

The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

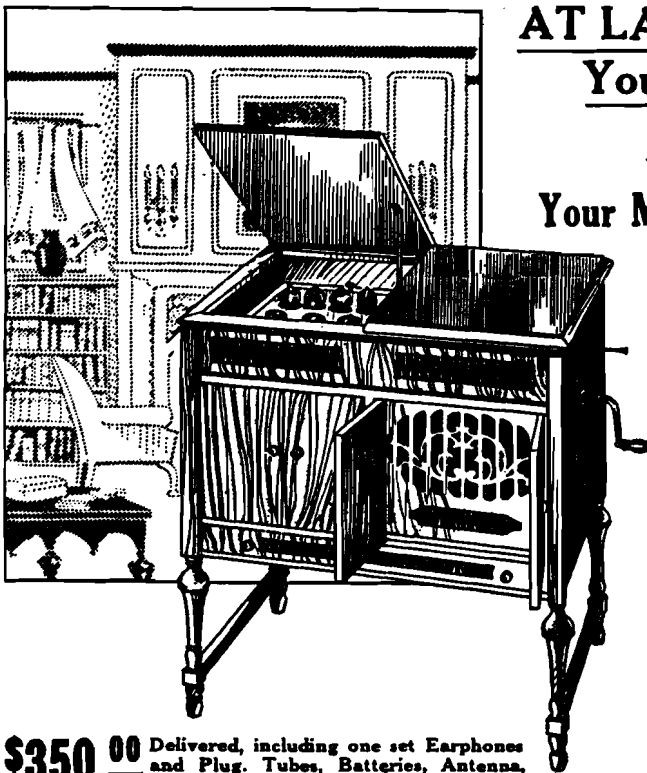
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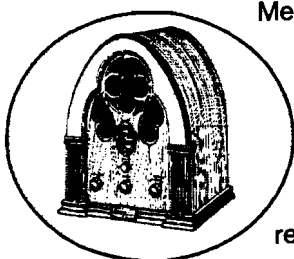
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Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing, and a monthly newsletter.

Memberships are as follows: If you join Jan-Mar, \$15.00; Apr-Jun, \$12.00; Jul-Sep, \$8.00; Oct-Dec, \$5.00. All renewals should be sent in as

soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd. Cheektowaga, N.Y. 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

Club Mailing Address

Old Time Radio Club
P.O. Box 426
Lancaster, N. Y. 14086

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When a Brown Philco Floor Model Brought the World to Hertel Avenue.

by Richard McDonald

Things just couldn't have been better ... at least that's the way I remember most of it. The autumn quickness was swelling in my chest the first week of October, 1941. My parents had made the right move. Here I was one month away from my seventh birthday, setting myself on the steps of our new ten and one-half room home, right next to an honest to goodness vacant lot with bushes, creeks and all the right sized trees!

My sister, Theresa, and I had arrived early that afternoon. Clear across town from the West Side of Buffalo to the North Side on a bus and streetcar. The West Side had been nice enough, I had enjoyed some good rides in my wagon down the street, but my brother, Tony, had died in that house, and it had been darker, grayer there somehow, more crowded, too. Now on Hertel Avenue we had five bedrooms.

We placed the brown, floor model Philco to the right of the mantled fire place, snug in the corner. To the right of the radio was a huge slipcovered armchair. The rest of my corner was taken up with a three way floor lamp and plenty of room for the register where one would be able to stand and warm himself when winter came, listening to our friends on the radio.

It's not that it was the best of times. But for a childhood, it was the only time. Today everyone's writing about it, reminiscing, attempting to recapture the magic. The Stonestown record shop recently had a complete window dedicated to the days of radio's big broadcasts. I'm lucky. It's forever genetically encoded in my memory glands.

It would be difficult to convince me that there

was any other era to match the innocence of simple pleasures - steaming hot food, warm rooms, good neighbors, high hope, the pulling together in the war effort, trust, rationing, my brothers and sisters parties, dancing to the big bands - Miller, Dorsey, Goodman and Kaye - the walk up Winton Road to St. Rose of Lima School in the morning, the walk down Parker Avenue in the afternoon. Within a year, I knew 80 per cent of the people on those two long blocks. That was the forties.

The super abundance of gleaming, wistful impressions are staggered in their chronological order. It might be best to simply recount them as they appear in the prominence of my mind:

Crosby, Bulldog Drummond, Cantor ... we knew each other and wanted to be part of one another's life.

