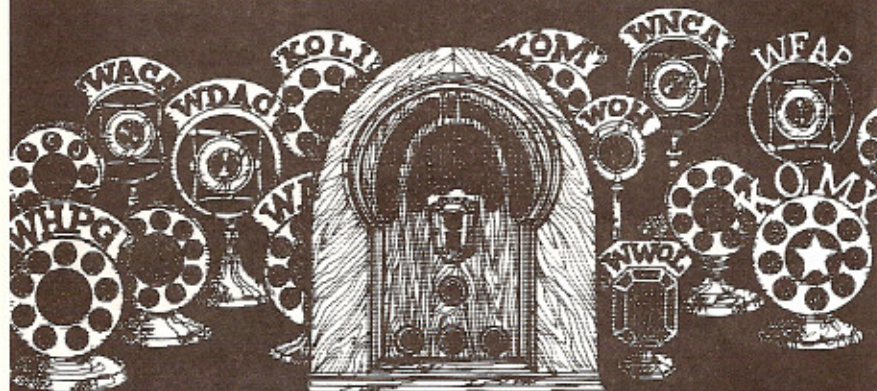
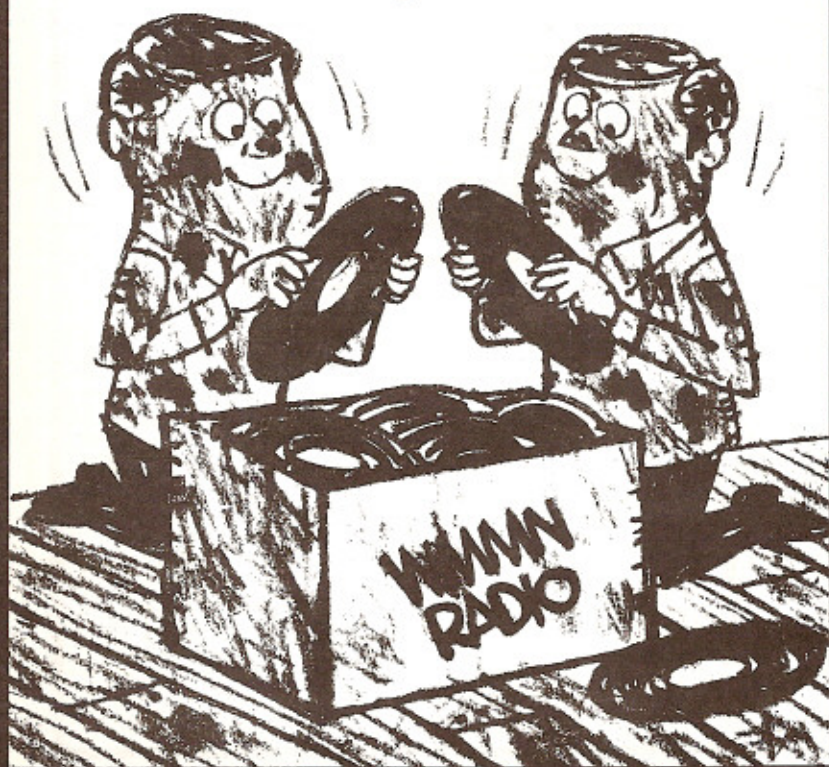


# Collector's Corner



Volume I No.7 September 1978 \$1.25

## Saga of the Great Find





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Contributing staff: Ken Piletic, Anne Nikl, Ray Windrix, David Reznick, Stuart Weiss, Max Schmid, Jim Maclise, Steve Lewis

If you have a question about COLLECTOR'S CORNER, you can call Joe Webb at (914) 375-0175 Saturdays between 1:30pm to 5:00pm Eastern time.



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## Collector's Comments from Joe Webb

As you may have noticed, this issue's lead story is that of the discovery of radio transcriptions, otherwise known to the collector as "ETs," "discs," "those funny big records I have no place to put," "those things that don't fit on my turntable," or merely "gold."

Having transcriptions is nice, but indeed one can make them absolutely worthless. Many collectors have ruined what could have been discoveries of note by not taking the time, consideration, or investment in order to record the discs correctly. They don't purchase the correct stylus (which is a plain ol' 78 stylus unless you want to be a perfectionist and get about 3 or four sizes). They don't clean the discs. They don't record at proper levels on their recorders. They don't use an equalizer or at least high and low filters.

