The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

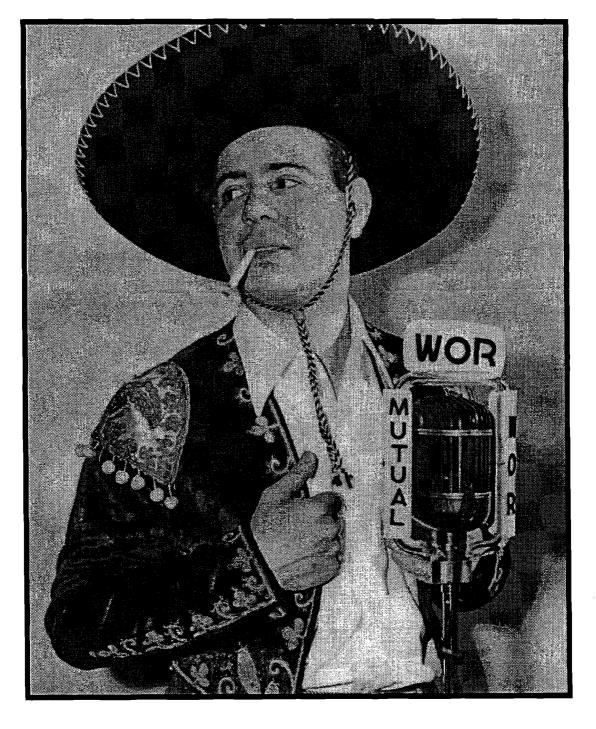
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Number 322

September 2004



JACKSON BECK

#### **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 the 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 newsletter issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The Old Time Radio Club meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 PM during the months of September through June at St. Aloysius School Hall, Cleveland Drive and Century Road, Cheektowaga, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July, and an informal meeting is held in 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 56 Christen Ct. Lancaster, NY 14086 E-Mail Address: otrclub@localnet.com

Back issues of *The Illustrated Press* are \$1.50 postpaid

# Deadline for *The Illustrated Press* is the 1st of each month prior to publication.

The Illustrated Press is the newsletter of the Old Time Radio Club, headquartered in Western New York State. It is published monthly except for the months of July and August. Contents except where noted are copyright © 2004 by the OTRC.

Send all articles, letters, exchange newsletters, etc. to: The Illustrated Press

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#### Video and Record Libraries

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



# Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons

by Jim Cox

#### Reviewed by Jerry Collins

I must admit that *Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons* was one of my favorite shows as I was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s. I will always remember the voice of the kindly "Old Professor."

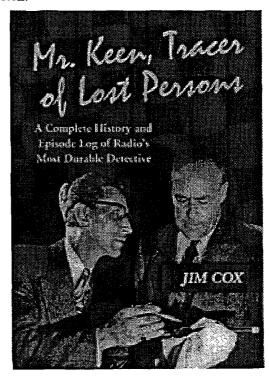
The show was on the air from October 12, 1937 to September 26, 1955, exactly 1,690 episodes. In his research, Jim Cox was able to locate 1,600 scripts. Sixty-four Mr. Keen dramas are thought to exist in recorded form, although five are believed to be in one person's private collection. Nearly 270 pages are devoted to a very detailed radio episode guide. This leaves only 76 pages of text. Cox is still able to pack an extensive amount of information into a limited amount of space.

Cox begins by tracing the transition of the show from Mr. Keen, "the tracer of lost persons," to Mr. Keen, "the plain old investigator." Next Cox traces the development of radio detective shows. It is quite an extensive study of all examples of the detective show genre. He then follows with the development of the Mr. Keen show, as one of many shows developed by Frank and Anne Hummert. Nearly every aspect of the show is investigated by Cox. For the Buffalo, New York readers. Mr. Keen visited Buffalo to interview a department store personnel manager in episode 976, "The Case of the Strange Display," aired on March 16, 1944.

