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World War II Air Force Cadets at Saint John's: Jack Webb of "Dragnet" Fame Gets His Start

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**...and future star Jack Webb
was one of the cadets!**

*75 years ago
this winter:*

The Army Invaded Saint John's

Jack was one of the 1,500 cadets of the 87th College Training Detachment of the Air Force who took four-month refresher courses at Saint John's in 1943 and 1944. After this exposure to college subjects, they moved on to Air Force bases for training as pilots, navigators and bombardiers.

Image published in the 1944 *Sagatan*, p.65; this version is from the SJU Archives, O:\...\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Army Air Force 1940s\Box1803f5_SJ Army Air Force Unit During WWII.jpg

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18471/rec/24>

Text inset from 1968 *SJU Alumni Magazine* Spring p.38

The March 5, 1943 Times pictured the cadets at St. John's

Weather
St. Cloud, Minn., Friday, March 5, 1943

The St. Cloud Daily Times

Published Daily, No. 222 Associated Press Licensed News ST. CLOUD, MINN., FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 1943 Daily Price Licensed News 13 Pages 5 CENTS

Senate Worried By 1943 Food Supply

Bill Offered to Ban Farm Draft

Washington (AP)—The senate today passed a bill to ban the military conscription of farm labor, a move that would help to ease the nation's food supply problem.

The measure, known as the "Farm Labor Conservation Act," is expected to pass the house in the next few days.

The bill would prohibit the military from drafting farm workers into the armed forces. It also would require the War Relocation Authority to provide for the food needs of farm workers who are drafted.

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Mass Recapture Score of Towns Along Railway

Strike Out From Council

Harvest This Year to Be Good, Wickard Tells Committee

Penno Parade Postscript

Boy, 6, Doomed to Die, Wins Hero's Citation

4 Axis Ships Are Sunk by Bombers

Teacher College Extension Work Bill Presented

Price Ceilings on Meat to Stamp Out Black Market

Allied Bombers Smash Again at German Target

Allied Warplane Bombs Finish Up Japanese Convoy

Two Linging Destroyers Sought Out, Sunk—32 Jap Planes Downed

Raid Horror 178 Perish in London Panic

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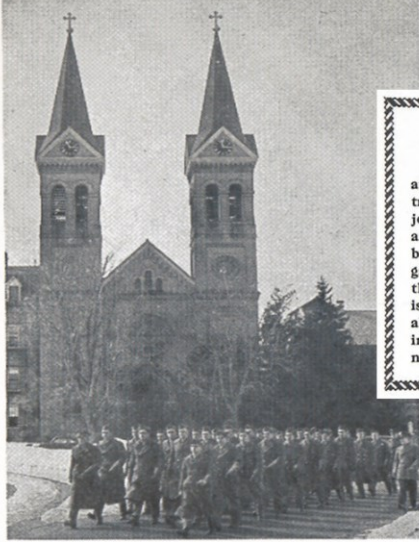
Allied Bombers Smash Again at German Target

Allied Warplane Bombs Finish Up Japanese Convoy

Two Linging Destroyers Sought Out, Sunk—32 Jap Planes Downed

Raid Horror 178 Perish in London Panic



Twin Towers Welcome Air Crew

OUT FOR A BRISK WALK in the chilly northland weather, the newly enrolled Air Crew students pass in review of the watchful eyes of the Twin Towers. The Towers, serving as St. John's conventional landmark for many years, apparently approves of the khaki clad warriors.
(Cut courtesy St. Cloud Times.)

The Record used the same photo in its March 11, 1943 issue, p.1

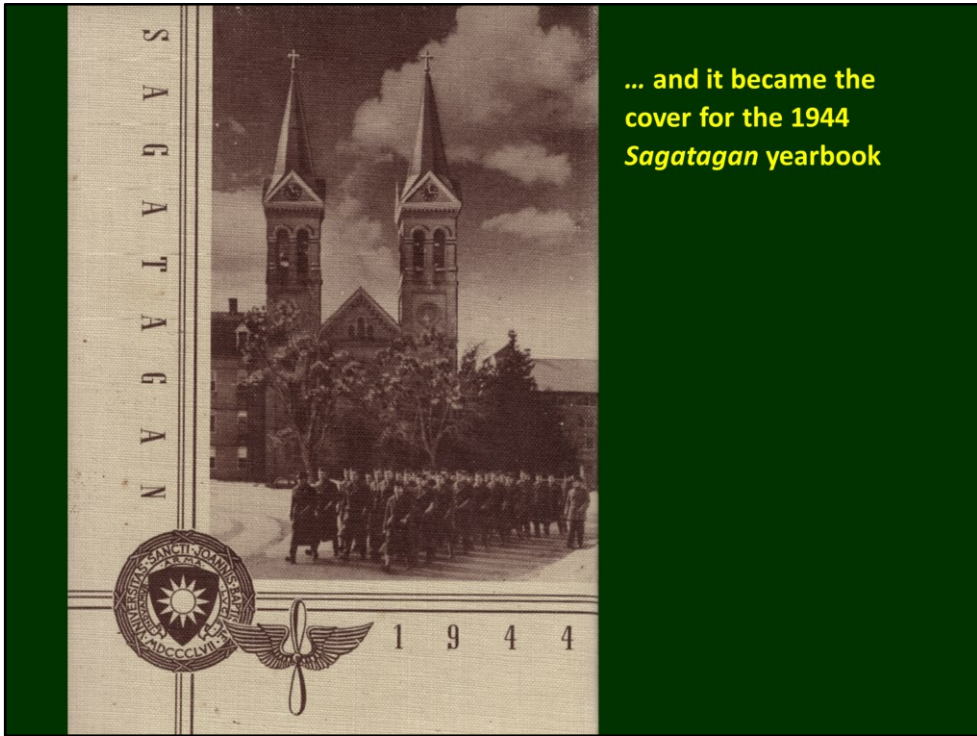
ARMY CADETS ARRIVING

ST. JOHN'S HAS BEEN PLACED on the list of 281 colleges and universities which will be used for specialized military training. The three weeks-old announcement made by a joint committee of the war department, navy department, and manpower commission has been greatly elaborated upon by the army since then. Army officers and enlisted men began arriving last week and have laid down the outline for the classes, subjects, and activities of the cadets. The school is to be used for the training of army air cadets who will also get 10 hours of flying time at the St. Cloud airport during their five-months stay here. The first group of cadets will number 150, arriving here before March 1.

[page 1](#) of the March 11, 1943 *Record* issue

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29545>

Servicemen alumni also featured prominently in that issue's four-page [Alumni Supplement](#), which also had this announcement.



... and it became the
cover for the 1944
Sagatagan yearbook

Image: 1944 *Sagatagan*, front cover,
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18439/rec/24>

The March 5, 1943 Times had a second photo of cadets below the first:

Weather
St. Cloud, Minn., March 5, 1943
Forecast: Partly cloudy, with light rain or snow, and a high of 45.

The St. Cloud Daily Times

Published Daily, Except on Sundays and Public Holidays
Subscription Price: \$3.00 per Annum in Advance
Single Copies: 10 Cents
ST. CLOUD, MINN., FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 1943
Third Class Post Office No. 1000
U. S. POST OFFICE PERMIT NO. 1000

Senate Worried By 1943 Food Supply

Bill Offered to Ban Farm Draft

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Senate today introduced a bill to ban the military conscription of farm workers, a move that would help insure the production of a 1943 food crop as well as help in the nation's war effort.

The bill, known as the "Farm Labor Conservation Act," is sponsored by Sen. Charles McNary, Oregon. It would prohibit the War Relocation Authority from drafting farm workers for military service.

The bill is expected to pass the Senate in the next few days. It is one of the many measures being introduced by the Senate to help the nation's war effort.

The bill is expected to pass the Senate in the next few days. It is one of the many measures being introduced by the Senate to help the nation's war effort.

178 Perish in London Panic

Raid Horror

LONDON (AP)—A heavy German raid on London tonight resulted in the deaths of 178 persons, according to a statement issued by the British government.

The raid, which was the heaviest since the evacuation of Dunkirk, was carried out by a force of 100 bombers. They dropped 1,000 tons of bombs on the city, including the city center.

The British government has announced that it will continue to defend London against such raids. It has also announced that it will continue to evacuate children from the city.

Russ Recapture Score of Towns Along Railway

Road Strike Out From Red Control

MOSCOW (AP)—The Russian army today recaptured a score of towns along a railway line in the Ukraine, according to a statement issued by the Soviet government.

