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# ILLUSTRATED PRESS

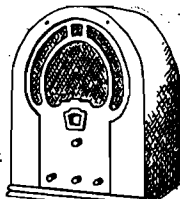
EST. 1975

JULY 1989  
#154



RFD SKELTON AT THE AGE 26  
IN 1939

THE OLD TIME



RADIO CLUB

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**THE OLD TIME RADIO CLUB  
MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

Club dues are \$17.50 per year from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31. Members receive a tape listing, library list, monthly newsletter (**THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS**) an annual magazine (**MEMORIES**), and various special items. Additional family members living in the same household as a regular member may join the club for \$5.00 per year. These members have all the privileges of regular members but do not receive the publications. A junior membership is available to persons 15 years of age or younger who do not live in the household of a regular member. This membership is \$13.00 per year and includes all the benefits of a regular membership. Regular membership dues are as follows: If you join in January-March dues are \$17.50 for the year; April-June, \$14.00; July-September, \$10.00; October-December, \$7. ALL renewals are due by January 2! Your renewal should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be certain to notify us if you change your address.

**OVERSEAS MEMBERSHIPS** are now available. Annual dues are \$29.75. Publications will be airmailed.

\*\*\*\*\*  
The Old Time Radio Club meets the **FIRST** Monday of the month (August through June) at 393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY. Anyone interested in the "Golden Age of Radio" is welcome. Meetings start 7:30 pm.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS** is a monthly newsletter of **THE OLD TIME RADIO CLUB** headquartered in Buffalo, NY. Contents except where noted, are copyright 1988 by the OTRC. All rights are hereby assigned to the contributors. Editor: Richard Olday; Production: Arlene Olday. Published since 1975. Printed in U.S.A. Cover designed by Eileen Curtin.

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Buffalo, NY 14213  
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Dominic Parisi  
38 Ardmore Pl.  
Buffalo, NY 14213

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**ADVERTISING RATES FOR MEMORIES:**  
\$60.00 for a full page (**ALL ADS MUST BE CAMERA READY**)  
\$40.00 for a half page  
**SPECIAL:** OTR Club members may take **50%** off these rates.  
Advertising Deadline - September 1

This edition of The Illustrated Press is meant to be a companion piece to the issue of last January.

It is intended to help clear up the terminology or jargon that you are liable to run across in the recording, collecting, and trading of OTR programs.

Much of the material you will already know.., or think you know. Possibly some of the stuff you will never have a need to know.

There are all sorts of books around that will give you this information but they tend to be over-technical and hard to understand. Often they leave you more confused than when you started.

We will attempt to use only terms that everyone can understand. Simplicity is the key here because, honestly, most of the technical jargon is beyond our understanding also.

Tell the truth...Can you, at this time, explain what the BIAS switch on your recorder does? Or what does MIL. stand for? Or what is the difference between ACETATE, MYLAR, and POLYESTER tape?

We, at the Old Time Radio Club, hope that you will be able to answer these and many more questions after reading this issue.

To help matters along we have divided this into two sections. The first refers to collecting / trading terms. The second section concerns itself with recording terms.

A  
GLOSSARY  
OF  
O. T. R.  
JARGON

COLLECTING/TRADING TERMS

NO OP/CL

This is something that you frequently see listed in catalogs. All it means is that, for some reason or other, the show has no opening and/or closing. It is the story only.

In most instances the commercials will also have been deleted. This editing does not take anything away from the story but does have an adverse effect on the overall ambience of the show.

If you have a show that is un-edited it is recommended that you leave it that way as the entire show is preferable. To collectors,

edits are considered as defects.

CLIPPED and EDITED basically mean the same thing as NO OP/CL.

\*\*\*\*\*

ROUND ROBIN

This is a method of collecting tapes that is in favor with many people. Simply put, it is a partnership of collectors who agree to buy certain reels of shows from dealers and splitting the cost.

One partner will get the shows and make copies for himself. Then he passes the original tapes along to the next partner so he can make his own copies. This partner then does the same.

The originals are circulated until all the partners have made their copies. After this is done the originals are spread out among the partners in a manner predetermined before buying the shows.

