

From 1942 through 1949, a radio show designed primarily to entertain US troops abroad was transmitted, mostly by the Armed Forces Radio Network, over shortwave radio and via networks for troops here at home. Like we're doing tonight, virtually everyone involved with these broadcasts was volunteering their time free of charge.

Some of the biggest stars of the time donated their efforts, and some truly unique broadcasts resulted. When the following show was broadcast, Bing Crosby was one of the top male vocalists in the country, though that young skinny upstart Frank Sinatra was rivaling his popularity, and was a successful film star as well, with dramas as well as the series of "Road" comedies he did with Bob Hope. In the newspapers, Dick Tracy was one of the most widely-read comic strips, and it would be several years before he or Li'l Abner would finally settle down and get married.

The pairing, though maybe not inevitable, was irresistible.

From 1945, here's a special episode of COMMAND PERFORMANCE, which originally featured Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Dinah Shore, Judy Garland, Jimmy Durante, Jerry Colonna, Frank Morgan and Harry Von Zell. It is our pleasure to bring you (abridged):

Dick Tracy in B Flat.

(Dick Tracy – Bing Crosby
Tess Trueheart – Dinah Shore
Flattop – Bob Hope
Snowflake – Judy Garland
Shaky – Frank Sinatra
The Mole – Jimmy Durante
Vitamin Flintheart – Frank Morgan
Police Chief – Jerry Colonna
Judge Hooper – Harry Von Zell (also Announcer)

Unfortunately, we had to cut Gravel Gertie and the Summer Sisters from this script.

DICK TRACY IN B FLAT

ANNOUNCER: And now for the first comic strip operetta of all time: Dick Tracy in B Flat, or, For Goodness Sake, Isn't He Ever Going to Marry Tess Trueheart?

(SFX: a 40s vintage car revs up from the distance, screeching tires, and a hail of machine-gun bullets is heard. Car stops, door shuts, footsteps, then a knocking at a door)

TESS: *(Music: sings to the tune of "Barnacle Bill the Sailor")*
Who's that knocking at my door?
Who's that singing through the door?
Bringing song to my boudoir?

DICK: It is I, Dick Tracy.

TESS: How I love your square-cut chin.
I'll come down and let you in.
(pause for steps going down stairs – lengthily – and then the door opens)
Hiya, Dick. Give me some skin.

DICK: Thank you scads, Tess Trueheart.
(speaks) Well, the big day, huh, Tess? We're finally going to get married.

TESS: Yes, Dick, and this time you'd better go through with it. I've waited 13 years to get married and you keep putting it off.

DICK: Well, honey, some big crime keeps coming up and I have to dash out and solve it. In 1941 it was 88 Keys. In 1942 it was Mrs. Pruneface. And in 1944 –

TESS: Wait a minute. What happened to 1943?

DICK: A very interesting year. My laundry came back.
But I know I don't have to worry about you, Tess Trueheart, because your heart is true.

TESS: My heart will always be true, but if we don't get married pretty soon, the rest of me may stray a little.

DICK: Now steady there, gal! Tonight's the night. Tell me, where are the wedding guests?

TESS: The wedding guests are assembled in the parlor even now. The Summer Sisters are gathered around the spinet. And Vitamin Flintheart is gathered around the punch bowl. Methinks Vitamin has drunk too freely of the Four Roses.

DICK: How can you tell?

TESS: His nose has broken out into small bouquets.

DICK: I disapprove of that. Why aren't men more like me? I don't drink, I don't smoke, and I don't gamble.

TESS: Oh, please! Please don't tell me any more of your faults. We're getting married tonight!

DICK: Come Tess, let us join the merry throng and get on with the nuptials. I will fling open the door -

(Door opens, and party guests are heard)

ALL *(singing)* Oh, happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy wedding day. . .

JUDGE: Oh shut up! At last the moment has come!
Tess Trueheart, do you take this man to be your lawful wedded husband?

TESS: I do.

JUDGE: Richard Tracy, do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife?

DICK: I do.

JUDGE: Ah, at last. I now pronounce you man and. . .

(Phone rings, keeps ringing)

Oh, bean juice. Blasted interruptions, always interruptions. I'll get that dang thing torn out. . .