Having the discs and all kinds of equipment does not guarantee quality sound. After all, if it's not on the disc, you can't make it appear from nowhere. But you are guaranteed the best possible sound. And if they are syndicated discs, the sound should be usually better than most network discs.

So as you go on your travels to discover transcriptions, take the time to record them properly. While it may take two hours to record a half-hour program, your end product makes all that time hunting and recording worthwhile.

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Let me at this time welcome two new contributors to COLLECTOR'S CORNER. The first is BILL JAKER, who collaborated with Ken Piletic on this issue's story. Bill and Ken will continue to keep us up to date on the find as more information on the discs and the station become available. Also allow me to welcome FRANK GILMORE, whose work will appear shortly. Frank has 60,000+ shows, and is above all, a very interesting person. We'll have more about him later on. See you next issue.

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## Saga of the Great Find

by Ken Piletic & Bill Jaker

Old time radio collectors are constantly on the lookout for new material. The additions to a personal collection will most often come from another personal collection or from a commercial catalog. But every once in a while the old programs will come straight from original discs and add to the treasure of broadcasts that were believed lost.

There are many old electrical transcriptions stored away and forgotten. As a rule, a collector has some idea as to where old disks might be and goes hunting. But our great find took place when we weren't expecting it, though in a place where anyone would expect them to be cached.

How we came to find about 130 "lost" ET's is not a complicated story, but it is a bit torturous. The two of us are ham radio operators and members of ORCATS, the Old time Radio Collectors and Traders (a bunch of hams from around North America who get together on the air to discuss old time radio and swap tapes). We've talked to each other nearly every Sunday morning, but had never met until Ken took a week's vacation from his home in Illinois to visit a ham gathering in Ohio and then on to see Bill in West Virginia.

During some of their conversations on the air, Bill told Ken about the curious situation of a social welfare agency housed in an old radio station. Ken was in the process of building a taping studio in his home and could certainly use the old "ON THE AIR" sign which the social workers and housing administrators and others at the agency could never use. Bill even mentioned the existence of foot-thick studio doors which the social workers seldom closed and would be happy to part with.

"Can you send me a door?" Ken asked one Sunday morning. "Come down and get it," responded Bill from West Virginia.

And so it turned out that when the two old friends met for the first time, they headed for a welfare agency in hopes of receiving a free door.

Marion County Community Action is housed in the former studios of radio station WMMN, in Fairmont, West Virginia. The call letters are still inscribed in the marble facade of the old building and the "studios" are one flight up. The radio station first went on the air in 1928 from studios around the corner in the Fairmont

Hotel and moved to what is now the welfare agency in 1934. The radio studios had undergone some minor renovations by the time the station had moved—oddly, back into the Fairmont Hotel building—in 1964.

However, there was no money available for renovation for Community Action when they moved in and the whole place still looked like a radio station when Ken and Bill arrived in 1978.

The "ON THE AIR" signs had been removed a few weeks earlier by Bill, but there were still double-pane windows between offices, raised floors, acoustical treatment on the walls, and of course, the heavy doors.

When Ken and Bill arrived at the agency, it was lunch time and most of the staff had left the office. Those who remained at their desks were eating their lunches and allowed the two collectors to browse through the "station."

It must have looked odd to see two grown men so enrapt by a door. It wasn't even a nice-looking door, Ken thought, probably hand-made by a local carpenter in the 1930's. It was somewhat thinner than the promised "foot-thick," but it opened and closed firmly and noiselessly in the special frame that surrounded it. It was not exactly what Ken had wanted, but he felt these were truly superdoors.

Even though desks and file cabinets now filled the rooms the two visitors could easily sense what had been master control, and looked out onto a one-time announce booth and two former studios. They could imagine announcers and musicians and see how a control board once sat where there was now only a clutter of boxes. It was possible to tell where the big clock had hung, where the program log was filed away, where a carbon mike was held by springs, and a Presto or Fairchild transcription cutter had operated under the close eye of a skilled engineer.

Bill and Ken stepped down from the control room and into another studio-turned-office. A staffer named Ronald Keffer was eating a sandwich at his desk and joined in their conversation as the two old time radio collectors speculated on how programs must have sounded from a studio with a large window that looked down on one of Fairmont's busiest streets.

