

AIR CHECK

NEWSLETTER OF THE RADIO ENTHUSIASTS OF PUGET SOUND (REPS)

Was David Harding Living Ahead of His Time?

by Jim Cox

While one was observed that, at its start, this show's methodology was "slightly above the juvenile," it apparently made little difference to the millions of faithful of whatever age who found *David Harding, Counterspy* an absorbing spy thriller. Compelled to "tune in next time" in the enchanting style that pervaded radio's aura, the mystery with espionage themes was an immediate hit. With only a few brief interruptions, it remained on the air for more than 15 years. The series extended from an inception in early 1942—shortly after America's entrance into the Second World War—to the end of 1957, during the fading epoch of network radio as the medium lost its grip as a primary source for most people's entertainment and information. In between those years *Counterspy*, as it was tagged by fans, offered excitement and adventure that fascinated listeners of widely diverse ages.

The show's distinctive opening was reminiscent of another radio feature that appeared at about the same time on one of a trio of national chains that transmitted it.

First Voice (on filter, over clicking telegraph keys): Mutual to Y-O-U...Sending...Are you ready?

Second Voice (on filter): Y-O-U to Mutual...Go ahead.

The opening of that late-afternoon youth-oriented serial, *Chick Carter, Boy Detective* (1943-45), tendered an introduction that was similar to the nighttime espionage thriller *David Harding, Counterspy*. Both were MBS narratives at different times (the latter aired on ABC and NBC earlier) and both proffered a comparable rhythm in their commencements. *Counterspy* launched like this:

Washington...calling David Harding, counterspy...
Washington...calling David Harding, counterspy.

Following an unleashing of explosive teletype commotion, the actor playing the key figure replied:

Harding, counterspy...calling Washington.

Theme up full.

At its start the tale centered on subversives who were committed to bringing down the American government. Specifically, the focus was upon preventing evildoers within the German Gestapo, the Italian Zobra and the Japanese Black Dragon from carrying out sinister plots that would cause harm to Americans and interrupt the freedoms they enjoy. Bringing that forward to the contemporary epoch, it all sounds familiar to anyone contemplating the anti-terrorist activities in which our government is engaged today. Was David Harding's



Don MacLaughlin as David Harding

Larry Albert Quiz Program. 2-4 pm, March 6, 2010
Norse Home, Seattle WA

Showcase 2010 -- June 25, 26, 27, 2010
More on Pages 9, 10

wordsmith visualizing the modern dilemma six decades before it occurred?

A fabled mythological detail that relied on highly classified intelligence, the counterspies were initially commissioned to halt anti-American activity during the Second World War. Their counterparts today would include the *CIA*, *Homeland Security Department* and other branches so charged with ferreting out enemy plans and thwarting them before they can be implemented. Once the war was over, the radio feature adapted to the times by diverting some of its attention to purely bad guys of sundry sorts in the same vein as *The FBI in Peace and War* and *This Is Your FBI*, competing aural programs. There seemed to be no loss of fictional ideas that could be turned into incredibly fascinating tales for all three shows to be sure, invariably pulling the masses back for more.

Harding, in the meantime, who was the nation's chief counterspy, and his partner, agent Harry Peters—most often referred to by surname only—went after the big game in sustaining our nation's safety. The pair and whatever backup they required ingeniously unraveled the masterful plotting of a given prey, frustrating the adversary while preserving the American way of life for another day. According to one critic, they were faithful to their commission, projecting themselves as responsible “by-the-book, humorless, heavy-footed, hard-nosed, unromantic federal agents.”

The titles of the individual installments applied to many of the Counterspy stories were inherently persuasive. Often they employed alliteration to capture the imagination of fans, beginning words with the same letter or repeating parallel sounds. Here are a few: “*The Case of the Carbon Consul*,” “*The Case of the Infiltrating Insurrectionist*,” “*The Case of the Pretty Plant*,” “*The Case of the Kleptomaniac Clues*,” “*The Case of the Insidious Impersonation*,” “*The Case of the Washington Woman Spy*,” “*The Case of the Bouncing Bank Robber*,” “*The Case of the Murdering Messenger*,” “*The Case of the Arrogant Arsonist*,” “*The Case of the Hot Car Killer*,” “*The Case of the Visiting Vultures*,” “*The Case of the High Class Hijacker*,” “*The Case of the Mile High Murders*,” “*The Case of the Soaring Saucer*,” “*The Case of the Postal Pirates*,” “*The Case of the Hoodlums Hero*,” “*The Case of the Magic Murder*” and many more following in that predilection.

