

## From the community: Radio Reenactment Presents Christmas Show



Posted by Andy Richardson, Community Contributor

By Community Contributor Andy Richardson,

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**T**hose Thrilling Days of Yesteryear Old Time Radio Recreations Troop presents a Christmas Show at 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21, at the Oak Park Arms retirement community, 408 S. Oak Park Ave. Included are "Life with Luigi" - "A Christmas Present for Pasquale" and from "The Great Gildersleeve" - "Christmas Stray Puppy."

Originating on radio as "The Little Immigrant," "Life with Luigi" is the story of a gentle Italian and other immigrants from Germany and Scandinavia taking U.S. citizenship night school classes. Their new home was Chicago, and their heartwarming encounters with American ways made this show as contemporary as it was post WWII. J. Carroll Naish, veteran character actor of stage and screen, made Luigi Basco come to life in each and every show.

"The Great Gildersleeve" was one of broadcast history's earliest spin-off programs. Built around Throckmorton Gildersleeve, a character who had been a staple on the classic radio situation comedy Fibber McGee and Molly, "The Great Gildersleeve" enjoyed its greatest success in the 1940s.

The key to the show - was actor Harold Peary, who played the title character. His booming voice and

facility with moans, groans, laughs, shudders and inflection was as close to body language and facial suggestion as a voice could get.

Gildersleeve was a bachelor raising two children. This show may have been the first to be centered on a single parent balancing child-rearing, work, and a social life, done with taste and genuine wit, often at the expense of Gildersleeve's hilarious pomposity.

A reception with coffee and cookies will follow the performance.

The performers

Those Thrilling Days of Yesteryear is composed of Chicagoland actors and voice over artists who share a common interest - to perform old time radio programs for the community. Each actor and technician donates talent and time for free.

Group founders, Ben Dooley and Pam Turlow, husband and wife, established a connection with The Oak Park Arms in September of 2002, when Turlow's father became a resident. They've been volunteering/performing at The Arms ever since.

Dooley and Turlow's group performs only once every two months due to the considerable challenges involved in creating a show. They browse through thousands of old time radio episodes, select a favorite, listen and type out the script. Many shows are not available in print and have to be painstakingly transcribed. Then they gather sound effect, rehearse and mount the show.

Sound effects were an important part of live radio shows, and the group performs them live. They have a real door for slamming, buzzers, a sound board and shoes for footsteps, and doorbells.

The shows are very popular with residents and people from the community. Some even bring their children and grandchildren to show them what entertainment was like before television.

"Since the entire cast donates its time and energy, we can only do shows six times a year," Dooley said, "but we strive to make sure that it's well worth the wait."

The Oak Park Arms is a rental retirement community which provides independent and assisted living apartments and a full schedule of activities and services. Furnished apartments are also available for a short-term stay - a weekend, a week, a month or longer.

The radio show is free and open to the public. For more information call 708-386-4040 or visit <http://www.oakparkarms.com>.

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