

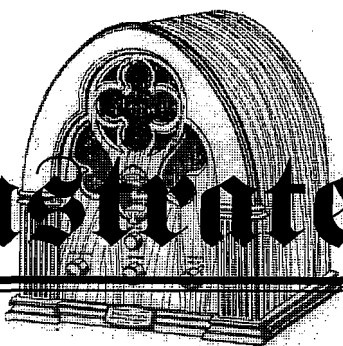
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

The Illustrated Press

Number 316

January 2004



This is Bob, informing you that this is the last issue of The Illustrated Press you will receive unless you renew your membership to The Old Time Radio Club. Don't be left out. Ride into the past with great old radio programs from their Reel-to-Reel and Cassette Libraries. Check out their books, scripts, logs, and other printed matter in the Reference Library. Keep in touch with informative articles, ads, and other goodies in the Illustrated Press and insure yourself of another great year of Old Time Radio bonding.



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Membership information

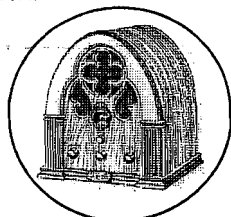
New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. 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 7:39 PM during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY 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

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Lancaster, NY 14086

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Tape Library Rates: All reels and video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; audio cassettes are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a club supplied cassette which is retained by the member; records are \$.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.



BOOK Review

Words at WAR

by Howard Blue

Reviewed by Jerry Collins

When I first heard about Words at War, I was less than enthusiastic about the book. Was I wrong! I initially thought that Howard Blue's book had a very limited audience. This was my second mistake. I am a retired Secondary Social Studies teacher and I would have enjoyed this book even if I had no interest in Old Time Radio. Words at War certainly gave me a better understanding of some of the events leading to World War II. The selection of scripts, plot and even individual performers was frequently dictated by the sponsors market and events unwinding in Europe. In other cases shows like *Cavalcade of America* changed their story lines to improve the image of their sponsor.

Shows like *Mercury Theater's* "War of the Worlds," and *Amos 'n' Andy* along with experimental shows like *Colombia Workshop* showed us the power of radio. As the world approached the outbreak of World II, a stronger role for radio became imperative. A pro-Hitler German-American Bond rally at Madison Square Garden attracted a crowd of 22,000. The Italian Red Cross raised money for Italian soldiers fighting in Ethiopia. Criticism leveled against Franco's government in Spain brought on the ire of the Catholic Church. Father Charles Coughlin, Charles Lindbergh and the Brooklyn Tablet were openly pro-Hitler and anti-Semitic. Many mid Western Newspapers and politicians were fanatical isolationists. Southern politicians like Theodore Bilbo, Strom Thurmond and others were openly racist and anti-Semitic. Later in the war leading Catholic clerics like Fulton Sheen and Francis Spellman were anti-Russian even though we were allied with them during the war. In the late 1930s and early 1940s American society was far from accepting the economic and political equality of woman and Blacks. These atti-

tudes as well as many others had to change if America was to successfully pursue the Second World War.

It was radio that was selected to change the attitudes of many Americans and it was radio that was enlisted to lead America in the great crusade against the evils of Fascism. Howard Blue does an excellent job of chronicling the efforts of some of the best and brightest in the radio industry.



These shows that fought this war against fascism included; *The Man Behind the Gun*, *Words at War*, *Treasury Star Parade*, *Chaplain Jim*, *Passport for Adam*, *They Call Me Joe*, *This Is War* and many others. Network shows such as *Lux Radio Theater*, *Cavalcade of America* and *The March of Time* also played a very effective role throughout the war. Some of the most effective individual shows were written by Norman Corwin. They included, "They Fly Through the Air," "We Hold These Truths' Untitled" and "On a Note of Triumph."

