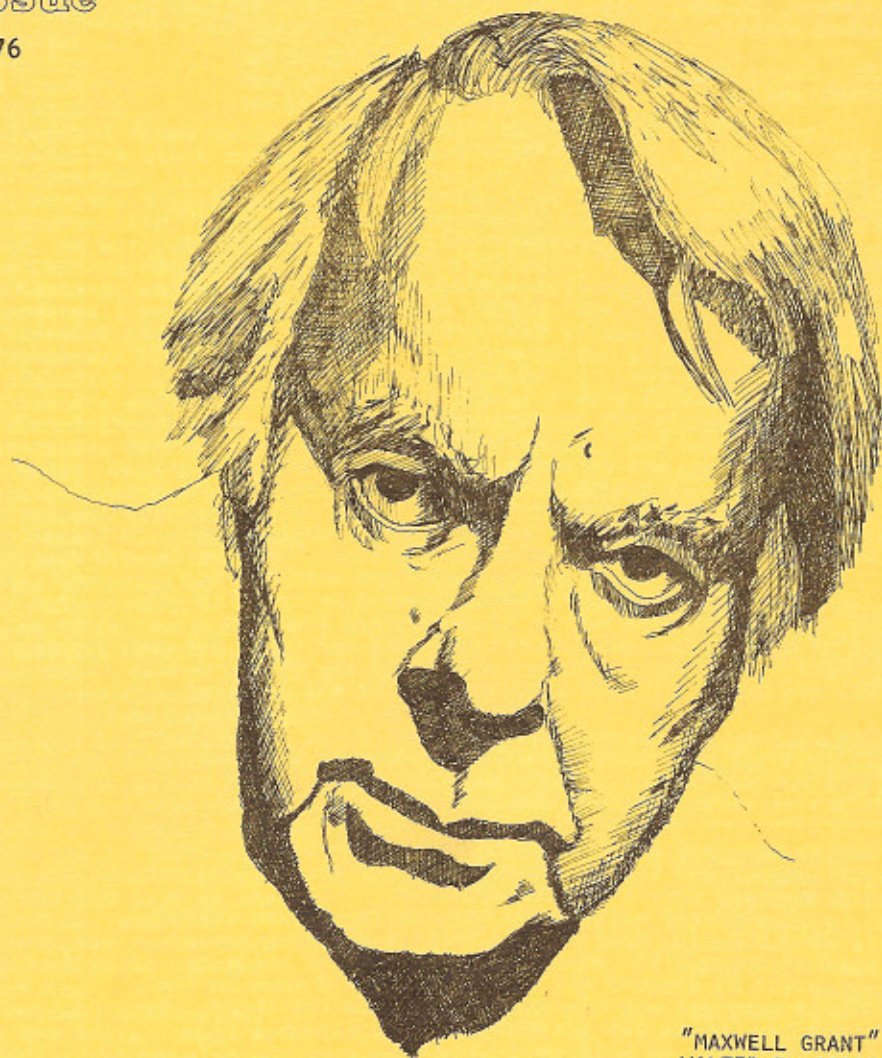


Second issue

December 1976

# AIRWAYS



"MAXWELL GRANT"  
WALTER B. GIBSON

THIS ISSUE:

PRO AND CON ON TAPES

THE SHADOW KNOWS (PART II)

NEW SERIES:

A HISTORY OF OUR HOBBY

FEATURE ARTICLE:

REPORT FROM THE SIXTH ANNUAL  
CONVENTION OF COLLECTORS



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THE COVER: Walter B.  
Gibson, otherwise  
known as Maxwell  
Grant, author of 282  
novels of the Shadow,  
and numerous books  
of magic.  
The art is that of  
Tom LaPadula.

## Shadow Knows

*Last issue, we dealt with  
the Shadow of the pulps and  
radio. This issue, we take  
a look at the writer of the  
original pulp stories,  
Walter B. Gibson!*

The writer of a pulp  
magazine in the 30's and 40's  
naturally had to be able to  
write well, be very quick with  
his mind and have very nimble  
typing fingers. Walter B.  
Gibson was one such writer and  
was one of the most prolific  
of these writers.