The Sunday dinner table was left uncleared. I was finishing my chocolate pudding by the candlelight that had been used for the occasion of my sister Jean's engagement party. The celebration had been brought to an abrupt end. The announcer was once again interrupting Jack Benny to inform my sisters, brothers and friends that they were going to war. The thing that sticks with me is that everyone in that living room was directly effected and all of them were in agreement. The time had come to do their duty. Corny? That's the way it was. It was hushed, serious, thoughtful conversation that followed the announcement. It seemed a shame to me that the party had to break up, but all of them were anxious to get on with whatever it was they had to do to meet this intrusion into their lives. The next for years were filled with conditions emanating from that night.

My brother Jack joined the Air Force. Jim joined the Marines. Both came home from the holidays, both were sent overseas. Jim to the

Pacific, where I wrote him one letter to ask if I could borrow his colossal fielders mitt. Jack was flying missions in Europe.

Saturday mornings were filled with a whole hour of *Let's Pretend* and *Grand Central Station*. We cleaned the dining and living room during this time, shutting the vacuum cleaner off for the conclusion or highlights of the story for five minutes at a time. Saturday afternoon was college football. One of the truly fine Saturday afternoons was that day in 1946 when Jim and I listened to the scoreless tie between Notre Dame and Army. Blanchard and Davis against Johnny Lujack. After that kind of game on radio, I don't watch much football on television. Who needs it?!

**TONIGHT and every Thursday Night
at 10:30 P.M. A Dramatic New
Frigidaire Show**

starring
**HERBERT
MARSHALL** as **THE
MAN CALLED**

**WGR 550
on your dial**

Your CBS Network Station

Saturday night was *Your Hit Parade*. We'd make a list, one through ten, and try to guess the new order of hits. Sinatra sang on *Your Hit Parade* for a while. In the beginning, I didn't care for him. Crosby was the real crooner, Sinatra was a weakling.

The *Hit Parade* goes way back for me. Wee Bonnie Baker singing "Oh, Johnny, Oh, Johnny, How You Can Love." I hated that song. I always had a tune rustling around in my head. Sometimes I couldn't get rid of it. I'd be singing or humming or whistling this tune that I'd heard that day, and in order to put it out of my mind, I found if I whistled or hummed Wee Bonnie Baker's "Oh, Johnny, Oh Johnny" -- which I detested -- I'd immediately forget the tune that was plaguing me. It worked. Since I hated "Oh, Johnny, Oh, Johnny" so much, I'd quickly drop that

and go on to something else. That's how much music was around us.

Mary Peck, Jack's girl, played a decent piano. On special occasions, we'd all stand around the piano in the hall and sing those songs from the *Hit Parade*. There was plenty of darn good harmony going down around that piano.

After Sunday mass, there was an hour and a half of top band music introduced by the orchestra leaders. Sammy Kaye was one of them, with Don Cornell and Tony Alamo as vocalists. This music set the background for a mid-day respite at the dining room table complete with pancakes, bacon and eggs, coffee, two dozen of Freddie's doughnuts (including peanut sticks), the *Sunday Courier Express* and the family.

Another family came on at 3:30 P.M. -- *One Man's Family*. I don't know if they had more members than we did, but it was close. We numbered eleven, including my parents, and there was always a guest or two. I kind of dug Claudia on *One Man's Family*.

Usually Sunday afternoon was movie or park time. In the winter months after a hard day's "pohging" (hitching onto the back of a car bumper and sailing along the two or three feet of soft snow that was readily available on Western New York streets), I'd go back into our house to be greeted by the firm, luxurious aroma of roast leg of lamb. There was company and sweet warm heat. That kind of assurance at dinner time made those wintery afternoons even more adventurous.

Sunday night radio started off with *The Shadow* ... "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men. The Shadow knows." Then the *Great Gildersleeve*; I loved him with his "Leeeeroy!" This was followed by the *Jack Benny Show*, *Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy*, *Fred Allen*, and *Suspense*.

Suspense, that was a whole other ballgame. Those mystery shows prompted a two-hour discussion one night on the adverse effect they were having on me. I listened to all of them. Actually they weren't that scary. I mean it was more a test to figure out how and who-dun-it, pitting your wits against the writer's. It was real head stuff. Of course, every night before I went to bed, I searched the closet, thoroughly, looked under the bed and pulled myself down deep under the covers.

During the week and after school and play, it was another hour of 15 minute supers. The only soap opera I ever listened to in my life was *Portia Faces Life*. Portia had a son named Dickie who was always bailing her out of some God-awful mess she'd managed to busybody herself into. I guess I identified with Dickie. But it was probably due more to the fact that Portia was the last soap just before *Jack Armstrong*, *Superman*, *Front Page Farrell*, *Captain Midnight* and *Terry and the Pirates*. I mean these people had problems. There was nowhere in the universe at that point in time where so many great action packed decisions were being made by all the right people for all the right reasons for all of us. Even my dinner was sometimes anti-climactic.

