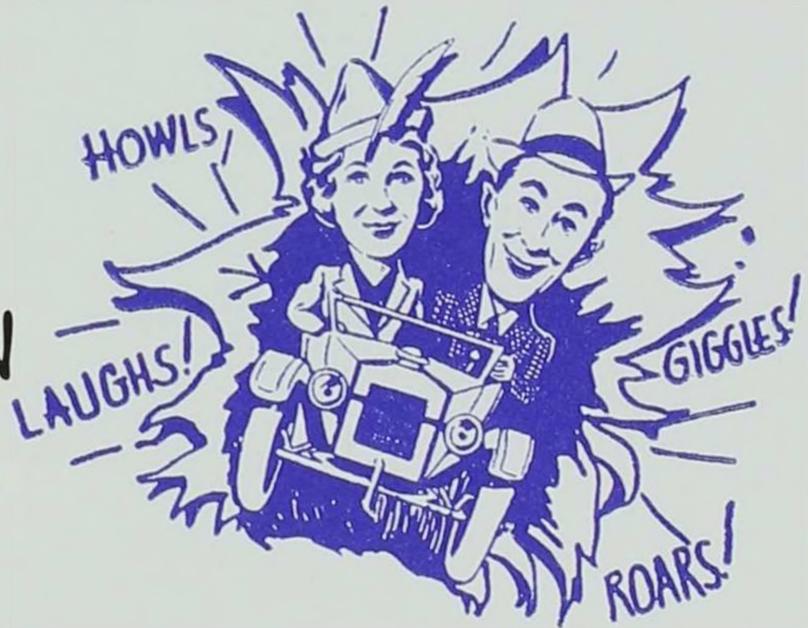


# Toby's Corntussel News

## The Schaffners Take their Show on the Radio



by Michael Kramme

*"Here comes Toby, here comes Suz,  
with their fun to chase your blues."*

This announcement alerted radio listeners that for the next 15 minutes, Neil and Caroline Schaffner would bring them the latest comical happenings from the fictional village of Bugtussel, Iowa. Thousands of midwesterners weary of the Great Depression and World War II tuned in to *Toby's Corntussel News* for a daily dose of humor.

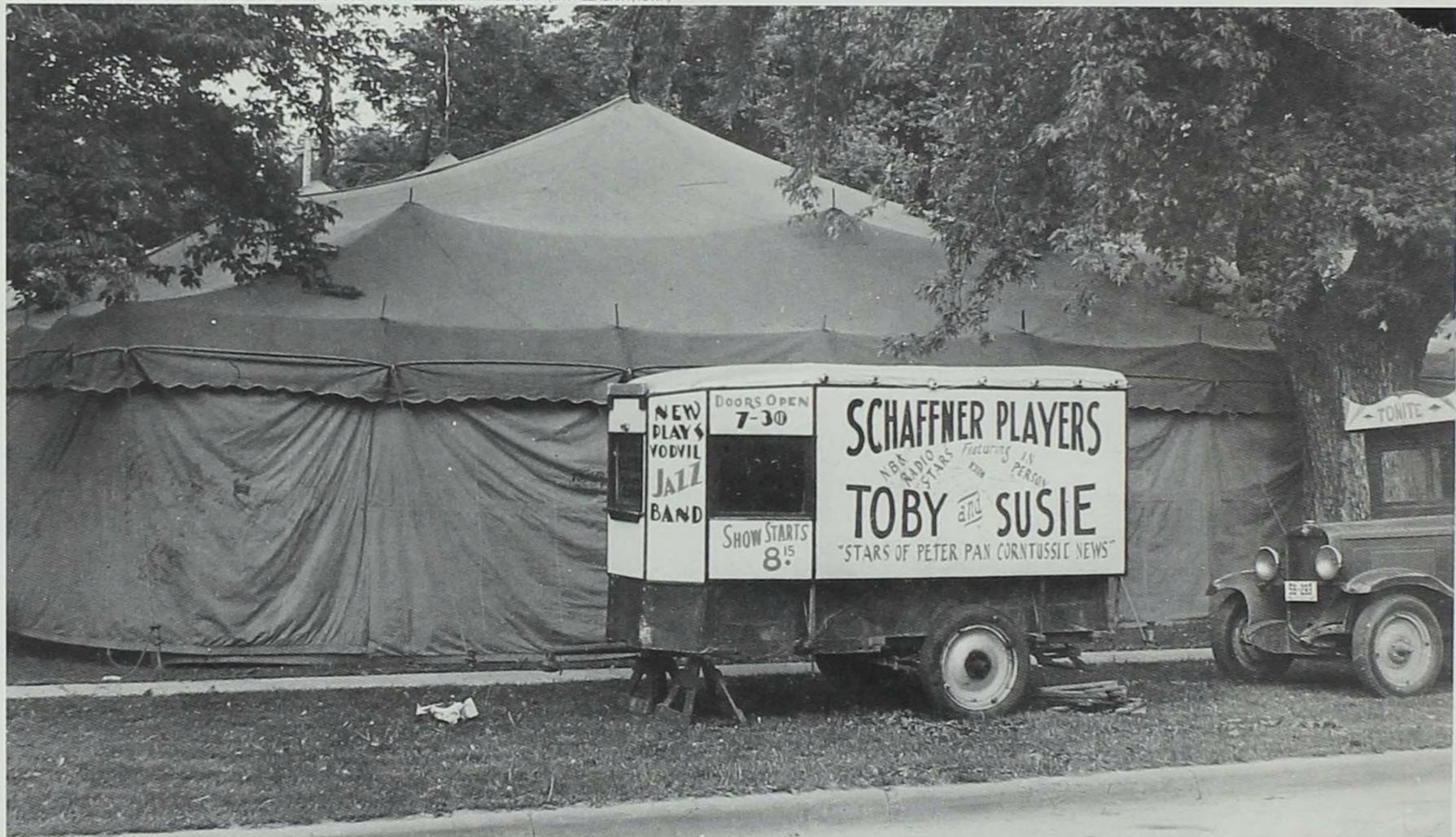
The show's stars, Neil and Caroline Schaffner, were already familiar to midwestern audiences through their traveling theatrical company, which had been touring Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri since 1925. Their company was similar to hundreds of traveling entertainment enterprises in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Typically, a company of actors and musicians arrived in a community, performed a mix of dramas, comedies, and specialty acts for several days, and then moved on to the next town. In the early years, the companies performed in opera houses, theaters, and town halls for most of the year. During summers, when buildings were too warm for the audience's comfort, the companies moved their shows into tents. As the popularity of motion pictures increased, fewer opera houses remained available to the traveling companies, and many of the companies became summer-only operations. By the early 1930s, as