Some of radio's most talented writers, Stephen Vincent Benet, Langston Hughes, Arthur Laurents, Archibald MacLeish, Arthur Miller, Arch Obler, William Robson, Norman Rosten and Allan Sloane added their creative

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skills to the war efforts. Some of radio's greatest actors and actresses saved some of their best performances for these patriotic and propaganda shows. This seemingly endless list would have included Ingrid Bergman, Art Carney, Orson Welles, James Stewart, Jackson Beck, Cliff Carpenter, Bud Collyer, Tommy Cook, Jeff Corey, Melvyn Douglas, Clark Gable, Will Geer, Joseph Julian, Canada Lee, Billy Lipton, Frederic March, Mercedes McCambridge, Burgess Meredith, Elliot Reid, Edward G. Robinson, and Dwight Weist. Elmer Davis, Clifton Fadiman and Rex Stout played largely administrative roles during the War.

What was the purpose of these different war related shows? What were these writers and performers attempting to achieve? The German people were just as evil as the Japanese. Rex Stout and Clifton Fadiman were almost fanatical in their support of this concept. The Russians were good people, after all they were our allies. Even though the British were rigid and snobbish and had a long history of imperialism, they were our trusted allies. It was necessary to hire both women and Blacks to solve the labor shortages. Rationing, volunteerism and tighter domestic security were all necessary to the war effort. International cooperation was essential both during and after the war. Prejudice against Blacks and Jews must be drastically reduced to aid the war effort.

Howard Blue uses a perfect title for his final chapter, "The Postwar Era: a Change of Enemies." During the war radio personalities such as Katherine Hepburn, Frederic March, Will Geer, Norman Corwin, Burgess Meredith, Joe Julian, Cliff Carpenter, Langston Hughes, Ken Roberts, Edward G. Robinson and John Garfield. Not only did they lead the fight against our enemies during World War II, but they also led the crusade against racial and religious intolerance in the United States. For this they were viciously attacked by the true enemies of the United States; J. Parnell Thomas, Martin Dies and Richard Nixon from the House Un-American Activities Committee, J. Edgar Hoover, Senators John Rankin from Mississippi, Joe McCarthy from Wisconsin, Pat McCarran from Nevada and John Tenney from California. Others like Ward Bond, Ed Sullivan, Laurence Johnson and Clayton "Bud" Collyer blindly cooperated in this anti-Communist crusade. Words at War includes Ruth Adams Knight's rambling, misleading and at times idiotic testimony before HUAC.

Whether you are a fan of "Old Time Radio," a history teacher or just a fan of World War II, Words at War is must reading. It is well researched, well documented, very thorough and very readable.

Ah, Those Were the Days

by Lawrence Meyer

Each Monday, Wednesday and Friday night, just as we were sitting down to dinner, out of the past with thundering hoofbeats and a hearty "Hi-yo, Silver!" the Lone Ranger rode into our dining room.

I welcomed him. He was my friend, and the days he was not on I missed him. In fact, to this day I consider Tuesdays and Thursdays to be "down days."

The Masked Man was only one of the number of radio acquaintances I made in my youth, adventurers with whom I shared scores of hair-raising escapes.

And because I could hear but not see them, I used my imagination to picture the Masked Man and his faithful guide, Tonto. I never felt particularly deprived in not being able to see them. I already knew what they and all the other people looked like.

With each program, I gave the characters faces, dressed them up and provided them with settings and atmosphere. If I didn't like the heroine as a blonde, I could make her a redhead, no problem.

But when I saw the Lone Ranger on television for the first time, I was disappointed; the actor (the real Lone Ranger, I knew, was still on radio) picked for the part was wrong.

Disappointing, too, was the lack of imagination of the people who constructed the sets. Where I pictured vast landscapes, they settled for tacky sound stages. I envisioned mansions; they provided what looked like prefabricated housing.

One other thing: radio somehow afforded an intimacy that television never permits. With television, the basic fact is that you're looking at a picture of something. With radio, though, you were in the action and could believe that the person on the other end was really talking just to you.

In the '40s and '50s staying home from school when I was sick meant a succession of programs, starting with Don McNeil and the *Breakfast Club*, followed by Arthur Godfrey in the morning and then the soap operas.

If soap operas moved at a glacial pace, at least they were not the perverted, twisted, demonic fare on television now. Those soap operas had character. You knew who the good folks were, and who were bad. You knew that

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the good folks had traditional values and were square with their fellow human beings, spoke the truth and never dealt underhandedly.

