

Annie People



The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

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Member of:

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Re-Release of Original Cast Album Out Now!

You may not have noticed that the Original Broadway Cast Album has been re-released under the Sony Classical/Columbia/Legacy label. The cover is exactly the same as the first release, so you will have to turn the CD or cassette over to see the new photo and song title listings. It's part of a new series of great Broadway show cast albums to be issued with digital remastering and additional material. The CD number is SK 60723 and the cassette number is ST 60723. A full review of the remastering and the additional material (Martin Charnin and Charles Strouse performing the first draft of the show for backer's auditions in 1972) will be in the January issue.

From *The New York Post* on Friday, August 21, 1998: "The sun will come out tomorrow for Macy's—after a judge tossed out a child actress' lawsuit claiming the famed store reneged on a deal to make her the star of "Annie" on Broadway....[Judge James Giles] ruled that Joanna Pacitti, then 12, had won only a chance to audition and win a part in the hit musical—not a guarantee she would ultimately be the star. "A Broadway role is not comparable to other contest awards," Giles wrote....Casting for the 20th Anniversary revival in 1996 drew attention nationwide when Macy's struck a deal with producers to conduct a 50-state search for "Broadway's New Annie."...ABC's "20/20" news show focused on Joanna's campaign to win the role, her triumph at the "Annie-Off" finals at Macy's Manhattan store and rehearsals for her Broadway debut. But in February 1997—two weeks before opening night—the producers faxed Joanna the news that she was being replaced in the show's lead role. Her [then] 8-year-old understudy, Brittny Kissinger, was chosen to replace her. Joanna and her parents, Joseph and Stella Pacitti, sued Macy's for breach of contract, charging it had made fraudulent claims concerning the auditions. Giles found otherwise. "The contract which she signed...did not guarantee her that she would open on Broadway," Giles wrote. "[It] instead considered her to be like every other actor in 'Annie' who had won their role through an audition process but could be replaced at the producer's discretion."

From *The New York Post* on Friday, August 28, 1998: "Joanna...is vowing to continue her legal fight with Macy's...."I want to continue to fight Macy's so that no other child has to go through what I did and be so disappointed," said Pacitti. Her attorney told Post Plus he will formally file an appeal in the next several weeks....But it's not been an entirely "hard-knocks life" for the 13-year-old actress—she's the lead in a major new production of "The Secret Garden" [in North Carolina in September 1998]."

From *Playbill On-Line* September 10, 1998: Livent's Ford Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto sued the producers of the Annie tour for \$200,000 for reimbursement for advertising costs when the Toronto booking of the tour was cancelled. The tour was scheduled to stop there in September, and all tickets had to be refunded.

Thanks to all who submitted material for this issue!

THE CONCLUSION TO THE QUESTIONS-AND-ANSWERS FROM THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY COMPANY

Are you familiar with any other aspects of Little Orphan Annie? Have you seen the 1982 movie or have you ever read the comic strip in the "funny papers?" Your opinions on them, please.

J.B. Adams (Drake/Morgenthau): Would love to hear Annie say 2 phrases: "Gloryosky" and "Who'd a-thunk it?"

Marla Egan (Stage Manager): Haven't seen the movie. Have read comic—found it very slow.

Michael E. Gold (Mr. Bundles/Sound Effects Man): Don't care for the movie, too far from the play.

Lisa Gunn (Grace Farrell): Not familiar.

Jeffrey Markowitz (Production Stage Manager): Saw the movie, not very good.

Brad Wills (Harold Ickes/Fred McCracken): Awful movie, strip is very entertaining. However, I love the period and I find almost anything about the period intriguing and charming.

Why do you stay with Annie? Do you like the material and how the show makes people of all ages happy? Is it the people you work with? (If the answer is simply "a steady job" that is valid as well!)

J.B. Adams (Drake/Morgenthau): J-O-B, W-O-R-K, M-O-N-E-Y.

Marla Egan (Stage Manager): Good people on crew and cast. Good money. Good time for children.

Michael E. Gold (Mr. Bundles/Sound Effects Man): Steady work, of course, but love to perform. The show is great and audiences love it.

Lisa Gunn (Grace Farrell): I've loved the experience, but it was time to get back to NYC and my husband.

Larry Kleiber (Swing): I've worked with Martin Charnin at least ten times before. It's so great to be a part of his most special show. I look at this job as a gift.

Jeffrey Markowitz (Production Stage Manager): The people I work with and the work.

