

*The Old Time Radio Club*

Established 1975

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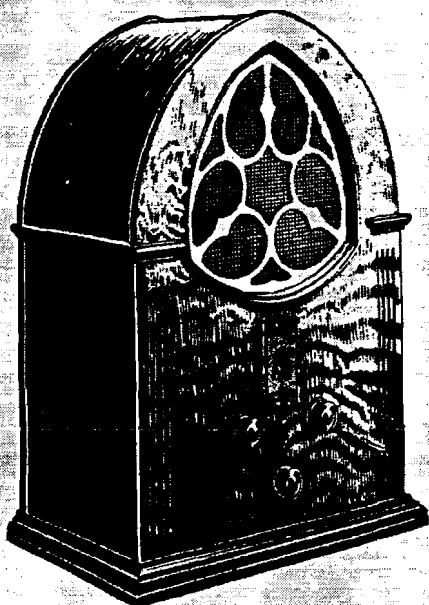


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Publication of the *Old Time Radio Club*

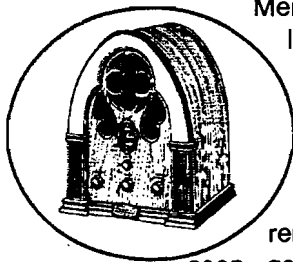
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**Membership Information**

New member processing, \$5.00 plus club membership of \$15.00 per year from Jan 1 to Dec 31.

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



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**Club Mailing Address**

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

Back issues of *The Illustrated Press* are \$1.50 postpaid. Publications out of print may be borrowed from our Reference Library.

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## Daytime Heroine: A Story Twice Told

by Jim Cox

Question: What actress simultaneously played the lead in two soap operas for more than a decade, the only one to have done so in the history of broadcasting?

Answer: Florence Freeman of radio's *Wendy Warren and the News* and *Young Widder Brown*.

Ms. Freeman's feat is believed to have never been duplicated, including both radio and television. Although there were many actresses -- and a few actors -- who starred on one radio serial while simultaneously appearing on another in a supporting role (Vivian Smolen was *Our Gal Sunday* and at the same time *Stella Dallas'* daughter, Laurel; Karl Swenson was Lorenzo Jones and Sunday's husband, Lord Henry Brinthrope; Agnes Young narrated *Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories* while being *Young Widder Brown's* town gossip, Maria Hawkins; and Joan Tompkins was Nora in *This Is Nora Drake* and Brown's good friend, Norine Temple), only Florence Freeman -- as lady newscaster Wendy Warren and tearoom proprietress Ellen Brown -- gained the unique fortune of simultaneously being two heroines for a decade or longer.

While several actresses, especially in the decade of the 1930's, were leading ladies on more than one soap opera at the same time, they played those roles for a few months or a few years at most.

But Ms. Freeman, who co-starred in one of those early roles -- Dot Horton, of *Dot and Will* on the NBC Blue network (forerunner of ABC) from 1935-37 -- would achieve soap opera stardom not once but twice in a long-running series. *Dot and Will* concerned the joys and sorrows of a couple and their neighbors. The series was a radio adaptation of stories by Elizabeth Todd. Todd's name should be remembered for she would figure even more prominently in Freeman's life a short time later.

Few details about Florence Freeman's life have ever been published. Extensive research for this article, drawing from more than two dozen sources, revealed nothing about her background before radio nor what became of her beyond the days she played those heroines.

We know that she was heard in a supporting role on at least one other serial -- as Prudence Dane's great granddaughter, Prudence, in the latter days of *A Woman of America* (aired from 1943-46 on NBC at 3:00 P.M. ET).

But Freeman is best remembered by true old time daytime radio aficionados for her roles on *Young Widder Brown* and *Wendy Warren and the News*. The two series were as distinctive as the woman who played their leads.

