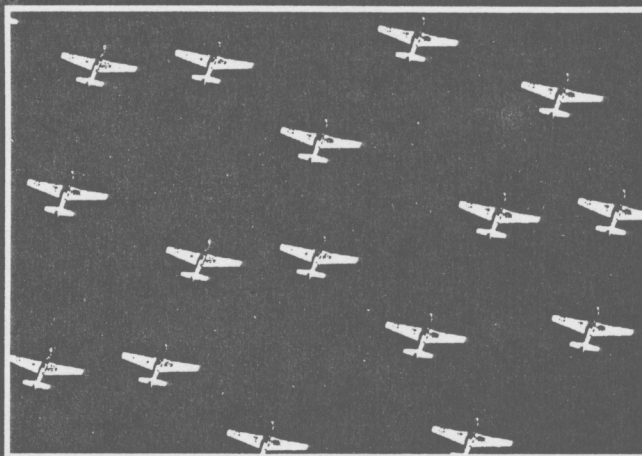


# AMERICAN DECADES

1940 - 1949



EDITED BY  
**VICTOR BONDI**

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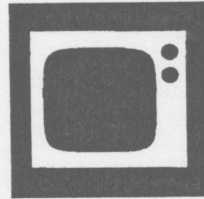
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# MEDIA



by VICTOR BONDI, JAMES W. HIPPI, and DARREN HARRIS-FAIN

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# OVERVIEW

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**World War II Dominates.** The 1940s were dominated by World War II. This was as true for the media as it was for other areas of American life. From 1941 until the majority of the troops returned home in 1946, newspapers and radio concentrated their coverage on the war. From small-town newspapers reporting the content of letters received from hometown soldiers to reports on the latest battle, the war was the overwhelming event of the decade. The newspaper war correspondent, epitomized by Ernie Pyle, became the lifeline for citizens who could not experience the valor and horror of war. Margaret Bourke-White, as a photographer for *Life* magazine, brought images of the war and the world to Americans and became a celebrity herself.

**Military Media.** Thirty-seven American newspeople, among them Pyle, lost their lives in World War II. At the scenes of conflict, the men and women in uniform were kept informed by thousands of military newspapers, the most important being *Stars and Stripes*. More important for the postwar world were the thousands of military people who worked on military newspapers and improved the quality of U.S. newspapers after the war.

**Radio in the 1940s.** Radio showed its importance in the nearly instant reporting of major events, such as the Battle of Britain and the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Edward R. Murrow and William Shirer, among many others, set the news standard for the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) network, a standard that would follow into the new dominant format, television, and last for decades after the war. But radio was not just a purveyor of news during the war. Radio meant entertainment, and the 1940s was the last decade in which radio was dominant. Music had long been a staple of radio, much of it performed live. Musicians had been unhappy for many years with what radio paid them for their talents. In the 1914 the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) was formed to collect royalties. Musicians and composers remained unhappy with the situation in the early 1940s, especially with the increased use of records on radio. Boycotts by ASCAP led radio broadcasters to form Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) as an alternative licensing group in 1939. Legal battles

erupted in the 1940s that remained unsettled decades later.

**Beginnings of Television.** Television had become a viable technology in the late 1930s, but legal delays, and then the war, halted widespread introduction until the late 1940s. After the war the broadcast companies put large amounts of money into television, starving radio, which had been their focus for twenty years. Most of the radio programs were transferred to television by the early 1950s, leaving the radio with music. As quickly as radio had transformed American life in the 1920s, television began a new revolution in the 1940s and 1950s. Federal rules mandated more competition in the television world, causing the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to divest itself of one of its radio networks; that network became the American Broadcasting Company (ABC).

**Comic Books.** The stultifying years of the Depression and the war were leveling influences on American society. Most everyone suffered through those two events, and the resulting sense of unity was an opportunity for business to sell to a mass market of everyday Americans. Two examples of this trend are the comic book and the paperback book. Comic books were successful in the 1940s, as they provided cheap, exciting entertainment. Superheroes flourished during a time in which evil was all too real in the world. Captain Marvel, Captain America, Batman, and other heroes like them did battle with evil and fed the imagination of the youth of the United States. On a slightly higher plane, at least sometimes, was the paperback book. The first American paperback imprint was Pocket Books, created in 1939. Many other imprints followed over the next decade, reprinting both literary classics and entertaining genre stories such as Westerns and detective fiction.

**McCarthyism.** But the end of the war and the rise of the Soviet Union as a European and world power brought new problems that erupted in unlikely spots, such as the media. The first rumbling of institutional anticommunism led to the blacklist, whereby motion picture, television, and radio artists and writers were denied the freedom to work under their own names. During the 1950s the darkness of McCarthyism intensified before the pain of these victims eased.

**Transition.** War can bring about revolutions, both in the countries that are defeated militarily and the countries of the victors. The media revolution in the United States did not occur immediately after the war. During

and after the war, indeed even during the Depression of the 1930s, revolutionary seeds were sown in the media that did not fully bear fruit until the 1950s, a truly revolutionary decade.

## TOPICS IN THE NEWS

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### ASCAP VERSUS BMI

**Performance and Payment.** By the 1940s, years of dispute had divided broadcasters and American songwriters. At the heart of their controversy was compensation for music played over the radio. Most radio broadcasts were live, and the musicians and composers were paid for a single performance, but to musicians and composers payment for a single performance alone did not seem fair when that one performance was being received by millions of listeners. Had those millions been packed into one concert hall, the musicians's share of the receipts would presumably have been huge. Broadcasters argued that it was impossible to pay licensing fees based on how many listeners tuned in, because no one knew what that number was. Besides, it was the technology of radio that made such enormous audiences possible. From the broadcasters' standpoint, it was enough to pay the musician and the songwriter for the single performance. In the 1930s, broadcasters, organized into the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), compromised with composers and songwriters, who had been organized since 1914 into the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). Radio stations paid ASCAP a variable royalty of between 3 and 5 percent of the station's gross revenue from advertising sales. This compromise satisfied no one. Broadcasters turned to drama, news, and special events to avoid paying the songwriters, and in 1937 ASCAP suggested they would demand greater royalties when the current contract between musicians and broadcasters expired in 1940.

**Records.** Complicating the argument between ASCAP and NAB was the increasing use by radio stations of recorded music. Recording technology was still imperfect, and fidelity was low, but stations nonetheless began to play records, introduced by a studio announcer known as a disc jockey. Once again the problem of compensating the musicians and composers on the records presented itself. Before 1940 many musicians, such as Bing Crosby or Fred Waring, sold records stamped with

### RADIO REPORTS THE DEATH OF ROOSEVELT

**F**ollowing many wartime improvements in the reporting of news by radio, American broadcasting succeeded in uniting the nation as never before on 12 April 1945, the day President Franklin Roosevelt died. First reports in the early evening were confused, sometimes erroneously reporting the deaths of other public figures. By late that night, however, radio listeners coast-to-coast were united in national mourning over the president's passing. Radios broadcast repeated summaries of FDR's career, prospects for the war without his leadership, and somber music. The networks and some local stations suspended advertising from the day of FDR's death until his burial in Hyde Park four days later. CBS reporter Arthur Godfrey, describing Roosevelt's funeral procession down Pennsylvania Avenue, broke down in tears and had to turn the broadcast over to a studio announcer. Much of the nation shared his sentiments. Radio provided an unprecedented outlet for the nation's collective grief — just as, four months later, radio became the mechanism for the national celebration of the end of the war.

**"NOT LICENSED FOR RADIO BROADCAST."** In 1940, however, the Supreme Court ruled that radio stations, having purchased the record, could play it. By 1941 disc-jockey programs such as WNEW's *Make Believe Ballroom* were restructuring the nature of music broadcasts. Far cheaper for a broadcaster than live performances, disc jockeys and recorded music were taking over the airwaves.

**Boycott and BMI.** ASCAP, as well as the American Federation of Musicians, responded to these developments by boycotting the airwaves. Lacking a new royalty contract with increased rates, ASCAP pulled music it

licensed from the air in 1941. In 1942 the American Federation of Musicians followed suit. By a unanimous vote at its annual convention, these musicians agreed to halt the making of new recordings. Radio was left with meager fare: recordings of unlicensed songs such as Stephen Foster's "Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair." But broadcasters were not without resources. They had organized their own royalty agency, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI), in 1939. The upstart BMI quickly became a magnet for regional musicians, such as rhythm-and-blues or country-and-western artists, who were traditionally neglected by the New York-based ASCAP. ASCAP's boycott was broken, and they settled for a less advantageous royalty rate than they had originally earned. In 1943 and 1944 record companies compromised with the American Federation of Musicians and created a welfare fund to facilitate payments to musicians. The record industry returned to full production, now for the new disc jockey-dominated broadcast industry. Although ASCAP and BMI received equal royalty rates from broadcasters, musicians could now choose which of the two agencies collected royalty payments, a situation unacceptable to ASCAP. In the 1950s and 1960s ASCAP would initiate a series of unsuccessful lawsuits to recover the position they lost during the boycott of 1941.

**Sources:**

Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo, *Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977);

John Ryan, *The Production of Culture in the Music Industry: The ASCAP-BMI Controversy* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985).

## THE BLACKLIST

**Suspicion.** Blacklisting was the practice whereby broadcasters agreed not to hire someone whose political opinions were "controversial." The blacklist was a destructive social phenomenon that swept through the broadcasting industry in the late 1940s and continued until the early 1960s. Often associated with the more directly political phenomenon of McCarthyism, blacklisting meant economic devastation to thousands whose political sympathies were left of center. The broadcasting industry, like many other sectors in American society, was seized by an anti-Communist hysteria. Unable to find work in film, radio, or television, many actors, screenwriters, and directors saw their careers ruined; some left the country in order to find work abroad; a despairing few committed suicide. In most cases little more than the mere suspicion of associating with Communists landed an individual on the blacklist, which included an estimated seventeen hundred individuals during its term of influence. Leftist political activities (especially during World War II when the Soviet Union was a U.S. ally) landed one on the blacklist automatically. The blacklist had a chilling effect on political activism among members of the broadcasting industry; more important, it

## RECORDS AND THE JUKEBOX

**W**hen the 1940s began, phonograph records were limited to albums that played at 78 rpm (revolutions per minute). Besides the fact that these records could hold only four minutes of music per side, they were made of shellac and thus scratched and broke easily. By the end of the decade, however, phonograph technology had improved dramatically. In 1948 Columbia Records introduced the vinyl long-playing record (LP), which was more durable, provided better sound reproduction, and could hold nearly twenty-five minutes of music per side. On the heels of the 33 1/3 rpm LP came the 45 rpm record, introduced by RCA Victor, which could record only as much music as a 78 rpm record but shared the improvements offered by the LP. Such developments were a boon to the jukebox, which had first gained popularity in the 1930s. With the use of 45 rpm records, its survival was ensured into the 1950s and beyond.

Source: Lawrence G. Goldsmith, "War in Three Speeds," *Nation*, 168 (7 May 1949): 523-525.

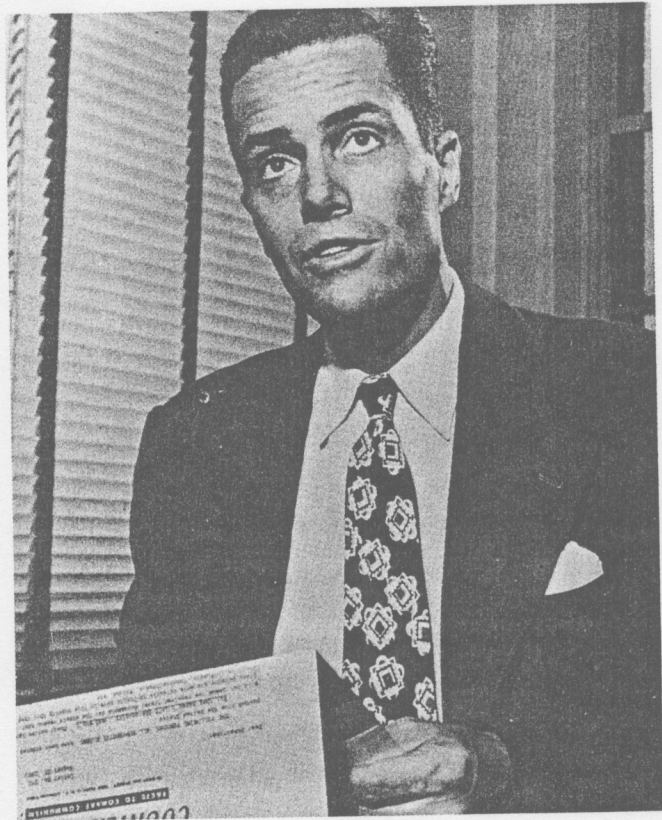
robbed the industry of many talented people unwilling to cut their opinions to fit anti-Communist models.