For years, however, Gibson  
never wrote under his own name,  
writing the Shadow novels under  
the pen-name of Maxwell Grant.  
This was common practice in the  
pulp industry in order that the  
readers would never notice a  
change in writers. If for in-  
stance, Gibson went for his  
eternal reward or tried to get  
a better reward from his  
employer (and had to be let go),  
the author of the Shadow novels  
would still be the mythical  
Maxwell Grant. Gibson tired of  
this anonymity, so he started  
to leave clues to his identity  
in anagrams found in his novels.  
For example, names and phrases  
such as Lewis G. Barton, Blist-  
er Wagon, Wilton Barges, and  
Granite Bowles are all anagrams  
of his name.

Ordinarily, Gibson worked  
on a battery of three type-  
writers. When one began to  
"get tired," he'd move to the  
second and then the third. He  
worked in a continuous flow,  
actually composing the tale on

the typewriter. The hours  
spent pounding the machines  
(there were no electric type-  
writers at this time) would  
swell his fingers, and often  
bloody the tips. For more  
than ten years, he wrote a  
complete 60,000 word novel  
every other week, and for the  
next four years, one every  
month.

According to Gibson, his  
theory was that 2,000 to 3,000  
words per day was a writer's  
proper stint. In order to  
meet the Shadow's publication  
schedule, it became necessary  
to hit 5,000 words or more a  
day. When he geared himself  
for that pace, he found that  
instead of being worn out by  
5,000 words, he was just reach-  
ing his peak. He made 10,000  
words his goal and found it  
easily reachable, as he aver-  
aged 15,000 words, or nearly  
60 typewritten pages, a pace  
of 4 to 5 pages and hour for  
12 or 15 hours. Sometimes the  
typewriter keys would fly so  
fast that Gibson wondered if  
his fingers could keep up  
with them. At the finish of  
the book, he often had to take  
a few days off because his  
fingertips were too sore to  
start the next one.

Enough statistics. We're  
here to talk about the man—  
Walter B. Gibson. Last year,  
I had a chance to see Gibson.  
He looks well for a ripe old  
age of 79 and a veteran of  
282 Shadow novels. For years,  
way before his Shadow fame,  
Gibson was an expert on magic,

continued on page 7

## BULLETIN:

The CBS Radio Network announced  
on December 1st that it has begun work  
on a weekend drama series, designed for  
young people. The series, Radio  
Adventure Theater, will make its debut  
on February 5, 1977. It will be  
produced by Himan Brown, who is the  
producer for CBS Mystery Theater, and  
in the past produced Inner Sanctum,  
Thin Man, Grand Central Station,  
Bulldog Drummond, and others.

The network sponsor will be  
General Mills. The program will be  
52 minutes long with 11 minutes of  
commercials, 7 of which belong to  
General Mills. The other spots will  
be sold locally.

CBS has also been syndicating  
Dragnet and Gunsmoke.



# Convention Report

By Joe Webb

It was a very pleasant drive up to Meriden, Connecticut, to the sixth annual gathering of radio collectors. As I learned later, the drive was a good omen, as the convention was fantastic.

Arriving at 9:30, we met the rest of the convention committee: Jay Hickerson, Larry and Julie DeSalvatore, who led me to my dealers table (where I would hand out the free debut issue of Airwaves).

Action at the table was brisk—I met collectors galore. Bob Vito, one of fandom's earlier collectors and first publishers, dropped by. Allen Rockford, the OTR king of central New York state had the table next to me. Gary Dudash, one of the larger collectors, had a table with Lee Stanley. Other collectors who visited included Stu Weiss, Mike Meredith, Max Schmid, Bob and Carol Witte, Ed Carr, Fred Shay, and others. Coverage by the local media was very extensive.

Movies were shown, Dick Curland conducted a very successful trivia panel, and then the fun started.

