



Artifact Showcase

Walter Winchell

This photo of Walter Winchell (1897-1972) is from the Museum's extensive photograph collection

Winchell had a distinctive personality. After getting a start in vaudeville, he launched a journalism career by writing a Broadway gossip column for papers like *The New York Mirror*. He began his radio career around 1930, on New York station WABC. For much of the 1930s and the 1940s, he was heard nationally on the NBC Network, (later, on the Mutual Network), with his *Jergen's Journal* for Jergen's Lotion. He liked to think of himself as a serious newscaster, but he was more likely to report on celebrity divorces than weighty national or world issues.

Winchell opened his radio broadcasts by shouting "Flash," and frantically banging out a string of meaningless dots and dashes on a telegraph key to create a feeling of urgency. Then, extremely rapidly and authoritatively, he intoned, "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. America, from border to border and coast to coast, and all the ships at sea. Let's go to press."

He equipped his automobile with a shortwave radio so he could listen to police calls, and even arranged to have a siren and red light put on his car, often racing to crime scenes or



fires sometimes beating law enforcement while enhancing his ego.

He supported President Roosevelt during the Depression years and was critical of Hitler and American isolationists. But his reputation was sullied after the War when he supported Senator Joe McCarthy's anti-communist crusade.

We appreciate your support of the Museum so that historical artifacts like this one and the stories that go with them can be preserved for future generations. THANKS!

Donated by Bill McMahon