hard times set in, traveling companies had begun to falter. But not the Schaffners. They were willing to take their show on the radio, as well as on the road.

Adaptability, resourcefulness, and risk-taking had long been hallmarks of Neil Schaffner, who had first fallen in love with the theater as a boy in Fort Dodge, Iowa, at the turn of the century. Progressing from audience, to backstage, to on stage, Schaffner held a variety of jobs in local and traveling productions. In 1924 Schaffner was visiting his hometown of Fort Dodge, when he first saw southern-born Caroline Hannah in the chorus line of a show named "Al Russell and His Sizzling Cuties." She caught his eye, and a few months later, he hired her to join Angell's Comedians; he was the company's manager as well as a performer. They became engaged while on tour and were married in Sac City on July 24, 1925.

Neil and Caroline soon left the Angell show and organized their own company, "The Neil E. Schaffner Players." During the Schaffner Players' first season (1925/26), they performed nine months in the opera houses and, to escape the heat, three months under canvas. Neil wrote many of their plays and played a variety of roles ranging from leading man to a comic character named "Toby." Caroline played the young, beautiful ingenue and occasionally leading lady roles.

The Schaffner Players were appearing in West Burlington in September 1935, when Johnny Palmer,



**D**uring nine months of the year, the Schaffners, like many touring performers, set up their stage and scenery, bleachers and chairs under huge canvas tents. As their radio show flourished, they capitalized on their “Toby and Susie” fame to draw even larger audiences. Here, the Schaffners set up their show in Lewiston, Missouri, in the 1940s.

business manager for 250-watt WCAZ in Carthage, Illinois, arrived to sell advertising. Palmer and Neil visited at length about the radio business, now in its second decade. Eventually they agreed on a proposition. The Schaffners would do a 15-minute comedy radio show, five days a week, without pay. In exchange, the station would give the Schaffners some air time each day to promote their traveling company.

After trying out a variety of material for the new radio program, the Schaffners remembered a successful routine they had used as a specialty act on the road. The routine was set in a small-town newspaper office. Toby (played by Neil) was the editor. He was in love with Susie (played by Caroline), the paper’s secretary, proofreader, and society columnist. Events in the newspaper office would become plots for the radio show. Caroline remembered a sign she had seen in Texas for the town of “Bugtussel,” which sounded like a good name for the show’s fictitious setting. They named the newspaper *The Cockeyed Nooz*; later, they changed it to *The Bugtussel Nooz* (and then *News*).

