

AIR CHECK

NEWSLETTER OF THE RADIO ENTHUSIASTS OF PUGET SOUND (REPS)

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THE SHADOW:

Perfect-O-Lite's Five Broadcasts

by Martin Grams

Latch the windows and tuck the youngsters in bed before 10 tonight for "The Shadow" is back on the air!

- January 5, 1932, issue of *The Cleveland Press*

The return of "The Shadow" recalls to the mike on a brand new commercial, one of the sturdiest characters evolved in years. We shall now have a feast of crime and horror and detective adventures -- and, of course, we'll like it.

- January 21, 1932, issue of *Radio Guide*

After *Detective Story Magazine Hour* and *Love Story Magazine Hour*, The Shadow finally received due credit when, from January to February 1932, he returned to the airwaves after a five-month absence from the blood 'n' thunder format with his own program titled *The Shadow*. While Frank Readick may have been supplying the narration and hosting chores with his eerie laugh on *Love Story*, he definitely reprised the role for this short-run series, giving the listeners (for five weeks, anyway) the opportunity to hear him twice a week. Readick's appearance was verified by numerous periodicals, including the January 12, 1932, issue of the *Cleveland Press*, which remarked: "Frank Readick, a mite of a fellow with an oily mustache, is the very mysterious Columbia 'Shadow' you'll hear tonight."

A description of how Frank Readick portrayed the shadowy character can be found in the "Radio Flashes" column in the January 2, 1932, issue of the *Winnipeg (Manitoba) Free Press*, reprinted next column.*

* The program was not carried over Canadian channels. It was reported that residents above the border could pick up the program over WBBM, Chicago; WOWO, Ft. Wayne; WCCO, Minneapolis/St. Paul; and KMOX, St. Louis.

Did you ever hear a voice in the dark that made the chills run up and down your spine? No? If you care to have such a thrill, we'll tell you how to get it. Turn out the lights and listen. "This is 'The Shadow!'" you will hear a deep, deep voice drawling, and then a low, guttural laugh as "The Shadow" announces the program which will hold you in suspense for a half-hour. From his dark place of seclusion, "The Shadow" will then follow the players in a mystifying drama, breaking in now and then to speak in his slow, deep voice to add to the mystery.

WOKO

"The Shadow"

Tonight at 10 P. M.

Perfect-O-Lites

Distributors

Hubbell & Query

139 Ontario St.

Telephone 8-0823

The drama which "The Shadow" follows so closely is a crime story, and "The Shadow" in his terrifying manner shows criminals that "Crime does not pay." Besides providing plenty of thrills, these Tuesday night broadcasts by "The Shadow" are splendid object lessons.

The previous *Detective Story Magazine* program never made mention of *The Shadow* magazine since it did not exist beforehand. There can be no doubt the mystery magazine was promoted under the Perfect-O-Lite sponsorship, especially since the name of the radio program was *The Shadow* and not the "Perfect-O-Lite Radio Revue."

In the May 11, 1932, issue of the *New York Times*, Frederic Melcher, an editor of *The Publishers' Weekly*, remarked that "readers are becoming more particular about quality, and the unknown in the mystery field has far less chance of large sales than formerly." According to Melcher, three years previous any book whose title even suggested a murder mystery could be counted on to sell several hundred copies, whether its author was known or not. Now, book distributors claimed "a murder mystery must be backed by a well-known name or advertising if it is to find a ready market." While fans with a passion for the pulp magazine might claim the thrilling adventures of the printed page led to the success of *The Shadow Magazine*, there can be no doubt the longevity of the magazine was due in part to *The Shadow's* appearances on radio.

The Shadow was broadcast for a total of five weeks under sponsorship of the Hachmeister-Lind Company, of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh. The manufacturer chose to promote its "Perfect-O-Lite" automobile headlights on the program. The headlight was designed by George Burton, considered "the wizard of auto light" and, according to the company's advertising, whose no-glare invention lit up the roadways twice as bright as the standard headlight. Promotional gimmicks and other direct methods of putting Perfect-O-Lite representatives in touch with millions of prospects were sent to Perfect-O-Lite dealers within the listening area.

In January 1932, Orran C. Packard took on the duties of nationally promoting and distributing the headlight. The January 17, 1932, issue of *The Houston Chronicle* featured a full-page advertisement attempting to grab potential dealers who wanted to get in on the ground floor. As part of the company's attempt to reveal how promising sales would be, *The Shadow* was promoted in the advertisement, claiming "millions of prospects" know about the item and are seeking it out.

The Shadow originated from WABC in New York in

the same manner as the previous runs and was broadcast as far west as Texas, Utah, Colorado and Oklahoma on a total of 28 stations.