Brad Wills (Harold Ickes/Fred McCracken): Job, job, job.

J.B. Adams: *How does this Annie tour experience compare with the 3rd National Tour of years ago in which you played Rooster?* No comparison. 3rd National was a far superior experience all-around for me. *What did you like about playing Rooster?* Sustained character/scene work. Acting with Kathleen Freeman (Miss Hannigan).

What are your memories regarding working on Annie Warbucks off-Broadway. At first exciting, then grueling, and finally, frustrating because the producers waited too long to decide to try to move it [from Off-Broadway to Broadway]. Also, felt it started with the huge disadvantage of always having to exist in the shadow of Annie. Thus, it had all the cards stacked against it.

Michael E. Gold: *(Reminisces regarding Annie Warbucks off-Broadway)* Annie Warbucks was different in many ways. I lost my father during that show so it was both difficult and foggy. Even missed the cast recording. But it was best being a part of an original musical and cast.

Larry Kleiber: *What was the least amount of time you had to prepare to go on for a performance?* In Vancouver at the end of the Cabinet scene a drop came in fast and hit Drew Taylor in the head. I had about five minutes to get in sound equipment and costumes to finish the second act.

Do you have your own set of costumes for all of the men's roles? I have my own set. I have more clothing than anyone in the production. I am a "valued" member of the company if only because of the thousands of dollars of clothing that was made especially for me. I have twice the amount of the female swing.

Have you ever covered 2 parts at once? My first day as the official swing I was on for Drew Taylor AND Brad Wills at the same time. I had dialogue in the Cabinet scene conversing with myself, so at half-hour [before curtain time] I was told which lines I would and would not say. We were on the road two weeks and I was on for Tom Treadwell AND the Drake/Bert Healy tracks at the same time. I never had been on for Drake so that combination was not easy for me.

Which role would you love to play permanently? I love the diversity of being a swing, so I have no desire to take over a track in the show. I love the challenge. As a final thought, we are all human, and life can get lonely at home—that loneliness is even deeper on the road—so lots of us can get down or cranky every so often. When I start to get too self-involved—queer as it sounds—I watch the first twenty minutes of the show. It always makes me appreciate being a part of this show.

Jeff Markowitz and Marla Egan (Stage Managers): *What is your division of labor (i.e. does one of you call the cues and the other makes sure the actors are ready and the stagehands are in place, etc, etc.)? Basically, who does what (pre-show and during performance)?*

Jeff: We both know all of each other's jobs so we can cover one another when a crisis calls for one of us to give attention elsewhere. Usually, one person gives the cues, the other runs the deck. Our Assistant Stage Manager Beth Bornstein is equally interchangeable.

Marla: We divide the show into calling, working the deck, and office/audience member and rotate jobs nightly. We all need to know how do it all.

How much prep time do you get when the tour arrives in a new city? Do you get to do a tech rehearsal with all the actors or at least a cue-to-cue before the first performance?

Jeff: Five hours on Monday and six or seven on Tuesday to set the show up. No rehearsal with actors except one hour sound check before half-hour, rarely—but sometimes—a cue-to-cue with local crew if conditions require.

Marla: We arrive, check in, head to theatre, set up the office, talk to local staff and then focus the lights with the electricians. By then it is 3 or 4pm. We break for dinner and return at 6:30 for a half-hour sound check and then we are at half-hour for performance.

Does the entire backstage crew travel with the show or do you hire local stagehands or lighting operators or whomever? If you have a new crew for each city, has that ever been a problem?

Jeff: We travel with 13 crew members—department heads and assistants. We add 51 locals to load-in and set-up, 29 to run the performances with us. New crews can be problematic—inexperience, rowdiness, drunkenness, attitude—all potential problems.

Marla: We travel with 2 of 10 prop [department], 2 of 8 electricians, 4 of 19 carps [carpenters]. There is always an adjustment to the different skill level but it works fine 99% of the time.

Are some theaters much more difficult to work with than others (antiquated equipment, not enough wing space, too small a stage)? What is some of the problem-solving you have had to do?

Jeff: Yes. Some theaters require scenery to be cut or the size of the deck cut or the loss of a winch, requiring restaging to have actors bring on furniture, or backstage actor crossovers to be cut requiring restaging. Many choices have to be made.

Marla: We have about 4 different versions of the stage set up depending on the stage size and set up. Quite frankly, that is touring. We adjust every day.

How did you get into stage managing? What training have you had? How long have you been doing this?