*Brown* debuted June 6, 1938 as a 4:00 P.M. ET sustaining feature on the Mutual Broadcasting System. Seeing promise in it, Air Features, Inc., a soap opera factory run by soon-to-become serial moguls Frank and Anne Hummert, delivered *Brown* to the better established NBC chain only a short time later (September 26). Broadcast at 11:30 A.M., the program was immediately tied to Sterling Drugs (for Bayer Aspirin and other health care products). The program-and-sponsor duo would become one of broadcasting's most durable. In fact, the association with Sterling continued for all but one of *Brown's* eighteen years on the air.

In 1939 NBC again moved the program, this time to late afternoons where it would remain from then on. For a dozen years it occupied the quarter-hour at 4:45 P.M. ET. When NBC shuffled its serials in 1951 it transferred *Lorenzo Jones* from its long-standing 4:30 air time to 5:30. *Brown* acquired *Jones'* former slot, remaining in it for four years. In its final season on the air it was moved a quarter-hour earlier once again, to 4:15 P.M. The series was cancelled June 29, 1956.

Ellen Brown, the tearoom proprietress in the mythical hamlet of Simpsonville somewhere in the Midwest, had "two fatherless children to support." In announcer George Ansbro's premise delivered daily over organist John Winters' theme rendition of "In the Gloaming" (and later, "Wonderful One"), *Young Widder Brown* was portrayed as "the age old conflict between a mother's duty and a woman's heart."

Ellen was a widow with two small children as the series began. The story line (written by Elizabeth Todd, who wrote Freeman's earlier series, *Dot and*

*Will*) revolved around Ellen's distracting love life. Again and again every conceivable obstacle imaginable prevented her from wedding an ever-patient suitor, Anthony Loring, a local physician.

Just when the loyal listener believed everything would be ironed out so that Anthony and Ellen could get on with their lives together, and have a well deserved break from their troubles, by George if Ellen wouldn't suffer amnesia or go blind or Anthony would go to jail for a murder he didn't commit.

Despite the fact that the avid fan knew they wouldn't get married, it probably seldom crossed a listener's mind that they couldn't get married. What would NBC do with one of its most popular daytime series named "Widder Brown" should the unmarried heroine wed someone whose last name was Loring? Air Features, Inc. would have to alter a premise that had built a loyal following for years. It wasn't about to tamper with success even though tens of thousands undoubtedly hoped that some way could be found to get Ellen and Anthony into wedded bliss.

Even at the end the pair did not tie the knot, although on the final broadcast they said they were headed to see a justice of the peace. But with the producers thinking ahead, hoping one day the series could return to the air, they weren't taking any chances by allowing the knot to be tied while still on the air. If *Brown* were ever to return, an auto wreck (or a dozen other plausible possibilities) could readily intervene, preventing Ellen and Anthony from reaching their intended justice of the peace.

If any of this sound familiar to those who listened to more than one radio soap opera, it should. During their lunch hour, many daytime serial addicts turned to an almost identical strategy being played out on CBS -- this one lasting twenty-seven years!

At 12:30, poor *Helen Trent* was desperately pursued most of the twenty-seven years by suitor Gil Whitney, who -- like Dr. Anthony Loring -- was also a professional (Whitney was a lawyer). Just when it appeared every roadblock that stood between Helen, Gil and the altar had evaporated, doggone it if one of them wouldn't fall victim to amnesia or be accused of some terrible crime. Anyone following the plights of Helen and Ellen (even the names were similar!) could almost think scripts had been written, produced and directed by the same people. Does it surprise you, then, to know that both came from the same factory under the watchful eye of the Hummerts? No coincidence here, to be sure. --to be continued--

## Cowboys on the Radio, Part 8

by Dom Parisi

*The Lone Ranger*, the best for last! On January 30, 1933 on Detroit radio station WXYZ, the *Ranger* rode into our lives for the first time.