The man giving voice to David Harding throughout the show's lengthy tenure was Don MacLaughlin, one of the busiest actors in broadcasting from the 1930s to the 1980s. His voice became instantly

recognized by daytime listeners routinely tuning in *The Road of Life* in the 1940s and 1950s. MacLaughlin was featured in the lead as the common-sense counselor-type physician, Dr. Jim Brent, who calmly faced many a domestic crisis in his private life. MacLaughlin also played the same part on a pithy CBS-TV incarnation of the show in 1954-55.

Born Nov. 24, 1906 at Webster, Iowa, MacLaughlin studied English and speech at the University of Iowa. He taught and coached briefly before departing academia in 1933 for tryouts on the New York stage. Not only did he appear in several Broadway productions (*Fifth Column*, *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden*, *The Respectful Prostitute*, *South Pacific*, *Virginia Reel*, et al.), he won a plethora of recurring roles in radio dramas. His repertoire included *Buck Private and His Girl*, *Chaplain Jim U.S.A.*, *Lora Lawton*, *The Romance of Helen Trent*, *The Story of Mary Marlin*, *Young Widder Brown* and *You're in the Army Now*. He was cast as the masculine lead in several. In 1983 he appeared as chief justice Earl Warren in the mini TV series *Kennedy*.

Without question, nonetheless, MacLaughlin's greatest coup was to win the role of Chris Hughes, the patriarch of daytime television's initial half-hour serial, *As the World Turns*, which debuted April 2, 1956. He remained as that pivotal figure until his death at Goshen, Conn. on May 28, 1986, three decades hence. It was one of the most durable runs among actors in broadcast drama.

As David Harding, MacLaughlin was assisted by sidekick Harry Peters, a personality embodied by veteran thespian Mandel Kramer. His nasal-voiced resonations were also quickly discerned by astute audio fans. The son of Russian immigrants, Kramer was born at Cleveland, Ohio



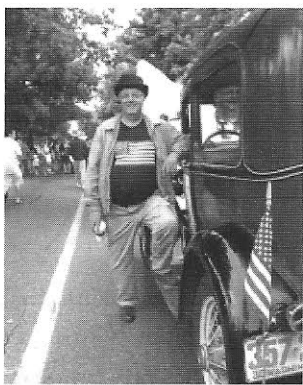
Go to Page 4

Don MacLaughlin & Helen Wagner, *As the World Turns*

INTERVIEWS WITH STUART AND BOB...

Paul Secord

For our February 6th, 2010 (twenty-ten) membership meeting we were introduced to Stuart Canin in a telephone interview conducted by our own Shaun Clancy.



Mr. Canin, a native of New York, was unknowingly the impetus for the classic comedy feud between Fred Allen and Jack Benny. On December 30th, 1936 he was selected to appear on Fred Allen's radio program "The Town Hall Varieties" to play his violin for which he would be paid \$75.00. Already an accomplished violinist at the age of 10 he played "The Bee" by Shubert. Fred Allen made an ad-lib comment during the show that he played better than that "39 year old who, when he played the violin it sounded like a female wild cat defending her young". With Allen's comment it was the beginning of the long running on-air feud between Allen and Benny. The feud actually was a myth because in reality the two were really very close friends.

Stuart appeared on The Jack Benny Program on March 7, 1937 as part of the continuation of the hoax. He did appear ~~periodically on their respective shows and on other radio shows for the next several years to perpetuate the feud.~~ Both Allen and Benny thought so highly of Stuart's talent they gave him \$1,000 to continue his musical education which he did. Stuart has a very long list of accomplishments. Over the years he became a world renowned violinist receiving numerous international and domestic awards and severing as professor of the violin at prestigious conservatories in the United States and abroad. Today he is the concertmaster of the Los Angeles Opera Company and has Placido Domingo as his boss. So they are both in good company.

One historical item he related in the interview was as a soldier near the end of World War II in Europe, with his talent as a musician, he was asked to form an orchestra to entertain our troops. In July, 1945 the Potsdam Conference, which brought President Truman, British Prime Minister Churchill and Soviet Premier Stalin together, was held to discuss post-war arrangements in Europe. Stuart Canin and the orchestra were asked and did perform for these dignitaries at the conference.

Mr. Canin was very a cordial and interesting guest. We all enjoyed the time he spent with us.

