

HAPPY 60th BIRTHDAY, ANNIE!

YOU DON'T LOOK A DAY OVER 11!!

Annie People



A Newsletter for Annie Fans

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Artwork by Tricia Trozzi

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Leapin' Lizards, Annie People, here we are, celebrating the 60th Annie-versary of the Little Orphan Annie comic strip, which was started by Harold Gray way back on August 5, 1924. Actually, when we all realize that six decades have passed since Annie became part of Americana, we also realize that she herself has changed very little. In spite of Annie's world-wide fame as a star of the stage and screen, she remains the little girl who keeps all our chins up no matter what goes on around us and constantly reminds us to look on the bright side. We dedicate this 10th issue of Annie People to our favorite red-haired orphan and hope that she will bring as much happiness to everyone in the next sixty years of "tomorrows" as she has in the past sixty years.

Featured in this special birthday issue is an interview with Shirley Bell Cole conducted by Larry Skrdla especially for Annie People. As you probably know, she played Little Orphan Annie on the radio serial during the 1930s.

CLASSIFIED AD: Tomorrow, the newsletter for Annie collectors, with news and information on Annie collectibles. For #1 and a copy of his sales list, send your name to Stephen M. Russo, 15 Tuttle Street, Revere, MA 02151. (If you ordered his first listing, you will be receiving Tomorrow.)

We will be back in September in AP #11 with our usual features again, more news of the tour, and an update on Rosanne Sorrentino.

Now, turn the page and meet some of Annie's old friends (and some enemies) who are joining us in wishing her a very HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!



Harold Gray (1894-1968)



"Daddy" Warbucks



Sandy



Punjab



The Asp



Skip Smith



Sheik Bahd-Simel



Janey



The Futiles



Eli Eon



Ezra Eon



Selby Adlebert Piffleberry
Count De Tour



Mark Pease



The Kneck Brothers



Shanghai



Libby



Pee Wee



Nick Gatt



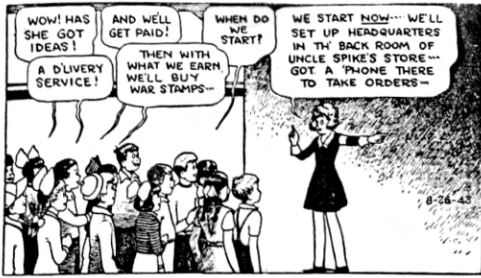
May Flowers



FIDO



Mr. Am



The Junior Commandos



Fred Free



Angela Pease



Boris Sirob



Emily Marie



Stella Han and Croesus



Huckie Flynn



The Spangles



Axel



Mr. and Mrs. Silo



Mr. Rune



Grunts and Little Casino



Spike Marlin



Dr. Sue Choors



Mrs. Bleating-hart



Wilda and Sawyer Oates



Dr. Wot and Snawky



Jack Boot



Maw Green



Anya Toze

★ Annie Stars Since Annie ... ★

At the end of July ALLISON SMITH will begin filming thirteen episodes of Kate and Allie for the fall on CBS...Word comes from APRIL LERMAN that she is also going to be in a TV series on CBS this fall. This summer she will be filming Charley in Charge, which will star Scott Baio and Willie Aames. Last summer April starred in an HBO movie called The Brass Ring...SHELLEY BRUCE has left AKA Unlimited and has joined a new band called MixTyMotions...ROSANNE SORRENTINO was recently in a play in New York called Sacraments...Problems may be ahead for RAY STARK's plans to have ALBERT FINNEY reprise his role as "Daddy" Warbucks in the movie sequel. Albert has had so many offers since he was nominated for an Oscar for The Dresser that he might not be available when Annie II (reportedly to be titled The Perils of Annie) is rewritten and filming begins. Right now he is directing a play in London called Sergeant Musgrove's Dance. He is also currently being seen in Under the Volcano, teaming up with JOHN HUSTON again for the first time since Annie...BIRTHDAYS: LAURA BAKER, 12 on July 22; JOHN HUSTON, 78 on Aug. 5; THOMAS MEEHAN, 55 on Aug. 14; ROBIN IGNICO, 14 on Aug. 19; and, of course, LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE, 60 on Aug. 5.