It was a small start, broadcasting on WCAZ to central and western Illinois, but that autumn of 1935 saw Neil and Caroline Schaffner join the ranks of such

comedy and variety radio performers as Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Burns & Allen, and, of course, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, veterans of *Amos & Andy* since 1929.

The Schaffners first realized the impact of their new radio show when they arrived at the Columbia Theater in Fort Madison, Iowa, where they had been hired to do a 15-minute vaudeville routine between movies. As they approached the theater, they saw a large sign on the marquee announcing: “IN PERSON, TOBY & SUSIE, STARS OF TOBY’S BUGTUSSEL NEWS.” Neil Schaffner’s gamble had paid off. The publicity from the radio show added to their visibility and boosted ticket sales and bookings for their traveling shows.

In May 1936, the Schaffners suspended the radio program—the tent show season was approaching, and that would always remain their first love—but they used the tag line “Toby & Susie Direct from Radio” in their advertising for their traveling company. The notoriety helped business—attendance for the 1936 tent season jumped by 50 percent. Even more changes were in store. The popularity of the “Susie” character changed the structure of the Schaffner company. Caroline gave up ingenue rolls and played the comic

"Susie" for most of the plays. The traveling company was now more often known as the "Toby and Susie Show" than as the "Neil E. Schaffner Players."

Pleased with their exposure on radio, and its effect on ticket sales, the Schaffners decided to try for work on a larger station. In Chicago, they auditioned for the Wade Advertising Agency. (At that time, many radio programs were still supplied by sponsors, who relied on advertising firms to produce the programs and used the air time to sell their products.) Walter Wade offered the Schaffners a three-minute spot on the weekly radio show *National Barn Dance*, starting in November 1936. *Barn Dance* played before live audiences on Saturday nights and was broadcast over the NBC network of 550 stations. Toby and Susie shared the microphone with headliners Joe Kelly, Lula Belle & Scotty, The Maple City Four, and other regulars. Toby was even given license to poke fun at the show's sponsor, Alka-Seltzer. One evening, Joe Kelly and Toby added these lines to the live commercial:

KELLY: Do you take Alka-Seltzer?

TOBY: I certainly do. I follow the directions.

KELLY: What do you mean?

TOBY: I keep the bottle tightly closed.

The Schaffners were soon gaining notice in the radio world. As a reviewer for NBC News Services commented, "Uncle Ezra's Rosedale, famous home of the mythical five-watter, Radio Station E-Z-R-A, has a rival on the Alka-Seltzer National Barn Dance broadcasts now that Tobias Tolliver and Susie Sharp are putting Bugtussel, Iowa on the map with their "Cockeyed News" now a regular feature of the Saturday night program." The reviewer continued: "Tobias and Susie, who in private life are Mr. and Mrs. Neil Schaffner, made their rollicking comedy popular . . . last winter, during a lull in their tent show business. . . . Their radio comedy features the publisher of a small town tabloid and his gossip minded girl-friend."

After nine months on *National Barn Dance*, the Schaffners chose to return to the tent for the summer of 1937, eager to perform again for audiences face-to-face. But they recognized that they had also become radio personalities. To maintain their presence on the radio, they appeared on *Barn Dance* once a month through the summer or had letters from "Toby and Susie" read on the air during the program. And with an agreement from the show's sponsor, they now

Billed here as "radio's comedy sensation," the Schaffners first broadcast on WCAZ. According to a script description, the "Toby" character was "a country boy, blustering, headstrong, lovable and a keen wit." Susie was "a level headed small town girl [who is] very much in love with Toby for the qualities she alone knows he possesses."





**A**t the center microphone, Caroline and Neil Schaffner perform as "Toby and Susie" in the WMT studio in Cedar Rapids. Opposite: To gauge the show's popularity, a few issues of the fictional *Corntussel News* were printed and offered free to fans.

advertised themselves as "Direct from the Alka-Seltzer Barn Dance."

The next winter season, when the Schaffners lost their *Barn Dance* spot to a New York comedian, they turned to other stations, first to WMT in Cedar Rapids, and then to WOW in Omaha, where they successfully auditioned in early 1938 for the Peterson Baking Company, bakers of Peter Pan Bread. Their new show's format would be much the same as their previous 15-minute program. However, the sponsor insisted on one change. Because bakers would not want their products associated with bugs, *Toby's Bugtussel News* became *Toby's Corntussel News*.