It was at this point that Harry Snider entered the room. Snider is bookkeeper for Community Action and also a man who remembered when WMMN was still operating from the building.

"This was a noisy studio," he reminisced, "You could hear the streetcars going by on the air." Harry verified Ken's and Bill's theory on the studio arrange-



ment and recalled some of the performers who were heard on WMMN in the early days.

Then he casually remarked, "There are still a few records laying around here," and left the room. Bill expected him to come back with some scratchy 78s by Dinah Shore or Tommy Dorsey. But when he returned, Harry was holding three 16 inch ET's. Bill and Ken stopped talking, amazed at what Harry had found. It was gold to an old time radio collector! Collecting studio doors may have some utility, but here were actual programs.

"There are more of these," Harry said, "It's too bad they can't be played."

Of course they could be played. Ken had the skill and back home in Illinois, all the equipment needed to transfer any electrical transcriptions to tape. Even Harry could get to hear what was on the disks.

In the excitement, which had caught Ron Keffer in the middle of his sandwich, the two collectors never bothered to make note of what was on the three disks that Harry Snider held, for he led Ken and Bill across the building to a stairway leading to the third floor.

Originally the building had very high ceilings, which was desirable for radio stations in the 1930's, but a drop ceiling had been installed in part of the offices and there was a storage area between the second and third floors accessible from the stairway. Harry led the two collectors up the stairs to an opening in the wall. Back in the dusty darkness was a large cardboard box. The box had no lid and a transcription disk was visible right on top. Together Bill and Ken carried the heavy box down to the second floor and placed it on a chair. Inside the box were dozens of electrical transcriptions.

Out of breath and dirty from the accumulated dust, the two collectors had barely begun to search through the box when Harry returned from the stairway and said, "Come with me. I think there may be more stuff upstairs."

This time, we went all the way up the stairs to an unoccupied third floor. This had once been a fine suite of rooms, but now the floorboards creaked and the sun shone through the grimy windows. Dust drifted everywhere and there were even a few cobwebs to make the scene complete.

Harry led us through a doorway with a magnificent carved wood frame and there, in the corner by a window in the otherwise empty room, was a pile of "stuff."

Several dozen more ET's were gathering dust. Most of the disks in the box downstairs had protective jackets, but these were just piled up and filthy. A couple of them had been left too close to the radiator and were

bent out of shape, but all the rest appeared to be in perfect condition. As Ken began to sort through the transcriptions, Harry retrieved from another corner of the room an enormous ledger. It was not one of his accounting ledgers, but the gold embossed letters on the cover identified it as the WMMN program log. There were three such books abandoned in the room—traffic logs actually—and they covered every minute of the station's operations from 1936 through 1941.

Old time radio collectors sometimes have to get their hands dirty. Bill and Ken carried the disks and ledgers back to the second floor and began to sort through them. Titles and dates written on the labels or scratched in the acetate indicated that they had been cut during the 1940's and covered a ten-year span until the time tape recorders began to replace disk cutters for general recording work.

At the bottom of the stack in the box were some empty envelopes, and the collectors began to insert the disks into them, to protect them from any possible scratches. In checking the titles, the excitement became contagious as the other office workers returned from lunch. There were many recordings of "News from Europe" from July through September of 1940 as well as disks of sporting events and political rallies—even a speech by Wendell Wilke. A few were familiar network programs, House Party and Grand Central Station, but most seemed to be recordings of local broadcasts with titles like Old Sagebrush Roundup. There were some transcribed syndicated shows such as The Magic Water Crystals Show in the find. We even discovered the old WMMN sign-on and sign-off announcements.

Dirty and worn-out, but exhilarated, we still didn't know what we were going to do with the disks. Ken had the equipment that could transfer them to tape, but he lived out of town. Could the collectors carry off the disks and could Ken keep them long enough to do the giant dubbing job? The answer to both questions was "yes."

With much grunting and sweating, Ken and Bill carried the overflowing box down the stairs and stuffed it into the trunk of Bill's car. Back at the motel where Ken was staying, the ET's were transferred to Ken's car, which allowed all the disks to be examined closely. The count was slightly over 100. Figuring 15 minutes per side, that would be about 50 hours worth of material, or the equivalent of about eight 1800' reels when recorded in the usual format.