This type of deal is fair to all involved and cuts the cost of buying from dealers down to a percentage of what it might have been.

Some collectors form this kind of partnership and rely less and less on actual trading to get the shows they want.

If you are thinking of this kind of deal go into it carefully and only with reliable people you can trust as it only takes one of

the partners to mess it up.

\*\*\*\*\*

COLLECTORS / TRADERS

You might imagine that these two words are interchangeable, that they mean the very same thing. Well, they don't necessarily.

A COLLECTOR is one who gathers together OTR shows for his own personal use. The means he uses to obtain these shows are various. He might dub some from radio rebroadcasts, or buy them from dealers, or borrow them from tape libraries, or any other way he can think of. This does not rule out trading shows with other traders but that is way down on his priority list.

He has come up with alternatives that allow him to get the shows he wants without going through the sometimes hassle of trading.

In many instances his sources have a wider variety of shows and are faster than the normal trading process.

Most collectors start out by trading shows but gradually, through learning of contacts, withdraw from the sometimes frantic trading activities. They then rely on these "sources" to get whatever shows they want.

On the other hand a TRADER is also a collector but one who relies on getting his shows from other traders. He likes the camaraderie and warm feelings that you get when dealing on a one to one basis with someone sharing the same interests.

Some great friendships have come out of what was, at first, a trading relationship.

Those actively involved in trading find themselves constantly plugging away at it. Whether it means dubbing trades, or cataloging them, or studying other's catalogs, or writing letters to set up trades, the trader is seldom without something he can be doing.

This pace is very agreeable to many who like to "keep busy". It is the trader that has the best time when attending OTR conventions as he gets to meet in person many of those who he knows only via the mail.

Collectors and Traders - The same thing, but different.

\*\*\*\*\*

NPR/ABC/NBC/CBS/PBS/BBC/MUT./ etc.

These initials designate the origin of the original broadcast. There are others (see AFRS) that also fit in with this group that will become familiar to you as you get deeper into trading/collecting.

Each of the initials is pretty much self-explanatory.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### AFRS

These initials stand for ARMED FORCES RADIO SERVICE. This is a broadcast service to our people in the military overseas. It is the source of many of the OTR shows in existence today.

The network shows are first "neutralized" (stripped of the commercials, etc.) and then rebroadcast. At times the actual series title will be changed to something like "Mystery Theater" or "Comedy Playhouse" but the real titles are usually easy to recognize.

If it weren't for copies of these AFRS broadcasts many OTR shows would be lost forever.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### CUSTOM REELS / REELS ONLY

OTR traders that deal in reels can be found in two categories. Ones that trade an entire reel at a time and those who will make up custom reels.

Custom reels are the best because the shows on the reel(s) you get are the shows that you specifically request. They might all be of the same series or may not. The choice is yours.

A trader that swaps shows by REEL ONLY limits you in the variety of programs you can get from him. For example...If you see a reel listed in his catalog with two shows on it that you really want then you must take whatever else is on that reel in order to get those two shows.

Some traders prefer trading like this as it makes dubbing the copies extremely easy and very time saving. If you can find entire reels of material that you want from him then everything is fine but in most cases, when only partial reels are wanted, you might have to take a bunch of shows that you do not want.

Many traders catalog their shows by reel number and not by numbering each show individually. This way, if the person he wants to trade with trades REEL ONLY, then there is no problem. If the person trades CUSTOM REELS then all he has to do is pick individual shows from the reels listed. Both ways are then covered and the trader is not restricted to only one mode of swapping shows.

The only other alternative would be to have two catalogs, one for REELS ONLY and one for CUSTOM REELS. This is an awful lot of work and frankly, too much of a

bother.

If one trades CUSTOM REELS then it is only right that the person he is trading with should be allowed the same choice. Conversely, if one trades REELS ONLY, then he should not expect to be allowed to pick CUSTOM REELS from the other.

The method of trading is something that should be established before the first trade is ever made. It will stop misunderstandings before they even start.