The towns, which were recaptured from the hands of German forces, are located along the railway line between Kiev and Odessa. The recapture of these towns is a significant military success for the Russians.

The Soviet government has also announced that it has broken the German blockade of the railway line. This will allow for the free movement of supplies and troops between the two cities.

Boy, 6, Doomed to Die, Wins Hero's Citation

Penny Parade Participant

PHOENIX (AP)—A 6-year-old boy, who participated in a penny parade for the war effort, has been awarded a hero's citation for his bravery.

The boy, whose name is [redacted], was awarded the citation for his actions during the parade. He was seen helping a wounded soldier to the hospital.

The citation is a recognition of the boy's courage and selflessness. It is a testament to the heroism of the young people of the United States.

4 Axis Ships Are Sunk by Bombers

WASHINGTON (AP)—Four Axis ships were sunk by Allied bombers in the Atlantic Ocean, according to a statement issued by the Navy.

The ships, which were part of a convoy, were sunk by a force of 100 bombers. The sinking of these ships is a significant military success for the Allies.

The Navy has announced that it will continue to hunt for Axis ships in the Atlantic. It has also announced that it will continue to support the war effort.

Teacher College Extension Work Bill Presented

WASHINGTON (AP)—A bill to extend the work of the National Teachers College has been introduced in the House of Representatives.

The bill, known as the "National Teachers College Extension Act," is sponsored by Rep. [redacted]. It would extend the work of the college for another five years.

The extension of the college's work is necessary to help the nation's war effort. The college has been instrumental in training teachers for the war effort.

Allied Bombers Smash Again at German Target

WASHINGTON (AP)—Allied bombers today smashed again at a German target, according to a statement issued by the War Relocation Authority.

The bombers, which were part of a force of 100, dropped 1,000 tons of bombs on the target. The target, which is located in Germany, is a major industrial center.

The bombing has caused significant damage to the target. It is expected that the target will be destroyed in the next few days.

Price Ceilings on Meat to Stamp Out Black Market

WASHINGTON (AP)—The War Relocation Authority today announced that it will impose price ceilings on meat to stamp out the black market.

The price ceilings will be imposed on all types of meat, including beef, pork, and lamb. The ceilings will be set at a level that will allow for the free market to operate.

The War Relocation Authority has announced that it will continue to fight the black market. It has also announced that it will continue to support the war effort.



Allied Warplane Bombs Finish Up Japanese Convoy

WASHINGTON (AP)—Allied warplanes today finished up a Japanese convoy, according to a statement issued by the War Relocation Authority.

The warplanes, which were part of a force of 100, dropped 1,000 tons of bombs on the convoy. The convoy, which was part of a Japanese fleet, was destroyed.

The War Relocation Authority has announced that it will continue to hunt for Japanese convoys. It has also announced that it will continue to support the war effort.

Allied Bombers Smash Again at German Target

WASHINGTON (AP)—Allied bombers today smashed again at a German target, according to a statement issued by the War Relocation Authority.

The bombers, which were part of a force of 100, dropped 1,000 tons of bombs on the target. The target, which is located in Germany, is a major industrial center.

The bombing has caused significant damage to the target. It is expected that the target will be destroyed in the next few days.

1943 March 5, *St. Cloud Times*, p.1



Jack Webb, Hollywood producer, director, writer and actor of DRAGNET fame, was at St. John's in the early 1940's as part of the 87th College Training Detachment.

ARMY PRE-FLIGHT CADETS have arrived at St. John's university and a group of them are drilling in the shadows of the twin towers. Below, a few of the boys are indulging in a bit of refreshments at the soda fountain in the college. (left to right) Privates Jack Webb, Charles Thorpe, William Webb, Vernon VanDyke, William Whiteside, Edward Wenigar, Isaac R. Hale. (Times photos)

SJU Archives 1772f5 *SCTimes*1943(2clippings).pdf
Inset: 1968 *SJU Alumni Magazine* Spring p.38

"This Is The Army"

VOLUME 1

THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 1943

NUMBER 1

The Record's supplemental pages for the cadets, "This Is the Army," before it became "WICL-CO" – see last month's history lesson! – mentioned Jack Webb.

ATTENTION PLEASE

"This is the army" is definitely not an appropriate name for this page. We borrowed the temporary title from Irving Berlin's show of the same name. This page is yours, and it's your job to name it. If the experiment is successful, if you like it, there is the possibility of enlargement. We welcome any and all suggestions for improvement.

But first we must have a name for our page—we can best judge your approval of our efforts by the number of names turned in. If we get 150 names we'll know that you want to have a page, and perhaps a paper of your own. If the response is

light, we'll know that you don't particularly care and will abandon the idea. So it's up to you! Leave your suggestions for a name for our page in rooms 401 and 243, just anywhere at any time. Print your suggestion, your full name, and your room number on the paper.

At the present time there are only three men on the staff. There are openings for a news editor, a sports editor, a feature editor, columnists, and writers of all kinds. A business manager is also needed. If you have had experience in these lines or are interested, contact Pvt. Chuck Woodruff, room 401, or Pvt. Jack Webb, room 243.

[1943-03-25](#)

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29567>

"This Is The Army"

VOLUME 1

THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 1943

NUMBER 1

...and he's on the staff list in the next issue

ATTENTION PLEASE

WIL-CO

STAFF

Editor..... Pvt. Chuck Woodruff
Co-Editor..... Pvt. Jack Webb
News Editor..... Pvt. Bob Woolf
Sports Co-Editors... Pvt. Bob Paul,
Pvt. Arnold Paige
Music Editor..... Pvt. Ed. Weniger
Business Manager. Pvt. Ralph Bartos
Reporters.. Pvts. N. Fehr, J. Brown,
D. M. Brod, R. Burgess, S. Collins,
J. Ellison, C. Alig.
Business Staff.. Pvts. C. Chauncey,
D. Emerick.
Head for the "Wil-co" was drawn by
Pvt. Rene Wetzl.

" is definitely light, we'll know that you don't name for this particularly care and will abandon the temporary the idea. So it's up to you! Leave n's show of the your suggestions for a name for our page in rooms 401 and 243, just e is yours, and anywhere at any time. Print your e it. If the ex- suggestion, your full name, and if you like it, your room number on the paper. ty of enlarge- At the present time there are only any and all three men on the staff. There are vement. openings for a news editor, a sports have a name editor, a feature editor, columnists, an best judge and writers of all kinds. A business efforts by the manager is also needed. If you have rned in. If we had experience in these lines or are know that you interested, contact Pvt. Chuck Wood- and perhaps a ruff, room 401, or Pvt. Jack Webb the response is room 243.

April 8, 1943

[1943-03-25 The Record](http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29567)

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29567>

WIL-CO list from [1943-04-08](http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29578)

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29578>



WILCO



VOLUME 1

THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1943

NUMBER 12

"Roger"

By Pvt. Bob Woolf

By way of introducing this column, it is highly appropriate to explain its uncommon name which is as new as the Air Corps and a very integral part of its language. "Roger" is flying inter-radio jargon for "reception" and "acknowledge" and will appear in all-armed present news to suggest less experienced George's air force his boot military. The me "Star high v. pletely furated. This the coo the we power and fast A20 Havocs when teamed together. Late Nipponese News Announcement: "All Japanese soldiers will be taught to swim."

Prof. Weniger Writes

"Ruffles and Flourishes"

We shall bring you, from time to time, news from the army's world of music. Know how the Air Corps Song came to be? At the Cleveland Air Races in 1938, General Westmore bemoaned the fact that the Air Corps was a government branch of

In Cadence--

By Privts. Bob Paul and Arnold Page

Fighting Stope Air Hawks-- The first game of the renovated schedule came off Thursday, April 1,

H'EXERCISE

inter-flight competition for squadron championships to possible outside contestants.

The way to get this program rolling is by everyone getting on the beam and organizing. All men interested in having an active part in developing their favorite sport contact Pvt. Arnold Page, room 419-- or leave a note in that room stating name, room number, flight, and sport interest on it so this program can be started.

How About You?

The burning question is not "when will we start to fly, but who flies off with the brooms every morning?" Really, we'd like to know. Do you men take the brooms at nine and keep them in your rooms, or do you arise at the crack of dawn and tip-toe down to the supply closet and thus nip them before the majority gets up? In either case, there are enough to go around unless some of you have permanently adopted them. Let's try and keep them moving in the mornings so we can all avoid gigs at room inspection.