George W. Trendle and John H. King bought station WXYZ shortly after the stock market crash in the early 1930's. Trendle immediately made some major changes. He developed a new show, a western equal to none with a bigger-than-life hero. He emerged from a meeting with his staff with an outline for the story.

Bryant's Gap, where cliffs rise high on both sides, and the wind whistles through the rocks was the place where the Lone Ranger legend began. Enter six Texas Rangers who are chasing the bad guy, Butch Cavendish and his ruthless gang of outlaws. Leading the search party is a captain named Dan Reid. His younger brother John is also riding with the party. The Reid brothers were partners in a silver mine strike they made before joining up with the Rangers. After their service with the Texas Rangers was over, they planned to return to silver mining. Into an ambush rode the loyal six. Cavendish and his gang of thugs fired into the group of Texas Rangers from the rocks of the canyon above. Dan Reid was killed in the ambush. An Indian found the Rangers. One man was still alive, young John Reid. The Indian, Tonto, carried John to a cave where he cleaned and dressed the wounds. Then he buried the five dead Rangers. He made a sixth grave, but left it empty. (years later after Butch Cavendish was brought to justice, the sixth mound was dismantled and the earth smoothed over). When at last the wounded John Reid's eyes opened he recognized the Indian and remembered him as a childhood friend whose life he had once saved:

"I know you, your name is Tonto," he said.  
"You remember," the Indian replied.  
"Years ago you called me Kemo Sabe," said Reid.  
"That right, and you still Kemo Sabe,  
It mean faithful friend."  
Reid asked about the other Rangers.  
"You only Ranger left," Tonto said.  
"You Lone Ranger."

Thus did John Reid become the Lone Ranger. He made a mask from his dead brother's vest. Then he and Tonto made a pact:

"As long as you live, as long as I live, I will ride with you."

Trendle hired Fran Striker, a young writer living in Buffalo, N.Y. He gave Striker the requirements he wanted for the new western adventure series. Fran wrote a sample script called *Covered Wagon Days* and tested it on Buffalo radio station WEBR in December of 1932. Trendle liked the script and accepted the show.

Striker came up with "Hi-Yo Silver!" He filled the Ranger's guns with silver bullets and groomed the Indian Tonto. Of course the Ranger never ran out of silver bullets or a source of income; his silver mine provided both. He captured a wild white stallion and named him Silver (what else?). He even made silver shoes for the horse's hooves. (would silver be hard and tough enough for shoes?) Then the Ranger set out to find his lost nephew, Dan Reid and to bring the Cavendish gang to justice! This then, was the fictional heritage of the Lone Ranger, one of the most famous champions of radio.

For most of the first year the *Lone Ranger* was sustained by the station. Then in November of 1933, Silvercup Bread stepped in to sponsor the *Lone Ranger*. They never sponsored the *Ranger* on a coast to coast basis but rather on a geographic regional setup. The sponsorship lasted until 1939. Bond Bread also sponsored the *Ranger* regionally on twenty-two stations, and the surprising thing is that it was sustained on thirty stations at this time. During World War II, General Mills became the first coast to coast sponsor of the *Ranger*, and generally featured their Kix and Cheerios breakfast cereals.

The Masked Man and Tonto filled the radio air with adventure and thrills into the mid-fifties. Who can forget:

"A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty Hi-Yo Silver!" The *Lone Ranger* was the first juvenile show set to classical music. Even today when I hear Rossini's "William Tell Overture," I think of the Masked Man; if you don't you're a true classical music virtuoso.

The Lone Ranger never smoked or drank, never shot

to kill, and subscribed to the highest ideals of American life. The only person the Ranger killed in more than twenty years of broadcasting was Butch Cavendish, his enemy. And Butch was killed in self defense!

