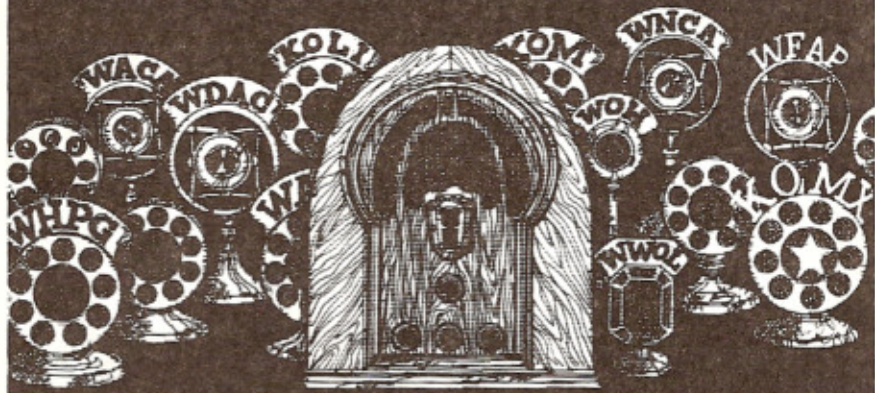
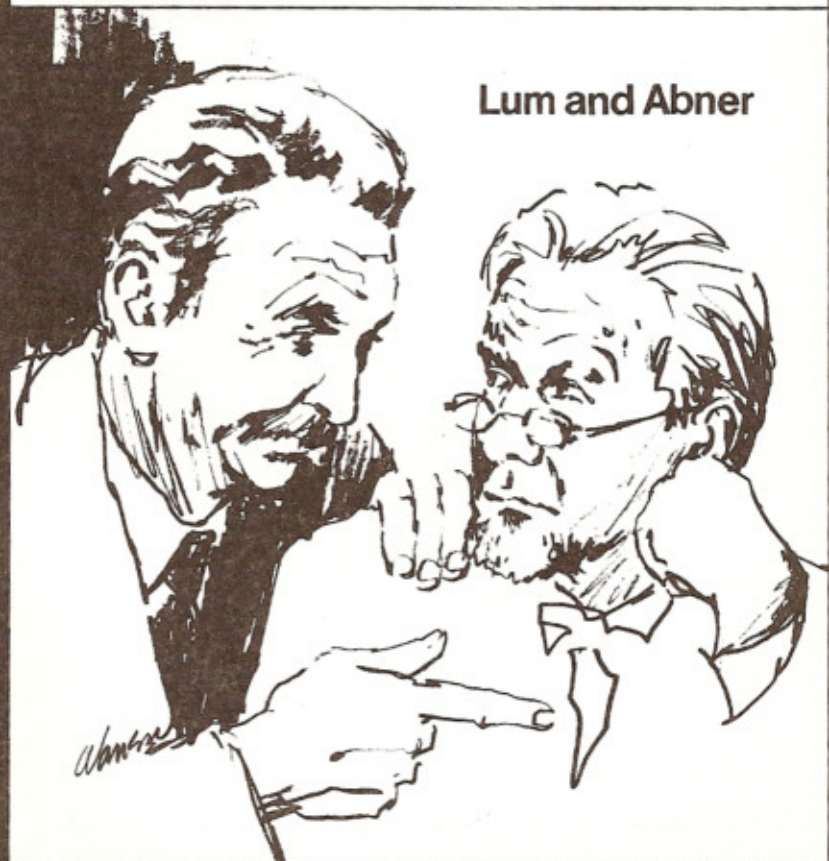


Collector's Corner



Volume I No.4 June 1978 \$1.25

Lum and Abner



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Collector's Comments from Bob Burnham

Why do we really collect old time radio?

Many moons ago when I first encountered old time radio when hearing rebroadcasts, I got the bright thought, "See whiz, wouldn't it be neat if I taped these little tidbits off the air--then I could hear 'em again, and make copies for my friends, and save those tapes cuz they'd be so valuable!!?"

During that stage of the game, I was equipped with a cassette deck and a few portables.

