

# AIR CHECK

NEWSLETTER OF THE RADIO ENTHUSIASTS OF PUGET SOUND (REPS)

VOLUME 7 • NUMBER 1

JANUARY 1997

## GIL STRATTON JR...



### WHAT A GUY!

*Responding to a plaintiff cry from the Pacific Northwest, Gil Stratton, Jr. came to Seattle on short notice. He was a highly popular and entertaining October REPS speaker when pressing business kept scheduled guest Alan Young away. Laughter echoed through the Queen Anne library as the large crowd listened to so many diverse and funny tales.*

*Story on page 9*

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## RADIO RALLY E.X.P.A.N.D.E.D

In response to a very large number of inquiries and requests, the convention committee and the REPS Board have made some adjustments to the Rally plans. It will be bigger than previously announced.

*Details on page 3*



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# REPS MEMBERSHIP

REPS welcomes into membership those who have an interest in Old Time Radio and/or current radio drama, variety, comedy, etc. There are three membership categories.

MEMBERSHIP	1ST YEAR	RENEWAL
Regular	\$22	\$18
Student	\$13	\$9
Vision impaired	\$13	\$9



### Shelby Jean Davis' "HISTORY SONG"

In Fourteen Hundred Ninety-Two,  
Columbus crossed the ocean,  
He thought he'd sail around the world,  
But took another notion.  
For sixty days and nights he sailed—  
So history has recorded—  
He landed in America,  
And then our country started.

They came from Spain and Portugal,  
From France and from Germania;  
The Dutch they built New Amsterdam,  
The Swedes took Pennsylvania.  
But soon the British owned it all—  
We had a revolution;  
And just a few years after that,  
They wrote the Constitution.

Chorus:  
I hope you like my little song  
And keep it in your noodle.  
I made the verses up myself—  
The tune is "Yankee Doodle."

▲ Here is another of those little mysteries from Don Allen. Does anyone know anything about Shelby Jean and the Blue Eyed Boy? On the right is her "History Song." How many people like this were on the radio?

# UPCOMING MEETINGS

**Jan. 4 IN TOUCH.** John Jensen is a guy who is very well connected in radio circles. Maybe you remember the meeting when he walked in late and Les Tremayne, on stage, stopped and said "There's John Jensen." He has OTR stories that will entertain us all.

**Feb. 1 NORMAN CORWIN.** Such a talented man, and so respected by all who know him. REPS is extremely honored to have Norman Corwin come to share and visit. As the "poet in residence" at CBS, his writing was, and is, superb. From series to specials there was always something distinctive about Corwin's work. A few examples readers may know: *Columbia Presents Corwin; Twenty Six by Corwin; On A Note of Triumph; The Pursuit of Happiness; Passport for Adams+++.*

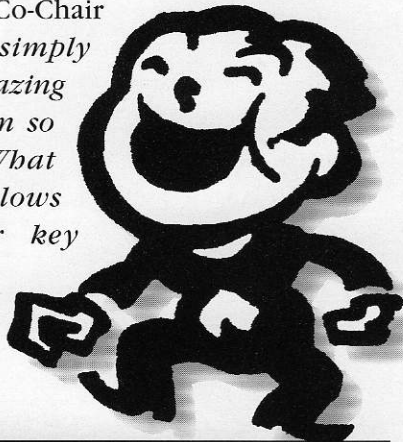
**Mar. 1 TO BE ANNOUNCED.**





## RADIO RALLY TO BE LARGER THAN ANNOUNCED *(continued from page 1)*

According to Rally Co-Chair Mike Sprague "We simply can't ignore the amazing level of interest from so many directions. What we've done still allows us to spare our key volunteers and yet offer a more diverse program."



**"Okay, I'm convinced! It is still a big deal and I'm registering now."**

### THE PROGRAM

In simplest terms, we will have a Friday night new radio feature. Then we will meet all day Saturday, including a dinner and an evening program. It appears that we will be able to do three recreations and three panels.

Some might ask, "Then what is the difference from the past?" All performances and panels will be in the Auditorium, which eliminates any engineering in our alternate room. The shows selected will be easier to produce and there will be fewer hours of rehearsal and related activity.

### FEWER GUESTS

Finally, we will still have far fewer special guests as announced in the last Air Check. Not being able to hang out with so many of our friends from the past is significant to us, but for this year it is the biggest sacrifice. All have been very kind in their understanding.

Some "out of towners" plan to join us on their own anyway because of personal connections in the area and because they like being here. That's a special deal, and we're delighted.

### PRIZE DRAWING FOR EARLY REGISTRANTS

The first flyer on the Radio Rally is enclosed with this Air Check. For those who register among the first 30,

they will be in a drawing at the Radio Rally. One lucky person will receive a complete set of the recordings of all recreations done at the event.

### PETER LEEDS DIES

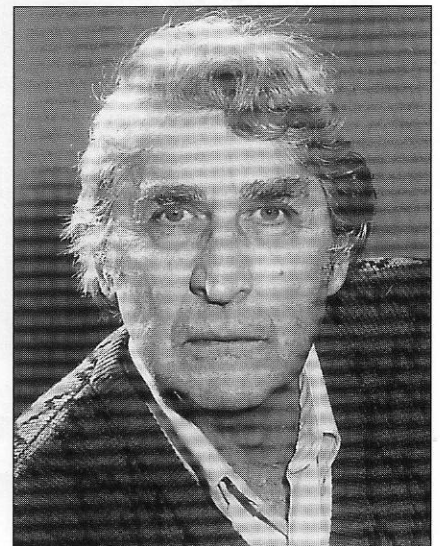
Only with us once, for the 1995 Radio Showcase, Peter Leeds became an instant REPS favorite. His energy and humor just captivated people. Unable to attend in 1996 because of his health, Peter died of cancer on November 12. Though incomplete, with regard to his total career, here is the biography we published in June 1995, along with a few additions.

"This first time Showcase visitor did all that zany stuff with *Stan Freberg* on radio and on recordings like *Rock Island Line* and *Banana Boat Song*. But there is more. Peter has thousands of radio shows under his belt, including *Maisie*, *Nightbeat* and *Rogue's Gallery* (he played Eugar).

(Just a few more of many: *Alan Young Show*, *Suspense*, *Escape*, *Jimmy Durante*, *Jack Carson*, *Burns and Allen*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Hermit's Cave*, and during WW II, *Hello Mom*.)