DICK: *(Picking up receiver)* Excuse me, Darling.

TESS: Oh, Richard!

DICK: Hello? Tracy at this end.

CHIEF: Hello! Police Chief on this end. . . . Well, that takes care of both ends.

DICK: What is it, Chief?

CHIEF: At 3:30 this afternoon, the First National Bank was robbed – and the crooks got away with three thousand, four hundred and sixty-eight dollars and seventy-seven cents!

DICK: Three thousand, four hundred sixty-eight dollars and seventy-seven cents?!
Are you positive?

CHIEF: . . . Just a minute, I'll count it again.

DICK: Now Chief, this sounds very suspicious. You weren't in on the deal, were you?

CHIEF: That's ridiculous! I wouldn't do anything crooked!

DICK: Well, okay, Dick Tracy is on the job! And all I can say is that whoever held up
the First National Bank better get out of town.

CHIEF: . . . Well, I'll go home and pack!

(Phone hangs up)

DICK: Tess, I must be off!

TESS: Oh, Richard, this is terrible! Left at the altar again! Why do you not renounce
your ceaseless pursuit of evildoers? 'Twere better by far if you opened up a live bait
store in Death Valley. . . .Don't go!

DICK: Ah, but I must. I owe it to society.
(Music: sings to the tune of "Barnacle Bill")

I must be off to do a job,
I can only stay a minute.
I'm off to pinch a crooked mob,
And everyone else that's in it.

TESS: How I dread the chance you take,
How I hope for your escape,
And each night I'll stay awake,
'Till your safe returning.

DICK: Thank you dear, but never fear,
They'll never get ol' Dick Tracy,
When I get back, we'll hire a hack,
And go and hear Count Basie.

TESS: Ah, my hero has no fears,
As that fatal moment nears,
Let me hold you by the ears –
They're so strong and flappy.

DICK: There'll be no mush, I've gotta rush,
I'm headin' for the station.
So save your smacks, and pat on the back,
'Till I get my vacation.

ALL: He's off to fight with all of his might,
This wonderful guy Dick Tracy,
While lonely Tess remains in a mess with Arsenic and Old Lacy.

DICK: Goodbye, Tess! I'm away!

(Door closes) (Car pulls away, revs up, screeches, hail of bullets, brakes squeal to a stop, door slams, and feet run up steps)

DICK: The jig is up! Reach for the ceiling! It's Dick Tracy, you swine!
. . . Hm. That's funny. Nobody here. . . . The First National Bank is empty!

FLATTOP: Drop that gun and turn around, Tracy.

DICK: If that voice belongs to who I think it does, I may never turn around.

FLATTOP: What a pleasure; I've always wanted to have a gun in this guy's back.

DICK: Yeah, and you can pull it up a little, too. . . .

FLATTOP: Sorry, I was going to blow your brains out.
Now drop that gun and turn around!

DICK: All right.

(Gun drops)

FLATTOP: You guessed it, Tracy, it's Flattop!

DICK: Well, now that you've got me, Flattop, what are you going to do with me?

FLATTOP: *(Chuckles gleefully)* You're not going to like this at all. *(giggles)*
You'll probably hate every minute of it. *(giggles)* You're really going to get the full
treatment, Dad. *(giggles)* Ooh, what's going to happen to you!

DICK: Well, what's going to happen? I'd like to laugh a little, too.

FLATTOP: Mmmm, I'm going to put you in the vault, pour a pitcher of cream over
your head, and then throw in a tiger with a rough tongue.

DICK: We'll see. Dick Tracy fears not your threats. The author will find a way out.

FLATTOP: You'll never get out of this vault, you marble-headed hero.
First I'll close this steel door.

(Door slams)

Now I'll twirl the combination.

(Safe dial twirls)

And now I'll slide in the bolt.

(Heavy bolt sliding and clicking)

There!

DICK: Hey, Junior, you forgot something; I'm still on the outside.

FLATTOP: All right, get in this one!

(Door slams)

Fool with me, eh? I may look like I'm not much, but I am. *(quizzical take)*

Some people forget that –

(Music: sings to the tune of "You're The Top")

I'm the top!

I'm the vicious Flattop!

