

The Ohio Bell Telephone Company
WTAM, Cleveland

The Ohio Story

MONDAY

MARCH 14, 1949

6:30 - 6:45

No. 343 - "BARNEY OLDFIELD ON THE CINDER CIRCUIT"

ANNCR: Ohio Bell, the Telephone Company, presents "The Ohio Story".

ORCH: THEME ... THIS FAIR COUNTRY ... DI PROVENZA FROM LA TRAVIATA

WALDROP: Big Barney Oldfield of Toledo, Ohio, was a money driver. And he had the courage to say so.

Barney knew the crowd paid their dollar-twenty to watch him risk his neck and to witness the most spectacular thrills on the track. He gave his customers more than full measure on both counts, and demanded a fair return on his investment, and that investment ... was life itself.

And so, with that uncluttered, clear-cut estimate before him, Barney Oldfield clamped a cigar into the southwest corner of his face and proceeded to every major motor race track in the nation and wrote a million dollars worth of thrills into the Ohio Story.

ORCH: THEME UP

ANNCR: That was Robert Waldrop beginning another Ohio Story brought to you by Ohio Bell ... the telephone company.

(COMMERCIAL)

Did you ever think how many telephone calls are used in making arrangements for a social get-together with friends? And how different things would be WITHOUT your telephone? All those calls to friends and relatives ... to the butcher, the grocer and other provisioners ... to the florist -- suppose you had to make them in person and on foot!

Of course, this example of "running of errands by wire" is only ONE of the many services which your telephone offers you throughout the year. And this indispensable servant becomes MORE useful to you every day, as Ohio Bell opens more exchanges and connects more telephones. However, cost of furnishing existing telephone service as well as expansion, has increased enormously in recent years ... and that is why Ohio Bell has found it necessary to ask for a modest rate increase.

0-2AN: CHORD AND UNDER

ANCHOR: And now back to Robert Waldrop and tonight's Ohio Story, "Barney Oldfield on the Cinder Circuit."

WALDROP: Berni Eli Oldfield was born in a crumbling log hut in Wauseon, Ohio on January 3rd, 1878, long after log cabins were out of style.

- At 15 Barney quit school to work as a waiter and to become a professional boxer. But by the time he was 16 he had found a way to make some real money. In amateur bicycle racing the winner was usually given a gold watch -- which had a retail value pretty close to \$20.

Barney Oldfield made himself bicycle racing champion of Ohio. In 1896 Barney was preparing for the big 18 mile race at Toledo when a stranger looked him up.

MILLER: Barney, why are you entering the 18 mile race Saturday?

BARNEY: There's a \$600 mortgage on this house. Reason enough, Mister?

MILLER: That's what I thought. I'm from the League of Amateur Wheelmen. We hear you draw a regular salary from Stearns Bicycle Company. That disqualifies you from Amateur racing.

BARNEY: You mean it's wrong to pay the mortgage?

MILLER: That's not my concern. But you race as an amateur or you don't race.

BARNEY: Well, I don't have time to play, Mister. So count me out.

ORCH: BRIDGE

WALDROP: It just happened that Tom Cooper, a friend of Barney's was back from Detroit.

TOM: I suppose you'll walk off with the race as usual, Barney.

BARNEY: Nope. Disqualified.

TOM: Wonderful!

BARNEY: What's so wonderful about it?

TOM: I got a job for you. It's dangerous, but it might pay.

BARNEY: Go ahead.

TOM: I'm working for a mechanic in Detroit now. He's building two racing cars to get publicity for his autos. But he doesn't want to drive. I said you'd drive one. Here's the address. Start Monday.

BARNEY: Who is this mechanic? Who do I ask for?

TOM: Guy by the name of Ford ... Henry Ford.

ORCH: BRIDGE

WALDROP: Henry Ford's objective was advertising publicity for his automobile; but more immediately the idea was to get the world racing championship away from Alexander Winton of Cleveland, Ohio. Barney Oldfield had never driven a car, but he learned all about the racer Henry Ford was making, because he helped build it.

On the day of the big race, though, they couldn't start the engines of Mr. Ford's two racing cars Alexander Winton was so cocky Ford could hardly stand it.

WINTON: I hear you're having a little trouble with your machines, Mr. Ford.

FORD: Nothing we can't fix, Mr. Winton. Barney, try cranking the yellow one again.