The second last chapter prior to the radio episode guide is entitled "Hired Guns." It is a series of condensed biographies of the show's actors, actresses, announcers, directors, writers, etc. Some of those featured were Leonard Klee, Larry Elliot, Ned Weaver and of course, Arthur Hughes, James Kelly, Bennett Kilpack, and Philip N. Clarke. Klee was one of radio's greatest writers. Unfortunately a heart attack struck him down at

the age of 42. Announcer Larry Elliot had one of the most recognizable voices in all of radio while Ned Weaver was one of its best character actors. I was a big fan of James Kelly, who played Mike Clancy. Unfortunately little is known of either his private of professional life. Kilpack and Clarke both played Mr. Keen. Kilpack played Mr. Keen from 1937 to 1950. During those last few years Kilpack was suffering from an unexplained illness. Arthur Hughes filled in frequently for Kilpack during those years. Finally Philip Clark permanently assumed the role of Mr. Keen on December 7, 1950 and held that position for the final five years of the show.

Jim Cox has produced another great book on the history of "old time radio." It is very thorough and well researched. If you are a fan of "old time radio," the book definitely belongs on your shelf. One last suggestion, Jim. Could we put the Hummert shows to rest? How about a book on the Shadow, Johnny Dollar or even Sgt. Preston?



374 Pages, Illustrated Case Binding (7 x 10)
Photographs, notes, chronology, bibliography, index
Price \$65, Postpaid Price \$69

Published by McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640 Orders 800-253-2187 — Fax 336-246-4403 www.mcfarlandpub.com

# The I Love a Mystery Companion

By Martin Grams, Jr. Forward by Jim Harmon

Published by OTR Publishing PO Box 252 Churchville, Maryland, 21028 717-456-6208 (\$29.95 plus shipping)

#### Reviewed by Peter Bellanca

Let me preface this review with the fact that this is the first book documenting the history of *I Love a Mystery*.

I met Martin Grams at the Cincinnati Old Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention and was impressed with his knowledge of Old Time Radio and his youth. He is twenty-seven years old. You might ask, how does someone this young have the background needed to write about Old Time Radio. The answers are intelligence, research, and dedication. At this point in his career Mr. Grams has written OTR books on Suspense, Cavalcade of America, CBS Mystery Theater, Have Gun Will Travel, Alfred Hitchcock, Ellery Queen, Information Please, Inner Sanctum plus a book on Radio Drama and one on Invitation to Learning.

When I first saw the book I thought any book pertaining to a popular radio program like I Love a Mystery is a plus, regardless of its contents. What a pleasant surprise. Mr. Grams uses every imaginable resource including primary source material, interviews, program summaries, logs, scripts, sponsors, production costs, program ratings, etc. to author this outstanding book.

He begins with the early life and career of Carlton E. Morse and his rise through the ranks of radio script writing. The success of Mr. Morse's One Man's Family was the reason its sponsor, Standard Brands, and the J. Walter Advertising Agency asked Mr. Morse to write a radio program that was the complete opposite of OMF. They wanted to target another demographic group. The original contract between NBC, the ad agency and Mr. Morse for ILAM is included in its entirety. Even the negotiations for the finalized agreement are included.

Later Morse stated he "needed some thing to play against. When you go along doing the same thing and thinking in the same general category week after week, your thoughts get a little fagged." Fortunately for the radio audience his thoughts were never a little fagged.

Extensive episode guides of *I Love A Mystery*, *I Love Adventure*, *Adventures By Morse* and Mr. Morse's early radio programs are incorporated into this book. Dates, cast members, story plots, etc. provide a running commentary on the programs aired on both the National Broadcast Company. and the Mutual Network. There is also a section on the ILAM movies, comic sections and books authored by Mr. Morse.

This book is a must for any OTR enthusiast and especially for a fan of ILAM. The 381 pages, not including appendices and bibliography, are a testament to one of the great adventure programs of radio's golden age.

Radio buffs know that there are numerous missing episodes of the original 1,700 plus broadcasts of ILAM. Mr. Grams' use of scripts to augment the few remaining episodes into a chronological history of this program is truly remarkable. It should be noted the estate of Carlton E. Morse has officially authorized this book.

A must addition to any fan of Jack, Doc, Reggie, and the entire crew of Carlton E. Morse's incredible imagina-

For all the trivia buffs out there, did you know that Carlton E. Morse was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. To find out where it is located you will have to buy the book.

A personal note to Mr. Grams: Now that you have written about my favorite radio drama, how about a book on my favorite detective, Sam Spade and my favorite comedy, the Phil Harris Alice Faye program.