I'm the top!

Got it in for that cop.

I'm a naughty boy,

I'm the pride and joy

Of sin!

So I sank my claws

In ol' Droopy Drawers

And locked him in!

I'm a jerk,

And the people love it.

Never work,

And I'm right proud of it.

I have lots of fun

When my water gun

Goes "pop!"

So if you want someone flattened,

Call Flattop!

(Music)

ALL *(singing)* Oh, happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy
happy happy wedding day. . .

TESS: Oh, dear, dear, what could be keeping Dick Tracy? A fine wedding day this turned out to be.

FLINTHEART: Now, now, now, now, don't fret, Miss Trueheart – my little Rum Blossom. Forsooth, I see not what you want with that flatfoot when I, the pride of the Flinthearts, am available.

TESS: Well, Mr. Flinheart, I hate to say this, but you're so much older than I am.

FLINTHEART: Older?! Bah! Age is in the mind! . . . I hope. They don't call me Vitamin for nothing.

TESS: Why, Mr. Flinheart, I'm shocked to hear you talk like that. And after the nice things I've heard about you from some of the other girls.

FLINTHEART: The girls are saying nice things about me?

TESS: Yes!

FLINTHEART: I must be getting older than I thought. But my dear, you don't realize the glamour that surrounds the life of an actor. I'll never forget my last appearance in Poopedout, Nebraska. . . . What a triumph! Let me tell you about myself, Miss Trueheart, and the glorious life I lead!

(Music: to the tune of "A Wandering Minstrel")

A wand'ring actor, I, my life is inter-urban;
I drink a lot of bourbon
To wash down my vitamin pills.

My better days were spent behind the lights and greasepaint –
Though I'm half-shot, my heart ain't.
I've got much more pep than Sinatra
Because of my capsules and my vitamin pills.

TESS: Well, Mr. Flinheart, I must say that's very interesting, but. . .

(Door opens)

DICK: Okay, let's get on with it! Poppa's back.

TESS: Dick! Dick, what kept you?

DICK: That rat, Flattop! He stripped off all my clothes and left me in a locked bank vault in my long underwear.

TESS: How did you manage to escape?

DICK: Through the trapdoor in the back. . . .
Well, everybody, let's get on with the wedding, huh?

(Music)
ALL *(singing)* Oh, happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy
happy happy wedding day. . .

JUDGE: Shut up! Now, I told you people, I want to get Tracy married. This is one jam he'll never get out of. Now, Richard Tracy, do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife?

DICK: I do.

JUDGE: And do you, Tess Trueheart, take this man to be your lawful wedded husband?

TESS: I do.

JUDGE: Good. Then I pronounce you man and . . .

(Phone rings)

Well, I'll be a second lieutenant.

DICK: *(picks up receiver)* Hello?

CHIEF: Hello, Tracy? Chief of Police speaking. I want to ask you a question.

DICK: What is it?

CHIEF: When you pick up a suspicious character, isn't it customary to frisk them?

DICK: Sure, you always frisk them.

CHIEF: See? What did I tell you, madam? Now hold still!

DICK: Chief! Did you interrupt my wedding just for that?

CHIEF: Certainly not, Tracy. I've got terrible news! Snowflake has just been kidnapped!

DICK: Snowflake? Snowflake? Snowflake?!

CHIEF: Yeah, must be a blizzard.

DICK: Well, I'll get on this case right away, Chief!

(hangs up phone)

There's only one man who could have done something as dastardly as this: the Mole! I must find that blackguard and wring the truth out of him.

TESS: Oh, Richard, you're not going to leave me at the altar again?

DICK: Well, hold on to your corsage. I'll be right back, Tess!

(Door closes) (Car pulls away, revs up, screeches, hail of bullets, brakes squeal to a stop, door slams, and feet run up steps)

MOLE: *(Jumping the gun)* Who's there?

(Knocking on door)

Who's there?

DICK: Tell me, is this the subterranean entrance to the home of that villainous gopher?

MOLE: Yes, better known as the Hole of the Mole.

DICK: Mole, I've come to ask you a question.

MOLE: I don't know where to get cigarettes, either.

DICK: You can't wiggle of this one, Mole.