**Origins.** The origins of the blacklist are found in broad anti-Communist sentiment that began to mount after World War I and, more directly, the post-World War II fear of subversion in a time when the broadcast industry was highly visible. Red-baiting was a favorite tactic of many groups even before the war ended. Conservatives discontented with government regulation charged that the New Deal was Communistic; business leaders characterized strikes as Communist-inspired; labor leaders gained advantages within their own unions by claiming their opponents were Communists. For the most part the public dismissed such charges as unfounded or partisan. As the Cold War heated up after World War II, however, foreign events seemed to verify suspicion at home, and the Truman administration, in announcing the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan, perceived a Communist ideological offensive against the United States. In 1947 the administration itself began a loyalty program among government employees, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) uncovered several minor spy rings, which suggested Communist infiltration of the government. The entertainment industry was also suspect. Many remained anxious over the ease with which the Nazis had used the media to propagandize the German people. Many Americans felt uncomfortable with the media power concentrated in Los Angeles and New York — and with the often prominent role Jews played in the entertainment industry. By 1947 many citizens were receptive to the suggestion that Communist agents in

Hollywood and New York were attempting to use the media to subvert U.S. institutions.

**HUAC.** While there were members of the entertainment industry, especially writers, who had been Communists or supported Communist causes, film, radio, and television were firmly in the hands of conservative businessmen fundamentally more interested in profits than politics. But they answered to advertisers, and advertisers answered to consumers, and via the threat of a consumer boycott anti-Communist activists were able to establish the blacklist. A consumer boycott was first suggested in the wake of the October 1947 hearings investigating Hollywood conducted by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). While uncovering no Communist conspiracy, HUAC did send ten prominent screenwriters, who refused to answer questions regarding their political beliefs, to prison for contempt of Congress. Public response to the hearings was generally apathetic, but the studio chiefs in Hollywood, afraid of the rumblings of a consumer boycott suggested by groups such as the American Legion, decided to ensure that they would suffer no political backlash by employing controversial persons. Hollywood was entering a difficult period. The government was charging many Hollywood studios with antitrust violations (resulting in a significant breakup of the studio system in 1948); many stars were forming their own production companies independent of the studios; and television promised to be a ruthless competitor to the movie industry. Following a 24–25 November 1947 meeting by studio heads at New York's Waldorf-Astoria hotel, Hollywood chiefs announced that they would screen potential employees for political activism or Communist sympathies. The blacklist had begun.

**Businessmen.** Businessmen in New York quickly moved in to establish a for-profit screening service to prevent advertisers as well as motion picture, radio, and television producers from hiring suspect personnel. American Business Consultants (ABC) was a group of three former FBI men who published *Counterattack*, a newsletter that listed the political affiliation and history of performers and writers. Funded by the militantly anti-Communist businessman Alfred Kohlberg, ABC would screen a potential employee for a five-dollar fee to determine whether he or she had a subversive background. ABC and *Counterattack* rarely accused an individual of Communist membership and subversion, lest they be sued for libel; they merely suggested a questionable background — enough for most employers to avoid hiring the individual. Their innuendo was buttressed by the efforts of anti-Communist fanatics who mounted letter-writing campaigns and boycotts against employers foolish enough to challenge the blacklist. The most famous of these fanatics was a Syracuse, New York, supermarket proprietor named Laurence “Larry” Johnson. When Block Drug Company, the makers of Amm-i-dent, a chlorophyll toothpaste, sponsored a television series using actors on the blacklist, Johnson threatened to dis-



Theodore Kirkpatrick, editor of the anti-Communist periodical *Counterattack*

play their toothpaste in his stores alongside that of a competitor with a sign indicating that the competitor shunned “Stalin’s little creatures,” while Block tolerated Communists; Johnson added that he would sponsor a national boycott of the product. Block capitulated and stopped sponsoring the series. Such tactics reinforced the power of ABC and the blacklist over broadcasters. Within two years ABC was earning two hundred thousand dollars per year from its services.

**Effects.** In 1950 ABC published a 215-page booklet entitled *Red Channels*, listing such celebrities as Leonard Bernstein, Lee J. Cobb, Aaron Copland, Langston Hughes, and Burl Ives as suspect. *Red Channels* became the semiofficial guide of the blacklist. The more famous on the blacklist could weather the slander, but for the less well known, the effect was devastating. Millard Lampell, a writer, was told by a sympathetic producer that his career was “dead . . . I couldn’t touch you with a barge pole.” Dancer Paul Draper moved to Europe, unable to earn a living in the United States. Jean Muir, of the television series *The Goldbergs*, found her career crushed; Philip Loeb, who had starred in the same program, was shut out of performing and committed suicide. Actors abandoned participation in civil rights movements and hid their dust-covered copies of Marx. Eventually, ABC and a spin-off company, Aware, realized the profits that could be made charging actors and writers fees to strike their names from the lists of the suspected. Actress Kim



Members of the House Un-American Activities Committee, from left to right: Rep. Richard Vail (R.-Ill.); Chairman J. Parnell Thomas (R.-N.J.); Rep. John McDowell (R.-Pa.); Robert Stripling, chief counsel; Rep. Richard Nixon (R.-Calif.)

Hunter paid two hundred dollars to have her name removed from the blacklist. Eventually, the blacklist self-destructed from such tactics, when in 1963 a feisty Texan, John Henry Faulk, won a lawsuit for conspiracy and extortion against Aware and Laurence Johnson. Until then American broadcasting was subject to a political filtering process that removed some of its most free-spirited and creative talent.

**Sources:**

David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978);

Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990);

Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

### COMIC STRIPS

**Part of American Culture.** The growth of an American middle class with leisure time and money to spend, starting in the late nineteenth century, culminated in the development of a commercial popular culture in the early

twentieth century that was unparalleled in its inventiveness and success. By 1940 these media included radio shows, pulp magazines, and comic books, as well as the forerunner of the comic book, comic strips, which had existed since the 1890s.

**Continuing Success.** As in radio the comic strips of the 1940s were largely a continuation of the successes of the previous decade. While there were many humor strips that gave the funnies their name — among them Al Capp's *L'il Abner* and Crockett Johnson's *Barnaby* — both decades saw a proliferation of narrative strips with continuing characters. Two types dominated: adventure strips such as Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*, Will Eisner's *The Spirit*, Lee Falk's *The Phantom* and *Mandrake the Magician*, Harold Foster's *Prince Valiant*, Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*, and Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon*; and soap-opera strips such as Allen Saunders and Dale Connor's *Mary Worth*, Dale Messick's *Brenda Starr*, and Nicholas Dallis's *Rex Morgan, M.D.* Many of these continued for decades.

World War II absorbed America's attention for the four years in which it fought, from December 1941 to August 1945. It is natural, then, that American popular culture was also preoccupied with the conflict. In comic books and strips, movies, animated cartoons, and many other media, patriotism and propaganda were rampant. For instance, Timely Comics launched Captain America early in 1941, while National Periodical Publications introduced Wonder Woman later that year. Like National Periodical's Superman, introduced in 1938, both superheroes fought for truth, justice, and the American way. Both also wore patriotic costumes, and along with many other superheroes of the period their enemies included Axis foes. The cover of the first issue of *Captain America*, for instance, showed the hero dealing a blow to Adolf Hitler.

While the comics dealt with the Axis threat seriously (though with a strong fantasy element), there were also humorous treatments. The Three Stooges and Charlie Chaplin produced anti-Hitler movies within months of each other in 1940, while Warner Bros. and Walt Disney Studios created several animated cartoons mocking the Axis powers and their leaders. A Disney cartoon commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department about the need to pay taxes, for instance, turned into *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), featuring Donald Duck in a Nazi-ruled country. Warner Bros. also pro-

duced cartoons for the government, a series of shorts featuring a Private Snafu to be shown at military bases. For the American public, Bugs Bunny fought the good fight in such movies as *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944), *Hare Force* (1944), and *Herr Meets Hare* (1945), in which Bugs pops up in Germany and impersonates Adolf Hitler (fooling Hermann Göring).

Sometimes the passions stirred by the war had the unfortunate effect of leading to hateful, racist propaganda, particularly where Japan was concerned. In the 1943 Batman movie serial, for instance, is a reference to "the shifty-eyed Japs" relocated by a "wise government," while in *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* the popular cartoon character, in aiding the Allied war effort, uses such slurs as "monkey face" and "slant-eyes" in referring to the Japanese. In reissuing period movies in recent years companies have sometimes dubbed over the offensive terms. The Bugs Bunny cartoon was released with other cartoons in its original form on videotape but then withdrawn due to protests. Both practices raise the problem of how to deal with offensive material that is part of America's cultural and historical past.

Sources: Robert Sklar, *Film: An International History of the Medium* (New York: Abrams, 1993);

James Van Hise, *Batmania* (Las Vegas: Pioneer, 1989).

#### Sources:

Ron Goulart, ed., *The Encyclopedia of American Comics* (New York & Oxford: Facts On File, 1990);

M. Thomas Inge, "Comic Strips," in *Handbook of American Popular Culture*, edited by Inge, second edition (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 205-228.

## EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING RETURNS

**A Neglected Idea.** Since the establishment of nationwide commercial broadcasting in the 1920s, media critics had argued that the full potential of mass-communications technology such as radio was not being realized. They found the absence of educational broadcasting especially troubling. Commercial radio, driven by advertising dollars, focused on entertainment and rarely presented the public with in-depth news analysis, fine arts, or complex informational programming. Critics argued that radio could become a formidable tool for in-depth information and education and pressured the networks and the government to require such broadcasting. They were ineffective before World War II, but during the war

the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which supervised American broadcasting, began a sweeping reconsideration of broadcasting's public responsibility. Because the new technologies of frequency modulation (FM) radio and television promised to open new broadcasting horizons, the FCC revised established restrictions. For the first time, they set aside certain bandwidths of the electromagnetic spectrum for educational broadcasting. Educational television and educational radio were born.

**A Shaky Start.** Ardentlly opposed by commercial interests, educational broadcasting got off to a difficult start. The FCC, responding to commercial pressure, rarely granted educational broadcasters AM radio licenses. FM licenses were readily granted, because most American radios only received AM signals, and thus the FM market was unattractive to the networks and advertisers. Similar economic considerations also governed the development of educational television. Commercial broadcasters vehemently opposed FCC licenses for educational broadcasting on the commercially lucrative very-high-frequency



## PAY RADIO

As radio profits declined with the advent of television, broadcasters resurrected an idea rarely heard since the beginning of air transmission: pay radio. Pay radio proposed an end to advertiser support for broadcasting. In place of ad revenues, pay-radio programmers would charge subscribers five cents a day (eighteen dollars a year) for broadcasts (scrambled to nonsubscribers) uninterrupted by advertisements. Many proponents of pay television proposed a similar scheme. The advertising industry was naturally opposed to the concept and by 1948 had killed it. Nevertheless, the principles of pay radio and pay television would return in the 1970s with the rise of public radio and cable television.

(VHF) wavelengths. Most American television receivers carried the VHF signal, and commercial broadcasters wanted the FCC to reserve VHF channels for their transmissions. Educational programming was thus shunted to the ultrahigh frequency (UHF) wavelengths, effectively blocking its development.