At that point, I was in the "explore and discover" stage of old time radio. I listened to every show I got, typed up a little card for each show, giving the title, date and my own little description of what happened during the show. I was enthralled. My friends were impressed I could fill up two type-written pages listing my collection. One of my favorite activities other than listening was to type up listings, arrange them alphabetically, then seeing how many people I could force my hobby upon. If I'd get three new shows, I'd retype the whole list. Let's face it, at the early stage, I loved the programs themselves, and had a small enough collection (and enough time I had nothing better to do) that I could invent new ways to catalog the shows. After I'd accumulated somewhere over 500 cassettes (which still gather dust to this day), I switched to reel, and that's when the change in my collecting habits began taking effect. My original purpose for collecting was still essentially the same--I liked the shows, but the increase in size of my collection had a definite bearing on my filing procedure.

I had just finished typing up cards for 178 Speed Gibson episodes when I realized something had to change, and the amount of work in the procedure was taking all of the fun out of the hobby. I started selling OTR on a larger scale, and I soon found I could no longer collect just the shows I liked, but I had to collect what every one else liked to get a greater volume in sales. And the only reason I needed to sell more was because I wanted to trade more, which is partially because I wanted to sell more--an odd cycle, but for some reason I liked the game.

As the game progressed still further, my goals changed. Did I want to collect every Suspense show ever broadcast? Naw...who cares. Suspense

is good to listen to, but there's too many other types of programs I ought to get that sell well.

How 'bout if I get twenty reels of Fibber McGee from this guy—even though I hate the show—and see how everyone else likes 'em. Maybe I'll be able to get a twenty reel trade with this guy so I can get those Lum and Abners I love so much with which I can get twenty reels of Joe Blow and his Flying Circus from this other guy.

Obviously, I wasn't trading for programs I wanted...just for programs that I thought everyone else wanted so I could get more programs out of that—plus for me there was the selling end of it. I didn't want eighty reels of One Man's Family because it didn't sell.

Today, I don't really know where I stand. Maybe I like having reels fall off the ends of my shelves because they're too full. Sure, it's nice to pull out an Escape reel from time to time and just listen; but lately, I've been using the programs to put me to sleep!

Certainly, I don't think every collector collects shows because he likes reels falling on his head while he types Collector's Corner. Blank tape actually would have the same effect, and it's obtainable at lesser cost and less time and trouble, too. But there's something about having a reel of Johnny Dollar fall on me that sends chills down my spine. Blank tape, or even tape containing a 1,000 cycle tone recorded its entire length does not have the same impact.

Seriously though, I think one of the reasons I collect is a common one among many collectors. You can look at your tapes and say "Wow, I've got ten billion reels in this room, and nobody else for thousands of miles can make the same claim!" You're proud of your collection. Maybe you don't have the largest collection; maybe you have a really small collection—less than 100 reels, perhaps. But you can stand back and look at all those tapes, and really think you have something great. Maybe you have eight reels that are in really good sound that you really had to work hard to get—maybe they're really terrible to listen to—perhaps band remotes featuring Arnold Spivac and his Royal Band of Midgets—but you have them directly off the discs and you're proud.

I was really pleased with my accomplishments in my cassette days. I might have accumulated 300 cassettes, and I'd look at my home built wooden cassette racks and get really excited,

then I'd be already planning what I wanted to add next.

Adding new reels is something the beginning collector can take delight in. After one collects a few years, it becomes routine. One begins to think of new activities to do with his collection.

I, myself, greatly enjoy reassembling reels—putting programs together grouping them in a way which is more attractive to me. Other collectors enjoy tampering with equalization, trying to improve the quality of the program. This to me is also a worthwhile activity, although it would seem to make more sense to me to just look for the program in better sound from a different source.

Equalizers are quite a bit of fun to play with, however, and one of these days I'm certain I'll run across a really odd breed of collector: One who has \$50,000 worth of signal processing equipment and looks for programs in the WORST sound possible, because he enjoys the challenge of trying to make the shows understandable. That's right—Mr. Harvey Schwartz, wealthy young man-about-tape-recorders collects old time radio because he likes to run it through his 70 band equalizer and his eight foot rack filled with notch filters, hiss suppressors, and what have you. If Mr. Schwartz ever surfaces, I think I'll resign from the hobby.