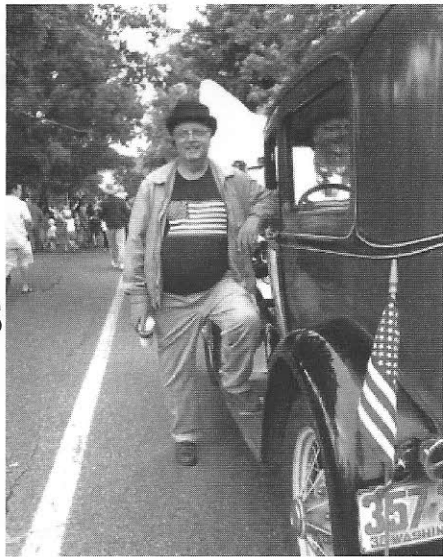
WADC	Akron, Ohio
KTRH	Houston, Texas
WOKO	Albany, New York
WFBM	Indianapolis, Indiana
WCAO	Baltimore, Maryland
WCCO	Minneapolis / St. Paul
WBRC	Birmingham, Alabama
WABC	New York City, New York
WKBW	Buffalo, New York
WDSU	New Orleans, Louisiana
WHK	Cleveland, Ohio
KFJF	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
WBT	Charlotte, North Carolina
WCAU	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
WBBM	Chicago, Illinois
WJAS	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
WKRC	Cincinnati, Ohio
KDYL	Salt Lake City, Utah
KRLD	Dallas, Texas
KMOX	St. Louis, Missouri
KLZ	Denver, Colorado
WFBL	Syracuse, New York
WXYZ	Detroit, Michigan
WSPD	Toledo, Ohio
WOWO	Ft. Wayne, Indiana
WIBW	Topeka, Kansas
WDRC	Hartford, Connecticut
WMAL	Washington, D.C.

The December 1, 1931, issue of *Broadcasting* listed current news about station accounts and reported the deal between the Hachmeister-Lind Company and CBS, claiming the program would be heard over 29 radio stations in an eight-week, half-hour format. The December 15 issue of *Broadcasting* reprinted the same item, now saying the dramatic sketch would be broadcast "over a 28-station CBS hookup." Whether the original 29 stations reported was the initial intention or a clerical error remains undetermined,

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**Paul
Secord**

President



VOTES, TOYS AND EATS

Well, we seemed to have survived the recent national and states elections this year but we've got one more for you. A separate *Air Check* was recently mailed containing the ballot for president, treasurer and the three at-large-members that are up for election this year. They will join the existing vice-president and secretary to form your Board of Directors for 2011. Please fill out your ballot and mail it to arrive well before the December 4th meeting. But, if you choose, you are welcome to bring it to the meeting on the 4th. On the 4th, the ballots will be counted and the results will be announced.

Speaking of December 4th, the day will start at 1:00PM with a *Grand-Old-Potluck*. Everyone gets to participate and bring a ready to eat food item to share. What you bring is your call and yes, we might end up with 24 cakes. The plates, napkins, eating utensils, and coffee will be provided. This is a good to spend time just sit'n around, having a bite to eat, and getting to know your fellow members a little better.

We will also have the *Toys-for-Tots* drive and hopefully we'll be able to have the Marines there to collect all your unwrapped gifts. This is a wonderful charity which began in 1947 by the then *Marine Corps Reserve* and fills a big need for less fortunate children in our area. Please open up your hearts.

And, of course, the *Media Exchange* tradition will continue. Just bring a wrapped CD, DVD or even an audio tape and place it under the tree. Then during the day we'll announce those that brought a gift can select an item from under the tree. Remember, you will need to bring a gift to participate in the exchange.

About 2:00 PM we'll have our regular meeting with something of interest. If you have ideas for upcoming meetings next year please send an e-mail to any board member with your thoughts and ideas. The meetings are for all of us and your ideas are needed and welcome.

I wish you all a very Happy Thanksgiving, a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful holiday season. Sincerely, Paul K. Secord, President

January 1, 2011

There will be no REPS Meeting on January 1, 2011.

The next REPS Meeting will be February 5, 2011 at the Norse Home, 2:00 in the afternoon.

Locked Door???

If you come in the alley door to the meeting, you may continue to do so. The door will be locked however due to federal regulations for retirement homes.

There is a call button to the right of the doors. Just push the button and the door will click unlocked.

REMEMBER:

Cell Phone Numbers Go Public this month.

REMINDER..... all cell phone numbers are being released to telemarketing companies and you will start to receive sales calls.

.... YOU WILL BE CHARGED FOR THESE CALLS

To prevent this, call the following number from your cell phone: 888-382-1222.

It is the National DO NOT CALL list It will only take a minute of your time.. It blocks your number for five (5) years. You must call from the cell phone number you want to have blocked. You cannot call from a different phone number. .. It takes about 20 seconds.



but the program was clearly broadcast on 28 stations and a 29th remains unknown.

The December 1, 1931, issue of *Variety* reported: "Hachmeister-Lind company starts using him December 15 for a series of mystery yarns on an eight-week campaign. The Shadow's new paycheck manufactures headlights. Program's area of release includes the basic network, Minneapolis, Dallas, Salt Lake City, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, Charlotte and Houston."

The news of *The Shadow's* return was welcomed by *Broadcast Advertising* in its January 1932 issue, reporting: "Radio's most sinister character, 'The Shadow,' will return to CBS in January in a new series of mystery dramas sponsored by the Hachmeister-Lind Company."

The *Detroit Evening Times* made *The Shadow* a headline feature for its radio column and listings, remarking: "He's coming back... yes, he'll tell more of those hair-raising mystery tales that have made the shivers and chills run up and down your back. Living up to his name, 'The Shadow' will hover in the background to set the scenes for this new series of dramas in the same manner as in the previous series which ended last July. Many dialers have asked about the return of this personage...."