BARNEY: Yes, sir.

WINTON: Well, good luck, gentlemen. If you get started, just follow the Winton Bullet and you'll come in second.

ORCH: BRIDGE

BARNEY: Maybe we can get 'em started for the next race, Mr. Ford.

FORD: Nope. I'm gonna sell 'em both for junk ...

BARNEY: I'll give you four hundred dollars for the red one.

FORD: It's yours Barney, but it'll break your heart.

ORCH: BRIDGE

WALDROP: Barney Oldfield and Tom Cooper got the red one going and took it to Dayton to race. It was billed as the 999 and it was to make history one day. At first though ---

SOUND: ENGINES IN B. G. ONE BEING CRANKED

BARNEY: What's wrong, Tom? Why won't she start?

TOM: Not enough air pressure in the tank to force gasoline into the engine.

FISHER: You guys better get that car runnin'. I billed you as "the fastest thing on wheels."

TOM: Hey, whatcha doin', Barney? Rippin' a hole in the tank!

BARNEY: Yeah, hand me that piece of hose ... and the tape.

TOM: What's the idea?

BARNEY: I'm gonna supply air pressure -- by blowin' into the tank ... crank 'er up.

SOUND: ENGINE ROARS

ORCH: BRIDGE

SOUND: ENGINE ROARS

TOM: (OVER) Keep blowin', Barney!

BARNEY: (HOLLERS) Don't worry about the pressure! Give it the gas!

ORCH: BRIDGE

WALDROP: For 15 laps Tom Cooper steered and oiled the engine with a long-snouted oil can while Barney Oldfield sat backwards puffing air into the gas tank. They won, and cleared \$25.

After repairs they shipped the 999 back to Detroit for the big Manufacturers' Challenge Cup Race. The man to beat was still the world champion ... Alexander Winton, of Cleveland. At the starting line, the track promoter and Henry Ford came over to see Barney.

SOUND: ENGINES IN B. G. IDLING

METZGER: Barney, if you beat Alexander Winton, you'll be famous.

BARNEY: What you mean, Metzger, is if I beat Winton, you'll get a bigger crowd next week.

METZGER: You catch on fast. \$100 extra then, if you beat Winton.

BARNEY: Make it 200.

FORD: Metzger, you're askin' this boy to kill himself for \$200. Barney, don't try passing Winton. You'll get killed.

BARNEY: Thanks, Mr. Ford. But I might as well be dead ... as dead broke.

SOUND: ENGINE REVS UP

ORCH: BRIDGE

TOM: I can't understand it. Barney's still ahead but his car isn't that good.

FORD: Watch him on the curves. Everyone else kills the throttle ...

TOM: But Barney pulls it wide open.

FORD: No. He opened it wide at the start and just left it that way.

SOUND: ENGINES COME UP MIKE

ORCH: BRIDGE

WINTON: Congratulations, Mr. Oldfield. You beat me by a half mile.

BARNEY: Thanks, Mr. Winton. Just follow the old 999 and you'll place second every time.

ORCH: BRIDGE

WALDROP: Barney's method was simple always. He just pulled the throttle all the way out and left it there. But that way, he knew he'd better plan to retire young so he charged high prices.

WALDROP: Barney stopped at Toledo and paid off the \$600 mortgage on his father's house; and then proceeded to Indianapolis.

Before the Indianapolis race the famous track promoter, Carl Fisher came to Barney.

SOUND: ENGINES IN B. G.

FISHER: Barney, today I'd like to see you become the first man in the world to drive a mile in 60 seconds.

BARNEY: So all the world would hear about your track, eh, Carl?

FISHER: \$250 extra if you circle this track in one minute, Barney.

BARNEY: Make it 500 and hang it on the finish line.

SOUND: ENGINE UP

ORCH: BRIDGE

FISHER: Congratulations, Barney. 59 and 3/5 seconds. Here's the five hundred. (PAUSE) And here comes an old friend of yours.

WINTON: Congratulations, Barney. You're the very first to do a mile a minute.

BARNEY: It's not worth it, Mr. Winton. The old 999 almost fell apart on me.

WINTON: That's why I came. Now if you were driving a Winton Bullet ...

BARNEY: Well, let's get down to terms, Mr. Winton.