He was a columnist and co-editor for the cadets' newspaper, which appeared in the school's newspaper.

Webb's column was a Dear Abby of sorts -- geared in a humorous manner to the everyday woes of a soldier.

"We sincerely hope that we aren't the cause of too much face reddening," he wrote in the opening column.

"yours received"

and contents noted"

By Pvt. Jack Webb

Each week at this same time and place we shall endeavor to answer all your queries regardless what they may be. We have on hand several consulting engineers well acquainted with all the various and sundry fields. Feel free at any time to write us a letter, card, or book on any and all subjects. We sincerely hope that we aren't the cause of too

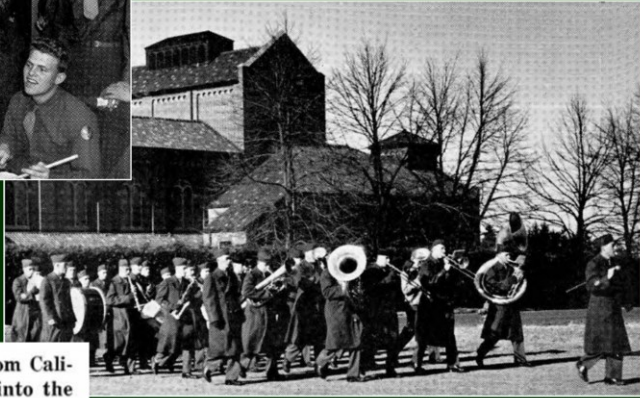
basco Sauce, and those little green Mexican peppers didn't give me a lift, I switched to fire eating. At first you may get over-heated and you'll have to ignore those nasty blisters on your tongue, but persevere and you'll come out of it with a pair of rosy cheeks and a sun-tanned epiglottis! We sincerely hope this answers your question and that our "warm" friendship may con-

THE MUSIC—formal and informal, was always good. The band was a credit to the traditions of St. John's students and the halls of Benet fairly shivered when the boys got together long enough to whip up some Boogie-Woogie in the latest fashion. Here they are.



Jack got involved with the campus music scene

Jack Webb from California organized post talent into the variety show, "Flying Blind," which was presented in St. Cloud, profiting \$1,200. This sum was donated to the U.S.O.



Text and photos from the 1944 yearbook

Band images and top text from 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.74

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18476/rec/24>

1944 *Sagatagan*, p.62

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18470/rec/24>

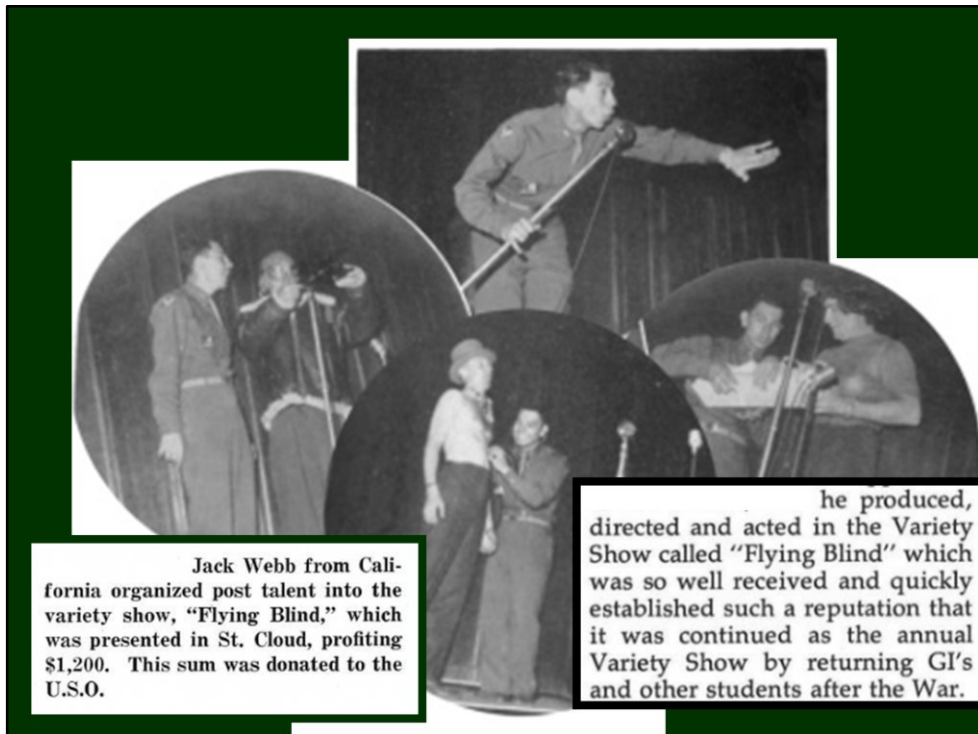


Image of Webb USO programs - from Webb Facebook page maintainer
 Text from 1944 *Sagatan*, p.62 (on left)
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18470/rec/24>
 and from 1968 *SJU Alumni Magazine* Spring p.38

St. Cloud Times 6-8-43

'You're in, Miss Gale'

Cadet Jack Webb Picks a Star for 'Flying Blind'

One day last week Cadet Jack Webb of the 87th college training detachment was looking for a woman—not any woman, but one that could speak three lines in his musical comedy, "Flying Blind," to be presented in the Technical High school auditorium Thursday and Friday.

He walked the streets, stood on corners, sat in drugstores, always looking for a woman "who could walk in and make the officers turn around." By week's end he had every St. John's cadet on the hunt for his woman.

Saturday noon the bus brought its load of fledgling wingmen to St. Cloud. Cadet Webb's collaborators gathered in a downtown room to map out the evening hunt—they still wanted the right feminine lead.

In walked Nancy Gale, 19-year-old Carleton sophomore home for the summer's vacation. The cadets looked. Was she what Webb would like? How did she walk? How did she talk? They looked some more, said nothing.

The air was like that of a sick room in which only the doctor

knew the seriousness of the case. The doctor came—Cadet Webb walked in only to let his potential star sit while he stared with the rest of the boys.

No one mentioned the show. The banter went on. Miss Gale was drawn into the conversation. Still no talk of "Flying Blind." Just wisecracks and small chatter for an hour. Ready to go, Cadet Webb looked at her, said, "You're in."

With their feminine lead picked (to speak three lines) the cadets went about the all-night job of writing a script, using the best of their three previous productions and combining it with everything new.

To make arrangements for rehearsals, Cadet Webb and his assistant director, Cadet Blaine Thompson, went to see their feminine lead Wednesday afternoon. Just in case, Cadet Webb whispered to her brother, Bob, "Can she play the piano?"

"She's only been playing since she was eight."

"Can she sing?"

"She sang with the dance band at Carleton for two years."

Then Cadet Webb saw that his script needed retouching. Instead of the three lines planned for his feminine lead, she could now sing and play. Maybe a scene could do her justice? Yes.

This week the play went to rehearsals and Nancy Gale "was in," in with dozens of cadet actors, singers, composers, directors, comedians, musicians. "Flying Blind," presented for the first time with a woman, was ready for an audience.

Written, directed, and produced by versatile Jack Webb, the all-cadet (except for Nancy) review will be staged as an army benefit for the St. Cloud service canteen which, for the past several months, has been the gathering place of cadets.

Lyrics, music, skits, and satires for the show were all penned by men stationed with the St. John's air crew, most of it by Cadet Webb himself.

Tickets for either of the two nights went on sale in downtown St. Cloud over the weekend at Dan Marsh Drugs, Fandel's, Spaniol Hotel, Hotel St. Cloud, and the service canteen. In addition, they can be purchased from cadets.



"FLYING BLIND" an all army production will be given by the St. John's air corps cadets pre-flight class. Rehearsals are under way for the show and pictured above are members of the cast with the only "Gal," Nancy Gale, in the show during practice Monday (left to right) Privates Jack Webb, Richard Wahl, Newton Blevins, J. S. White, Donald Brod, and Edward Bierman. (Times photo)

St. Cloud Times 6-8-43

SJU Archives 1772f5 SCTimes1943(2clippings).pdf

Some of the Jack Webb materials in the SJU Archives was shared via the Jack Webb Archives Facebook page in 2017

Jack Webb Archives

Like Follow Share ...