MOLE: But I'm tellin' ya I had nothing to do with Snowflake's disappearance.

DICK: Aha! I said nothing about Snowflake's disappearance. How did you know she was missing?

MOLE: I seen it in the newsreel.

DICK: It hasn't been in the newsreel.

MOLE: I read it in the papers.

DICK: It hasn't been in the papers.

MOLE: I heard it on the radio.

DICK: It hasn't been on the radio.

MOLE: I wish they'd hurry up with that television!

DICK: Confess, Mole! Did you have something to do with this dastardly kidnapping?

MOLE: I got a perfect alibi. At the exact time of the kidnapping, I can provide six witnesses who will swear that they saw me at the table of a well-known restaurant.

DICK: You got a perfect alibi? At the exact time of the kidnapping, you can provide six witnesses who will swear that they saw you at the table of a well-known restaurant?

MOLE: This man is quotin' me verbattim!

DICK: Listen, Mole, if you squeal on the kidnappers, I'll see that you get special consideration.

MOLE: I'm no rat!

DICK: I'll see that the police don't bother you.

MOLE: I'm no rat!

DICK: Well, I'll give you a million dollars reward.

MOLE: That's the cheese I've been waitin' for! . . . I'll tell you all : Snowflake is up in Flattop's apartment. Even now, he's plyin' her with bubblin' champagne!

DICK: If I know Flattop, it's spiked 7-Up. . . . Thanks for the tip! I'm off to Flattop's apartment, and Gadzooks! I hope I'm in time!

(Door closes) (Car pulls away, revs up, screeches, hail of bullets, brakes squeal to a stop, door slams)

SNOWFLAKE: Please, Flattop, leave me alone!

FLATTOP: *(giggles)* Come over here, Snowflake, I'm gonna tie you up with this rope.

SNOWFLAKE: You wouldn't take advantage of a poor, defenseless girl, would you?

FLATTOP: She doesn't know me very well.

SNOWFLAKE: Please, please, Flattop, I beseech you to release me.

FLATTOP: Nothin' doin' – I only release 'em when they're over 38.

SNOWFLAKE: Flattop, I appeal to you on bended knee.

FLATTOP: Kid, you appeal to me in any position!

SNOWFLAKE: Ugh! I'm ashamed of you! What would your mother say if she saw you acting this way?

FLATTOP: I never had a mother.

SNOWFLAKE: What would your father say?

FLATTOP: Nothin'! He never had a mother either!
Listen, Snowflake, how about you and I teamin' up?

SNOWFLAKE: Don't be silly. I've promised my hand to Vitamin Flintheart.

FLATTOP: Give it to him; it's the rest of ya I want!
What about it, Snowflake? Will ya marry me?

SNOWFLAKE: Oh, no! What would I want with anyone with such a flat top, Flattop?
At least if you were twins I could use you for a bookend.

FLATTOP: Now don't get sassy, Snowflake! I'm a tough guy, see? I'll show you how strong I am – watch me rip this telephone book in half.

SNOWFLAKE: You couldn't.

FLATTOP: Just watch.

(Ripping sound)

Now for the next page.

SNOWFLAKE: Please, please, Flattop, let me go. These ropes are pressing against my flesh!

FLATTOP: I can always replace them with me!
Ah, me proud beauty, I've got you over a barrel!

SNOWFLAKE: Yes, you have got me over a barrel!
(Music: sing to the tune of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow")

Somewhere over a barrel
Black and blue --
Smiling bravely the while
I wait for the next sound cue.

(Car revs up, screeches, hail of bullets, brakes squeal to a stop, door slams, and feet run up steps, door breaks in)

DICK: This should be Flattop's hideout, but where is he?

FLATTOP: Right here, Tracy. Don't move. I've got a gun in your back. Stick 'em up!

MOLE: I'm the Mole! Stick 'em up!

CHIEF: I'm the Chief of Police! Stick 'em up!

DICK: Chief? Why are *you* sticking me up?

CHIEF: I like to be on the winning side.

MOLE: This is the end of the trail for you, Tracy!

FLATTOP: Yeah, you're through! There's a block of cement over your head. It's gonna fall on the count of three.