"Television saw him appear in over 1000 shows, playing a variety of roles from press agent to gangster; from dope peddler to ballet dancer. Let's get an explanation on this last one. Lots of comedy roles on *Jack Benny*, *Red Skelton* and others.

"He traveled with Bob Hope for 13 years on Christmas tours, and did 4 of his own. Peter has a number of movie credits including *I'll Cry Tomorrow* and *The Jean Harlow Story*. He co-starred with Ann Miller and Mickey Rooney on Broadway for 3 1/2 years in *Sugar Babies*."



► Peter Leeds: A funny, caring and much missed friend.



# FACING the MUSIC

By KEN ALDEN



Ex-Major Lanny Ross combines his romantic tenor voice with the smartly-styled singing of Evelyn Knight (right) on the Lanny Ross Show, which is heard Monday through Friday at 7:00 P.M. EDT, over the CBS network.



Perry Como's Monday-through-Friday Supper Club show, 7:00 P.M. EDT on NBC, piles up the fan mail to such a point that the singer's whole family has to pitch in to help him read his way through it.



**P**ERRY COMO, whose single recording of "Till The End of Time" sold more copies than any other disc of the year, and who has clicked in recent 20th Century-Fox films, will probably have a new sponsorship deal in 1947 when his cigarette show runs out. Perry is now on NBC but the rival web, CBS, is promised the baritone.

Don't be surprised if Dinah Shore and her husband George Montgomery form a daytime radio partnership, a la Kate Smith and Ted Collins. The idea might be experimented with next season on a regional west coast hookup and if successful, go national.

Count Basie is writing a history of jazz and boogie woogie and MGM is interested in seeing the script for possible screen use.

Look for Tommy Riggs and Betty Lou, one of radio's better ventriloquists, to be back on the air this Fall co-

starring with Ginny Simms on CBS. Riggs was in the service.

Don't be surprised if Frank Sinatra shifts his broadcasting time to an earlier hour to satisfy his kid fans.

Jean Tennyson, soprano star of CBS's Great Moments in Music, is planning to set up a musical scholarship, only Broadway show and chorus girls to be eligible.

Jean Sablon, the French Crosby, has returned to Paris. American networks couldn't work out a satisfactory deal to keep the baritone over here.

Music lost another great composer when Vincent Youmans passed away at the age of 47, a victim of t.b. His beautiful songs like "Tea for Two," "I Want to Be Happy," carry on forever.

**STAN UP AND CHEER**  
It takes more than talent to become a

successful bandleader. It takes guts, too. Slim, sincere Stan Kenton, whose fine young orchestra rates the highest popularity potential of 1946, is the current case in point.

"I never had trouble playing piano in bands," Stan told me as we brunchted in Lindy's, "it wasn't until I decided to have my own band that things got tough."

Stan is a master of understatement. Things weren't tough. They were desperate. Stan organized his band on a shoe string.

"What made things worse was that my wife, Violet, was expecting a baby."

When the band didn't work Stan stuffed his pride in his bare pocket and collected unemployment insurance. The Kentons moved in with Violet's folks. One night, Stan, anxious for his wife's health, was all for giving up his ambitious plans and throwing in the baton.

"Don't do it, honey," his wife pleaded. "This is what you want. Soon the public will appreciate the kind of music you want to give them."

The baby was born without mishap. Stan was sure this was a lucky omen. He persuaded the local radio station to put a line into Star Balboa ballroom. Pearl Harbor day came and the networks stayed on the air continuously. They needed remote dance band music to fill in between breathless bulletins. "What they got was Stan Kenton," Stan recalled, "whether they liked it or not. We went on, from coast to coast, three times a night."

By the time Stan's loyal crew left Balboa, he owed the radio station \$1,200 for line charges but it was well worth it. People had listened to the strong, swing-minded band. A one-night engagement in a Long Beach auditorium attracted 2,000 paying patrons. A Los Angeles disc jockey, Al Jarvis, scouted the turnout, put in a hurry call to Maury Cohen, manager of that vast ballroom, the Palladium.

Cohen, needing a fill-in band for five

▲ A reprint of the famous column  
"Facing the Music" by Ken Alden.....





weeks, got Kenton at bargain prices. "You would think that was the end of my troubles but it wasn't," Stan continued. "Too cocky, we headed east and did OK until we got into Roseland in New York. Booked for six weeks, we played three. Our style just didn't fit." Back on the coast, Bob Hope hired the band to replace Army-bound Skinnay Ennis. Stan thought this was the big opportunity, but the gag-filled Hope show had little room to show off the musical wares of Kenton. The band got lost between irium and Jerry Colonna. But their Capitol records clicked.

In two years the plucky pioneer saved \$25,000, owned two cars, and a luxurious Hollywood home. Eager to keep improving his band, he poured money back into it for better musicians and singers.

Stan is 34 now. He was born in Wichita, Kansas, the son of an auto mechanic and a piano teacher. The family moved to the coast shortly after Stan was born. Their son went to school in Long Beach, started studying music under the watchful eye of his mother when he was 14.

The depression prevented Stan from going to college. He joined a local dance band, drifted from one to another, playing a polished piano. But he soon became bored with routine music and routine arrangements. The band-leading bug bit him early. He met his pretty wife while playing in one of these clap-trap outfits.

"If it wasn't for her we'd have given up long ago. When we signed contracts which called for a girl vocalist, Vi would make believe she was the girl vocalist even though she had never sung professionally in her life."

Now that the sweat and tears days are over, Violet Kenton concentrates on being a wife and mother.

"Now that we're moderately successful Vi doesn't bother too much about it. But I'm sure if anything went wrong again she'd be in there pitching."