Jack Webb Archives added a new photo to the album: Family Photos. November 9, 2017

A very special "Thank You" to Louis Johnston and Peggy Roske from Saint John's University who were kind enough to send us this historic newspaper article from a 1943 edition of the (Minnesota) Saint Cloud Times. We greatly appreciate their extensive research.

The article features Army Air Corps Cadet, Jack Webb, who wrote, directed and produced the variety show- Flying Blind. This production helped raise money for the Saint Cloud USO Service Club and continued as an annual event after WWII. Jack had a very special affection for Saint John's University where he spent four months in "Pre-flight" College Training Detachment. He is seen (far left) in the photo.

'You're in, Miss Gale'
Cadet Jack Webb Picks a Star for 'Flying Blind'

Like Comment Share

63 Top Comments

Marilyn Silverman-Peach How wonderful to see this. Like Reply 2 November 9, 2017 at 6:26pm

Jack Webb Archives Very cool indeed Like Reply 2 November 9, 2017 at 6:34pm

Kristi Noel Wow!!! This is so cool! What an historic find!

<https://www.facebook.com/Jack-Webb-Archives-453527154752962/>

Dan Moyer Jack Webb Archives FB creator, asked about Webb at SJU on May 10, 2017

The next time Webb gets a mention in *The Record* is February 29, 1952:

Wartime Johnny Alumnus Stars On 'Dragnet' Television Show

Jack Webb, '43, of Los Angeles, Cal., a College Training (aircrew) Johnnie during the war, is now writer, producer, director, and star of "Dragnet" (NBC-TV, alternate Thursdays).

Webb, onetime co-editor of "Wilco", the army news page of the *Record*, was very active during his brief wartime stay at Collegeville. Besides his contributions to "Wilco", he found time to write, produce—yes, and even act in his own productions. "Flying Blind", an all-army show directed, produced and partially written by the former Pvt. Webb, earned him the title of Pvt. Cecil B. deWebb. His talent gave him an enviable reputation while at St. John's.

Carrying on where he left off in the Air Corps, Jack made entertaining his business in civilian life.

"Dragnet" is a documentary type of police drama, whose stories are actual cases from Los Angeles police department files. Emphasis is put on intense realism.

The program is on film and simply shoots Los Angeles as it is; its alleys and cheap hotels, its frequently outlandish characters are all used in creating the show's setting.

The emphasis is on crime detection rather than on crime commission.

Jack plays the part of Sgt. Friday, the soft-spoken, competent detective in this true crime story. To him belongs the credit for the show's quiet honesty, meticulous attention to detail and absence of theatricality.

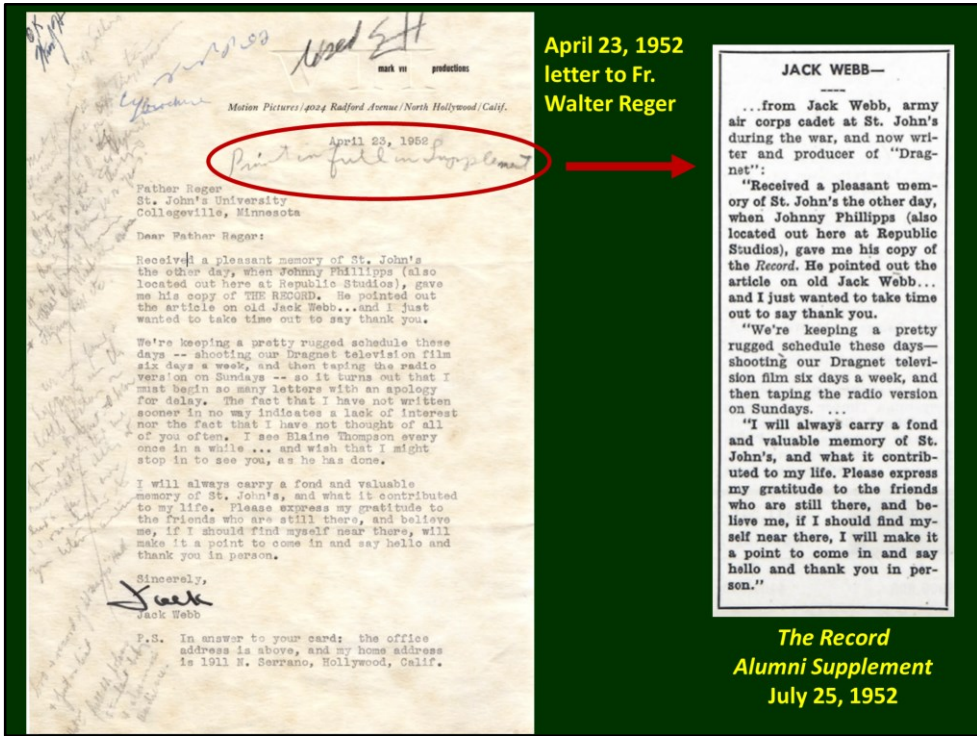
According to John Crosby, noted TV and radio critic, "Dragnet" is among the most wholesome dramatic shows on the air."

★ ALUMNI NEWS ★

...and a correspondence had begun between Jack and Fr. Walter Reger, Alumni Director

...1952-02-29, *The Record* p.4

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/31077/rec/5>



April 23, 1952
letter to Fr.
Walter Reger

JACK WEBB--

...from Jack Webb, army air corps cadet at St. John's during the war, and now writer and producer of "Dragnet":

"Received a pleasant memory of St. John's the other day, when Johnny Phillipps (also located out here at Republic Studios), gave me his copy of the *Record*. He pointed out the article on old Jack Webb... and I just wanted to take time out to say thank you.

"We're keeping a pretty rugged schedule these days-- shooting our *Dragnet* television film six days a week, and then taping the radio version on Sundays. ...

"I will always carry a fond and valuable memory of St. John's, and what it contributed to my life. Please express my gratitude to the friends who are still there, and believe me, if I should find myself near there, I will make it a point to come in and say hello and thank you in person."

The Record
Alumni Supplement
July 25, 1952

1801 f6 Letter to Father Walter from Jack Webb April 23, 1952
1952-07-25, *The Record*, p. 2 of the *Alumni Supplement*,
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/30728/rec/6>

RADIO & TELEVISION

Life of Crime

Most TV detectives spend more time locked in combat with blondes than with criminals. *Dragnet* (alt. Thurs. 9 p.m., NBC), long a radio favorite, has become the best of the TV crime shows by tossing overboard all such TV clichés—from insidious blondes and comic stogoes to roaring outbursts and simple-Simon detection. Last week the TV *Dragnet* came back to the air after a summer vacation in the form of a new series of 47 filmed episodes. The suspenseful story of a man about to jump from an eighth-floor ledge, it was well acted, filmed and directed and undoubtedly *Dragnet's* best show to date. Star of the show, as well as its director,

The show has paid off to the extent of a five-year contract with spouses Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co. This summer, 34 U.S. newspapers began running a new comic strip, using *Dragnet's* characters and atmosphere (but not its plots). By the first of the year, Webb hopes to have a new show called *The Kelly's Blue Book* for TV. Also, his long life of crime, *Dragnet* will also see a trumpet-blowing triumph of the 1950s.

Music in the Night

General Manager Ted Cott, of Manhattan's station WNBC, is a man who abhors a vacuum. In February the Civil Defense authorities asked him to keep WNBC on the air from midnight until



JACK WEBB (LEFT) IS "DRAGNET"

The blondes wait overnight.

is Jack Webb, 31, who plays Police Sergeant Joe Friday with a minimum of fake heroics. His cases range from simple theft to multiple murder, but the program is more concerned with the painstaking solving of crimes than with showing their gory execution. Once the entire half-hour was devoted to a verbal third degree, as Webb and his fellow detective, Ed Jacobs, broke down a hoodly slouching jewel thief.

Webb got his idea for *Dragnet* while he was playing a typical private eye on radio. A Los Angeles police sergeant named Marty Wynn said disgustedly: "Why don't you do a show about real cops?" and arranged for Webb to use the Los Angeles police files. Webb began building a show based on authentic police methods and backgrounds. After three years on radio (this week, the radio *Dragnet* was rated No. 1) by *Nation's* ~~columnist~~ *Walter* decided to apply his "successful formula" ("realism plus entertainment") to TV.

6 a.m. so that the station would be ready to function instantly in case of an emergency. All the Civil Defense required was a constant tone signal. Instead, Cott decided to fill the six hours with classical music and see what would happen.

