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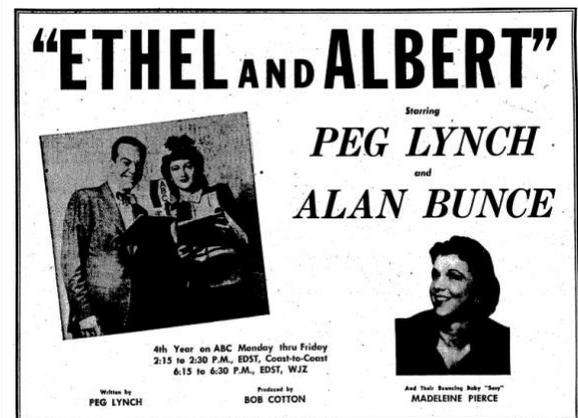
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Ethel and Albert Episodes in the Joe Hehn Memorial Collection Larry Maupin

The first issue to be addressed about *Ethel and Albert* is how it originated and how best to categorize it. Although Jim Cox mentions it on page 77 of his *Historical Dictionary of American Radio Soap Operas*, the series is clearly what it would later become on television: a situation comedy.

In *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio* (pp. 234-235) John Dunning writes that “[Peg] Lynch created the show at a station in Minnesota, where she first worked in radio in 1938.” In addressing the same point, Cox notes the following: “Created by Peg Lynch, who played Ethel and penned the scripts, the series emanated to the ABC network after premiering over KATE in Albert Lea, Minnesota in the early 1940s.”

Cox describes *Ethel and Albert* as “the humorous tale of a young couple living in Sandy Harbor. The dialogue (which frequently involved only the principles) centered on unending familial calamities. A narrator introduced it with this epigraph: ‘The big events in one’s life occur only now and then, but there are smaller events that are familiar to every family. It’s these daily incidents that make up the private lives of Ethel and Albert.’” Dunning states (p. 234) that “Entire episodes could be consumed with the principles standing at the kitchen sink, talking and doing the dinner dishes. Albert was the manager of an office in town, but the focus of the comedy was on



miniscule domestic logjams.” He also provides the interesting information (p. 235) that Alan Bunce assumed the character of Albert after leaving “his recent long-running role as radio’s *Young Dr. Malone*.” Although his audition for the part was uninspired, Lynch hired him anyway and he remained in the role for nine years.

The first new episode in the [Hehn collection](#) is titled “Can’t Find the Wedding Ring” and dated April 7, 1947. It is early evening in the Arbuckles’ home. Throughout the program two things are happening at the same time. One is that Albert is trying to glue back together an old spring chair in the living room that has come apart. The second is a discussion about the importance of wedding rings in a marriage. Their friends Kitty and Dave are engaged, and a crisis has arisen because Dave has just informed Kitty that he doesn’t want to wear a wedding ring because he does not want to feel “branded.” After Kitty telephones Ethel for support, she and Albert discuss the matter as she holds the chair while he glues it and grapples with the broken springs that keep getting in the way.

Then Dave phones and asks to speak to Albert, who tells him that the secret to a good marriage is “just finding a way of proving that she’s right.” The announcer concludes with “*The Private Lives of Ethel and Albert* comes to you each weekday at this time. This is ABC, the American Broadcasting Company.”

The program aired on April 9th, “Albert’s Collection of Water Samples From Rivers, Lakes, Oceans” opens with a public service announcement for The American Cancer Society. Albert is beginning to feel “the touch of earthly years” and vows to get in shape by playing golf and tennis at least once a week from now on. Ethel tells him that he is not old yet but has begun to grow more handsome. While rummaging in the attic looking for his tennis racquet he runs across his old collection of water samples from all over the world. He calls down to Ethel to come up and see it, then proudly shows it off and gives a running commentary on where each sample is from (Lake Michigan, the Mississippi River, Africa, etc.) while she stifles a yawn. When she implies that it all looks like tap water to her, he threatens to throw the entire collection away (and of course his boyhood dreams along with it). She then promises to buy a tennis racquet and play with him all summer. There is a promo for *The Henry Morgan Show* at the conclusion.

The next episode, “Ethel’s Dream,” is dated April 10, 1947. It is 3 a.m. in Sandy Harbor and Ethel awakes from a dream in which she remembered the location of a bluebird pin Albert gave her which has been missing for months. She insists on going outside right away to find it. Very reluctantly accompanying her, Albert immediately trips over a trash can outside the house and the noise sets all the neighborhood dogs to barking and waking everybody up. This is somewhat reminiscent of the bedroom scenes of John and Blanche Bickerson, but Albert doesn’t snore and Ethel is not forever accusing him of not loving her!

The program broadcast on June 23, 1947 is titled “The Report.” The announcer states “It’s early evening in Sandy Harbor, the Arbuckles are in the living room and Ethel has just answered the telephone.” Their neighbor Myra wants to speak to

“ETHEL
and
ALBERT”



STARRING
PEG LYNCH
and
ALAN BUNCE

Written by
PEG LYNCH

Directed by
WALTER HART

Ethel about her son Junior's report card. The school board has added a number of questions about the parents themselves, which concerns Myra and is the reason for her call. There is even a detachable section to be filled out and mailed in by the neighbors of each student. Are the parents good neighbors? Good parents? Do they have the borrowing habit? Albert begins filling out the questionnaire on Myra and Harold with Ethel's help. He recalls that Junior once spit on him and on another occasion dumped polliwogs into his soup, but Ethel discourages him from writing that Myra and Howard have failed to discipline him properly and may have spoiled him beyond repair. Note: While Ethel was on the telephone with Myra, Albert asked her to invite her and Harold over to play bridge.

The next episode, dated August 14th, 1947, deals exclusively with Albert's preparation for participating in the annual Tiger Lodge Parade. He is excited because his will be the lead car, and his passenger will be none other than "The King of



Ethel and Albert—alias Peg Lynch and Alan Bunce.

Beasts." A few calamities are associated with the event. First the Arbuckles' young daughter Susie ruins the crepe paper with which the car has been decorated by spraying water on it. Then the next door neighbor Mrs. Parsons tries to help by bringing over a tiger skin complete with head that she thinks will make a nice ornament if placed over the hood of the car and positioned so that it seems to be looking in the window. This rather inspired idea is not greeted with much enthusiasm. Then Ethel receives a telephone call informing her that two of the cannibals have not shown up for the event, which is scheduled to begin very soon. Also the wife of one of the headhunters wants him to come home because she is having trouble with the hot water heater. Finally, to top it all off, Stanley can't find Livingstone! The program concludes with a promo for *This Is Your FBI* which airs "every Friday night on most of these ABC stations."

The final 1947 episode in the collection was broadcast on December 10th. We find Albert coming home from work at about 6:45 p.m. "in a foul mood." He has just engaged in a prolonged dispute at a local department store with a clerk, a floor manager, a salesman, and the store manager himself over replacing an order for a monogrammed cigarette lighter that he selected as a Christmas present for his brother-in-law Tom with an order for a monogrammed cigarette case. After he tells Ethel about his ordeal, she informs him that Tom has recently given up smoking after being ordered to do so by his doctor. Albert ventures the hopeful comment that Tom may decide to start smoking again anyway, and then indignantly tells Ethel that he has no intention of returning the gift to the store and buying Tom something else.

On February 20, 1948, an episode titled "Susie Should Go To College" is in fact all about Albert. He has received a letter asking him to make a "large donation" to help rebuild the west wing of his old fraternity house. The epistle is suitably flattering, requesting some updated biographical information for the yearbook and referring to him as former football star Tornado Arbuckle. The letter prompts him to reflect on his college days, including a "famous 90-yard run" of his that won a ball game. Then he says something very thoughtful to Ethel that addresses the issue of whether graduating from college makes people any different from those with less of a formal education. His opinion is that college provides a good foundation for "learning to get along with people." As

he leaves for work, Ethel reminds him to take his checkbook with him.

The next episode in the collection, which was broadcast on March 17, 1948, is mostly about Sandy Harbor's upcoming sesquicentennial celebration. Albert hopes to be asked by the mayor to play a large role in it, perhaps even to be asked to be on the board. But he is in the attic looking for his fishing tackle while Ethel reads the newspaper downstairs as we join them this evening. She answers the telephone while he is rummaging about, and the caller says he will try again later. When Albert learns about the call he becomes irritated, thinking it might have been from the mayor himself, and tells Ethel that she could learn how to take a message properly from his secretary Miss Worthington. She tells him she could probably learn a lot more than that, then asks him if he has ever kissed Miss Worthington. He then leaves to go buy some cigarettes, the man calls again, and Albert is even more disappointed to have missed the call a second time. When the man phones a third time he turns out to be a life insurance salesman! Ethel tells Albert he should take out a policy just to make sure her future will be comfortable. The program concludes with a promo for *Stop the Music*, which is to premiere "Sunday evening, March 21st over this same ABC station."