MOLE: Then we're gonna pour gasoline over ya and put a match to it!

FLATTOP: After that, we're gonna take what's left of ya and put ya in a bone-crushing machine.

MOLE: And then, to top it off, we're going to cover you with rattlesnakes!

DICK: Egad! I wonder what Superman would do in a spot like this?

(Music)

ALL *(singing)* Oh, happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy wedding day. . .

JUDGE: Shut up! Is Tracy here?

TESS: No, he isn't.

DICK: Yes, I am!

TESS: Oh, Richard, I was so worried!

DICK: Well, I was in a tough spot. Flattop and the Mole had me under a block of cement, and they were just about to release the rattlesnakes and set me on fire.

TESS: How on earth did you get away?

DICK: . . . I forced myself.
Let's get married!

JUDGE: It's about time! Do you, Richard Tracy, take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife?

DICK: I do.

JUDGE: Good. Do you, Tess Trueheart, take this man to be your lawful wedded husband?

TESS: I do.

JUDGE: At last! I get my two bucks. I now pronounce you man and . . .

(Phone rings)

Oh, nuts!

DICK: I'll get it! I'll get it! *(picks up receiver)* Hello?

CHIEF: Guess who?

DICK: Oh, no! Haven't you run out of slugs yet?

CHIEF: Listen, Dick, did you tell me to stop a robbery on the corner of Hollywood and Vine?

DICK: No, no, Chief, I said Sunset and Vine.

CHIEF: Oh! Sorry, gentlemen – go right ahead.

DICK: Now look here, I'm very busy – I'm getting married. Come to the point.

CHIEF: There's terrible news again, Tracy. Remember that crook named Shaky?

DICK: Sure, I put Shaky in jail.

CHIEF: Well, he shook loose.

Look, Tracy, I'm calling from a phone booth in a drug store. I hate to say this, but Shaky just held it up. He's already killed 13 people.

DICK: Killed 13 people?

CHIEF: Yes, ten customers, the proprietor, the janitor, and a guy who dropped in for a small coke. No ice.

DICK: Don't worry, Chief, I'll capture that scoundrel or my name ain't. . .

(Door closes) (Car pulls away, revs up, screeches, hail of bullets, brakes squeal to a stop, door slams, and feet run up steps)

DICK: This is the place. I'll sneak up behind him. Now I've got you – aha! You murderous villain! Reach for the sky!

CHIEF: Wait, Tracy, it's me!

DICK: Pardon me, Chief. Where's Shaky?

CHIEF: He's over at that counter having a malted.

DICK: Oh, I couldn't see him behind that straw.
Go out and cover the back door, Chief; I'll deal with Shaky.

CHIEF: Thanks!

DICK: I hate to be mercenary, but there's a \$5000 reward for Shaky alive – and a \$5000 reward for Shaky dead. In his condition, I'll hit the jackpot.
All right, Shaky, the jig is up. Get off that stool.

SHAKY: Just a minute, copper, 'til I finish this malt.
(sucking sound, then slide whistle)

DICK: Oh, fine, he fell in.
Climb outta there, Shaky, and start talking.

SHAKY: Darn these jumbo straws! They suck back!

DICK: Never mind that, Shaky, you're going on a long, long trip – a one-way trip, and there's bad news at the end of it. Justice has caught up with you, so you'd better talk, and talk fast. Why did you kill the people in this drugstore?

SHAKY: Because they aggravated me.

DICK: How did they aggravate you?

SHAKY: They were alive! It was maddening! All of them sittin' there around me, breathing!

DICK: You're just a lousy rat, and I'm going to see you get what's coming to you!

SHAKY: Oh, darn you!

DICK: Come on, I'm taking you down to the station house!

FLATTOP: All right, copper, I'm right behind you. Drop your gun.

SHAKY: Boy, am I glad to see you, Flattop!

FLATTOP: Shut up, small timer!

SHAKY: What do you mean, small timer? I just bumped off twelve people!

FLATTOP: You couldn't bump off twelve termites in a lumberyard.
All right, copper, I'm gonna bump you off.

SHAKY: Don't shoot, Flattop, this guy may be useful to us. He's got his ear to the ground, you know.

FLATTOP: That ain't all that's draggin'.