Hamilton O'Hara, sound effects man for CBS-New York held an effects workshop. One of the anecdotes told by O'Hara was that of the new janitor who found a squeaking door in the storeroom, so, of course, he oiled it. However, this was the famous squeaking door of Inner Sanctum. All the cleaning in the world couldn't get that door to squeak again. In desperation, the door was left on the beach at Fire Island, N.Y., where the corrosive salt water and air could "work" on it. Luckily, the door would squeak again!

Then there was a panel discussion, chaired by collector Bob Witte. The participants were (left to right), Jim Maloney, Jack McCarthy (the Green Hornet), Jackson Beck (announcer for Superman, Tom Corbett, played Cisco Kid and Philo Vance), Don McLaughlin (Counterspy, now Chris Hughes on TV's As the World Turns), Raymond Edward Johnson (Raymond, your host.....), Evie Juster, Lee Stanley, and Larry Haines (today's Stu on Search for Tomorrow). I won't go into the panel discussion right now; a transcript will be reprinted next issue.

At 7:00 the evening's festivities began, with the usual cocktails, buffet, and gab. The first activity (besides the food) was a reading from Julius

Caesar by Beck (as Marc Antony), supported by Witte, Hickerson, and Stanley. Mrs. Beck then told what it was like being a "backstage" wife. Raymond Edward Johnson read a little story entitled "I am Condemned!" The highlight of the evening, however, was the performance of a script from the series "The FBI in Peace and War," with sound effects by O'Hara and music supplied by the nimble-fingered Hickerson.

Awards were presented to the guests, thanking them for their contributions to the evening, and moreover, their contribution to the art of radio drama.

On collecting and collectors, the guests said the following:

"To realize," said Evie Juster, "that such a group exists was marvelously heartwarming...to know that all of you feel the way you do about this medium, which gave so many of us so much joy and hope...that it will come back...I thank you all very much."

Don McLaughlin: "I want to give thanks to the good Lord for two things. One is the fun we had all those years, and the other is for the fun we had tonight."

"There was a golden age of radio, there really was," said Jack McCarthy. "And I want to thank all of you for keeping it alive."

Jackson Beck said "If radio ever comes back, it's going to be you people who brought it there. I want to thank you for your efforts in keeping the art alive, and giving life to something we think should persevere and persist and come back to the days of glory. And it ever does, you people have done it."

It was a day so full of experiences so numerous, it will be long remembered. I'm looking forward to next year. I started looking forward when I left Meriden that night.

(Recordings of the convention are available from me. Send two 1800' reels of good quality---I will record on one and keep the other---to Joe Webb, 5 Valley View Drive, Yonkers, NY 10710.)



The requirements of recording tape for the collector is somewhat different than the requirement of tape for the high fidelity music recordist. The reason there is a difference is that the fidelity of radio shows, even from disc, does not compare with that of modern records. The major difference between the two is the wideness of the frequency spectrum. Almost all programs performed before the fifties have no usable frequencies above 7 kHz, or below 50 Hz. The other factor that makes a radio tape different from a modern record is noise. However, it cannot be said that all or even most radio programs have more noise than records. Provided the original disc was recorded correctly, and wasn't too scratched, a radio show stresses the signal to noise ratio of recording tape, more than a music record would. The problem with radio programs, and the human voice is all those quiet spaces between words! Music can mask tape hiss more effectively. I might add a note here that after numerous generations from the original disc recording, tape hiss recorded with the show copy will outweigh hiss introduced with copying, and so making noise-free recording impossible, even with the most expensive grade of tape. Professionals, if given the choice of either noise or distortion, generally would rather have a slightly higher distortion level than a noisier recording, and therefore, the general rule should be to level as far into the red as needed, in order to limit noise. There is no reason why a copy should sound any noisier than the original if this practice is used. Radio shows often have high distortion levels already, and tape distortion will be unnoticeable. Two other maladies of overleveling, high frequency distortion, and high frequency volume reduction, will not be any factors that affect radio programs, as they don't have real high frequencies.

