

1940's "In Case You Didn't Know" Glossary

Backer's Audition - a special performance, usually an informal presentation of songs, scenes, or excerpts from a new musical or play, meant to attract financial investors (called *backers*) who might fund the full production.

Little Orphan Annie is the main character from a famous American comic strip created by Harold Gray in the 1920s. The strip follows a spunky young orphan girl with curly red hair and her dog, Sandy, as they go on adventures and overcome hardships.

Ovaltine – A powdered malt (or cocoa) flavoring stirred into milk, Ovaltine sponsored the *Little Orphan Annie* radio show, creating a powerful marketing campaign that encouraged children to buy the drink by joining a secret society and using decoder badges to decipher secret messages.

Stephen Foster was one of America's earliest and most famous songwriters, often called "*The Father of American Music*." Among many others, he wrote "Oh! Susanna," "Camptown Races," "Swanee River," and "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair."

A **saboteur** is an individual who deliberately damages, disrupts, or destroys something, often for political, financial, or personal gain.

The Great White Way is a nickname for Broadway in New York City, specifically the section of Broadway in Midtown Manhattan, so-called because it was one of the first electrically lighted streets in the U.S.

Admiral Richard E. Byrd was a famous American naval officer and explorer, best known for his expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic. He gained international fame in the 1920s and 1940s for his polar exploration, pioneering flights over both poles, and scientific research in extreme environments.

Nancy Drew is a fictional teenaged amateur detective from a long-running series of mystery novels, published by the Stratemeyer Syndicate, which also published books about the Hardy Boys, the Bobbsey Twins, and the Rover Boys.

The Brill Building, at 1619 Broadway, was a hub for music publishers and a vertical integration of songwriting, arrangement, and recording. It was not far from the similarly famous Tin Pan Alley, also a hub for music production.

Du Barry Was a Lady - a 1939 Broadway musical with music and lyrics by Cole Porter. It starred Bert Lahr and Ethel Merman and was later adapted into a 1943 film starring Red Skelton and Lucille Ball.

Bob Alton was a highly influential Broadway choreographer in the 1930s and 40s, known for

revolutionizing chorus work by breaking it into soloists and smaller groups. He choreographed numerous hit shows, like *Pal Joey*, *Anything Goes*, and *Du Barry Was a Lady*.

Sardi's has been the toast of Broadway for 100 years, one of the most popular restaurants in the heart of New York's Theater District.

Kaiser Wilhelm II (German Emperor) - From his ascension in 1888 until his abdication in 1918, during the Great War, Wilhelm II oversaw Germany's rise as an economic and military power, driven by his desire to make Germany a world power.

The Streets of Paris - This musical revue, featuring **Bobby Clark**, debuted on June 19, 1939, in New York. The show introduced Carmen Miranda to the American public and marked the debut of **Abbott & Costello**, **Gower Champion**, and Jeanne Tyler in Broadway musicals.

Sauerbraten is a traditional German pot roast made with heavily marinated meat, typically beef, which is braised until exceptionally tender.

Liedercranz is a cow's milk cheese, with an edible pale yellow-orange-tan crust, and a semisoft, pale interior with a mildly pungent flavor and distinct aroma.

Toffenetti's was a famous, large-capacity restaurant located at 43rd Street and Broadway in Times Square, New York City, operating from 1940 to 1968. Founded by Dario Toffenetti, the restaurant was known as "The Busiest Restaurant on the World's Busiest Corner."

Les Sylphides is considered the first plotless, or abstract, ballet. It was choreographed by Michael Fokine and premiered in 1909 in Paris.

Ellery Queen is an American detective fiction character who is a writer and amateur detective, creating the popular 1940s mystery brand that has been adapted into multiple radio, film, and television shows.

Bert Lahr was an American actor and comedian. He was best known for his role as the Cowardly Lion in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

Jerome Kern (1885-1945) was an American composer of musical theatre and popular music. One of the most important American theatre composers of the early 20th century, he wrote more than 700 songs, used in over 100 stage works, including such classics as "Ol' Man River," "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," and "The Way You Look Tonight."

Sigmund Romberg (1887-1951) was a Hungarian-born American composer best known for his musicals and operettas. Early in his career, Romberg was employed by the Shubert brothers to write music for their musicals

and revues. His three hit operettas of the mid-1920s, such as *The Desert Song*, are in the style of Viennese operetta, but his other works from that time mostly employ the style of American musicals of their eras.