Press releases were issued to newspapers carrying radio listings for the 28 stations and, like *Broadcast Advertising*, failed to mention how many broadcasts were scheduled. Three separate advertisements were designed for the newspapers, leaving the usual space for the time and station call letters to be inserted locally.

Though eight broadcasts were contracted, the run was even shorter. Complaints made by various organizations, including the government traffic bureau (a precursor to the National Transportation Safety Board),



claimed the headlights were not up to snuff and the advertising suspect. Even though *The Shadow* was not broadcast in Washington [State], Perfect-O-Lites were illegal in that state and thus not available for sale. CBS lost \$5,000 per week due to this controversy and pulled the show off the air after only five broadcasts. (Further research into the Hachmeister-Lind Company through the Pittsburgh Historical Society and state archives have led this author to believe this chaos bankrupted the company and all its records disappeared. Whether Hachmeister-Lind was bought out by another company or simply vanished remains a mystery.)



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The Shadow had a prime time slot and certainly showed promise. It premiered immediately following *Eno Crime Club*, another mystery program which began featuring adaptations of Edgar Wallace mystery novels. *The Shadow* only had to deal with musical programs on rival networks. Any dial turner wanting to listen to a drama with action instead of music had only one choice. No competition and a strong mystery beforehand gave *The Shadow* every opportunity to succeed.*

* *The Shadow* also borrowed talent from the preceding *Eno Crime Club* with Elsie Hitz and John McGovern in the cast. Or rather, they were members of the same acting troupe from the station. *Radio Digest* reported McGovern was a busy crime fighter, repeatedly appearing in *Sherlock Holmes*, *Danger Fighters*, *The Shadow* and *Eno Crime Club*.

All of the episodes were adaptations of short stories that had appeared in recent issues (September and November 1931) of *Detective Story Magazine*. The first of the five dramas was "Dynamite Moll," based on a short story by Leslie T. White, who would enjoy the honor of having four of his stories adapted for the five programs. The mystery concerned an enterprising reporter who stumbles on a new racket in his town involving both gangsters and influential politicians. He finally manages to break it up by gaining the confidence of the "gun moll" of one of the head gangsters.

The second broadcast was "Wee Willie's Ghost" (January 12, 1932), which told the story of a criminal who returns to life, seemingly after being executed. This same plot would later be used repeatedly in *The Shadow* continuity series — always proving that dead men cannot walk, but before they face the Grim Reaper can continue to create a new way of faking their spiritual return for the sake of vengeance against them.

The third broadcast, "Turn of the Tide" (January 19, 1932), was based on a short story by Kyle Corning, also known as Erle Stanley Gardner, creator of Perry Mason. Radio listeners were given the tale of a gangster girl schooled in racketeering who falls in love with a gangster chasing detective. When Chick Kendall is discovered to be a police stool pigeon, the head of a gang, Sam Keene, decides to set Kendall up to be killed. He gets his girlfriend, Sally Mason, to fool special-duty policeman Fighting Finney into doing the killing. But Sally remembers the help Finney gave her when she was in jail and decides to turn against Keene. She tells Finney what is going on, but he still decides to go ahead, intending to set up Keene and his gang instead.

The fourth episode was "Friday the 13th" and

told an exciting story of circus life. The fifth and final broadcast, "Two Keys" (February 2, 1932), was described by one newspaper as a "thriller about perilous adventures of a reporter." Casey Shannon is traveling on the Salt Lake Limited after reporting on the trial of convicted jewel thief Wilkinson. On the train a blonde is killed and Shannon suspects a young brunette, who flees from the train when it comes to a stop. Shannon chases after, only to be held against his will as she pulls a gun on him. Mistaking him for a man named Weiss, she demands the second key to a safe deposit box where jewels are stashed. Shannon attempts to prove he is a reporter and soon discovers she is Wilkinson's sister. The real Weiss appears and takes the woman's safety deposit key. While the two are held at Weiss's apartment in San Francisco, they devise a scheme that will allow justice to prevail.

On the same afternoon the final broadcast aired, in the February 2, 1932, issue of *The (Baltimore) Evening Sun*, an unidentified radio columnist remarked: "Network programs these Tuesday nights are overloaded with dramatizations. Columbia persists in giving us two in a row — the *Crime Club* drama and *The Shadow's* program. Each detracts from enjoyment of the other." Keeping in mind that more than 80 percent of the evening's entertainment on the major networks were musical presentations, crime dramas were few and far between and the critic would have preferred crime thrillers spread throughout the week.

The musical conductor for the productions was Eugene Ormandy, making what is probably his only contribution to *The Shadow* thrillers. At age 32, Ormandy was the youngest conductor of a major symphony orchestra broadcast over the radio in the United States. This distinction did not go unnoticed and his credit on *The Shadow* was repeated numerous times in newspapers throughout 1932. Known as a child prodigy who never used a score, he also never missed a cue. After a close study of a composition before a rehearsal he had a "picture" of it in his mind, he once explained. He reached New York a few years previous to *The Shadow*, without funds, unable to speak English. The violin training he began when less than 4-years-old won him a place in a theater orchestra. His first break came when the conductor became ill and Ormandy filled in for him.