Trading OTR shows is a friendly thing and a minor misunderstanding about something like this could be a way of messing it up.

Hey, what is fair for one is fair for the other.

CUSTOM REELS are also sometimes referred to as SHOW FOR SHOW, or HOUR FOR HOUR reels.

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#### SPEED FLUX

SPEED FLUX is just a short way of saying speed fluctuation.

At some time when someone was dubbing the show it was done on a machine that was having speed problems where the unit would speed up or slow down at intervals.

This, of course, affects the recorded signal.

On some tapes this can be very irritating and totally ruin a show.

Others might have only slight speed variations that can only be noticed during musical passages. These shows are listenable but not recommended unless there are no other copies available.

After all, something is better than nothing.

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#### DOUBLE TRACKING/CROSSTALK/LOGS

#### DOUBLE SPEEDING/ GOVT.TAPES

These terms have all been explained in the January, 1989 (#148) issue of The Illustrated Press.

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#### NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are the "grapevine" or voice of the hobby. They are informative and chatty publications distributed by many OTR clubs to their memberships.

Ranging from a single-page mimeographed letter to a multi-page magazine format, the newsletter is a club's way of letting it's membership know just what has been happening in the world of OTR.

They often can be of help when a member is looking for certain shows or information.

The trader that is new to the game can find a newsletter a vital aid in building his or her collection by giving useful hints about collecting or trading.

Some newsletters are slick and glossy while others are anything but, but they are all aimed at giving both information and pleasure to their readers.

It goes without saying that we, at the OLD TIME RADIO CLUB, think our newsletter is the best but that does not mean that the others are not outstanding. As a matter of fact most of the others are remarkable for their consistent quality.

Not all newsletters are published monthly. Some are bi-monthly, while still others might be quarterly. It all depends on the club.

Possibly the longest lived newsletter of them all is put out by Jay Hickerson with his "Hello Again" effort. It's been around for a long time and deservedly so. We hope it stays around for a long time to come.

A final word about newsletters. It is a constant and universal problem facing newsletter editors to come up with new material. If you feel that you have something to say, or run across a OTR related article, why don't you send it to the editor of your newsletter. It will be appreciated.

SOUND RATINGS

I would imagine that every collector or trader in the hobby could come up with a system to properly grade just how good a show is as regard to it's sound.

That is the problem. There are so many ways of doing it that there is no set standard and we are not liable to have one in the foreseeable future.

The most common system in use is a poor one at best and is based on the collector's own judgements and sometimes these judgements are widely different.

This system is broken down into 5 categories and each is admittedly a generalization.

The categories are.....

POOR - There is a lot wrong soundwise. Order this show only if it's there are no others available and don't expect much.

FAIR - Only a little better than poor. The sound is definitely not up to par and, at times, might be unlistenable. Again, don't expect much when ordering a show in this category.

GOOD - This kind of show is listenable but there are disturbing elements in it such as hum, static, or bassy-ness that detract from the overall enjoyment.

For many collectors this is

the bottom rating in their collections. Any shows that do not measure up to this rating are usually discarded.

VERY GOOD - Probably the most common rating given in catalogs. These shows might have a minor flaw but are crisp and clear and a pleasure to listen to. It would be nice if all shows would fit into this grouping.

EXCELLENT - These shows are as near broadcast quality as possible. Without any apparent defects, these shows are the ultimate in listening pleasure.

A warning though. Some collectors have tin ears and are very free in their use of this rating. After trading for a while you will be able to determine if your trading partner is one of these people.

As previously stated, these descriptions are general in nature and should be treated as such. It's not a great system and doesn't cover specific defects but it's all we've got and all we are likely to get.

\*\*\*\*\*





TWO-FERS

There are some established traders who will, out of the goodness of their hearts, trade with novice traders who have no shows that they really want.

These traders will, in lieu of shows, ask that for each reel of material requested two blank reels of equal quality be sent. The trader will dub one of the reels and keep the other for himself.

This is a kindness that these traders do to help some collectors get started. If you are lucky enough to run across one of these people do not abuse his generosity by ordering excessive amounts of reels and sending him those dirt-cheap used government reels for the trade.