That was a different era, When America had confidence in itself and a deeply ingrained sense of its own goodness. Sex had not been invented.

I'm talking about Oxydol's own *Ma Perkins*, *Aunt Jenny*, and her real life stories; *Just Plain Bill*, barber of Hartville; *Our Gal Sunday* (the story that asks the question: "Can this girl from the little mining town of Silver Creek, Colorado, find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and titled Englishman?")

And *Stella Dallas*, *The Second Mrs. Burton*; *The Romance of Helen Trent* (Cue announcer, Fielden Farrington, while chorus hums Juanita: "Time now for The Romance of Helen Trent, the real life drama of Helen Trent, who when life mocks her, breaks her hopes, dashes her against the rocks of despair, fights back bravely, successfully to prove what so many women long to prove in their own lives: that because a women is 35, and more, romance in life need not be over; that the romance of youth can extend into middle life, and even beyond." Humming reaches crescendo.)

And *Mary Noble*, *Backstage Wife*, *The Guiding Light* (yes it was on radio); *Young Widder Brown*; and *Lorenzo Jones* and his wife, Belle. Belle dropped out somewhere along the way while I was healthy and in school, and Lorenzo, who had been something of a ne'er-do-well, suddenly became an overnight success as an inventor and acquired a younger, sexier sounding spouse. That was the first warning that life might be a little more complicated than I thought.

For kids, there were programs like *Let's Pretend*, *Sky King*, (and his niece, Penny) *Jack Armstrong*, *The All American Boy*, *Frank Merriwell*, *Tom Mix*, and *Captain-n-n-n MIDnight* (brought to you by Ovaltine). Every week Captain Midnight gave the kids a secret message, decipherable only by using the Captain Midnight Secret Decoder Ring.

Depending on what night of the week it was, I had a rich choice of fantasy. *The Fat Man*: ("His name, Brad Runyan. There he goes now into that drugstore. He's stepping on the scale. Weight? Two-hundred thirty-nine pounds. Fortune? Danger! Who is it? *The Fat Man!*") *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar*, the hard boiled insurance investigator, ("the man with the action packed expense account"); and *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, license number 137596, played by Howard Duff.

My brother and I also liked *The Green Hornet* (and his faithful Japanese—later Filipino servant, Cato; *The Big Story* ("the story behind the story" and the weekly presentation of the Pall Mall Award, which included something like \$200), and for light entertainment, *Fibber McGee and Molly* and Willard Waterman as *The Great Gildersleeve*.

On Sunday afternoons there was Lamont Cranston, who while on a trip to the Orient had learned the secret of clouding men's minds so that he became invisible to them. He was *The Shadow* ("Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows." Diabolical laughter sends chills down your spine.)

Sunday nights brought Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Phil Harris and Alice Faye, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, and *Amos 'n' Andy*.

These were all real people for me, and to this day, when I see shots of actors standing in front of a microphone reading scripts, and when I learn how the sound effects man simulated the sound of hoofbeats and fists making contact with jaws and doors slamming, I refuse to believe that had anything to do with the world I entered in those programs.

By the time I listened, radio had grown sophisticated enough to tolerate the likes of Henry Morgan (whose sponsor dropped him for two weeks for mocking it on the air, only to discover that the audience was wild for that kind on irreverence) and the inspired zaniness of Bob and Ray.

In the '50s, one by one, a lot of these shows started drifting off. Jack Benny was one of the first to go. I never thought television improved his product. He was successful on television, but he was still a creature of radio. And I felt sorry for people who knew him and all the others only from television.

They enjoyed the shows, to be sure, but aside from a few, Steve Allen, Sid Caesar, and Ernie Kovacs, television didn't add anything to what they did. What the audience saw on television was a smaller than life re-creation of a world that earlier was bounded only by the limits of imagination.

And it seemed to me that when some of my friends from radio got to television, they changed somehow, became remote stars rather than the simpler folks I had known.

My peers may have been impressed by all those glittering "new" television stars, but I wasn't. I knew them back when.