Very little is known about Ormandy's radio career. He was musical director for the *Jack Frost Melody Moments*, in which he played the violin as a highlight of the program, months before working on *The Shadow*. Thorough research by multiple parties suggests his work on the five *Shadow*

broadcasts and *Jack Frost* may have been the only major musical tasks Ormandy had on network radio. The networks had strict policies about keeping track of broadcast music scores broadcast for both royalty and legal purposes. If Ormandy applied his way of conducting an orchestra for the productions, his tenure on radio would not have been long-lived. Two days after the fifth and final broadcast of the series, *The Evening Tribune* reported that Ormandy was recently appointed the head of the Minneapolis orchestra and was making plans for a 7,000-mile concert tour that winter, departing radio for the stage. George Earle and his orchestra would become the music staple for *The Shadow* dramas following Ormandy.

Numerous reference guides have cited Ormandy as the spooky narrator, and some historians speculate he doubled for the role when Frank Readick was unavailable. Tracking down the source from the reference guides (not too surprisingly, they were borrowing the information from other reference guides), this author succeeded and tracking down the initial source. It seems Ormandy was listed among certain newspaper radio logs and it was “assumed” he played the role, with the initial historian unaware at the time that newspaper listings often listed the musician as well as the name of the program. Thus, it remains highly unlikely Ormandy played the role.

Martin Grams is the author of *The Shadow: The History and Mystery of the Radio Program, 1930 - 1954*, due out through OTR Publishing in January 2011.



Shadow ET 16 inch disk from the late 1930s in the REPS collection of ET disks a few years beyond the time frame of the article by Martin Grams..

In Soap City, Not All the Dreams Come True

by Jim Cox

It must have stung something awful.

To substantially nurture something for a lengthy period of time and then suddenly have it yanked from one's clutches with little chance of influencing its future must have been disheartening at best and, quite likely, devastating to the caregiver.

The mother of soap opera, Irna Phillips, experienced it the spring of 1956 when her ties with a previously malnourished daytime radio serial were abruptly severed. “It doesn't seem possible that last week my association with Young Doctor Malone and the Columbia Broadcasting System was terminated,” she launched into a typewritten invective from her Chicago address at 1335 North Astor Street to *Malone* scriptwriter David Lesan on Valley Road, Cos Cob, Connecticut. The date was June 2, 1956. While her memo didn't reveal the circumstances of her separation, she acknowledged to Lesan: “Knowing Procter and Gamble, you should realize by this time they never do the obvious.”

Irna Phillips' departure from a potent storyline-consulting role for *Young Doctor Malone* was particularly painful to her. Just 20 months earlier the quarter-hour narrative she had affectionately inspired catapulted into first place in the Nielsen ratings among nearly three-dozen daytime dramas. That dynamic encouraged her toward even loftier heights that she had obviously harbored for a long while.

A few days following the release of *Malone's* superior ranking, on October 5, 1954 Phillips dispatched an appeal to Compton Advertising executive Lewis H. Titterton in New York (who represented *Malone's* agency of record): “I would like your permission to kinescope, at my expense, two episodes of Young Doctor Malone. . . I would not want you to feel in any way obligated to present them to Procter and Gamble if you did not think it wise to do so.” A carbon of her letter went to William M. Ramsey, supervising the *Malone* program for Procter & Gamble Productions, Inc. in Cincinnati, Ohio. In longhand, at the bottom of the carbon, Phillips added: “You don't know anything about this—unless you think it doesn't matter.”

For a long while it had been her intent to take the popular aural medical feature to weekday television. She had previously underwritten kinescopes of *The Guiding Light*, one of her radio creations, in an effort to persuade P&G

to add a video version of that venerable narrative. After considerable persistence, she convinced the soapmaker and personal goods manufacturer to initiate the durable drama on the small screen following the same story line broadcast on radio. For a quadrennial, beginning June 30, 1952 and continuing through June 29, 1956 when it left the aural ether and became a TV-only feature, *The Guiding Light* aired once in both mediums every weekday. Phillips fully intended to repeat her good fortune with *Malone*.

Regrettably, time for her to influence the outcome ran out before the idea could be implemented. While the program ultimately arrived on the small screen on competing chain NBC on December 29, 1958, a pundit observed: "This TV adaptation of the long-running radio serial of the same name . . . transferred only the principal characters' names and the credits of Irna Phillips as creator and Julian Funt as writer." According to reporter Wesley Hyatt, the setting and story line were dramatically altered from the radio version, yet running on CBS and featuring Sandy Becker in the lead. The radio series was still penned by David Lesan. The dual-though-separate narratives continued until the aural version departed in late 1960. On TV it remained as a half-hour daily performance through March 29, 1963.

Irna Phillips can still be clearly recognized as the omnipresent drama mama, the original guru of daytime narratives who—perhaps as much as anybody—was instrumental in placing Chicago on the national radio map. The plethora of dramatic programming that stemmed from her inventive mind generated scores of added shows airing from within and closely adjacent to the Windy City's renowned Loop.