Did you ever act or do some other technical theater job first before you became a stage manager? How hard is it to become a professional stage manager?

Jeff: Started in college, theatre program at SUNY Purchase required a show in every area and stage managing clicked. Been doing it 15 years. Never acted, only stage manage, production manage, produce or lighting direct. It's a very hard discipline, few good jobs, healthy competition—need technical skills, people skills, political skills and PATIENCE.

Marla: I have been stage managing for 10 years, 8 professionally. I started by helping a friend after I quit my job selling used cars. I had never done any theatre before. Have a Psychology/English double major from Denison University in Granville, Ohio. Professional work is about talking to everyone you can about learning more and finding out what is available to do—AND DOING IT.

Jeff reminisces regarding Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge and Annie 2 in Connecticut (his name was even in the show for a while as "Captain Markowitz" of the Warbucks' yacht!) and Annie Warbucks off-Broadway. **Jeff:** A thousand stories of A2.... Yes, my name was in and out of the show several times, but the characters never stayed. My mom's name too (Flo). Here's one story—when Dorothy Loudon got sick for five of the six final shows in Washington DC, the understudy, Dorothy Stanley, had never been rehearsed because the script was changing every day—we never had time for understudies. So, all her lines and lyrics were furiously scribbled on poster board and stage management took turns between cues to hold cue cards up in the center of the [orchestra] pit for Dorothy Stanley. Oy, the musicians weren't happy with us...

Todd Serenbetz (animal handler of Cindy Lou and Buster): *Do the dogs get recognized by people on the street when you take them for a walk before the show?* Quite often. It's usually the parents that recognize the dogs and not the children. Little kids, especially, don't quite grasp the idea of live theatre in that the people they'll be seeing perform are real and different from the people in the movie. So before the show, they're expecting to see the dog from the movie. After the show, they're very good at spotting us on the street.

What special accommodations do the dogs require either in travelling or at the hotel or theater? Bill doesn't allow his dogs to be flown, so I drive them in a van from city to city. On long trips I stop every three hours to let them exercise and give them water. We don't need anything special at the hotel—Cindy Lou is very happy with lying in "her" queen-sized bed. At the theatre, the dogs and I need our own dressing room to ensure their safety (and everyone else's sanity). The room need to be properly heated or cooled, so Cindy Lou will perform at her peak.

Are they fed any sort of special food or vitamins to keep them in tip-top shape for performing, or do you stop in the supermarket in each city you are in to buy their food off the shelf? Cindy Lou and Buster eat Purina Dog Chow—one of the best foods on the market—as well as get vitamins that improve their coat, boost their energy and prevent the onset of arthritis (a common ailment for large dogs).

Do they ever just not want to do the show? Like for the "NYC crossover," does Cindy Lou ever give you the dog equivalent of a look that says "yeah, right, you think I'm gonna walk all the way over there for you." The remarkable thing about Cindy Lou is that she always performs her tricks, which is a testimony to Bill's method of training as well as an indication of how special Cindy Lou is. She may not do the trick with a high level of energy, but that's due to her being tired or bored. So, the real "trick" of the show is to keep her interested and enthused in what she's doing.