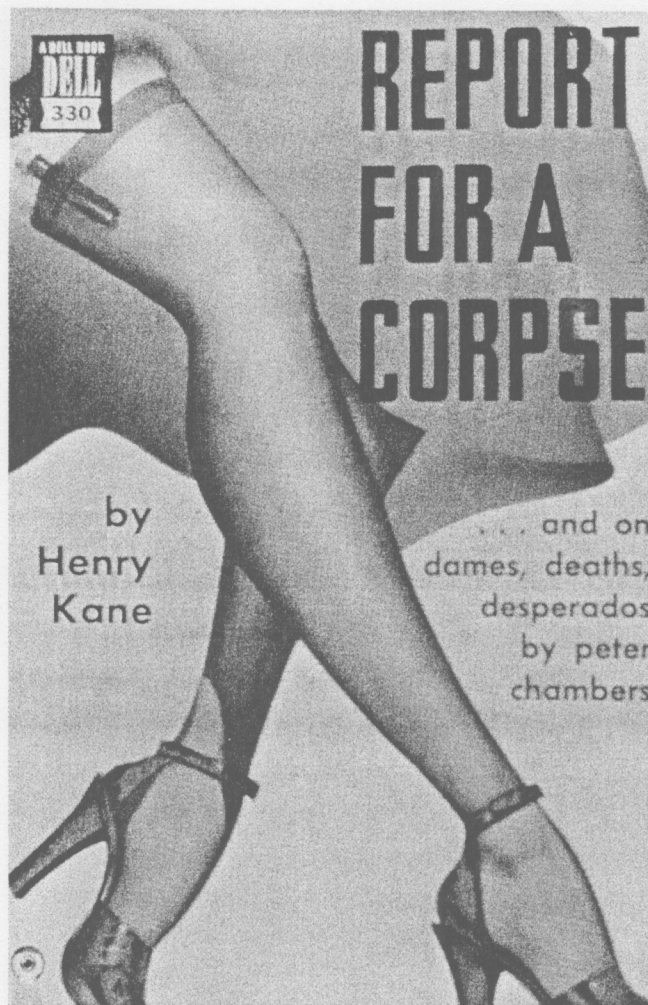
**Precedent for the Future.** Despite commercial opposition, educational broadcasting did begin in the 1940s. Small-scale educational programming on FM radio was such a success that by 1948 the FCC revised its broadcast rules and permitted educational programming by radio stations limited to 10 watts of power — enough for a two- to five-mile transmission radius. The FCC normally limited licenses to stations with 250 watts of power or more, but the 10-watt stations, usually located on college campuses, effectively met the needs of the local community and provided on-site training for broadcasting students. By 1952 there were ninety-two educational FM stations operating. Similarly, educational television was located on college campuses, servicing local communities and providing valuable experience for broadcasting students. By 1948 five universities in the United States operated their own television stations. Given the enormous expenses involved in television production, however, educational television would not become a significant force in broadcasting until the federal government began to underwrite the costs of educational television in the 1960s.

Source:

Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1978).

## FROM THE PULPS TO THE PAPERBACKS

**The End of an Era.** Few periods in history are static, but the 1940s was particularly a period of transition for the United States, with its victory in World War II and



1949 Dell paperback cover

its emergence from the conflict as a world economic and military superpower. Changes were also evident in American popular culture: radio enjoyed the last years of its heyday as the most successful broadcast medium before television claimed dominance, and one medium that had enjoyed extreme popularity since the 1920s, the pulp magazine, succumbed to the dual challenge of comic books for younger readers and paperback books for adults. In addition the magazines and radio often shared the same audience and even characters, such as the Shadow, but like radio the magazines lost potential readers to the exciting new medium of television.

**The Heyday of the Pulp.** With roots in the late nineteenth century, the pulps — sensational magazines ranging widely in quality, with gaudy covers and cheap pulpwood pages — were looked down upon by the guardians of high culture but were extremely popular, their extravagant tales encompassing such popular genres as adventure, romance, crime, horror, science fiction, and the Western. Characters such as the Shadow and Doc Savage were among the popular heroes of the age; writers such as H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard (the creator of Conan) gained cult followings; and magazines such as

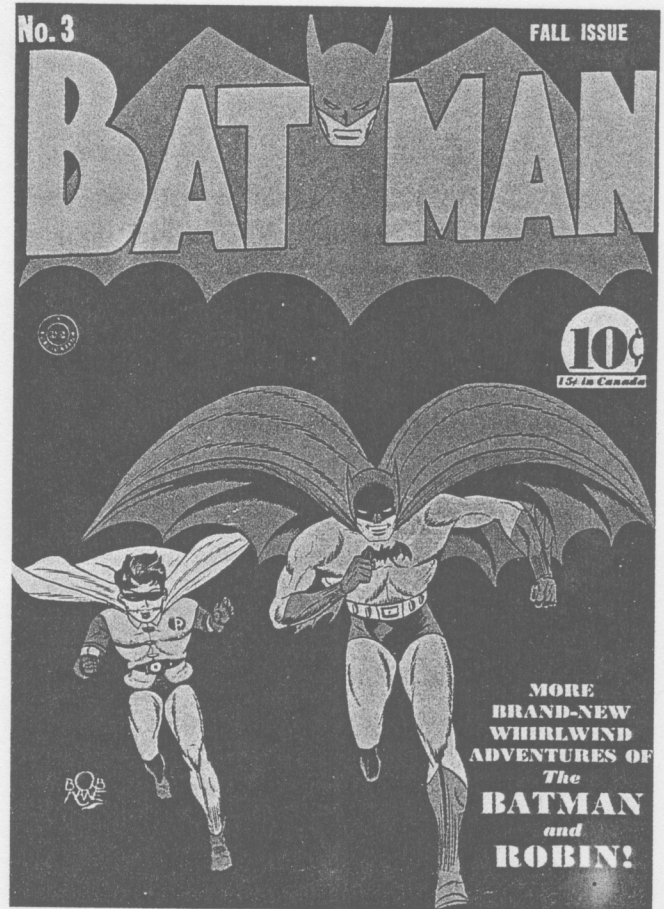
*Black Mask*, *Weird Tales*, and *Astounding Science-Fiction* dominated their respective genres. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, though many magazines came and went, sales of pulp magazines skyrocketed.

**The Beginning of the End.** While the pulps were at their height in the 1930s, however, the seeds of their decline were also present. Popular writers such as Lovecraft and Howard died, magazines such as *Black Mask* lost its best writers to the book publishers, and comic books, which were heavily influenced by the pulps and shared many similarities with them, began to encroach on their market. Also, the pulps generally had a bad reputation with much of the American public, and editors such as John W. Campbell, Jr., of *Astounding Science-Fiction* changed the format of their magazines to avoid being associated with them. The final blow, however, was the paperback.

**The Origins of the American Paperback.** Though books with paper covers had been published in the United States since the nineteenth century, paperbacks as they are now known did not appear until the late 1930s as inexpensive reprints of best-selling or literary works. The trend began in Britain with the success of Penguin Books, introduced in 1936. In 1939 Robert Fair de Graff founded Pocket Books, which was soon successful due to the books' low cost; their colorful, eye-catching covers; and their availability at newsstands as well as bookstores. Pocket Books soon found itself competing with imitators, including Avon Books (founded in 1941), Dell Books (founded in 1943), and Popular Library (also founded in 1943). Although paper was in short supply during World War II, the paperbacks prospered, with more publishers entering the market: Bantam Books, created by Ian Ballantine, in 1945; the New American Library (NAL), with its fiction Signet Books and nonfiction Mentor Books, in 1948; and Gold Medal Books in 1949.

**Sex and Violence.** The commercial success of paperbacks was directly related to their content, which often took up where the pulps left off. In particular, after the war, book covers and the books themselves became increasingly provocative and sensationalistic, promising readers straightforward tales of sex, violence, and depravity. A telling example is Mickey Spillane's *I, the Jury*: it enjoyed a small success in 1947 when published in hardcover, but after Signet published it the following year it sold more than 2 million copies within two years. Featuring Spillane's hard-boiled detective Mike Hammer, the novel had all the major elements that made paperbacks popular.

**The End of the Pulps.** Like the pulps, and to a lesser extent comic books, paperbacks could titillate readers as other media — including radio, television, and movies — could not. The last of the pulps was published in the 1950s, with only detective and science fiction and fantasy magazines carrying on their legacy.



Fall 1940 comic-book cover

**Sources:**

- Thomas L. Bonn, *Under Cover: An Illustrated History of American Mass Market Paperbacks* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1982);
- Piet Schreuders, *Paperbacks, U.S.A.: A Graphic History, 1939-1959*, translated by Josh Pachter (San Diego: Blue Dolphin, 1981);
- Lee Server, *Danger Is My Business: An Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines* (San Francisco: Chronicle, 1993);
- Server, *Over My Dead Body: The Sensational Age of the American Paperback — 1945-1955* (San Francisco: Chronicle, 1994).

## THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMIC BOOKS

**The Golden Decade.** By 1940 the comic book, a medium created in the United States, had existed for exactly seven years. The first comic books were reprintings of newspaper comic strips, but they quickly turned to publishing original stories considerably longer than the strips. Historians have labeled the 1930s and 1940s, the first two decades of U.S. comic books, the golden age, and the comic book was at its height during the 1940s, which established the medium as part of American culture.

**Something for Everyone.** The first few years were a period of experimenting with what readers, mostly children and adolescents but also adults, appreciated. In imitation of the popular pulp magazines, which influenced most comic-book writers and artists along with movies and radio shows, stories in different genres soon became

the norm, including adventure, crime, fantasy and science fiction, horror, romance, war, and Westerns. Another popular subgenre was about *teenagers*, a term that gained widespread use starting in the 1940s, and chief among these humor comics were those featuring Archie and his friends. Created by Bob Montana, the Archie characters first appeared in 1941 and soon became the most popular nonheroic characters in comic-book history. Comic books also developed a few genres of their own, including "funny animal" stories (no doubt influenced by animated cartoons such as those created by Walt Disney Studios) and, most notably, with another nod to the pulps, the superhero. Costumed crime fighters were popular in the mid 1930s, but their dominance over the field was assured with the overwhelming popularity of two characters introduced by National Periodical Publications in 1938 and 1939: Superman, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, and Batman, created by Bob Kane.

**The Reign of the Superheroes.** By 1940, the best year for comic books to that time in terms of sales, there were more than 150 titles in publication. National Periodical Publications introduced a whole series of new costumed heroes, including the golden age versions of Flash, Hawkman, and Green Lantern (all would be reinterpreted later), as well as Batman's sidekick, Robin. Other heroes — including Timely's Captain America and National's Wonder Woman, both introduced in 1941 — fit in with the growing patriotism of the country as it silently prepared for war. Another popular superhero was C. C. Beck's Captain Marvel, introduced in Fawcett's *Whiz Comics* in 1940. More humorous than most other costumed heroes, Captain Marvel nonetheless succeeded with fans and, like many other heroes, acquired a youthful sidekick with whom fans could further identify. Another humorous superhero was Jack Cole's Plastic Man, introduced in 1941.

**From Crime Fighters to Crime.** Though a wide range of comics was available, superheroes dominated most of the decade. After World War II, however, tastes began to shift. Westerns and romance comics became extremely popular, as did crime comics such as *Crime Does Not Pay*, which had begun in 1942. Crime comics remained successful into the next decade; along with horror comics and the frequent depiction of sexy, scantily clad women, they were singled out as a bad influence on children, which led to concern about the content of comic books and a widespread self-censorship of the comics in the mid 1950s.

**A Rare Legacy.** The freedom that comic-book creators enjoyed, for better or worse, during the 1940s accounts for much of the comic book's appeal, as does the energy evident in the new industry. Besides nostalgia the value of comic books from the 1940s as collectors' items today has much to do with how little they were valued during the period. Some were lost to bonfires protesting their content, many were discarded by parents when they

## JOHN HERSEY'S HIROSHIMA

In 1946 journalist-novelist John Hersey completed his account of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, which helped to bring the war in the Pacific to an end but killed tens of thousands of civilians. Recording the observations of six survivors about the bombing and its aftermath, *Hiroshima* became a multimedia phenomenon. It was first published as the entire 31 August 1946 issue of *The New Yorker*, which sold extremely well. When it was published as a book, Albert Einstein purchased one thousand copies. The Book-of-the-Month Club gave away copies as well. Radio stations read the book to their listeners, and it was recorded and given to schools and colleges. While other commentators preached about the implications of atomic warfare, Hersey had given it a human face.

thought their children were too old for them, and many were lost to wartime paper drives.

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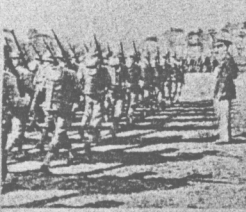
## MILITARY MEDIA

**Peak of Influence.** The military press reached its historic high in numbers and influence during World War II. From the beginning of U.S. involvement in the war, thousands of publications sprang up in training camps, battlefronts, and strategic locations around the world to report the news of home and the war, keep up morale, and propagandize the war effort.

