



While the remainder of the family was upstairs or outside the house, Billy led me to their finished basement. The stairway from the first floor ended near the center of the basement, creating a triangular-shaped space under the stairs. This space had been converted into a pantry by closing off one side and installing a loose-fitting door on the other. Billy showed me a cigarette and asked me if I wanted to take some puffs on it. Although I had no interest, I knew it was forbidden by adults so I agreed to try it. He and I went into the pantry, lit the cigarette and each had a couple of puffs. I remember being very unimpressed. During this short period of time, the cigarette smoke escaped through the openings around the pantry door. Very soon the door burst open and numerous excited adults were peering in on us. Some of them were shouting, "Fire! Fire! The house is on fire!" or similar things. I suppose they were happy to find that the house was not really on fire but that the smoke was caused by 2 cowering young kids sneaking a smoke on a cigarette. My mind is a blur after that. Fortunately, there was no telephone in the house so nobody called the fire department. I don't know if the family gathering continued or broke up.

I didn't receive corporal punishment, but I'm not so sure about Billy. He and I never discussed the incident. My mother felt that the proper punishment was to keep me indoors for a week. She didn't allow me to go outdoors and play baseball or hide-and-seek with the other neighborhood boys. Instead, I stayed indoors and listened to the 15-minute long radio programs that were popular at the time. These included: Tom Mix, Captain Midnight, Jack Armstrong, Terry and the Pirates, Little Orphan Annie and several others. After this one-week punishment and exposure to radio programs, I was anxious for much more of this kind of entertainment. So not only did the punishment achieve the desired result (I never, ever smoked again) but it generated a lifetime of fringe benefits for me.

### **LONE RANGER RADIO PROGRAM**

By the time I was 9 or 10 years old, I had been listening to the half-hour long, evening "The Lone Ranger" regularly. This program was created by a radio writer named Fran Striker and the man most responsible for it, a radio producer named George Trendel. The program originated at radio station WXYZ in downtown Detroit in 1933. At the end of each broadcast, the announcer informed us that the program was being beamed to us from a skyscraper about 8 miles from my home at 7058 Milton St.

At some point, I got it into my head that I would really like to see a radio broadcast of "The Lone Ranger." I envisioned a huge studio with a masked man, his Indian companion, horses, guns with silver bullets, stagecoaches, bad guys, sheriffs and the like. I kept begging my parents to take me to the WXYZ studio, only 8 miles away. They gave me many excuses why they couldn't take me such as: gasoline was rationed, the roof leaked on our 1936 Plymouth car, daddy was working the night shift, a reservation was necessary and we had no telephone, etc. Of course, they didn't want to tell me the real reason was that it was a radio program and not "real life." They didn't want me to see several men (probably dressed in suits) talking into microphones plus a sound effects man instead of horses and flying bullets. They knew that that would have been an extreme disappointment for me and would probably cause me to stop listening to it (as well as my other radio programs).

I kept "bugging" them to take me to WXYZ for a long time, and they kept giving me excuses why they couldn't. It came to a point where I was actually mad at them for their unreasonableness. It was probably years before I realized the truth about radio programs. Of course, I'm very, very, glad that they didn't take me to the studio or tell me the real reason why not! I guess that this is an example that parents sometimes know what is best for their child.