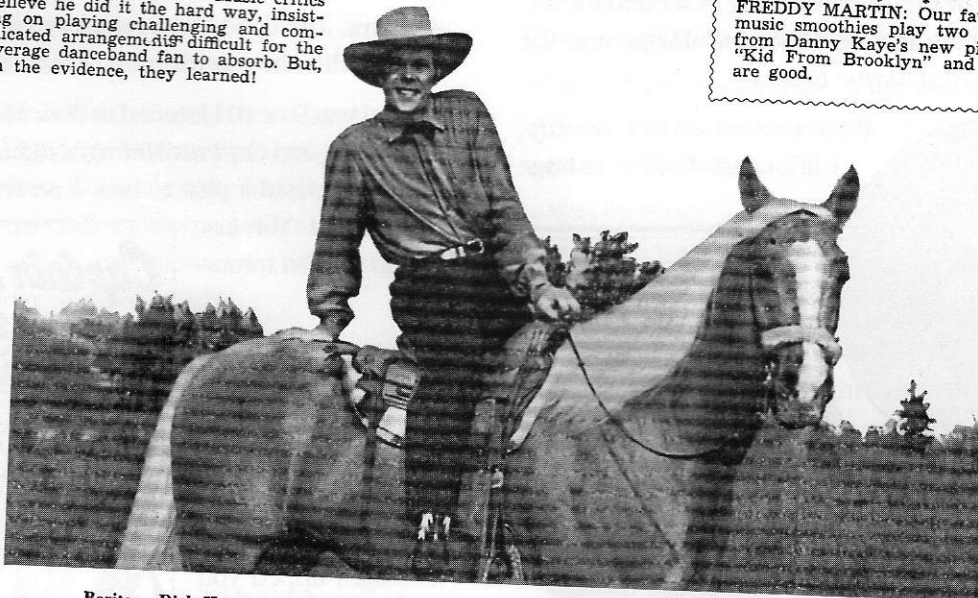
It's taken Kenton about six years to put his fine band across. Music critics believe he did it the hard way, insisting on playing challenging and complicated arrangements difficult for the average danceband fan to absorb. But, on the evidence, they learned!



Life was easy as a musician, hard as a bandleader—but Stan Kenton wanted to lead a band.



Vivacious Nanette Fabray is the vocalist on NBC's Saturday night Jimmy Edmondson Show, at 8.



Baritone Dick Haymes steals as many hours as he can from movies and his CBS show (Saturdays at 8:00 P.M. EDT) to ride and train the horses on his Encino Valley ranch—Thunderbolt is one.

### NEW RECORDS

(Each month Ken Alden picks the most popular platters)

**JO STAFFORD:** The languorous Californian offers an album (Capitol) filled with memorable hits of yesteryear.

**DINAH SHORE:** Dinah is herself again with this effortless version of "The Gypsy" and "Laughing on the Outside." (Columbia)

**JACK SMITH:** The Prudential Family hour favorite turns in a pleasant coupling of "I'll Be Yours" and "Let's Put Out the Lights." (Majestic)

**NORO MORALES:** Majestic thinks mighty highly of this rumba disciple. "Maria" and "Tambo" are the tunes and an easy-to-learn rumba lesson written by Arthur Murray is on the jacket.

**PHIL MOORE FOUR:** Another slick Musicraft mixture by this quartet featuring "September Song" and "Danny Boy."

**JOHNNY GUARNIERI:** "Body and Soul" and "Nobody's Sweetheart" show off an honest piano style and he gets understanding help from drummer Cole and string bassist Haggart. (Majestic)

**GEORGE AULD:** Here's a band due to climb. Listen to them as they play "You Haven't Changed At All," a lovely tune, and "Daily Double." (Musicraft)

**FRANK SINATRA:** The Voice rejoices with two fine songs from "Centennial Summer"—"All 'nrough the Day" and "Two Hearts Are Better Than One."

**FREDDY MARTIN:** Our favorite music smoothies play two tunes from Danny Kaye's new picture "Kid From Brooklyn" and both are good.

R  
M  
6

.....from the magazine "Radio Mirror"



# REMINISCING

In the last issue of *Air Check*, we invited readers to share with us some of their memories of radio and its role in their families and lives. Here are a couple of "look backs" we think you'll enjoy.

## On Approval

*From Eileene Young (wife of honorary member Doug Young)*

I was in the second grade when my Dad brought home a very primitive radio in 1925. The sound was annoying and nothing about the programming encouraged my parents to keep it, since the radio had been purchased "on approval."

I next remember hearing "Pagan Love Song" on our radio. This was a favorite of mine and I would pause by the window to listen.

Then came *Cecil and Sally*, usually after the 10 PM news. We were allowed to stay up and listen. On Saturday mornings I listened to KRSC to hear opera music. By this time I was totally involved.

After school, my girlfriend and I would listen to *Orphan Annie*. Even sent for an Ovaltine cup, even though we didn't like Ovaltine. During this time, Sunday had our big show *One Man's Family*. Coming in second for we, the younger generation, was *Myrt and Marge* and the whole family enjoyed *Major Bowes*.



Back to *One Man's Family*, Clifford and Paul were huge

◀ Helen Troy—  
better known as "Sally"



▶ Johnny Patrick—"Cecil"  
of "Cecil and Sally" fame.

disappointments when we saw them. A prime favorite, *Groucho Marx*, was easily enjoyed both on radio and TV. *Fred Allen*, *Ransome Sherman*, *Col. Stoopnagle* and *Duffy's Tavern*—all favorites, as were *Lights Out*, *Suspense* and *Lux Radio Theatre*.

## My Heroes Were All Cowboys

*Lionel Haywood looks back*

My growing up years were during WW II. I am sure that I was typical of a lot of little boys because my heroes were all cowboys. I mean, how could you beat *Hopalong Cassidy* for championing good over evil?

His easy going good nature never stopped him from winning any tough fight he was in. He always had a plan for beating the bad guys that you would find out about later (provided you stayed tuned and mom didn't want you to do something.) Mom never really understood the importance of many things that a 9 year old knew immediately!

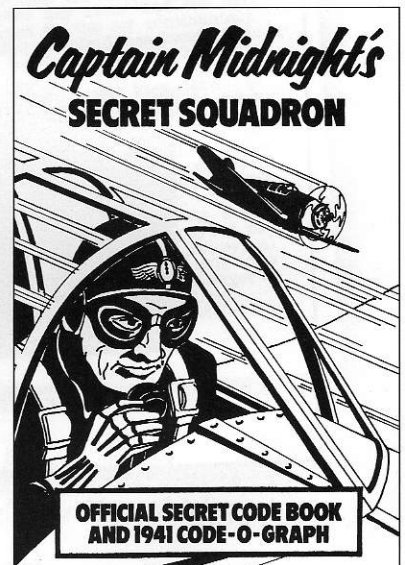
## My own silver bullet

I can still feel the anticipation of adventure when I hear the William Tell Overture. My dad gave me a casing from a silver bullet that he told me belonged to the *Lone Ranger*. Maybe a 6 year old is too old to believe in Santa, but brother, I believed my dad about that silver bullet. It was one of my greatest treasures. The *Lone Ranger* *always* left a silver bullet with friends when he was unable to be there in person.