Remember, he's doing YOU a favor!

\*\*\*\*\*

SYNDICATED / SYND.

A show that is marked SYND. means that the show was never broadcast over a radio network.

The packager of the show had approached individual stations to pick up the show and it was these stations, usually smaller ones, who aired the program.

Just because a program was a syndicated one does not mean that it wasn't a quality show.

Quite a few OTR shows started out as station by station productions. Some went on to networks while others lasted their entire run in syndication.

The Lone Ranger, when it first started, was briefly a syndicated show.

\*\*\*\*\*

AIR CHECK

All AIR CHECK really means is that the collector's master tape was recorded off the air from the original broadcast or a re-broadcast. This is not really significant as to the sound quality of the show because of the capriciousness of over-the-air transmissions.

For example...If there was a storm going on during the broadcast there might be moments of static present. Any number of things can cause interference to receiving a and AIR CHECKS are fair game to them.

We are not saying that AIR CHECKS are a bad thing. On the contrary. They give the feeling of actually hearing the broadcast as it was made, of hearing it the way the listeners back then heard it.

It can be very much like actually "being there" and isn't that what OTR fans are striving for?

Like any other shows AIR CHECKS vary in sound quality, so be guided

by the sound ratings. AIR CHECKS are considered a plus.

A funny thing about the term air check. In doing research on it we came up with any number of definitions that were widely divergent as to specific meanings. The only thread that was more or less common to them all was that they were recordings made off the air.

It appears that each person who uses this term believes that his definition is the right one! So..... ??????????

\*\*\*\*\*

TECHNICAL / RECORDING TERMS

MASTERS / MASTER TAPES

In this instance MASTERS refers to the tape that is your copy of a show. This is the copy that you make other copies from. It is the tape that you keep in your own collection.

\*\*\*\*\*

DECIBLES / dB

A bel (short for Alexander Graham Bell) is a unit of sound. A deci. is one tenth of something.

Put them together and you have the word decibel which means one tenth of a bel, the smallest sound the human ear can hear.

There is a formula for working

out exactly what a decibel is but it runs many pages in length and is v-e-r-y complicated.

As a general rule you can say that decibel means loudness or gain.

The abbreviation for this word is dB (small d - capital B). I have no idea why this is so.

\*\*\*\*\*

S/N RATIO (Signal to Noise Ratio)

This is the amount of noise (hiss, crackle, hum, etc.) that is recorded along with the material being dubbed. This noise can be caused from the tape player, the recorder, or the tape itself.

In other words, it is the sound put on a tape once the signal being recorded has stopped but the recorder continues to run.

The difference between the show (signal) being recorded and the noise being recorded along with it is called the SIGNAL TO NOISE RATIO (S/N RATIO).

If your units do not have a high ratio then there are many products on the market that will help overcome the problem.

Sometimes just using a better grade of tape will lessen this problem tremendously as the cheaper grades tend to be prone to this unwanted noise.

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I.P.S. ( Inches Per Second )

IPS indicates the amount of tape that passes the recorder heads in a one second period of time.

On a tape recorded at 3 & 3/4 ips, three and one half inches pass by the heads for every second of time you are listening.

At the 7 & 1/2 ips. speed, seven and one half inches pass by the heads for every second second.

These are the two main tape speeds used in collecting and trading OTR shows.

Some recorders have the ability to run at faster or slower speeds but they are not generally used.

The tape speed of a cassette is 1 & 7/8 ips. This is the standard on all cassettes.

\*\*\*\*\*

MYLAR / ACTETATE TAPE

Let's start out by saying that MYLAR is not really a kind of tape even though general usage seems to have made it so. MYLAR is a brand name for POLYESTER tape.

All Mylar tape is Polyester, but all Polyester tape is not Mylar! It is much like a person calling a refrigerator a Frigidaire.

Polyester and Acetate tape both record very well. It is the properties of the tape itself that make the difference.

Acetate tape has been around the longest. It records very well but does have a tendency to dry out with age. With this drying out comes a real problem for the collector. The oxide backing, the "stuff" that actually records and holds the signal, tends to peel or flake off leaving just a clear strip of tape that is absolutely devoid of any sound.