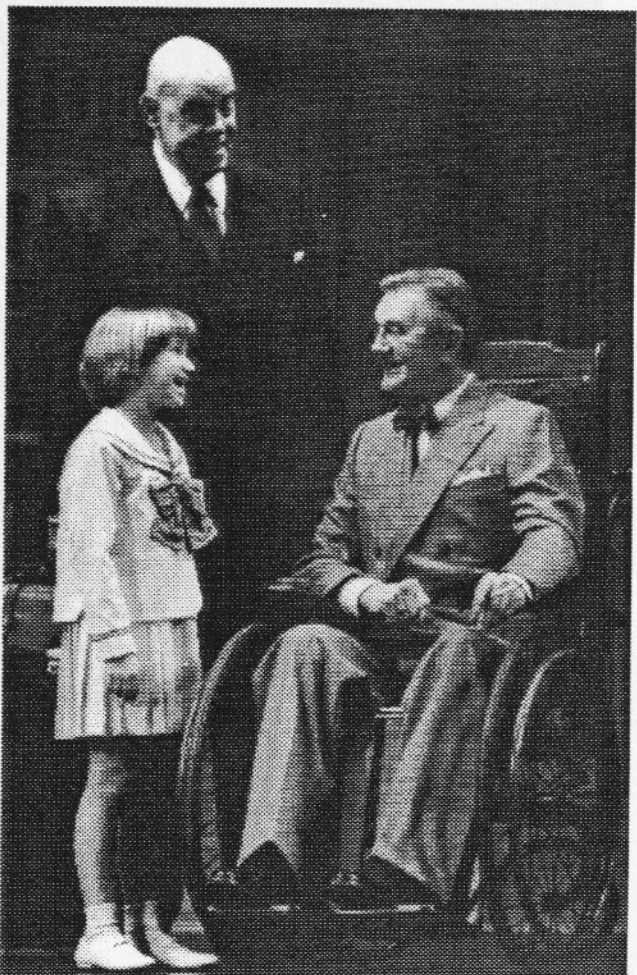
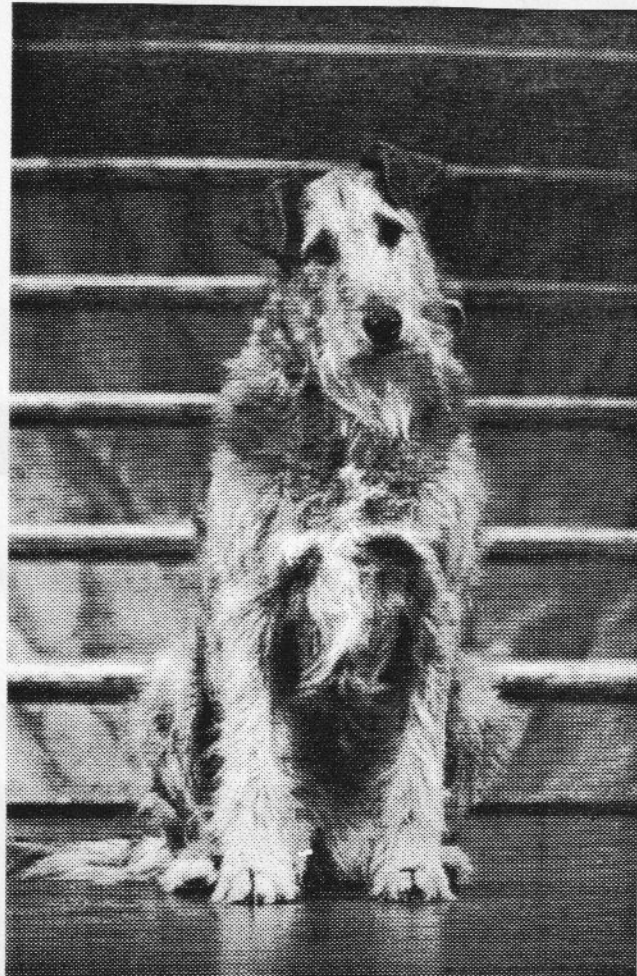
What is your background as an animal handler (how long have you been working for Bill, have you worked with any other animals besides dogs, how did you get into the business, do you have any special training that you went through)? I started working with Bill in November 1995. I was a marketing intern at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia when they were about to put on "The Wizard of Oz." They hired Bill at the last minute (the week before tech rehearsal) to replace the first dog they hired, but he could only set the show up and not run it. I volunteered to take care of the dog and run the show for him. which combined two passions for me: theatre and dogs. I've since done two more productions of "The Wizard of Oz," Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Whistle Down the Wind," a regional production of "Annie" (with Kathryn Zarembo) as well as this one. I've only received the training that Bill has given me. The most exotic animal I've worked with is a lamb that was used in a production of Sam Shepard's "Curse of the Starving Class" at the Signature Theatre in NYC.



Photo credit: Carol Rosegg. Submitted by Danielle and Britny Klissinger.

SCENES FROM THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION ON BROADWAY

Original Broadway Company of March 1997. Photo credit: 1997 Carol Rosegg. Submitted by Cromarty & Co.