When I was 9 or 10 I listened to *Tom Mix*, *Superman*, *Jack Armstrong* and *Captain Midnight* right after school. Again, they always had a plan to beat Ivan Shark or some other mastermind. You just had to tune in tomorrow.

However, you were among the select few if you had a code-a-graph and were a "Ralston Straight Shooter." The secret messages tipped you off. (Continued on page 7)

▶ A Code-A-Graph of another Haywood hero.







## REMINISCING *(Continued from page 6)*

*Lionel Haywood, cont'd*

### **No more cereal**

Things that were entirely unimportant or important to Mom took on real significance. I can still hear "No, you can't get more cereal. You haven't eaten all of what you got before." Before meant the cereal box with the box top an 10 cents that were necessary to get the Whistling Ring from Tom Mix.)

### **The Red Ryder Code-a-graph Incident.**

My sister was, and is, very dear to me. However, it is still hard to forgive her for the Red Ryder Code-a-graph incident. You must understand that radio premiums had a definite cycle. They were used for a time and then became passé. I finally was cleared by mom to get the Code-a-graph, and waited and waited for it to come in the mail.

Our house didn't have mail delivery, so we had a box at the Post Office. When would that darn thing come? Every day, I would check our mail after school, with no luck.

Finally, I opened the box, and there was the magic package. My hands trembled as I opened it. As I recall, the Code-a-graph was made of cardboard. During WW II, we learned that metal articles were in short supply because of war production. No problem. I would assemble it at home, and rushed there with anticipation!

One other problem: I ordered my prize so late that Red Ryder and his sidekick, Little Beaver, were just about ready to start offering a new code-a-graph. Tonight would be the last night that my code-a-graph would be good. After this, a new one would be used with new codes! At home I assembled my prize and was ready.

### **Engagement vs Red Ryder**

Sometimes, the world of adults intrudes on the kid world. My sister had just been engaged and planned to announce it to the world with a party at our house. Little brothers weren't wanted or needed, and of course the feeling was mutual. Disaster struck. We had a console GE. I was informed of two things: I was not allowed away from my room during the party to listen to Red Ryder. And, the radio would not be taken upstairs to my room.

I really think that the theme from Dragnet is an appropriate ending to this little essay.



▲ Way back then. Any Rudy Vallee fans who remember what he did?

## **YOUR STORY FROM BACK THEN?**

Others would enjoy reading your story. Consider such things as:

- Who listened with you? What was it like "back then?" How often did you gather? What times of the day do you most remember?
- Was there one show you just wouldn't miss? How about others in your family?
- Do you listen today? Where...when...with whom?
- Did you ever order any of the premiums offered by sponsors? Were you thrilled when they arrived? Disappointed?
- What radio personalities made an impression on you, and how did they do that?
- If a favorite radio show of yours went to television, what was your reaction when you saw it there as compared to the image in your head?

Mail your Reminiscences to Air Check, 9936 NE 197th Street, Bothell, WA 98011. If you have questions, call Mike Sprague 206-488-9518.



FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

# RADIO THEATRE™

## Premiere!

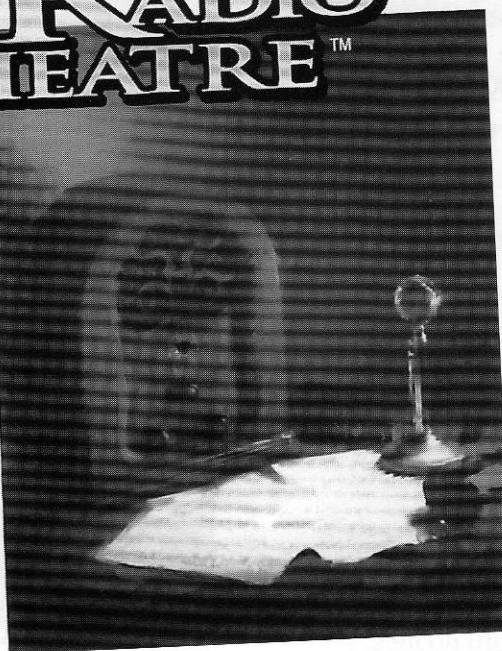
Recognize this scene? It's early evening, and Mom, Dad, and the four children are gathered in the family room. The little ones, dressed in pajamas, snuggle next to Mom. The older children stretch out on the floor with Dad. Soon, the anticipated music of the family's favorite drama series begins to fill the room. But wait . . . the television isn't on. This family is listening to the radio!

What have they tuned in? Answer: Focus on the Family Radio Theatre!

Inspired by the success of Focus on the Family's "Adventures in Odyssey" radio program now heard on more than 1,200 stations, Paul McCusker and Dave Arnold, the "Odyssey" producers, have been working nearly two years on Radio Theatre, which will present favorite classical stories and inspirational biographies to a broader audience. Unlike the regular half-hour episodes of "Odyssey," Radio Theatre will be a series of "specials" heard on local radio and available on audiocassettes and compact discs.

The first program, Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," has just been released, and it will air on radio stations between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. (Call Briargate Media at 719-531-3300 to find out when "A Christmas Carol" will air in your area.)

"A Christmas Carol" was recorded in England with British actors and produced in Colorado Springs. "Listeners will be touched by the heartwarming reminder that it's never too late to change," McCusker said.



Meanwhile, "Adventures in Odyssey," a radio drama series produced by Focus on the Family, is nearing its 10th anniversary. Set in a town called Odyssey, the program is home to many memorable characters, including John Avery Whittaker, Eugene Meltsner, Connie Kendall, Tom Riley and Bart Rathbone.

What makes "Adventures in Odyssey" so special is the way the program brings scriptural principles to life through interesting characters, realistic dramas, heartfelt comedy and even a bit of fantasy using the "theater of the mind." The radio dramas became an overnight hit when Focus on the Family produced a limited-run series

for Dr. Dobson's daily broadcast in 1987.

Back then, the series introduced John Avery Whittaker, a tall, sparkly-eyed fellow with unruly white hair and a bushy white mustache. Whit, as kids in the neighborhood called him, was the proprietor of Whit's End, an old-fashioned ice cream store. Over the last decade, the series has taken off like Whit's Imagination Station (a machine that transports riders to other eras).