Aside from high frequency and noise considerations, requirements for a recording tape are the same for old radio, as they are for high fidelity usage. Tape slitting should be uniform, so that after playback, the reel of tape will be smooth on the side. DAK and to some extent, Audio-magnetics TRACS have this problem. The reason why poor slitting means poor sound is that when the tape is too wide, and comes into contact with a slightly worn head, or into contact with a guidepost, the tape will curl outward, thereby losing contact with the tape head. The result will be dropouts (momentary loss of sound) on the left channels. This, by the way, is probably the reason one encounters so many reels where the left channels sound duller than the right channels. All quality tapes, Ampex, Scotch, and all of the Japanese brands that come to mind are slit well. Some cheap tapes, Shamrock and Concert for example, are slit well. I feel lubrication is a point to be concerned about, but I don't know of any accurate test to find out whether a tape is lubricated correctly or not. Both under and overlubrication are problems. A tape without enough lubrication will squeal. Ampex 292 and some forms of Shamrock have this problem. Lubrication problems seem to be disappearing with time, as are abrasive

## BLANK TAPE

by JERRY CHAPMAN

tapes. The problem resulting with abrasive tapes is wear on the tape heads, resulting in poorer frequency response, and a poorer S/N ratio. Also, it would seem that a tape would be more likely to squeal on worn heads than smooth ones. Abrasive tapes can be told apart from non-abrasive types, by looking at the oxide coating. A good tape will be smooth and shiny. Maxell for example is a specimen of low abrasion. Capitol would be an example of high abrasion, as is Scotch 150. Shamrock is not abrasive for the most part, although there are so many varieties of Shamrock, there might be exceptions. Hard heads, such as Sony's "Ferrite & Ferrite", JVC's "Sen-Alloy", AKAI's "Glass and Crystal", and Technics' "HPP" are so much superior in terms of wear, to permalloy, that the machines will be more likely to wear out than the tape heads, even while using an abrasive tape. Dokorder, for example, guarantees its heads for life. Teac, one of the last holdouts to keep permalloy, is switching slowly, I believe, to ferrite. The problem with ferrite used to be in the way it sounded, but developments have solved these problems, so that it isn't a factor. Ampex, for example, in a professional multi-track unit, uses ferrite heads. The way to tell if your heads are wearing, is to look at them. The entire surface of the head should be smooth. A worn head has two ridges, running along the tape path line, as wide as the tape, with an indentation on the part of the head where tape makes contact. Heads are manufactured so that they can take a bit of wear without affecting the sound, so that a head worn like above, may still be usefull for quite a while.

Other factors that one should be aware of, when choosing a tape are dropouts, and a high-output level. While high output tape may actually be noisier than one with a lower output, generally the higher the output, the lower the noise. Psychologically, a high output tape is liked better, so one should keep in mind that while it is nice for the tape to play back loud, that in itself, has no real meaning in terms of audio quality.

Even after reading and studying the various parameters of recording tape, a decision on what to buy, isn't easy. The factors of noise, dropouts, slitting, abrasion, output, and lubrication can be tested by recording and listening. Reliability over a long term cannot be tested, except by keeping tapes over a long period of time. Good tapes carry a lifetime guarantee, and for those who are overly concerned about reliability, it can be had, at a price. For those who are not concerned, evidence shows that even cheap tapes made today are superior

continued on page 5



## COLLECTORS

LISTINGS IN THE COLLECTORS COLUMN ARE FREE. IF YOU DESIRE A MENTION, PLEASE SEND DETAILS ON YOUR COLLECTION TO AIRWAVES. IF POSSIBLE, SEND YOUR CATALOG IF YOU HAVE ONE. INFORMATION WHICH WOULD NORMALLY BE INCLUDED ARE: NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE, MATERIAL YOU HAVE, AND WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR. AIRWAVES WILL BE HAPPY TO MENTION ANY OTHER COLLECTING HABITS. IF YOU COLLECT ONLY ON CASSETTE, PLEASE SPECIFY. REEL COLLECTING WILL BE ASSUMED OTHERWISE.