After a short timeout, Shaun continued the program interviewing Bob Shepard. Bob grew up in New York and as a youngster was infatuated with radio. He began his career at the ripe old age of 14 getting a job with the Buffalo Broadcasting Company in Buffalo, NY working in the control room. At

the age of 18 he was employed by the Young and Rubicon Advertising Agency and worked in the control room for NBC in New York City. He worked on the Fred Allen Show and he developed a great appreciation and respect for Fred. He said Fred was a very nice person and often gave monetary handouts to the less fortunate during his evening walks. And he worked on the Jack Benny Show when Benny came to New York. He said Jack Benny acted as the straight man and the others in his cast got the laughs. That is one thing that made him different than other comedians. Bob also worked on other shows namely Henry Aldrich, Kate Smith, George Burns and Gracie Allen, and Alan Young. Bob did say working with Eddie Cantor and Ed Wynn was a bit of a challenge. Bob finished his career working for NBC in the news department in New York. Bob now lives in Kirkland, Washington.

Bob is a great guy with many stories from his days in radio. How very fortunate we are to have him a member of REPS.

And a very big thank you to Shaun Clancy for the great job he did with the two interviews. Thank you Shaun

PS. Be sure to check out the REPS Website:
www.repsonline.org

Pontiac Bay Symphony Orchestra Presents

"The Pontiac Bay Old-Time Radio Show"

Come join Pontiac Bay for another 1940's style, old-time "radio" show on Sunday, March 14 at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle.

This wildly popular event draws huge audiences and features classic Big Band and popular music of the era performed by Pontiac Bay Symphony Orchestra, guest actors performing classic old-time radio skits, and a guest vocalist singing popular tunes of yesteryear!

Produced and directed by Sheila Espinoza (a REPS member), the show will also feature REPS members Larry Albert and Dave Selvig as guest actors, plus guest actor Susan Connors, and guest vocalist and local actor Cliff Watson. The orchestra's Guest Conductor is once again the entertaining and renowned professional musician and conductor, Lauren Anderson.

Sunday, March 14, 2010
6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Museum of History and Industry, 2700 24th Avenue East, Seattle 98112

Tickets: \$17 General, and \$15 Students, Seniors, and Children

Information and Advance Tickets: www.pontiacbay.org, www.brownpapertickets.com, and 206-364-0907



on March 12, 1916. He died at Westchester, N. Y. on Jan. 29, 1989. In between those dates he earned credits on more than two-dozen radio series. A few of the more prominent ones were *The Adventures of Dick Tracy*, *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, *Backstage Wife*, *The CBS Radio Mystery Theater*, *Dimension X*, *The Falcon*, *Gangbusters*, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, *Perry Mason*, *The Shadow*, *Stella Dallas* and *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar*.

Kramer, too, landed on TV, initially as the court bailiff on CBS's premiering *The Verdict Is Yours* weekday afternoons in 1957. More importantly, however, he is probably best recalled as the police chief of mythical Monticello, Bill Marceau, on CBS-TV's daytime serial with a dark theme, *The Edge of Night* (1959-79).

David Harding, *Counterspy* was created by one of the masters of similar fare, Phillips H. Lord (1902-75), who was also responsible for such important aural properties as *Gangbusters*, *Mr. District Attorney*, *Policewoman* and *Treasury Agent*—all shows exhibiting an analogous manner.

While there was no television sequel to the enduring *Counterspy* radio series, the popular espionage caper found its way onto the silver screen. In 1950 Columbia Pictures launched a B-movie flick based on Harding's seemingly authentic adventures. In *David Harding*, *Counterspy* actor Howard St. John appeared as Harding, yet was billed third in a cast of less-than-impressive names that included Willard Parker, Audrey Long, John Dehner, Jock Mahoney and John Pickard. A follow-up film, also issued in 1950, was titled *Counterspy Meets Scotland Yard*. Howard St. John received top billing that time, flanked by Ron Randell, another unknown, and an alluring femme fatale and future *Gunsmoke* leading lady on TV, Amanda Blake.

When the radio series ended on November 29, 1957, most of *Counterspy's* peer dramas (certainly so on MBS) had departed the airwaves. While *The FBI in Peace and War* and a few more primetime thrillers were still running, the halcyon days of the radio narrative had passed and legions of former radio listeners had already invested in small black-and-white television sets. The fact

that *Counterspy* was good enough to persist almost until the end of the aural medium's golden age testifies not only to its resilience against the growing odds but also to its talent (writing, acting, production) in continuing to attract vestiges of loyal fans who still enjoyed a good spoof in the theater of the mind. -30-



REPS Meeting, February 6, 2010



WWW.RADIOENT.COM

YOUR HOME FOR CLASSIC
AUDIO DRAMA



425-883-2182 Kirkland

Jay Secord
11332 120th Ave NE #119
Kirkland WA 98033
<http://secordprinting.com>

Friends of REPS, gone but in our hearts forever.

