

# AIR CHECK

NEWSLETTER OF THE RADIO ENTHUSIASTS OF PUGET SOUND (REPS)

Volume 15, Number 4

April 2005

## THE ADVENTURES OF FRANK RACE: AN OVERVIEW

by Jim Widner

During the late forties and into the early fifties, dramas depicting the adventurous lives of spies were in abundance on the radio. The rise of the Cold War brought listener interest in adventure and intrigue in the world of spies. One such series was the syndicated *Adventures of Frank Race*. The series was a production of Bruce Ells from Hollywood who also produced a number of other radio series as well as purchasing the catalog of the former Radio Transcription Company Ltd (Transco).

Frank Race is described in the opening sequence by announcer **Art Gilmore** with these words "Before the war, Frank Race worked as an attorney, but he traded his law books for the cloak and dagger of the OSS. When the war was over, his former life was over too ... adventure became his business!" Race and his assistant, Mark Donovan, are constantly away from their New York offices off to exotic locales hunting down evil-doers in places such as Berlin, Tunis, and Monte Carlo. For the most part Race's life is one of intrigue in his hunt for jewel thieves and illegal importers for his clients who, like Johnny Dollar, are mostly insurance companies but with an international flair!

The series ran in syndication, airing beginning in 1949 through 1950 on the East Coast. It later aired on the West Coast from 1951 through

1952. A total of 43 episodes were produced. The first Frank Race was portrayed by the elegant **Tom Collins**, brother to George Sanders, with his smooth cultured voice. Collins was in many West Coast radio productions including a stint as *Chandu, the Magician* and Reggie in Carlton Morse's *I Love Adventure*. He also appeared in many of the Dr. Kildare films from 1940.



This is Art Gilmore in the 1940's during one of his many announcing jobs. Art will be performing a familiar role at Showcase 2005 — announcer for *The Adventures of Frank Race*.

**Paul Dubov** portrayed Race for the last 22 episodes. Dubov's portrayal of Frank Race was less cosmopolitan and more tough-guy detective. A West Coast character actor and announcer (*The Swing Shift*), he often was heard in *Escape* and *Gunsmoke* as well as the *Dr. Kildare* radio series. He had a large film bibliography mostly in minor roles. His best film was probably as Andre in

*Irma la Douce*.

**Tony Barrett** portrayed Mark Donovan, Race's sidekick throughout the whole series. Donovan seemed to appear whenever his partner was in trouble and to add a bit of humor to Race's seriousness. Barrett, whose acting career took him from New York radio to the West Coast by 1945, is all over the dial. Often heard in many West Coast programs such as *Lux Radio Theatre*, *The Whistler*, *Let George Do It*, *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar* and many more.

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Production of the series was handled by **Joel Murcott** and **Buckley Angel** both of whom wrote and directed. Murcott wrote for many other radio series including *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and the Mercedes McCambridge vehicle, *Defense Attorney*. Music on the program was deftly created and handled by **Ivan Ditmars** on the organ. His work can also be heard on the West Coast version of *Escape*, *Dr. Christian* and many other radio programs. He later provided some of the music for television's *Star Trek*.

*The Adventures of Frank Race* found many great West Coast radio character actors making



Look for Dick Beals in the role of Hassim in *The Adventures of Frank Race* at Showcase 2005.

appearances. **Wilms Herbert**, **Jack Kruschen**, **Harry Lang** and **Lillian Buyeff**.

The early Frank Race adventures were more interesting with intriguing titles such as "Istanbul Adventure" and "The Shanghai Incident." Toward the end of the run the stories became less exotic with titles such as "The Night Crawler" and "The Loveable Character." The series provides some great entertainment; and though it only lasted a year, the stories provide some good listening fun with its many detective-genre clichés.

"Pharoh's Staff" is the Showcase episode.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE STARS WE COULDN'T INVITE THIS YEAR

Dear honored, honorary member:

Each year, there is a certain amount of agony as we spend months deciding on program and actors. Every single one of our honorary members should be here and allowing us to honor you.

You are so good. Alas, our size and location always cause us to drastically limit the invitations.

We thank you for your continued and kind understanding as we try to find ways to creatively get more of you here. There are some plans afoot that may well allow this to happen.