In three days *Music Through the Night* drew a nice enthusiastic letter. In three months the mail had reached 20,000, and scores of listeners still call in every night to ask the name of the program's haunting theme song (*Good-byes*, a 16th century English air). Listeners have sent in valentines, poems, flowers and art work to show their appreciation. Congressman Albert Morano of Connecticut related "the marked contrast to the claptrap coming from other stations." Composer Richard Rodgers wrote a grateful letter on behalf of his ill wife; Cartoonist Milton (Steve Garson) Caniff said: "Like many another night worker, I am your ardent supporter." A group of 47

Dragnet gets favorably reviewed in TIME magazine, September 22, 1952

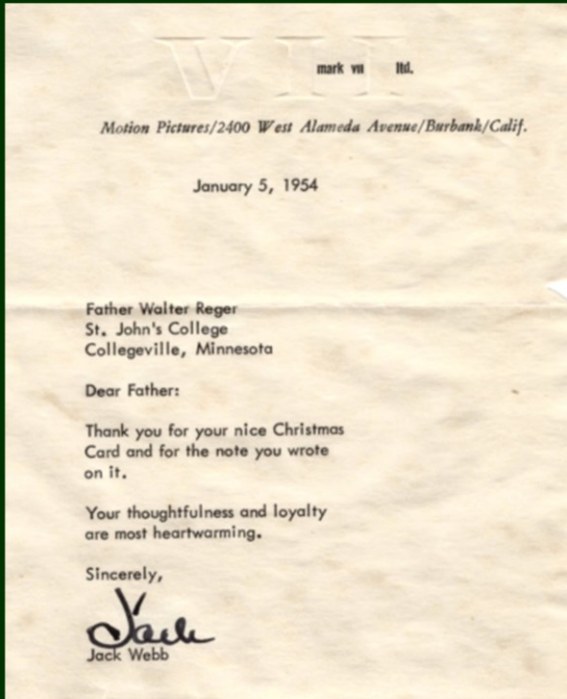
Most TV detectives spend more time locked in combat with blondes than with criminals. *Dragnet* (alt. Thurs. 9 p.m., NBC), long a radio favorite, has become the best of the TV crime shows by tossing overboard all such TV clichés-

Webb got his idea for *Dragnet* while he was playing a typical private eye on radio. A Los Angeles police sergeant named Marty Wynn said disgustedly: "Why don't you do a show about real cops?" and arranged for Webb to use the Los Angeles police files. Webb began building a show based on authentic police methods and backgrounds.

"Life of crime," *Time*, September 22, 1952, p. 75.

January 1954

The correspondence
continues:



1801.6 Letter to Father Walter from Jack Webb 1954

Jack is on the cover of *TIME*



...which is noticed in a March 13, 1954 letter from Fr. Walter

March 13, 1954

Mr. Jack Webb
2400 West Alameda Avenue
Burbank, California

Dear Jack:

It did my heart good to see you receive the distinction associated in the public mind with a cover picture on *TIME* magazine! As the biographical article inside suggests, your achievement represents laudable ambition, hard work, and devotion to high purpose. You have every right to be proud of having "arrived", but you also have every obligation to use your God-given talent to continue to hold the interest of the public for its entertainment and improvement. I and the rest of the faculty of St. John's University are happy to note that despite your prodigious accomplishments as of now, your creative spirit has not only not weakened but has taken on new vigor and will continue to develop new ideas and media for further work.

Special congratulations from all of us at St. John's University who had the unique experience of contributing our facilities for your preliminary training. As *TIME* puts it: "where he wrote, produced, and acted in two variety shows which convulsed the uncritical hirsuten-to-be."

In 1956, Jack, St. John's University will celebrate its centenary. Nothing would please us more than to have you participate in some way in this celebration. If there is any possibility of this, we will be delighted to hear from you in regard to it. You could set your own time and decide the manner of your appearance. It would be a great occasion for all of us, I assure you.

With sincere regards and continuing best wishes, I remain

Cordially yours,

(Gen.) Walter H. Beger, C.S.B.
Director of Development and Alumni Relations

Time magazine cover story on Jack Webb March 15, 1954
1801.6 Letter from Father Walter to Jack Webb 1954

March 13, 1954

March 13, 1954

Mr. Jack Webb
2400 West Alameda Avenue
Burbank, California

TIME OF DEPARTURE 3:10 P.M.
DATE 3/13/54

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(Rev.) Walter H. Seger, C.S.B.
Director of Development and Alumni Relations

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Time magazine cover story on Jack Webb March 15, 1954
1801.6 Letter from Father Walter to Jack Webb 1954

"It was a grand experience after ten years to see you again at the RKO Orpheum in Minneapolis and to bring you greetings from St. John's where memories of "Flying Blind" and your other early stage productions are still fresh."

"I was, of course, also pleased to have you put in such a gracious 'plug' for St. John's."

"As you may know, next year – 1956-57 – St. John's celebrates its one-hundredth birthday. We sincerely hope that you and Mrs. Webb will be able to find the time for a visit during the year. A convocation hour with our student body of 1300 boys present could be arranged at any time convenient for you..."

August 1955 letter

August 29, 1955

Mr. Jack Webb
4700 Louise
Encino, California

Dear Jack:

It was a grand experience after ten years to see you again at the RKO Orpheum in Minneapolis and to bring you greetings from St. John's where memories of "Flying Blind" and your other early stage productions are still fresh.

I was pleased to find you in such good health in spite of the terrific demands made upon you. More than I can tell you, I was again struck by the warmth of your personality and the fine humility which characterizes your behaviour. These qualities were in full evidence as you addressed your admirers in the theatre. I was especially impressed by the beautiful words with which you closed your address. As I remember, they were "God bless you and keep you all." I was, of course, also pleased to have you put in such a gracious "plug" for St. John's. I am sure that all the members of our faculty, the alumni and our many friends in the area appreciated this very much.

I trust your personal appearance tour turned out to be as successful as you hoped it would. Father Francis and I certainly want to thank you for the special interview you gave us. It was wonderful of you to give of yourself and your valuable time as you did.

As you may know, next year - 1956-57 - St. John's celebrates its one-hundredth birthday. We sincerely hope that you and Mrs. Webb will be able to find the time for a visit during the year. A convocation hour with our student body of 1300 boys present, could be arranged at any time convenient for you. Perhaps a centennial student committee will write you about this later. Meanwhile, everybody here joins me in wishing you and your new screen venture utmost success.

Please convey my personal greetings to Robert Breen and the other members of your troupe.

With kindest personal regards and best wishes for your continued success, I remain

Sincerely yours,

(Rev.) Walter Reger, O.S.B.

RR*fp

<p>CLASS OF SERVICE This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">WESTERN UNION</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">TELEGRAM</h2> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT</p>	<p>SYMBOLS DL=Day Letter NL=Night Letter LT=International Letter Telegram</p>
<p>The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination</p>		
WB096 LB226	1201	(11) T
<p>L NHA177 PD=WUX NORTH HOLLYWOOD CALIF 12 10 59 PM 3 27 ST JOHNS ABBEY= COLLEGEVILLE MINN= <i>File under Webb-</i></p> <p>LOCAL POST OFFICE WILL NOT DELIVER REGISTERED LETTERS TO JACK WEBB UNLESS HE ACCEPTS PERSONALLY MR WEBB IS IN PRODUCTION AND CANNOT GO TO POST OFFICE SUGGEST YOU INSTRUCT POST OFFICE TO PERMIT REPRESENTATIVE ACCEPT DELIVERY REGARDS= :J R RODGERS= <i>\$ Bl 2-1890 To Fed E By PMA 355 p o b mail</i></p>		
<p>THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE</p>		

June 1956: correspondence with someone famous may have been difficult at times

1801 f6 telegram

January 2, 1958

Jack Webb
January 2, 1958

Dear Father Reger:

Many thanks for the wonderful picture of the University. It makes me homesick.

I'm having it framed and I do appreciate your thoughtfulness.

My best wishes to you for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Jack
JW:ijm

March 2, 1958

Wunday, 3 p.m.
Sutday, 3 p.m.
March 2, 1958

Mr. Jack Webb
4024 Radford
North Hollywood, California

Dear Jack:

I have just come away from the television set and still have fresh memories of the interview (which, by the way, was delightful) on the "Look Here" program. What prompts me to write, as it will hundreds of others I fear, is your statement that you have an unfulfilled ambition to do some worthwhile charity when you find this possible. It reminded me of the great satisfaction you gave us when Father Francis and I left your apartment last summer. "I'll build you folks at St. John's a building sometimes."

