



The Facts **ABOUT** **Arthur Godfrey**

By Jack O'Brian

ARTHUR GODFREY is not a singer. He is not a comedian. But he is, several times over, a millionaire. And his best friends are millionaires.

Somehow, this striking notion does not seem to bother the vast concentration of Godfrey fans as much as it bothers Godfrey himself. As a matter of public relations, he pretends that his vast holdings are as near to non-existence as possible.

This feeling that large piles of cash might strike some of his public as vulgar, ostentatious even for a man of much highly publicized success, is only of recent vintage. Two years ago I was off on a week end to

Miami Beach with Arthur Godfrey; his business manager, Leo D'Orsay, one of the nation's top tax experts and fiscal lawyers; and our wives. It was our first sight of the fabulous passenger plane the aviation industry had presented to Arthur Godfrey in gratitude for the fantastic good will he had promoted for commercial aviation.

The plane's fittings were fabulous. The innards contained lounges, desks, cocktail implements, a kitchen, powder room, an airship-to-shore telephone, even a television set.

We fell to discussing the Godfrey

Legend with Leo D'Orsay, the only man in the world — including Godfrey — who knows how much Arthur is worth. D'Orsay was not reluctant then.

We were discussing Godfrey's contract with the Columbia Broadcasting System, which had been signed not long before.

"It's the last contract Arthur will ever sign with any network," D'Orsay said.

He explained that Arthur then was 48 years old, that he would be 58 at the expiration of the pact — in 1961 — at which time he would undoubtedly be ready, probably anxious, to get along to something other than the deadly daily deadline of microphone and camera.

"Of course," said D'Orsay, "Arthur hasn't had to worry about money for years."

We asked what he meant. We can't remember with positive exactness, but it sounded somewhat like this:

"American Tel. & Tel., Anawhatzis Copper, Atlantic & Potomac, A. & Z., Anaheim & Azuzza Power & Light, Anteater Inc.," and so on; as neat, solid-sounding names as you would hear anywhere short of Dun & Bradstreet's fanciest alphabetics.

D'Orsay rattled off a dozen or more names under "A" and went on to "B" and then "C." It was an amazing display not only of Godfrey's investments but of D'Orsay's memory.

ARTHUR GODFREY has not, let us assert right here, amassed all this fortune through some fiscal fluke nor through holes punched suddenly in the Internal Revenue by the hard-hitting Mr. D'Orsay. Be it remembered that Arthur literally has been in the Big Money since 1934.

That was the year when he first was heard by Walter Winchell on the very first night he took to Washington radio with a witching-hours disc-jockey-and-chatter show.

Winchell and some friends were sitting in New York and someone was doodling with the dials on the radio set. The Godfrey voice, the intonation, the gentle impudence, the simple, unaffected approach, struck Winchell's quick ear. He called the radio station in Washington whence Godfrey's gabby imper tinences were originating.

Godfrey took the call, but simply didn't believe it was Winchell. After another call, he believed.

Winchell said he loved the show; keep it up.

Godfrey said thanks; he would.

Then started a constant barrage of admiration in Winchell's syndicated column that no press agent extant could have hoped for. Godfrey told us the story himself, several times.

"Suddenly my salary shot up to \$750 a week, and the very next week to \$1,000," he told us, wonderment at the miracle still present after 18 years.

"I haven't made less than \$1,000 a week since."

This, of course, is modesty triumphant. To break out the full facts, Arthur Godfrey now gets \$35,000 a week from the Columbia Broadcasting System.

His furious succession of radio and TV shows earn for the Columbia Broadcasting System a gross total of more than \$17,000,000 per year.

Godfrey's portion is 10 per cent of that, or a little over \$1,700,000.

Even after taxes, this is a heady hunk of cash. It has been estimated that after Uncle Sam finishes his annual avuncular carving, some \$300,000 is left.

That is roughly around \$6,000 a week after taxes.

Naturally, the millions-and-more that Godfrey already has stashed away in investments spread their annual dividends into cash, or coupons, or into more stock. He owns some New York City real estate. He is an equal partner in one of the finest perfumeries this side of Paris: Cicogne, Inc.

Godfrey has large holdings in the frozen fruit industry, in a bank, in real estate developments elsewhere; and if we hear the furtive murmurs correctly, some oil property gushing nicely, thank you.

As for his famous "farm" at Leesburg, Va., it is a stretch of rolling land worth roughly more than a million. It is stocked to the hilt with blooded cattle and livestock of all kinds. But please do not get the

notion that Arthur is that sorry fellow, a "gentleman farmer." Far from it. His farm makes money.

ONE of the minor mysteries around Radio-TV Row is how the story started that Arthur Godfrey is "tight," penurious, a miser. He is not. Thrifty — yes. But tight — never.