A.W. BLATT, 42 Bowling Green Pl., STATEN IS., NY 10314 has Sony cassette deck and Tandberg reel. Andy is looking for the following shows: Studio One, Inner Sanctum, Sherlock Holmes, Green Hornet, Suspense, Shadow, Gunsmoke, Lone Ranger, Ernie Kovacs, Whistler, Harry Lime, Black Museum, and Fred Allen.

EDWARD J. CARR, 629 East Race Street, Stowe, PA. 19464. Looking for Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Scarlet Pimpernel, in excellent sound, no crosstalk. Also looking to buy 10" discs of radio shows (78rpm) which must be at least VG+/VG.

JOHN EDWARDS, 24 Greenbriar Rd., Aurora, IL 60538. Has large collection of 25,000 shows. Interested in rare, uncirculated shows, airchecks of baseball and boxing programs from 1940s on.

VINCENT EGARIAN, 30 Manhattan Ave., Yonkers, NY 10707. Has 1000 shows on reel to trade, basically interested in comedies. Highlights of collection include Jack Benny, Mel Blanc, Phil Harris, and Archie Andrews.

PAT MURRAY, 1408 Whittier St., Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197. Pat runs a quarterly transcription auction. The next one will be sometime in January. Send SASE for complete details.

MARTY PAHLS, 7648 N Greenview, Chicago, IL 60626. Has large collection of music; 47 page offset catalog. Trades on hour for hour basis, discs, movie soundtracks, cylinders, piano rolls, tapes of Blues, pre-1947 country, 1927-1935 dance bands, pre-1948 music variety shows.

MAX SCHMID, 135 5th Ave., Apt. 4D, Pelham, NY 10803, looking for Stage Door Canteen programs. These are needed desperately.

NORMAN SWACK, 49 Old Westbrook Rd., Clinton, CT 06413, has 1000 programs, reel and cassette. Shadow, Lone Ranger, Green Hornet, Sherlock Holmes, Amos 'n' Andy, Jack Benny, Can You Top This?

BILL WATTS, 12 Carter Ave., Meriden CT 06450 has 1500 items, including sports, news, documentaries. Favorites include Escape, Jack Benny, Mysterious Traveler, Fibber McGee, and science fiction programs.

HENRY WRIGHTSON, 571 State St., Hanson, MA 02341. Has 2000 programs. Likes Lone Ranger, Aldrich Family, Phil Harris, Suspense, and wide variety of others. Started collecting when he tired of TV.

GARY YOGGY, Corning Community College, Corning, NY 14830. Has 2000 shows, cassettes, reels, records. Interested in Suspense, Escape, Jack Benny, Fibber McGee, Inner Sanctum, Charlie McCarthy, Shadow, Lux Radio Theater, Hallmark Playhouse, Cavalcade of America.

TAPE continued from page 4

to some of the more expensive ones made 5 - 10 years back, and if worse comes to worst, it ought to be possible to recopy reels onto a better grade, before the original gets to old.

Cassettes have pretty much the same properties as do reels, and the advice above should be just as useful to the cassette collector. Reliability takes on another dimension with cassettes, as cheap types might jam after heavy usage. Again, at a price, expensive types, such as Maxell, carry a lifetime guarantee, and I would think that types costing \$1.25 on up will be free of mechanical defects. Jamming is also a factor of tape player design, as are other parameters a factor of tape player units, therefore one might save money in the long run by purchasing a lower grade of tape, and a higher priced tape deck.



## Our Hobby's Roots

BY CHAPMAN AND WEBB

The collecting of radio programs is a hobby that is older than most people think. The hobby started almost concurrently with the recording of shows on discs. Some people took the discs home from work; record sets of historic events were issued; boot-leg discs were circulated among collectors. Later, people airchecked programs

at home using their own wire recorders, and today, tape recorders.

This series of articles will take a look at our hobby historically. It will not, however, follow a chronological path, but will cover a particular phase of collecting each time. For example, articles will cover discs, tapes, the role of rebroadcasts, selling shows, conventions, and collectors themselves.

One of the most important tools of collecting has been the newsletter. Hello Again, published by Jay Hickerson, has had the longest continuous effect on the hobby. Other publications, such as Radio Dial, have since vanished from the collecting scene. (These other newsletters

will be covered in future articles).