#### **JACKSON BECK**

One of the stalwarts of the radio and television broadcasting mediums has passed away. Jackson Beck died in Manhattan on July 28, 2004, five days after his 92nd birthday. He was in poor health after suffering a series of minor strokes four or five years ago according to a friend, Jeff David.

In the golden age of radio Beck played title roles in The Cisco Kid from October 1942 through February 1945 and Philo Vance from 1948-1950. He was also heard on a host of other programs including Easy Aces, The March of Time, Mark Trail, Grand Central Station and many more. His strong, modulated voice was famous for introducing the Superman series on both radio and TV.

Faster than a speeding bullet ... More powerful than a locomotive . . . Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound . . . "Look! Up in the sky!" "It's a bird!" "It's a plane!" "It's SUPERMAN!"

He was also heard as the voice of Popeye's arch-nemesis Bluto in the animated Popeye cartoon series and worked in various other cartoon shorts. His voice was used in the Woody Allen film "Radio Days", a tribute to radio's golden age. In the film he portrayed the narrator reporting the rescue attempt of the little girl who had fallen down a well.

In television his voice was heard in countless commercials extolling the virtues of products such as Pepsi Cola, Brawny Paper Towels, Sugar Frosted Flakes, Little Caesar's Pizza, etc. He was a frequent guest at many OTR conventions and participated in re-creations of classic shows.

Jackson was married twice. His first wife passed away and his second, Bernice, died in 1986. He is survived by a son, Leslie Winter, of Manhattan.



#### **Hollywood's Fictional Sleuths**

by JACK FRENCH © 2004

Before Sam Spade, Nick Carter, or Dick Tracy ever took to the airwaves, women detectives had been solving murder mysteries on the radio. While most of the ladies at the microphone were exclusively network performers in the Golden Age of Radio, several Hollywood stars also used their talents to become fictional sleuths in broadcasting.

Radio's very first lady detective was film star Irene Delroy, a Broadway ingenue of the 1920s who appeared in several productions of Ziegfeld Follies and whose success elevated her to the cover of popular magazines. She went to Hollywood in 1929 and found feature work in the Vitaphone musical films churned out by Warner Brothers. But by 1932 these movies were scaled back and Delroy, like many other singers and dancers, found herself out of work. She turned, probably reluctantly to

radio and obtained the starring role in two crime mystery series, "The Transcontinental Murder Mystery" and "The Stratosphere Murder Mystery" produced by Transco, the same company that gave us "The Cinnamon Bear." Both of Delroy's shows were syndicated throughout the U.S. and in them, using her real name, she portrayed a private investigator who single-handedly solved homicides and robberies. Several audio copies of each series still exist today.

In the summer of 1941, NBC radio aired a new half-hour series, Miss Pinkerton, Inc., with Joan Blondell in the title role. Her co-star was her then-husband, Dick Powell. In this crime drama, Blondell played a law school graduate who inherited her uncle's detective agency. She decided to run it herself, to the consternation of boy friend, Dennis Murray, a New York policeman portrayed by Powell. The series was a wonderful combination of crime solving, romance, and mystery, but there is only one surviving audio copy, which is the audition disk.

Three years later, in 1944, Oscar winning Claire Trevor came to the Mutual Network as the co-lead in Results, Inc. Her partner at the microphone was an equally talented Hollywood star, Lloyd Nolan, and this detective duo solved an assortment of mysteries involving haunted houses, escaped killers, and Egyptian mummies coming to life. Although successful, the series was cancelled when the two leads had to return to their higher paying jobs in the movies. Two audio copies of this series, the first and last episodes, are available from many old-time radio dealers, and both are delightful.

Academy Award winner, McCambridge, also portrayed a crime fighter on radio. In 1951 ABC debuted Defense Attorney and in the title role, McCambridge played Martha Ellis Bryant, a mirror image of Perry Mason, in that she was an attorney who spent most of her time in the streets solving crime. In this series, her boy friend Jud Barnes (the voice of Howard Culver, who had also played Straight Arrow) was at her beck-and-call to assist in the solution of the various crimes that came her way. McCambridge was by far the most talented radio performer to be among Hollywood's elite; she had put herself through college working on network soap operas in Chicago and regularly returned to the microphone when not filming. There are a half dozen audio copies of her crime drama program that have survived to present day.