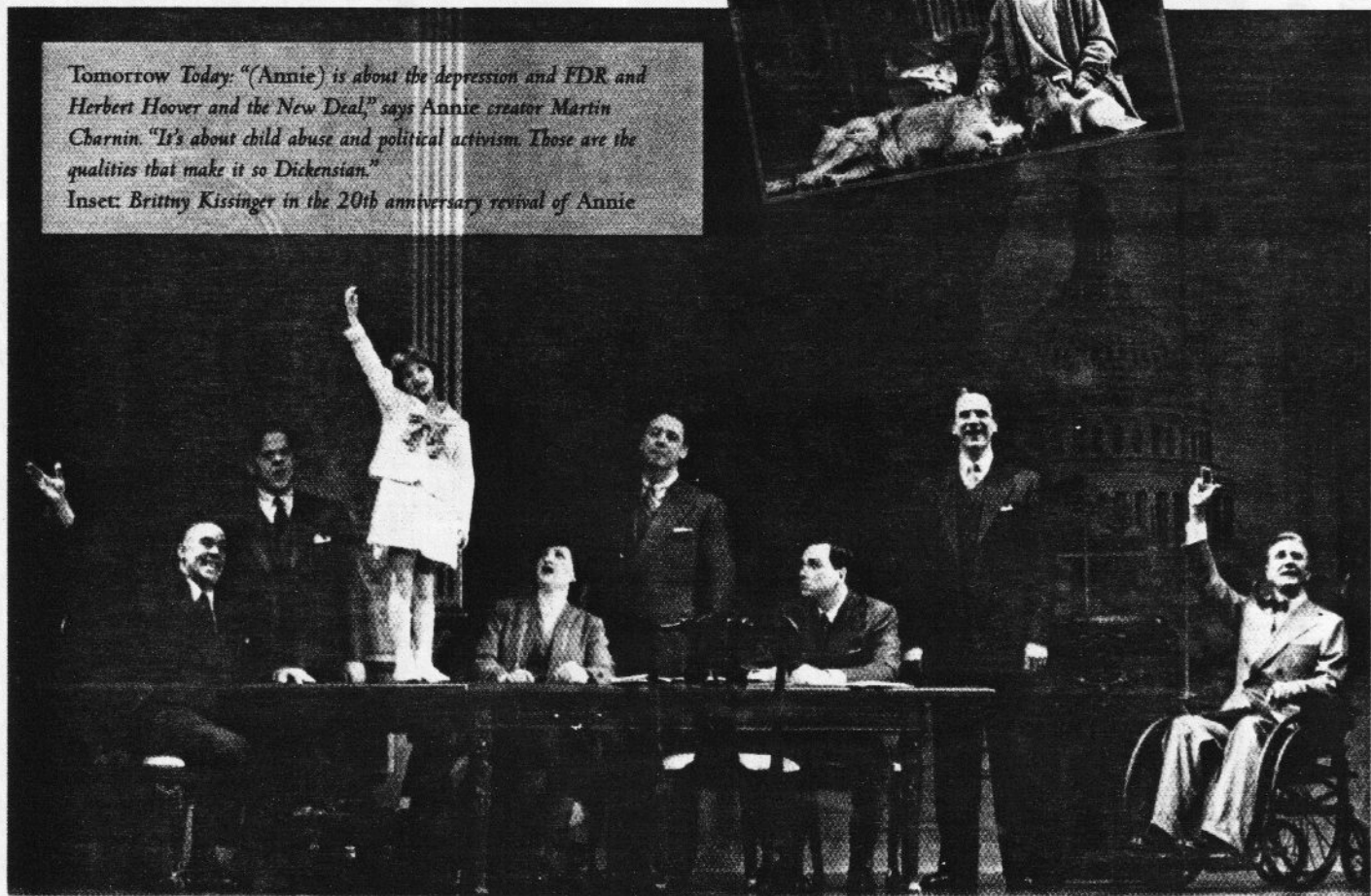
America's Favorite Orphan Comes of Age

A Conversation with *Annie* Creator Martin Charnin

BY MICHAEL SCASSERRA

Tomorrow Today: "(Annie) is about the depression and FDR and Herbert Hoover and the New Deal," says Annie creator Martin Charnin. "It's about child abuse and political activism. Those are the qualities that make it so Dickensian."

Inset: Brittany Kissinger in the 20th anniversary revival of *Annie*



In this issue we begin reprinting an interview with Martin Charnin which appeared in the program for the 20th Anniversary Tour on its engagement at the Newark, New Jersey Performing Arts Center in June 1998. The rest of the article will be reprinted in the January issue. The article was reprinted with the permission of the author Michael Scasserra and the NJPAC.

Twenty years after it first opened on Broadway, *Annie* is back to charm a whole new generation. . . .



The American musical's greatest villain?: Sally Struthers as Miss Hannigan

The show's original Broadway production won seven Tony Awards, ran for 2,377 performances (making it the 11th longest running show in Broadway history) and was subsequently presented in 17 foreign languages. Since her debut as a musical comedy heroine, *Annie* has grossed over 350 million dollars and continues to be one of the most lucrative stage properties ever created.