The program originated live from the WMT studios from 11:30 to 11:45 a.m., Monday through Friday. The broadcast went out over a network of five stations: WOW in Omaha; in Iowa, WMT (Cedar Rapids) and KMA (Shenandoah); and in Illinois, WHBF (Rock

Island) and WCAZ (Carthage). The Schaffners were again responsible for writing the 15-minute programs and performing them live, five days a week, throughout the winter season (they suspended the radio show when the summer tent season started up).

The format of *Toby's Corntussel News* remained basically the same over the next few years. The first thing the listeners heard was a jingle composed and played by WMT's Frank Voelker, billed as "radio's blind organist":

*Here comes Toby, here comes Suz  
With their fun to chase your blues.  
Buy the freshest bread you can  
Complete your meals with Peter Pan.*

Next, announcer Bennie Alter warmed up the listening audience with: "It's all in fun. Just to brighten

# Toby's CORNTUSSEL NEWS

PUBLISHED WEEKLY NOW AND THEN

IF YOU SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEWS IT WILL SERVE YOU RIGHT

VOL. ONCET

CORNTUSSEL, U. S. A.

NUM. TWICET

## TOBY SEZ

A government expert visited Corn Tussel last week and made a talk on fertilizers. He says he has perfected a new fertilizer that he has condensed so enough for one acre can be carried in your vest pocket. His talk was very good but the Editor wants to add that the crop can probably be carried in the other vest pocket.

### TOBY'S EDITOREEL

Things is getting much better in Corn Kounty and Corn Tussel. Business is picking up. Extra help is being put on everywhere. We note with pride that the Red Front store has taken in a receiver. Business is so good around the Public Square that one boss was able to marry off his daughter to an employee.

The farmers report improved conditions. Sy Smithers says his new Scared-Crow is working so well that the crows is bringing back the corn they stole last year.

### Get Married Young Man.

Then you will know what real happiness is. Of course it will be too late but you will know.

Before a man marries he is a dude. After marriage he is a subdude. Before marriage he seldom has a button on his shirt. After marriage he seldom has a shirt. Before marriage he says loud and lonk, "I would n't marry the best woman in the world." After marriage he finds out he was a true profit. A single man always says, "I will be boss in my home or know the reason why." After marriage he knows the reason. Most husbands, however, do have the last word. When their wife gets through talking they say "alright." Yet, seriously, this Editor dedicates these few words to that happy institution "Marriage."

MARRIAGE that happy relationship that is just like a pair of shears. One part is no good without the other. Joined together so they can't be separated each part moves in an opposite direction and play the dickens with any one that comes between them.

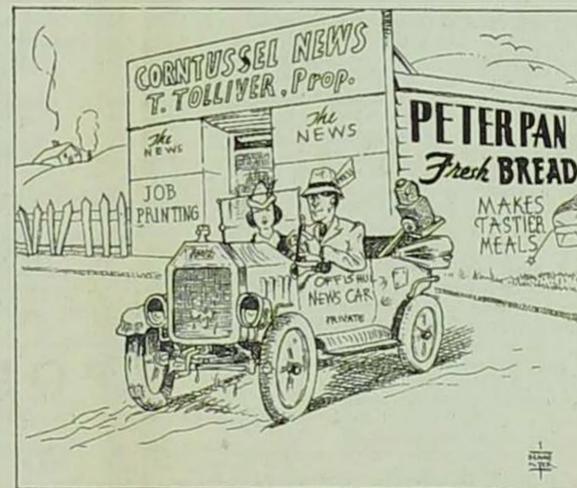
All things change—even love. In the old days a swain would dress himself up in his Sunday-go-to-meetin' full peg top and get himself a nice bouquet of flowers. Then in a dignified manner as befitted the occasion he would go to the home of his lady fair. Upon reaching the porch he would clang sharply three times upon the old knocker, then for several minutes would wiggle from foot to foot. His courage again coming up he would clang once more upon the knocker. Finally the door would open and the young lady with an astonished tone would say, "Oh! is that you?" just as if she hadn't been sittin' upstairs lookin' out the window for the last half hour. Then she would say "Want to come in?" He would mumble, "That's what I come for." She would then escort him into the parlor. That parlor with its horse hair sofa and the boards nailed across the bottom where the springs had begun to come out. There also stood that chair in the corner, the one with the weak leg. In

## Local Autonear Improves After Bein' Hit By Truck

### Singin' Practice Held Last Night

(Lem Coldchissel's used car ad got mixed up in this some way) A practicin' for Community Singin' Operetta was held last night on my used car lat by several local ladies, all good bargains. Sally Annie Waddles was lovely in floured georgette, well upholstered with mileage in large figures. Vera DeVere sang beautifully and deserves her popularity because of one extra good clutch and startling pick up. Miz Asterblit Morgan made a striking appearance as an old model but completely repainted, only minus one bumper. Her song was "I'm Yours, All Yours with 24 months to pay." (You can unscramble this for yourself?)