"Adventures in Odyssey" has also been turned into an animated video series (so your TV set can be turned on once in a while), and the ninth episode is being released this month.

In fact, Focus on the Family is offering "tons of stuff" for Odyssey fans this month, said McCusker. Available from Focus on the Family are these resources:

- The "Adventures in Odyssey" audio series "Back On the Air" is a special six-cassette album (or four CDs) featuring 12 great episodes from the popular radio series.

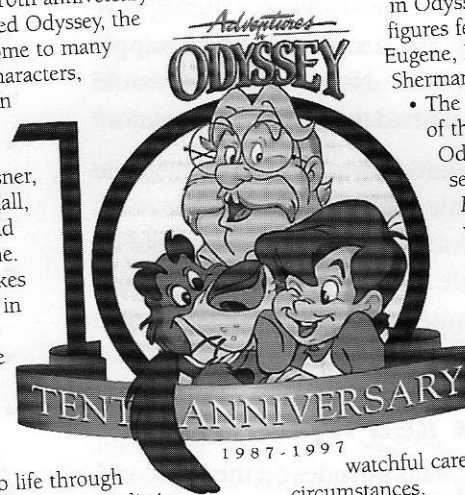
- The collectible "Adventures in Odyssey" action figures featuring Whit, Eugene, Dylan and Sherman.

- The 10th installment of the "Adventures in Odyssey" paperback series called *Freedom Run*, written by Paul McCusker, is set in the pre-Civil War South.

- The animated video "Someone to Watch Over Me" confirms God's

watchful care in difficult circumstances.

If you would like to learn more about these "Odyssey" resources, or request them for your home (they make great Christmas presents!), please see the center section of the magazine.



▲ New radio programming does exist for kids (and adults will enjoy too!)  
Seattle air times on back page. To order, call 1-800-232-6459.





## PAST REPS MEETINGS

OCTOBER...

GIL STRATTON, JR.

### GIL DELIGHTS LARGE AUDIENCE

Reporter-Bill Parker

Air Check readers will have noted, not doubt with amusement, the blanked-out picture of Alan Young on the October issue. It reminds one of an old *Dick Tracy* story called "The Man With No Face."

We were very fortunate that Gil Stratton, Jr. was able to be with us on short notice when Young had to cancel. Gil had a huge part in making last summer's Showcase IV so satisfying. He worked in just about everything we did.

Few, if any other, entertainment personalities have successfully combined long careers in both acting and sports announcing. He told us that he first acted on radio nearly sixty years ago, doing children's voices. He is currently Sports Director for KNX radio in Los Angeles.

Gil says that his lifetime ambition was to be a sports announcer. He told us "In acting, everything is subjective. In sports, the records are irrefutable. You can't argue with sports performances."

▼ Gil Stratton and fans at the REPS meeting.



### "CLEAN YOUR SHOES"

He first landed a role on *Grand Central Station*, sponsored by Shinola Shoe Polish, where announcer John McIntyre's famous line was "Look at your shoes—other people do." Before the broadcast, director Bert Prager

told Gil "Your shoes are a mess. Clean 'em up!" And, when he was cued for his first line, the director threw a sheet of trick flaming paper at him. All a joke, but a great initiation into nationwide broadcasting.

### Some of Gil's Radio Work

Gil Stratton is a fount of entertaining and hilarious stories. This space can only highlight a few of them.

- *Kate Hopkins, M.D.* was his only soap opera. The director told him "Slow down and take long pauses." (to fill up the 15 minute time slot.) It was totally different from playing comedy.
- He did many dialects. his British accent was always an imitation of Freddie Bartholomew. He developed a generalized continental accent which was "good for German, Hungarian and others."
- Shows Gil loved doing: *The Life of Riley* "Bill Bendix was a down home guy, was like Riley in real life." *The Halls of Ivy*, with Ronald and Bonita Colman. "She was a marvelous lady, great to work with." Doing *Lux Radio Theatre* with 17 year old Elizabeth Taylor—"Unbelievable. Out of all the (29) Luxes I did, that one stands out."

### Travelling with the Watermans

Gil moved from New York to Hollywood in 1946, traveling in a three car caravan with Willard and Mary Anna Waterman. He was featured in many movies, including:

- *Girl Crazy* with Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland
- *Stalag 17* in a very key role. It was shot sequentially so the actors didn't know the outcome.
- *Monkey Business* with Cary Grant.
- *Cats From Outer Space* !?!!

Sure Gil did television. He was very funny on *My Little Margie* and *That's My Boy* to name just a couple.

His desire to be a sports announcer led him first to be an umpire in the Pacific Coast League Then, in February 1954 he was selected as a replacement announce for sports great Tom Harmon. His announcing career was underway, both on radio and television, where he has since won 2 Emmys for KNX and 7 Golden Mikes.

Gil's trademark opening line for his sports broadcasts has always been "Hello everybody. It's time to call 'em as I see 'em."

And this is a fitting title for his wonderfully entertaining program at the October meeting.



# PAST REPS MEETINGS

## NOVEMBER...

### THE RADIO ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK

#### Jim Dolan and Kevin Clark

Reporter Bill Parker

These partners began working together back in high school, and they told us about "Starting a Radio Network." With 20 years of radio experience, they operate the Radio Entertainment Network. Jim's conviction is that "Radio entertainment will work if presented in the right format."

So far, commercial radio stations have considered OTR a throwaway, to be played in late evening hours with public service ads. Jim and Kevin's network was created to persuade radio stations that radio drama has a place. Jim told us that nothing has been currently produced to convince program directors that radio drama is viable.

But times have changed as have formats. As stations competed to play essentially the same rock music, specialization played a larger part and talk radio has risen to prominence. And, there is evidence that young listeners, not just those who grew up on radio drama, do respond.

#### TUNING IN ON REN

- Satellite—Yesterday USA...Sun. 6 AM-4 PM EST
- C Band—Galaxy 5 channel 7-6.8 mhz audio
- Internet...same times...www.audionet.com...click "Hot New Stations" You need a 48k modem and sound card
- Seattle—Channel 9 second channel...stereo TV or VCR M-F 11 PM-1AM Sun 2AM-10 AM Legal holidays 12N-8PM

For information and/or help, contact REN, PO Box 51161, Seattle, WA 98115 206-689-1708

REN has moved their concept forward largely through developing programming for the blind, working first through Evergreen Reading Service locally in Seattle and then in cities all over America. REPS members know that the broadcasts can be picked up on the FM sub-carrier, or as described above.