SHAKY: I say maybe we can do business with this guy. Every man has his price.

FLATTOP: Maybe you're right. Listen, Tracy, how would you like to make some easy money?

DICK: Honestly?

FLATTOP: Cross my black heart, it's a cinch.

DICK: *(under his breath)* I shall pretend to take their filthy bribe, and by so doing, round up the entire gang. *(Full voice)* I might be willing to talk business with you, Flattop – if my cut of the swag is big enough.

FLATTOP: Good, then it's a deal.

DICK: All right, let's shake on it.

SHAKY: I'm tired of shaking. Let's sing.

ALL 3: *(Music: to the tune of "Sunday, Monday, or Always")*
We're three pinup boys
Filled with charm and poise –
(individually) Tracy, Shaky, and Flattop.

DICK: I'll make justice win.

SHAKY & FLATTOP: Please don't fence us in.

ALL 3: *(individually)* Tracy, Shaky, and Flattop.

SHAKY & FLATTOP: We're just two little sheep
That lost our way around.

DICK: I'll keep you locked in jail
No matter how you pound and pound.

SHAKY & FLATTOP: Oh, what are we to do?

DICK: Listen mugs, you're through.

ALL 3: (*individually*) Tracy, Shaky, and Flattop.

SHAKY: Hey, Flattop, what did ya do with Snowflake?

FLATTOP: I had the Mole take her down to Gravel Gertie's gravel pit.

DICK: Let's all go out there.

FLATTOP: Just a second, Tracy, you ain't got any ideas about pinchin' anybody, have ya?

DICK: No, just Snowflake. Really, I'm one of you now. I'd even step on her foot if you wanted me to.

FLATTOP: Would ya twist her arm?

DICK: Yeah.

SHAKY: Would ya punch her in the nose?

DICK: Yes! (*under his breath*) And may the District Attorney forgive me.

FLATTOP: Okay, but no tricks now. I'll be watchin' ya.

DICK: Good! Let us away!

(*Door closes*) (*Car pulls away, revs up, screeches, hail of bullets, brakes squeal to a stop*)

ANNOUNCER: Speeding toward the same destination is another car. Leave us see who is in it.

SNOWFLAKE: Ah, woe is me, woe is me. Helpless in the foul clutches of the Mole.

MOLE: Just a minute, Snowflake. My clutch may slip a little, but it ain't foul. Besides, I do not mean you any harm, comb-ly wrench. I told Shaky and Flattop to drive out here, too. Wouldn't it be funny if we all got here at the exact same time?

(Huge screeching of tires, brakes, and an enormous car crash)

You know, ask silly questions, ya get silly answers.
Ah well, this was a hot car anyway, and it's a cinch theirs was too.

FLATTOP: Hey, Mole, why don't you watch where you're driving?

MOLE: I put my hand out.

FLATTOP: Well, here it is.

MOLE: And may I return your windshield wiper?

SHAKY: Let go, that's me.

FLATTOP: Come on, we haven't bumped anyone off in hours. Let's rub Snowflake out.

SNOWFLAKE: Oh, no, no, you mustn't - I'm too young to be fractured.

FLATTOP: You're never too young. Where's my tommygun?

DICK: I'm glad you asked that, Flattop, because I've disarmed you all. Now, reach for the sky, you rats!

MOLE: Again, reach for the sky. Every two minutes, it's calisthenics!

DICK: What a triumph this is! Singlehandedly, Tracy has rounded up three public enemies! No other dick can make this statement.

MOLE: Hooray! May I be the first to congratulate you. Hooray! . . . What am I cheering about? I'm heading for the electrical hari-kari!

DICK: I'll say you are. All of you.

FLATTOP: Quit taking bows, you ham cop. If I had my gun back, I'd fill you so full of holes, you'd have to go on the air for Swiss cheese!

DICK: At last! I can finish getting married to my darling Tess!

TESS: Too late, Richard! I've found another husband.

CHIEF: Ah, yes! All's well that ends well, that's what I say!

(Music)

ALL *(singing)* Oh, happy happy happy happy happy happy happy happy
happy happy wedding day. . .
Happy happy wedding – happy happy wedding – happy happy wedding day!