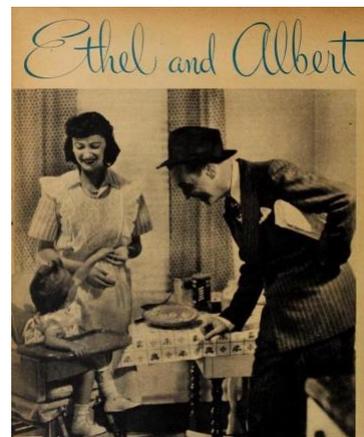
The next episode, dated April 21, 1948, opens with Ethel and Susie in the kitchen while Albert reads the newspaper in the living room. She soon tells him dinner is ready and that she has prepared rib roast and apple pie just for him. He comes in grumbling as usual, and asks her what happened to the car. She tells him that she was in a parking accident downtown but that it was not serious. Then Mr. Paul Baxter telephones and threatens to sue for damages because Ethel backed her car into his wife's and is entirely at fault. When Albert begins shouting at the man, Ethel takes the phone away from him and resolves the matter by having a very civil conversation with Mrs. Baxter. The two of them agree that this sort of thing is the reason people buy automobile insurance in the first place.

The final *Ethel and Albert* program in the Joe Hehn Memorial Collection is a five-minute excerpt with no date except 1948 and is probably

mistitled "Eating Breakfast." It actually takes place during the dinner hour, and Ethel is "just bringing the potatoes into the dining room." Once they begin the meal, she asks Albert if he thinks she put too much salt on the potatoes, but he doesn't think so. He tells her that "they are putting up a new office building on the corner of Monroe and 6th," then asks whether she would like to go to a movie. This is a couple that really loves each other, and that is evident in every episode in the collection.

Now for a few concluding thoughts. The ten episodes of *Ethel and Albert* in the [Joe Hehn Memorial Collection](#) are newly discovered, so everyone who listens to them will be doing so for the first time. Anyone with a computer and a sound card can find them and listen to them by typing in archive.org/details/joe-hehn. They are so good that I think even those who do not care for Peg Lynch's more famous creation *The Couple Next Door* will enjoy them. All are complete with music, and all except the last one are just a few seconds less than fifteen minutes in length. None have commercials, so the program must have been sustained by ABC at that time. The sound quality is excellent.

As Ethel, Peg reveals a side of herself that is lighthearted and very charming in these episodes. Alan Bunce as Albert is loud and irascible, in sharp contrast to his sweet-tempered wife. He does not even seem to like their little daughter, constantly yelling at her and telling her to go play with her doll somewhere else. All this produces a lot of laughs, as does Ethel's refusal to take anything too seriously while he takes everything too seriously. It would be interesting to listen to a few episodes of *Young Dr. Malone* in which Bunce played the role of Jerry Malone, just to find out whether he yelled at all his patients.



The Lone Indian Controversy (1953)

Martin Grams

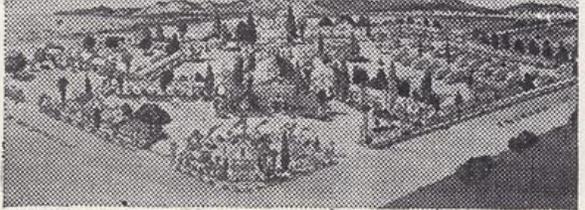
Through the month of February 1953, someone named C.C. Cook of the Indian Theatre, at the Mission Village in Los Angeles, a four-acre resort with an American Indian theme, mailed two letters to George W. Trendle, the man behind WXYZ classics *The Lone Ranger* and *The Green Hornet*. Cook was supposedly representing Robert E. Callahan, author and showman. Having read an article in a magazine providing a brief background to the origin of *The Lone Ranger* radio program, Cook took it upon himself to accuse Trendle of plagiarism, an accusation promptly denied and dismissed by Trendle.

The first letter indicated no intention of a lawsuit, just a suggestion that Callahan himself should receive some financial due for injecting the germ of an idea into Trendle's mind for a radio Western. The details behind the accusation, repeated in each of the two letters, were similarities between *The Lone Indian* and *The Lone Ranger*, varied enough to give historians today cause to suspect Callahan was writing the letters using the alias of C.C. Cook, with faded memory of the details from 1933, exercising professional jealousy for the financial success of *The Lone Ranger*.

In 1926, advertising man Robert Callahan, an actor who appeared in numerous silent and early talkie pictures, was such a fanatic of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel, *Ramona* (1884), that he wrote a sequel in 1930, *Daughter of Ramona*. Considered by many as a fanatic of the times, he built a theme park in Culver City called Ramona Village, where he was accused by one critic of creating a "jazz commercial version" of California's past. The park was built in 1927 and was open for some time in the summer of 1929, but the idea did not go over, with the buildings and equipment only half finished. As a result of a court case questioning the sale and ownership of stock used to raise capital for construction, the four-acre parcel suffered economic setbacks before construction could be completed. It was supposedly reopened for a short time in 1930 to help promote the sale of his novel. The theme park was influenced by the popularity

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AUTOMOBILE AND TRAILER TRAVEL when stopping at a

of Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel, *Ramona*, which spurred his fascination with Spanish mission and Native American life. Callahan, a self-proclaimed authority of authentic American Indian history, decided to construct a new park on the same site, rechristened Mission Village.

The story took a turn in 1930 when Callahan wrote and created *The Lone Indian*, a radio program broadcast six-times-a-week over the Warner Bros. radio station in Hollywood, for nearly four years (1930 to 1933). It was sponsored by Walker's Department Store in Los Angeles, where an Indian Lodge was built on the fifth floor, and from which various prizes were given to children who listened to *The Lone Indian* broadcasts. It is estimated that half a million of the *Lone Indian* buttons were made and distributed throughout Los Angeles circa 1931, given to children who faithfully followed the radio broadcasts. During the Warner Bros. run, the program was serialized with Callahan ostensibly at a ranch telling an Eastern visitor stories of Indian lore, backed by singing Indians. In 1937, Callahan recorded *The Lone Indian* for

syndication, an Electro-Vox transcription, each with a self-contained story narrated by “The Old Trapper,” played by Callahan, possibly inspired by “The Old Ranger” from radio’s *Death Valley Days*.



ECHOES OF THE DAYS WHEN THE WEST WAS WILDER: Figures in the past history of the West at a get-together in Mission Village, Los Angeles. Left to right: Red Larkin, former Indian fighter; Emmet Dalton, of the famous Dalton gang; Chief Many Treaties, Montana Blackfoot; Al Jennings, pardoned train robber; Jim Thorpe, Indian football star, and Frank Murphy, Texas Indian scout.

At the Mission Village, during *The Lone Indian*'s radio tenure through syndication, a staff member would dress up like the title character and attend evening campfire circles for children, telling stories and providing good morals for them to live by.

In late 1932 literature was composed to make *The Lone Indian* a nation-wide broadcast through syndication. Reportedly among the literature were selections from *The Lone Indian* book of short stories (published in 1933), all adapted from radio scripts. As producer, writer, and director of the program, Callahan prepared three wax recordings for nationwide transcription release, made by Radio Recorders. According to Callahan, one of these audition records was mailed to George W. Trendle in 1932, answering an advertisement in a trade paper, asking for audition platters and details. Trendle kept them for several weeks before finally writing back saying the price was too high to consider purchase. When prompted to provide evidence of a deal, Callahan confessed nothing but faded memory to back his claim. No agreement was ever made at the time both men exchanged communication.

A few months (or a few years) later, a lawsuit was prepared against George W. Trendle for stealing the basic concept of *The Lone Indian*, but Callahan's wife suddenly passed away (and Callahan himself went to South America for two months both for health and relaxation) causing him to think twice before filing the lawsuit, which he never did.

Callahan insisted the black horse was changed to a white horse, Callahan's second lead – a Texas Ranger – was made into the hero instead of an Indian. “They carried out the entire program as sent in the literature and as contained in my book, a definite steal,” Callahan claimed. Actor Victor Daniels – whose Indian name was Chief Thundercloud – played the role of “Lone Indian” for two years on the air. Callahan claimed another common denominator between the two radio programs was Daniels playing the role of Tonto on *The Lone Ranger* for a short time, but Callahan was incorrect in his statement – Daniels played Tonto in the second of the two Republic Pictures cliffhanger serials, not the radio program.

Another of Callahan's claims was that *The Lone Indian* also exemplified high morals by the title character. Callahan's version introduced Indian philosophy and prayers, including a policy not to drink or smoke. Always appearing in time of need, *The Lone Indian* provided assistance for the meek through cunning and action.

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As a lawyer who was with *The Lone Ranger* since the beginning and handled many *Lone Ranger* cases, particularly in the Federal Courts, this claim of plagiarism was not uncommon in the eyes of Raymond

Meurer, who instructed Trendle to “just forget about this crackpot and not be drawn into a contest. I’d suggest we just drop the thing right here and, if anything happens, we’ll take care of it at that time.” Cook ceased sending letters after Meurer stopped responding. (There is nothing found to suggest Callahan sent more than two letters. Mission Village was destroyed in 1962 to make way for the Santa Monica Freeway.)