Jim and Kevin are providing large blocks of OTR programming on a regularly scheduled basis to reading services all over the country. They do so with great amounts of personal times and finances.

The Radio Enthusiasts heard a couple of real enthusiasts who have put their commitment into action. Good things are ahead.

## DECEMBER...

### ONE MAN'S FAMILY

#### Mike Sprague

"It really isn't right to call 'One Man's Family' a soap," preached Mike Sprague during his presentation on this show that ran from 1932 until 1959.

Jokingly, he stated "OMF was never sponsored by a soap company...it was almost always in prime time...and the writing was superb." Whatever category one finds to place it in, One Man's Family was something special.

#### The Message

Sprague read from a newly published log/history on OMF

to give some perspective. "This was the day-to-day, multi-generational story of the Barbour Family, living in the Sea Cliff section of San Francisco. Written and produced by Carlton E. Morse, the show quickly won the hearts of millions of Americans



▲ The Barbour Family at Christmas time.

from coast to coast. The show considered the strength and vitality of the family to be the essential cornerstone of American democracy."

#### The Program

Mike took the approach of picking and playing a particularly good "Book" which featured all of the major characters in the show. Morse wrote the show in Books and Chapters. All in all, there were 3,256 chapters in 134 Books. Only about 12% of those have survived. We heard Chapter 12, Book 72, done in December 1949.

(Continued on page 15)



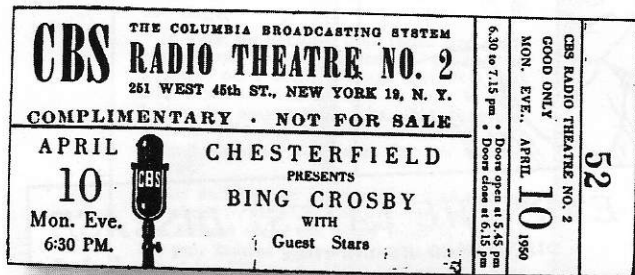


## KIRO MYSTERY PLAYHOUSE

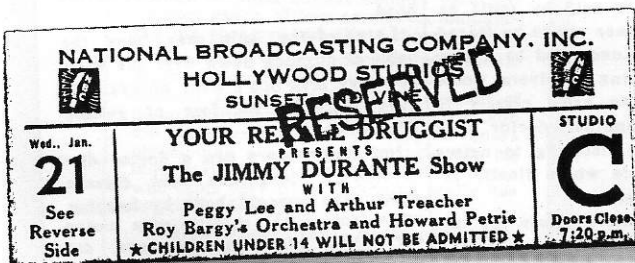
Early 1997 dates for taping are: Jan. 16, Feb. 20 and Mar. 20. Honorary member Jim French continues to write and produce excellent new radio drama that is aired locally and syndicated in over 100 cities. The shows are taped at the Museum of History and Industry, with tickets available by calling KIRO radio. Doors usually open about 7:15 PM and the taping starts at 7:30.

## WE'RE SOFTWARE... ...THEY'RE HARDWARE

REPS is focused on the programming that was on radio during the Golden Age. If you have any level of interest in old radios and equipment, you'll want to connect with the Puget Sound Antique Radio Association. They meet at the Shoreline Historical Museum on the third Sunday of each month, except December. Meetings are at 12:00 noon. You can contact them: PSARA, PO Box 125, Snohomish, WA 98291. 360-568-2698.



▲ Ticket for the Bing Crosby Radio Program: April 10, 1950.  
(for the program broadcast on May 3, 1950)



▲ Ticket for the Jimmy Durante Show.

## SPERDVAC CONVENTION

Both Bill Brooks and Mike Sprague attended the OTR convention of the Society to Preserve and Encourage

Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy. Once again, those folks in Los Angeles did a wonderful job of assembling performers and audiences for a great weekend.

Many of our actor friends who attend Showcases here in Seattle were there. Parley Baer and Herb Ellis were working all the time. Alan Young was there, and did a really good job on the recreation of his Golden Age radio program. We still hope to get him to a REPS meeting soon. The recreations were fascinating and well done, and there was a variety of panel presentations.

Special commendation to the in-house recreation group Thirty Minutes to Curtain. Their recreation of *The Aldrich Family* was special. Though they joked about their ages, Stuart Lubin (Homer) and Bobb Lynes (Henry) were hard to tell from the originals. Tyler McVey and Esther Geddes even joined in on this show.

Mike Sprague was responsible for the Sunday program, billed as a Family Reunion and the featured show was *One Man's Family*. 10 actors who had worked on OMF participated in a light hearted skit fashioned after *This Is Your Life*. News and lives were updated since the show went off the air in 1959. The question and answer part of the Reunion was fun too.

SPERDVAC has been especially kind to REPS over the years, and Brooks and Sprague both encourage many members to put next November on their calendar to attend this large, first class convention.

## LAUGHS, LUCK...and LUCY

This book is for Lucy fans everywhere. Jess Oppenheimer's memoir is a humorous, personal account of the broadcasting industry's development from the days of crystal sets to the golden age of television. The book, published in November by Syracuse University Press, was completed by Jess's son, Gregg after his father's death in 1988.

Subtitled "How I Came to Create the Most Popular Sitcom of All Time", the book is 280 pages and includes an audio CD of radio comedy by Lucille Ball, Gale Gordon, Bea Benaderet, Frank Nelson, Hans Conreid and others.

At bookstores for \$29.95...on the internet at [www.bookzone.com](http://www.bookzone.com) and ...1-800-946-9846.



# PANTOMIME : : : : : By J. H. Striebel

WHAT RADIO DID  
FOR THE  
JONES FAMILY



Copyright, 1924, A.S.

## "RADIO EAR" THE LATEST DISEASE DISCOVERED BY DOCTORS NAVY MAN DON'T FEAR RAVAGES

"Radio Ear," the latest disease discovered by a member of the medical profession, is said by radio experts to be a disease not to be feared. It was recently announced by a physician that wearing receivers would cause the ears to grow closely to the head, and another doctor then declared that the listening to noises caused ear trouble which finally affected the hearing.