Fanny Brice as "Baby Snooks"

Baby Snooks came about through bad dentistry. Fanny had had teeth problems for years, and before one particular radio rehearsal her dentist let her come away without her dentures. Fanny was unable to speak properly. Frantic, the producer suddenly remembered a cute baby



act Fanny would do at parties and in front of friends. It was the only thing she could do in her current condition. "What do you call her?" the producer cried. "Schnooks," lisped Fanny.

But she needed material—instantly. Rapp and David Freedman (his writing partner at the time) frantically searched the nearest bookcase and came up with an out of print (public domain) collection of sketches by Robert James Burdette titled *Chimes From a Jester's Bells*. Finding a humorous piece about a kid and his uncle called "The Simple Story of George Washington," the kid was switched to a girl, Rapp changed "Schnooks" to "Snooks," and history was made.

Fanny Brice was born on October 29, 1891 and found early fame starring in the Ziegfield Follies from 1911 to 1923. And it was on Ziegfield Follies of the Air (which Phil Rapp wrote and directed from 1936-37) that Baby Snooks took her first hilarious step. The Snooks sketches began as a regular feature in 1937 on the variety show *Good News*, and became the main attraction on *Maxwell House Coffee Time* in 1940. In 1944 the impish problem child began her own radio program, *The Baby Snooks Show*.

The series dealt with the childish innocence and constant questioning from little baby, Snooks which clashed with considerable force against the long-suffering "Daddy," first played by film actor Frank Morgan. Alan Reed next took over the adult role. But it is Hanley Stafford who is best remembered as Daddy, with his incredibly painful line readings of "Ooooooh . . . Snooooooks!"

Lalive Brownell and then Arlene Harris played the mother, while versatile child impersonator Lenore

Ledoux gave out cries as little baby brother, Robespierre, The announcers switched between Ken Roberts and Harlow Wilcox (famous as the Fibber McGee announcer).

The sponsors for *Baby Snooks* included Post cereals, Sanka coffee, Spic-n-Span, Turns antacid, and Jell-O. The musical theme was "Rock-A-Bye Baby." Rapp wrote all the material.

The series ended with Fanny's unexpected, untimely demise at the age of 50 in 1951. No one could replace her in the title role of Snooks. And no one did. A tribute program was aired the week following her death.

(Article borrowed from The Golden Radio Buffs of Maryland Publication - On The Air)

I Got The Breaks

by KAY KYSER

Writing about yourself makes a fellow feel kind of funny. It's a little like talking to your best girl friend on the party line back home with all the neighbors listening in. Know what I mean?

First of all, I'm a very lucky fellow. People have been nice to me. They pack into theaters to see our band. They let me come into their parlors every Wednesday night with our radio program. They seem to like my movie, "That's Right, You're Wrong."

I don't mean lucky like the fellow who wins the turkey at the church bazaar. I work plenty hard. But so do a lot of other folks and nothing much happens to them. Their dreams stay dreams no matter how hard they struggle. As they say on Broadway, I got the breaks.

It's a long way from Rocky Mount, N. C. my old home town, to Broadway. There are no short cuts and they never run any excursion trains to success. I walked down Broadway the other night. The dusk was falling and suddenly the lights popped on. My name was up there over a movie theatre. My name was helping light up the most famous street in the world. I just stood there on the street corner and looked and couldn't get over it. I felt good and happy and awful proud. I'm a country fellow and I guess I'll always be one, but my name up in lights made me think how lucky I was and thankful I am to all the people who have been nice to me.

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Back home in college I was a cheerleader. I never wanted to make the last touchdown. I just wanted to jump around and holler and make the folks in the stands laugh. Well, I still feel the same way. Only my audience is bigger. But every Wednesday when we broadcast, we try to forget the millions in their parlors and the big crowd sitting in the studio. We make believe we're back home and it's Saturday in the Fall and we're doing our stuff for a home crowd in a grandstand. It's worked out pretty good so far.

Most fellows have to prepare for their careers by sticking their noses into books and keeping them there. I got an A. B. degree, but I think I prepared for the future by clowning at the college socials and being a cheerleader. My play turned out to be my work. Anyway, that's the way I look at it. I like to hear people laughing. Laughter is sweet music.