Hello Again did not start out as a newsletter, but evolved from Hickerson's monthly supplements, listing his latest acquisitions. He issued normal supplements for the first three months of 1970, then in April added a "Comments and Tidbits" section. This column included information about collectors who had helped him, and some information about himself. By June, 1970, it became a full-fledged monthly newsletter, and subscriptions were \$1.00 per year. Hello Again is a home-mimeographed newsletter, and continues to be published monthly.

Next issue: *Disc collecting of the 1930s*

### Shadow Log III

- |                            |          |   |          |
|----------------------------|----------|---|----------|
| Killer's Rendezvous        | 12/15/40 | Return of Carnation Charlie                     | 2/2/40   |
| Lady in Black              |          | Ruby of Karvahl                                 | 10/19/47 |
| Laughing Corpse            | 3/10/40  | Sabotage  | 1938     |
| League of Terror           | 1938     | Sabotage by Air (Welles)                        | 1938     |
| Legend of the Living Swamp |          | Sabotage by Air (Johnstone)                     | 3/39     |
| The Leopard Strikes        | 1/5/41   | Sandhog Murders                                 | 11/26/39 |
| The Living Head            | 2/10/46  | Seance with Death                               | 5/25/47  |
| Make-up for Murder         | 12/1/46  | Shadow Challenged                               | 1/19/41  |
| Man who Lived Twice        |          | Shadow Returns                                  | 11/19/39 |
| Man who was Death          | 2/29/48  | Shadow of Suspicion                             | 12/29/46 |
| Mansion of Madness         | 11/5/39  | Shadow's Revenge                                | 5/11/47  |
| Mark of the Black Widow    | 10/27/40 | Shyster Payoff                                  | 1938     |
| Message from the Hill      | 1937     | Silent Avenger                                  | 3/20/38  |
| Mind over Murder           | 3/31/46  | Society of the Living Dead                      | 1938     |
| Murder and the Medium      | 11/30/47 | Spider Boy                                      | 11/11/45 |
| Murder from the Grave      | 4/6/41   | Stake-out                                       | 3/14/48  |
| Murder in E Flat           | 1939     | Suicide League                                  | 5/4/47   |
| Murder in the Death House  | 1/7/40   | Temple Bells of Neban                           | 1937     |
| Murder on Approval         | 1937     | Tenor with a Broken Voice                       | 1937     |
| Murder on the Main Stem    | 12/15/46 | Terrible Legend of Crownshield<br>Castle        | 12/28/47 |
| Murder Underground         | 3/9/41   | Terror at Wolf's Head Knoll                     | 2/15/48  |
| Murder with Music          | 2/3/46   | They Kill With a Silver Hatchet                 | 5/26/46  |
| Murders in Wax             | 1937     | Thing in the Cage                               | 2/8/48   |
| Murderer's Vanity          | 3/17/40  | Three Ghosts                                    | 1938     |
| Mystery of Madman's Deep   | 10/25/42 | Tomb of Terror                                  | 1937     |
| Night Marauders            | 10/1/39  | Touch of Death                                  | 5/17/46  |
| Night Without End          | 1939     | Traffic in Death                                | 1939     |
| Nightmare at Gaelsbury     | 2/2/41   | Unburied Dead                                   | 4/14/46  |
| Nursery Rhyme Murders      | 2/22/48  | Valley of Living Terror                         | 10/13/46 |
| One Dead, Two to Go        | 2/1/48   | Valley of the Living Dead                       | 1939     |
| Oracle of Death            | 10/20/40 | Voice of Death                                  | 12/8/40  |
| Phantom Fingerprints       | 10/29/39 | Voodoo  |          |
| Phantom of the Lighthouse  | 9/7/47   | Wailing Corpse                                  | 11/8/42  |
| Phantom Voice              | 1939     | Walking Corpse                                  | 3/24/46  |
| Phantom Voyage             | 2/16/41  | Werewolf of Hamilton Mansion                    | 1/5/47   |
| Plot that Failed           | 3/24/40  | When the Grave is Open                          | 9/14/47  |
| Poison Death               | 1937     | White God                                       | 1937     |
| Power of the Mind          | 1937-38? | White Witchman of Labiake                       | 5/5/46   |
| Precipice Called Death     | 1/21/40  | Witch of the Crescent Moon (1st 15 min<br>only) | 2/23/47  |
| Prelude to Terror          | 1939     |   |          |
| Reflection of Death        | 5/9/48   |   |          |