He pays most of his entertainers "scale," meaning union minimums, or not much more than scale. But this alone is a lot of salary. Take the recently-exploded-to-stardom Julius La Rosa as an instance. Paid only a hair above "scale," this young sailor Godfrey had discovered singing in a Navy base earned about \$1,000 a week at the time of his noisy exodus from the good ship Godfrey.

When he takes the members of his air shows with him on week end junkets to Miami Beach, or wherever, there never is any question of who hoists the tab; it always is Godfrey. Nor does he select one or two members of his Gang for such fun forays; he takes as many as his plane comfortably will tote.

It is not miserliness, as the gossips would have it; nor pride of riches, as Godfrey himself fears, that causes his bad publicity. It is the emotional explosions that punctuate his paternalistic relations with his employees. Details of the Julius La Rosa blunder — in which Godfrey fired the young singer before a coast-to-coast audience — got unprecedented publicity. But internal com-

bustion is no novelty among the Godfrey personnel.

Generally, what goes on before or after a radio show is of little interest to the public; the play's the thing. But in Godfrey's case, he has carried his radio and TV fans along so far into his private life — from his farm to his penthouse apartment, from swimming pools on the farm to ditto in Miami Beach hotels, with marginal details on the life and loves of his farm animals, his own enthusiasms from politics to ponies, and those of the members of his cast — that everything concerning the group is a matter for public nosiness.

We all know that Frank Parker is a year older than Godfrey. Godfrey uses that skimpy head start as a hook for laughs. Of course, we didn't know until Julius La Rosa let the kitten out of the bag that middle-aged Frank Parker at the age of fifty had to take ballet lessons; and that he did not like them.

Lots of more troublesome kittens escaped their confinement once La Rosa's case went into the headlines. It seemed to loosen tongues around CBS. Godfrey no longer was sacred. A strange, worried censorship had previously taken root in that \$17,000,000 or more in advertising revenue Godfrey delivered. Not even persons who were known to have had sad tales to tell were brave enough to talk. But suddenly, when the great legend tottered a little, the klatch began:

What about Irving Mansfield, the

CBS producer who gave Godfrey the idea for "Talent Scouts"? Wasn't he pushed off the show by Godfrey's anger?

What happened to Godfrey's first CBS bandleader, Henry Sylvern, who had been made as much a focal point of the fun as Archie Bleyer later was to become — until he too was fired along with Julius La Rosa?

WE CONTACTED Sylvern, and he was bitter about his strange departure from Godfrey's shows.

"I had a heart attack, from working so hard," he said. "I spent 13 weeks in an oxygen tent, another 13 weeks in the hospital, and the rest of a year recuperating."

Why hadn't he returned to the Godfrey shows?

"Because he didn't ask me to," said Sylvern, shrugging.

Any reason?

"I've never known one," he said.

What did Godfrey say about it?

"I never knew — he never called me."

Bill Lawrence, who once was to the Godfrey Gang what Julius La Rosa was to become, also was cased out of the Godfrey orbit after he went into service, was discharged medically, and came back to what he'd hoped would be his old job.

He also had bitter things to say, but wouldn't go far into detail. Godfrey told us young Lawrence was a "mixed-up kid, drank too much, and other stuff."

Lawrence said he never drank un-

til he got among the Godfrey Gang. That dispute remains, to no one's advantage.

The case of Margaret "Mug" Richardson, formerly Godfrey's closest associate, is mentioned often by informers who say "Mug would have a lot to tell, if she only would."

But "Mug" won't; she hasn't said anything to date but carefully complimentary things.

Some time ago reporters were loosed on the Godfrey pack, and each of his various shows' performers was interviewed on the subject of their millionaire boss. None would talk specifically about his farm, although they had been there; seems they had been warned never to discuss it. They would speak only in the most extravagant admiration.

Their stories were about the same: Godfrey was wonderful.

Since the La Rosa episode, some of these former statements have become a back-of-the-hand laughing matter. What they wouldn't discuss formerly, some of the cast now detail privately. All that had been sweetness and joy in the interviews now is shrugged off as something "we had to do."

We have been able at last to put a little more together in the complex mosaic of Godfrey's relations with his employees.

"And we *are* employees — he never lets us forget it," we were advised.

First thing a new performer is made aware of in the Godfrey scene

is the admonition in word and framed office signs which, summed up, insist: "Never bite the hand that feeds you." This is impressed heavily, even when the hand that is feeding may push the feed forcibly and with considerable discomfort to a person's pride.

Even Frank Parker, a man Godfrey publicly states was important to him when Godfrey's going was rough, has been told that "*you* can be replaced, too."

Lu Ann Simms was publicly admonished for admitting admiration for Frank Sinatra and for saying on the air that she wanted to go see him perform. Sinatra, said Godfrey, was not the sort of person he wanted mentioned approvingly during his shows, and anyone who disregarded this would get the sack.