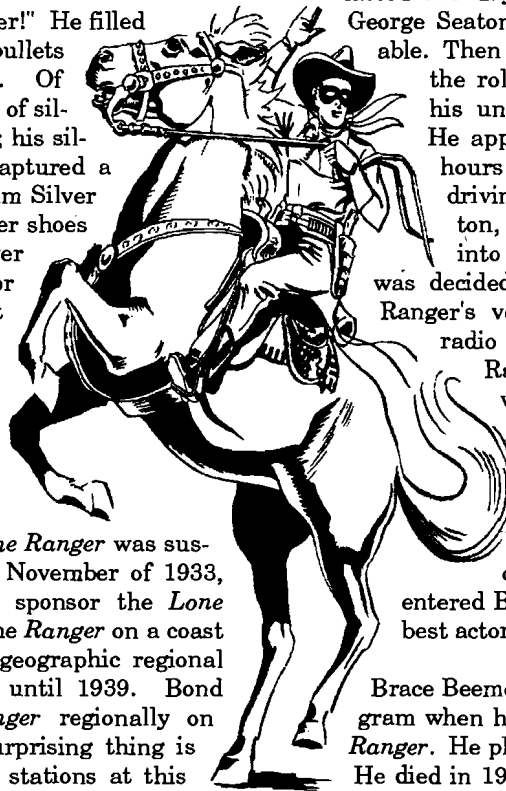
Dave Holland in his well researched book, *A Pictorial History of the Lone Ranger*, states that George Steinius was the first to play the Ranger. He lasted two and one-half months. Jack Deeds took over and lasted two days! Next to play the part was George Seaton. He turned out to be unsuitable. Then in May of 1933 Earle Graser got the role and he played the lead until his untimely death on April 8, 1941. He apparently fell asleep in the early hours of that Tuesday morning while driving to his horse farm in Farmington, Michigan and crashed head-on into the back of a parked truck. It was decided that a sudden change in the Ranger's voice could be confusing to the radio audience. So it was that the Ranger would be seriously wounded and for a couple of weeks would be unable to speak. Tonto took over the show and nursed the Ranger back to health. For another two weeks the Ranger could only speak in a whisper. Then entered Brace Beemer, in my opinion, the best actor to play the Lone Ranger.

Brace Beemer was an announcer for the program when he took over the lead in the *Lone Ranger*. He played the part from 1941 to 1955. He died in 1965. Fred Foy, the long time announcer for the show played the Ranger in one episode, "Burly Scott's Sacrifice," on March 29, 1954.

Fred Foy, in my opinion the best Lone Ranger announcer, narrated with authority:

"With his faithful Indian companion Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early western United States. Nowhere in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice. Return with us to those thrilling days of yesteryear -- From out of the past come the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse Silver. The Lone Ranger rides again!!!"

Man, I could cry when I hear that opening. What a show!



To wind up -- John Todd played Tonto, Paul Hughes played badmen, army colonels and even the ranger's friend, Thunder Martin. His voice was just as recognizable as the Ranger's. Tonto's horse was called Scout, and Dan Reid rode Victor. Fans never needed the admiring words of the sheriff to know that, "Shucks, that wasn't no prospector, boys. He's the Lone Ranger!"

Westerns weren't only heard on just western shows. Many other radio programs broadcast them. *Lux Radio Theatre* presented "The Plainsman" with Frederic March in 1937; "The Westerner" with Gary Cooper on September 23, 1940; "In Old Oklahoma" with Roy Rogers on March 13, 1944; "My Darling Clementine" on April 28, 1947; and "Shane" in 1955. "Fort Apache" and "Yellow Sky" appeared on *Screen Director's Playhouse* in 1949. "Stagecoach" was heard on *Academy Award* in 1946. *Cavalcade of America* staged "Wild Bill Hickok" in 1940 and "Kansas Marshal" in 1947. The classic "Ox Bow Incident" was heard on *Hollywood Sound Stage* in 1952. Another great western, "The Return of Jessie James" was featured on *Hollywood Star Time* in 1946 and *Hallmark Playhouse* aired "The Virginian" on October 13, 1949. Even the thrilling *Escape* series aired a western, "Sundown," in 1950.