One disk looked especially interesting. It was titled The Sleepy Time Program, and neither of us had ever heard of it. Fortunately, Ken had a transcription player (recently purchased in another stroke of good luck) in the car. We carried the player and disc to the motel room. The disc was very dirty and had to be



washed before the needle was dropped to it, and even then proved to be a bit scratchy, though not so badly that it couldn't be corrected later.

Apparently, Sleepy Time was intended to put the listener to sleep at the end of the broadcast day. Ken guessed that the station hoped the listener would fall asleep with the radio on WMMN and not tune to the competition. The program consisted of organ music—no melody in particular, just chords and improvisations—with an announcer speaking prose about the sweetness of sleep in a caressing voice. The program worked. Ken almost fell asleep—perhaps due to the excitement and exertion of the day, though maybe the old program still held a hypnotic spell.

The next day, Ken returned to Illinois to start transferring the disks to tape, and Bill prepared to dub the tapes for Harry Snider and others who'd wondered what they were.

Bill continued to look into the circumstances of the discs being abandoned in the old studios. According to a long-time WMMN staff member, at the time the station was preparing to move there was some fear that the landlord might charge extra rent if they remained past the end of the month, so they left everything behind that wasn't needed for continued operation. When the Community Action agency took over the building, the cleanup crew, described by Harry Snider as "some college boys," carefully put aside the old disks. From time to time, Harry said, he or his colleagues would "cabbage away" a disk or two and the feeling was "they were going to disappear eventually." A few were even turned into dishes and ashtrays.

As our saga develops, we can see what a treasure could have been lost. The News from Europe disks, the first to be dubbed to tape, were of the 8:00 AM CBS report from the summer of 1940. During those crucial days, London and Berlin were being bombed and Italy was taking military action in Africa. With the United States still neutral, CBS was able to maintain correspondents in the Axis capitals—William L. Shirer and Edwin Hartridge in Berlin, Cecil Brown in Rome. Reporting from London, of course, was Edward R. Murrow, with assistance from young Eric Sevareid and Larry Leseur. The technical quality of these overseas reports was phenomenal and the disks had been perfectly preserved. Among revelations in hearing them now is that Edward R. Murrow's famous "This is London" opening was actually just the standard introduction used by all CBS correspondents—though Eric Sevareid would simply say "This is London," while Murrow's resonant voice intoned "This...is London."

Station WMMN was a major country/western station from the late 1920's through 1940's and many of the disks contained rare performances by Grandpa Jones (who called himself "Grandpa" 40 years ago, it seems), Buddy

Starcher and other names familiar to country music devotees. As the dubbing progressed, however, Ken discovered that many of the disks contained duplicate programs. Possibly they were cut for distribution to other stations.

It seems though, that the greatest interest in West Virginia will be for political programs with the voices of such personages from recent state history as Governor Okey Patteson. Once tapes are available, Bill has promised to make a copy for the State Archives.

So the Great Find turns out to be of interest to more than just OTR collectors. And as the saga continues, a moral begins to emerge. The moral is: Keep looking. Disks turn up in the most unlikely places and under unusual circumstances.

What if we had arrived at the old studio at 10:00 AM rather than noon? The offices would have been busy and we'd likely have not met Harry and been led to the disks. They would still be hidden away gathering dust. But thanks to a good fortune, a helpful friend, an impatient landlord and some anonymous "college boys" who treated transcriptions with a little respect, some old time radio has been saved.

The Great Find may have felt like a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but we feel it could happen again.



## Collector's Comments from Our Readers

From Rodger Johnson, Minneapolis, MN

Bob,

Back in issue 30 of News & Reviews, there was a letter from Roger Neveaux asking about reels containing Louisiana Hayride and featuring Elvis Presley. Can you tell me if any of these reels turned up, as I would like the programs also.

In Collector's Corner #5, I was glad to see that there are 12 new Chandu shows released. Do you know of, or have any reels of the Topper series? Keep up the good work with CC. It's the best thing to happen to OTR yet. I really enjoy it.

(Ed.: Glad you like CC. Unfortunately, no Louisiana Hayrides turned up I know of. You might write to Neveaux directly, but I would doubt he's had much luck either....There are some single Topper shows floating around, but probably not enough to make up a full reel. If there are any full reels of Topper around, they certainly aren't in general circulation...Bob B.)