Well, I told the Abbot of our visit and of your promise and he said "What a grand thing it would be if Jack would memorialize himself here with one of the 19 new units of construction in our hundred year plan -- the WEBB AUDITORIUM." Well, maybe that's something for the future.

Right now we are at work raising funds for the new Student Chapel. Even a token contribution from you would be a great help to us. Also I know it would be of great spiritual worth to you. After reading Father Abbot's accompanying letter and brochure about this church please consider whether you can give something for this at this time. I don't think you can realize what a Webb gift will mean to the 75,000 Johnny followers of yours all over the country.

Thanks again, Jack, for being so kind to us last summer. We think of you often and remember you in our prayers.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Walter Reger, O.S.B.

P.S. One of these days I'll be shipping out a few more loaves of St. John's Bread. Incidentally, I should tell you that we are preparing to put it on the market. Chances are we will start locally and branch out east and west-- provided we can tell a success story after a few months. Will tell you more next time I write.

1801.6 (on left) Letter to Father Walter from Jack Webb about Photo Jan. 2, 1958
1801.6 (on right) Letter from Father Walter to Jack Webb March 2, 1958

"...you have an unfilled ambition to do some worthwhile charity..."

"...when I left your apartment last summer: 'I'll build you folks at St. John's a building sometime.'"

"...the Abbot said 'What a grand thing it would be... the WEBB AUDITORIUM.'"

"...please consider whether you can give something at this time."

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March 2, 1958

Wunday, 3 p.m.
Sundday 3, 1958
March 2, 1958

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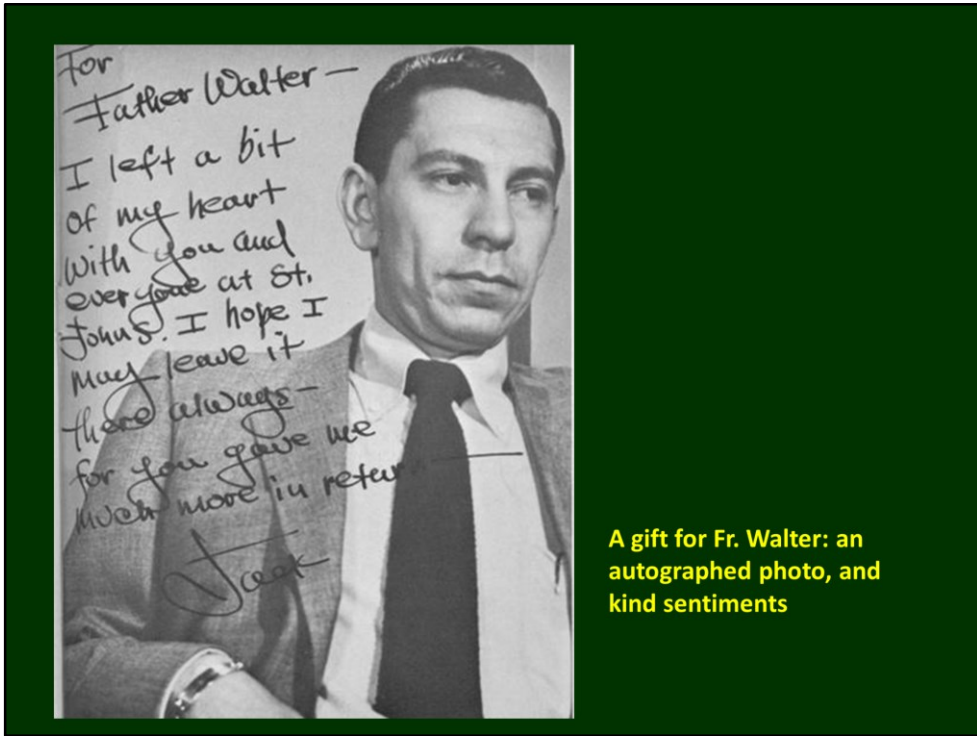
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O
P
Y

1801.6 (on left) Letter to Father Walter from Jack Webb about Photo Jan. 2, 1958
1801.6 (on right) Letter from Father Walter to Jack Webb March 2, 1958



A gift for Fr. Walter: an autographed photo, and kind sentiments

1968 SJU Alumni Magazine Spring p.38

by Leslie Raddatz

JACK WEBB REVISITED

A former radio-TV critic, now far from the windy caverns of Madison Avenue, the drafty soundstages of Hollywood and the warm security of Bleeck's bar, is responsible, whether he knows it or not, for the creation of a sometime millionaire who today is happy or as nearly happy as he can be.

The ex-critic is John Crosby, Paris correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune. And the ex-millionaire is Jack Webb, whose *Dragnet* was one of the greatest hits TV has ever known—a statement which will probably never be made concerning his current *General Electric True* (Sunday nights, CBS).

In its beginnings, which go back to the latter days of big-time network radio, *Dragnet* was the lowest of the low—a summer replacement. (One thing you can say for radio: There were no reruns.) To Webb, who had created it and sweated it out and finally *continued*



He has seen his fortune go as failure followed success, but he says he's happier now than ever before

Thought you enjoy this show

Then, after the first "Dragnet" broadcast on June 3, 1949, all hope appeared lost. Network executives disliked everything about the new show—its underplaying, slow pace, attention to detail, lack of gun-play and violence—everything, in short, that Webb had painstakingly produced to make it different from all the other cops-and-robbers shows on the air. Sweeping changes were ordered: "Speed it up! Let's have some action! Get actors who can act!"

Then John Crosby's column appeared in the New York Herald Tribune. Crosby *liked* the laconic way the cops talked and the way they approached their cases as a day-in-and-day-out job. He praised "Dragnet's" honesty.

TV Guide, February 1963

1801:06 "Jack Webb revisited," by Leslie Raddatz. *TV Guide*, 2 February 1963, p.16.



"There are some pretty good crime shows, at least one of which, 'Dragnet,' is among the most wholesome dramatic shows on the air."

Then John Crosby's column appeared in the New York Herald Tribune. Crosby liked the laconic way the cops talked and the way they approached their cases as a day-in-and-day-out job. He praised "Dragnet's" honesty.

"Jack Webb, who plays Sgt. Friday, the soft-spoken, competent detective on the radio, is director and producer and also the star on television. To him belongs the credit for the show's quiet honesty, meticulous attention to detail and absence of theatricality."

NY Herald Tribune column as reprinted in Minneapolis Morning Tribune Feb. 12, 1952

SJU Archives Box 1801:6, clipping of Crosby NY Herald Tribune column as reprinted in Minneapolis Morning Tribune Feb. 12, 1952.

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Thought you enjoy this show
15

No sooner had Crosby's column hit New York desks than long-distance phones rang in Hollywood offices. But now the refrain was different. "Don't change a thing!" cried the converted experts. "Keep it just as it is!" And the rest of the story of *Dragnet* is history—covering eight years on radio; eight years, 278 performances and countless reruns on television; and something approaching national hysteria during which the words "Just the facts, ma'am" and the theme "DUM, DA-DUM-DUM" echoed endlessly.

TV Guide, February 1963

1801:06 "Jack Webb revisited," by Leslie Raddatz. *TV Guide*, 2 February 1963, p.16.



The End of The Road

TV-1:38 P.M.—Thursday
(Chesterfield)

"Dan dee dum dum" had a trace of nostalgia in it today. Because *Dragnet*, one of the Cinderella stories of television, has put the lid on its last run of film.

On Stage 21 at Republic Studios, Hollywood, Producer Jack Webb and the company of Mark VII wrapped up the 275 performance of the pioneer TV weekly dramatic documentary of life on a U.S. police force.

It was a household and a toast to a property that had left in its wake a summary of staggering success.

Now it's over. Or is it? Not Webb or anyone else can answer that. All they know is that the last contracted segment of "*Dragnet*" is done, rolled, in the can. And there's no sign that any more will be ordered or that Webb would be willing to continue the program beyond its seventh year.

The end of a TV landmark must be assumed, although "*Dragnet*" still has 30 weeks to run next season.

Almost nine years ago to the day, "*Dragnet*" was a radio success, begging for the ghost of a chance. NBC opened the door. The start was humble: a tentative summer fill-in. But it was like the opening of a floodgate. Public response was swift and overwhelming. The duckling nobody had wanted was laying golden eggs.

