

## **This Is Your FBI**

*This Is Your FBI*, the second long-running show using the FBI as thriller material, came to the Blue Network (ABC) April 6, 1945. *The FBI in Peace and War* had been running a little less than a year on CBS, and the appearance of a new G-Man thriller led to inevitable comparisons. In fact, there were striking similarities between the

shows. The original music of *This Is Your FBI* had a bouncy, rousing rhythm much like the "Love for Three Oranges" march of *Peace and War*. Both shows used agent-heros of a rather faceless nature. Field Agent Sheppard of *Peace and War* probably could have filled in for Jim Taylor of *This Is Your FBI*, but in the all-important realm of entertainment, *This Is Your FBI* was better. The real differences were subtle, but just beneath the surface. While *Peace and War* took its material (or at least the inspiration) from a fictionalized book, *This Is Your FBI* got its cases from FBI filing cabinets. The result was a dramatic pace that *Peace and War*, for all its years on the air, never achieved.

*This Is Your FBI* was created, produced, and directed by Jerry Devine, a former comedy writer who had worked for Kate Smith before going straight and turning to thrillers. Devine saw his show as "the official story," the Bureau's own view of the criminal life. The FBI was glorified in the typical manner of the era, while criminals and racketeers were depicted as living the most lurid lives this side of hell. Crime might pay on the streets of New York, but not on *This Is Your FBI*. With its scientific tools and its worldwide communications system, the Bureau was infallible.

Devine prepared well for his show. He attended the FBI school for new agents, then got J. Edgar Hoover's permission to dramatize from old, closed cases, using only fictitious names, dates, and places. Hoover even gave the series a personal sendoff. Often in its first year, the show ran sensational, screaming stories of Nazi super-agents, of escaped Nazi prisoners of war, of saboteurs. Later, as the war faded into history, agent Taylor and his men came to grips with military frauds, juvenile delinquents, hijackers, bank robbers, and embezzlers. The stories were usually told from the inside out, from the viewpoint of the criminal or his victim. Taylor, played by Stacy Harris, had almost a supporting part during the entire eight years that the show was on the air.

Each episode was told in chronological form, with a harsh narrative overlay. Frank Lovejoy was the first narrator, and a good one. But he left within a year, and by 1947 Dean Carlton had the job. William Woodson came on as narrator in March 1948 and remained for several years. The show used freelance writers, mostly Lawrence MacArthur and Frank Phares, until Jerry D. Lewis came aboard as staff scripter in the late 1940's. Music was by Nathan Van Cleave and later by Frederick Steiner. Carl Frank was announcer. By 1948, Larry Keating—best remembered as George Burns' neighbor on early *Burns and Allen* TV shows—was announcing and doing spots for the Equitable Life Assurance Society. The show was carried by Equitable on Friday nights through 1952, and ran for another year as an ABC sustainer. The sponsor's well-remembered punchline was: "To your FBI you

look for national security, and to your Equitable Society for financial security. These two great institutions are dedicated to the protection of you, your home, and your country!"