You are special to us and we really hope that you know this.

For the membership, Mike Sprague, Showcase Chairman

## HELP WANTED or UNCLE REPS NEEDS YOU!

Is there a place you might want to serve?

**Registration helpers:** staff the table. Pleasant and willing. It works well for unregistered family members or friends to do this. But volunteers can be registered too. 3 hours or so would help.

**Concierge Corps:** be readily available to the Stars during the Showcase, in person or by phone. Just being a friendly assistant to one or more of the OTR actors. A great chance to get to know them.

**Packet preparers:** When we get close to the Showcase, several folks will be needed to assemble the packets, with the program, name badges and other items.

**Transportation:** Good drivers, with nice clean cars and pleasant personalities. Help get the actors from the airport to the hotel and back again.

**Engineering assistant:** Bob Cardenas is putting together the technical side of Showcase. If you have talent and willingness, please step forward.

Volunteer or have a question? Contact Mike Sprague at 480-474-4480



# 3 ½ REASONS TO BE AT SHOWCASE

June 24-25 at Seattle Center

Okay, there may be 409, but here are some of the biggies.

## 1. The Good Ol' Days

This title fits Showcase because we're both honoring the actors and the great stuff on radio in the Golden Age AND we'll be enjoying REPS the way REPS used to be.

The atmosphere will be cordial and relaxed. We'll be honoring the actors who made radio what it was and we'll be enjoying the company of one another.

By the way, the dinner will have an entirely different atmosphere this year. Quite casual and intimate — and good!

## 2. Superb Actors

They used their voices to make a living "back then", and their talent is just as obvious today. It is so much more than reading a script. Anyone can do that. Not many can do what these pros do.

You can approach any of these Golden Age actors and find time for a few moments of personal visiting.

**Gil Stratton, Jr., Hal Stone, Rosemary Rice, Anne Whitfield Phillips, Bill Idelson, Bob Hastings, Art Gilmore, Ray Erlenborn, Herb Ellis, Dick Beals, Alice Backes.**

Don't miss talented professionals like **Jim French, Frank Buxton** and **Larry Albert** either.

## 3. Great Programming

We'll all be enjoying re-creations of:

*Vic and Sade* (with Bill Idelson, Rush, who doesn't go to conventions)

*The Adventures of Frank Race* (with original announcer Art Gilmore leading the way)

*Archie Andrews* (Yep! Three of the stars ... Bob Hastings, Hal Stone and Rosemary Rice in a very funny episode)

*X Minus One* (A very different sci-fi comedy)

*Romance* (A swashbuckling challenge to the sound effects talent)

And, there will be a brand new *Adventures of Harry Nile*, featuring Larry Albert and some of the OTR guests.

Other segments of OTR shows await attendees, along with a new Showcase piece. We'll be having an **Improv Radio** show headed by Frank Buxton and an Improv group he leads.

Very interesting and fast moving interviews and panels are coming together, along with some first class musical entertainment.

## 3 ½ You

Maybe it sounds a little corny, but *it won't be the same without you*. Come and make a difference. Every single person does, and you'll have such a good time.

For registration and other information, visit [www.reponline.org](http://www.reponline.org) or email Mike Sprague [hrrmikes@aol.com](mailto:hrrmikes@aol.com).

## Electronic Transcription Disks

Last month we reported that 284 ET disks were donated to REPS. These are the original recordings made at the broadcasting studio either for syndication or when the program was broadcast live or for later release. Many of them are uncirculated 1946 to 1952 programs.

Archie Andrews episodes are listed below. A brief listing of what we have includes *Phil Harris-Alice Faye*, *Skippy Hollywood Theatre*, *Jimmy Durante*, *Blackstone the Magic Detective*, *High Adventure*, and others. There is a *Vic and Sade* but alas it is one already available.

Our friends at **First Generation Archives** are putting them on CDs for us, using the proper needles and turntables. What I have heard so far is excellent,

These programs, dates, and content will be released into our library in CD format as part of our Showcase Convention in June. We may even frame a couple of the original ETs for the silent auction.