Monday night, *I Love a Mystery*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Bulldog Drummond*, and *Lux Presents Hollywood*. The thing is we were together. Not only the family but that radio and all the performers. They were there not simply to entertain us, because that wasn't the way we thought about it. They were there because both of us, the audience and the performers, knew each other and wanted to be part of one another's life.

Radio worked that way. Nothing else in the media has or ever will result in that kind of togetherness. If radio's potential hadn't been identified and so skillfully utilized by the writers, performers and management, our days, for all their joy and glory, would have been less fulfilled. When Bob Hope struck up his thin, nasaled "Thanks for the Memory", you knew everything was going to be all right, at least for the next half hour.

Crosby was a better talker than he was a singer. I later learned from a piano player who worked with Bing that Crosby always carried a dictionary of synonyms with him in order to avoid redundant phrases in his pitter patter. Der Bingle's "When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day" beckoned us to a balmy, ever so easy life style, teaching us to roll with it a little more, laugh at the inconsistencies, cherish the peace of the moment.

Eddie Cantor's best moment was his theme at the end. "I'd like to spend each Wednesday (or whatever) with you, from friend to friend, I'm sorry, it's through." I mean that's intimate. Eddie tried hard.

My sisters believed Sinatra singing "Put your dreams away for another day, and I will take their place in

your heart." Then there was Jolson's comeback on radio after the hit movie of his life story. He was my father's favorite. One birthday, my father gave me two albums of Jolson; I learned every song Jolson sang and made plenty of dimes passing the hat at graduation parties.

There were all kinds of glorious songs, goofy songs, ballads that said I love you, outstanding choral music like Fred Waring's "Bless this House." It would be interesting to hear Sinatra's "This is America to Me" today. Some things have changed.

Fibber McGee and Molly were solid on Tuesday, surrounded by *Duffy's Tavern*, *Burns and Allen* and *Lights Out*. Again, the mysteries each had a style that was unique in format. *Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons* was on Thursdays. Here's a guy dedicated to finding lost loved ones. Dynamite! "Mr. District Attorney ... champion of the people, defender of truth, guardian of our fundamental rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This show scored heavy reminders, just heavy enough at that time. *Inner Sanctum* had a squeaking door that curled your legs tighter than ever under that favorite blanket or pillow.

Friday was fight night -- Don Dunphy giving his blow by blow account of the Billy Conn-Joe Louis 13 round champion bout. Not every Friday was that big, but those fights were a journey into the mind's eye that plunked you front row, ringside Madison Square Garden, looking up at the gladiators, straight through that Philco floor model.

Following the fights, Bill Stern had a sports show. I learned a form of story telling from Stern that promoted me to president of my class three years in a row. It seemed I was the only one who could handle the weekly meeting and talentfest. I understand Stern used to lace his authentic cliff hangers with smatterings of untruths. I only used his format.

As the decade ended, so did radio. So did the big stage shows at the downtown Shea's Buffalo. The Shea's had a fantastic lobby, where we used to sip hot chocolate between the movies and stage shows. It was laid out in deep red carpets, solid brass along all the orchestra doors, 30 foot gold curtains and a winding staircase that led to a crystal chandeliered balcony. I saw many of the great performers I had heard on the radio in this incredible theater.

Anytime I hear someone mention those golden days of radio, catch a nostalgic song or flick, my mind's eye goes back to that brown Philco floor model tucked in the corner of our living room, all of those treasures come sweeping back to replenish my soul. It was a well spent childhood.

TONIGHT! Listen to the musical drama that made stage and screen history

GERTRUDE LAWRENCE
MACDONALD CAREY ★ **HUME CRONYM**
in "*Lady in the Dark*"
... a full hour program dedicated to
the American Red Cross Fund Drive

THEATRE GUILD on the AIR
8:30 P.M. WHAM

Old Time Radio at the Movies

"The Shadow"

by Robert J. Brown

This summer Universal studios has released the multi-million dollar adventure, *The Shadow* to eager audiences nationwide. The visual effort to bring the popular radio crime-fighter to the screen had been in the offering for over twelve years, during which time the producers experimented with different storylines, whipped up publicity, and endeavored to enlist such box office heavyweights as Alec Baldwin and Penelope Ann Miller to the cast. The result of all this productive activity is somewhat mixed, and there are some notable shortcomings in the film which greatly diminish the dramatic impact of the radio apparition who commanded the airwaves for nearly twenty years and thrilled thousands of beleaguered Americans in the throes of the Great depression.