What is it, though, that has driven Joe Webb to collect 500 reels in less time than he took to complete his high school education? In the first issue of AIRWAVES, published over a year ago Jerry Chapman said Joe collected at a "feverish rate." The question is why? The answer, I think, can be applied to many collectors with relatively large collections...The actual collecting experience can be enjoyable and very rewarding, and the pride and prestige one derives from collecting is quite a nice feeling. The same thing can be applied to collecting guns, stamps, coins, beer cans or whatever. The only problem is copying them is tough, and I don't think an old beer can would put me to sleep as quickly...no, the shows don't bore me, I've just found an alternative use for them!





Collector's Corner presents...

Lum and Abner: An appreciation by David Reznick

Unlike other mass media, network radio in its heyday suffered from a lack of serious commentary and criticism. For various reasons, the phenomenon of dramatic radio never brought forth its Kael's of Agees to solemnize and legitimize the form. Ironically, this situation is only now, in retrospect, being remedied. Now that the corpse is laid out on the table, many writers, like perceptive pathologists, have been able to put our loss into perspective. We can clearly see the artistry involved in transforming a dozen running gags into the everfresh JACK BENNY program; we can understand how ONE MAN'S FAMILY might honorably take its place among the more celebrated manifestations of the "realism" movement in fiction; we can be sure that if Paul Rhymer had written novels instead of VIC AND SADE, his name would be mentioned with Mark Twain in discussions of American humor. Today, many of the old programs have their champions and specialists, and a newly discovered episode of QUIET PLEASE or FRED ALLEN is cause for rejoicing among all collectors.

Yet it seems to me that while certain well-known high spots of OTR are continually celebrated, other programs are taken for granted. This is certainly true of LUM AND ABNER, the very vin ordinaire of network radio, plugging along day after day, year after year for almost a quarter century, ignored by critics, now discounted by collectors. But LUM AND ABNER is lasting. We don't remember it as a high water mark; we remember THE SHADOW and THE LONE RANGER, but surely we can see, more for their childhood associations than for their quality; we remember LIGHTS OUT, only to discover upon rehearing what an embarrassingly poor dramatist Oboler was. But L & A is redolent of timelessness. It's better today than what it was then.

L & A was not a unique conception; rather it was just one example of a genre well-worked by others with whom it may legitimately be compared. The populating of an entire multi-character program by one or two vocal virtuosi was a common stunt, well done by many. Jimmy Scribner needed no help at all on THE JOHNSON FAMILY, and Mel Blanc talked to himself for years in the Warner Brothers cartoons. But of course, the most obvious comparison is with the more popular and fondly remembered AMOS 'N' ANDY.

No matter how funny the scripts or how adept the actors, a program of this nature will be artistically successful only to the extent that we are motivated to suspend our disbelief. We must want to believe that many different people are speaking, rather than one or two. This is dependent not only on technical proficiency and story line, but also on our involvement with the actors themselves; on our perceptions of how they feel about us and their material (The exception, of course, is a satirical version of the form such as is provided by Bob and Ray who want us to be aware at all times that we are hearing two men doing different voices.). It is this audience-performer interaction that is missing for me, from AMOS 'N' ANDY.

A & A is firmly entrenched in American media folklore, with its phenomenal success, its catch-phrases, its Christmas broadcast, and all the rest. But history has caught up with A & A. No matter what pleasure we derive from our associative memories, the inescapable fact is that the program is rooted in social injustice and ugliness. The nature of the show is such that Gosden and Correll, no matter what their intentions might have been, couldn't help but appear condescending and superior. A & A appeals to our baser natures. I suspect we've always known that, but in the more innocent thirties and forties, we were allowed to plead ignorance, an attitude we'd be hard pressed to sustain today. And it's the reason, I think, that A & A of all programs came across better on TV than on radio. The sight of black actors engaged in perpetuating racial stereotypes, poignant as it may have been, was at least free from the uglier implications involved in seeing whites do so. Tim Moore's Kingfish was a far more developed and sympathetic figure than Gosden's ever was.