Her strong influence, extending geographically around the globe, was also timeless. It continues to be witnessed today through the televised serials she so pervasively motivated. No other single individual left a mark on daytime drama to the extent she did. Among the handful of radio's washboard weeper creatives, she alone succeeded in transferring her brilliant concepts to video and—in due course—to future generations. The story of the humble initiation of this radio pioneer is captivating.

In the summer of 1930 Phillips, still in her twenties (and for several years a teacher in a Dayton, Ohio normal school) returned to her native Chicago seeking seasonal work between academic terms. One of the doors she knocked on was that of radio station WGN, a Midwest powerhouse whose regional scope extended far beyond the confines of its native turf. Cherishing a longtime interest in performing, she had the good fortune to be accepted by the station as an actress. She initially appeared by herself, then

with Ireene (sic) Wicker, another schoolmarm-turned-thespian, in various dialoguing exchanges. Both women soon relinquished their teaching careers to devote full time to a professional life in broadcasting.

Phillips would gain the distinction of creating the very first daytime serial, *Painted Dreams*, which debuted over WGN on October 20, 1930. Revolving around an Irish-American household, the cast included a matriarch, a daughter and a friend of the daughter. Potential sponsors, however, were hesitant to underwrite such an untried formula. Undaunted nonetheless, station management launched the program on a sustaining (un-sponsored) basis. For a year *Painted Dreams* appeared without benefit of commercials, airing new episodes six days a week. In October 1931 it was sold to a Chicago-based meatpacker, Mickleberry Products Company.

Irna Phillips was assigned to write the drama and play dual roles in it. As the elderly widowed Mother Moynihan, she became a kindly, philosophical, all-wise protagonist coping with the realities of the Depression era. Her single goal in life was to ensure the ultimate happiness of her grown children. The simple message of the drama was that marriage, love and motherhood offered the greatest achievement and destiny any female could hope to experience. Most of the action occurred in an urban Chicago neighborhood where the Moynihans resided.

Not surprisingly, Ireene Wicker was featured in the *Painted Dreams* cast, playing the part of the heroine's daughter, along with several other roles. Lucy Gilman, Kay Chase, Alice Hill and Olan Soule were also among the actors in the troupe. A conspicuous sidelight was that Frank Hummert—whose name would be identified with an assembly line turning out more daytime radio series than anyone else—produced *Painted Dreams* for his most formidable soon-to-be competitor, Irna Phillips. The show wafted onto the ether with "I'm Yours" as its musical theme.

While other similar broadcast features achieved network status before *Painted Dreams* began airing over CBS on October 10, 1933, there can be little doubt that the program and its originator, Phillips, were the first of a breed of hundreds of serials and scores of creators to populate the daytime airwaves. Their success would set the agenda for the bulk of programming in the sunshine hours that persists today and has been copied around the globe. It was truly a momentous occasion, although few would have so ascertained then.

Phillips, meanwhile, became embroiled in a legal quagmire over ownership rights to *Painted Dreams*, a controversy

that dragged on in the courts for almost a decade. While she lost the battle, her indomitable spirit was demonstrated, displaying little evidence that she was negatively affected by it. The experience turned her into an astute businesswoman. From that day forward she established her rights to the material she created and continued in that vein throughout the remainder of her career. It also turned her into a very affluent individual. In time the lifelong spinster was personally carrying more than a quarter of a million dollars out of radio every year. After she was established in television that figure rose to millions.

Phillips created no less than nine radio serials, in chronological order—*Painted Dreams* (1930), *Today's Children* (1932), *The Guiding Light* (1937), *Road of Life* (1937), *Woman in White* (1938), *The Right to Happiness* (1939), *Lonely Women* (1942), *Masquerade* (1946), *The Brighter Day* (1948). She was later credited with authoring or co-authoring eight TV incarnations—*These Are My Children* (1949), *The Guiding Light* (1952), *The Brighter Day* (1954), *As the World Turns* (1956), *Another World* (1964), *Days of Our Lives* (1965), *Our Private World* (1965), *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* (1967). A critic noted that *The Guiding Light*, currently in its seventh decade including both radio and television renderings, could be touted as “the longest story ever told.”

Beyond that, through several protégés Phillips' ideas have continued in no less than five other televised serials—*One Life to Live*, *All My Children*, *Loving*, *The Young and the Restless*, *The Bold and the Beautiful*. When she died on December 23, 1973, she left a legacy that influenced serialized melodrama in two mediums. Some of the precepts practiced in the modern era stem directly from ideas concocted by the legendary imaginative genius.

Unlike her soap opera production contemporaries Frank and Anne Hummert who relied upon assembly line techniques to flesh out dialogue for a surfeit of serialized scripts (they were responsible for 61 soap operas), at least at the beginning of Phillips' reign as the mother of the genre, she wrote every word herself. At the time with only a few shows on the air she used a manual typewriter and carbon paper to make copies of her scripts for every cast member in a single typing.

Numerous stories have circulated over the years, and are believed to be true, that when changes were made in her scripts during rehearsals—just before airtime—Phillips raced to the typewriter to hammer out corrected pages for everybody. Sometimes she fed new dialogue to actors while a show was *on the air*, just moments before those lines would be spoken live!