the center of the parlor was that old fashioned heating coal base burner. There was not use turning out the lights. The young lady would sit in the rocking chair on one side of the room and the lover would perch on the edge of the horse hair sofa. In the corner an old grandfather clock would seem to say, "Take your time! Take your time!" But, now days, when a young shiek goes to call on his femme he dresses up in a jelly bean suit and sails down to her house. He kicks in the front door and yells, "Oh, Nellie, are you here?" She comes rushing down the stairs throwing her arms around his neck and drags him into the front room where there is a great big over-stuffed squatee and on the mantel a \$1.98 alarm clock which seems to say "Get going! Get going!"



There Goes Tobe! There Goes Suse! There They Go For the Corntussel News!

### ODD FAX

Dug up by T. Tolliver

The best cure for sea-sickness is to sit under a tree for an hour.

Statistics prove that over a period of many years there are the same number of women married as men.

People are funny things. They build cities in crowded districts when it would be much better to build them out in the country where there is lots of room.

It is better to have loved a short man than never to have loved a tall.

### Lokal Congressman Promises Big Results

Caleb Plunkett, local business man who was recently elected to Congress, promises his first term will be one of big results. He has promised to cut down government expenses in a big way. He says he has discovered that barnacles on the ships cost the United States Navy over \$3,000,000 a year. He is going to introduce a bill demanding that they use cheaper barnacles or fewer of them.

### Elmer Switchel Gets Fine Job

We are glad to see Corn Tussel's young men getting ahead. Elmer Switchel, son of Elmer Switchel has a fine new job. He is in business selling coffee and spices to the farms and not taking orders from nobody.

### Bill Paxton Arrested

Bill Paxton was arrested today for speeding. He was taking his mother-in-law home from her visit with them.

### BIG ROBBERY NEAR TOWN

Sy Smithers's hog pen was visited by thieves last night and two of his best pigs was stole. Something has got to be done about this or none of us will be safe.

We wish to announce that them as saw Clem Spraggin being chased down the street by his wife with a broom in her hand not to think nothin' of it. She was tryin' to brush some lint off'n his coat and if he hadn't tried to get the broom away from her he wouldn't got the black eye he got. (That was the way it was told to us.)

Zeb Proudly has his old model T fixed up for a patrol wagon. It isn't much of a car but will do in a pinch.

Windy Bragg who jist came back from a extended trip to the city had the unfortune to be hit by a loaded truck yesterday. Windy says that the main thing he noticed in the city was that folks got expert in weaving in and out of traffik so he was tryin' out some of the expert foot work he had picked up while in the city. Some of these steps was a kind of zig-zag and he zigged when he should have zagged once and was knocked down by Clem Spraggins' loaded truck. Clem's defense will probably be that he didn't know it was loaded. Doc Croker announces that Windy was struck in the Junction of the Clavicle and Scapula. Constable, Zeb Proudly, is trying to locate this corner. Full details will be printed in the News.

### Tuck & Stitch Club Met At Home of Lucinda Sniggins

The following notes was chewed up by Susie's pup together with Mr. Pan's ad for breda. This is all we could get out)

The ladies of the Tuck & Stitch Club met at all grocers. Lu Cinde Sniggins was in charge with thin and tender crusts waring a tailored suit with an yeatsy flavor. Her hair dress was the very latest and looked like Honey Cracked Wheat. She sang in a clear voice "Coming Thru the Bavarian Rye."

### Skating Season Not Yet Open

Staking is not allowed on the mill pond yet. Sheriff Hodge tested the ice by sending his wife out on it. Mrs. Hodge weighs a little over 200 and broke through easily. Some is hintin' if she would diet a little skating would be earlier in Corn Tussel.

### CORRECTION

We are very sorry we made a mistake in yesterday's paper concerning the wedding os Hep-saba Grant and Ezekial Twitt-lefoot. Where we printed the roses was punk we should have printed the noses was pink. We are verry sorry.