Known Broadcast History: *Indian Village* (KTM in Santa Monica, 1930 to circa 1931); *Indian Stories* (KFWB, owned by Warner Brothers, three times a week, 1932 to November 1933); *The Lone Indian* (1932 to 1934); *Lone Indian Theater*, a.k.a. *Indian Theater – Santa Fe Trail*, a.k.a. *Santa Fe Trail* (KFAC, March to June 1935); and *Indian Trails*, retitled *Indian Village* most likely to promote his theme park (KMTR, circa December 31, 1936 to 1937, sponsored by The Forman Loan Company, and another run in 1939).



SECRET OUT—Robert E. Callahan, Indian expert and author of *Ramona Pageant*, with his bride, the former Marion Corney, actress. The couple have just revealed their marriage in February, 1950. The wedding took place in little Arizona town, they said.

Besides *The Lone Indian*, Callahan produced a number of radio programs for syndication, all of the Western genre, including *Wife Wanted*, *The Santa Fe Trail*, *Tommy Gale of the Box-T Ranch*, and *The Singing Bandit* – the latter of which aired on selected stations across the country and was certainly closer to *The Lone Ranger* than *The Lone Indian*, even though the hero was not masked and whose trademark was singing.

Wistful Vistas

From the Editor’s Desk
Ryan Ellett

Welcome to summer, fellow old-time radio lovers! This month’s contributors are all familiar names to long-time readers; research by Martin Grams, episode reviews by Larry Maupin, an episode critique by Denise Noe, and the next installment of Joe Adams’ guide to creating new radio drama.

We’ve gotten a few Maintained sets out since last issue. Two of them – *Frontier Town* and *The Big Show* – are reissues of much older Certified sets. *Frontier Town* is mainly an upgrade in file quality from mp3 to flac. *The Big Show* includes many new episodes and some new printed ads as well. Our original release this time is *Duffy’s Tavern*! This Maintained set has been in the works for almost two years and has survived some unfortunate computer crashes. I was pretty unfamiliar with the series beyond its basic premise before participating in this project. It’s definitely one I plan to return to down the road!

If you’re not seeing your favorite series released as a Maintained set, I’d encourage you to check us out at groups.io and see how you can jump in and volunteer to make the set a reality

As usual, the *Old Radio Times* is always looking for new content. Book reviews, reminiscences, and historical articles are eagerly accepted. No professional writing experience necessary!

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Radio Dramas On the Mystery of Plant “Consciousness”

Denise Noe

Life on earth is largely divided into two basic types: animals and plants. Animals move around; plants are stationary. Animals eat food that can be plants or other animals; plants convert sunlight into needed energy (although carnivorous plants like the Venus fly-trap exist).

Plants have no central nervous system and cannot feel pain. Indeed, since plants are stationary creatures, the ability to feel pain makes no sense. Pain evolved as a mechanism leading organisms to move away from threats. Since plants cannot move, they have not evolved pain capability.

The general perception is that just as plants have no central nervous system and cannot suffer pain, the fact that they lack brains means they have no possibility of any consciousness or intelligence. (Some animals also lack brains. All such animals live underwater and include jellyfish, sponges, corals, clams, and oysters.) Absent a brain, there is no possibility of even the most rudimentary intelligence or consciousness . . . or is there?

People who raise gardens often treat their plants as if they had consciousness, by talking to them for example. Many gardeners claim to sense emotion or intelligence in their plants. Although plants lack brains, could structures they are known to possess serve analogous functions? The famous Charles Darwin postulated that the root tip of a plant “acts like the brain of one of the lower animals.”

Could talking to a plant do any good? A botanical study by the Royal Horticultural Society found that plants grew faster if someone spoke to them and that they responded better to a female voice. An article in *The Spruce* reported, “In the month-long study, the Royal Horticultural Society recorded 10 people, including both men and women, reading from either literary or scientific works. Each recording was played through a set of headphones that was attached to each tomato plant's pot (so, one tomato plant per person). The same tomato variety was used, same soil, same care regimen, etc. They also included two plants that were not read to as a control. At the end of the

month, the plants that had been attached to female voice recordings grew an average of an inch taller than those attached to a male voice.” The plants growing in a silent environment did not grow as much as the ones around voices. Scientists speculated that the gender difference could be related to “women's greater range of pitch or tone that affects the sound waves that hit the plant, and that sound, just like any other environmental factor, has an effect on plant growth.”

The television show *Mythbusters* did a study in which 60 pea plants were divided among three greenhouses: one played humans saying nice things; another humans saying nasty things; the third was a control group in which it was silent. The ones in which the recordings played showed greater pea plant growth but there was no major difference depending on whether the recordings were nasty or nice.

One quality strongly associated with consciousness is the ability to learn. Some recent studies show evidence that plants can learn. The *mimosa pudica* is also called the sensitive or touch-me-not plant. Dr. Monica Gagliano designed experiments to see if a *mimosa pudica* could learn. The scientist and her assistant designed an apparatus that dropped these plants about a foot on a regular basis. Of course, the plants curled its leaves on dropping. However, after it was dropped several times, the leaves ceased curling. Was the plant just too tired to curl again? When shaken side to side, it curled. What's more, it showed memory as when dropped a month after it “learned” to refrain from curling its leaves, it did not curl when dropped from the same type of apparatus.

Before we get too carried away, it is vital to point out that many scientists are adamant that plants possess not the slightest degree of consciousness or emotion. One of them is Lincoln Taiz a University of California at Santa Cruz biology professor. “For consciousness to evolve, a brain with a threshold level of complexity and capacity is required,” he asserts. Taiz points to research that concluded that consciousness in animals is limited to vertebrates, cephalopods (octopuses, squids, cuttlefishes, and similar beings), and arthropods (insects, spiders, crustaceans). “If the lower animals – which have nervous systems – lack consciousness, the chances that plants without nervous systems have consciousness are effectively nil,” he maintains.

Whether plant consciousness exists or not, the tantalizing possibility of it served as inspiration for at least two remarkable radio episodes. One first aired

on *Quiet, Please*; the other decades later on *The CBS Radio Mystery Theater*.

Quiet, Please was broadcast from June 8, 1947 through June 20, 1949 and was noted for emphasizing on horror and surrealism. It was created by Wyllis Cooper who was also the show's writer and director. The actor who was most



Wyllis Cooper

consistently on the show was Ernest Chappell. The episode that concerns us here first aired on June 28, 1948 and is entitled "Let the Lilies Consider," an inspired reversal of the New Testament passage in which Jesus says, "Consider the lilies."



Ernest Chappell

The episode opens with a murder suspect giving a statement that is being taken down by a

stenographer. The suspect understands "whatever I say may be used against me." He tells us his name is James Roderick and he is forty-one. He is a college graduate without a job. He quickly adds that he is "not unemployed" but has a "small but adequate income." He is suspected of murdering his wife, Gretchen (Cathleen Cordell), who seems to have disappeared.

A police officer (Jim Boles) brusquely demands to know where Gretchen is. James answers that she is "there" but the cop says that area of James's garden was dug up and found to contain no human corpse. The police officer demands to know if James buried his wife in the garden and James adamantly denies it. The officer accuses James of killing his wife and James insists she is not dead.

The cop notes that one lily is "so much bigger than the others." The officer wonders: Did James plant that strikingly large lily to mark his wife's grave? The police officer speculates that the lily will "hang" James. Then James says, "That lily loves me." After that curious statement, we are led into the deepest and most profound points of the episode. "We consider the lilies and some of us love them," James muses. "Do you suppose the lilies consider us and sometimes return our love?" The exasperated cop thinks James is hoping for an insanity defense.

9:30 p. m.—Quiet Please. "Let the Lilies Consider," another eerie Wyllis Cooper tale with Ernest Chappell, narrator, portraying the man who liked and was liked by flowers. KQV.

James lets us know that he is fascinated by flowers. He cares little for the scientific aspects of "stamens and pistils and the anatomy of flowers." Rather, he has strong emotional reactions to flowers – and believes they can return those emotions. This conviction in the emotional capabilities of plants could signal that James is an unreliable narrator, either deluded or simply lying. The audience must wonder if we are meant to take what he says as "real" as he begins recalling the bulk of the episode's story.

The marriage of James and Gretchen is troubled because she thinks he spends so much time attending to

his beloved garden, especially the lilies that he finds beautiful. Gretchen admits that she is jealous of the flowers. She also believes that the flowers dislike her. Like her husband, Gretchen attributes human-like emotions to plants. This opens the possibility that the married couple has fallen into a shared delusion.

“You do love me more than you love the flowers, don’t you James?” Gretchen asks. There is something heartrendingly pitiful in the question – a question James does not answer. As James and Gretchen quarrel, the latter exclaims of the lilies: “They’re listening!”