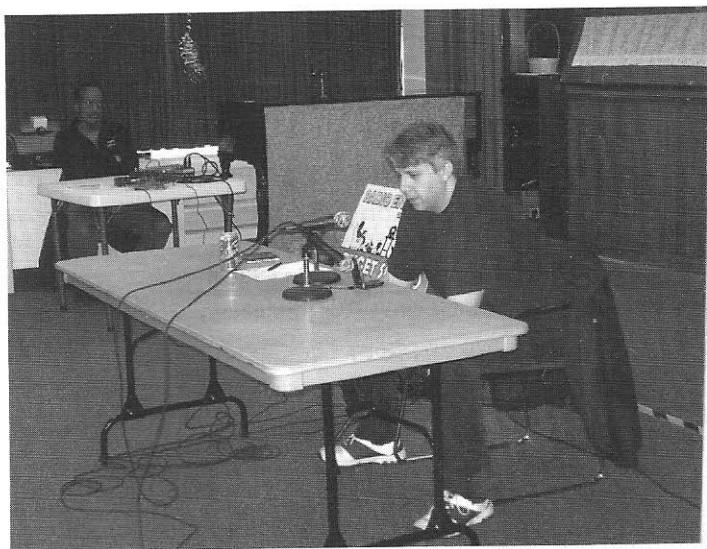
Paul Herlinger began his broadcasting career while still a teenager in New York City working at WINS and WNYC as an actor and announcer. He worked in the same capacity in early TV shows on WPIX and the CBS network. Herlinger's primary work has been in commercial and public television production as an executive producer/director. He has written and produced numerous public affairs programs and two environmental documentaries for PBS, one of which, *What Happens To Me?*, earned a national Emmy-Award nomination. He has done voice work for more than thirty PBS programs and won special recognition for his narration on the national Emmy award-winning program *The Unquiet Death of Eli Creekmore*. He has performed on *Imagination Theatre* and many other Jim French productions. Most recently he played one of the central characters, 'Whit', on the family radio drama series *Adventures in Odyssey*. Paul was the announcer/narrator of one of the best productions ever done at a REPS Showcase two years ago in 2008, *The Lost Letters of Robert E Lee*. It starred Janet Waldo and Larry Albert with Frank Buxton directing. It was written by Robert E Lee, Janet Waldo's husband.

John "Jack" B. Merrell, the husband of Rosemary Rice Merrell.

Mr. Merrell was born in New Jersey and grew up in the town of Fanwood. He enrolled as a pre-medical student at Princeton in 1942, and was called to active duty in July 1943. After training as a medical technician, Mr. Merrell was assigned to the 83rd Infantry Division in Europe. He served as a front-line medic in all of the major campaigns in which the 83rd participated. He was wounded twice and was awarded the Silver Battle Star.

Mr. Merrell joined the Prudential Insurance Company to participate in its executive training program. His work for Prudential focused mainly on the design and execution of marketing programs for its agency force.

In 1959, Mr. Merrell went to Mobil Oil Corp., to join its firm. For the following 29 years, he served in a variety of executive positions: general manager of Marketing Planning, treasurer of North American Division, assistant treasurer of Mobil Corp., G.M. Public Relations. He derived his greatest satisfactions from his nine years as president, heading up Mobil Oil Credit Corp. He retired from Mobil in 1988.



REPS Meeting, Feb 6, 2010

Showcase XVII 2010

June 25, 26, 27, 2010



Preparations are being made for Showcase 2010 at the *Coast Bellevue Hotel* in Bellevue, the site of previous Showcases.

We will be having most of our regular guest stars that we have had in the past.

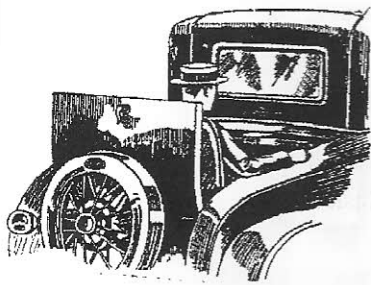
If there is someone that you would like to have invited, please contact one of the board members and we will see what we can do.

We are doing something new this year. Alaska Airlines which most of our guest stars use to fly to Seattle from California has changed schedules for departing flights. Most don't leave Seattle for California until the afternoon. That leaves all Sunday morning with nothing to do. A breakfast/brunch will be hosted by REPS at the hotel. No recreations, no program, just a breakfast/brunch and one more time to sit and visit with our guest stars before they go to the airport and home.