Chester (Lum) Lauck and Norris (Abner) Goff have said that LUM AND ABNER was originally meant to be a black dialect act, but was changed almost accidentally at the last moment. If so, it was an enormous stroke of good fortune for them; yet it is hard to imagine them ever being able to indulge in the sort of put down humor that black-face must necessarily represent. For they were able to make that ineffable connection with their audience which brought their characters—not just the title characters, but the whole population of Pine Ridge, Arkansas—to life.

L & A's success is based upon a two-pillared foundation; story line and humor. Typically, the plot of a situation comedy is merely a device to allow the characters to do their familiar comedy turns; but L & A plots were more than that. The madcap sequences which had the old fellows

Continued on page 10



Collector's Corner
OTR Log

SUSPENSE

Well here we are again with SUSPENSE-1945. Did you know that there are over 800 circulating SUSPENSE shows? Jay Hickerson, publisher of HELLO AGAIN did the original work on this log and through the years many have refined and revised the log.

SUSPENSE - 1945

| Date | Title | Stars |
|------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1/4 | I Had an Alibi | Keenan Wynn |
| 1/11 | Drive-In | Nancy Kelly |
| 1/18 | To Find Help | Sinatra, M'r'head |
| 1/25 | Drury's Bones | Boris Karloff |
| 2/1 | Most Dangerous Game | Joseph Cotten |
| 2/8 | Tale of Two Sisters | Claire Trevor |
| 2/15 | Sell Me Your Life | Lee Bowman |
| 2/22 | John Barrie and Son | Thom. Mitchell |
| 3/1 | My Wife Geraldine | E.G. Robinson |
| 3/8 | Love's Lovely Counterfeit | Bogart |
| 3/15 | Cricket | Margaret O'Brien |
| 3/22 | Heart's Desire | Lloyd Nolan |
| 3/29 | Taming of the Beast | Nancy Kelly |
| 4/5 | A Guy Gets Lonely | Dane Clark |
| 4/12 | To Sharp Knives | John Payne |
| 4/19 | Pearls are a Nuisance | Allan Joslyn |
| 4/26 | ****PRE-EMPTED**** | |
| 5/3 | Fear Paints a Picture | Lana Turner |
| 5/10 | Reprieve | John Garfield |
| 5/17 | Two Birds with One Stone | Dana Andrews |
| 5/24 | My Own Murderer | Herbert Marshall |
| 5/31 | August Heat | Ronal Colman |
| 6/7 | To Sharp Knives | Payne & Frank McHugh |
| 6/14 | Burning Court | Clifton Webb |
| 6/21 | Story of Ivy | Ann Richards |
| 6/28 | Dealings of Markham | Henry Daniell |
| 7/5 | Last Detail | Geo. Coulouris |
| 7/12 | Foot Falls | J. Carroll Naish |
| 7/19 | Bank Holiday | Boutta Granville |
| 7/26 | Fury and Sound | Norman Lloyd |

| Date | Title | Stars |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 8/2 | A Man in the House | Joan Loring |
| 8/9 | Murder for Myra | Lloyd Nolan |
| 8/16 | Short Order | Joseph Kearns |
| 8/23 | This Will Kill You | Dane Clark |
| 8/30 | Nobody Loves Me | Peter Lorre |
| 9/6 | Sorry, Wrong Number | Agnes Morrehead |
| 9/13 | The Furnished Floor | Don DeFore |
| 9/20 | Library Book | Myrna Loy |
| 9/27 | The Earth is Made of Glass | |
| 10/4 | Death on Highway 99 | Joseph Cotten |
| 10/11 | Beyond Good and Evil | George Murphy |
| 10/18 | Summer Storm | Joseph Cotten |
| 10/25 | A Shroud for Sarah | Henry Fonda |
| 11/1 | The Dunwich Horror | Lucille Ball |
| 11/8 | The Bet | Ronald Colman |
| 11/15 | Murder Off Key | Lee J. Cobb |
| 11/22 | Nineteen Deacon Street | Zachary Scott |
| 11/29 | A Week Ago Wednesday | Lloyd Nolan |
| 12/6 | I Won't Take a Minute | Nancy Kelly |
| 12/13 | The Argyle Album | Lee Bowman |
| 12/20 | Double Entry | Robert Taylor |
| 12/27 | Pink Camellias | Hume Cronyn |
| | | Marsha Hunt |

NEXT ISSUE: What else? SUSPENSE-1946

HIGHLIGHTS OF COLLECTOR'S CORNER #5:

- An interview with Fred Foy
- Goodbye Crosstalk! Hello Tin-foil?