**Hammett.** Many newspapers were printed in small, out of the way places. Many of these were mimeographed. The *Adakian* was one of these small papers, edited and printed at the army base in Adak, Alaska, under the leadership of Cpl. Dashiell Hammett. Hammett, a novelist well known for his detective stories, saw the first issue published on 19 January 1944. Among the staff members who worked on the paper during its nearly two-year run was Bernard Kalb, who later became a well-known print and television journalist.

**Stars and Stripes.** The biggest and best-known of the military newspapers was *Stars and Stripes*, a paper which first appeared in several forms during the Civil War.

General Marshall Inspects Troops in Northern Ireland



Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, inspects an infantry company in review during his visit to Northern Ireland and the American Group Headquarters in Northern Ireland on the 27th. The group is commanded by Major General Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, and other officers of the British, American, and Canadian forces.

Tell Pass Plan, Trips to London



Gen. H. F. Harbo, commander of U.S. troops in Northern Ireland, is seen (left) with British troops in Northern Ireland, and (right) Gen. James C. Harbo, commander of American troops in the British Isles. General Harbo is seen with General Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, at left. (Continued on Page 2)

Dear Mom: I've Met 2 Heroes

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** (Special) Kansas City police are looking for a man who has been identified as a possible suspect in the murder of a woman who was shot in the city last week. The man is described as being about 30 years of age, 5 feet 10 inches tall, with dark hair and eyes, and wearing a dark suit and tie. He was seen in the city on the night of the murder, and is believed to have been in the area of the crime. The police are asking anyone who has any information about the man to contact them at once.

Tokyo Raid Upsets Japs

**Tokyo**—An air raid by American bombers on Tokyo last night has caused a great deal of confusion and panic among the Japanese people. The raid, which was the first since the attack on Pearl Harbor, resulted in the destruction of several buildings and the death of many people. The Japanese government has accused the United States of starting the war, and has vowed to retaliate against the attack.

See U.S. Blows at Nazis

**Nazi**—The United States has announced that it will be sending a large number of military advisors to the Soviet Union to help them in their fight against the Germans. This move is seen as a significant step towards the formation of a coalition between the United States and the Soviet Union against the Axis powers. The advisors will be sent to the Soviet Union in the next few weeks, and will be based in the city of Moscow.

Pay Boosts Near Vote

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—The House of Representatives is expected to vote soon on a bill to increase the pay of members of Congress. The bill, which was introduced by a Republican member of the House, would raise the salaries of members of Congress by 10 percent. The bill is expected to pass the House in the next few days, and will then go to the Senate for consideration.

The 25 April 1945 issue of the most successful military newspaper

During World War I only one edition of the paper, datelined Paris, was published; in World War II nearly thirty editions appeared at one time or another. The first World War II edition was published 18 April 1942 in London, and the weekly was designated volume two, as opposed to the volume one of World War I. The first daily edition of World War II, designated volume three, appeared on 2 November 1942 and was headquartered in the offices of the London Times.

**News From All Over.** The news carried in *Stars and Stripes* and the myriad of other military newspapers was provided by military reporters; the Army News Service, a wire service run by the military; and civilian magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. An average issue of the paper included news of the war, especially about events on other fronts; news from the United States, such as the latest song hits; book reviews; cartoons, featuring such cartoonists as Bill Mauldin; and, always, photographs of beautiful women.

**Yank Magazine.** Another important media venue was *Yank* magazine, a monthly that made its first appearance on 17 June 1942. A historical and entertainment magazine, *Yank* was most famous for two cartoon characters that made their debuts there: G.I. Joe, drawn by David Breger, and Sad Sack, drawn by George Baker. The mag-

azine was first published in New York City, but by the end of the war there were twenty-three separate editions and a paid subscription of more than 2 million people.

**Building Morale and Purpose.** The service newspapers and magazines were staffed by military personnel, which no doubt helped the rising quality of small-town newspapers after the war. But more important, the military print media did much to maintain the morale of the troops in the field. Gen. George Marshall was quoted in *Stars and Stripes* on 18 April 1942 on the importance of the military newspaper:

A soldier's newspaper, in these grave times, is more than a morale venture. It is a symbol of the things we are fighting to preserve and spread in this threatened world. It represents the free thought and free expression of a free people.

**Questions of Loyalty.** But after the war those symbols came under attack. In 1946 the War Department ordered the screening of all information and education personnel "to establish complete loyalty to the United States." The Tokyo edition of *Stars and Stripes* was especially hard hit. Two staff members were fired for failing the loyalty test; some accused the Tokyo *Stars and Stripes* of writing pro-Communist editorials and censoring news that showed the Soviet Union in a bad light. In addition to helping bring about victory in World War II, the military media showed the types of problems arising from victory and the first arguments of the Cold War.

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MONOPOLY INVESTIGATIONS

**Monopoly and the Airwaves.** Since the introduction of mass-communication technologies, U.S. politicians and businessmen had been concerned about the relationship between communication and business monopoly. Most mass-communication technologies were naturally monopolistic: telephone and telegraph signals, in order to be effective, travel over a single set of lines and cables; radio broadcasts must be assigned specific frequencies on the electromagnetic spectrum in order to be heard clearly. Politicians, responding to public concerns (and to the concerns of businessmen dependent upon mass communications), monitored and regulated mass communications to ensure equality in fees charged to the public and to maintain fair political use of the airwaves. Government oversight of mass communications was increased following the creation of the FCC in 1934. Empowered to license and oversee broadcast activities, during the 1930s the FCC focused its attention primarily on investigating activities it felt violated the public trust—false radio advertising, for example. In 1938, transferring the investigation of ad claims to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the FCC established a commission to investigate

“chain broadcasting” — the practice whereby the major broadcasting networks, such as CBS and NBC, owned and operated chains of radio stations (affiliates) around the country. On 2 May 1941 the FCC issued *Report on Chain Broadcasting*, a summary of the commission’s findings.

**Findings and Recommendations.** The FCC report concluded that chain broadcasting was fundamentally monopolistic. They were especially concerned about the political implications involved in a communications corporation owning two or more networks or two or more broadcast stations in a single market. The Roosevelt administration, smarting under criticism from Republican-dominated media outlets, argued that if one person or group of persons owned the majority of media outlets in a given area, they would be capable of unduly influencing public opinion. The FCC proposed to forbid chain broadcasting and single ownership of multiple media outlets. They established new rules regarding multiple ownership and forced local stations to be more responsive to the needs of their immediate communities. In October 1941 NBC and CBS took the FCC to court, arguing the new rules violated their rights of trade. They also attacked the FCC through supporters in Congress, under the leadership of Congressman Eugene E. Cox of Georgia, who launched a brief and ineffective investigation of the FCC.

**Diversity.** In 1943 the Supreme Court upheld the FCC rules, forever altering the character of American broadcasting. Although the large networks announced that the decision spelled doom for broadcasting, the effects of the judgment were limited. The Radio Corporation of America (RCA), the parent company of NBC, was forced to divest itself of one of its two networks. Bought by Edward J. Noble, a candy manufacturer who had made a fortune with Life Savers, the network became the basis of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in 1945. Smaller networks such as the Mutual and Keystone thrived in the new environment of independent, unaffiliated local stations. With the postwar lifting of the ban on radio manufacture and station construction, returning veterans with radio experience opened hundreds of new stations. The broadcasters built revenues by increasingly focusing on specialized programming, such as swing or classical music, which helped erode the power of the old radio networks. Radio network advertising revenue fell from \$23 million to \$11 million in the seven years following the end of the war. By 1952 the networks had lost half of all their affiliates, but NBC and CBS continued to be profitable, as they shifted their resources to a new, less-regulated sector of the communications business: television.

**Sources:**

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Lewis J. Paper, *Empire: William S. Paley and the Making of CBS* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987).

## VOICE OF THE ENEMY

**D**uring World War II the U.S. government began the Voice of America, propaganda broadcasts to occupied and enemy nations designed to demoralize the enemy. Enemies of the United States, of course, did the same, especially via broadcasts aimed at advancing U.S. troops. Axis broadcasts drew many listeners among the troops because they often played American popular music between propaganda sermons and misinformation. The nicknames of enemy broadcast announcers became household names by the end of the war: “Tokyo Rose” (Iva Ikuko Toguri), who told the troops their wives and girlfriends were having affairs with other men while they fought; “Axis Sally” (Mildred Gillars), an Ohio woman imprisoned after the war (1949–1956); “Lord Haw Haw” (William Joyce), who broadcast Nazi propaganda in English with an upper-class British accent and was hanged for treason by the British after the war. The most famous announcer of all was American poet Ezra Pound, broadcasting from Fascist Italy. Pound was arrested following the war for his activities but was judged unfit to stand trial. He was confined in St. Elizabeths mental hospital in Washington, D.C., from 1946 until 1958, when he was released.

## PROPAGANDA AND THE NEWS

**Propaganda.** When, in 1934, Nazis seized the government of Austria, their first act was to occupy not a government building but a radio station. The act symbolized the new importance the control and dissemination of information had in modern political life. News control and propaganda were central to the success of authoritarian states. By 1940 many members of the U.S. media were expressing deep concern about the control of the news and the effectiveness of propaganda, which was commonly defined as the manipulation of news and information for political purposes. Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany used the new technology of cinema to rally the masses; the Fascist governments of Italy and Germany used the even newer technology of radio to garner broad support for their policies; everywhere in war-torn Europe censors imposed themselves on journalism. How propaganda worked was the subject of great discussion, and media analysts argued pointedly about the relationship between propaganda and unbiased news. It was not an abstract debate. Radio rabble-rousers, such as conservative commentator Fr. Charles Coughlin, already enjoyed large audiences in the Midwest; critics of the Roosevelt administration hinted that FDR’s successful fireside chats over radio, as well as the industry regulation of the FCC, were signs of impending dictatorship.



Edward R. Murrow broadcasting news of the Allied invasion of France. Beside him is the military censor, his hand on the switch that would interrupt the transmission if he felt it necessary.

A well-orchestrated media campaign, filled with bald distortions, had destroyed Upton Sinclair's 1934 run for governor of California. Reporting from Europe, journalists and broadcasters found it difficult to adhere to an unbiased and objective presentation of the news. During the Spanish civil war of 1936-1939, H. V. Kaltenborn waxed indignant over Fascist atrocities in his radio broadcasts for CBS; the Hearst press, distorting events in Spain, cast Francisco Franco's Fascists as "insurgents" and the Republican government as "reds." Eric Sevareid, witnessing the fall of France, felt a complacent press was much to blame and urged CBS to abandon neutrality in reporting European events. Other European correspondents, who repeatedly saw their reporting lost to censors, were all too aware of how the objective press could be turned to partisan ends. For journalists and broadcasters in the late 1930s, the boundaries between news and propaganda were indistinct.

**The CBS Style.** Some in the U.S. media were not troubled by the blurry distinction between news and propaganda. The Hearst press was famous for its sensationalism and distortion; the Luce publishing empire readily

acknowledged that its presentation of the news reflected the bias of its publisher. Luce argued that the mere selection of one news item over another reflected bias and that an objective presentation of the news was impossible. Most industry insiders agreed with Luce but nonetheless strove for balance and fairness in the presentation of the news. In part this struggle represented a philosophical commitment to fairness, but it also reflected commercial and political realities. Overt editorializing sometimes cost a network commercial sponsors and carried the risk of intervention by offended politicians. CBS was the first of the major networks to institutionalize fairness as part of its broadcasts. It often sponsored a roundtable of opposing viewpoints following the broadcast of important events, and it demanded low-key, dispassionate reporting of its journalists. ("We must not display a tenth of the emotion that a broadcaster does when describing a prize fight," explained Sevareid.) Edward R. Murrow's broadcasts from besieged London made the style famous. Murrow's reports were not exactly objective, and he himself sought to sway the sentiment of Americans toward intervention in the war on the side of the British. But the CBS style was subtly understated and enormously effective.

## THE BOYS IN THE BASEMENT

Often criticized and sometimes grudgingly admired, Franklin Roosevelt's innovative use of radio was a persistent thorn in the side of his political opponents. This was never more the case than at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1940. Roosevelt's strategy for running for an unprecedented third term as president was to appear reluctant, suggesting that it was grassroots support, rather than ambition, which led him to the hustings. FDR did enjoy considerable support among the delegates, much of it, however, half-hearted — and that made for a moribund convention. Listeners, however, heard the convention enthusiastically draft Roosevelt. Mayor Kelly of Chicago, a partisan of FDR, packed loyal supporters into the basement of the convention hall. Their cheers at the mention of Roosevelt's name, picked up by strategically placed microphones, were broadcast over loudspeakers and over the radio — generating a sense that the convention's endorsement of Roosevelt was spontaneous and wholehearted.

