

“Two People Who Live Together and Like It”

by Lynne Belluscio

It was before my time, but “Henry Aldrich” was one of the most popular radio programs in the 1930s, along with the “Jack Benny Show” and “My Favorite Husband,” starring Lucille Ball. All three programs were sponsored by Jell-O. It was the Golden Age of Radio and few of us remember a time when families would gather in the front parlor to listen to the radio.

But you will have a rare opportunity to gather at 58 On Main on Friday night, September 12 at 7 pm or Saturday, September 13 at 2:00 pm for a smattering of radio programs. Jim Delooze has gathered several programs together for an entertaining radio show. Tickets are available for only \$5 at the Jell-O Gallery or at Barista’s at 58 Main. Proceeds will benefit the Historical Society.

The Aldrich Family was developed from a Broadway play, and first was included in short episodes on the Kate Smith Show. Then it was a summer replacement for the Jack Benny Show.

In 1939, it became a weekly

show on Tuesday nights. The show opened with Henry’s mother shouting “H-e-n-r-y - Henry Aldrich.” And Henry would shout back in a high pitched adolescent voice “Co-m-i-n-g Mother!” The Aldrich family lived at 117 Elm Street in Centerville. Henry’s father was a lawyer and his mother was a homemaker. Henry was an awkward teenager who bumbled his way through each episode, but endeared himself to the audience each week. The radio show developed into comic books, television and movies. The last radio program was in 1953.

“My Favorite Husband” aired in 1948 and ran for three years, starring Lucille Ball as Liz Cugat. The name of her character changed to Liz Cooper after confusion with band leader Xavier Cugat. The Coopers lived at 321



Bundy Drive in the fictitious city of Sheridan Falls and were billed as “two people who live together and like it.”

For several years, the show was sponsored by Jell-O and each episode included at least three Jell-O commercials, including Lucy’s greeting - - “Jell-O Everybody!” In 1953, it was suggested that the show would go to television, but Lucy refused to appear on a television show without her husband Desi Arnaz, so “My Favorite Husband” appeared on television with Desi and Lucy.

Probably the radio program most closely associated with Jell-O was the “Jack Benny Show”, which featured the penny-pinching, comedian who played the violin terribly, and who was always 39. He was joined on

the air with Mary Livingstone, “Rochester” his chauffeur, Dennis Day, the band leader Phil Harris, and the announcer, Don Wilson, who was often the brunt of Benny’s jokes. It was Don Wilson’s voice that sang out the familiar “J - E - L - L - O.”

“The Jack Benny Show” was sponsored by Jell-O from 1934 until 1942. It was said that the program created such a demand for Jell-O that production was unable to keep up. When World War II broke out, the sugar shortage created a terrible problem for Jell-O and General Foods changed the sponsorship of the program to Grape Nuts, another General Foods product.

So if you’re looking for a little nostalgia, and a time when radio was entertaining, join us at 58 On Main for a glimpse of the Golden Age of Radio.

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