1984 ANNIE NATIONAL TOUR

The 1984 Annie National Tour will open in Atlanta in July and run till November. MARTHA RAYE will be Miss Hannigan, DEAN DITTMAN will be Oliver Warbucks, and LYNNE WINTERSTELLER will be Grace. The Orphan cast will be as follows:

Annie	LISA LYNN HOHENSTEIN
Molly	SHELLEY PAUL
Tessie	KIMBERLY STERN
Duffy	JENNINE BABO
Pepper	SARAH LITZSINGER
July	DANA DAWSON
Kate	REGINA MEREDITH
Swing Orphan	SHERRI LEIDY

Lisa Lynn is ten years old and is from Philadelphia, where she played Annie at the Riverfront Dinner Theatre last summer. Many of the other Orphan names are familiar to Annie People readers, since they have played previously on Broadway or in other national tours of Annie. Dana toured with Allison Smith and Sherri toured with Alyson Kirk last summer; Regina played Molly in the 2nd National; Kimberly was Molly in the 4th National; and, of course, Jennine was on Broadway for five years under four different Annies as three different Orphans. The AP staff believes that Jennine has played on the Annie stage more times than any other Orphan actress in history, something like 2,000 times.

So far, the order of cities for the 1984 national tour is as follows: Atlanta, Indianapolis, Dallas, Costa Mesa (Calif.), Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia.

Will this tour come to Broadway for the holidays? Rumors have been flying that it might, but the official word is that such a move is not planned at this time. The closing is planned for the 4th of November in Philadelphia. However, of course, anything could happen during the course of the tour, and plans could be changed. Stay tuned to AP for any late developments.

Collector's Corner

PLAYBILL
The Movie of Tomorrow
Annie

by
Tricia Trozzi

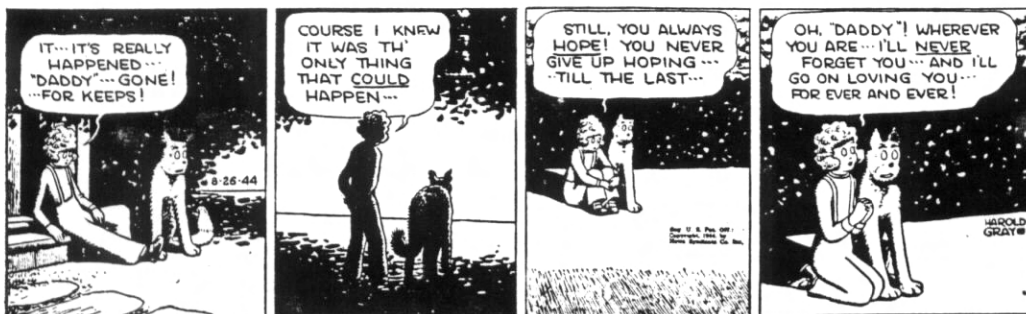
One day near Christmas, 1971, an actor/writer/director bought a book of ten years in the life of a comic strip character. He meant to give the book as a present, but instead he became fascinated with it--so enchanted with the character that he set about fashioning a Broadway musical about her. Six years and many difficulties later, the show became a smash hit. In case you haven't guessed, the man is Martin Charnin, the show is Annie, and the book is called Arf! The Life and Hard Times of Little Orphan Annie, 1935-1945 by Harold Gray. This book was originally published by Arlington House, New York, in 1970, and a slightly different format was put out later by Bonanza books.

Arf! is an abridgement of LOA strip stories (dailies only) from July 1935 to December 1945. All our favorites are there: Annie, Sandy, Oliver Warbucks, Punjab, The Asp, Eli Eon, Mr. Am, and more, including Shanghai, the peg-leg drifter who is featured in what many critics consider Gray's best story. Gray's talent for suspense, human drama, and political commentary are all evidenced, and his stories were always above the intellectual level of other "comics." Warbucks dealt with the perils of big business, while Annie ran from the kidnapers who sought to make the ward of the world's richest man their prisoner. Stories from 1942-45 show Gray at his patriotic best, with Warbucks, Punjab, and the Asp marching off to the war, and Annie tending the home front. The "Junior Commandos" movement she started caught on, with real kids all across America collecting scrap metal and buying war stamps. That brought Harold Gray the praise that he hadn't been getting during the Depression, when he was criticizing the New Deal and President Roosevelt.

This book is a fantastic sampling of Harold Gray and LOA at their prime, and although not all of the stories are complete, there is no better collection of vintage Annie. Unfortunately, this is an extremely rare book; AP's staff knows of only about a half dozen copies in existence among our readers. Possibly old book shops would have it or could get it, or maybe large comic stores. A few libraries have editions, too. This book is well worth a good search; it is an important piece of Annie memorabilia, and it will make fine reading for you for months!