## A Goldmine in tape by Frank Gilmore

Several years ago when I first began "heavy" trading of old radio programs, I soon realized I needed a good source of recording tape at a reasonable price. I had contented myself with Shamrock and Capitol for trading purposes with more costly tapes for masters.

After looking around a while, I soon found there just was not any brand of new tape that could be purchased inexpensively.

Then an idea began to form. What about all the expensive tape used by radio stations and professional recording studios? I had worked in such studios previously and knew that masters were only kept for a certain length of time...then disposed of.

I sat down at my typewriter and began sending letters to old friends and business people that I remembered from my "pro" days. I asked in simple terms if they had any used mastering grade tape that they were declaring surplus, and if so, what they would sell it to me for.

A few weeks went by and the first response arrived. One studio in Tennessee had a large quantity of low noise tape on 10½" NAB (National Association of Broadcasters) hubs (no reel flanges) that they would like an offer on. They said some of the tape had edit splices, and some reels were slightly less than 3600' in length. The first figure that came to mind was \$2.00 per reel, so this was my bid. To make a long story short, about two weeks passed and I received word I now owned over 700 reels of tape. They waited until my check was received then packaged the whole mess and shipped it by motor freight. Freight charges were terrible. I wound up with nearly \$3.00 per reel invested. I waited anxiously to see my "prize."

Three weeks passed before a large truck pulled up to my house and began unloading boxes and boxes of tape. I hurriedly uncrated some of it...Ampex low noise... Scotch low noise...Agfa low noise! Wow!

I filled every nook and cranny with tape and still had boxes of the stuff sitting on my front porch. I contacted some friends whom I knew needed tape and they agreed to take some off my hands.

Strangely enough, this was only the beginning. Soon responses came in from other studios. I picked up 50 reels here...a couple of hundred there...I was being deluged with beautiful slightly used mastering tape! I was hard pressed to keep enough money on hand to accept the offers as they came in. But I knew this could not

last forever, and I also knew that my collecting was reaching huge proportions with increasing demands for tape. So I bought more and more.

Today I have no idea how much tape is stored. I have it in four different towns! I would estimate I have enough to keep me going for many years to come, but I will still buy more if the price is right!

One unexpected bonus was the tapes that came from radio stations. In many cases, they contained all sorts of interesting material the station had not erased...local spots, ball games, interview shows, etc. Much of this I felt I should keep so I transcribed it to other reels. Some rare original music works I kept intact in their 15 IPS format.

The reason I am writing this is to suggest to all tape enthusiasts that they investigate the radio stations and studios in their area. If you never ask, you will never know what they might be getting ready to haul to the junkyard. I just missed a huge amount of Kodak master tape that was burned in a rubbish pile! Two days earlier I would really have had something going.

A few rules are in order though. First, always be sure in your mind what price you are willing to pay for used tape. Don't always expect to get terrific bargains like 3600' pancakes for \$3.00. Be realistic. The average studio needs their storage space and always has something to get out the door, but they aren't stupid. There are increasing numbers of home type studios that use used tape in their productions. This will be your strongest competitor. Next, keep in mind the distance and freight charges involved. Most all companies will ship either UPS or Motor Freight. I got one batch of tape via bus and that costs dearly.

Do not buy computer tape either split or full size. This stuff is extremely abrasive to audio recording heads.

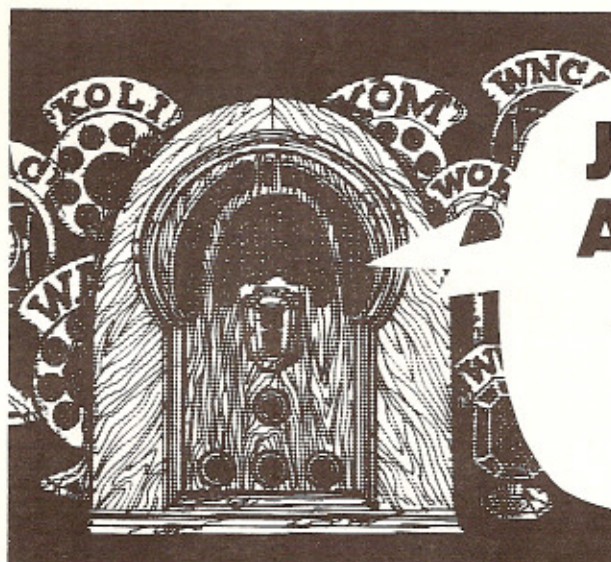
Check the incoming tapes for interesting program material. You never know what might be there.