All of these westerns were supported by talented stars; Henry Fonda, Alan Ladd, Van Heflin, Ward Bond and others. Funny man Jack Benny did skits about Jessie James on February 26, 1939 and "High Noon" on February 1, 1953 programs. And of course he had the long running skit about "Buck Benny" based on his "Buck Benny Rides Again" movie.

I'm sure there are other western theme stories that appeared on radio, other than the few that I researched at this time. The cowboys were hot stuff on radio, just like science fiction is today on the other medium. But, that's another story.

til' next time, by by, Buy Bonds!

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**COMES TO TOWN**  
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**Finest Dance Band**  
**EVERYDAY except Sunday**  
**WEBR 12:00 to 12:30 P.M.** [1940]

## The Goat Doctor

John R. Brinkley had a dubious medical license, but he looked like a doctor and talked like a doctor, and many people believed he was a doctor. What "Doctor" John R. Brinkley did have was a charismatic personality, his own radio station and a gimmick. He began his infamous career in radio when he started broadcasting from Milford, Kansas, a small town on the Republican River about sixty miles west of Topeka in 1923. Using the call letters KFKB (Kansas First, Kansas Best), Brinkley reached listeners throughout mid-America for thirteen hours a day, delivering a mix of fundamentalist religion, country music, educational lectures and anything else he thought might be of interest.

The doctor's popularity really soared in the late 1920's when he began a daily "Medical Question Box" show, answering letters from listeners for a \$2.00 charge per question. Although Brinkley willingly tackled all manner of complaints on the air, and prescribed his own patent medicines as cures, the specialty that made him famous was zeroing in on "flat tires" and other sure signs of "failing manhood." His improbable solution for the above problems was to implant goat sex glands in human males, a procedure that earned him the nickname "Goat Gland Brinkley." The doctor performed the operation himself at a hospital he built expressly for the purpose. Later when the authorities were after him he moved his "hospital" from Kansas to Arkansas. Patients could pick out their own donor goats from a pen next to the hospital. There apparently was no shortage of men with "failing manhood" and by 1928 he was performing some forty operations a week at up to \$1,500 per implant.

Not surprisingly, the American Medical Association and the Federal Radio Commission were none too fond of "Doctor" Brinkley. By 1930 the two managed to strip him of both his medical and broadcast licenses in Kansas. But that did not stop the good doctor. Moving to Texas, he began operating XER, a new 500,000 watt station, just across the border in Mexico. At that time station XER had the most powerful transmitter in the world. And even after the government cracked down on XER in 1934, Brinkley managed to continue his self promotion over a variety of stations around the Little Rock, Arkansas area and the Texas border town of Del Rio until his death in 1941. I wonder if anyone ever did a follow up study on the good doctor's patients to see if their flat tires remained flat or were in working order?

*From the Editor's Chair*

I wish to thank Jack Palmer of Battle Creek, MI for helping with some of the dates and locations mentioned in the article on *The Goat Doctor*. From the you thought OTR was dead department, Gene Dench of Hyde Park, MA sent in the following news article from the Boston Sunday Globe.

The Lone Ranger rides again! So does the Green Hornet, Captain Midnight and so many other characters who populated the airwaves of America from the 1920's to the 1950's. Their adventures are once more on the radio, at the Inn at Maplewood Farm in Hillsborough, N.H.



Innkeepers Laura and Jayme Simoes have collected nearly 1,000 shows including *Suspense*, *Lights Out*, *The Jack Benny Show* and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. And every evening guests can either gather around one of the 1930's cathedral Philco radios in the inn's parlor or retreat to their rooms to listen in on World War II era radios by their bedsides. All this is brought about by Radio Maplewood Farm, a 100 milliwatt transmitter that broadcasts throughout the inn.

The full service bed and breakfast, built in 1794 and open year round, will be celebrating National Radio Month in May with a special event. For more information call (603) 464-4242.