But radio operators refute the latter claim, saying that their hearing is more acute than the average person's, and as for the ears growing more closely to the skull, who wants lop ears, anyway?

Navy operators, who have been listening to radio since 1907, have yet to report any defects in their ears, and there has not been a case put on record where a man's hat

slid over his ears as a result of keeping the receivers clamped to his head.

Large derby hats may have the habit of slipping down over the eyes, but navy men don't wear derbys, and have little or no fear of getting "Radio Ear."

Not many years ago a doctor discovered a dangerous foot disease which was brought about by keeping one's foot on the throttle of a motor car. This discovery, however, did not keep the people from driving automobiles, for there are now more people who drive cars than those who don't.

It seems likely, therefore, that "Radio Ear" will not keep the populace from enjoying the concerts in the air, and might induce parents to clamp receivers on offspring afflicted with widespread ears.

From the  
April 1, 1924  
edition of the  
"Bremerton Daily  
News Searchlight"

Courtesy Jack Taylor





**BUSY MAN...**

One of the busiest men in radio is Harlow Wilcox, NBC announcer. Currently, he is dividing his time between assignments on Fibber McGee and Molly, Maxwell House Coffee Time and Amos 'n' Andy. Which isn't a bad record for a man who was told he'd better not try to break into radio back in 1929.

Wilcox was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1900. He grew up in an atmosphere of showmanship, for his father was in the band of the first Ringling Brothers show and his sister was a vaudeville and concert violinist. Harlow himself studied voice and, while still in his 'teens, left home for the Chautauqua platform and stage. In a short while, he decided that being a salesman would be more remunerative and gave up the stage.

In 1929, he decided that radio had some attractions and succeeded in getting an audition on a small Chicago station. That was when he was advised to stick to selling; radio was not for him. But, reasoned Wilcox, if being a radio announcer isn't selling, what is? A month later he was on the air.

Jim and Marion Jordan were just getting a toehold in radio in Chicago then and Wilcox helped them cut some records. When the pair landed their own radio show, they asked for Wilcox as their announcer. The future triumphs of the trio are well known to all Fibber McGee and Molly fans. When the Jordans moved out to Hollywood in 1939, Wilcox went with them and, now, even when Fibber McGee and Molly leave the air for their annual summer vacations on their ranch, Wilcox carries on, announcing the sponsor's substitute show.

According to his co-workers, who should know, Wilcox's greatest assets as an announcer are his poise and his element of believability, qualities which have won him the announcing spot on so many of radio's outstanding programs. In private life, his friends know him as a quiet, reserved man who talks very little, unless he really has something to say.

Harlow Wilcox lives in Beverly Hills with his wife, the former Mari Bishop of Oak Park, Illinois. He finds little time these days for his favorite pastimes of horseback riding, yachting and polo. Between rehearsals and broadcasts, however, he manages to snatch the time for an occasional game of gin rummy. He's six feet tall, weighs 190 pounds and is considered one of the best dressed men in radio, which in an industry of well-dressed men is itself no mean record.

▲ Everyone remembers Harlow.

## ELECTION OFFERS NO SURPRISES

The December election for two Board members was peaceful and positive. Members cast their ballots at the meeting or by mail in advance.

Vice President Joy Jackson had completed the maximum of four years allowed by our bylaws. The nominating committee put forth the name of Sam Simone. Sam has been a definite contributor of time and energy on various REPS matters, including coordinating publicity and the convention committee. He was elected as the new Vice President.

Richard Haviland has served as the Treasurer for two years and was willing to serve two more years if desired. He was nominated and elected with much appreciation.

Joy will continue to meet with the Board in an advisory role.



## THE DOOR PRIZE GANG

There has never been a REPS meeting without door prizes, and that, like so many things, wouldn't be the case without willing volunteers.

Special thanks to all who contribute, and many have. Especially, we thank Don Allen and Bill Brooks who bring tapes just about every meeting.

Don bundles up tapes, pictures, old newspapers and makes the journey from Tacoma. His store there yields many treasures.

Bill has focused on having tapes that relate to the guest and/or topic of the meeting. If Gil Statton is the guest, Bill will have tapes featuring Gil, etc. etc.

And to Bob Herman, Andy Anderson and the rest of you...thanks for a warm and friendly tradition.

## YA WANNA BUY A DUCK?

Air Check has had no new requests/ But this space can be reactivated anytime if just one of you has something you are seeking (information, tapes, equipment, books) or you would like to find club members with similar interests etc.



## “WRITE FOR RADIO”

### A Look At Writer Larry Menkin

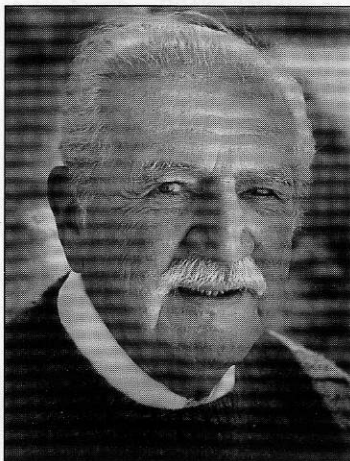
By Michael Menkin—REPS member

(Editor’s note. We invited Michael to do an article on his father who now lives in a skilled nursing facility in California. Larry would welcome visitors so any one who is interested can contact Michael at 206-454-2355. We have edited some of the article for space considerations.)

“Write for radio!” That’s the best advice my father, Larry Menkin, ever gave me. I’ve used it throughout my writing career in advertising and public relations. He was a pioneer in radio in the early thirties and in television in the late 40’s and early 50’s. He retired in 1991 because of Alzheimer’s disease.

Larry Menkin’s career actually started in the late 1920’s when he acted in many roles n off-Broadway theatre in New York. His talent for writing quickly took him into radio where he worked on many of the popular shows of that era.

#### From Cincinnati to The Shadow



▲ Larry Menkin in 1990

At WLW in Cincinnati in 1933, he wrote *Ken-Rad Unsolved Mysteries*. Some of the rest of his lengthy credits ranged from *True Detective Mystery Magazine* to *The Shadow*. But, listeners would also have heard his writing on: *The Cisco Kid*, *Mister District Attorney*, *Gangbusters*, *Molle Mystery Theatre*, *Kate Smith Hour Sketches*, *We The People*, *Guy Lombardo Transcribed Series* and more.