Recalling this scene to police and stenographer, James claims that the lilies were “leaning toward us” with an “attitude of expectancy.” He says that Gretchen burst into tears and ran into the house, “trampling the beautiful, delicate bodies [of the lilies] underfoot as she ran.”

The cop interrupts, accusing James of murdering Gretchen because the lilies meant more to him than his wife. He yells that he did not kill his wife, adding that he really loved Gretchen.

James then tells of a period of marital harmony: wintertime, when there was no garden. Spring came and Gretchen became anxious. She requested that he not cultivate a garden. However, he just cannot imagine a life without his beautiful lilies.

Gretchen acknowledges that she is being “very foolish and very silly” but tells him she has only “hate” for the flowers. She complains about fearing that he finds the flowers more beautiful than she, about fearing he is more married to his garden than his flesh-and-blood woman. “You’ve let those flowers become an obsessions with you!” she accuses. “You’ve begun to feel that they’re alive, that they have feelings!”

The last sentence encapsulates the mystery represented by plants. They *are* indisputably “alive.” The question mark hovering over them in whether or not they are life that can possess “feelings.”

After hearing his wife’s anguished complaints, James resolves to compromise with her. He will spend less time with the garden and plant only half as many flowers as usual. But he continues that he “reckoned without the flowers.” For they grew robustly and more came up than he had planted. When working in the garden, he would often see

Gretchen staring out the window of the house, glaring at the lilies with “a look of awful hatred.”

He tells cop and stenographer that at one point he heard a wordless but loving “murmur” from the lilies. Then “the words came”: the lilies softly murmured “love you, love you, love you.” Gretchen demands he choose between her and the flowers – and he cannot. Gretchen returns to the house; he falls asleep in the garden.

James is awakened when Gretchen, enraged with jealousy, sets the lilies on fire! The fire burns itself out and Gretchen stands triumphant in the scorched remains of what had been beautiful flowers.

However, the next morning, James discovers the lilies are healthy and robust as if “nothing had happened.” From the house, Gretchen weeps in despair at the way the enemy-flowers miraculously returned to life after the conflagration.

Gretchen tells James she must leave him. She is certain James does not love her and fears the lilies will seek revenge. He tells her he loves her and begs her to stay. But when she gives an ultimatum, he is again unable to choose between the flowers and Gretchen. While husband and wife talk, James hears the murmuring voice of the “lilies,” repeating, “Love you, love you, love you.” James sees Gretchen pointing a gun at him. She tells him she cannot allow the flowers to have him. She points the gun at his heart and pulls the trigger.

According to James, he was knocked temporarily unconscious by the shot. When he awakens, he is in great pain and unsure of what has transpired. He hears the soft murmur, “Love you, love you, love you.” He calls to Gretchen but instead of hearing from her, he hears from the lilies: “You will not die. Gretchen has not died. . . . Gretchen lives. Gretchen loves you.”

The cop asks to see James’s wound and James shows him a scar that the cop acknowledges. When the police officer demands to know where Gretchen is, James directs his attention to the unusually big lily, the one the cops failed to remove when they dug up the area. James asks the cop what is on the lily’s stem. “It’s a ring!” the officer exclaims. James tells him it is a wedding ring.

A music bridge lets us know time has passed. The officer speaks to his superior, saying he could not get James to sign the confession because he could not find James. He and the other cops looked to see where the murmuring “love you, love you, love you” sounds they

heard were coming from and when they turned around, James was gone! The cop continues that he then saw *two* unusually large lilies beside each other and “they looked as if they had their arms around each other.” The drama ends and the audience learns the names of the performers who appeared in this episode, all of whom I have already named except Peggy Stanley who was the voice of the lilies. Stanley certainly contributed to the success of the episode as her sweet, gentle, high-pitched, stage whispering well represented the delicate beauty of a lily.

Much of the creepy power of “Let the Lilies Consider” lies in the way it underlines basic mysteries about plants. For example, when Gretchen accuses James of acting “as if the lilies are alive,” she stumbles into the confusion we as humans have between life and consciousness. Plants are indisputably *life* but are usually regarded as no more capable of consciousness than non-living objects. Since human beings admire and enjoy plants, since we may even *love* plants, do we foolishly project on them feelings they cannot possibly experience? Or could it be that we correctly sense that, as living beings, they may possess emotions?

Although “Let the Lilies Consider” dangles before its audience the possibility of an unreliable narrator, deluded or deceiving, its ending resolves the episode into the surrealistic and fantasy genres.

The other radio episode playing with the idea of consciousness and emotions in plants that will be discussed in this article is “All Living Things Must Die” that aired on April 29, 1974 on *CBS Radio Mystery Theater (CBSRMT)*. This program aired 1974 to 1982 and, despite its title, was not inevitably a mystery but frequently included sketches of comedy, Westerns, science fiction, horror, and historical fiction. “All Living Things Must Die” opens with Barbara (Mercedes McCambridge) gushing over her plants, saying, “I love you! I love you all! You are my darlings!”

A doorbell rings. It is Detective Sergeant Johnson (Larry Haines) checking up on Barbara because she had been troubled by obscene phone calls. Luckily, she tells him she has been free of them since the phone number was changed. As



they talk, husband Frank (Ralph Bell) walks in. The officer soon leaves.

The marriage is troubled. Although the feminist movement was getting underway during the time period, and the episode was written by a woman, Elspeth Eric, the marriage depicted follows an old-fashioned husband-is-the-boss and wife-is-submissive model. What’s more, the husband is a grumpy and insensitive tyrant who is quite indifferent to his wife’s emotional needs. Barbara feels terribly isolated. She yearns for a baby or, failing that, a dog. She is very lonely. But her husband Frank (Ralph Bell) Just Says No to both pleas. “No dog!” he thunders. “No baby!” He tells her she is lucky he allows her to keep the plants she cultivates although he considers her “dumb” for caring about them.

At one point, Barbara says, “I hate you! I wish you were dead!” Then he is attacked – by the plants! A type of life defined, in part, by its inability to move suddenly moves. Its branches surround Frank’s neck and start choking him. “Barbara get some scissors!” he pleads. But she does not. The plants kill Frank or at least appear to kill him.

We fast forward several months and widow Barbara is now newly married. Her husband is the cop who investigated the obscene phone callers! His first name is Ed and is far more easygoing than Frank. Barbara still relishes her beloved plants. He brings home a plant for her, the “purple passion plant.” Later he brings in a dog! She still has her plants, now she has a dog.

She and her new husband discuss the desire she has previously expressed to have a baby. In sharp contrast to his predecessor, this husband wants Barbara to have a baby. However, Barbara believes that, before they can become parents, she must come clean to Ed about Frank’s demise. As they talk, we learn that his perception is that there was a freak accident in which Frank somehow got tangled up in the plants and was choked by their branches. (This author does not know how that could happen in real life but as a “freak

accident” it does not seem impossible.) Barbara recounts what the audience heard. She tells Ed that she told Frank she wished he was dead. “The plants moved, they moved and wound themselves around his neck!” she relates. Then she elaborates that Frank begged her to cut off the branches with a pair of scissors. Instead of grabbing the scissors to help him, she just watched while the plants deliberately killed him. She tells Ed that she believes the plants did it because she said she wished he was dead and was, therefore, an “accessory.” Ed dismisses the memory as a “bad dream.”

With her husband’s enthusiastic approval, Barbara is soon pregnant. She is deliriously happy. She shares her joy with Ed, the dog, and the plants. She is untroubled by what happened to Frank and is “not sure it even happened” as she recalled it but was just a “freak accident” in which she played no part. Alone with the plants, she says, “I don’t even care about the plants.” She and Ed will move into a new place, one more appropriate to the family they will start, and she will leave the plants behind. The plants attack again! She is choked by them but Ed grabs a pair of scissors to free her. She faints, is taken to the hospital, and easily recovers with no permanent damage. She becomes convinced that the plants did not intend to kill or even injure her. They just wanted to let her know that they did not want to be abandoned. The episode ends happily: Barbara has a dog, a good husband who loves her, is looking forward to having her baby – and will continue her relationship with her dear plants. The childhood rhyme, “Make new friends and keep the old/one is silver and the other is gold,” is appropriate to the ending of this radio drama.

In both episodes, there is an initial straddling of the line between speculative and realistic fiction – before each resolves into the speculative genre. “Let the Lilies Consider” makes it clear that it is a supernatural story when James vanishes from the view of the police officers to be transformed into a lily. “All Living Things Must Die” initially leaves open the possibility that Barbara’s imagination transformed a genuine freak accident into a homicide in the case of Frank’s death but makes it clear that the plants are acting violently when Ed

must cut the plants with scissors to free her from their botanical grip.

“Let the Lilies Consider” and “All Living Things Must Die” dramatize the same basic mystery that surrounds plant life and the possibility of some form of consciousness in it.

Are plants in fact conscious? Do they think and/or have emotions? It seems unlikely. But we do not know for certain. And the tantalizing, even if remote, possibility that plants consider us even as we consider them has helped create at least two fascinating, thought-provoking, and wonderfully memorable radio episodes.