Echoes of the Past

If you are seeking QUALITY OTR programs.... reasonably priced....well-dubbed on splice-free tape....and with each reel individually sound-rated, you will find it worth your time to send for my reel or cassette catalog.

Since OTR is a hobby and not a business for me, quality rather than quantity is my goal. Income from OTR sales goes right back into the hobby to add additional quality programs.....

Send \$1.50 for Reel Catalog(2500 Shows) or \$1.00 for Cassette Catalog(500 Shows) to:

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constructing rocket ships to Mars and being chased by lions were alternated with sequences of the purest, most primitive melodrama: abandoned babies and mistreated orphans, the stuff of campy satire.

But these outrageous tear-jerkers were delivered with such innocence and sincerity that we were (and are, upon rehearing) forced to accept them at face value. And in doing so, we are willing to impart realism to the characters—we are, in short, ready to love them. And there is plenty to love.

Those who do not know the series assume that it is only hillbilly humor of the Hee-Haw stripe (and in this group I must include John Dunning, whose description of Abner in TUNE IN YESTERDAY as a "whining gambler" certainly suggests that he has never so much as listened to a complete episode). Those who listened occasionally might describe Lum or Abner as stupid. But the devotee knows better. Kingfish and Andy were stupid. Lum and Abner were childlike. Lum was childlike in his grandiose plans and his rapidly changing enthusiasms, in his belief that wearing a banker's hat made him a banker. Abner was childlike in his conviction that those who speak with authority are probably right, thus allowing him to go along with the most egregious schemes and plots. The distinct -ion is all-important: We may be amused by stupidity, but we can love a child of any age, and we can identify with him as well. And so the plots, while they often creaked along, were an essential part of the L & A recipe, the ingredient that was missing in the later half-hour incarnation of the program.

They provided humanity and underlined the basic morality and goodness of the protagonists. Surely they were synthetic and obvious, but like Norman Rockwell's magazine covers, and for the same reasons, they worked.

They were delivered in a manner that convinced us that the events happened the way Lauck and Goff wanted them to happen in real life.

This attribute, of course, was shared by many programs, including most soap operas. But the other ingredient was humor. Lauck and Goff were funny. And not like Barney Google and Snuffy Smith. They were sly, swift, and deadpan—the most sophisticated big-city humorists. They dealt in nuances and finesse, and had nothing in common with the outhouse humor of stock hillbilly routines. They were, in fact, masters of the quietly outrageous, and had much in common with the more highly regarded practitioners, notably, Paul Rhymer.

Indeed, there is much in L & A that is reminiscent of its celebrated contemporary, VIC AND SADE. Both found delight in given names, and the amnesia-stricken Grandpappy Spears' insistence that he is Buster V.

Davenport, a second-hand vacuum cleaner salesman from Toledo, Ohio, cannot fail to evoke memories of the admirable Uncle Fletcher. The character of Grandpappy Spears itself is strongly suggestive of Uncle Fletcher and Grandpappy's non-sequiturs from the Farmers Almanac are straight out of the little house halfway up the next block. Significantly, Clarence (Uncle Fletcher) Hartzell himself was used later in the half-hour version of L & A. But it was not imitation Rhymer we heard from Lauck and Goff—it was a highly original blend of styles, which could quickly broaden to verbal slapstick. The routines in which Lum used an "old Edwards saying" that Abner insisted on taking literally, were a homage to the vaudeville style of Abbott and Costello. The most original aspect of the humor was that it was delivered in a language all its own, and one that only constant listeners could appreciate. The idioms and expressions created by the two were always consistent, and a great source of pleasure as they became familiar.

Along with all this, there was the fact that Lauck and Goff were easily the most technically accomplished of the multi-voiced men. There was an uncanny separation of characters done by the two men, never approached by Gosden, Edgar Bergen, or anyone else.

