fussy old woman, Eunice (in reality a pleasant young lady) made a huge hit as "Sister Janey" in the well-remembered "Wrightville Clarion" series. An excellent elderly actress who plays elderly roles is Mary Frances Lihou. Hazel Golby is still another Playhouse star.

Charles Richards, the fine English actor who was trained in England in the Shakespearian tradition, often

plays in Playhouse dramas. Two splendid actors of long experience on the stage and in radio are G. Lester Paul and Burke Clark. Add also John Winthrop. There is still a vacant chair in the studios for Jay Ray, the late beloved character actor who was with the Playhouse during its first six years.

Louis Neistat, a Playhouse alumnus whom you're hearing on many of the most successful network shows emanating from New York, often comes "home" to WTIC to lend his talents to Playhouse productions. Floyd Pattee is still another Playhouse star. Ditto Robert Clapp. And, in case you don't know it, Ben Hawthorne of "Morning Watch" fame started his career at WTIC as a Playhouse thespian.

Ralph Klein deserves special mention. This young man, both as an actor and an author, is one of the mainstays of the group. His radio plays, written originally for Playhouse presentation, are being broadcast by scores of stations not only in the United States, but also in foreign lands. In South America his scripts, translated into Spanish, have been eminently successful.

Among younger members of the present Playhouse personnel are Mara Sterling, Eileen Stevens, Shirley Beldon, Grace Lowe, Jerry Ledwith and Helen White—all "comers."

The Playhouse roster of graduates is imposing. It includes Gertrude Warner, who at this writing is playing the leading role in the serialized radio version of "Dark Victory" over the NBC network. Gertrude has played the "lead" in many of the most successful "soap dramas" on the

NBC chain. Among them are "The Man I Married," "The O'Neils" and "Girl Alone." She has also played on the air opposite Franchot Tone and other noted moving picture stars. Of her success, Guy says, "Gertrude is paid more in one day today than she used to earn in six months in the Playhouse." Another Playhouse alumna now on the networks is Olive LaMoy, who went straight from WTIC to become Olive Oyle in the popular "Pop-Eye" series over NBC and Columbia. Still another is Betsy Sterns, now in moving picture work in Hollywood. Donald Sturgis, a Playhouse alumnus, is a successful script-writer and is head of the dramatic school at the University of Kansas. A tragic loss to radio was the death of Mona Lee, beautiful young Playhouse actress who died at the threshold of network fame.

The Playhouse is regarded in Broadway radio circles as a proving ground for both plays and players. If a radio actor has had experience in the Playhouse, he already "has the jump" on competitors for network berths. If a play is accepted and played by the Playhouse, New York producing agencies accept it as worthy of general release.

Mr. Hedlund has many memories of his years in the WTIC studios. He remembers one occasion in which the villain of a play, in the middle of a long speech, suddenly fainted away. Guy, who was playing the hero, picked up the villain's lines, trying to imitate the latter's tone and inflection. Thus he carried on in both roles, the hero and the villain, the good Guy and "the bad guy," shifting his voice from one part to the other. The plot entailed a fist fight between the two men. Guy gave himself a severe pummeling. Says he, "I've heard of actors knocking themselves out in a part, but that was probably the only time it ever happened literally."

In another play the hero was to walk into the sea and drown. Mr. Hedlund carried the part. He carried it so well, in fact, that there were two calls for women in the radio audience saying that they were sorry to hear that Mr. Hedlund had drowned. One of the most humorous incidents ever to take place in the WTIC studios occurred during a Playhouse program. The locale of the play was Old Newgate Prison. One line was worded: "Old Newgate Prison—the most God-forsaken place in America." In the middle of the line the technicians became entangled in their own mechanisms and a station identification came through, so that the audience heard the astounding announcement: "This is Station WTIC, the most God-forsaken place in America."



First "reading" of a new script. In the foreground: Shirley Benton, Lucille Clark, Guy Hedlund, Robert Clapp and G. Lester Paul. In the background: James L. Howard, Junior, Anthony Patricelli, Kurt Unkelbach, Eddie O'Shea and Eileen Stevens.



CHAFF



Pat determined to pass his favorite tavern on the way home. As he approached it, he became somewhat shaky, but after plucking up courage, he passed it. Then, after going about 50 yards, he turned, saying to himself:

"Well done, Pat, me boy. Come back and I'll treat ye."



Uncle and niece stood watching the young people dance about them.

"I'll bet you never saw any dancing like that back in the nineties, eh, uncle?"

"Once, but the place was raided!"



Jock McPherson and family sat down to Sunday dinner.

"Now, children," he said, "do ye want the cold meat or a nickel apiece?"

Three hands went up for the nickel. The meat was removed, and Mrs. McPherson then served the apple pie.

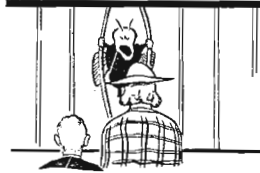
"Now children," said Jock, "who wants a piece of pie for a nickel?"

The firm had advertised for a stenographer. One of the partners was interviewing a very pretty girl who had applied for the position. The other partner came, took a look at the girl and called the other member of the firm aside and whispered: "I'd hire her."

"I have."

"Can she take dictation?"

"We'll find that out later. I didn't want any obstacles to crop up."



Teacher (pointing to deer at the zoo): "Johnny, what is that?"

Johnny: "I don't know."

Teacher: "What does your mother call your father?"

Johnny: "Don't tell me that's a louse!"



The old martinet was lecturing his nephew.

"Never known such a generation," said the old fellow. "You modern boys want too much."

The boy was tactfully silent.

"Do you know what I was getting when I married your aunt?" asked the uncle.

"No," replied the nephew, realizing the time had come to terminate the argument, "and I bet you didn't, either."



The grocer was busily engaged attending the wants of his customers when he suddenly caught sight of a large crate of oranges.

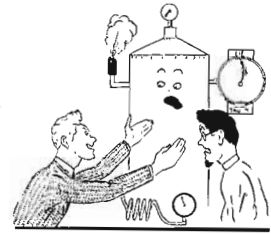
"Now then, my lad," he began, "what are you up to?"

"Nothing," replied the boy.

"Nothing," echoed the grocer.

"Well, it looks to me as if you were trying to take one of those oranges."

"You're wrong, mister," retorted the boy. "I'm trying not to."



The man who recently invented a lie detector tried it out on a fisherman. The inventor hasn't decided whether to try to repair the machine or build a new one.



"Tell me about that policy—I'm all ears!"