We have a new web site just for Showcase 2010 with the most recent up to date information.

www.repsshowcase.com

Let us know what you think!



Rumble Seat

Franz

Showcase XVII, 2010 is approaching rapidly. There is a discount if you sign up no later than the April 3, 2010 General Meeting. Alaska Airlines usually offers a convention discount. We will not have the code for that until next month should you fly on Alaska Air.

We are still contacting our Guest Stars. We will have Bob Hastings, Gloria McMillan, Ron Cocking, Shirley Mitchell, Dick Beals, Stuffy Singer, Rosemary Rice, and more. We are still talking to others to fill out our usual compliment. Health is becoming a problem with some and travel a limiting factor. It is possible that Janet Waldo will be able to be here. If she is able to have the time to come, she will be here.

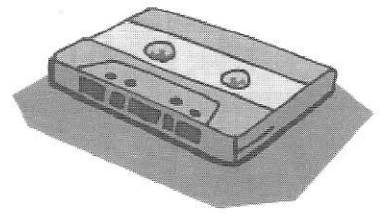
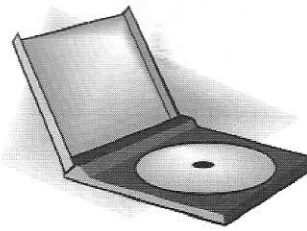
So far there are no *David Harding, Counterspy* episodes in the REPS CD Library. There are a few in the REPS Cassette Library however. The lead article this month mentions *The FBI in Peace and War*, and *This is Your FBI*. Those programs have a few episodes represented in both the CD and Cassette Libraries.

Cassettes are not obsolete, at least not yet, but every day that passes brings us closer. REPS has no intention of abandoning the Cassette Library but on the other hand has not been adding to it. As individual cassettes wear out or become damaged they have not been replaced. REPS does have a complete set of backup cassettes. If someone would like to be in charge of making the occasional replacement or even adding to the library, please let us know. It would probably not take much more than two or three hours a year.

We think having a library of vintage programs is part of the function of REPS. What is sad is, not many people are taking advantage of what our Libraries have to offer.

It costs REPS about \$1.00 for every CD that is added. That includes the Jewel Case, the Library CD and a backup CD that is kept in a different location.

Give it a try, check something out. You will not be displeased with the quality and it certainly is not very expensive.



How to use the Cassette, CD, DVD Libraries.

First of all each library is distinct. Catalog numbers in one library will have a completely different content than another. It is necessary to identify CD, Cassette, OMF, or DVD along with the catalog number. The OMF Library is CD only. At the present time there is no plan to have MP3's in the library.

REPS Members may check out 10 CDs or 10 Cassettes or 10 DVDs for \$6.00. It is also possible to check out a double order 20 CDs or 20 Cassettes for \$12.00. This covers the cost of mailing and maintaining the library. You may mix Cassettes, CDs, and DVDs in your order.

At some of the meetings a few *grab bags* of 10 Cassettes or CDs are available for checkout from the library. New members may be confused, these are for checkout and then returned to the library after use. The *grab bags* are not for sale.

Checkout forms are available at the meetings, by request in the mail, on the web site, and a new form included with each library checkout. The library may also be used with the internet using PayPal. Instructions for that use are on the web site.

We get the CDs for our library from several different sources. Most of them are remasters taken from the original ET disks or original tapes. We try to have the best available sound on the CDs. Any lesser quality is indicated on the catalog pages. On some popular series there are a few episodes that have never surfaced in quality sound. These poorer quality sounding episodes are included to fill out the series. The cassette library was acquired over many years in the past and often from lesser quality copies of copies. While most of the cassettes are fine, you will find a few that aren't. Check for a CD if a cassette comes up short of expectations.

Although the content of the CDs in our library is correct, a few of the CDs will show an incorrect title in a computer. In any case that CD is correct for content and catalog number. Even though there are not very many of those, it may take us awhile to find the ones that have errors.

Contact:

Darrell Anderson, REPS Librarian, 17232 174th SE,
Renton WA 98058.
425-226-7005, woods_inn@aol.com

Aircheck is created on a Mac G4 computer with *Adobe Indesign CS* and *Adobe Photoshop CS*. Most of the text is *Adobe Garamond Pro* at 12 points with the headlines at 12, 14, and 18 points bold. If you would like a copy on a CD, write to Frank Rosin, 9811 NE 139th St, Kirkland WA 98034.