There are many episodes extant in which Lauck or Goff appear alone with no loss of credibility. One must constantly remind oneself that the same man plays Lum, Grandpappy Spears and Cedric Wehunt. Not only are the voices sharply differentiated, but the characters themselves are clearly delineated and distinct—there is never a carry over from one to another—a flawless juggling act.

Mousey Grey, the spaced-out eccentric; Uncle Henry Lunceford, the officious prig who represents the law in Pine Ridge; Cedric Wehunt, who sounds like Mortimer Snerd, but isn't quite as bright—all these are sharply etched and immediately identifiable. And of course, there is Squire Skimp, a truly malevolent villain who makes us nervous with each entrance even as we laugh. To this roster must be added the host of characters who are constantly referred to but who never appear, and in whom we come to believe as readily as those on stage. This last phenomenon is also highly characteristic of VIC AND SADE, and accounts for the breadth and scope of both programs.

Finally, LUM AND ABNER is an excellent evocation of life on the home front during World War II, accurately transmitting information about how it was to live in an era of rationing books, victory gardens, and meatless Tuesdays.

It is cause for rejoicing that so much L & A—a significant part of the complete run—is available today. The complete LUM AND ABNER is a treasurable document which deserves an honored place in the catalog of every collector.



Collector's Corner presents...

Some Static by Ray Windrix

First came the radio receivers, which ranged from home made oatmeal and cigar box crystal sets to manufactured sets which came in complete or kit form. Next the circuits advanced up to the superhetrodyne, developed by Edwin Armstrong of Yonkers, New York in 1918 (This is the circuit still used for AM reception today). Armstrong capped his career in 1933 by inventing FM.

For the next milestone on the road to what we now term OTR, we had to have a transmitting station—enter Dr. Frank Conrad.

Radio broadcasting was born when Conrad began transmitting out of his garage, four years before Pittsburg station KDKA went on the air in 1920.

Conrad began broadcasting because he planned to manufacture radio sets under the name "Music Box," and rightly reasoned that regular broadcasting would create a demand for these sets.

Conrad was also responsible for one of the first commercials, when during one of his broadcasts, he mentioned an item for sale in a Pittsburg department store. The following day, the store was reported to have been swamped with customers.

Actually, the first licensed station to air a sponsored program was WEAJ of New York. The sponsor was a real estate company trying to sell building plots. The public was outraged the airwaves were polluted by crass commercialism, and we know only too well the results since.

In 1920, KDKA was given a license, with Conrad and Westinghouse managing operations. The station did not have a studio, and for the first six months, operated from a tent pitched atop the roof of Westinghouse's East Pittsburgh plant. As with Conrad's early home station, KDKA programs in the beginning, consisted mainly of playing phonograph records.

The first poles taken by radio in the early twenties were the result of the station's need to know how many people were listening, and how far their broadcasts reached. They obtained the information by sending out postcards to be filled out and returned to the station.

An early status symbol was to boast of how great a distance one could receive a station on his radio. Manufacturers jumped on this theme and competition

began in building long-distance receivers. The E.H. Scott Company set most records in this area. Another manufacturer, Ecodyne, had the novel idea of running advertising such as "Mr. Joe Blow on March 14, 1924, in the State of Pennsylvania, heard England on his receiver, which of course was an Ecodyne." What made this ad unique was that it was properly notarized by a local Notary Public.

Radios of this era usually were operated on two somewhat bulky batteries. Early AC sets (operating on house current) hit in 1927 and by 1928, millions were sold. The famous cathedral sets we all fondly remember were popular beginning in 1931.

Now that we've considered some of the early history of the radio stations and the sets, let us examine the programming.

Most of us know that most early radio performers came from the ranks of vaudeville, and some were stars of the record industry. Perhaps two radio giants were AMOS 'N' ANDY. Their run over the years seemed unending, but it finally did end for the same reason the other programs died: TV... AMOS 'N' ANDY on radio hung on until 1960, when the program dwindled down to a 15 minute disc jockey show.