It makes me laugh a little inside when I'm introduced as the professor of the *Kollege of Musical Knowledge*. You see I come from a teaching family. For a hundred years I've had kinsmen who have been on the faculty at the University of North Carolina. My first cousin was the dean of the Graduate School at U. N. C. My brother, who is now an attorney, taught chemistry. My mother was the first lady druggist in North Carolina. My father was a druggist, too. Professoring and music run in the family, because my oldest sister, Virginia, has conducted a grand opera class for years back home.

Say, I'm glad I didn't have the opera urge, because I'd probably be wearing a beard as big as a weeping willow tree and staggering around that Met stage with a big spear in my hand and fat ladies dying all over the place, while a tenor sings in a language no one understands. I'm a clarinet man, but I'm a lucky (that word keeps coming into my typewriter all the time) fellow I don't play it better than I do. If I did, I'd probably be sitting four rows back in some other fellows band. Realizing I wasn't going to set any creeks on fire with my clarinetting, I started to figuring and things worked out pretty fine, because the band I started in a drowsy college town found itself in Chicago's roaring Loop.

That was in 1934, when we were booked into the Blackhawk Restaurant. We were scared to death and figured we were going to flop. You see, we followed Hal Kemp who was terrific and still is. He's my buddy and a fellow who has been one of my ideals since I started playing music.

Well, the Chicago folks liked us and started a-coming. Our singing titles helped put us over as much as anything. We had introduced the idea at the Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica, California, the summer before, but

didn't fully develop the idea until we opened at the Blackhawk. Those singing titles save a lot of time and you don't have to make a lot of useless announcements. Anyway, we always figured people were entitled to know the name of the song they were listening to.

But the *Kollege of Musical Knowledge* put me over. It was a break that the people who ran the Blackhawk were brave enough to let us pioneer with a new type of entertainment, and then we were signed for the *Lucky Strike Program*. Then the big crowds in the theatres and movies, and well, I can't read the palm and the crystal, so I'm just hoping it will be all right from now on.

I've got the nicest gang of fellows any one ever worked with in my band. Six of them started with me back down the years in Rocky Mount and they're still with me and I hope they always will be. So you think I'm lucky? "That's right, you're right."

(Re-printed from *Radio Varieties*, June 1940)



Yep, It's That Time Again

It's membership renewal time once again, and in order to remain a member we need to receive your dues (\$17.50) by the end of February. If the mailing label has 1/04 printed after your name it means your membership is expiring and this will be the last issue of the I.P. mailed to you. Please send in your check today while it's fresh in your mind.

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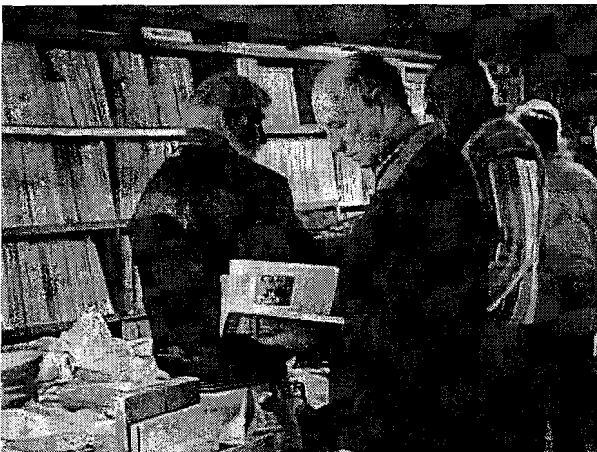
*****CHRISTMAS PARTY PHOTOS*****