There are other LOA strip collectibles too, many produced during the 1930s and 1940s. There was a Little Orphan Annie board game, as well as celluloid dolls, metal toy stoves, pinback buttons, comics, and Big Little Books. In association with the Ovaltine-sponsored radio show starring Shirley Bell, Annie's likeness appeared on mugs, badges, and in decoder ring manuals. More recently, to coincide with the movie in 1982, many manufacturers used Leonard Starr drawings on the products. Sears carried bedspreads, curtains, wall-paper, and other items with Starr's cartoons on them. Random House published kiddie books with other artists handling the blank eyes of our friends. There are other strip-related collectibles out there too--jewelry and keychains by Applause, puffy stickers, View-Master reels, and so on and so on. It's enough to keep the collector busy on a never-ending "Annieness Hunt."

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Warbucks dies, August 1944 (but he came back to life again a year later)

An Interview With Shirley Bell Cole



After the Little Orphan Annie comic strip by Harold Gray had been running for six years, it was decided to have his little red-haired heroine branch out into another medium. The radio show, which was started in 1930, was serialized daily in 15-minute installments, and featured the adventures of Orphan Annie and her sidekick, Joe Corntassle. Whereas the strip was aimed mainly toward adult readers, the radio broadcasts were meant for children of all ages, who made sure they were sitting intently in front of the "wireless" each day at the appointed hour to find out what would happen next.

History's first human Annie was played by Shirley Bell, who was ten years old when she started on the radio show, half a century before ten-year-old Allison Smith and ten-year-old Aileen Quinn would bring Annie to the stage and to the screen. Annie People is proud to present an interview with Mrs. Shirley Bell Cole, which was conducted by frequent Annie People correspondent Larry Skrdla. Portions of Larry's talk with Mrs. Cole follow:

LS: During what years did you play the role of Orphan Annie?

SBC: From 1930 till 1940.

LS: What did you do following the radio show?

SBC: For a year or so I freelanced, then married. I have three daughters.

LS: Have you seen the Broadway version of Annie or the 1982 movie?

SBC: Yes, I traveled to New York and saw the Broadway show when Andrea McArdle played the title role. I thought it was very good. It didn't necessarily relate to the radio show, which did relate to the comic strip in terms of cast and characters and lifestyle. The Broadway show really dealt with her time in the Orphanage, and the radio show dealt with adventure with and without "Daddy" Warbucks. I thought the movie was well done.

LS: Do you have any information about other cast members from the radio show?

SBC: The original Joe Corntassle--that's Allan Baruch--is deceased, and the second one, Francis Durby, I've lost track of. Most of the adults are gone now.

LS: Do you still receive fan mail?

SBC: Once in a while I get some from collectors of memorabilia of Annie, but not necessarily fan mail from the show.

LS: Have you been involved in show business recently?

SBC: I attempted to get into commercials and did a few voiceovers. I have a daughter who's a commercial studio singer. A couple of years ago one of the road shows had an "Annie Day" at Arlington Park in Chicago; I was invited to join the cast. It was very nice.

LS: Have you done any recent TV appearances?

SBC: Last summer I was interviewed on a local show, Prime Time with Buddy Black, seen Sundays, and when I was in New York I did a few interviews.

LS: Do you still have the red wig used in the promotional photos for the radio show?

SBC: Yes, I do. I had to have it restored, so to speak, lying in a cigar box all these years looking pretty motley, but I have it put away now. I have an Annie dress also, used a couple of times.

HAROLD GRAY AND LEONARD STARR
 "How Many Ways Can One Draw Blank Eyeballs?"

by Tricia Trozzi

Although the pupil-less trademark of Annie and her friends has remained fairly constant over the years, most of the other visual aspects of the strip had changed during Gray's forty years at the drawing board. After Gray's death in 1968, it wasn't until 1979 that Leonard Starr put Annie back on course. Over the years drawing styles change, and a comparison involves looking at each artist in his own era.