"We imagine the America that listened to the radio each night as a very different place," says Jamye Simoes. It certainly was: Before television, listeners exercised their imaginations, and that exercise did them good.

Sounds like a nice place to take a vacation. Thanks for the article, Gene.

If you enjoyed the article *The Mounties in OTR History* by Jack French in the November and December *Illustrated Press*, you certainly will enjoy a book by member Bernard A. Drew, *Lawmen in Scarlet: Annotated Guide to Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Print and Performance*.

This book looks at more than 500 fictional works featuring the rugged Mounties, overlapping such genres as Westerns, romances and mysteries. Entries provide author biographies, publication data and plot summaries. Major authors covered include James B. Hendryx, Alissa Craig, William Byron Mowery, Laurie York Erskine, Ralph Connor, James Oliver Curwood, and Ian Anderson. The author provides plot summaries, casts, and credits for about 225 films. The illustrated text is intended as a reference and collectors' guide. For those researching Canadian popular fiction, entries are keyed to listings and critical discussion in more than thirty other reference works. Also included are miscellaneous Big Little Books, comic books, comic strips, TV and radio shows, operas, stage dramas, and musicals.

Bernard A. Drew holds a BA in English from Northeastern University and is managing editor of *The Berkshire Courier*, a weekly newspaper in Great Barrington, MA. He has edited the pulp mystery anthology *Hard-Boiled Dames* (1985) and compiled the reference books *Western Series & Sequels* (1986, with Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh), *Action Series & Sequels* (1988), and *Skirting Danger: A Bibliography of Women Series Characters in Mystery, Police Procedural, Private Detective, Espionage, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Western, Romance, Juvenile and Action Novels* (1989). He has also written and published a number of local Berkshire County, MA histories.

*Lawmen in Scarlet* contains 296 pages with illustrations and is published by Scarecrow Press, Inc. PO Box 4167, Metuchen, NJ 08840

**Additions to the Cassette library.**

- 2027 RCAF, - # 75 - 3/24/85
- RCAF, - # 76 - 12/9/84
- 2028 RCAF, - # 77 - 1/27/85
- RCAF, - # 78 - 2/3/85
- 2029 RCAF, - # 81 - 10/28/84
- RCAF, - # 82 - 6/2/85
- 2030 RCAF, - # 87 - 10/6/85
- RCAF, - # 88 - 10/13/85
- 2031 RCAF, - # 89 - 10/27/85
- RCAF, - # 90 - 11/3/85
- 2032 RCAF, - # 33 - 4/24/83
- RCAF, - # 34 - 5/1/83
- 2033 HANCOCK, HANCOCK'S WAR
- HANCOCK, THE CHRISTMAS CLUB
- 2034 NERO WOLFE - BEAUTIFUL ARCHER - 11/24/50
- NERO WOLFE - FRIENDLY RABBIT - 11/24/50
- 2035 KRAFT MUSIC HALL - JERRY COLONNA - 12/14/44
- KRAFT MUSIC HALL - CHRISTMAS SHOW - 12/21/44

# ON RADIO

6:00 pm Roger Goodrich and the News

6:45 pm Lowell Thomas

7:15 pm The Tennessee Ernie Show

7:30 pm The Bing Crosby Show

7:45 pm Edward R. Murrow—News

8:30 pm Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts

9:05 pm The Jack Carson Show

9:30 pm Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall

9:55 pm Robert Trout and the News

10:00 pm Mr. District Attorney

11:00 pm News of the Night

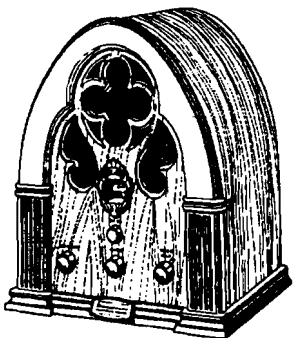
11:15 pm The Nine-Cap (1955)

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