The most conspicuous defect that many radio enthusiasts will discover is in the manner in which director, Russell Mulcahy, portrays the main charac-

ters. Lamont Cranston (Alec Baldwin) is seen as a shiftless, unsophisticated playboy devoid of the intellectual incisiveness and mild-mannered demeanor that characterized the radio figure. When Cranston transforms into the Shadow, the inadequacies of the film are even more apparent. Unlike the program, there is no vocal transition from one personality to the next (accomplished on radio through voice filters), and Baldwin's raspy delivery stands in stark contrast to the crisp, authoritarian tones of Orson Welles, Bill Johnstone, and Brett Morrison. The voice of Baldwin's Shadow, seems incapable of inspiring terror "in the hearts of sharpsters, lawbreakers and criminals," in the same manner as aural predecessors. Similarly, the intimidating, haunting laugh that sent chills down the spines of listeners, likewise loses much of its effectiveness on the screen. Surprisingly, modern technological advances such as stereo and theater "surround sound," could not compensate for the deficiency.

In a similar vein, the producers were unfaithful to many of the other familiar program characters. Shreevy the cab driver, is a disappointingly unfamiliar Mr. Shreevitz who lacks the stuttering persona and simple-mindedness which provide so much comic relief to many a tense situation in which the invisible crusader found himself. Commissioner Weston, a man that the Shadow frequently respected but never spurned, is depicted in the film as a bungling incompetent. Perhaps the most striking transgression is in the portrayal of Margo Lane. While looking every bit the part of a 1930's debutante, the screen Margo (Penelope Ann Miller) seems to have been added just for sexual appeal. Throughout the film, she wanders about aimlessly, attracted to Cranston, while at the same time, being drawn by a mental force that she cannot understand. It is in this capacity that the producers have effected a serious injustice to the radio characterization. While admittedly embryonic, Margo Lane's character in no way exhibits the inquisitive and loyal qualities that will make her the Shadow's "friend and companion," and a valuable asset in the war against Depression era criminals and supernatural forces.

As the story begins to unfold many more serious flaws in the film become evident. With the last descendant of Genghis Khan, Shiwan attempting to blow up New York City as a preliminary step in a 13th century plan of world conquest, the plot is quite fantastic, even by the standards of the Shadow's 1930's nemeses and arch villains. When the Shadow

uncovers Shiwan's machinations, and the two meet in the final showdown, there is no climactic battle that brings the audience to the edge of its seat as when the radio character dispatched the "Gorilla Man," the "Walking Corpse," "Carnation Charlie," the "Silent Avenger," or numerous other menacing rivals. In addition to this, David Koepp's script is poorly written, employing unmoving dialogue sprinkled heavily with program cliches that seem inappropriate and awkward.

Fortunately, not everything about the film version of The Shadow is unfavorable. While the storyline is not even worthy of a ten cent pulp feature or matinee serial, Shadow fans are exposed to many early scenes in which the origins of the character are enacted, thus filling in many notable gaps where the radio scripts only made vague references. The inclusion of this background is largely due to the efforts of the screenwriters to amalgamate the radio and pulp Shadows into one personality.

In Carl Fullerton's laudable make-up work, Alec Baldwin is made to look strikingly similar to the hero as he was pictured on countless pulp covers. Even though the director acknowledged beforehand that the Shadow's invisibility would be difficult to translate into, "a compelling visual event," he succeeds to a large degree in endowing his central character with an apparitional quality. When the Shadow confronts a handful of gangsters preparing to fit a hapless victim with "cement shoes," the action sequence is first rate. Another special effects triumph in the film is the superb matte painting and miniatures that convince the viewer that he is witnessing scenes in Depression-era New York.

Overall, the film adaptation of The Shadow falls well below expectations, and is certain to prove disappointing to many longtime radio aficionados. The poor characterizations, weak plot, and monotonous script, conspire to make this a movie that even many non-listeners will find subaverage. For those who have enjoyed the "Master of Other People's Minds," through their loudspeakers, it would be well to stay at home, save the \$7.00 admission, and experience the real thing on your tape deck. The failure of the modern entertainment world to bring the popular 1930's character to life on the screen, illustrates once again the enduring power of radio broadcasting to capture our imaginations in a way that other, more technologically endowed electronic media cannot surpass.