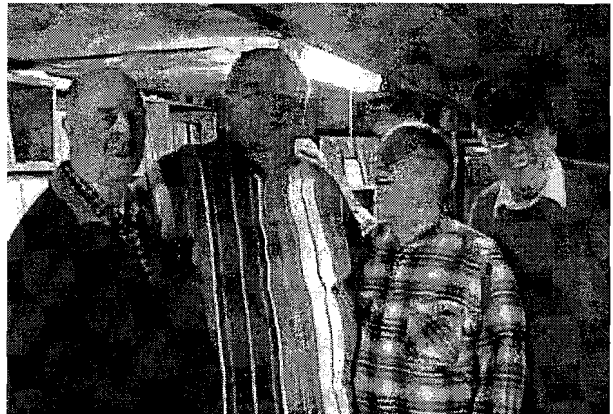
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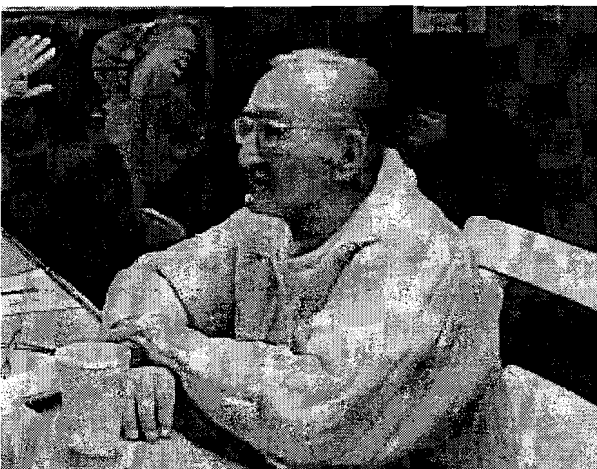
Ray Olivieri, Frank Bork & Tom Cherre



Our studious Vice Pres. Dick Simpson



**Dick Simpson, Dick Olday, Bob Mcdivitt
and Tom Cherre (quite a Quartet)**



Our genial host Ed Wanat



Our workaholic President

The Illustrated Press

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- 3292 Lum & Abner "Trouble Paying Back Taxes"
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Lum & Abner "Mind Reader" 10/10/48
- 3293 Lum & Abner "Lum Must Sell A Lot" 1/9/49
Lum & Abner "To Washington For Inauguration"
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- 3294 Eddie Cantor Show "Bobby Wanted A Raise"
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Eddie Cantor Show "Football" 11/8/36
- 3295 Philo Vance "The Church Murder Case" 3/7/50
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- 3296 Philo Vance "The Chicken Murder Case" 2/7/50
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- 3297 Philo Vance "The Herring Bone Murder Case"
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- 3298 Philo Vance "The Rumba Murder Case" 12/28/48
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- 3299 Black Museum "A Length of Sash Cord"
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- 3300 Philo Vance "The Idol Murder Case" 1/25/49
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- 3301 Great Gildersleeve "Needy Children's Party"
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(Leroy)" 12/30/53
- 3302 Inner Sanctum "Till Death Do Us Part" 9/14/52
Inner Sanctum "The Corpse Nobody Loved"
9/21/52
- 3303 Wild Bill Hickok "A Trail of Vengeance" 2/5/52
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- 3304 Wild Bill Hickok "Jingles Settles Down" 1/5/53
Wild Bill Hickok "Wild Bill's New Deputy" 5/13/53
- 3305 Wild Bill Hickok "The Highest Bidder" 11/8/54
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- 3306 Red Ryder "Trouble In Millersville" (Pt. 1) 2/10/42
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- 3307 Father Knows Best "An Uncontrolled Dog" 5/5/11
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- 3308 Father Knows Best "Watching The Dog" 9/11/52
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- 3309 Inner Sanctum "Appointment With Death"
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- 3310 Maisie "Chester Drake" 3/16/50
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- 3313 Philip Marlowe "The Long Way Home" 8/4/51
Philip Marlowe "Young Man's Fancy" 8/18/51

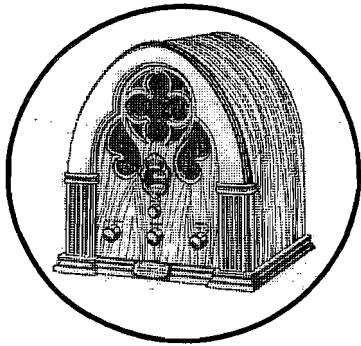
Edward Wanat, Sr.

It is with a heavy heart that we
announce the passing of fellow
member Ed Wanat, Sr.

Our condolences to his family.
It was his wish to continue to use
his home as a meeting place for
The Old Time Radio Club to be be
hosted by his son, Ed Wanat, Jr.

The Old Time Radio Club

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