The other broadcast networks followed suit. In 1940 NBC and the Mutual network issued a joint statement forbidding their war correspondents from efforts “to influence action or opinion of others one way or another.” In 1941 such a position became law, as the FCC, ruling on a licensing request from a Boston station, declared, “A truly free radio cannot be used to advocate the causes of the licensee. . . .”

**Censorship and the War.** The relationship between news and propaganda became more complex after Pearl Harbor. Although some suggested that the U.S. media should be nationalized and controlled by the government for the duration of the war, government intervention in the media was limited. It did create several agencies to monitor the press. The Office of Facts and Figures, under Archibald MacLeish, had been created before the war to combat the distortion of news in the media. The Office of War Information had a similar function after its creation in 1942 and additionally monitored shortwave broadcasts to ensure that important military secrets were not revealed. The War Department refused to permit the publication of photographs showing dead U.S. soldiers. The Office of Censorship under Byron Price closed amateur radio stations for fear of espionage broadcasts and forbade the transmission of weather news or the announcement of troop, ship, or plane movements. It also abolished man-on-the-street interviews, fearing that spies would send coded information in ad-lib form.

**Dangers of Censorship.** Aside from these measures, however, the Office of Censorship relied on voluntary censorship by the media. Government officials feared that heavy-handed censorship would be viewed as a Fascist attempt to manipulate opinion, obscuring the differences between democracy and authoritarian rule. More important, policy makers feared a political backlash against the war effort if heavy censorship was invoked. While enemies of the nation's black press, for example, sought to use the war emergency to shut it down, Attorney General Francis Biddle feared the consequences of such an act on the morale of African Americans, who were making vital contributions to the war effort. Government officials, moreover, trusted that the prowar consensus that swept the public with Pearl Harbor would be reflected in the press.

**Voluntary Censorship.** They were not disappointed. Editors and broadcasters took seriously the Office of Censorship guidelines not to betray military movements or undermine morale. Newspapers and radio stations regularly submitted stories to the Office of Censorship for approval and tightened journalistic standards to ensure that information was safe for publication. Censorship had the effect of making the distinction between propaganda and news sharper because it demanded greater accuracy in reporting. No longer would lazy reporters cite “informed sources” or “reliable informants” in their news stories without verifying the information. The war made the U.S. press fairer and more judicious.

**Propaganda Efforts.** At the same time the press was codifying a new set of journalistic ethics, the government was refining its propaganda efforts, learning much from foreign propaganda broadcasts. In 1941 the FCC established the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service to monitor and transcribe German and Japanese propaganda aimed at the United States. In turn the War Department directed propaganda broadcasts at Germany and Japan. Transmitted from British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) equipment in England, and on mobile units operated by the military in the Pacific, U.S. propaganda broadcasts were under the supervision of the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) of the Office of War Information. PWB specialized in two types of broadcasts: the first, “white” broadcasts, were aimed to demoralize the enemy and undermine their morale; the second, “black” broadcasts, imitated Axis transmissions, and sought to confuse the enemy during military operations. PWB's most successful white broadcast was a daily series entitled *Briefe die sie nicht erreichten* (Letters That Didn't Reach You), wherein announcers read letters by demoralized German soldiers to the Nazi homeland. Their most famous black radio project was a 1944 broadcast from Radio Luxembourg that purported to be an official German station. During the invasion of the German heartland, this station broadcast misinformation regarding the offensive and created widespread panic in cities far from the actual military operations.

**The Debate Continues.** Following the war, the debate over fairness and objectivity in the news continued. During the war, labor unions repeatedly complained that radio stations denied them access to air and advertising time on the grounds that their perspectives were partisan. Broadcasters also routinely denied air and ad time to Communist groups, arguing that the Smith Act of 1940 made Communists an illegal partisan group. Right-wingers, on the other hand, continued to slant the news in ways that were frankly propagandistic. The most notorious example was that of the radio network owned by Detroit businessman George Richards. A virulent anti-Semite, who derided President Roosevelt as a Communist "Jew-lover," Richards demanded his station managers twist the news to accord his particular sensibility. His activities were so authoritarian that in 1948 a group of journalists formerly in the employ of Richards protested to the FCC about his tactics. The FCC began hearings to consider suspending Richards's radio licenses, taking testimony from scores of witnesses that he forced them to slant and falsify news. Richards spent over \$2 million to maintain his stations before, at the height of the controversy, he died. His widow pledged not to interfere in the presentation of the news, and the Richards family was allowed to retain its radio stations.

**Editorials.** The FCC indulged Richards because it had concluded that unbiased presentation of the news was impossible. By 1946 it had begun to roll back its 1941 decision prohibiting journalistic advocacy. Issuing a blue-covered report entitled *Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees*, it established new guidelines for programming acceptable to the FCC. Taking note of the de facto censorship of labor from the airwaves, it obliged broadcasters to present a balanced presentation of the news rather than maintaining strict neutrality (often violated in practice). More important, it required broadcasters to meet their public obligations by being increasingly responsive to local needs, by limiting commercial advertising, and by increasing public-affairs programming. Although many broadcasters protested the guidelines found in the FCC's "blue book," many media leaders, including William S. Paley of CBS, had suggested similar ideas. Paley, who had often insisted that news be unbiased, concluded during the war that commentary and editorial opinion were permissible so long as they were clearly presented as distinct from the news. His solution became that of the FCC. In 1949 it thoroughly reversed the 1941 decision and permitted explicit editorial commentaries by journalists, so long as opposing viewpoints were presented. This ruling became the basis of the later "fairness doctrine," which sought to maintain political diversity by forcing broadcasters to present all sides. News, in other words, should strive to be objective, but it could be propagandistic so long as a plurality of opinion was presented.



Father Charles Coughlin

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## RADIO: THE END OF THE GOLDEN AGE

**The Once and Former King.** After a "pioneer period" from the first successful experiments in the 1890s to the 1920s, radio entered a golden age in the 1930s. Before the first truly successful television broadcasts early in the 1940s, radio was the only broadcast medium, and its popularity in the United States during the time rivaled that of television since the late 1940s. For two decades radio was king.

**Little Change.** The nature of the golden age of radio was established in the 1930s, and radio programming remained basically unchanged during the 1940s. Comedy-variety shows featuring popular actors and musicians, soap operas, adventure programs such as *The Shadow* and *The Lone Ranger*, and news dominated the airwaves. The only substantial difference between the decades was the amount of news on the radio, which



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Advertisement, late 1949

increased substantially when the United States entered World War II in 1941.

**In Television's Shadow.** Ironically, the successes of radio provided the foundations for its own decline in the face of television. Its successive improvements in broadcast technology provided the nuts and bolts for television, and its evolution from local broadcasting to national networks such as NBC, CBS, and ABC created corporate entities that would employ this technology for greater potential profits in television, essentially abandoning radio in the process. In addition, many of the first stars of television got their starts in radio. When the networks and the stars shifted their energies to the new medium after the end of World War II enabled them to do so, the local stations who had broadcast their offerings were left behind. These stations for the most part became local broadcasters once again, perhaps relying on a network for news but focusing their energies on music and local advertising.

Source:

Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, Volume II — 1933 to 1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

## TELEVISION IS BORN

**Slow Development.** Although the basic components of television were developed as early as the 1870s, the technology was not sophisticated enough to broadcast an image until the 1920s. Even then television was too crude for widespread use. There were eighteen experimental

television stations in the United States in 1931, but opposition to the new medium by radio broadcasters and a lack of funding during the Depression left these promising starts wanting. Nonetheless, technical innovations by inventors such as Vladimir Zworykin and Philo Farnsworth refined and improved television, and RCA was ready to introduce widespread commercial manufacture of television sets by 1938. RCA's competitors opposed the deployment of a national broadcast system based on RCA technology and moved to block the licensing of commercial broadcasting by the FCC. In 1940 a government panel concluded that RCA was attempting to establish industry broadcasting standards on terms disadvantageous to its competitors, and it reviewed and revised television broadcasting standards. On 3 May 1941 the FCC established guidelines more equitable for a variety of television manufacturers, opening the way for widespread commercial television broadcasting in the United States. On 1 July 1941 CBS and NBC switched their New York stations from experimental to commercial status, broadcasting about fifteen hours of programming a week. Television sets, extremely expensive at the time, limited the expansion of the technology. By the time of Pearl Harbor, there were only ten thousand to twenty thousand receivers in use in the United States, and broadcasting was limited to a few urban centers. The war put a hold on the expansion of television. The FCC forbade building new television stations in order to conserve materials for the war. For the moment television's potential remained unrealized.

**Postwar Boom.** The hiatus in television growth during World War II gave television manufacturers an opportunity to improve existing technology using electronic innovations developed during the war. The image orthicon, a sensitive television camera developed by RCA in 1945, was an important advance. Postwar introduction of television nonetheless took place slowly at first, then developed in a rush. The sheer expense involved in building a television station — at a time when profits were unproven — retarded investor support. Television costs generally ran ten times higher than those of radio, and few stations posted profits before 1952. Most stations were thus owned by business concerns that could sustain long-term losses. Television manufacturers bought stations, hoping to spark sales of their products. Allen B. Dumont, a television-set maker, bought several East Coast stations after the war, hoping to build a network to support his manufacturing. Newspapers also bought local stations, anticipating that television's immediacy would be a boon to the news business. Most important, however, the old radio networks and large independent radio stations moved into television. NBC was the most powerful of these networks, with over twenty-five national affiliates by 1948. CBS quickly developed a reputation for outstanding news broadcasting. Noble's ABC struggled until 1951, when it absorbed and was revitalized by a powerful entertainment company, United Paramount



Milton Berle, in striped shirt, after having been hit in the face with a pie on the *Texaco Star Theater* in 1948

Theaters. Concerned about the potential of the new industry, radio networks moved into television to control their losses. But the networks also moved into television broadcasting because it was less regulated by the FCC than was radio. Despite the ban on monopolies, NBC, CBS, and ABC exercised enormous control over affiliate stations in major markets, and by the early 1960s the “big three” networks had a virtual monopoly on U.S. television broadcasting.

**Programming.** As radio networks moved to dominate television broadcasting, they brought many of the popular radio shows and personalities to television. *Life of Riley*, a popular program dealing with a blue-collar worker, made the transition, as did comedies such as *Our Miss Brooks*, starring Eve Arden, *The Goldbergs*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, and *Amos and Andy*. Radio format staples, such as the talent shows *Original Amateur Hour* and Arthur Godfrey’s *Talent Scouts*, relocated to the small screen. *Your Hit Parade* had run for fifteen years on radio before it moved to television in 1950. The program featured contemporary best-selling pop tunes. Crime-detective dramas, such as *Dragnet*, jumped from radio to television, as did the “thriller” programs aimed at school-age children, such as *Sky King* and *Superman*. Sports broadcasting was, of course, immensely popular, as were original children’s programs such as *Super Circus*, *Howdy Doody*, and *Kukla, Fran, and Ollie*. Television also borrowed

radio newsmen and formats. Reporters made famous by World War II, such as Edward R. Murrow, extended their celebrity to television. Network public-affairs programming, such as *Meet the Press* and *Hear It Now* (which became *See It Now*), also made the transition to television. A staple of early television, the variety show, was borrowed from vaudeville theater. The imperturbable Ed Sullivan hosted the long-running *Toast of the Town*, while Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca made *Your Show of Shows* an audience favorite.

**Uncle Miltie.** By far the most popular program in television’s early years was a similar variety program, *Texaco Star Theater*, starring Milton Berle, a forty-year-old comedian when NBC hired him for the program in 1948. A Borscht Belt vaudevillian, he specialized in slapstick humor and manic, unflagging energy. By the fall of 1948 Berle’s program had earned a 94.7 rating in the television markets — meaning that when he was on television, 94.7 percent of the viewers in the United States tuned into his program. The next year “Uncle Miltie,” as he was affectionately called, graced the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek*. His name was synonymous with television when the medium served urban, ethnic audiences — 35 percent of viewers lived in New York. As television expanded into the heartland, Berle’s humor seemed less vital, and his jokes about New York and its ethnic groups fell flat. His

fortunes declined, and by 1955 television's first superstar was dropped from *Texaco Star Theater*.