In 1953, playing a thinly veiled composite of her silver screen persona, Marlene Dietrich launched the character of international singer and sleuth, Diane LaVolta, in her series, Time for Love on CBS radio. The writer for this series was Murray Burnett, whose earlier stage drama had become the basis for the classic movie, Casablanca. His network scripts sent LaVolta around the globe, solving a bombing in Algiers, a homicide in Brazil, and diamond smuggling in Greece. Dietrich had come to radio when her motion picture career stalled, but she quickly abandoned her radio series when her agent booked her in a lengthy (and well-paying) club engagement in Las Vegas. Although only four audio copies of her radio crime series are usually available in the U.S., I've heard from European collectors that another 45 episodes are in the Marlene Dietrich Museum in Berlin and a German production company recently started releasing them on CD to the public.

Jack French is the author of PRIVATE EYELASHES: Radio's Lady Detectives, just released by Bear Manor Media of Pennsylvania, and available for \$ 18.95 plus postage at their web site, www.bearmanormedia.com

# The Radio

#### by TOM CHERRE

What a miracle it must have seemed like to those people living back in the 20s. To have a small box emit a voice from many miles away. Even though those early radios might have appeared a bit primitive it was still a mystery. Much in the same way modern technology, like picture cell phones, computers, etc staggers my little brain, the invention of radio was just as fascinating.

Through the long history of radio in the early 20s to modern times there were more than 300 American companies manufacturing radios. We've all heard of the big ten, Admiral, Crosley, Emerson, GE, Motorola, Philco, RCA, Stromberg/Carlson, Westinghouse and Zenith, but there were hundreds more. The most popular models were floor, table, and portable. We also had box, breadbox, cathedral, chest, deco, highboy, lowboy, and even a few more. My grandmother had one of those huge Philco's in her living room. It was bigger than the TV we have now. I also remember the dark brown Stromberg/Carlson sitting on the kitchen counter listening to Mark Trail right around supper time. My mother had it on all the time. Listening to Clint Buehlman in those stormy winter mornings I'd always pray he would close our schools. The radio and the soaps kept my mom company as she did the housework. All the problems of Helen Trent, Our Gal Sunday, Ma Perkins, and all the rest took her troubles away. When my mom would make us lunch she'd always ask if we wanted our sandwich cut Lorenzo Jones style (diagonal). Does anyone else recall that. Oh the memories!



Sometimes radios were free if a child wrote for the Free Radio Plan.

The birth of radio in Buffalo began May 21st, 1922 with WGR named after George Rand its founder. Some of the first programs to come out of the studio at 1739 Elmwood Ave. 82 years ago were a clergyman's lecture, "Six points to success", a concert from Victor's furniture store, and another lecture by Dr. Julian Park of UB stressing the advantage of a college education. Sounds like something Frank Bork would get excited about. On top of all this the reception was so weak you needed ear phones glued to your head. Another hard thing to bear was the price, about \$25.00. This was a good chunk of change in 1922. We all know things did get better.

Jack Benny's daughter Joan, describes her conception of the old radio days from her book "Sundays at Seven" in this way. Those days were filled with nostalgia. Television could never take radio's place. On her father's show listener's could picture Jack Benny's money vault. You could see the tunnel leading to the dungeon in your mind. The moat, the alligators, the polar bear, the torches, and all the booby traps were implanted in your imagination. Joan remembers doing her homework to shows like Suspense, The Whistler, and Inner Sanctum. She also hid a portable under the covers to listen to I Love a Mystery. I could still remember doing my homework to The Lone Ranger. Other shows I enjoyed were Gildersleeve, Luigi, Beuhla, and the Shadow. I also had an old GE in my bedroom to listen to X minus One late at night, at least I thought it was late.

Going back to the Depression years of the 30s, before my time, radios were an affordable luxury. It was possible to buy a Wards Airline table model for \$24.95 while a large console might put you back \$72.00. Nowadays, you could go to a drugstore and pick up a decent am-fm clock radio for ten bucks. Up till the early 50s when not being enter-

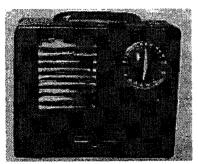
#### The Illustrated Press



1941 Airline model 14BR-522A; white plastic radio with simple lines.



1941 Zenith portable model 6G-601-M cloth-covered.



1941 Emerson portable model FU-427

tained by music, comedy, or drama. You heard the latest news around town or the world, not to mention hearing the latest sporting event.