JULIUS LA ROSA, who prefaces each reference to his discoverer with gratitude for the opportunity Godfrey gave him, says now that, "Whatever Mr. Godfrey did about firing me has nothing to do with the wonderful things he did to bring me to radio and TV."

But, explanations and semantic footwork aside, La Rosa engaged a personal agent and a lawyer to handle his future — the reason Godfrey gave for firing Julius — simply because he "saw it coming six months before."

La Rosa said he felt the ultimate firing was certain when Godfrey "started picking on me regularly."

Until then, Julius had received about the same percentage of knuckle-rapping as the rest of the folks on the shows.

Cynics around CBS say the bawlings-out grew in number and intensity with the rise in size and enthusiasm of La Rosa's fan mail. Whatever the reason, Julius said he rode the receiving end so often that he secretly sought out his family friend, now his lawyer and manager, Frank Barone. Both hoped the assaulting firepower would lessen, but when it became clear, they said, that friendly relations could not handle the situation, the offer of Thomas Rockwell, boss of one of the three biggest theatrical agencies, of an annual \$100,000 minimum guarantee, looked good.

When Godfrey was told by CBS vice-president James Seward, who handles contracts for Godfrey performers, that Julius had committed a grievous sin against Godfrey's First Commandment — hiring an agent, manager, or publicity representative — the end was in sight.

That Godfrey chose an actorish, extrovert method of firing the 23-year-old singer — right on the air — turned La Rosa into a sudden and sympathetic sensation instead of just another nice young singer among dozens of TV's hundreds such. CBS and the newspapers were flooded with anti-Arthur mail. What at first was a trivial backstage personnel problem now became a popular item of coast-to-coast gossip. It

loosed everyone's tongue and imagination. It also loosed Godfrey's ire at the Godfrey Gang. He insisted that no one on his shows had any "real" talent except Marion Marlowe. He previously had exercised his ire against Miss Marlowe in various fashion, even pointedly excluding her from a little gathering for coffee after a swim on a chilly day, a minor indignity but one Miss Marlowe felt deeply.

He hit the roof when he read in gossip columns that Miss Marlowe was dating George Jessel; another "Sinatra" style attitude.

The intensity of what the Gang calls "prayer meetings" was illustrated during the La Rosa fracas when the McGuire Sisters — "Julius wants to marry Dorothy McGuire, and vice versa" — grew so jittery that they literally closed and locked a CBS door, and prayed for protection against a feared angry onslaught.

Some stories now circulating totter over into the lunatic category, and must be dismissed as pointedly the work of enemies. But we were advised to see certain office workers once connected with Godfrey interests who plainly knew more than they would mention. They remained curiously tight-lipped, refusing to say anything for or against their former boss; meaning that some of the fright hadn't yet left them. Had they said anything complimentary, the silence would not have settled so menacingly.

SPEAKING *of* ANIMALS . . .

By Alan Devoe

THE CLAMPING down of the Iron Curtain has been an awful thing on many solemn and momentous counts. Also, for me personally, it has involved a small, preposterous and poignant sorrow. My mail does not bring me, any more, the "snake story."

I used to get it from places like Pinsk, Omsk, and Nether, Czechoslovakia. My correspondent was almost always at least a former Major-General in His Serene Highness's Imperial Hussars, or a nephew of His Apostolic Holiness of Odessa, or something like that. The story was always an eyewitness account, quite often with a supporting affidavit from an unimpeachable authority. It went like this:

A cleaning woman in our ancestral castle (so His Hereditary Magnificence would tell me) one day moved a heavy piece of furniture in an out-kitchen. Behold, there was disclosed a family of baby snakes. As our faithful Tanya emitted an outcry of sur-prisement, the mother snake came hurrying from outdoors, where she had been gathering food for her little ones. Aha, thought the snake, this wicked woman will kill my babes! I will revenge! Stealthy, thinking unobserved, mother snake glides to milk-crock on hearth, and in twin-

klung is spitting-in her terrible poison! But sharp-eyed Tanya sees and hurries to tell me. Rushing to out-kitchen, I pick up baby snakes, very gentle, and put them outside in grass. I show mother snake is only kindness meant. She watches in amaze as if thunder-stroke. Terrible remorse comes in her heart. Quick like a snake, she darts to hearth and overturns milk-crock, so her benefactors will not be drink poison! Is not this wonderful thing, showing how wise is mother-love even in serpent, and how strange and marvelous is nature, nyet?

Well. I used to get this story about once a week. I miss it. It used to give the work of being a naturalist a dreamy glow of extraordinary charm. I should be nearly inconsolable without it, if there were not fortunately a great many countries still outside the Iron Curtain, and spirited animal lovers in them to report to me the doings of their furred and feathered friends.

For instance, the matter of those North African gazelles. This account generally comes to me from a missionary's wife at a lonely desert outpost. She has always been a keen student of wildlife, she tells me; and of course a missionary's wife in a place like Mukh-al-Fabeeb has a lot of time for looking at it. Well,