**The Television Freeze.** Uncle Miltie was not the only casualty of television's expansion. By 1948 the growth of television in the Northeast was so great that the FCC's original channel allocation plan, drafted only three years earlier, had to be revised. Because there were only thirteen channels available for VHF television broadcasts, the FCC had the unenviable task of making sure that stations were assigned broadcast frequencies fairly and competitively. With channel one assigned to emergency broadcasting, the FCC had to balance carefully the assignment of twelve channels in major metropolitan areas such as New York City. Geography was an important factor: New York could easily sustain twelve commercial channels, but other communities within two hundred broadcast miles of New York (including Philadelphia and Hartford) also needed channels; if the same channel were assigned to stations in close broadcast proximity, the signals would interfere with one another. In 1948 interference and channel assignment were overwhelming prob-

lems. The FCC responded by freezing the licensing of new stations, ostensibly for a six- to nine-month period. In fact, the freeze lasted until 14 April 1952. Although it retarded the construction of new stations, the freeze lessened competitive pressures on existing stations, allowing them to standardize production and broadcast practices. The freeze also gave the FCC time to adjudicate a terrific battle between RCA and CBS over the technological standard to be adopted in color-television transmissions, an issue resolved in RCA's favor in 1953. The freeze was resolved by a careful geographic allocation of VHF channels and by opening up the ultrahigh frequency (UHF) bands to commercial television. By the end of the freeze, all the technological, commercial, and licensing elements of the television industry were in place. In the 1950s television would undergo explosive growth and transform the character of American culture irrevocably.

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# HEADLINE MAKERS

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## MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE

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1906-1971

PHOTOJOURNALIST



**War Journalist.** In an era which acclaimed the war journalist, none was more renowned than Margaret Bourke-White. Her photographs for *Life* magazine brought World War II home with clarity and sensitivity for millions of Americans; her courage on the battlefield became legendary.

Bourke-White set many firsts for women during the war — the first woman to fly on bombing missions, for instance — and her work was superior to that of most U.S. photographers, male or female. When U.S. troops liberated the Nazi death camps, Bourke-White was there, documenting the tragedy of the camps and relaying unforgettable images of the atrocities to the public.

**Background.** Daughter of an engineer-inventor and a strong-willed, independent housewife, Bourke-White was raised in a household that embraced female equality and ambition. Her father, holding several machine patents, instilled in Bourke-White a fascination and awe for machines that would later advance her career considerably. He was also an amateur photographer, although Bourke-White claimed she did not begin photographing until after his death in 1922. When she enrolled at Columbia University in 1921, it was with the intention of becoming a biologist. (She ultimately received a B.A. in biology from Cornell.) A series of art photography classes with Clarence H. White, associated with the innovative Photo-Secession school of Alfred Stieglitz, cinched photography as a vocation, but Bourke-White had a difficult time getting started. She switched universities several times due to money problems and suffered through a brief, failed marriage. By 1927 she had steeled her resolve

to make a living as an independent photographer, and she relocated to Cleveland to make her mark.

**Photojournalist.** Cleveland was in the midst of the industrial boom of the 1920s, and Bourke-White established her reputation in the new field of industrial photography. She was drawn to the symmetry and power of big industry, and her photos, with their overtones of art, made an impression — not only among Cleveland's industrialists, busy hiring her to photograph steel furnaces and assembly lines, but among magazine publishers such as Henry R. Luce, owner of *Time*. Luce had planned a new magazine, *Fortune*, to cater to American business, and Bourke-White's photographs fit his format well. She contributed the photographs for the lead article in the first issue, and thereafter the magazine was to a great extent dependent upon her bold, iconographic photographs. She took what she termed "symbolic" photographs: single images that would come to represent entire ideas and concepts. She pioneered photojournalism in *Fortune*, which built entire articles around her images. By the early 1930s she was the most famous photojournalist in the United States.

**Icons and Politics.** Bourke-White's skill with the camera was such that she had her choice of assignments. In the early 1930s she traveled to the Soviet Union, before the United States had established diplomatic relations with that nation. Her photographs of Soviet industry became some of the first images of the Soviet Union seen by Americans, and she became an in-demand lecturer on the Soviet Union. In 1935 she was called upon to photograph President Franklin D. Roosevelt and began documenting New Deal public-works projects. In 1936 one such photograph, of the Fort Peck dam in Montana, became the cover of the first issue of Luce's new photo magazine, *Life*. *Life* became an important forum for Bourke-White's work, especially for photographs of the dust bowl or the Depression, such as the 1937 picture of Louisville flood victims lined up for assistance before a

billboard proclaiming that the United States maintained the world's highest standard of living. She dropped her earlier awe of machines and became fascinated by human drama. She joined progressive political organizations, such as the American Artists' Congress, dedicated to using art to publicize the plight of the disadvantaged, and stopped taking photographs for major advertisers. She even, for a time, broke with Luce to work in a more liberal journal, *PM*, but ultimately returned to *Life*. In 1937 she published *You Have Seen Their Faces*, a photo-essay on sharecropping, with text by the man who would become her second husband, Erskine Caldwell. It was a popular success and paved the way for subsequent protest photo-essays, such as James Agee and Walter Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) or those of Robert Frank. In 1938 Bourke-White and Caldwell decided to apply a similar formula to a book on Europe. They arrived in time for the Munich crisis.

**War and Liberation.** As the political crisis in Europe disintegrated into war, Bourke-White was there, capturing the drama of the experience. She traveled from London to Libya and from Syria to Siberia during the conflict. The first woman accredited as a war correspondent, she survived the sinking of the SS *Strath-Allan* off North Africa and flew on B-17 bombing runs over Tunis. Trusted by the Soviets for her previous work on the Soviet Union, Bourke-White scooped her fellow photo-journalists by being the only American at work in the U.S.S.R. when the Germans invaded. She also accompanied U.S. troops during the invasion of Italy, developing an almost mythological reputation for her willingness to hazard enemy fire to get dangerous aerial shots. In 1945 she was with Gen. George Patton's forces as they liberated Buchenwald and took classic photographs that highlighted the spectral gazes of the prisoners of the concentration camp; she reached the Erla work camp and took appalling photos of the massacre hours after SS troops incinerated over three hundred inmates. Following the war, Bourke-White published many photographs of Europe in ruins, bringing the cost of war home to many Americans via the pages of *Life*. She also traveled to India, becoming one of the first American photographers to cover the burgeoning nationalist movements of the third world. She shot photos of Mohandas K. Gandhi at his spinning wheel, the slaughter in the Punjab, and Pakistani refugees, and she published the photographs in a well-received book, *Halfway to Freedom* (1949).

**Last Battle.** By the 1950s Bourke-White had traveled to thirty-six countries and taken hundreds of thousands of photographs. In 1952 she returned to war, this time in Korea. Rather than photograph the battles, she published a photo-essay in *Life* that focused on the trauma of civil war for one Korean family. It was to be her last major assignment. In the early 1950s she was diagnosed as having Parkinson's disease. Bourke-White's worldwide adventurism ground to a halt, and her work ended as she devoted her attention to fighting the illness. She publi-

cized her struggle through a 1960 television dramatization of her life and through the publication of her autobiography, *Portrait of Myself*, in 1963. After twenty years of fighting Parkinson's, Bourke-White died on 27 August 1971.

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## JOHN W. CAMPBELL, JR.

1910-1971

### SCIENCE-FICTION WRITER AND MAGAZINE EDITOR



**Influential Editor.** The term *golden age* is used with great frequency to refer to popular culture of the 1930s and 1940s, whether referring to radio, comic books, or science fiction. Rarely, however, can such a golden age be as closely identified with the work of one person as the science-fiction golden age can with John W. Campbell, Jr. During the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s he was the most influential editor in the field, discovering impressive new talents and pushing the genre to a level more sophisticated than that of most previous American science fiction, which relied heavily on adventure formulas and gadgetry.

**From Writer to Editor.** Campbell began writing science fiction while in his teens and published his first stories before completing his studies in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Duke University. He built a name for himself as a writer during the 1930s, at first with space opera, then under the pseudonym Don A. Stuart, with moody, atmospheric stories such as "Twilight" (1934) and "Who Goes There?" (1938). In the second half of the decade he became increasingly associated with *Astounding Science-Fiction*, edited by F. Orlin Tremaine. In 1937 he became its next editor, a position he retained until his death.

**New Writers, New Ideas.** Campbell wrote little fiction after assuming the editorship of *Astounding Science-Fiction*, devoting his energies instead to making his the best science-fiction magazine in the United States. He succeeded, bringing his knowledge of good writing as an author to bear on the writings of others. He was supportive of new writers, offering them extremely detailed feedback on their work and even giving them ideas of his own to improve their stories. Within two years he had discovered a stable of writers who have since been recognized as major figures in the field, including Isaac Asimov, Lester del Rey, Robert A. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, and A. E. Van Vogt. He also attracted more-established writ-

ers into his fold, among them L. Sprague de Camp, L. Ron Hubbard, Henry Kuttner, C. L. Moore, Clifford D. Simak, and Jack Williamson. In the pages of *Astounding Science-Fiction* Campbell published many science-fiction classics by these authors and others. Though it published several fantasy classics, he was less successful with the fantasy magazine *Unknown*, which he began in 1939 and ended four years later.

**Future Realism.** Campbell, like his counterparts, stressed good storytelling, but he also strove for realism — psychological and sociological as well as scientific — within the conventions of the genre. His goal, he stated, was to publish stories about the future that would seem like journalism to a reader from that future. Sometimes this resulted in writers predicting things before they came to pass. *Astounding Science-Fiction* was publishing stories about moon landings and atomic-plant meltdowns long before such events became reality, and one story — Cleve Cartmill's "Deadline" (1944) — brought Campbell a visit from U.S. intelligence agents demanding to know how the magazine had acquired the "secret" of how to build an atomic bomb, which had been published as part of the story, from the Manhattan Project.

**After the Golden Age.** Campbell remained an important figure in science fiction until his death, but the influence he exercised in the 1940s waned for various reasons after the decade had passed. First, the dominance of *Astounding Science-Fiction* was effectively challenged in the 1950s by new magazines such as the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (founded 1949) and *Galaxy* (founded 1950) — both of which were as innovative in publishing new writers and ideas as Campbell had been more than a decade earlier. In contrast Campbell became more conservative, both artistically and politically, and some of the new ideas he entertained — most notably Hubbard's new "science" of dianetics, first explained in an article in the May 1950 issue of *Astounding Science-Fiction* — earned him more ridicule than respect. In addition, he was losing authors to the changing science-fiction market: writers such as Heinlein and Asimov realized they could reach more people and make more money by writing for mainstream magazines with wider circulations and by fulfilling the new demand for science-fiction books (most American science fiction before World War II had been published in magazines). Nevertheless, *Astounding Science Fiction* (renamed *Analog Science Fact — Science Fiction* in 1960) continued to remain one of the most popular magazines in the field, and Campbell was widely mourned when he died in 1971.

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## WILL EISNER

1917-

COMIC-BOOK WRITER AND ARTIST



**A Man of Many Talents.** Will Eisner was one of the most innovative and talented comic-book writers, artists, and editors of the late 1930s and the 1940s. Best known for writing and drawing *The Spirit*, he was also prominent in the industry for creating several memorable characters, among them

Blackhawk and Sheena, Queen of the Jungle. In the case of *The Spirit*, he was also one of the few comic-book figures from this period to retain control over his creation.

**An Early Start.** Born in Brooklyn, Eisner entered the new field of comic books in 1936 while still a teenager. With Jerry Iger he formed a company that produced comics for different publishers, including Fiction House, Fox, and Quality. (One artist for the Eisner-Iger partnership, Bob Kane, soon went on to create Batman.) During this period he and Iger created Sheena, drawn by Mort Meskin, and Dollman, drawn by Lou Fine. The company prospered, but Eisner wanted to do more than mass-produce formulaic comic books for kids. Consequently, when the *Chicago Tribune* decided to create a comic-book magazine in the spring of 1940 in order to compete with the wildly successful comic-book industry, Eisner jumped at the offer to write and draw a weekly, sixteen-page comic that would be distributed in a newspaper rather than on the newsstands. The result was *The Spirit*.