Frank Rosin

## Bylaw Changes

- **Notice to members of the intent to change and amend the Bylaws.** In order to make the REPS Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation in the State of Washington conform to each other some small changes must be made in both.
- The Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation are posted on the web site ([www.reponline.org](http://www.reponline.org)).
- Copies will be available at the May and June 2005 regular membership meetings.
- Both will be discussed and explained at the meeting in May and voted on at the meeting in June.

## Archie Andrews Episodes

5-11-1946	Poison Candy	11-11-1950	Mouse in the House
5-18-1946	Hip Talk	11-18-1950*	Charleston Contest
6-1-1946	Elephant	3-10-1951	Mailing the Income Tax
6-8-1946	A Story in Real Life	3-17-1951*	Too Much Noise
7-6-1946	Masked Marvel	5-3-1951	Jalopy Won't Start
7-13-1946	Stranded on Deserted Island		
7-20-1946	Hammock		
7-27-1946	Ordering things for a Party		
8-3-1946	No Rest for Fred Andrews		
3-4-1950	Archie is no where to be Found		

\* These are the two episodes that will be on a CD for everyone attending the Showcase.



## Archie Andrews

by Frank Rosin

Among the ETs that were donated to REPS we were fortunate to have 15 complete network *Archie Andrews* episodes. Most of them are from 1946 with a few from 1950 and 1951. The sound quality is excellent. Each program runs 29:30 and has NBC chimes at the end

Although during the time frame we have recordings for the program was unsponsored, on occasion there is a promo for another NBC program. In one case there is a promo for Phil Harris-Alice Faye. We have that particular program on one of the other ET disks.

*Archie Andrews* is definitely a program marketed for the middle school youth. The jokes are clean and fun. "There goes a man who hasn't taken a haircut in over 20 years". "Why is that?" they ask. "It's because he is bald." Chuckle, chuckle, chuckle and tittering from the youthful studio audience.

A recurring theme places many of the episodes we have at night. Someone needs to do something or go some place, which in turn wakes the whole household or prevents them from going to bed. Eventually the entire neighborhood is in the act with everyone yelling and chatting at once. This must have been a fun program to be a part of when it was originally made.

In 1946 Hal Stone plays Jughead in a very low-key soft manner. It is interesting to see that when we jump to 1950 he sounds entirely different, more like the nasal Jackie Kelk, Homer Brown from the *Aldrich*

*Family*. When going through the programs we had to listen to the credits at the end to know that they had not switched actors.

**Hal Stone, Bob Hastings, and Rosemary Rice**, three of the original cast members will be at our Showcase in June. This is a rare treat to get the three of them here for this occasion.

The *Archie Andrews* programs we have will be in the REPS Library and we will have a number of copies of all the episodes on CDs at Showcase. First Generation Archives is putting two of the fifteen episodes on a CD for everyone who attends the Showcase as part of the Showcase package.

Bob Hastings as Archie sings a very nice good night love song to Veronica in the 'Jalopy Won't Start' episode. He sang well and it was a good song but it woke the Lodge household and he was told to "go home immediately." He tried but the car would not start. Of course the entire

Lodge house woke up, then the Andrews and Brown houses got up to help get the car started. Bob Hastings and Hal Stone could make so much noise in the middle of the night. The cacophony of sound is enhanced by the laughter of the studio audience until Fred Andrews finally yells at them to all be quiet. So goes a typical episode.

We will be listening to a few samples of these episodes at the May 7, Saturday meeting.



Photo courtesy of Rosemary Rice.

## The REPS Cassette, CD, and DVD Library

You will find that a number of new cassettes have been added to the library. We don't have room in this issue to print them but you will find them on the REPS website: ([www.repsonline.org](http://www.repsonline.org)).

The main thrust however is to make as many CDs available as fast as possible. We have at least 750 CDs either already posted on the web site or available or at least that many in the works to be posted soon.

Entire series are being done if possible. The entire run of available *Escape* episodes is in the CD library. Of course we do not have the few 'missing' episodes. We want our CDs to have the best available sound. *Escape* has a few elusive programs that are "listenable" even though the sound quality is not top-notch. We have made an exception and decided to include these programs.

About 165 episodes of *Our Miss Brooks* have been completed for the library. An original script used for one of the early episodes is included on one CD in PDF format. You can print out the script on your computer and read along as you listen to the program.