What Radio Can Do For Our Boys

Radio World, March 22, 1924

Justice Cropsey, one of the leading jurists of the state of New York, recently sentenced several young men, some of them scarcely more than boys, to long terms in Sing Sing prison. Justice Cropsey, in making an address from the bench, offered the following to the boys:

"We can lessen the crimes in our midst by giving our attention to the youths. They need a man's guiding hand and helpful personality. They need the example of a true man's life in the forming of their character. Brooklyn can be made better. Whether it will depend upon us, its men. Shall we turn our backs and ignore existing conditions, or shall we accept the challenge and lend ourselves to the task? It's a man's job and it needs red-blooded men who will put something of themselves in the undertaking."

"Men, this is a call to us. Are we awake? Do we hear? Will our conscience let us ignore it? Shall we not help to make better the boys of today? Should we not begin at once?"

Radio World now asks a few questions supplementing Justice Cropsey's queries from the bench:

Isn't keeping boys at home o'nights the best plan in the world for keeping them honest? Does every youth who owns a radio set stay at home and tune-in? If you know a boy who is going wrong, wouldn't you endeavor to save him?

And wouldn't the saving process be started if you were to give him a radio set so he would have an added incentive for keeping of the streets and avoiding bad company?

Will you help?

And isn't the answer a quick and generous YES to all the questions?

From the Editor's Chair

A nice indepth review of The Shadow movie by Robert J. Brown. Any other members have comments on the movie? Not much space left, see you next month.



THE RAILROAD HOUR

THE PRODUCERS OF THIS POPULAR MONDAY NIGHT PROGRAM OF MUSIC AND DRAMA SPARED NO EXPENSE IN MAKING IT A SUCCESS. SUCH SINGING STARS AS JO STAFFORD, RISE STEVENS, JANE POWELL, DOROTHY WAREISKJOLD AND LUCILLE NORMAN JOINED HOST GORDON MACGRAE AND A LARGE DRAMATIC CAST. THE RAILROAD HOUR PRESENTED FAMOUS MUSICAL COMEDIES AS WELL AS ORIGINAL STORIES WITH MUSIC.

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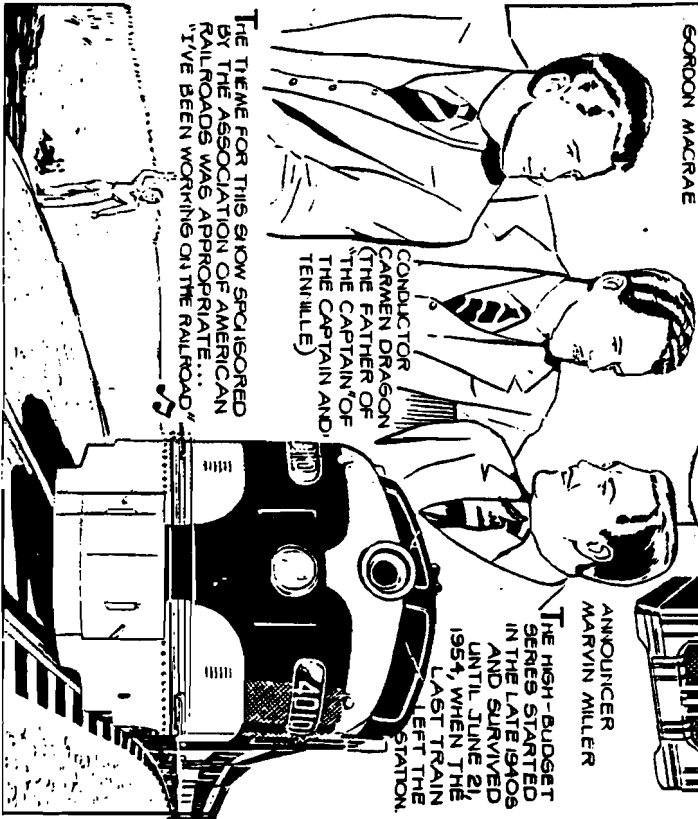
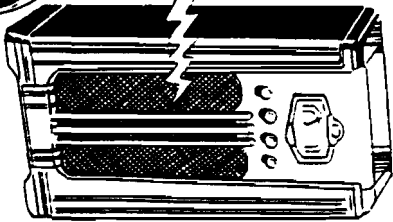
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THE CAPTAIN OF
THE TENNILLE)

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ANNOUNCER
MARVIN MILLER

THE HIGH-BUDGET SERIES STARTED IN THE LATE 1940S AND SURVIVED UNTIL JUNE 21, 1954, WHEN THE LAST TRAIN LEFT THE STATION.

LADIES
AND
GENTLE-
MEN...
THE
RAILROAD
HOUR!



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Box 426
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