Later, as she expanded her repertoire of daytime serials, it became impossible for her to type enough scripts to provide for every show. This presented no problem to a talented originator, however—she bought a dictating machine and said those lines of dialogue into it. Clerical helpers turned her dictation into completed scripts. (Elaine Sterne Carrington, a prolific soapwriter protégé, would become a principal exponent of Phillips' dictating system.) For a while Phillips was dictating as many as six scripts daily, amounting to 60,000 words weekly and three million words annually.

When the dictating machine became too cumbersome, Phillips finally acquiesced. Admitting her personal limitations to herself, she hired a group of unnamed hacks to churn out much of the verbiage she had been accustomed to writing. For their efforts she compensated them at \$100 per quarter-hour script (\$500 weekly), a far cry from the measly \$25-per-show the Hummerts were doling out to their dialoguers. That alone appears to have made working for Phillips far more attractive to aspiring scribes than toiling for the rival Hummerts.

Irna Phillips, furthermore, imbued the soap opera strain with a number of predispositions that were to have permanent effect.

She placed strong emphasis on characterization in all of her serials. She claimed, “The important factor . . . is that the story grow out of characters rather than story superimposed upon characters.” (The Hummerts, for a couple, were guilty of weighing their central figures with heavy plotting.) “This [characterization] I have found to be most successful, realistic and believable,” Phillips continued. “We do what we do because we are what we are.”

Asserted one critic: “The success of Irna Phillips' serials came from her devotion to reality and from her careful understanding of the women who comprised her audience.”

Over time, little by little Phillips revealed innate details about the people in her stories, allowing her audiences to identify with those individuals. A couple of her subjects might spend an entire quarter-hour on radio dialoguing with one another. That is something that ostensibly never have happened on a Hummert serial, despite those producers' determined efforts to hold down their costs by reducing the number of players appearing in each installment.

It's reliably reported that Phillips realized that not only could the characterization be advanced by such lengthy

chats but her bottom line would be significantly enhanced in doing so, too. The technique became a staple in her modus operandi. Whereas the Hummerts limited their dialoguers to inserting a maximum of 25 speaking roles in their serials over any five-day period, Phillips usually got by with substantially fewer, perhaps no more than 15 in some weeks.

Phillips was also the first daytime serial writer to focus on the career professional as a protagonist. Such figures as clergymen (*The Guiding Light*, *The Brighter Day*), physicians (*Road of Life*, *Young Doctor Malone*), nurses (*Woman in White*), attorneys (*The Right to Happiness*) dotted the landscape of her drainboard dramas. She insisted that the professional crowd made far more appealing subjects for her stories than simply ordinary common citizens with uninteresting careers. In pursuing that agenda she capitalized on an area that had gone unnoticed by many radio producers, intentionally or otherwise. The preponderance of such skilled artisans in contemporary daytime television serials probably emanated from Phillips' shrewd perception so many years ago.

Phillips may also be credited with yet another concept that was to profoundly influence the soap operas currently transmitted. When she became convinced that televised serials were the wave of the future, she relentlessly lobbied the networks and sponsors to increase the traditional quarter-hour dramas to half-hour shows. It took two years before CBS and sponsor Procter & Gamble finally either grew weary of her persistence or were won over and gave in. On April 2, 1956 they instituted not one but two 30-minute serials on a single day—*As the World Turns* and *The Edge of Night*. The new practice eventually led to the hour-long feature, which Phillips championed. In 1973 she would be acclaimed “the single most important influence on television soaps” by a couple of insightful researchers of the genre, Madeleine Edmondson and David Rounds.

Flashback now to the early 1950s: Irna Phillips' watchful eye was overseeing *Young Doctor Malone* for CBS. David Lesan, an utterly commendable dialoguer during golden age radio's fading epoch, was fleshing out the *Malone* narratives with sterling conversations that contributed heavily toward advancing the show to number one. Yet it was Irna Phillips who was plotting the details and furnishing the outlines to him for those sequences. Some correspondence from that era, uncovered recently, paints a picture of a woman who had her finger on the pulse of everything that transpired on “her” show. She was, in many ways, a woman possessed with creative imagination.

“As plans now stand,” Lesan wrote Compton Agency

rep Lewis Titterton on May 27, 1954, “Irna will have completed her new outline for *Young Doctor Malone* by June 7th at which time Bob [Short, unidentified further] has suggested that we get together with her in Chicago for one of our routine discussions of same. Is this satisfactory with you?”

Lesan continued: “Irna has also suggested that in the interests of a closer relationship between her and the Producer, that Bill Bohlen [the show's recently appointed head honcho at Compton Advertising] accompany us on this trip. In this way he will see how a working contact is maintained with her; how questions, discussions and disagreements are expressed; how a compromise is finally hammered out which is satisfactory to all—in short, receive a valuable ‘short course’ in one Irna Phillips which might be of inestimable value to both him and her in their future dealings together.

“I think this is a pretty logical step, as unless and until a close relationship is gained with the woman, it is difficult to make any headway with her as a writer, as you and I know.”

If there remained any doubt about who was actually in control of *Young Doctor Malone* (and by extension, presumably Phillips' other broadcast features), such an exchange—typical of other expressions composed in similar vein—should clear the air.