A final word of caution: Most splices you will find are very professional—usually Edit-all type. These won't hurt a thing, but there is always the exception. I have actually found audio tape from a studio with splices made with masking tape! I spent hours reworking those to make the tape usable.

Happy searching! A little time and money can supply tape to take care of all your trading.

(Ed.: It is likely you will find more 1½ mil tape than 1 mil, so you'll end up with more 1200' reels than 1800', if you wind the tape onto 7" reels. Of the stations I've worked at and visited, 1½ mil is the standard—it doesn't stretch as easily on heavy duty machines, and is not as prone to print through. Bob B.)





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The convention opens at 9:00AM with our dealers room of over 25 tables, where radio memorabilia can be purchased, traded, or just admired. Also scheduled are acting and teachers' workshops, a reading by the doorkeeper of the INNER SANCTUM, Raymond Edward Johnson, movies, and a question and answer period with our guests, along with other events.

That's just the beginning! Our evening closes out a fine day with cocktails and a buffet dinner, followed by two live radio shows starring our guests, who are then honored with our annual awards.

Tickets for the entire day are \$15.00 which includes all the events and the buffet dinner. Children under 16 are charged \$12.50. Participation in afternoon events only is \$3.00, children under 16, \$1.50.

So join in the fun! We're about an hour from New York, off convenient Interstate 95 (Exit 27-Lafayette Blvd., Bridgeport).

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Orange, CT 06477

Indicate how many will be attending and if you need a display or dealer table.

DEALERS! There is no additional cost for tables.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: call New Haven, CT (203)795-6261 or 795-3748





Collector's Corner  
OTR Log

# SUSPENSE

=SUSPENSE 1948=

| Date   | Title                                     | Star(s)              |
|--|---|----------------------|
| 1/3  | Black Curtain                             | Robt Montgomery      |
| 1/10   | Kandy Tooth (Sam Spade)                   | Howard Duff          |
| 1/17   | Love's Lovely Counterfeit                 | James Cagney         |
| 1/24   | Black Angel (Eve)                         | June Havoc           |
| 1/31   | Bet with Death                            | Otto Kreuger         |
| 2/7  | Donovan's Brain                           | John McIntire        |
| 2/14   | The Lodger                                | Robt Montgomery      |
| 2/21   | Beyond Reason                             | Robert Ryan          |
| 2/28   | House by the River                        | John McIntire        |
| 3/6  | In a Lonely Place                         | Robt Montgomery      |
| 3/13   | Nightmare                                 | Eddie Bracken        |
| 3/20   | Wet Saturday (and)<br>August Heat         | Dennis Hoey          |
| 3/27   | Night Must Fall                           | Robt Montgomery      |
| 4/3  | Suspicion                                 | Sam Jaffe            |
| 4/10   | Crossfire                                 | Robert Young         |
| 4/17   | PRE-EMPTED                                |                      |
| 4/24   | The Search                                | Howard Culver        |
| 5/1  | The Blind Spot                            | Edmund O'Brien       |
| 5/8  | Life Ends at Midnight                     | Fay Bainter          |
| 5/15   | Deadline at Dawn                          | Helen Walker         |
| <p>All the above listed shows, except for 5/8, are all sixty minute shows. Between the 5/15 and 7/8 broadcasts, SUSPENSE was off the air</p> |   |                      |
| 7/8  | Last Chance                               | Cary Grant           |
| 7/15   | Summer Night                              | Ida Lupino           |
| 7/22   | Deep into Darkness                        | Douglas Fairbanks Jr |
| 7/29   | The Yellow Wallpaper                      | Agnes Moorehead      |
| 8/5  | An Honest Man                             | Charles Laughton     |
| 8/12   | Beware the Quiet Man                      | Ann Southern         |
| 8/19   | Crisis                                    | Martha Scott         |
| 8/26   | Song of the Heart                         | Van Heflin           |
| 9/2  | Morrison Affair                           | Madeleine Carroll    |
| 9/9  | The Big Shot                              | Burt Lancaster       |
| 9/16   | Hitch-hike Poker                          | Gregory Peck         |
| 9/23   | Celebration                               | Robert Young         |
| 9/30   | Man who Wanted to be<br>Edward G Robinson | EGR, of course       |
| 10/7   | Night Cry                                 | Ray Milland          |
| 10/14  | A Little Piece of Rope                    | Lucille Ball         |
| 10/21  | Give Me Liberty                           | William Powell       |
| 10/28  | PRE-EMPTED                                |                      |

