

"—and best regards from Jake and the children. Let me know how Harry's business is. Write soon. Sincerely, Molly."

MOLLY, need I explain, was, is and will be your old friend Gertrude Berg, author and main character of the Goldbergs. It would be difficult to refer to her followers as fans—they are more friends of the family, the Goldbergs.

For years now she has been carrying on correspondence with thousands of radio listeners. Few of her listeners write "I enjoy your program—would you please send me an autographed photo, etc?" Instead, listeners want to know what is happening to the family when the family is off the air. It started a few years back when Miss Berg made personal appearances with the show throughout the country when it left the air. Letters began pouring in. What happened to the Goldbergs—what would become of them? Miss Berg sat down and wrote to these people that the show would be back as soon as air time could be cleared and she thanked them for their interest in her work. But that wasn't enough.

Most of the writers wanted more personal information. Friendships too strong had been started to be dismissed so lightly. You couldn't get away with such a formal note if you were writing to a neighbor of long standing.

WELL, you know how it is when you move away from the old block and you get, "Now don't forget to write. I expect to hear from you so we can get together." If you are one of those humans who puts even one letter off from day to day because this and that turns up, you can understand the task that faced Miss Berg when the fans insisted she tell them everything about the Goldbergs. And it couldn't be settled with a form letter, either. Everybody asked different questions. They told of their individual problems and sought advice.

Dodge the issue? That was one escape, but not one for Molly. You see, in real life she is the same understanding soul she portrays on the air. If these people thought enough of her

Here is the family the fans wonder about when the program is off the air. Letters to and from the author of the script keep the fans informed. From left, Roslyn Selber as Rosie; Everett Sloan as Sammy; James Water as Jake and Gertrude Berg, Molly.



The Customers Always Write



And Gertrude Berg (Molly Goldberg to You) Writes Back to Tell What Her Folks Are Doing

By Bernard Green

opinions on social problems, if they displayed such a poignant interest in her radio brain child, she was not going to let them down. It was the thrill of a lifetime and she decided to make it the work of a lifetime.

And so, when the Goldbergs return once more to the air on Sept. 13, the show won't take up where it left off. No, sir! Too many listeners have been keeping right up to date with the family. The progress of each member

has been noted—Sammy's school work, Jake's business, Rosie's social activities and Molly's deep friendship with Mrs. Bloom and Mrs. Kerrigan.

There may be some who will say, "Come now, that's quite a story to ask us to swallow. Are radio listeners that naive?" But you see, it isn't naive. It goes just a little bit further than that.

Picture a typical American family. Note that I didn't say a typical Jewish family. Of course, the Goldbergs are a Jewish group but they are typically American. Thus, each listener thinks of them as belonging to his or her group. After all, life is too large to be classified.

THEY tune in the Goldbergs and Molly is scolding Sammy for something he has done to hurt Rosie. Sammy at once becomes either Patrick, Angelo, Izzy or Fritz. The Mays, the Helens, the Janes and the Angelinas dissolve into Rosie. Mrs. Goldberg is either Mrs. Murphy Mrs. Caputo or Mrs. Mueller. Patrick will say to himself, "Gosh, I did the same thing to Mary two days ago. My own sister, what a fool I was." Mrs. Murphy might say, "That's the way I should have handled it." And Mary's comment may be, "I should forgive and forget—I flew off the handle too easily."

This happens day in and day out, while the program is on. Oh, no, I'm not guessing at it. Not by a long shot. With the aid of several friends in and around radio I put the question to dozens of listeners and found almost the same reaction each time. In short it settled down to this—the program was human.

One can easily understand how these different people began to look forward to each episode. If a certain incident touched home, a listener would write in seeking further advice. It was the Agony Column in new form, interesting, telling a story, offering a worldly education.

As the years rolled by the problems of the Goldbergs became the problems of thousands of families throughout the country. And their problems became the problems of Molly Goldberg, Gertrude Berg. The author and each member of those families became as close to each other as radio and mail could allow.

THERE is a typical letter which Molly received about six months ago. They've been off the air little more than a year, you know, so this will give you an idea. "Dear Molly," goes the letter "I wanted to get in touch with you long before this, but you know how it is with me. I'm always putting things off. A little lazy, I guess. Molly, I finally convinced Harry that you had the right idea on that deal. He thought it might go good over the air in a script show, but when it comes to real life it just couldn't work out. I spoke to his partner and we decided to take the bull by the horns. When he found out that we were working behind his back, as he put it, he was fit to be tied. But I told you how he raves and then later becomes as meek as a lamb. That's how it is now.

"He pays a little more attention to me when I talk. Of course, like you said, I don't make him feel that I'm the boss—but he's more civil these days. And, thank heavens, things are a little brighter.

"That neighbor of mine (the one who is like your Mrs. Kerrigan) gave birth to the darlinest baby boy. She sends her regards. Will you please write to her? How are the children? And Jake? Best wishes to you and yours. Love, Mary Horton."

A nun wrote: "Dear Miss Berg: Because of religious principles which prevented us from listening to the radio, we at the convent have missed your regular weekly broadcasts during the entire duration of Lent. Please be assured of my appreciation in the event that you could possibly forward those scripts to me."

YOU can take all your good will ambassadors, all your peace conferences and roll them into the river. I'll take more programs along the lines of the Goldbergs.

P. S.—About seven years ago an ambitious writer tried to interest some radio bigwigs in a program which was tagged *The Rise of the Goldbergs*. She couldn't get a hearing. So she hied to a small independent station and, without financial remuneration, put the show on herself. It clicked. It went to the networks.

When this same writer comes back to the air with the new series of the Goldbergs, it will be for a five-year period. The total planned expenditure on the series will exceed \$2,000,000. Gertrude Berg will net close to \$5,000 per week for her own efforts. I'll still take more programs along the lines of the Goldbergs.