### EDITORIAL ADVISE

—by T. Tolliver

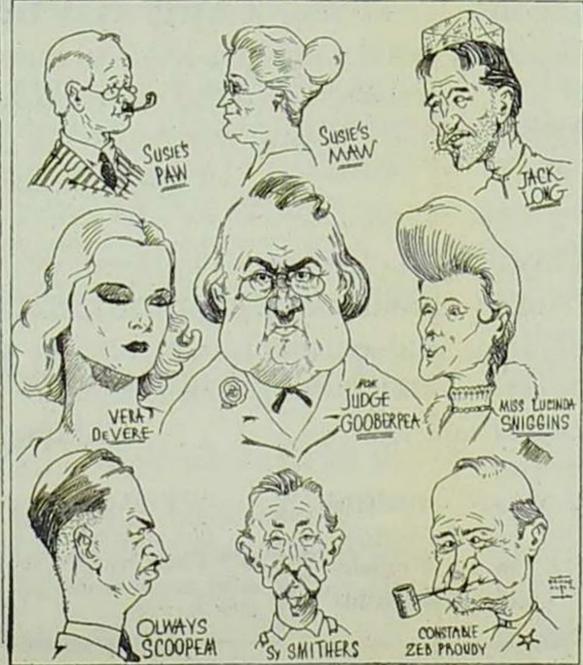
Don't worry if your wife speaks often of her first husband. You have nothing to worry about until she starts talking about her next one.

To keep stamps from sticking together, buy them one at a time.

He can who thinks he can. He is canned who thinks he can't.

Corn Tussel will have a new dentist, Elmer Whipple. We understand he has had wide experience. Before taking dentistry he was a riveter until he got too nervous to work with that. Corn Tussel welcomes the new dentist.

## FAMILIAR FACES in CORNTUSSEL!



your daytime hours the foolishness of Toby and Susie sent to you with the best wishes of the Peter Pan Bakers." In case anyone had missed an episode, Alter reviewed the story line of the last few episodes. Just before the day's episode began, a commercial for Peter Pan Bread was broadcast live, always ending with the phrase, "Will you listen?"

The Schaffners would stretch a story line over a dozen episodes. Each plot involved some silly scheme devised by Toby. In one story line, for instance, Toby is trying to please Susie's disapproving mother. To get in her good graces, he promises her some canaries he expects to win in a contest. But all he wins is an offer of one canary for every 24 packages of perfumed laundry bluing he sells. Quickly failing as a salesman, too, Toby instead uses the bluing to dye some sparrows, which he passes off as singing bluebirds.

Just as Toby is about to ask Susie's parents for permission to marry their daughter, a telegram announces the arrival in Bugtussel of Professor Ebenezer Schnozzle, here to examine the unusual birds. During the examination, the professor accidentally puts on Toby's blue sunglasses instead of his own glasses and declares the birds to be genuine and, indeed, quite rare. A victory for Toby! The wedding will go on, or so it seems. Busy with plans, Susie's mother now decides that the bluebirds must sing at the ceremony. And if they do not, she warns Toby, the marriage will not take place.

But now a commercial interrupts the drama for the day, followed by the announcer's teasing wrap-up: "What will Toby do now? Will Susie's mother figure out what really happened? What will Susie think when the beautiful blonde comes into town?"

As the show concluded, listeners heard the theme song again, then the promise that "Toby and Susie will return at this same time tomorrow and it will all be in fun," and finally the reminder that "Toby and Susie, presented by the Peter Pan Bakers, have reached you by a special midwest network." Neil Schaffner signed off each day with: "This is Toby Tolliver saying, 'Keep 'em smiling.'"

Toby and Susie appeared in every episode. Other regulars included Susie's parents and her Aunt Mehitable, the town constable Zeb Proudly, and the printer Shorty Snaggelby. The episodes, built on simple humor and familiar characters, used several running gags. Every time Zeb Proudly came into the office his dog fell asleep and Zeb had to awaken it as he left. Toby always answered the phone by saying "Commence," and ended each phone call with "This end is through." Although the Toby character would

evolve over Neil's career, essentially Toby Tolliver was a bumbling rube whose good heart and good intentions generally won out over more savvy, sophisticated characters. Susie became the foil or "straight man" for Toby. Whenever he had one of his crazy ideas, she was always the voice of reason and common sense, even though she would always go along with him.

**M**ore than 330,000 listeners tuned in daily to Toby and Susie, according to Milton Peterson, vice-president of Peter Pan Bakers. He understood the program's appeal: "The character of the program was a simple humorous comedy of the audience sympathy type, very high in emotional appeal," he expounded. "It combines laughter, suspense and pathos, tears or near tears, and keen sympathy for the character in their frustrated aims. They are constantly trying to do something, trying to accomplish something, frequently failing, but always bouncing back with optimism, ready to undertake it anew, making all of the mistakes and meeting all of the problems that are met by simple country folks in the smaller towns."