I can honestly say I enjoyed sharing a small part of my life during the last vintage of those great radio days. Oh how I would look forward to those Saturday mornings many years ago listening to Big Jon and Sparky. Sad to say those days are gone, but I won't fret. I might just pop in a cassette right now and listen to The Great Gildersleeve, The mavbe Shadow, might even listen to Jack Benny.

> Well anyway, "Good Night Folks".

#### **SAM EDWARDS**

Sam Edwards, a Georgia native and long time character actor who performed in radio, television and movies passed away on July 28, 2004 in Durango, Colorado at the age of 89. Sam played Dexter Franklin along with Janet Waldo who had the lead role in *Meet Corliss Archer*. He was kept busy in radio's golden years with roles in shows such as *One Man's Family*,



Cavalcade of America, The Great Gildersleeve, Suspense, Dragnet and Gunsmoke. His television credits were numerous and included performances in such shows as Dragnet, Little House On The Prairie, The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, The Burns and Allen Show, You Are There, The Andy Griffith Show and many others.

Films in which he appeared include "Twelve O'clock High", "Hello Dolly", "The Postman Always Rings Twice" and many made for TV movies.

Sam is survived by his wife of 35 years, Beverly Edwards, brother Jack Edwards, three stepchildren and four grandchildren.

# Bill Cosby Honored with a New JELL-O Museum Exhibit

On June 8, Bill Cosby unveiled a new exhibit at the JELL-O Museum in LeRoy, NY, the Birthplace of JELL-O. Created in honor of Cosby's 30th Anniversary as spokesman, the multimedia Exhibit features the work he has done for JELL-O.

The museum houses historical items that trace the invention, production and advertising of "America's most famous desert" which was named JELL-O by its inventor, Pearle B. Wait, a carpenter and cough medicine manufacturer from LeRoy. Visitors to the museum will learn about the rich history of the jiggly desert and its celebrity representatives. The Exhibit features classic commercial and print ads promotional items and more.

Vintage radio recordings from Jack Benny and Lucille Ball will be showcased, along with many television commercials featuring Andy Griffith, Jim Nabors, Paul Lynde, the cast of Green Acres, and, of course, Bill Cosby.

The JELL-O Museum first opened its doors to the public in 1997, in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the "birth" of JELL-O gelatin in LeRoy in 1897.

According to Lynne Belluscio, Director of the LeRoy Historical Society and curator of the museum, "Interest in the museum has been overwhelming since the day we opened."

The Museum, a stone annex located behind the LeRoy Historical Society headquarters, was once the town high school. The historic building stood idle for more than 50 years before it was refurbished in 1997 with the help of a grant from Kraft Foods (the company that produces JELL-O brand products).

#### The Illustrated Press

Visitors to the Museum include tourists, collectors and students of American culture who are attracted to the Exhibits that illustrate the JELL-O brand's colorful history. Original paintings by such famous artists as Maxfield Parrish, Norman Rockwell and Rose O'Neill hang on walls, flanked by collections of recipe books and memorabilia. In addition to chronicling the brand's advertising, the Museum houses the original 1899 contract that sold the rights to JELL-O gelatin for \$450, along with a collection of antique tin molds in outrageous geometric shapes.

Portions of the gallery are dedicated to tracing the production of the dessert during the early 1900s with captivating black and white photographs, while display cases hold an original plantworker's uniform and pieces of original machinery.

The 30-year relationship between Bill Cosby and the JELL-O brand has been one of the most enduring in advertising history. Audiences knew right away that it was a marriage made in heaven: America's favorite funnyman and America's Most Famous Dessert.

"I remember what a treat it was when my mom made JELL-O pudding for dessert," Cosby said. "It still makes me smile when I open the refrigerator and find some JELL-O. I'm proud of the fact that for 30 years I've been able to share some of those JELL-O smiles."

Bill Cosby began his association with JELL-O pudding in 1974. His "Kids Love Pudding" campaign, and his vibrant, upbeat personality projected the idea that JELL-O is fun. After 13 successful years appealing to young moms and kids, Cosby was asked to become the spokesperson for JELL-O gelatin, as well. Sales, which had been lackluster, began to turn around as baby boomers served the foods they love as kids to their own children.