Jack Webb, in the part of Joe Friday, a grass roots, hardworking cop on the Los Angeles Police Department, became a household name.

"Dan dee dum dum" was a musical phrase hummed around the world. And Friday's catchline, "Just the facts, ma'am," took its place in colloquial American along with "23 skidoo" and "Hot dog!"

No TV dramatic show ever was taken to the hearts of English speaking audiences as was "*Dragnet*."

More than 100 awards, plaques, certificates and medals were bestowed on Webb and company for technical excellence, story interest, humanitarian effort and general showmanship.

Police departments around the country thundered their approval of the first sincere attempt to show accurately a cop at work. Service clubs applauded the contributions by "*Dragnet*" to take reduction of juvenile delinquency.

The hoop of praise is mountainous and, in fact, continuing — after nearly a decade.

The series with TV's record for longevity leaves Webb with mixed emotions.

After seven years of portraying Joe Friday, Webb the actor is somewhat tired. At the moment, he isn't remorseful over Friday's apparent fall out.

Webb the director feels about the same as Webb the actor regarding the fulfillment of the "*Dragnet*" film contract.

But Webb the producer is of a different mind. He doesn't see the series as a chore. He sees it as something made large and rich by public acceptance. He is thankful.

"I don't think I'll ever stop being grateful for the way we were received. Everything we ever did was only made possible by the radio and TV audience. They deserve the best and we always tried to give them the best."

"The success accorded '*Dragnet*' is enough to last a lifetime. If I never again do anything that amounts to much, the '*Dragnet*' story will be enough to keep me happy."

"It was a wonderful feeling to have that association with the public. It's a performer's dream. One you never lose sight of."

Those were the words of Jack Webb as Badge 714 went into a special case reserved for it on Stage 21 — maybe for the last time — today on the "*Dragnet*" set of Mark VII.

"On Stage 21 at Republic Studios, Hollywood, Producer Jack Webb and the company of Mark VII wrapped up the 275 performance[s] of the pioneer TV weekly dramatic documentary of life on a U.S. police force."

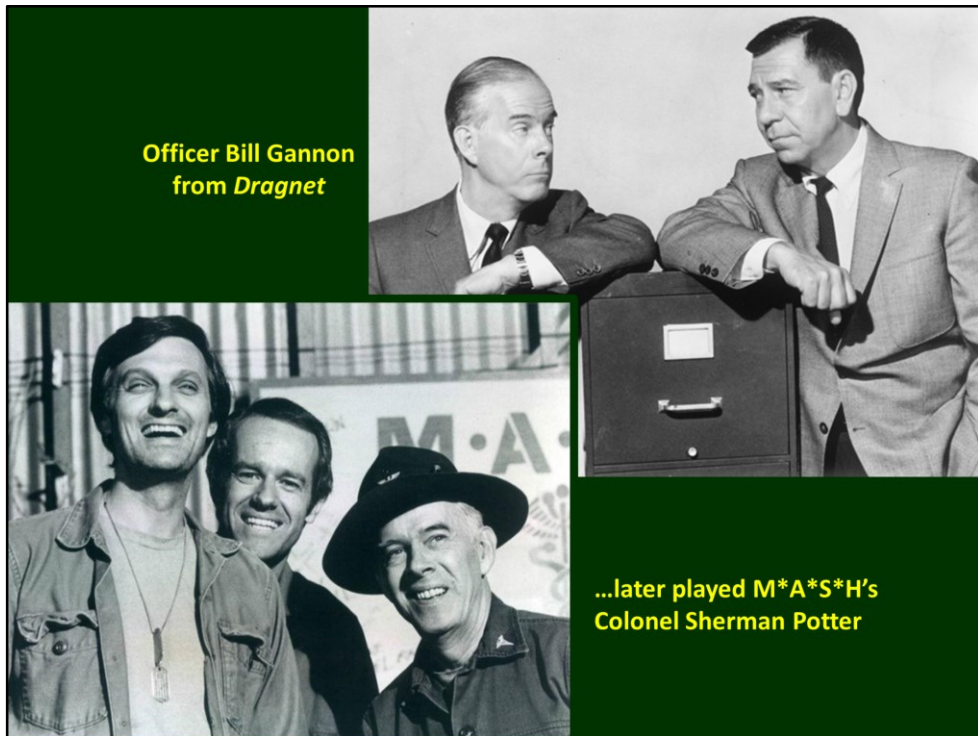
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(1959, source unknown)



Upper image from <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/df/76/b9/df76b93f115e3899aa1cba1037faac34.jpg>; Officer Bill Gannon on [Dragnet](#) (1967–1970); and his starring role as [Colonel Sherman T. Potter](#) in [M*A*S*H](#) (1975–1983). Publicity photo of some *M*A*S*H* cast members in 1975. Alan Alda (left), Mike Farrell (center) and Harry Morgan (right). Photo by wikimedia commons, retrieved from <http://michiganradio.org/post/michigan-born-actor-harry-morgan-dies-96>



AP photo
Jack Webb, as Det. Sgt. Joe Friday on the television show "Dragnet," in 1952. Webb died today of an apparent heart attack.

1st Varist. Show

'Dragnet' star Webb dead at 62

Jack Webb's 1982 death was national news

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Jack Webb, the stone-faced Sgt. Joe Friday of television's "Dragnet" series, died today in his home of an apparent heart attack, police said. He was 62.

Los Angeles County Fire Department paramedics who were summoned to the West Hollywood house pronounced the actor dead at 3:23 a.m., said Los Angeles Sheriff's Deputy Clyde French.

Webb's wife, Opal, was with him when he died, said French.

"Mr. Webb had been complaining of indigestion in the past three or four days and about 3 a.m. this morning he started experiencing the same pains in his chest, and that's when his wife summoned the paramedics," French said.

Webb, head of the Mark VII Ltd. production company that made such TV shows as "Emergency!" and "Adam-12," was best known for his portrayal of Sgt. Joe Friday on "Dragnet," a series based on actual Los Angeles Police Department files.

He began the show on radio in 1949, and it moved to NBC television in 1951 with Webb as producer and director as well as star. The show ran until 1959, and again from 1967 to 1970.

Les Brown, in his "Encyclopedia of Television," said, "Webb's patented style... was to play down the melodramatic glamor of the perilous assignments of his protagonists, and to give their execution an all-in-a-day's work flavor. The shows seemed more realistic and authentic than most others of the genre, but the heroes were no less heroic."

Webb once said there "never will be anything in 'Dragnet' that I wouldn't want my own kids to see." In the first 60 episodes, he said, only 15 bullets were fired, and there were just three fights and a half-dozen punches. The show popularized the phrase, "Just the facts, ma'am."

"Dragnet" had an estimated 38 million viewers at the height of its popularity.

Webb, born in the seaside Los Angeles County city of Santa Monica on April 2, 1920, began his career as a radio announcer in San Francisco in 1945. He later played the title role of "Pat Novak for Hire" on a San Francisco radio station, and then starred in the radio show, "Johnny Madero-Pier 23."

Webb also appeared in more than a dozen movies, including "Sunset Boulevard" and "The Men" in 1950, "The Halls of Montezuma" in 1951, and "The D.I." in 1957.

The best-known part of his career began on the set of 1948 movie, "He Walked by Night," when Webb asked a police advisor if a radio show based on police files might be possible.

"I spent nights riding in police patrol cars, researched crime lab files by day, and finally came up with 'Dragnet,'" he once said.

Webb received many honors for the program, including the award for best mystery show of 1952-1954 from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

He took pride in the character of Joe Friday, but said the TV detective was not really a portrait of himself.

"I see him as a composite of many officers downtown (in Los Angeles), he said in a 1967 interview with The Los Angeles Times. "There are 350 detectives, and I have a growing admiration for all of them and know a good many... Each show, one detective comes out to advise us."

"As for Friday's being me... he actually is a neutral character. He has no religion, he's had no childhood, no educational background, no war record, no personal side at all. He's simply a civil servant, a dedicated human being — and of course, he likes girls."

TV Guide said in a mid-1950s article, "He plays every television scene if it were a real police case."

In addition to "Emergency!" and "Adam-12," Mark VII Ltd. made such television shows as "Mobile One," "Hec Ramsey" and "The D.A."

Webb's first marriage was to actress-singer Julie London, who later starred in "Emergency!" The couple had two daughters, Stacy and Lisa. He later married and divorced both Dorothy Towne and Jackie Loughery, who was Miss USA of 1952.