Acetate tape also will snap (break) in some circumstances. This is a plus to some collectors as the tape can be easily spliced together again with no damage done to it.

This kind of tape is gradually losing favor among collectors and will probably disappear from usage in the future.

Mylar/Polyester tape has been in use for a long time and has proven itself to be a durable, well performing tape on which to record. As years go by it will likely become even better because of new formulations of backing.

Polyester tape does not snap. It will stretch to a thread before finally breaking. A break of this kind is not repairable and the material on a stretched piece of tape is lost.

Another factor to consider is that this tape is so tough it can be made extremely thin and that can cause

a variety of problems.(See MIL.)

The tape contained in cassettes and cartridges are all of the polyester variety.

One problem that polyester tape has that acetate tape doesn't is that the polyester tape seems to age badly and develop a screechy sound. Hopefully, this problem will be solved in the near future.

You can find out if a reel of tape is polyester or acetate by simply holding the reel up to a strong light and looking at the tape edgewise.

If it is translucent (it lets light through without being transparent) it is acetate. If no light comes through, it is polyester.

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LEADER TAPE

Leader tape is non-recordable tape spliced onto the start and the finish of a reel of taps.

It is there to help in the initial threading onto the take up reel.

Another function is when a collector writes on it such information as might apply to that reel. Some leader tapes come with timing marks already printed on it. To use this you must have a Strobe light.

\*\*\*\*\*

MIL.

A mil. is a unit of measurement to show how thick one layer of tape is. A mil. is a 1000th of an inch and is from the Latin word "mille" meaning a thousand.

The usual thickness of a 1200 ft. tape on a 7 inch reel is 1½ mil. On an 1800.ft. reel, also 7 inch, the thickness is 1 mil. These are the best for recording shows. (See Print Through).

Use of ½ mil. tape increases the running time greatly but has many adverse side effects. Because of it's ultra-thinness the tape can twist easily, stretch badly, and have a tendency to flip over in the tape guides. This is a disaster when making a recording. The ½ mil. tape is also somewhat less sensitive to accepting a recorded signal.

There is also on the market a ¼ mil. tape but be warned, this stuff can be real trouble. Consider it a curiosity item not to be used for serious dubbing.

\*\*\*\*\*

PRINT THROUGH

Print through is nothing more than a repeating or echo of one layer of tape transferring to the next. It is usually very faint but, at times, can be quite irritating and impossible to correct once it happens.

There are three main causes of print through.

One is the use of super-thin tape. 1/2 or 3/4 mil. tape is especially prone to print through. 1 mil. is less apt and 1 1/2 mil. is the least likely to be affected.

Another cause of print through is winding the tape too tightly on the reel. This tightness forces the tape layers together under pressure and the magnetic signal, being just that, can echo in a relatively short time.

Yet another cause of print through is when there is a super strong signal on the tape. This can be avoided by not saturating the sound onto the tape in the first place. Everyone likes a nice strong sound on their tapes but too much signal can ultimately spoil an otherwise perfect sounding show.

Moderation is the key here. Don't get carried away!

\*\*\*\*\*

GENERATIONS

Generation refers to how many times a particular show has been dubbed. For example, a show that is a copy of a copy of a copy is called a 3rd generation copy.

Each generation dub, no matter how carefully made, loses something from the original. Thus a 15th generation copy can sound

worlds apart from the 2nd generation copy. When you start getting into the very high generations a show that was originally excellent sounding can be brutal.

Many collectors list, when possible, the generation of their master so as to let you know it's quality of sound.

Once a show is in general circulation it is almost impossible to determine what generation it is and one has to rely on the sound rating the collector gives it.

\*\*\*\*\*

FOOTAGE

The footage indicated on a tape or tape box is an indication as to how much recording time you can put on that particular tape.

By utilizing each track separately and recording at the tape speed of 3 & 3/4 ips. the following chart will be accurate.