Based on Harold Gray's enduring depression-era comic strip, the original *Annie* first hit New York in 1977 and has since earned a place as one of America's most beloved musicals. The 20th anniversary production (running at NJPAC from June 9 through June 14) was nominated for a Tony Award as Best Musical Revival during its Broadway run last year. This revival reunites the show's original creative team — director and lyricist Martin Charnin, composer Charles Strouse, and dramatist Thomas Meehan — and stars Conrad John Schuck as Daddy Warbucks, Sally Struthers as Miss Hannigan, and Brittny Kissinger as America's favorite orphan.

Here, taking a break from the current nationwide *Annie* tour, Martin Charnin discusses the history of the show, the universal appeal of *Tomorrow*, and the current state of the American musical theater.

Michael Scasserra: Take us back as far as you can go with *Annie*. When was the first time the idea of doing this comic strip as a musical came into being?

Martin Charnin: Christmas of 1971. It coincided with the publication of a book called *Arf, The Life and Hard Times of Little Orphan Annie*. It was a compilation of the work of Harold Gray. I bought it as a Christmas gift for a friend of mine, but the bookshop was so crowded, I told them not to bother to wrap it. Then when I got home, I started to read it. Needless to say, my friend never got the book.

I became so fascinated with Gray's style and his storytelling.

MS: What about his style?

MC: Well, if you look at the *Little Orphan Annie* strip, there are an awful lot of words in those balloons. As a child, I can remember that I avoided reading it because it had so much language. It wasn't like a lot of the other line-drawing cartoons of the time.

MS: Were you always a reader of the comics?

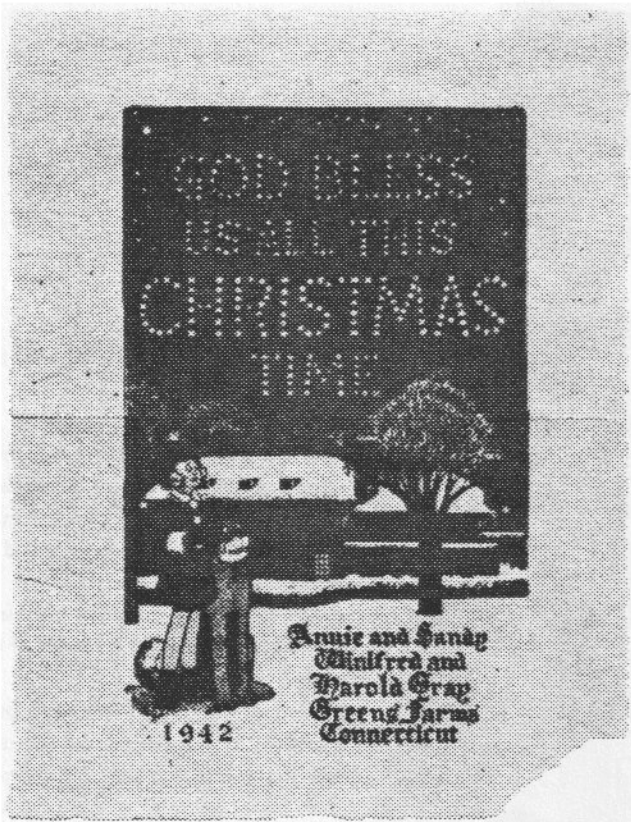
MC: Growing up, I was primarily interested in Superman and Batman and those exploits. But *Little Orphan Annie* wasn't so much a comic book as it was a comic strip.

MS: It had a serial quality?

MC: Yes. In fact, at one point, it had a great deal of success as a half-hour serialized radio show. Gray had a lot to say. He was very political. To me, he was a master of intricacies of plot and detail. I kind of equate him with an American Charles Dickens. During the early 1970's, it seemed that everything Dickens wrote was being turned into a musical, so there were no Dickens works left to explore in that way. All of the sudden, looking at Gray's work, I found someone homegrown. The trick to Gray's cartoon style was that the character of Annie never changed. She maintained her

"...a generation or two have not really experienced *Annie* on stage. They only know it from the really terrible movie that Columbia made."

— *Martin Charnin*



From the late 1920s until his death in 1968, Harold Gray drew an Annie Christmas card to send out. These two are from 1942 and 1944, and are very poorly printed on extremely fragile and cheap World War II newsprint. They measure about 4" by 6" and do not have any printing on the back.

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