References

- Gibson, Prudence. “Pavlov’s Plants: new study shows plants can learn from experience.” *The Conversation*.
- “Let the Lilies Consider.” *Ghoulish Delights* website.
- “Mimosa Plants Have Long Term Memory, Can Learn, Biologists Say.” *Sci News*. Jan. 16, 2014.
- Patton, Paul. “Can Plants Learn?” *Moments of Science*. April 18, 2018.
- Summers, Christan. “Do Plants Have Feelings?” *Ask A Plant Queen*.

Radio Mystery Theater: Mercedes McCambridge in “All Living Things Must Die.” A woman lavishes care and affection on her numerous plants and they repay her by murdering her hated husband.
WHAS (840) 9:30 p.m.

Purchasing Groups

The Old Time Radio Researchers Purchasing Group:
Contact Jim Wood at OTRPG@Bookfixer.com
Dues: 5\$ per month.

Ted Davenport Purchasing Group:
Contact Ted at tedotr52@gmail.com
Dues: 35\$ per month for 18 hours of both circulating and uncirculating material from transcription disc.

Doug Hopkinson Purchasing Group:
Contact Doug at auditorium117@gmail.com
Dues: \$30 for 7.5 hours.

Support the *Old Radio Times*

Since its debut in December 2005, the *Old Radio Times* has been offered free to the old-time radio community. It is the only free group publication in the hobby and it will remain so. However, as a way to help readers show their appreciation for the zine, we've created a Patreon page where you can pledge a regular donation to the upkeep of the zine and the work of the Old Time Radio Researchers in general.

Visit [the Times' Patreon page](#) to become a subscriber, paying \$1 (or \$2) to our dusty coffers each time a new issue is published. We are currently on a bi-monthly schedule so the total annual cost could be as little as \$6.

Visit Our Blog

Another little-known resource for the Old Time Radio Researchers is our blog, found [here](#). It was dormant after the death of Jim Beshires but in recent months we have reactivated it. Please subscribe to be automatically notified of new posts.

A Reminder

The Old Time Radio Researchers online library remains one of the most valuable sources of downloadable OTR programs available freely to the wider public. Many newer members appear unfamiliar with this resource. [Visit here!](#)

Update on the Doug Hopkinson Group

Beginning in April 2021 Doug changed his distro group. He merged the music and the OTR options into one distro. He's still putting out 7.5 total hours of audio and the mix will be about the same (2:1). This is not the only change happening. You need to read this next bit.

From time to time, Doug has mentioned [Stay Tuned America](#), a nostalgia formatted station that celebrates the best Big Band, Jazz, Blues and Old Time Radio. STA is now featuring quite a few well known programs, such as *When Radio Was*, *Imagination Theater*, *Sounds Of Sinatra*, *Unshackled* and more. [Stay Tuned America](#) is going to be a new partner with Doug's distro. STA is adding 10 hours of audio to the distro each month.

The programs Stay Tuned America is sharing from their vast archives are from first generation reels that came from a legendary buying group, headed by a well-known, and well-read author of an encyclopedic type book, on the subject of Old Time Radio. This legendary buying group was composed of collectors close to the industry and they had a penchant to only collect the best sounding programs. These reels have been stored for decades and are now freshly baked and ready to be served up to you each month. The files from STA will be raw only, offered in wav, flac and mp3. There will be a mix of programming that will appeal to everyone. 10 hours more than you were getting just a month ago! In return, you might

try clicking on any of the active [Stay Tuned America](#) hyperlinks. You can also access STA on your smartphone, laptop or desktop with apps like Live365, Tunein, and Streema. Visit STA on Facebook too.

Aside from Doug's audio, there will be a list of the 10 hours being provided by [Stay Tuned America](#) as well, and any special notes that may apply. Each month the STA schedule will be included and one of the many syndicated programs will be singled out and described. He is charging \$30 a month through the end of 2021.



Stay Tuned America Schedule

(All times are Central Standard Time)

Monday:

06:30-07:00 - Unshackled!
16:00-17:00 - When Radio Was! ENCORE! w/
Greg Bell (Classic Episodes)
18:00-19:00 - When Radio Was! w/ Greg Bell
(Current Episodes)
19:00-20:00 - Make Believe Ballroom w/Jeff
Bressler (Repeat)
21:00-23:59 - USA Classic Radio Theater w/
Wyatt Cox

Tuesday:

06:30-07:00 - Unshackled!
16:00-17:00 - When Radio Was! ENCORE! w/
Greg Bell (Classic Episodes)
18:00-19:00 - When Radio Was! w/ Greg Bell
(Current Episodes)
19:00-21:00 - Same Time, Same Station - w/ John
and Larry Gassman
21:00-23:59 - USA Classic Radio Theater w/
Wyatt Cox

Wednesday:

06:30-07:00 - Unshackled!
16:00-17:00 - When Radio Was! ENCORE! w/
Greg Bell (Classic Episodes)
17:00-18:00 - Anything Goes!! w/ Lise Avery
(Repeat)
18:00-19:00 - When Radio Was! w/ Greg Bell
(Current Episodes)
21:00-23:59 - USA Classic Radio Theater w/
Wyatt Cox

Thursday:

06:30-07:00 - Unshackled!
16:00-17:00 - When Radio Was! ENCORE! w/
Greg Bell (Classic Episodes)
18:00-19:00 - When Radio Was! w/ Greg Bell
(Current Episodes)
19:00-21:00 - The Sounds Of Sinatra w/ Sid Mark
21:00-23:59 - USA Classic Radio Theater w/
Wyatt Cox

Friday:

06:30-07:00 - Unshackled!
12:00-13:00 - Anything Goes!! w/ Lise Avery (Repeat)
16:00-17:00 - When Radio Was! ENCORE! w/ Greg
Bell (Classic Episodes)
18:00-19:00 - When Radio Was! w/ Greg Bell (Current
Episodes)
19:00-21:00 - The Great Music Club w/ Mike Shannon
21:00-23:59 - USA Classic Radio Theater w/ Wyatt
Cox

Saturday:

06:30-07:00 - Unshackled!
07:00-12:00 - Swing Thing w/ Fred Hall
12:00-14:00 - Old Time Radio Classics w/ Jerry
Haendiges
14:00-15:00 - Make Believe Ballroom w/ Jeff Bressler
15:00-17:00 - Memories In Melody w/ Matt Taylor
17:00-19:00 - Seems Like Old Times w/ Craig
Orndorff
19:00-21:00 - American Standards By The Sea w/ Dick
Robinson
21:00-23:00 - The Sounds Of Sinatra w/ Sid Mark
23:00-23:59 - WoodSongs Old Time Radio Hour

Sunday:

06:30-07:00 - Unshackled!
07:00-08:00 - The Roaring 20's
08:00-09:00 - Sound Ideas w/ Clay Ryder
09:00-10:00 - Jazz Rhythm w/ Dave Radlauer
10:00-11:00 - Juke In The Back w/ Matt The Cat
11:00-12:00 - Rhythm Sweet And Hot w/ Mike Plaskett
12:00-19:00 - When Radio Was! w/ Greg Bell (Current
& Weekend Episodes)
19:00-19:30 - Imagination Theatre
19:30-20:00 - Golden Days Of Radio w/ Frank Bresee
20:00-21:00 - Powder River (Colonial Radio Theatre)
21:00-22:00 - Anything Goes!! w/ Lise Avery
22:00-23:59 - Archives Theater w/ Wally Stall



The Non-Studio Studio

Part 7 in a series of articles by Joseph Kessler
Adams

I approach most community projects from the standpoint of Henny Penny; From her famous question, “Who will help me plant the wheat” on up to the eating of the bread she bakes. It tells me a lot about who is serious about getting the job (whatever job it may be) *done!*

When it comes to starting a radio drama project, the who is very important, but so is the where. Where will the show be done?

In this installment of Do It Yourself Radio Theater, I want to look at where the show will be performed – staged before a live audience or recorded in a living room. The final location will be inside the mind of the real audience, the listener. But before it gets into their ears, it must be put up on its feet in some physical space.

The “arteests” may be offended that I look at the physical plant, the needs, and process before addressing their high art. Without a place to do their work, the “arteests” can go off and do it in a closet somewhere. Actors need a stage. Radio needs a room.

Your Studio Space

There are a few things necessary for your production of a new radio drama or comedy program. Hopefully, you will be doing more than one show so any necessary purchases can be amortized over the life of the series. Things can be borrowed from crew members or friends (marked so they can be returned) or shopped from online, garage sales, thrift shops, or purchased new.

You will need:

At least one room – the space where your whole crew will meet, audition, cast, rehearse, and actually perform the play. If this is the room where you record, a second room for isolation of the sound equipment is preferred, but you can survive with a single room where the recording desk is in the corner, as far from the action as possible (because the sound engineer should only be involved with what comes through the wires for the final show). If you are using a real recording studio, this will be set up for you. In our system

we had this luxury so we had three rooms – the studio, the control room, the office/front room, and bathrooms for both ladies and gentlemen at the far end of the building. We have also recorded in borrowed church basements and in a dining room with the recording equipment in a bedroom off to the side. Your creativity and problem-solving starts long before your first recording.