Writing Lesan on July 28, 1954, Phillips observed, “Just so everyone's happy and the show goes to TV, we're happy too.”

She went on to state, “Now that Aggie [writer Agnes Nixon] is taking over G.L. [*Guiding Light*] again, I have more time to dream up new ailments. If I run out of ailments, I'll let you know and we'll plot a few. Frankly, it's a relief not to be dialoging for a change. When I get tired of just plotting, I think I'm going to sell another show. To whom? L.T. [Lewis Titterton] looks like a likely prospect. . . . Inasmuch as you and L.T. are spending his vacation together, I think you should try to talk him into *Malone* TV, then we'll all be happy. Yes? Yes!”

The prospect of the show moving to TV obviously wasn't ever far from her thinking.

Phillips could be just as meticulous as she could be determined. In a letter to Compton's Bill Bohlen in New York on August 24, 1954, she allowed, “I am as happy with Dave's scripts as all of you are, but—and it's a big ‘but’, Bill—the production is no different; what criticism I had in the past I still have. Dr. Brown is still belligerent, clipped in speech, and the tempo is way out of line with

the character that was originally outlined and as it is being written at the present time.”

Phillips adds: “Long scripts suddenly become short scripts; dialog is so speeded up to create conflict that you don’t even know what the characters are saying; and I don’t think, Bill, that a fast tempo necessarily creates conflict. Evidently the director does. Some of the pauses you could drive a truck thru. . . .

“I know you’ve heard these same criticisms over and over, so now I’m going on record via Uncle Sam. I hope to be in New York sometime in September, and maybe we can kick it around more at that time.”

In the interim, meanwhile, the announcement was made of *Young Doctor Malone’s* chart-topping Nielsen success. Reaction from Procter & Gamble Productions’ Bill Ramsey was swift. To writer Dave Lesan he said on September 28, 1954: “Since I’ve taken to myself the immediate supervision of ‘Young Dr. Malone’ I have, of course, been reading all of the scripts. There is only one word that I can think of which describes them adequately and that word is ‘superb.’ In addition to their dramatic intensity, they have many of the qualities of great music. I can only regret all the years we’ve wasted in not having taken advantage sooner of your tremendous talents as a writer.

“And to cap it all,” Ramsey’s words fairly leaped from the letterhead, “today’s Nielsen report puts ‘Young Dr. Malone’ in first place and ‘The Guiding Light’ in second place! It’s the first time within my memory ‘Young Dr. Malone,’ excellent though it was when our good friend Julian [Funt, who would be tapped later to pen the separate televised *Malone* story] was writing it, has ever been in first place.

“Again I say, I love you, David, and I love Weazer [Mrs. Lesan] too.”

With such affirmation, surely the scripts Lesan was turning out had to be inspired!

If Lesan’s head was in the clouds after that communication, Irna Phillips quickly helped him replant his feet solidly on terra firma. On September 30, 1954 she dispatched a new missive to him, launching it with: “The next time you go out of town let me know so I don’t have to worry. I call up, you’re not there, I worry, the phone rings and rings and rings, so I call Bob Short, he informs me that you’re fine but are taking a few days off. I knew you were planning to do this, but I didn’t know exactly when. Your itinerary please, Mr. Lesan.”

She softens the blow by stating further down, “May I say that your scripts for the week of October 18th are kind of super. It seems to me that your people were all in character

most of the time; add to that they were really scripts that moved—well I like them!”

Phillips’ domineering stance regarding *Young Doctor Malone* is underscored further in a letter she typed on January 24, 1955 to Lesan. “There has been a question in my mind, as you know, as to whether or not we have the best possible producer and the best possible director,” she stated stridently.

“I’m somewhat at a loss to understand your reason, other than wanting a very good show, for discussing production with either Bob Rehbock or the new director. I’m sure you will agree that the last thing either of us wants is to create any kind of confusion as far as production is concerned. If you are to give your views on direction and production and I am to give mine, somewhere along the line we’re bound to contradict each other.

“Now here’s how I feel about it, Dave: If you want to keep in touch with production and direction on *Malone*, this is fine with me; but let it be understood that all criticism, comments, good, bad or indifferent, come from one source. Okay? Okay!”

The single “source” seems to be unmistakably understood without defining it.

Roughly two weeks before Ms. Phillips’ firing by CBS and resultant disassociation with *Young Doctor Malone*, CBS Radio official Preston H. Pumphrey [sic] sent the following communiqué to David Lesan, dated May 8, 1956: “Attached are an original and four copies of a contract covering the agreement we reached on the phone last week for your writing of *Young Dr. Malone*.

“I trust you will find it all in order, and if so, we’d appreciate your signing and returning all the copies. After that, I’ll have them signed for CBS Radio and will send you copies for your files.

“We also talked about keeping this show within budget. The show is budgeted for eighteen performers [separate speaking roles] per week in addition to Sandy Becker [the actor in the title role]. Becker’s contract has a five-time-a-week guarantee, so there is nothing saved by leaving him out.

“I will be looking forward to making your acquaintance the first time you’re in New York.”