During the War, Larry Menkin served in the Office of War Information, writing *Weapons for Victory*, *Labor for Victory* and *Stories for Industry*, among others.

#### Menkin As An Actor

My father could act as well as he could write. His radio acting credits cover: *Gangbusters*, *Famous Jury Trials*, *Mr. District Attorney*, *True Detective Mysteries*, *Columbia Workshop* and many others.

#### His Writing Style

As a writer, he was phenomenal, writing a half hour television script overnight and it would come out with perfect timing. It took some writers a month to do the same type of script. He had natural timing. He knew what the radio audience liked and he know how to write to them.



▲ Menkin (second from right) and friends—1938

#### Young And In A Radio World

As a youngster, I was actually raised in radio and television studios. My father took me to work with him as often as he could. I remember drinking coffee for the first time at age 5 in a radio station in Pennsylvania.

I often saw them making sound effects for radio. Small doors that imitated real ones; wood blocks on strings to simulate the sound of horse hooves. I remember being told to get out of the way when the sound effects man fired blanks from a gun.

#### Menkin In Television-77 Sunset Strip +++

In 1949 my father left radio and went into television, becoming Assistant Program Director for DuMont Television Network. He created and produced *Hands of Mystery*, *Magic Cottage*, *MonoDrama Theatre* and the series for which he is most famous *Captain Video*.

Winner of many awards, my father moved the family to California in 1956 where he was program director for Ziv Television. He wrote many of the popular TV shows of the late 50’s and early 60’s, such as

(Concluded on page 15)





## DECEMBER MEETING ONE MAN'S FAMILY *(from page 10)*

The audience got background on all seven of the major characters, ranging from Mother and Father Barbour, through each of their five children Paul, Hazel, Clifford, Claudia and Jack.

Before each segment of Chapter 12, Mike stopped the tape and told us something about the characters and the story line that led up to this point. Then we listened, pausing for more background and for questions.

### **Father Barbour's Plastic Wreath**

This episode had a humorous thread running throughout. It was a nice vehicle to allow the listeners to see glimpses of each of the characters as they interacted with Father Barbour and with one another.

### **Paul Proposes**

Real OMF fans may remember that this is the Chapter where Paul, just about everyone's favorite, proposes to Christine Abbott. Will he find happiness at last? Mike didn't tell us the end of the story, suggesting that we'd want to obtain tapes and hear it for ourselves.

### **Carlton E. Morse**

For 27 years Morse wrote and directed this classic show. He also did the highly popular I Love A Mystery, along with Adventures By Morse and The Woman In My House.

Clearly Morse's values were woven throughout OMF. He often stated that he cast each character with an actor who was like the character...and at the same time wrote a character to fit actors that he knew well. Sprague wondered out loud, "Could Anthony Smythe (Father Barbour) have really been like that? And was Bart Yarborough (Clifford) such a mixed up person?"

### **Premiums, Logs and more**

We learned about the use of premiums on OMF and how Morse designed the story line to lead up to the offers that would follow. Mike also described and showed us the new One Man's Family log, just being offered for sale to members of the One Man's Family Family.

## **The Sales Pitch! One Man's Family Family**

In closing, the co-founder of the special interest club — One Man's Family — invited everyone to join the club for \$12 per year by writing OMF, PO Box 723, Bothell, WA 98041

This was a fun look at one of radio's longest running, most respected and highly honored programs.

► 9/18/43

## **RADIO WRITER MENKIN**

*(from page 14)*

77 Sunset Strip, Rawhide, Zane Grey Theatre, Line Up, Wanted Dead or Alive, Highway Patrol, Death Valley Days etc.

My father taught until he was 79 and retired because of Alzheimer's. His last acting stints in movies were in Tucker and Peggy Sue Got Married. In the late 80's he and my mother did a commercial for a health maintenance organization in the Bay Area. They got the parts because they could still swing dance.

### **Want To See Larry Menkin's Scrapbooks?**

Though most of my father's material was donated to the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, I have his scrap books, press clippings and some scripts. If you're interested in these, I can be reached at 206-454-2355, or you can write Michael Menkin, 9925 NE First St., Bellevue, WA 98004.

(Editor's note. Thanks to Michael for this look at someone who played an intriguing role in the history of this hobby of ours. Sounds like Larry Menkin is quite a guy.)

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**"I'M GOING TO SECORD PRINTING FOR ALL OF MY PRINTING NEEDS."** That's what we hope all REPS members and friends will do to get quality printing work done. And thanks Jay, for your kindness on doing Air Check at a greatly reduced price. Thanks Brenda for all the creative touches on the layout. Jay Secord can be contacted at 9215 151st Ave. NE, Redmond, WA 98052, (206)883-2182. Let him know your appreciation with a call, a note **OR** a printing job.

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### **PUGET SOUND RADIO LISTINGS**

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Both Old Time Radio and current materials (designated C) are on the air. To the best of our knowledge, this is when and where. **THE ONLY WAY WE WILL BE ABLE TO CORRECT THIS LIST IS WHEN WE RECEIVE NOTES AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS.** If you know of others, or if any of these need correction, please let Air Check know. One such change is Jim Dolan's Radio Entertainment Network, now each weekday instead of Sunday. Please let the stations and sponsors (if any) know of your appreciation.

Mystery Playhouse (C)	KIRO	710AM	9:06-10PM	Saturday
Mystery Playhouse (C)	KIRO	710AM	9:06-10PM	Sunday
When Radio Was	KIRO	710AM	10PM-1AM	Saturday
When Radio Was	KIRO	710AM	10PM-12AM	Sunday
When Radio Was	KLKI	1340AM	6PM-7PM	M-F (Anacortes)
OTR	CFMS	98.5 FM	9-10PM	Saturday (Victoria)
OTR Siskind/Herman	ERRS	SAP FM	8-9PM	Saturday
OTR Dolan	ERRS	SAP FM	11PM-2AM	M-F (note change)
Odyssey/children (C)	KCIS	630AM	7:30AM	Saturday
Odyssey/children (C)	KCIS	630AM	7:30PM	M-F
Ruby In'galac. Gumshoe (C)	KUOW	94.9 FM	10:30PM	M-F
Unshackled (C)	KCIS	630AM	9:30PM	Sunday
OTR	CFMI	101.1 FM	10PM	Sunday (Vancouver)
Radio Replays	CKNW	980AM	11:10 PM	M-F (Vancouver)