Toby and Susie's following continued to grow. In 1939, they received some 7,800 Christmas cards. Neil recounted how a shopkeeper had refused to wait on customers until the show was over. In 1941, the Schaffners persuaded the sponsor to run a promotion. They created an actual issue of the *Corntussel News*, printed 10,000 copies, and offered it free to anyone who requested it. In just 15 days, more than 33,000 requests poured in, often with praise for the program and for Peter Pan Bread. Some of the letters attested to the role the show played in listeners' daily routine:

"Your story is twice told nearly every day you're on the air. You tell it to me and then it's my turn when Friend Husband comes from work. Just as often as not his greeting will be, 'What did Toby get into today?'"

—Mrs. Lou Loveland, Oelwein, Iowa

"We want to thank you and Peter Pan Bread for a lot of enjoyment. We always need laughable nonsensical entertainment and of course we all need it very much in times like these."

—Louis Poorman, Shell Rock, Iowa

"Please send me your newspaper. I enjoy your program very much. I just want to see if it is as dumb as you are Toby."

—Mrs. Elmer Kantz, Rock Island, Illinois



## TOBY & SUSIE

\*WEDDING PICTURE

(Left to right)

Zeb Proudly.....	Constable
Mrs. Sharp.....	Bride's Mother
Susie.....	The Bride
Alonzo Sharp.....	Bride's Father
Toby Tolliver (seated).....	The Groom
Shorty Snaggelby.....	Printer
Aunt Mehitable.....	Susie's Aunt

\*Photo taken in Sharp's parlor  
Feb. 22, 1946.

COMPLIMENTS OF

**WAIT'S**  
GREEN MOUNTAIN  
COUGH SYRUP

and

**G-M LINIMENT**

SPONSORS OF

**"CORNTUSSEL NEWS"**

with

**TOBY & SUSIE**

1:00 p. m.

MONDAY THRU FRIDAY

**WMT**  **600**  
ON YOUR  
DIAL

Thousands of fans of *Corntussel News* requested this "wedding photo" of Toby, Susie, and the cast.

"Please send me a free copy of the *Corntussel News*. I am a steady listener for I think you are very funny. I would hate to be Toby. Sincerely, Age 13, 1941 Yours"

—Jimmie Mixer, Beverly, Illinois

"I am one of your listeners and I sure do enjoy your program. It really is worth my time to just stop my work and listen as it [is] just so good that I can't miss a bit of it. It takes one's mind off of war news and bad luck just around the corner."

—Dorothy Brenizer, Shenandoah, Iowa

Some letters contained more personal messages:

"I know my daughter Betty 12 yr. old will be listening too at Iowa City Hospital Inf. Paralysis victim of over a year ago. She never misses your program."

—Mrs. Mary Foley, Marion, Iowa

"Please send me the *Corntussel News*, and if you

care to send one to the Sunny Slope Sanitarium, Ottumwa, Iowa, to Lorraine Junkman it would be something for pastime for all patients on the porch she is on."

— Mrs. Walter Junkman, Manson, Iowa

The Schaffners eventually published three issues of the newspaper, emblazoned with the slogans "Published weakly now and then" and "If you subscribe to the *News* it will serve you right." Like the radio show, the newspaper was filled with invented news stories and advertisements, its humor relying on misinformed spellings and double entendres, as in these want ads:

WANTED: To rent, room by middle-aged man with large bay window.

BON TON CAFE—Eat hear onct' and youl never et anywhere else.

FOR SALE: Dining room table, by young lady with mahogany legs.

NOTICE: Anyone found around my chicken coop at night will be found there the next morning.

WANTED—Laundry and sich. Latest methods used. We do not tear your clothes with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.

FOR SALE—Large bed by old maid that folds up and looks like a piano.

The Schaffners had found a niche among the soap operas and serialized dramas rampant on radio. As a promotional brochure described it, "these two former NBC laugh riots" were a welcome break, "coming at the time of day when the air is choked with sob-sister, three-cornered love affair programs." Buoyed by their success, the Schaffners, with the assistance of the Peterson Baking Company, decided to sell the program to other stations. Depending on their size, stations paid them between \$5 and \$40 as weekly royalties. Stations from coast to coast purchased the series. An industry advertisement in 1940 listed 76 subscribers, including WOR in New York and KFY in Los Angeles. Eventually, 172 stations in 24 states car-

ried the series, as did 25 Canadian stations. (With their sense of humor, Toby and Susie no doubt appreciated the fact that they were reaching towns with names like Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.)