Seats – to hold all of the butts of your cast and crew during rehearsal, and when they are not standing.

Table – around which the cast, director, production assistant, and other crew rest their weary selves as needed.

Recording System – the way the audio will be recorded to be heard by a listening audience. This will be discussed in depth in a later section, but you will need at least one microphone (and the structure that holds the microphone in place). Two microphones are preferred. Cardioids placed back to back to give the actors a way to relate to each other, and “off” positions out of the recording pattern for the illusion of distance from the microphone, called “off-mike.”

Classic radio theater was produced with a “ribbon” or “figure-eight” microphone where the single device could create that same direction on-mike/off-mike option. Some producers claim a separate microphone for each person is a possibility (as became popular in the productions of the late 20th century), but I feel the control over the individual voices is secondary to the relationship between performers in the production. Actors can build energy by seeing each other and feeding on the level of the other actors’ emotion to increase tension in the performance of the script (how actors use the microphone will be covered in a later chapter).

For recording purposes you also need to consider the wiring; or the hardware that carries the sound from the microphone to the recording device. You need enough to carry two microphones (at least) to the recording system, and lines to feed headphones coming back into the performance space (which is optional).

Of course, you’ll also need a recording device. There are many options including reel to reel, cassette, DAT, or computer (which is becoming more likely); these choices are explored later.

The Room

If you are lucky enough to have a studio operator, either a professional or an enthusiastic amateur, you are

ahead of the game. They will have all the equipment and the room they need, so you will just need to trot out actors, sound effects artists, director, production assistant(s), chairs, and snacks to feed the growing horde.

Since you will be dealing with sound, it is important that you control the reflection of sound on flat surfaces, called echoes. Whether your space is a room in an apartment, the basement of a supportive church, or a school classroom, you can overcome the “flat surface” problem with carpeting to cover tile or wooden floors. You can also move pads or blankets to cover walls or furniture. The purpose is to reduce the sound of the performers to a raw feed to pass through the microphone(s) to the recording device without the distraction of echoes that drive engineers crazy.

You want a raw signal to allow clean edits between different takes of a scene and echoes may complicate that process of editing, whether electronically or with the old fashioned razor-blade method used with reel to reel tape. You also want a clean voice track for fully produced shows, or the “live” sound of a single pass, with or without an audience.

The process of providing the actors with a space to stand *in front* of a microphone means you need: a) space around the microphone for each actor involved in the scene to stand, b) space *away* from the microphones (in the same room or not) for actors to sit when they are not performing, and c) space for sound effect artists to perform *while* the actors are performing. However, you can opt to record sound effects later using the same space. Sound effects can take over the studio so if you are going to perform sound effects live, you will need a larger room for the equipment and technicians to do their work while actors are doing the voice tracks in the same space.

Table and Chairs

Everybody has tables and chairs, but not all of the existing furniture will serve the radio production.

For auditions and script readings, just about anything will do. When you get into recording, it is important that your chairs be silent.

An Auditions “Green Room”

During auditions for a show, you make things work best when you have a lot of seating in a waiting room. You should also have a table where the “sides” are available. “Sides” are pages from the script, or a sample script if casting for more than one show at a time. It’s a good idea to also make available a sign-up clipboard and, ideally, water, cups, and snacks for the auditionees.

During Casting

Actors should be separated during actual auditions. They need to be allowed to do their work without added pressure from other actors watching their performance and judging them. Seating is only needed for the director and production crew while the actor stands before their table. The people who have to hear 40 people read will need that table to receive resumes, head shots, and to write their own notes for the session.

During Rehearsals

Rehearsals for professional shows were a couple of times the length of the final show, but for most “amateur” shows you should allow a couple of sessions. They do not need to be held in the studio; almost any comfortable space will do. A comfortable space can include a crew member’s large dining room table, a folding table in a church basement, a living room that will accommodate the number of people attending. It is a good idea to get your actors used to the needs of standing at the microphone, so having them rise, go to a dummy microphone, and return to their seats. This adds to the need for open space so the performers don’t bump into each other (or the furniture) while getting up for their time performing, then back down to give the next people at the microphone a clear path for their turn.

During Recording

Furniture becomes more important for recording sessions. Chairs must be quiet. The creaking of wood or metal when the show is supposed to be on a desert island is distracting. Actors have to be able to brace themselves for silent rising and sitting as far as is possible. Tables are not needed, but a music stand for each performer can be useful, if not an outright luxury.

A carpet may be necessary, or if the floor is bare wood (undesirable because of sound reflection)

performers may be asked to wear thick socks to move silently.

Snack tables or seats for resting may be kept in another room, in which case you need to be sure that the door to the studio is silent (no squeaks), and someone needs to be with them, like a librarian, to “shush” the people resting and reminding them to be quiet so as not interfere with recording.

About Snacks

You should at least provide water and some snacks to keep the cast going. If your performers are enthusiastic non-professionals, they may run from work to the recording location without time to think of the energy required to perform. Professionals know, usually by virtue of previous mistakes with blood sugar.

Simple rules, something with sugar (for energy), without sugar (for diabetics), with caffeine (for energy), without (for your Mormon performers). Snacks should be divided between sweet options, salty options, and fresh options (like veggies or fruit). Toothpicks can serve in place of plastic forks or spoons for the fresh options.

Snacks can be done potluck style or with the investment of \$3 per performer to make the session more pleasant. It has the side-benefit of creating the illusion that the production team values and appreciates the talents the actors bring to the show. And if things go badly, it opens the door to a nice food fight at the end of the recording session.

Snacks should be separate from the recording room, but can be available to the performers during auditions or rehearsals.

The Vital Amenity

Performers will need access to at least one clean, functioning bathroom. Beside the obvious uses, it can be used in case a performer needs to take a bath or producers need a place to run and be sick if the performance fails big time.

Providing access to a large bathroom (more than one person at a time) or a very nice room will create goodwill with your crew of actors and technicians. Don't forget about it.

Recording Space

You will need to use a space for your show's recording, whether it is a local theater for a live nostalgic production for the local audience, or a recorded program for later broadcast. In that room you will have to mix people, wiring, recording equipment, sound, egos, and dramatic tensions. Preparing the room before the script arrives is just good planning; the last minute is a terrible time to make decisions. But sometimes it may be unavoidable.

Wrap

By setting up your needs in advance, you will come off as professional to your actors, writers, engineers, and local drama community. It will also reflect on you in your final show. Was the script able to reach the audience because of good recording? Were your actors secure in the location and free to do their best work? Were your engineers able to get what they needed to record voice tracks, sound effects, music, and mixing? Did you feel like they were part of your team, or did come across as an unprepared, petty tyrant who wasn't able to bring it all together?

I have a motto that is based on my brief career in radio “little theater” in the late '70s and early '80s:

“Over-prepare and go with the flow!”

2020/21 Maintained Releases (v. Year Month)

[Counterspy](#) v. 2001
[The Clyde Beatty Show](#) v. 2001
[Rocky Fortune](#) v. 2001
[The Weird Circle](#) v. 2004
[Broadway's My Beat](#) v. 2004
[The Adventures of Philip Marlowe](#) v. 2005
[My Friend Irma](#) v. 2006
[Firefighters](#) v. 2007
[Jeff Regan, Investigator](#) v. 2007
[Life with Luigi](#) v. 2008
[Tales of the Texas Rangers](#) v. 2009
[Mr. District Attorney](#) v. 2010
[Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons](#) v. 2010
[Hopalong Cassidy](#) v. 2011
[Family Doctor](#) v. 2012
[Father Knows Best](#) v. 2012
[The Anderson Family](#) v. 2102
[The Danny Kaye Show](#) v. 2105



Peg Lynch of Ethel And Albert happily admits: "Home is how you look at it."



Peg's typewriter is one of the few modern touches at "Witchstone," her lovely home which dates back to 1728.



Here's the perfect husband, says Peg: His name is Odd, his disposition's even—and he's handy around the house.



ETHEL'S "Family Obligation"

By MADGE HOLDEN

THE FACT that Washington did or did not sleep at 'Witchstone,'" points out Peg Lynch, originator, writer and star of the popular NBC-TV series, *Ethel And Albert*, "had nothing whatsoever to do with our buying it. No, it was simply that two years ago, when we were house hunting, my husband, Odd, and I were merely looking for a place that looked like home—and when we found 'Witchstone' it looked like home. That is, it looked like home to me. At first glance, it looked to Odd just like an old red house with a peculiar ski-jump type of roof . . . surrounded with an acre of rocky ground that would present terrific landscaping problems, to say nothing of mowing problems. In fact, I'm (Continued on page 98)

Ethel And Albert, NBC-TV, Sat., 7:30 P.M., EST, for the Sunbeam Corp., makers of electrical appliances.