In the Twenties, comic characters were less concerned with anatomical

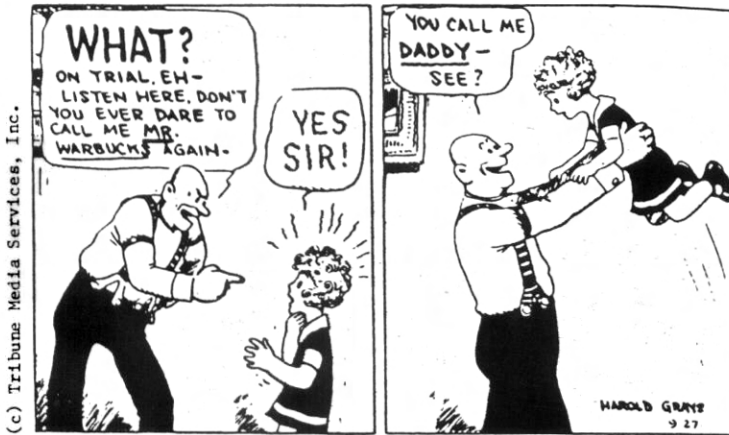


Figure 1 September 1924

accuracy than with being funny. This was totally acceptable to the public, who didn't care if their heroes had huge hands and feet with tiny bodies. When Little Orphan Annie first appeared on August 5, 1924, she was a fairly well-proportioned little girl. But Oliver Warbucks started out as a typical banana-nosed, pot-bellied cartoon man. (Fig. 1) Other early characters were also very "cartoony," but that was the style of the times. In the Thirties,

Gray was much more realistic in the depiction of his characters, although he always drew arms and legs that were kind of shapeless, and hands that were big and thick. Warbucks looked much more human, as did other men in the strip, except maybe for Punjab, who sometimes appeared to be nine feet tall! (Fig. 2) In the Forties and Fifties, Annie seemed to look older than twenty years earlier, as Gray's style changed with each passing decade. (Fig. 3)

His changing style is also shown in his backgrounds; some were plain with hatch lines around the word balloons, but others were full of detail and helped create the mood of the story. In the 1940s, Gray was using a lot of black in his panels, especially during World War II episodes. He was conveying a dark time in history, even for Annie, when in 1944, Mrs. Bleating-hart's large black-dressed frame appeared in several strips. Since Gray's way of depicting his characters had changed so



Figure 2 April 1941

much over the years that the 1924 Annie and the 1968 Annie seemed like distant cousins, Leonard Starr had to pick which era he would model his drawings on. He chose the Thirties, which he considered Gray's best art.

Comics, too, have changed over the years, and now in the Eighties more life-like characters appear. Leonard Starr's previous strip before Annie was called On Stage, and it was about a struggling young actress. His style is very realistic, and blank eyeballs notwithstanding, his characters in Annie look like real human beings. Annie is the right size for



Figure 3 September 1945

an eleven-year-old, looking slightly older than in some of Gray's drawings. Warbucks is far more true-to-life than his 1924 counterpart. (Fig. 4) The other renderings of characters stay in this life-like style, which is compatible with the Eighties.

Starr's backgrounds vary from cross-hatching at the top of the panel to detailed interiors of rooms. The diversity is necessary in order to make an interesting set of panels. After the movie came out in 1982, Starr adopted the Monmouth College (N.J.) building that was used as Warbucks' mansion in the film into the strip, which gives a little continuity between these two aspects of Annieness. (Fig. 5) When the Starr comics started in 1979, the logo from the Broadway show was used in the strip as a sort of tie-in. Actually, the Broadway show took the logo art from a panel drawn by Harold Gray in 1932. (Fig. 6) It just shows how all of LOA fandom is inter-connected.



Figure 4 December 1983

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Through 60 years of good times and bad times, Miss Asthma's Orphanage to Oliver Warbucks' mansion, Pee Wee to Snawky, Axel to Skip Smith, Eli Eon to Ezra Eon, and all the rest, Annie has hung in there and has usually come out on top. In the drawings of Harold Gray and Leonard Starr, Annie's blank eyes, red dress, and frizzy hair have made her our favorite little orphan. May she never grow up!



Figure 5 December 1983

(c) Tribune Media Services, Inc.



Figure 6 November 1932

(c) Tribune Media Services, Inc.

Annie

Suppose Harold Gray had been alive and had been the one to write the screenplay for the movie. How would he have done the ending to keep it more in tune with his Little Orphan Annie strip? Here is how reviewer Shel Dorf from The Comics Journal imagined how it might have been:

"...As everyone is singing and dancing on the front lawn of Warbucks' Mansion, the fireworks would land on the roof and set it on fire. "Daddy" Warbucks would run into the flaming building to save his valuable papers. The whole structure would collapse as Annie and her dog, Sandy, watch in horror. Annie would be left with just her dog and the clothes on her back. Presuming "Daddy" Warbucks to be dead, she would have the choice of either going back to the Orphanage or hitting the road. So, in the next scene, Annie and Sandy are picked up by a truck driver who eventually takes them home to live with his family. Then we would see how the working man himself deals with the Depression...."