After Pearl Harbor, the various stations' interest in the Schaffners' show dropped away, but Peterson Baking Company continued to sponsor *Toby's Corntussel News* on the regional network until 1943. Then in 1945, the Wade Advertising Agency in Chicago again approached the Schaffners with an offer: 26 weeks on WMT in Cedar Rapids, sponsored by Green Mountain Cough Syrup and G-M Liniment. The Schaffners accepted the offer, and Toby and Susie delighted their radio listeners again. After 13 weeks, the station conducted another test of the show's popularity. This time they offered a free wedding photo of Toby and Susie. Almost overnight, the station received 10,000 requests.

In spite of the show's success, the Wade Agency did not renew the contract but bought rights to *Lum & Abner* instead. Frustrated, Neil and Caroline Schaffner said goodbye to their radio careers. From then on, they focused fully on their traveling theater opera-

As sponsor, Peter Pan Bread advertised the Schaffners' show as "a radio 'sit-down strike' in hundreds of thousands of midwest homes."

**"TOBY and SUSIE ARE TOPS!"**

*Toby's*  
**"CORNTUSSEL NEWS"**

**Hit Radio Show of the Day!**

It's a radio "sit-down strike" in hundreds of thousands of midwest homes every morning from 11:00 to 11:15! How do we know? When 33,091 people write in asking for a copy of Toby's "Corntussel News", it's pretty certain they listen to this hilarious program . . . and hear the story of Peter Pan Fresh Bread. Coming at the time of day when the air is choked with sob-sister, three-cornered love affair programs, these two former NBC laugh riots not only astound their listeners, but recently amazed ourselves and five radio stations! After 15 announcements offering copies of their comical newspaper, we had to call a halt! 33,091 requests not only exceeded our fondest expectations, but forced us to a big reprint order. And even though we did not require bread wrappers or labels . . . nearly every one of those letters made some mention of Peter Pan Fresh Bread. Toby and Susie are two of the best bread salesmen you ever had — Tell your customers about them.

**If You Have a Radio in YOUR STORE Tune in**

**OVER THESE STATIONS**

**WOW** OMAHA  
**KMA** SHENANDOAH  
**WMT** CEDAR RAPIDS  
**WHBF** ROCK ISLAND  
**WCAZ** CARTHAGE, ILL.

**11 A.M.**  
**MONDAY THRU FRIDAY**

**QUIDDOR NEWSPAPER RADIO**



**Long after Toby and Susie left the air, the Schaffner Players continued their tent shows, into the 1960s, in fact. Above, Neil and Caroline Schaffner (on porch) perform in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* with other actors in a production during the 1948/49 season.**

tions. The war had not lessened their success on the road, despite tire rationing and limited men available for male roles. Audiences still wanted diversion from daily cares and world calamities, and they still wanted something to laugh about.

Long after most traveling companies and repertoire troupes had taken down their last tents, the Schaffner Players continued to perform for midwestern audiences. They became a living tradition, attracting urban audiences curious to see what some now called "folk theater," and maintaining their rural audiences who held them in loyal affection. For 46 years, in fact, until 1962, their traveling show entertained midwestern audiences eager to watch their antics and dramatics on stage. Besides their longevity, the Schaffners had accomplished something else—for a decade in the midst of their career on the road, Toby and Susie reached new audiences on the airwaves, during the Golden Age of Radio. ❖

*Michael Kramme is professor of theater and chair of the Division of Fine Arts at Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri. His earlier theater-history articles for this magazine focused on Hazel Cass and Jesse Cox.*

#### NOTE ON SOURCES

All materials used for this article are in the collections of the Theatre Museum of Repertoire Americana, including *The Fabulous Toby and Me*, written by Neil E. Schaffner with Vance Johnson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968); audio tapes of the broadcasts; and various publicity materials for the program. The cartoon of Toby and Susie on page 27 is from a WTMJ advertisement, dated 1939, for their *Corntussel News* radio show.

The Theatre Museum of Repertoire Americana, in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, houses a unique collection of memorabilia from early American popular entertainment. The museum displays stage scenery, costumes, props, photographs, and other items from the touring companies that played in hundreds of opera houses, town halls, and tent theaters from the 1850s through the 1950s. The collections also include items from Chautauqua, showboats, and minstrel shows. In the museum's research library, the collections comprise more than 1,000 play manuscripts (most were written especially for the traveling companies), 5,000 photographs, 2,000 programs, 700 posters, and other advertising items. The museum sponsors an annual seminar in April, at which scholars and troupers give presentations on various aspects of popular entertainment. The museum, located on the grounds of the Midwest Old Threshers Organization in Mt. Pleasant, is open Tuesday through Friday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and other times by appointment.