Both heart and home bless these three with a sense of "one-ness": Peg, Odd, and their daughter, Elise Astrid.



Ethel's "Family Obligation"

(Continued from page 46)

not sure Odd ever really saw the house for what it really was until after he moved in—he was so engrossed with the rocks . . . which I never really saw until after I had stumbled over the first dozen."

Be that as it may, it is now quite safe to say that both Peg and her husband are blissfully happy with their new-old home . . . one of the few houses of Early Eighteenth Century vintage in that neighborhood in which Washington never slept . . . to which, as far as anybody can make out, he never even came to tea.

In very much the same way "Ethel" would maneuver a guest around her home, Peg enthusiastically conducts her own grand tour—starting in the most logical spot, the front door, which she pats fondly and beams, "I always wanted a house with a Dutch door . . . it was one of the things that sold me on the house even before I saw the inside."

Once inside that Dutch door, two centuries suddenly evaporate and you realize what Washington missed. A center fireplace—three sides of which are open, and usable—is the focal point and acts as the divider between the living room, dining room and den. This is the first floor of the original building; the floors, walls and most of the black walnut beams are those which were installed by some craftsman back in 1728. "The house is listed as having been built in the early 1730's," Peg explains, "but when we were repairing the fireplace we uncovered a cornerstone marked '1728.' Not that, at this stage, a few years make any difference . . . except that I get a bang out of thinking we're probably the only people in the last hundred years or so to know the exact year the house was built."

To the left of the fireplace is the cozy living room. "Moving from a small New York apartment to an eight-room house presents

quite a problem in furnishings—particularly when your apartment was quite modern, and your new home quite Early American. There was nothing to do but start from scratch. In the interest of not putting us in debt for the rest of our natural lives, we bought reproductions rather than authentic Early American furniture. In fact, there are only one or two really authentic pieces in the entire house. Some day, I hope to have more, but right now I'm quite content to be furnished without being broke. I think you'll find the only thing in this section of the house that is out-of-character—besides electricity and children's up-to-date toys—is the TV set. Under the circumstances, I think the original owners, the Ferrises, will forgive the intrusion of science."

To the right of the living room, and in front of the fireplace, is the dining room with its rag rugs, ladder-back chairs and oval dining table. Built into one wall is a lovely china cabinet filled with blue and white English woodland-scene china. Blue and white drapes at the French doors (leading to a rear porch) and blue and white plates arranged on the stark white walls add color to the room. In another wall is a Dutch-door glass cabinet and bar. "This was the original staircase to the second floor. When the wing was added, this sharp and steep staircase was shut off and a less precipitous one put in off the rear of the living room. Odd turned the old stairwell into the cabinet and installed soft indirect lighting in both the glass and china cabinets. We think the lighting in two otherwise fairly dark corners is quite effective."

"And don't you just love the black antiqued wrought-iron door hinges against the white walls and woodwork throughout the house? Odd did that, too."

"Believe it or not, I didn't really marry

Odd because he was so handy around the house . . . in fact, I didn't know about these talents of his until we moved out here. The apartment we had in Gramercy Park gave him very little opportunity to display his hammer-and-chisel dexterity. And the fact that he's a mechanical and chemical engineer doesn't necessarily guarantee that he's a whiz with a bucket of white paint. Certainly, the one potted geranium which bedecked our New York flat never aroused any suspicions as to the very active green thumb he possesses—although I suppose I should have guessed it, since Odd Ronning was born and raised in Norway . . . and, as everybody knows, Norwegians as a whole love the great outdoors and everything connected with it. Now that the inside of the house is finished, just let the sun even pretend to shine and Odd is outside like a flash working on the lawn, preparing new flower or vegetable gardens, trimming trees . . . doing just about anything required to keep an acre of ground looking well-manicured.

"Besides that, he's got the disposition of an angel—is a wonderful influence on me when I get tense over some show problem. Television presents many problems for *Ethel And Albert* that were never in evidence when the program was on radio. Try as I do to keep my business problems separate from our family life, every once in a while I get tied up in a mental knot, and it takes Odd's even disposition and common sense to straighten me out. To think I almost missed the boat with Odd—actually did miss the boat—well, there I go into another knot!"

And miss Odd's boat is exactly what Peg did. You see, Odd and Peggy are third cousins who had never met until 1946, when Odd came to the United States to take some additional engineering courses at Syracuse University. Norwegian relatives had written Peg, telling her on what boat—and when—Odd would arrive. But, somewhere along the line, information went awry and, when Peg arrived at the pier, the boat had long since docked and dispersed all passengers. So, it wasn't until the next school vacation period that Odd put in an appearance at a family dinner. In the course of the next few years, a family obligation turned from friendship to love and, on August 12, 1948, they were married at the famous Little Church Around The Corner in New York.

"The combination of my radio commitments and the fact that Odd had to return to Norway to fulfill some personal obligations," continues Peggy, "postponed our honeymoon until the following summer, when we went to Norway—by way of London and Brussels—to visit our mutual rela-

tives, none of whom I knew. It was a trip I shall never forget! It was food I shall never forget! People always ask me about Norwegian food . . . that is, what the average Norwegian family eats. Having spent a full summer in Norway, I still can't answer that question. No matter where we went, there seemed to be multitudes of the Ronning clan with but one thought in mind . . . feed the couple.

"But, all joking aside, the trip and the people were wonderful. And, if I never have any other *Ethel And Albert* fans—heaven forbid—I have a solid block in Norway. Naturally, they can't see or hear the show. But, at their request, when the show returned to the air, I sent them a couple of scripts—now I have to send them all. Which pleases me, because it indicates that I'm accomplishing what I set out to do . . . write a show that had universal appeal . . . real meaning, regardless of nationality or walk-of-life."

It is in the peace and quiet of "Witchstone"—a name derived from the flat stone covering over the chimney, which was supposed to keep witches away—that Peggy writes her *Ethel And Albert* scripts . . . reading the final drafts to Odd for his opinions and suggestions. "On the second floor of the original house," continues Peg, "are two bedrooms and a bath and—tucked away in the wing which was added somewhere along the line—is a little L-shaped room which I use as my study and writing room. What a blessed relief it is to be able to work at home and yet not feel I'm disturbing the family! In a three-room apartment in New York, this was quite a trick—especially after June 18, 1951, when Elise Astrid joined the family. It was at this point that Odd and I seriously set about finding the home we had always talked about . . . the home that would fulfill our needs and provide the proper setting for the raising of our daughter. The comparative safety of the country is a great comfort to a mother who cannot always be home to watch over her child. I say 'comparative safety,' because occasionally it seems to be a toss-up. For instance, is a skinned knee from a city street really any worse than a swollen eyelid from a country spider? Well, at least there's no traffic problem!"

"One other thing that I wanted in my home was a modern, roomy kitchen—one that was as far away from an apartment kitchenette as a bed of geraniums is from a potted plant. Once again, 'Witchstone' answered my prayer—the kitchen is a dream. In fact, it's a sore temptation when I know I should be pounding a typewriter. It's roomy, light and airy, and has a stove that defies error. It's such a cheery room that I don't even mind dish-washing. To boot, it's right off the screened-in back porch where we all live during the summer months, and when I'm in the kitchen I can still take part in what's going on with the rest of the family. You know, I've often thought that the reason so many women resent their kitchens is because the kitchens are usually tucked away in a remote corner far from the center of family activity. Not so in my house. The kitchen is located in such a way that the only room you can't see from it is the first-floor bedroom.

"In fact, one of the most charming features of the house is that, no matter where you are on the first floor of the original structure, you're really always in the same room . . . the chimney merely acting as a divider without actually closing off the rooms. In some subtle way, it makes for a feeling of oneness—of always being together. And perhaps, without realizing it, that's why I thought 'Witchstone' looked like home.

"But then, home is how you look at it, isn't it?"



Radio 100 Years Ago

Enjoy a look back at what was going on in the world of broadcasting 100 years ago.

Frieda Hempel Sings to Radio Audience

AN unseen audience, scattered over a 500-mile radius from Denver, heard Frieda Hempel of the Chicago Opera Association recently sing through the wireless telephone.

Miss Hempel, often called "the Jenny Lind of today," sang an old familiar waltz, with Frank St. Leger playing the accompaniment. The singer also sweetly gave "Home, Sweet Home." Phonograph records reproducing her voice and records by other artists also were played, and picked up by wireless.

Scores of telephone calls after the concert expressed the gratitude of listeners who had heard the program. More than 350 persons heard it at the Fitzsimmons General Hospital, and large audiences "listened in" also at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the University of Denver.



The Wireless Age, June 1921

President Harding Hears Voice by Radio 5,700 Miles

A NOTABLE radio incident occurred when President Harding formally opened the direct telephonic communication service from the United States with the island of Cuba. To signal the event, a conversation took place via wireless telephone and land and sea telephone cables from Catalina Islands, off the California coast, to Cuba, a distance of 5,700 miles, or farther than from London to Peking.