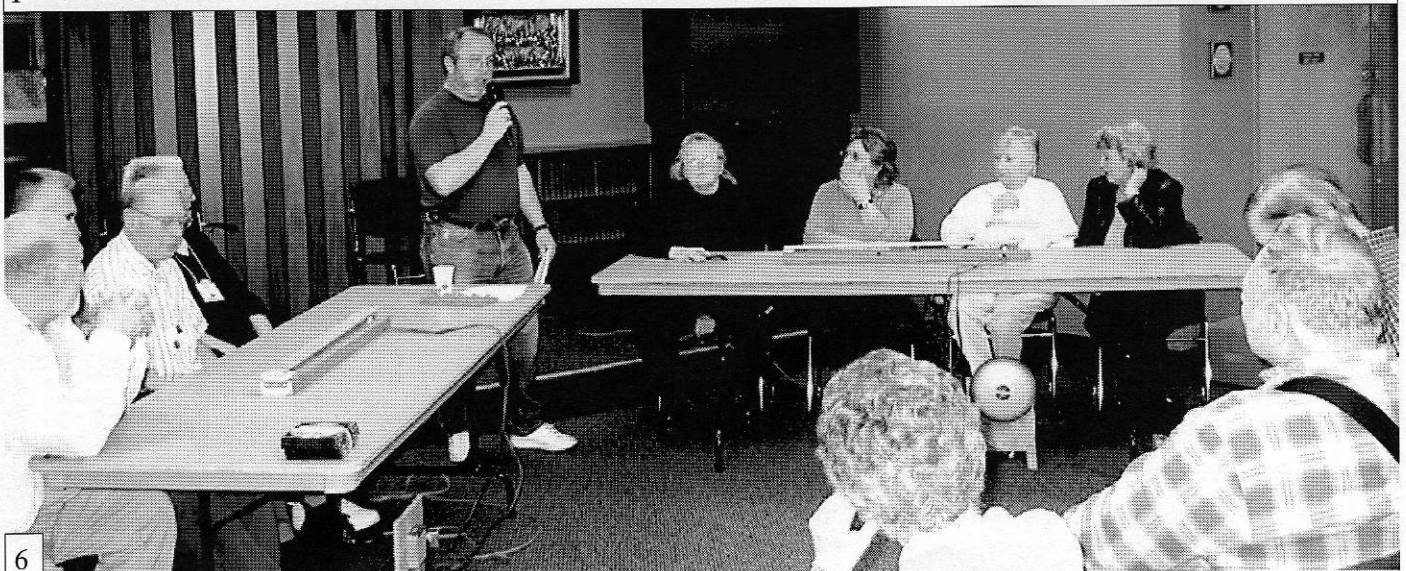
There are *Rogue's Gallery*, *Richard Diamond*, *Judy Canova*, *Sam Spade*, *Red Ryder*, *Now Hear This*, *Phil Harris - Alice Fay*, *Cinnamon Bear*, *Rocky Jordan*, *Gunsmoke*, *High Adventure*, *Inspector Thorne*, and others being added every day.

Because of the time it is taking to get all these CDs in use, the DVD part of the library is not ready. It is not being ignored but we want the majority of the CDs done first. We do have several radio related movies about ready to go. *Here Come the Nelsons*, *Our Miss Brooks*, most of the Jack Benny and Fred Allen movies. We have all the known *Amos 'n' Andy* TV episodes and many of the *Ozzie and Harriet* TV episodes.

Frank Rosin

Larry Albert moderated the April Meeting: **Quiz Program**. Questions abounded about who was who and who did what on radio. There were two panels, men against women, ringing a bell or buzzer to see who would get to answer the question. From time to time there was a clip of theme music played. This was a question for someone in the audience; the first to answer got a CD of that particular program.

At half time the score indicated the men ahead by 5 points. The scorekeeper and judge, John Jensen, announced at the end that the women had come from behind and the score was a tie. The **Quiz Program** will need to be continued to a future meeting in the next year for us to see who can prevail, the men or the women.





## Honorary Member William "Billy" Idelson

The memorable career of this talented REPS honorary member spans decades. William "Billy" Idelson, best known to radio fans as Rush from the series *Vic and Sade* had a noble television legacy. As an actor in the early days of television William appeared in the TV version of the well-known radio series *One Man's Family* in 1949. He played the character of Cliff. He had occasional roles on *Dragnet*, *Jack Benny*, *My Three Sons*, *Perry Mason* and *Leave It to Beaver*.