St. Cloud Times Dec. 23, 1982

"'Dragnet' star Webb dead at 62,' St. Cloud Times Dec. 23, 1982, p. 1 (?), p.16A

Actor Jack Webb's death reminds oldtimers of first SJU Variety Show

by Fr. Martin Schürber,
OSB '31

News of the death of Jack Webb, star and producer of the popular radio and TV series *Dragnet*, on December 23, 1982, brought back memories of a colorful personality to profs, students and Air Force cadets of the 1940s. Jack was one of the 1,500 cadets of the 87th College Training Detachment of the Air Force who took four-month refresher courses at Saint John's in 1943 and 1944. After this exposure to college subjects, they moved on to Air Force bases for training as pilots, navigators and bombardiers. Webb registered as an Air Force cadet in March, 1943, and was very much a part of campus life as actor, producer and writer until he was "graduated" in July of that year.

Since the college enrollment had fallen from over 500 to about 130 because of the draft, this remnant — 17-year-olds, pre-divinity students, and students deferred because of physical disability — could be accommodated in the dorms and study halls, and the cadets took over Benet Hall, the only dorm on campus with rooms for college students. This meant that they were in a position to take part in college activities and it is here that Webb revealed his talents. He helped edit *Willco*, the cadet supplement to *The Record*, and he produced, directed and acted in the Variety Show called "Flying Blind" which was so well received and quickly established such a reputation that it was continued as the annual Variety Show by returning GI's and other students after the War.

The civilian version of the show was emceed from 1946 to 1949 by Paul Mulready '50, currently vice president of sales and marketing for Johnson Fishing, Inc., North Mankato, and featured a wide variety of songs, dances and skits, ranging from acts appealing to low-brows as



Webb

well as to more cultivated tastes. An example of the former was the Tipperary Trio, a barbershop group which included John Simonett '48, now a Minnesota Supreme Court Judge; Ray Endres '49, now Dean of Continuing Education at Cal State U., Sacramento; and Mulready. An example of the more refined offerings was the piano selections played by concert pianist, Bill Ibes '58, then an exchange student from Holland, and now professor of music at Saint John's.

After the war, Jack Webb returned to his native California and played various parts on radio. Once when playing the part of a private eye in a typical cops-and-robber scenario, a Los Angeles police sergeant asked him disgustedly: "Why don't you do a show about *real* cops?" Webb's answer was to develop the radio show *Dragnet* based on actual cases drawn from the Los Angeles Police files.

Webb's *Dragnet* had little violence. The actor said he would never include anything in the show that he wouldn't want his own children to see. Testimony to the excellence of the production were the more than 100 awards received for technical excellence, story interest and humanitarian appeal. At the height of its popularity, it had an estimated 38 million viewers.

See Alumni Standup Schedule, Page 27

...as well as campus news

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SJU Alumni Magazine, Spring 1983

1983 Spr SJU Mag p.25

Just a fact: Jack Webb of 'Dragnet' fame spent 4 months at St. John's

By John DuBois
TIMES STAFF WRITER

You weren't supposed to stand out. This was the Army Air Corps. You were in training.

You were supposed to be one of the guys. You ate together, drilled together and studied together.

And you weren't allowed to talk to an officer without permission.

Yet, there was one man training at St. John's University that even the army couldn't hold down. He was Jack Webb, better known as Sgt. Joe Friday on television's "Dragnet."

"Sure, I remember him," recalls the Rev. Baldwin Dworschak, who taught English to the cadets. "I didn't happen to have him in my class. But I helped put together a yearbook that he edited."

Webb, then a 23-year-old soldier from Santa Monica, Calif., did much more than that even though he was at St. John's but four months.

He was a columnist and co-editor for the cadets' newspaper, which appeared in the school's newspaper.

Webb's column was a Dear Abby of sorts — geared in a humorous manner to the everyday woes of a soldier.

"We sincerely hope that we aren't the cause of too much face reddening," he wrote in the opening column.

The best of Webb's accomplishments at St. John's, though, was something having more to do with his future.

He produced, directed and acted in "Flying Blind," which, over two nights, played to 3,500 people.



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A young Jack Webb wrote a column for the student newspaper.

Performed at St. Cloud Technical High School, the play raked in \$1,200, all of which was donated to the USO Canteen in St. Cloud.

"He was a natural fellow, though," Dworschak recalls. "He was capable and showed it, but I didn't suspect he'd be the kind of person he was later on."

Webb, of course, wound up in Hollywood. Once, while playing a private eye in a radio drama, he was pressed by a Los Angeles police sergeant pressed to do a show about real cops.

Webb's response was "Dragnet." Based on cases drawn from police files,

the radio show reached a No. 1 Nielsen rating in 1949.

Two years later, Webb took it to NBC television, where it ran until 1959 and again from 1967 to '70.

Despite the fame, Webb never forgot his time at St. John's. Nor did St. John's forget him.

In the university's archives is a Webb file, filled with correspondence between the star and the Rev. Walter Reger, then alumni director.

Included is a photo of the star with this handwritten message:

"Dear Father Walter: I left a bit of my heart with you and everyone at St. John's. I hope I may leave it there always — for you gave me much more in return — Jack."

Walter, it appears, tried to even the score. He asked Webb to come to St. John's 100th anniversary in 1956. He asked if St. John's could have copies of "Dragnet." And he asked about money for a building.

Webb was gracious in his replies, but didn't come through.

"That's kind of a sore spot," says the Rev. Vincent Tegeder, director of the university's archives.

Webb died in 1982 at age 62.

The last correspondence in the file from him was to George Durenberger, who taught physical education when Webb was there.

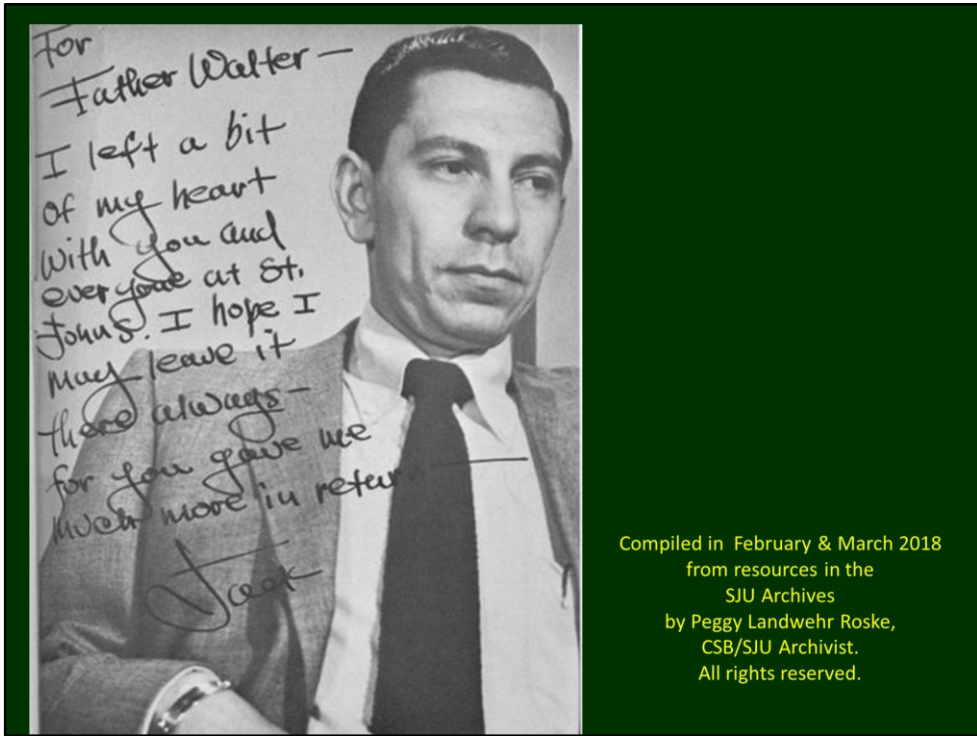
"Those days were happy days, but as far as remembering when I was in PE classes, I couldn't possibly tell you."

Gone, but not forgotten:

"50 years ago, colleges went to war,"
St. Cloud Times,
May 11, 1993

John DuBois, "Just a fact: Jack Webb of 'Dragnet' fame spent 4 months at St. John's," *St. Cloud Times*, May 11, 1993, p. 7A.

John DuBois, "50 years ago, colleges went to war," *St. Cloud Times*, May 11, 1993, p. 7A.



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