In addition to the greeting between President Harding and the Cuban chief executive, the guests "listening in" at both ends, heard distinctly every word of the message from Catalina Island, in the Pacific. The messages from Catalina were heard as distinctly as if they had originated locally.



The Wireless Age, June 1921

REPORTED BY WIRELESS

(By Associated Press)

PITTSBURGH, April 30.—Unique in the annals of journalism and newspaper enterprise was the achievement recently of the Pittsburgh Post which reported by wireless telephone the fight of Johnny Ray, of Pittsburgh, and Johnny Dundee, of New York, lightweights. Instantaneous

news service of the fight, round by round and blow by blow was given by the Post reporter at the ringside, enabling the paper to have an extra on the streets a few minutes after the last gong sounded.

Reports from all over the country indicate that wireless telephone operators were treated to the action of the ring battle with all the realism of each blow and each bit of ring strategy enacted the instant it occurred.

An Associated Press dispatch from Hartford, Conn., stated that the Dundee-Ray boxing match was "heard" in Hartford. "A wireless telephone brought the sounds of the conflict, the clang of the gong and the shouts of the fans to a group of wireless enthusiasts assembled at a private radio station," the dispatch said. Hiram Percy Maxim, the wireless expert was present.

Tuscaloosa News (AL), May 1, 1921

THE CALIFORNIA THEATRE RADIOPHONE

(By Lieut. E. W. Stone)

THE De Forest radiophone station operated at the California Theater in San Francisco by the Moorhead Laboratories, Inc., of that city, which is the exclusive distributor of the De Forest Company on the Pacific Coast, has been in operation for over a year and it is thought that a description of same will be found of interest to readers.

The California Theatre is the largest motion picture house in San Francisco and is one of three controlled by the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, the other two being the Imperial and Portola Theatres. A fourth, the Granada, is under process of construction.

The station was installed early in 1920, through the courtesy of Directors Roth and Pardington of the "Big 3" Theatres, and is located in a concrete room in the fly galleries of the California Theatre. The antenna is rigged off the tower of the Humboldt Bank Building, directly adjoining the theatre.

The transmitting set consists of the standard De Forest 1 KW radiophone set with additional loading inductance so as to obtain the working wave length of 1260 meters. The call letter of this station is 6XC. The antenna current varies from 4 to 5 amperes, according to the amount of input energy. Ordinarily, less than a half kilowatt is used for transmission. As the set is essentially an experimental one, various transmitting circuits of the De Forest Company have been tried out. The circuit at present in use is one developed by the engineers of the Moorhead Laboratories, for which patents have been applied. The receiving set is of the standard De Forest type.

For best results in receiving from the California Theatre, the following Ultra Honeycomb Coils should be used: Primary—DL 200, with series condenser on moderate antenna. Secondary—DL 200, Tickler—DL 150.

In connection with the transmission of music, several interesting methods have been developed through experimentation. For collecting and transmitting the music from the theatre's symphony orchestra of 50 pieces a large Magnavox horn is suspended in the fly galleries in such a position as to be clear of the side "drops." At the small end of the horn, a Kellogg microphone transmitter is mounted in a vertical position. From here the usual wires are lead to the radio modulating circuit. For

the transmission of phonograph records, several devices have been used. One is a standard Magnavox phonograph microphone, consisting of a microphone mounted at the end of the usual phonograph tone-arm. Another method developed by the Moorhead Laboratories is to utilize the steel needle holder so as to bear directly on the microphone diaphragm in place of the usual phonograph diaphragm.

For special concerts, which are frequently given, a sound-proof room in the basement of the theatre is utilized. For small chamber or instrumental music, a Magnavox horn similar to the one suspended in the fly galleries is utilized, but for vocal selections Kellogg desk transmitters are used by each singer. By placing the singers with their backs to the grand piano used for accompaniment, enough of the sound intensity from the piano is obtained through the singers' microphones so as to obtain a proper blending of the voice and piano.

Harp solos by Miss Jay Clark, piano solos by Mr. Hans Hanke, and vocal solos by Miss Mary White, Miss Ruth Williams, and Mr. Ford Rush of the California Theatre, and Madam Frieda Hempel and Forrest Lamont, stars of the Chicago Grand Opera

Company, have been the big features of the special concerts.

The regular concerts, consisting of the Herman Heller Orchestra music and phonograph records, are sent out at 4:00, 7:15 and 9:00 p. m. on weeks days, lasting for at least one-half hour. Special vocal and instrumental concerts are sent out at 9:00 p. m. on Wednesdays, and a special Sunday concert given by the Herman Heller Orchestra is sent out from 11:00 a. m. to noon.

The transmission of music from the De Forest station at the California Theatre has developed from an experimental standpoint to a worth-while contribution to the musical progress of the city, and receiving sets for the reception of this music alone have been installed at clubs, hospitals, hotels, and many private homes since the inauguration of this service.

The accompanying photograph shows Dr. Lee De Forest, inventor of the audion, at the radio set, and Miss Mary White singing over the set on the occasion of one of the special concerts.

The station is operated under the direction of Lieut. Ellery W. Stone, general manager of the Moorhead Laboratories; Mr. B. F. McNamee, chief engineer, and Mr. J. E. Squires, operator of the station.



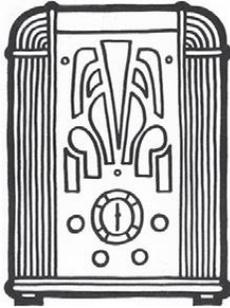
The Radio Room at the California Theater in San Francisco. Dr. Lee De Forest is shown demonstrating his invention to Miss Mary White, one of the many entertainers who have had the distinction of singing to the "unseen audience."

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Created in 1984, the Metro Washington Old-Time Radio Club is the second largest old-time radio club in the United States. Club members enjoy monthly club meetings, an annual luncheon, and a bi-monthly newsletter. You do not have to live in or near Washington, D.C., to become a member. The newsletter, RADIO RECALL, is mailed to members from all over the country and loaded with fascinating articles, news of what is happening in the hobby, recently-discovered “lost” programs and more. Why not join the hundreds who enjoy the newsletter, which can be sent via email in PDF format, or be mailed to you through the post office?



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Old-Time Radio Researchers Acquisitions: New Episodes and Upgraded Sound Encodes

Please note that our distributions are available to OTRR Purchasing Group members first, and then made available to the public after about six months.

Distro 136

This distro consists of the best sounding mp3s currently available of CBS Radio Mystery Theater. About half of the recordings come from Ken Long's site <http://cbsrmt.thelongtrek.com> and the other half are from reel to reel recordings made over the air by David Oxford's good friend John Edwards. They are from radio station WBBM in Chicago. He purchased the reels from John in 2008 and worked like the devil to digitize 479 recordings on his Pioneer RT-707 reel deck before giving up in frustration and exhaustion. He had to wait 12 years before he could face the task again. He now has a Pioneer RT-909 and a Teac A-4300SX to join the 707 in recording the reels.

David had been aware of Ken Long's CBSRMT site for some time and decided to download Ken's entire site and comb it for the best sounding file of each episode available. This quickly proved to be too big and daunting a task. He recruited Tony Adams of our group to help him compare the numerous files in December 2018. They soldiered on month after month going through the files. Once they had selected Ken's best files, they compared them to David's recordings and chose what they felt were the Best of Available recording - abbreviated {BoA} in the mp3s.

This choice could be a little fickle at times. David preferred a recording with commercials and news left intact. Sometimes the best sounding file was stripped of everything except the story. A very close second file may have all the commercials and news - but not quite as good as the first. What to do? David collaborated with Tony and sometimes chose the stripped version and sometimes the very close second depending on the quality difference in the recording's sound. So, a little fickle! David will elaborate on the contents and statistics of this and future distros in a future communication.

A special thanks to Dave Tysver for creating an excel spreadsheet with actors and writers for me to import into the artist field in these mp3s. He'll release this when he's finished tweaking a bit more and we'll include it with the other files in a near future distro. David will give thanks

to all the second listener's down the road when I make more formal acknowledgments.

David plans to distro all his recordings (1393 files) to the group as Flac in RAW & Cleaned files in future distros to follow this one. About 611 of these he considered as Best of Available. He'll distro Ken's BEST of Available files in flac format but there are only 191 of these - most are mp3s with no lossless parent. There were many flac files available. However, these weren't considered the best recordings, unfortunately. The radio call letters are given for each file: KIXI, KIRO, KQV, WUWM, WBBM. John Edwards files are WBBM JE. TC is Time Corrected, SS = Sound Soap (an audio editing program for removing hiss, noise), EQ is equalization.

All Files were time corrected using two notes in the closing theme music (if available and not abruptly cut off my a damed commercial!). This music is present at the beginning of each act but is often "Talked Over" and more difficult to measure. By experimenting with measuring all these notes in an episode, one finds some variation in playback of about 40 seconds if the slowest part of the tape is used over the fasted speed of the recording. Still, pretty good and your ears can't hear the difference over a 52 minute show.