Many of OTR's heavyweights began in the thirties. Some were The Shadow, The Lone Ranger, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Bing Crosby, Bergen and McCarthy, Fibber McGee and Molly, Lum and Abner, etc. Along with AMOS 'N' ANDY, most of these giants lasted the entire length of radio's great years. Some of the long distance runners around to combine with the other greats of the forties were Great Gildersleeve, Aldrich Family, Life of Riley, Inner Sanctum, Suspense, Whistler, Gangbusters, Mr. District Attorney, Lux Radio Theatre, Jack Armstrong, Captain Midnight and many others, to make the forties the Golden Age of Radio. This was the decade in which radio thrived, and for the most part at its end, died. By the forties, almost everything concerning the broadcast of a show had been perfected, and the gamut had been run as far as what could possibly be thought of or conceived to bombard the airwaves with—from comedy to soaps, quiz shows to kid's serials.... We loved it all.

Some of us, no doubt, share similar memories. Mine centered around a cathedral type radio which sat by my bed by the window with a ground wire running out of the window, tied to a steel rod which was driven into the ground.

I fondly remember listening to Captain Midnight, but my attention focused mainly on a premium that was being offered for 10¢, and the secret decoder message at the end of the show. I was fortunate in that we were poor and couldn't afford a television set until five years or so after most families had one. So I continued to go to bed listening to Gunsmoke on radio in the fifties each Saturday night at 8:00. For others, memories may have centered around an elaborately carved console and the glow of its "magic eye" (or yellow lighted dial) with brand names such as RCA, Philco, Atwater-Kent or Crosley.

To someone born to television, it is no doubt, difficult to appreciate a world limited to sound alone. TV's problem is it dissects its content to the point where the viewer need not think. What it lacks, of course, is what E.G. Marshall (host of CBS Mystery Theatre) often reminds us of: That magic ingredient, imagination. And last, but not least, radio was first.

When the invention of radio first hit the world, its impact was of tremendous magnitude—rivaling the impression made by man's moon landing. For the first time, the "world" of the past, present and future was at our fingertips. For those of us who experienced those days—Radio's Golden Age—be it from the beginning, or in its dying days, we were fortunate indeed. For those of us who came afterwards and never really knew these moments, we are also fortunate for the material which was collected and saved, allowing a glimpse of the Golden Age of Radio.

I will sign off now appropriately quoting you know who, as I invite you to "Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear."

(Ed: Being born in the middle fifties, I feel fortunate tape recording technology has advanced to the point where we're able to hear OTR today of equal or better fidelity than radios of the forties... ---Bob B.)



Collector's Comments from Our Readers

I have just finished reading the first issue of CC and I thoroughly enjoyed it. You fellows did such a good job that I thought I would offer some comments and suggestions:

1. I think you assume that I know more than I really do. For example, you say Al Hodge was the Green Hornet for eight years. I would like to know what years. I'm also curious as to how old Al is and what he is doing now.

2. A similar comment can be made on the News section. When you say True Detective has eight more episode making the rounds, it is necessary to have some perspective as to how many were circulating previously.
3. There are similar cases, but I think you get the idea that I would like more detail (each issue should be 100 pages).
4. In the Suspense log, the program "Two Sharp Knives" should be "To Sharp Knives." The title comes from a phrase used in the script, and context indicates "To" instead of "Two." In summing up, I think you have done an excellent job, and the above nit-picking is just to prevent enlarged craniums (and increased prices).

—Clayton W. Holden

(((Thanks for your note. Don't be afraid to nit-pick, after all, if we're going to hold onto subscribers, we have to know what they want. To answer some of your questions, Al Hodge started the G.H. in 1936, and I would estimate his age at around 60, 62, or so. There were about 14 True Detective circulating before the last 8 came out. One hundred pages a month? One day, maybe. But wouldn't that give Bob and I enlarged craniums?...or just a collective headache? Don't count it out for the semi-distant future! ----Joe W)))

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For a complete listing of the Johnny Dollar reels above, see our July/August 1978 flyer.



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Look what we have here!

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AIRWAVES #12: Convention issue with many pictures and feature article.

AIRWAVES #13: Radio Goes To War, Philip Marlowe article and log.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER #1: Al Hodge interview, hints on buying used equipment, book review: WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN?, Suspense 1942 log.

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