- 600 ft.....2 hrs.
- 1200 ft.....4 hrs.
- 1800 ft.....6 hrs.
- 2400 ft.....8 hrs.
- 3600 ft.....12 hrs.

Of these the first (600 ft.) & the last (3600 ft.) are not in common usage for one reason or the other. Generally, they should be avoided.

\*\*\*\*\*

BIAS

BIAS is an adjustment control found on better recorders. When correctly used it reduces distortion in a recorded signal and is meant to be used when a high bias tape is being recorded.

For a normal bias tape this switch/dial/button should be left off as it will have an adverse effect on the frequency response and sensitivity of the recording.

The bias control allows a more vivid signal to be placed on a tape without garbling it.

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MASTER UNIT / SLAVE UNIT

To copy (dub) a tape you need two recorders. The first one is the unit you play the tape on. It provides the signal that is to be recorded and is called the MASTER UNIT.

The signal comes from this unit and is fed into the recorder that will copy it. This second unit is called the SLAVE UNIT.

In many instances these two units are interchangeable. The master unit might, at times, be used as a slave unit. The reverse is also true.

\*\*\*\*\*



PROPER METHOD OF ADJUSTING A KNOB ON A DIAL. APPLY PRESSURE TO THE KNOB AND NOT THE PLUNGER.

CrO2 ( CHROMIUM TAPE )

CrO2 is the current state-of-the-art in tape formulization.

Ordinary tapes are coated with iron oxide particles. It is these particles that hold the signal on the tape. Iron oxide tape works very well but there is room for improvement and improve they did.

By using a coating of chromium oxide particles the sound range and sensitivity of a tape is increased dramatically, allowing a purer and crisper sound with a S/N ratio that is almost unbelievable.

Not only the highs and lows are affected. The mid-range is also enhanced, allowing a signal to be recorded with more "force" behind it without being distorted.

The full dynamic range of music cannot be reproduced but CrO2 tape comes closer to achieving this than any other ever has.

Because of its properties CrO2 tape is excellent for slow speed use such as in cassettes.

When using this kind of tape you should set your recorder for HIGH BIAS and CrO2 for optimum results.

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DIGITAL / ANALOG

There are currently two methods of putting a recording on tape.

ANALOG is the system you probably have right now. It can be imagined

as a sound wave, with its highs and lows, running the length of the recording.

DIGITAL can be described as minute blocks of information stacked next to each other for the length of the recording. Each block contains all the information needed to make the required sound. As these blocks pass the heads they convey the convey the info which is then converted into sound.

This is a bare-bones explanation but it should give you an idea of what it's all about.

Digital will gradually phase out analog recording. It is the future.

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SHORT SHOTS

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DEGAUSSING

Just another way of saying de-magnetizing - the removal of built-up magnetism from tape heads and guides.

\*\*\*\*\*

DROPOUT / DROP OUT

Frequent dips in the sound level usually found on the left, or outside tracks of a tape. The most common cause is from a bad coating on the tape.

\*\*\*\*\*

EQUALIZER

No Virginia, it's not that guy on television. It is a device that allows you to "tune out" unwanted sounds from your recordings.

Every OTR fan should have one.

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MONITOR

The ability of some recorders to let you hear the tape you are recording as it is being recorded. Your unit must have separate record/play back heads to have this feature.

It allows you to check on a recording as it is being made without disturbing the recording process.

\*\*\*\*\*

If you care to get a more in-depth look at OTR and related subjects we would like to suggest that you obtain "The Listening Guide to Classic Radio Programs" by Bob Burnham, available in two volumes. Write to Bob at...

BRC Productions  
P.O. Box 2645  
Livonia, Michigan  
48151

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We, at the OLD TIME RADIO CLUB, hope that this issue will be a help to you and that you might have learned something you didn't know .

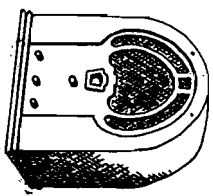
This issue compiled and written by Bob Davis of the OLD TIME RADIO CLUB.

# FIRST CLASS MAIL

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THE OLD TIME

100 HARVEY DRIVE



RADIO CLUB

LANCASTER, N.Y. 14086