At the onset of the 1960s William established a very successful career in Television writing. For the next 20 years William would write for many of the classic TV programs of the time; such favorites as *Twilight Zone*, *Get Smart*, *Love American Style*, *The Odd Couple*, *Bob Newhart*, *MASH*, *Happy Days* and many more. William was recognized with many honors for his TV writing achievements.

Many years prior, back in 1931, as a young lad of 10, William started his radio career on station WGN Chicago. WGN, the Tribune Station, had an ambitious idea to develop a radio series out of the newspaper cartoon strip *Gasoline Alley*. "Uncle Walt and Skeezix" as it was announced premiered with a cast, which the production department of WGN had carefully chosen. Hundreds of radio artists had been interviewed and given tryouts for the important roles. William was chosen to do one of the most popular child characters in the cartoon strips -- the role of Skeezix. So popular was the radio series and so identified with the role was William that at school he was nicknamed "Skeezix" by his classmates. Shortly thereafter Clarence L. Menser, production chief at NBC Chicago, wanted a family show for the 8:30 morning time slot. He asked Staff writer Paul Rhymer to develop the project.



Paul, with his amusing wit, created a "family" show featuring a childless couple. According to Mr. Idelson, within 10 days the childless couple was running out of things to gab about and so Paul Rhymer thought to introduce a child into the series as an additional character. Paul wanted a 10-year-old child but was faced with the dilemma of having a 10-year-old child born to a childless couple. Therefore, William came into the cast as the adopted son Rush, the child of Sade's sister.

*Vic and Sade* was simple and true to life and went over so well that network sponsors began bidding for it. The way the public accepted the show convinced NBC it should be given a better time, a nighttime spot on the net. When it was taken off the evening schedule NBC wanted to schedule *Vic and Sade* at 11 am. However, William "Billy" Idelson was so important to the show that the sketch was aired earlier in the morning so that Billy could continue as a freshman at Oak Park High School and also appear in the series. By 1937 and at age 17 Billy was a veteran in the radio business. Before Billy went into the service during WWII he had

parts on six continuous radio series out of Chicago. After the war Billy relocated to Hollywood and landed a role in *One Man's Family*.

William has always cherished his radio days and specifically his association with *Vic and Sade*. William had hoped to publish a book on *Vic and Sade* spending countless hours reading Paul Rhymer's scripts and correspondence. He also attended the meetings of an early group of *Vic and Sade* fans who would meet and listen to the original shows. William is a great admirer of Paul Rhymer's *Vic and Sade* scripts. "He had a great sense of fun," Idelson says of Rhymer.



**REPS**

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**Meetings**

**Board meeting**  
May 6, 2005: 7 pm  
Mercer Room, Comfort Suites (near the Space Needle)

**Membership meeting**  
May 7, 2005: 2 pm  
Norse Home  
Bring your favorite brief program clip to play and talk about.

**Showcase**  
June 24 & 25: 10 am-9 pm  
Northwest Rooms, Seattle Center  
Theme: *The Good Ol' Days*

**REPS Officers and Committee Chairs for 2005**

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Dick Beals  
1741 David Drive  
Escondido CA 92026-1616

**Vice President**  
Michael Comstock  
31003 49th Place SW  
Federal Way WA 98023-2004

**Treasurer**  
Frank Rosin  
9811 NE 139th Street  
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Kirkland WA 98034-2401

**At Large**  
John Jensen  
1069 SW 326th Street  
Federal Way WA 98023-4908

**At Large**  
Larry Albert  
8727 Jones Ave NW  
Seattle WA 98177-3750

**At Large & Showcase**  
Mike Sprague  
6762 S Four Peaks Way  
Chandler AZ 85249

**Membership**  
Bryan Haigood  
17334 Densmore Avenue N  
Shoreline WA 98133

**Editor**  
Marilyn Wilt  
1907 NE 124th  
Seattle WA 98125

**Librarians**  
Andy & Vi Anderson  
17254 Lake Desire Drive N  
Renton WA 98058



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