ORCH: BRIDGE

WALDROP: Barney Oldfield made every one of his cars famous. The Ford 999, The Winton Bullet, The Green Dragon, The Big Ben, The Golden Submarine. He broke every record in the book. Even the cigar the dentist made him wear between his clenched teeth to absorb the shock became famous. When he got to be the idol of American boys from coast to coast Barney finally found something to be afraid of ...

SOUND: IDLING MOTOR

BARNEY: Herbie, you walk right up to that promoter's office and withdraw your entry. And don't ever let me hear of you entering a \$25 race again!

HERBIE: Aw, Barney, just to get some gasoline money for the BIG race.

BARNEY: Listen every time you drive you're bettin your life against that prize money. And even your young life's worth more than \$25.

HERBIE: But if I don't get gasoline money ...

BARNEY: Tell my mechanic I said to give you four barrels of gas. Now get that car off this track

ORCH: BRIDGE

WALDROP: Barney's records began to fall to younger men. Talk went that Barney was afraid to lean on the pedal anymore. They began to call his Golden Submarine ... "The Golden Goose Egg".

To settle the matter Barney sent to Indianapolis for the electric timer and a flock of track judges. Before a crowd of experts at the St. Louis track Barney rolled the Golden Submarine onto the cinders. And while the judges gaped the great Barney Oldfield stepped on the gas. On the first lap the mile record fell. On the fifth lap the 5 mile record fell. On the tenth lap he shattered the 10 mile record. And he kept right on going until he had broken every American oval dirt track record on the books. That gave the rest of the world something to shoot at.

ORCH: OUT

It was late in the year 1918 that big Barney Oldfield, the racer from Toledo, Ohio and Henry Ford, automobile manufacturer, found themselves at the same automotive banquet in New York. Both men were at the top of their field.

BARNEY: Henry, I'd sure love to find out who has the old No. 999. Like to buy it back as a souvenir.

FORD: You won't be able to if I find it first, because I've got more money than you have.

BARNEY: I guess that's so, Henry.

FORD: Y'know, Barney, in a way, when you started racing in that old Ford 999 ... you made me. And I guess in a way, I made you.

BARNEY: Guess you're right, Henry. But y'know, if that's true, I think I did a better job than you did.

ORCH: BRIDGE AND SEGUE TO THEME

WALDROP: In 17 years on the cinder track Barney Oldfield wore out 32 automobiles and drove in 2,000 races on every major dirt track in the United States. His name became a synonym for speed and daring ... and he wrote a million dollars worth of thrills into the Ohio Story.

ORCH: CURTAIN

ANNCR: And now before we close tonight's Ohio Story, here is Robert Waldrop with his Ohio Bell Brevity.

(COMMERCIAL)

WALDROP: At this very moment, people all over the country are placing long-distance telephone calls. They'll talk about hundreds of different things. But many conversations will start with the same words -- "I called you because I couldn't wait to know." Inspired by anxiety, curiosity or just wholesome interest in people and events, they'll be saying, "I couldn't wait to know ..."

1st MAN: whether you and Mother are driving up for the weekend.

WALDROP: "I couldn't wait to know ..."

(COMMERCIAL) (Cont'd)

2nd MAN: how Uncle William's operation came out. Is he all right?

WALDROP: "I couldn't wait to know ..."

3rd MAN: if you understood WHY I'm not going to take that offer. Maybe my letter didn't make it clear.

WALDROP: And, in most cases, there's no reason why folks SHOULD wait ... for a low-cost long-distance telephone call will answer their questions, relieve their anxiety, put them at ease. Yes, there's nothing so satisfactory as a voice-visit with a person when you want information. Long distance is so easy to use, and it costs so little. A station-to-station call from Cleveland to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for instance, costs only ninety-five cents, plus tax.

ORCH: THESE UP

ANNCR: Ohio Bell will bring you Robert Waldrop in the Ohio Story again Wednesday evening at this same time when we tell the story of an Irishman who founded the first white settlement in western Ohio, and named it Willshire.

Listen Wednesday for "Captain Riley's Regard".

The Ohio Story, brought to you every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at this same time, is produced by Stuart Buchanan and tonight's story was written by Bill Ellis and Frank Siedel. Original music by Earl Rohlf.

Until Wednesday at this same time, this is Tom Field saying "good night" for Ohio Bell.

ORCH: THESE UP AND OUT

ANNCR: This is a special network of Ohio radio stations.