## Book Review

7

*This was Radio: A Personal Memoir* by Joseph Julian.  
(Viking, 1975; \$8.95)

Joe Julian is far from being a familiar household name, but his career in radio includes some 10,000 broadcasts. That's not bad for someone whose life-long ambition was a career on the Broadway stage, for whom radio was a temporary stepping stone. And yet, in spite of the fact that I have his voice many times over in my radio collection, I can't honestly say that I would recognize it if I heard it right now. Names come only slowly to be placed with many, many familiar voices. Names which but for collectors of these old shows would be lost in the musty archives of time.

And but for the memories of those who were on the

scene and but for books like this one, to add a perspective to the past. Julian's story reflects the times. The depression, World War II in England, Japan after Hiroshima, the McCarthy years, ...do you know what Red Channels was? More names. Julian has seen a lot of history. But this is far more interesting than any history book.

Some of the programs Joe Julian played on are:

*Big Sister, Bright Horizon, Columbia Presents Corwin, Joyce Jordan, Life Can be Beautiful, Life of Mary Southern, Lorenzo Jones, The O'Neills, Orphans of Divorce, The Sparrow and the Hawk.*

(This article was written by Steve Lewis, and originally appeared in his mystery fanzine *Mystery\*file*).

SHADOW continued from page 2

ghosting books for Harry Houdini, Howard Thurston, and Harry Blackstone, the top magician of the 20th century. Gibson most recently has been involved in the Shadow revival by Pyramid books (reprints in paperback form) and has written scripts for *Twilight Zone* and *Man from UNCLE*.

In 1950, Gibson hosted a radio show called "Strange" (Editor's note: Are there any of these in circulation?). He has written a book on psychic science with his wife, Litzka. Now spending his time writing, traveling to nearby "haunted" houses (of which he is "very skeptical"), Gibson hopes to eventually see the Shadow make it to movies.

--Joe Webb



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11/15/76

Jerry Chapman  
Joe Webb  
c/o Airwaves  
438 W. Neptune  
NIU  
DeKalb, IL 60115

Dear Jerry and Joe,

Just a note to welcome you to the Old Time Radio publishing business. Enclosed is a check for a year's subscription. I subscribe to all known OTR publications and belong to all known OTR clubs, because it increases the enjoyment of my hobby and because I know they need my support to survive. Compared to the cost of equipment and tape, such expenditures are a relatively small item to enhance my hobby.

There's a perennial story that goes around our northwest Washington boating community about a man who owns a boat marina who one day inherits a large sum of money. His friend asked him what he would do now with his life. Her replied, "Oh, I'll just stay here and keep running this marina as long as my money holds out!"

Last year RADIO HISTORIAN, RADIO DIAL, RADIO-IN-DEPTH, and a few other assorted OTR publications went out of business due mostly to financial troubles. I know all too well the work and cost involved in writing, editing, type-setting, lay-out, proofing, printing, folding, stuffing, and mailing a paper. I know, for example, that it costs about \$65.00 per page to publish and deliver the NATIONAL RADIO TRADER to our subscribers. This does not include the time of myself or my wife.

I know from experience that subscriptions will be very slow in coming in. You may well get discouraged from time to time. You may have to readjust your original expectations of total numbers of subscribers.

My very best wishes to you both for success. Let's keep publishing AIRWAVES and NATIONAL RADIO TRADER until our money runs out! Or could it happen that some magic will cause our fellow OTR hobbyists to realize that, if we are to have any publication or club that can survive, they will have to support such projects with a few of their hobby dollars.

Sincerely, *Phil Cole*