



*Glenn L. Morris and his stage equipment*

## Stage Scientist

By PEGGY CLAY

**Nearly Two Million Persons Have Watched This Educational Magician Press Buttons**

**W**HEN gentlemen wore moustaches and dangled silk handkerchiefs, the average audience asked nothing better than a rabbit and a top hat for a good evening's entertainment. Glenn L. Morris, '26ba, has found a swingtime version of the old stage magic that's even better.

For Mr. Morris tours the country giving popularized science demonstrations, and his electrical "magic" has kept hundreds of audiences guessing. His only sleight-of-hand work lies in pushing buttons.

Before almost two million persons, at one time or another, Mr. Morris has demonstrated the oddities of modern science. Over a total of 496,600 miles in the United States and Canada, he has moved his elaborate set of demonstration equipment. And wherever he goes, from Maine to California, he meets graduates and former students of the University of Oklahoma. His main regret is that he never gets to know any of them very well.

When he lectured at Chicago Heights, Illinois, the principal of the high school corrected him when he introduced himself as "Glenn Morris of Madison, Wisconsin."

"You were from Oklahoma when I knew you," the principal insisted, and on comparing notes the two men discovered that they had known each other twenty-five years before.

Mr. Morris has been working at this sort of lecturing for a long time, for it was money from demonstration tours which made the completion of his college

training possible. After he received a degree in physics at the University in 1926, he moved to Wisconsin, where his headquarters are still located.

Along with memories of blizzards, floods, mud and peculiar restaurant and housing facilities, the genial lecturer can look back to the times when his first audiences met under the tents of the old summer Chautauquas, and in close winter community buildings. He has slept in hundreds of strange beds in rooms where the ventilation and heating systems were uncomfortably poor.

**N**OW Mr. Morris demonstrates his scientific oddities before school assemblies, luncheon clubs, church groups, science clubs, teachers' colleges and conventions. In some instances, city school boards purchase entire blocks of his time so that, as a visiting teacher, he can cover all of the schools in the district.

In a whimsical vein, Mr. Morris recalls some of the unique introductions he has been given before various audiences in the forty-eight states he has visited.

"As chairman of your Lyceum committee," said a man who was about to introduce him to an Ohio audience, "I am happy to announce that we have a surplus of \$300 on this season's operations, and, with your permission, we have decided to keep this money until next season in order to buy a better grade of talent. Now we come to the final number of this year—"

In the early days, when advertising was bombastic and flashy, Mr. Morris was frequently referred to as an "Electrical Wizard," and sometimes as "The Benjamin Franklin of the Twentieth Century."

The advertising proved a boomerang one summer night when a fuse blew out, leaving his audience in total darkness. Tracing the electric wires to the alley, with his pocket flashlight, Mr. Morris observed that an ingenious local electrician had installed his own fuse box on top of a pole. Returning to the tent, he requested the superintendent to find a lineman. To his consternation, the good woman walked to the platform and, without telling the audience about the problem at hand, inquired in a high-pitched voice, "Is there an electrician in the house?" The "electrical wizard" lost the audience that night and the contract for the following year.

"Usually someone breaks the ice by giving me some sort of an introduction," he said. Sometimes, however, I have to take matters into my own hands. At one town I waited far past the hour scheduled for my performance, thinking that perhaps it was prayer meeting night and the sponsors were waiting for the people to arrive. All of a sudden a bald head appeared in the stage door and snapped, "Well, why don't you start, and give the people something for their money? I looked about to see how the curtain was to be raised, and found that I had to climb a narrow ladder up to the fly attic and wind up the heavy asbestos curtain on a creaky windlass. Coming down somewhat dusty and out of breath, I managed to screw my face into one of those fixed stage grins to face an audience already gone sour."

Everywhere he goes, Mr. Morris finds people who have known or heard him, and the surprise is always pleasant. One week he was killing time in New York City and had taken a boat out to the Statue of Liberty. He climbed the winding stairs to the head of the statue and was peering out one of the windows of her brow, when a man at the next window inquired, "Pardon me, aren't you Glenn Morris who gives scientific demonstrations?" He had been in one of Mr. Morris' Pennsylvania audiences.

Some of his lecture tours are arranged by booking bureaus, but most of them are scheduled independently, by direct mail. Although they demand a great deal of time and travel, they nevertheless leave him some leisure hours to spend at his home in Madison, Wisconsin. He is married and has four children, three sons and one daughter.

By and large, Mr. Morris likes scientific lecturing and prefers it to teaching or research work. He takes great pride in maintaining accuracy in his popularized demonstrations, and the veracity of his work is guaranteed by his knowledge of physics and electrical engineering.