The Blue Ribbon restaurant in Times Square, a long-running German eatery, was a landmark at 145 West 44th Street known for its German menu, low prices, and status as a gathering place for operatic greats. It opened in 1914 and closed in 1975.

Sal Hepatica - a saline laxative that was also an antacid. It was a popular product for Bristol-Myers and was sold for many decades.

Gale Sondergaard was the first recipient of the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress, in 1936. She was widely known for her ability to portray villainous characters with sophistication and menace, earning her the nickname "Queen of the Heavies." Despite her villainous reputation, she also received praise for her performances in sympathetic roles since she was able to convey warmth and strength in addition to her more sinister parts.

Phil Spitalny - Popular in the 1930s and 1940s, The Hour of Charm Orchestra, conducted by Phil Spitalny, was a unique all-female orchestra in an era when most orchestra members were male. NBC's Red and Blue radio networks provided nationwide coverage.

Eric Von Stroheim was an Austrian American director, screenwriter, actor, and producer, most noted as a film star and avant-garde, visionary director of the silent era. (In 1950 he would portray Max in the film *Sunset Boulevard*.)

Jack Armstrong, *the All-American Boy*, was a radio adventure series which maintained its popularity from 1933 to 1951.

Don Winslow of the Navy is an American comic strip from 1934 to 1955. The title character was a spy-chasing lieutenant commander in Naval intelligence.

Gestapo - the official secret police of Nazi Germany, meaning "secret state police" (*Geheime Staatspolizei*). Formed in 1933, it was known for using terror and arbitrary arrest to repress political opposition and enforce the regime's policies, including the Holocaust.

Ensign - a commissioned officer of the lowest rank in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, ranking above chief warrant officer and below lieutenant.

Katzenjammer Kid - *The Katzenjammer Kids* was an American comic strip that featured Hans and Fritz, twins who rebelled against authority.

Hot Mikado is a 1940s swing-time version of *The Mikado*, with blues, swing, and hot gospel music, and a tap-dancing, colorful show. The production, lasting for

two seasons, was reportedly one of the most popular attractions at the **New York World's Fair** and starred Bill "Mr. Bojangles" Robinson.

The 64-Dollar Question - The phrase comes from the top prize in the 1940s radio show *Take It or Leave It*, on which contestants were asked questions of increasing difficulty for a top prize of \$64.

Vichyssoise - A creamy, chilled soup made from puréed leeks, potatoes, and cream, typically garnished with fresh chives. Although a French-sounding name, this elegant dish was actually perfected and named in New York City in the early 20th century.

Roster of Broadway and Hollywood Luminaries for Shameless Name-Dropping in 1940:

Bob Alton
Jimmy Arnemann
Alice Faye
Dick Powell
Phil Silvers
Ann Miller
Patsy Kelly
George Brent
Lauritz Melchior
Jascha Heifetz
Eric Von Stroheim
Borrah Minevitch
Paulette Goddard
Laird Cregar
Judith Anderson
Lionel Atwill
George Sanders
Peter Lorre
John Carradine
Abbott and Costello
Gower Champion
William Powell
Myrna Loy
Sydney Blackmer
Ralph Bellamy
Nat Pendleton
Louise Albritton
Elisha Cook Jr.
Harry Cohn
Jack Warner
Josh Logan
George Abbott
Charley Friedman
Leonard Sillman
Louella Parsons
Paul Lukas
Helmut Dantine
Conrad Veidt
George Coulouris
Oscar Homolka
Merle Oberon
Marlene Dietrich
Lotte Lenya
Josephine Baker
Judy Garland

White House Merry-Go-Round References:

Harry Hopkins - From 1940 until 1943, Hopkins lived in the White House and assisted President FDR in the management of American foreign policy.

James Farley was Postmaster General of the United States and the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, but his political career took a significant turn in 1940. Having managed FDR's successful 1932 and 1936 presidential campaigns, Farley opposed Roosevelt's unprecedented bid for a third term, thus straining his relationship with Roosevelt, despite the efforts of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to mend the friendship.

Harold L. Ickes served as United States Secretary of the Interior for nearly 13 years from 1933 to 1946, the longest tenure of anyone to hold the office.

Cordell Hull was the U.S. Secretary of State from 1933 to 1944.

Fala - FDR's beloved Scottish Terrier.