Although regrettably we don’t possess further details of Irna Phillips’ abrupt departure and the specific reasons behind it, on face value it would be easy to speculate that Lesan might have become the fair-haired boy and—with an expressed emphasis on cutting costs—Phillips, and whatever perceived baggage she brought to the show, were

plainly shelved. It's not a stretch to assume that by this time the seasoned scribe (Lesan) had acquired knowledge, training and experience beyond mere dialoguing duties, and the tasks of outlining and writing the show were consolidated and vested in his apparently capable hands. There is no documented proof of a "successor" as such to Irna Phillips.

Of course, by then Phillips already had her own hands full with the launch of her first half-hour televised serial, *As the World Turns*, which debuted a couple of months earlier (April 2). Nonetheless, her sudden departure from her beloved *Young Doctor Malone* must have smarted. Her dreams of carrying it to television were dashed and—while the drama would eventually make it to the small tube—her association with it there appears to have been limited to the mention of her name as the program's creator and little more.

The radio series continued on its judicious journey for another four-and-a-half years, meanwhile, earning the distinction of enduring to that fateful day when CBS Radio pulled the plug on its last quartet of open-ended daytime soap operas. That momentous occasion brought to a close a broadcast breed that had extended for 30 years. (The other national chains abandoned their washboard weepers some time earlier.) David Lesan was officially notified of his impending doom in a CBS memorandum issued on October 25, 1960. "The last broadcast of Young Dr. Malone will be that of November 25, 1960, and we hereby terminate the agreement between us dated May 1, 1956, as amended, at the conclusion of that broadcast, and any delayed or supplementary broadcasts as provided therein."

The message concluded: "We deeply regret the termination of this program [although obviously not enough to save it], and we want to express our appreciation of your contribution to the success it has enjoyed."

Those weren't the only words of commendation Lesan would receive. On November 25, the very day that *The Right to Happiness*, *Ma Perkins*, *Young Doctor Malone* and *The Second Mrs. Burton* bit the dust forever, George M. Perkins, CBS Radio director of network programs in New York, dropped a line to the seasoned hack. "Let me express my sincere admiration and deep appreciation for your skillful creation of 'Young Dr. Malone' over these past years," said Perkins.

"You can forever be proud of your contributions to one of the most glorious chapters in all of broadcasting history. You will be missed by those of us who remain, as well as the multitude of your daily followers.

"My personal thanks go to you for all of your talented efforts and helpfulness."

And there was at least one other affirmation, written December 20, 1960 by no less an eminent principal as CBS Radio president Arthur Hull Hays, who admonished: "It is always unfortunate when we terminate the services of someone who has been doing outstanding work which is certainly true in your case. I am sorry that the changes forced us to eliminate Young Dr. Malone, and I did not want to let the occasion go by without expressing my personal gratitude to you for your excellent work.

"Wishing you a very happy Christmas and a successful New Year."

It's uncertain where a successful, though unemployed, writer for a medium that was no longer accepting applications might turn, of course. The correspondence file ends with that letter and Lesan's professional career definitely appeared to be on hold, if not absolutely in permanent jeopardy.

Parenthetically, an NBC-TV serial, *Today Is Ours*, jointly concocted by Lesan and contemporary Julian Funt, the preceding scriptwriter for radio's *Young Doctor Malone*, premiered on June 30, 1958. By December 26, 1958 their creation was off the tube, succeeded by a hardly recognizable *Malone* penned by Funt. Lesan kept writing the radio play. For him, foreboding handwriting would appear on the wall before long.

And as for Irna Phillips, while severance from her beloved *Young Doctor Malone* undoubtedly hurt tremendously, within a short time she was probably laughing all the way to the bank, drowning her sorrows in martinis, the result of her fabulous fortune in TV Land (the incubatory one).

The Phillips-Lesan-*Malone* tale exuded many fascinating components. The pathos of a beleaguered heroine, a joyful hero with legions of admirers who was riding the crest of popularity, and finally, subsequent crushing adversity was similar to soap opera's basic themes. Who better to understand what had happened than two who were embroiled in it? Phillips' excessive penchant for reality made it easy to contemplate but most difficult to abide.

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Aircheck is created on a Mac G5 computer with *Adobe Indesign CS3* and *Adobe Photoshop CS3*. 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, contact Frank Rosin, 9811 NE 139th St, Kirkland WA 98034.

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Scheduled Events

- Dec 4, 2010 Regular and Board Meeting, *Back for Christmas* by REPS Readers, Toys for Tots, CD Exchange, Potluck. Meeting Starts at 1:00 rather than 2:00
- Jan 1, 2011 No Regular Meeting at Norse Home, Enjoy your Holiday**
- Feb 5, 2011 Regular and Board Meeting, Norse Home
- Mar 5, 2011 Regular and Board Meeting, Norse Home
- Apr 2, 2011 Regular and Board Meeting, Norse Home
- June 24, 25, 2011 Showcase 2011 to be determined, tentative date.**

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Unless specified otherwise, Board Meetings are held in the Norse Home Board Room, Seattle, and start at 11:00 am. Regular Membership Meetings are held at the Norse Home, Seattle, and start at 2:00 pm. They are both on the first Saturday of each Month.