**The Spirit.** The conception of Eisner's new character, a crimefighter with a secret identity, owed much to the popular superhero comic books, but everything else about the comic was entirely original. Rather than a colorful costume, Denny Colt wore a blue business suit with matching mask and fedora to fight crime as the Spirit. He possessed no superpowers — merely a powerful physique, above-average intelligence, and the capacity to get hit a lot and still stand up. *The Spirit* was also noteworthy for its inclusion of the Spirit's friend Ebony, the first African American character to appear on a continuing basis in an American comic book. Though a humorous character drawn as a caricature in line with popular-culture stereotypes of the day, Ebony was also a three-dimensional character and sometimes the focus of serious subplots within the book.

**Art and Business.** *The Spirit* was significant for other reasons as well. For one thing, many comic-book writers and artists toiled anonymously, churning out books on a work-for-hire basis; Eisner, in contrast, received prominent billing in each issue and added to his profits from his company by retaining all rights to the character. A shrewd businessman, he was also a consummate artist.

He combined comedy and drama in skillfully told stories, created believable characters, and set them in gritty, yet evocatively drawn, settings.

**Successes.** *The Spirit* was published through newspaper syndication for twelve years and was then reprinted in different comics on various occasions. While Eisner remained active with this comic and others, he also turned his attention to promoting the form through book-length graphic novels and his study *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), illustrated with many examples from his own work.

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## JOHN H. JOHNSON

1918-

MAGAZINE PUBLISHER



**Success Story.** John H. Johnson entered publishing at age twenty-four, when, after white bankers refused to loan him money, he used his mother's furniture as collateral for a five-hundred-dollar loan in order to send out twenty thousand letters promoting a new magazine, to be called *Negro Digest*. By the 1990s Johnson, a multimillionaire, was the most influential and prosperous African American businessman in the country. In the intervening fifty years his magazines, particularly *Ebony*, had become an integral part of American culture.

**Aspiration.** Johnson was born to a poor family in Arkansas City, Arkansas. When he was six his father died in a sawmill accident. Because Arkansas City had no high school for blacks, he and his mother moved to Chicago when he was in his teens on money she earned as a cook. The move paid off: Johnson excelled in high school in academics and leadership, and he edited the school newspaper and served as business manager of its yearbook. Influenced by his mother, he saw hard work and determination as essential to succeeding in a society in which blacks were afforded little opportunity for success. He graduated from high school with honors and received a tuition-only scholarship to the University of Chicago; he was able to accept it thanks to Harry H. Pace, president of the black-owned Supreme Life Insurance Company of America, who offered him a part-time office job. Working with African American professionals was another powerful influence on him, and he stopped attending the University of Chicago after two years to focus on his office work. (In 1938-1940 he resumed his studies at the Northwestern School of Commerce.)

**Inspiration.** Johnson's first job for the company was to read articles from contemporary publications and select those of interest to blacks for the company newsletter sent to clients. This task, along with the success of *Reader's Digest*, gave him the idea of creating a magazine that would reprint articles and publish feature articles for a black audience. Through his initial letter promoting *Negro Digest* he convinced three thousand people to contribute two dollars each toward charter subscriptions; with the six thousand dollars he received he published the first issue of the magazine in November 1942.

**In Leaps and Bounds.** Johnson had difficulties at first in getting his magazine to readers. It was declined by distributors at the time, who said it lacked an audience. In response he encouraged thirty Supreme Life employees to ask for the magazine at newsstands and buy it to prod dealers to request it from distributors. It worked in Chicago (he then bought back and resold the magazines), and then he tried it in other large cities. Within a year *Negro Digest* had a circulation of fifty thousand. Circulation tripled when Eleanor Roosevelt contributed to an ongoing feature, "If I Were a Negro." Another feature of the magazine was called "My Most Humiliating Jim Crow Experience." Throughout the 1940s *Negro Digest* offered what Johnson promised with the first issue: "a complete survey of current Negro life and thought . . . dedicated to the development of interracial understanding and the promotion of national unity. It stands unqualifiedly for . . . the integration of all citizens into the democratic process." In 1951 *Negro Digest* was discontinued when Johnson introduced *Jet*, a weekly news magazine, but it was reintroduced in 1961. In 1970 it was renamed *Black World* and under editor Hoyt W. Fuller became the most militant of his publications. It ceased publication in 1976.

**Ebony.** Johnson's best-known magazine, *Ebony*, premiered in November 1945. Modeled after popular magazines featuring pictures and short articles such as *Life* and *Look*, the magazine aimed "to mirror the happier side of Negro life — the positive, everyday achievements from Harlem to Hollywood." However, Johnson added, it would address racial problems seriously. Supporters have consistently praised *Ebony* for its positive depictions of African American life and its encouraging messages to its many readers. By 1985, forty years after its initial publication, its circulation had risen from a press run of 25,000, with an estimated 125,000 readers, to a press run of 2.3 million, with an estimated 9 million readers.

**Continuing Success.** On the successes of *Negro Digest* and *Ebony* Johnson built a publishing and financial empire. He introduced other magazines, most notably *Jet*, and pursued other business interests, among them radio, television, and cosmetics. He is also the chief executive officer of the Supreme Life Insurance Company. His many awards include the Spingarn Medal from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1966 and the Publisher of the Year

Award from the Magazine Publishers Association in 1972.

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## HENRY R. LUCE

1898-1967

PUBLISHER, TIME, LIFE, AND FORTUNE MAGAZINES



### The American Publisher.

Henry R. Luce was one of the most influential magazine publishers in the United States in the twentieth century. The magazines he began, *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, had a profound impact on U.S. publishing and American public opinion. *Time* defined the modern

newsmagazine, and *Life* established photo-documentary journalism. Moreover, the phenomenal success of these magazines gave Luce a platform from which to promote deeply held political and social ambitions. Wendell Willkie's internationalism was to some extent a product of Luce's influence, and the 1940 Republican candidate for president owed much of his popularity to Luce and his magazines. Luce championed U.S. assistance to China, intervention in World War II, and the escalation of the Cold War long before these issues became popular. His instincts both anticipated and seemed perfectly keyed to public interests. In a highly influential editorial of 1941 he argued that the United States should take advantage of World War II to subordinate economic competitors and restructure the world's political economy "for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit." According to Luce, an "American Century" had dawned; after the war the public, heady with success and enjoying unprecedented prosperity, agreed. Luce seemed prophetic, and he was widely acknowledged as one of the foremost proponents of internationalism — the American publisher of the new American century.

**Young Expansionist.** The acclaim Luce enjoyed as a publicist for U.S. internationalism in the 1940s was the fulfillment of a lifetime's ambition. Son of a Presbyterian missionary to China, Luce adopted much of his father's crusading faith in the manifest destiny of the United States. Arriving with the first U.S. diplomatic and business missions, the elder Luce saw his task as not only involving the conversion of the Chinese to Christianity but also the expansion of U.S. political and economic institutions into Asia. It was a goal his son would never abandon, pursuing it, like his father, with an almost jingoistic zeal. Educated in China, England, and the United

States, young Luce entered Yale in 1916, making a name for himself as a tireless and humorless journalist. Joining the staff of the Yale *Daily News*, Luce used the occasion of the entry of the United States into World War I to propagate his nationalism, advocating much the same international role for the United States as he would in World War II. Given his religious background, Luce found atheistic communism repugnant and also published the first of many anti-Communist broadsides in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.

**Making Time.** Following graduation in 1920, Luce took a series of editorial jobs, eventually relocating to New York. With a fellow *Daily News* alumnus, Britton Hadden, he set out to launch a newsweekly magazine, tentatively entitled "Facts." Unlike newsmagazines of the day, Luce and Hadden's glossy would be written second-hand, with the editors summarizing material appearing originally in newspapers and magazines around the globe. The new magazine, now titled *Time*, would also specialize in breezy, accessible prose, which became known among journalists as "Timestyle." Dropped articles and adjectives, inverted sentence structure, and a staccato punctuation that compressed the material for an intended audience of "busy men" were the main elements of Timestyle. *Time* also announced, in its 3 March 1923 first issue, that "complete neutrality on public questions and important news is probably as undesirable as it is impossible." From that moment forward, *Time* was not only a magazine intended to inform; it was a magazine intended as Luce's platform.

**Advocate.** *Time*, as well as later Luce developments *Fortune* (begun in 1929) and *Life* (begun in 1936), routinely championed the interests of eastern, Republican businessmen — a solid core of subscribers who weathered the Depression well. Luce advocated a laissez-faire policy as a solution to the Depression, backed Hoover in 1932, and opposed the New Deal. Luce also expanded his activities into new media, beginning a topical radio series, "March of Time," which featured sensational dramatizations of the week's events, complete with sound effects such as gunshots. Later he introduced a newsreel series with the same title. As the Luce empire grew, it became an important organ for international news, tilting the public toward Luce's particular conception of American internationalism by its presentation of events. Until the middle 1930s Luce and *Time* promoted fascism, especially that espoused by Mussolini, as a solution to the dangers of communism. As Hitler's regime spiraled to new depths of brutality, however, Luce followed his readership into Fascist opposition. Luce and *Time* were irate at the normalization of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1933 and continued to portray the Communist state negatively. China, in the midst of a civil war between Communists and Nationalists (as well as at war against the Japanese), in the mid 1930s earned repeated exposure in the pages of *Time* and *Life*, especially in the



form of sympathetic articles on the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek.

**Internationalist.** After the Munich crisis of 1938, the Luce publications began to advocate U.S. intervention to oppose Hitler in Europe. In this Luce was bucking the tide of isolationist sentiment, especially within the Republican Party. He had strengthened his ties with the Republicans, backing Alf Landon in 1936. In 1940 Luce actively promoted a political outsider, Wendell Willkie, as the Republican nominee for president. Willkie, like Luce, was an internationalist, convinced that only the United States could impose order on a chaotic world. Luce was a trusted adviser, hoping to become secretary of state after a Willkie victory. His ambitions dashed with Willkie's defeat, Luce turned toward his second wife, Clare Boothe Luce, giving her the publicity she needed to win a seat in Congress in 1942. He also continued to press for a more expansive U.S. role in the world. Pearl Harbor greatly simplified his efforts. After the declaration of war he turned his publications toward the task of achieving victory, although he was unsettled that events had cast the United States and the Soviet Union as allies against Germany. By 1943 a *Fortune* poll found that 81 percent of Americans approved of the coalition with the Soviet Union and hoped to continue to pursue the alliance after the war. Luce, loathing Stalin and communism, was determined to prevent this.

**Cold Warrior.** Luce and his magazines were instrumental in promoting the Cold War by molding American public opinion against the Soviets. *Time* and *Life* accomplished this by subtle — and not so subtle — use of analogies and metaphors. For example, *Life*, in an essay on the devil, suggested he resided in Moscow. Both magazines were among the first press voices to suggest that communism and fascism — polar opposites in ideology — were politically equivalent and to make analogies between Hitler and Stalin. They consistently suggested that Soviet actions were filled with evil intent and advocated large-scale military build-up. They promoted domestic anti-Communists such as Richard Nixon and Joseph McCarthy (although later Luce would deny being a McCarthy supporter) and repeatedly attacked leading Democrats, such as Harry S Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, for being soft on communism. Some of this zealous anticommunism was due to Whittaker Chambers, a *Time* senior editor who would become famous for accusing a State Department official, Alger Hiss, of spying for the Soviet Union. Luce, however, was the main general of the anti-Communist crusade. His speeches to civic groups during this period are full sermons on the dangers of the Soviets and on God's choice of the United States as "a principal instrument of His will on earth." Luce was also the leader of the China Lobby, a group of conservative organizations that funneled millions of dollars in U.S. assistance to Chiang Kai-shek in China. Luce featured the Chinese generalissimo repeatedly on the cover of *Time*, giving the public the impres-

sion that he enjoyed widespread Chinese popularity. This was not the case, and Chiang's corrupt and inept Nationalists fell to Mao's Communists in 1949. Luce was livid, and his magazines were among the first to echo the Republican charge that the Democrats had "lost" China. The charge, coming after the Soviet explosion of the atomic bomb and right before the Korean War, was fatal to the political prospects of the Democrats. They were crushed in the 1952 election. Luce was no doubt a political force.