| Date  | Title                 | Star(s)                           |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 11/4  | Death Sentence        | John Garfield                     |
| 11/11 | Muddy Track           | Edmund O'Brien                    |
| 11/18 | Sorry, Wrong Number   | Agnes Moorehead                   |
| 11/25 | The Screaming Woman   | Margaret O'Brien                  |
| 12/2  | Hands of Mr Ottermole | Claude Rains and<br>Vincent Price |
| 12/9  | The Sisters           | Rosalind Russell                  |
| 12/16 | No Escape             | James Cagney                      |
| 12/23 | Holiday Story         | Herbert Marshall                  |
| 12/30 | Break-Up              | William Bendix                    |

## News News News

Well over 100 LET GEORGE DO IT programs starring BOB BAILEY will be circulating by early next year. New ROGUE'S GALLERY, RICHARD DIAMOND 5-part JOHNNY DOLLAR continue to appear. More JOHNNY DOLLARS should continue to appear.

The Emergency Broadcast System, designed to alert the nation of impending disaster was triggered by the sound effect of a bird's chirp on MYSTERY THEATER when played on the CBS network. CBS' New York office was flooded with calls from affiliates wondering when and where the bombs were coming from....seem's the chirp sound effect was the same frequency as the warning signal used to set off the system. Years ago, Arthur Godfrey would set it off by whistling. By the way, there was no disaster.

Remember Al Hodge (CC#1)? Well it seems he's landed a part in THE KILLING SEA, a new movie to star Cliff Robertson. Hodge will portray a CIA agent. Producer of the movie, Irwin Schiff was a CAPTAIN VIDEO fan who never forgot his hero. It's the first job in show-business since CAPTAIN VIDEO went off the air. Hodge, 66, lately a shoe salesman, will be heading off to Canada for filming of the movie in September.

Add to the list of radio-celebrities for the third annual POR convention announcers GEORGE ANSBRO (Widder Brown, American Album) and BOB DIXON (Life Can Be Beautiful, Perry Mason), and writer-director BLAIR WALLISER (Chandu, Helen Trent, much more). For additional information on the October 7, Bridgeport, Connecticut Holiday Inn convention, write Jay Hickerson, Box C, Orange, CT 06477, or call him at (203)795-6261 or (203)795-3748. \$15.00 admission includes buffet dinner.



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## RICHARD DIAMOND

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Reels Only encourages two or more collectors to form small buying groups for the purpose of acquiring quality sound. Buy these tapes, then pass them around and let your OTR collecting friends make a copy for their collections.

SORRY, BUT NO SPECIALS ARE SHIPPED BEFORE THE FIRST of the month. All orders received during August will be ready for mailing on the first (1st) of September.

**WARNING:**

THESE TAPES ARE SOLD FOR YOUR PERSONAL ENJOYMENT ONLY. EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE ALL OF BROADCAST QUALITY THEY ARE NOT SOLD FOR THAT PURPOSE!

PLEASE USE THE SPECIAL ORDER FORM BELOW

1800' 3 3/4 ips 1/2 track

1800' 3 3/4 ips 1/2 track

"RICHARD DIAMOND"

TAPE 1: Side 1: 5-15-49 -Ralph Chase's step daughter Elizabeth  
5-22-49 -elderly news vendor -stolen purse  
5-29-49 -gangster beats up Diamond  
Side 2: 9-24-49 -Betty Moran kills blackmailer  
10-22-49 -Rene Benet hires Diamond  
12-17-49 -Diamond knocks out 'Big Man' \$7.50

TAPE 2: Side 1: 12-24-49 -Christmas Story-  
1-14-50 -Mr. Victor hires Diamond  
2-5-50 -bodyguard for Timothy (the seal)  
Side 2: 2-12-50 -Elaine Tannor missing  
2-19-50 -jewel thief Wells is dead  
2-26-50 -cop is killed in line of duty \$7.50

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