"Bill Cosby is all about families and fun and that is exactly what JELL-O is about, too," said Laura Szeliga, senior business director, JELL-O Brand.

"His special talent and unique brand of comedy appeals to kids of all ages and personifies the attributes of JELL-O in a way that no one else could. We are honored to be celebrating such a long and successful relationship with him."

Through his work for JELL-O, he has created some of television's most memorable and heart-warming commercials and has earned the title of longest tenured spokesperson in history. Over the years, Cosby has appeared in over 70 television commercials, more than 50 radio commercials and numerous print ads for JELL-O.

To celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the partnership between Bill Cosby and JELL-O, the brand hosted a "Jiggle & Giggle comedy Contest" for kid comedians nationwide. Parents submitted a videotape of their kid doing a "move" (the jiggle) and telling a joke (the giggle) in order to win the grand prize of an opportunity to meet and appear with Cosby at the unveiling of an exhibit created to honor his tenure with the brand. The new Exhibit at the JELL-O Museum in LeRoy, NY celebrates the work of Cosby and other famous spokespeople for the brand.

Thirty years have brought many changes but what hasn't changed is America's love for Bill Cosby and America's love for its most famous dessert, JELL-O.

JELL-O is part of Kraftfoods, which markets many of the world's leading food brands, including Kraft cheese, Maxwell House and Jacobs coffees, Nabisco cookies and crackers, Philadelphia cream cheese, Oscar Mayer meats, Post cereals and Milk chocolates — in more than 150 countries.

The JELL-O Museum is located at 23 East Main Street, LeRoy, NY. For additional information on the LeRoy JELL-O Museum, visit http://www.jellomuseum.com For more information on JELL-O brand products visit http://www.jell-o.com

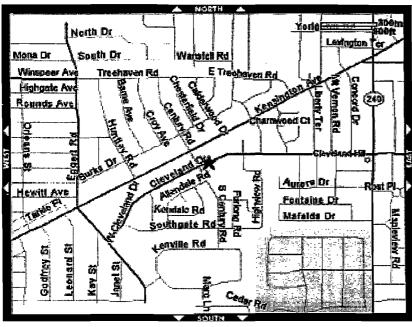


# We've got a New Meeting Place

After months of searching and debating the merits of different locations we've finally solved the problem of where to hold our monthly meetings. The Pastor of St. Aloysius Gonzaga Church in Cheektowaga, NY has graciously allowed us to meet in the school hall located alongside the Church. It's located on the southwest corner of Cleveland Drive and Century Road in Cheektowaga.

Meetings will begin at the usual time, 7:30 PM, and most importantly coffee and doughnuts will still be available after the meeting. We're grateful to Tom Cherre and Frank Bork for their efforts in securing this location.

(See page nine for a map of this location.)



St. Aloysius Church and School located on the southwest corner of Cleveland Drive and Century Road in Cheektowaga, NY

### 29th Annual Friends of Old Time Radio Convention

#### October 21 - 24, 2004 HOLIDAY INN-NORTH Newark, NJ

See back cover for additional information

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3386 Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show "A Night With Phil Harris" 12/4/53

Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show "Jessica, You're Draggin' Your Neck" 12/11/53

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3388 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "The Corridor of Doom" 10/23/45

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3389 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Hangman's Island" 9/20/48

Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Murder By Prophecy" 9/27/48

3390 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Flame of Death" 2/21/49

Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Only The Dead Die Twice" 3/21/49

3391 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "The Unburied Dead" 5/16/49

Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Death On The Highway" 6/6/49

3392 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Corpse Without A Conscience" 6/20/49

Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Pattern For Fear" 7/4/49

3393 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "The Devil's Workshop" 10/10/49

Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Image of Death" 10/17/49

3394 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Night Is My Shroud" 10/24/49

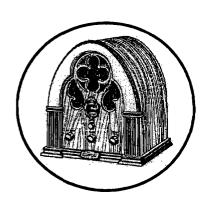
Inner Sanctum Mysteries "A Corpse For Halloween" 10/31/49

3395 Inner Sanctum Mysteries "A Wish To Kill" 11/14/49

Inner Sanctum Mysteries "Beyond The Grave" 12/19/49

#### The Old Time Radio Club

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