**Establishment.** In the 1950s and 1960s Luce's influence and power were substantial, and his magazines became, more or less, organs of the American *establishment* — a term often used to describe the elite of conservative, corporate, anti-Communist internationalists centered in Washington, D.C., and New York City. Winston Churchill labeled him one of the seven most powerful men in the United States. His magazines, including a new recreational title, *Sports Illustrated*, were read by nearly 50 million people weekly, and his company had branched out into book publication, recordings, and entertainment. The 1963 fortieth anniversary of *Time* was the social event of the season, featuring over three hundred distinguished guests who had graced the cover of *Time*. With age his militant anticommunism mellowed, but he retained a keen interest in Asian affairs and was foremost among those advocating U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. In 1964 he turned over the management of the *Time* publications to Hedley Donovan, but he never really retired, continuing to applaud U.S. intervention in Vietnam and U.S. confrontation with Communist China. He died of a coronary occlusion on 28 February 1967.

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## BILL MAULDIN

1921-

CARTOONIST



**Army Cartoonist.** Bill Mauldin became one of the best-known cartoonists of the 1940s on the strength of his World War II series *Up Front*. Syndicated in addition to their publication in his division newspaper and later the *Stars and Stripes*, his cartoons about army life were a favorite of enlisted men and civilians alike. In 1945 he received the Pulitzer Prize, at age twenty-four the youngest person to do so.

**Civilian Life.** Mauldin was born in Mountain Park, New Mexico, and by the time he was a teenager he was

drawing posters for local merchants. At his Phoenix high school he worked on the school newspaper. He studied at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts with money borrowed from his grandparents. He had no trouble securing work as a freelance cartoonist, but during the Depression he found it difficult to support himself, so in 1940 he joined the National Guard. Almost immediately his unit was activated as part of the U.S. army, with Mauldin serving first in a truck unit and then in the infantry. He began submitting cartoons to his division's newspaper, in the process creating his two most memorable characters.

**An Unsentimental View of War.** Willie and Joe, Mauldin's everyman GIs, allowed him to explore the humorous as well as darker aspects of war; they also allowed him to poke fun at the military brass, some of whom would have kept his cartoons from publication were they not so popular with the enlisted men. Their popularity with the American public also helped to ensure their continued publication, and they moved to *Stars and Stripes* in 1944.

**Postwar Career.** After the war ended Mauldin received a lucrative contract to continue *Up Front* as *Willie and Joe*, which dealt with the characters' return to civilian life. Though his collections *Up Front* (1945) and *Back Home* (1947) sold well, the newspaper cartoons did not prosper, and in 1949 he left cartooning for nine years in order to pursue other interests, including acting and aviation. In 1958 he became an editorial cartoonist for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; the following year he won his second Pulitzer Prize. In 1962 he moved to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, where he has spent the remainder of his career as a respected editorial cartoonist.

**Source:**

Dennis Wepman, "Bill Mauldin," in *The Encyclopedia of American Comics*, edited by Ron Goulart (New York & Oxford: Facts On File, 1990), pp. 253-254.

## DREW PEARSON

1896-1969

JOURNALIST



**Muckraking Journalist.** Drew Pearson served as one of Washington's premier muckraking journalists for over thirty years, writing the syndicated column "Washington Merry-Go-Round," first with Robert S. Allen and later with Jack Anderson.

**World Journey.** Pearson was born in Evanston, Illinois, to a Quaker professor who served as governor of the Virgin Islands. After graduating from Swarthmore College in 1919, Pearson traveled to post-World War I Europe to learn about diplomacy but instead became the director of relief in the Balkans for the British Red Cross. In 1921 he returned to the United

States. In 1922 he began a self-financed world journey, signing on as seaman on the merchant vessel S.S. *President Madison* for a journey to the Far East. He jumped ship in Yokohama, Japan, and traveled for two years in Japan, the Soviet Union, China, the Phillipines, Australia, New Zealand, and India.

**Newspaper Beginnings.** During his travels Pearson began publishing his impressions in Australian newspapers. In 1923 he continued his travels into Europe and gained a newspaper syndicate contract. His most important work from this period was his interview series Europe's Twelve Greatest Men. In 1925, after a trip to Japan and China, he married, and the next year he took a job on the staff of the *United States Daily* newspaper. With this position Pearson began his rise in the world of Washington journalism. In 1928 he traveled with Secretary of State Clark Kellogg on trips to Paris and Dublin and with President Calvin Coolidge to Havana.

**Washington Merry-Go-Round.** In 1929 he joined the staff of the *Baltimore Sun* and continued his work as a diplomatic and foreign-affairs reporter. During the presidency of Herbert Hoover and the first years of what became the Great Depression, Pearson became friends with Robert Allen, the Washington bureau chief of the *Christian Science Monitor*. The two often met and discussed ways to print inside stories of Washington politics that their respective papers refused to publish. In 1931 they wrote and published anonymously *Washington Merry-Go-Round*, a compilation of rumor and gossip that caused an uproar in official Washington circles. A sequel, *More Washington Merry-Go-Round*, was published in 1932, but the identity of the authors was revealed, and both Pearson and Allen were dismissed from their jobs.

**Daily Column and Radio.** Faced with unemployment Pearson and Allen signed with United Features Syndicate to produce a daily "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column. By 1941 it was printed in 350 papers around the world. In February 1941 they began a weekly radio broadcast on NBC that Pearson claimed was a safeguard against censorship efforts by the syndicate or by individual papers. A liberal with a controversialist edge, Pearson campaigned for internationalism abroad and civil rights at home. During the war he had impeccable sources within the War Department and the intelligence groups. In April 1941 he predicted the breakdown of the Nazi-Soviet pact and the German invasion two months before these events happened. In 1943 Pearson broke the story of Gen. George S. Patton striking a soldier who was suffering from battle fatigue.

**Nobel Prize Nomination.** In 1947 Pearson organized a public movement to donate food for the war survivors in Europe. His talent for publicity and self-promotion was so successful that seven hundred train-car loads of food were distributed in Italy and France through his efforts. He received most of the credit and was nominated for the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize. But he was best known after the

war for his attacks on the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), on which he was relentless from the beginning. Pearson was such a thorn in the side of Sen. Joseph McCarthy that in December 1950 McCarthy attacked him physically.

**Continuing Influence.** Pearson's career continued into the late 1960s; where his influence waned in one degree, it continued in another. After Allen quit the "Washington Merry-Go-Round" during the war, Pearson continued the column on his own. In the late 1940s he recruited a young newspaperman, Jack Anderson, to work with him on it. Anderson, who ended up on President Richard Nixon's enemies list in the early 1970s, was a muckraker in Pearson's image. He was not, however, nearly as principled. It is in his tactics and his doggedness that Pearson's influence lives.

Source:

Oliver Pilat, *Drew Pearson: An Unauthorized Biography* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1973).

## ERNIE PYLE

1900-1945

WAR CORRESPONDENT



**The Regular American.** Ernie Pyle was the most famous war correspondent the United States ever produced. A Midwesterner who quit college after three years, Pyle was the eyes and voice of the regular American, able to describe the experience of individuals at war in the language of the readers at home.

**First Newspaper Job.** Pyle missed World War I when his parents ordered him to graduate from high school and refused to allow him to enlist. As a senior at Indiana University in January 1923, Pyle quit to accept a job as a reporter on the *LaPorte* (Ind.) *Herald*. In just a few months he was offered a job as a reporter on the *Washington Daily News*.

**Traveling the Country.** In July 1925 he married Geraldine "Jerry" Seibolds, an intelligent but troubled civil-service worker. Calling themselves bohemians, the couple did not allow their friends to know of their marriage for many years. In summer 1926 the Pyles quit their jobs and traveled around the United States. After nine thousand miles in ten weeks, the Pyles ended up in New York, where Ernie took a job on the copy desk at the *Evening World*. In December 1927 Pyle returned to Washington, D.C., and the *Washington Daily News*, where he began the first aviation column in the United States.

**Roving Columnist.** In 1932 he was promoted to managing editor, a position he did not enjoy but which he kept for three years. In 1934 a long automobile trip taken

to convalesce from a nasty case of influenza suggested his ultimate talent. After his return to Washington he wrote a series of well-received columns about his vacation trip. He convinced Scripps-Howard, the owner of the *Washington Daily News*, to employ him as a roving columnist. He began writing six columns per week to be printed in the twenty-six Scripps-Howard papers. For five years Pyle traveled throughout the United States, writing his six columns per week, the whole week's worth often completed in one day.

**The Battle of Britain.** In November 1940 Pyle sailed for Great Britain to report on the Battle of Britain. One of his first stories shows his talent for writing and for reporting:

Someday when peace has returned to this odd world I want to come to London again and stand on a certain balcony on a moonlit night and look down upon the peaceful silver curve of the Thames with its dark bridges.

And standing there I want to tell somebody who has never seen it how London looked on a certain night in the holiday season of the year 1940.

For on that night this old, old city — even though I must bite my tongue in shame for saying it — was the most beautiful sight I have ever seen.

It was a night when London was ringed and stabbed with fire.

**The Costs of War.** Over the next four years Pyle traveled through the war zones, both Atlantic and Pacific — Great Britain, Ireland, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, and the islands of the Pacific theater. As he watched the youth of the United States march across Europe and the Pacific Islands, he became fascinated at what war was doing to these young men. They were becoming killers, he realized; he told, indeed warned, the people back home that if and when their brothers, sons, and husbands returned home they would be extremely different from the way they had been when they left.

**Okinawa.** Pyle left for his last trip at the end of 1944. From Hawaii he traveled with units of the First Marine Division to Okinawa for the invasion that began on 1 April 1945. He went ashore five hours after the first landing and spent two days on the island. He then returned to the ship in order to write. He made several more trips to the island to accompany the Marines. On 17 April 1945 the Marines landed on Ie Shima, a ten-square-mile island west of Okinawa. Pyle did not go ashore on the landing day, as was his normal procedure, but instead waited until the following day. On 18 April 1945 he was killed by a Japanese sniper. There was a great outpouring of grief for the man who had made the life of a soldier and the experience of war available to so many. Gen. Omar Bradley commented that "I have known no finer man, no finer soldier than he."

Source:

*Ernie's War: The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches*, edited, with a biographical essay, by David Nichols (New York: Random House, 1986).

# PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

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In February 1940 American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) president **Gene Buck** was arrested in Phoenix, Arizona, on extortion charges. The charges, stemming from a licensing dispute between ASCAP and a radio station, were dropped when Arizona governor R. T. Jones refused extradition to New York.

Early in 1942 Rep. **Eugene E. Cox** of Georgia began a House investigation of FCC chairman **Lawrence Fly** and the FCC, which was dropped when it was revealed that Cox had taken kickbacks from a Georgia radio station.

On 6 June 1945 six people connected to the foreign-policy journal *Amerasia*, including publisher **Philip Jaffe**, were arrested and charged with espionage when they were found to have had substantial classified State Department files passed to them by disgruntled officials critical of U.S. support for Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalists. There was little evidence to support the charge, and the cases against the six were dropped, fueling suspicions on the far Right that a Communist conspiracy was at work within the State Department.

In June 1940 **James Caesar Petrillo** was elected president of the American Federation of Musicians. During the next few years, he would lead a struggle for royalty payments to musicians from radio broadcasters.

In 1942 former newsman **Byron Price** became head of the U.S. Office of Censorship, a wartime agency set up to monitor overseas communications within the United States and American broadcasting.

On 10 March 1944 Col. **David S. Sarnoff** of the reserve officer's corps reported for duty in the Army Signal Corps. Sarnoff, the president of RCA, was placed in charge of allocation of materials and communications for D-Day.

Published by Pocket Books, **Benjamin Spock's** *Baby and Child Care* quickly became the best-selling paperback book of the 1940s and 1950s.

When **Joe Shuster** and **Jerry Siegel** sold their comic-book character Superman to National Periodical Publications (later DC Comics) in 1938, they signed away all rights to the character but continued to draw and write the strip. When they took the company to court in 1947 to increase their royalties they lost the case and their jobs writing and drawing Superman. In 1975, in response to public outrage that DC had made millions from Superman while his creators received nothing, DC established an annual stipend for each.

One of the more stunning radio programs aired in the summer of 1943 was *Open Letter on Race Hatred*, a CBS dramatization of the June race riots in Detroit. The program, advocating racial tolerance, concluded with a piece read by former Republican presidential candidate, **Wendell Willkie**.