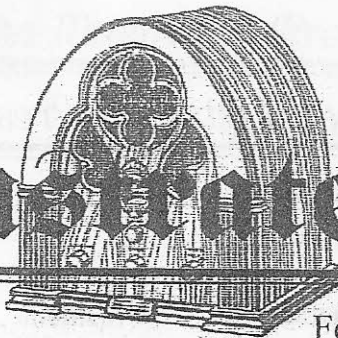


The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

The Illustrated Press



Number 387

February 2011



The Illustrated Press

Membership Information

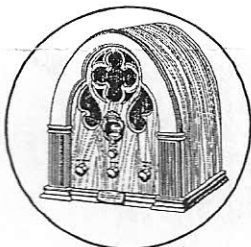
Club Membership: \$18.00 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and the monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$18.00; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. All renewals should 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 the month of August.

Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with the Old Time Radio Network.

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All Submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

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

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

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Library Rates:

Audio cassettes and CDs are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a **club supplied cassette or CD** which is **retained** by the member. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.



Editor's Two Cents:

Happy New Year to all. Our first meeting of the new year went well. We would like to welcome new member Mike Powers of Williamsville to the club, and also re-welcome Fr Dave Baker back to the club after a brief absence. Thanks are in order to Peter Bellanca and Frank Bork for contributing interesting articles to the newsletter. Peter gave a nice eulogy to one of the founders of the club, Chuck Seeley. It is also featured in this issue of the newsletter. Jerry had several trivia questions on hand. I promise to have a bunch of questions for this February's meeting. I will also give away a DVD of The Our Miss Brooks movie as a trivia prize. Once again thanks to our writers. It makes my job so much easier when I have pieces to put in, so if you've got a hankering for an idea just put it in writing and it will be in the newsletter.

IP correction: Last month I thanked Paul instead of Ted Davenport for being so kind to donate CDs to our club. Ted has been gracious enough to donate more CDs to our club. So thank you again for being so generous. Our club appreciates your gift. Many thanks to Ted Davenport. *****

Reminder... Our annual Spaghetti Dinner will take place Feb. 20th from 4-7 PM at the school hall. Please support our dinner. St Al's provides our meeting room Gratus. Call me for tickets. Tom

Bet'sha Didn't Know:

Our Miss Brooks was one of the most popular radio shows of all time. Eve Arden in playing Miss Brooks was the most famous teacher of all time. From the beginning in 1948 she became a favorite to women, high schoolers, and parents. She became the role model for teachers to be. Now for some trivia. We should know the high school she taught at was Madison H.S. As for Mr. Boynton, who often appeared brain dead, was a Biology teacher. The very often Miss Davis had a cat by the name of Minerva. I bet you didn't know that Eve Arden was the 3rd choice for playing Our Miss Brooks. The first was Shirley Booth. The second one was believe it or not, Lucille Ball. Colgate Palmolive was the only sponsor in the show's long run. They provided soap products, Lustre Crème Shampoo, and Toni hair products. What 1978 movie had Eve Arden playing the principal of Rydel High School? Of course it was Grease. Who was the only cast member not to join the ranks when the show went to TV? That was Phil Boynton's character played by Jeff Chandler. Robert Rockwell assumed that role. And now for the DVD movie of Our Miss Brooks. What was the real first name of Stretch Snodgrass? Good Luck.



Chuck Seeley

The Old Time Radio Club lost one of its founders on Wednesday December 29th 2010. Charles (Chuck) Seeley died of an apparent heart attack. Chuck was our first secretary and inspirational leader of the fledgling *Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo*. As secretary he corresponded with other OTR enthusiasts and organizations to give the club a creditable beginning. In February of 1976 Chuck published our first newsletter, which he later named the *Illustrated Press*. He also started our magazine, *Memories*, which was published until 1993. There was never enough material to fill the *IP* and *Memories* so Chuck would write articles using various names hoping it would inspire other members to contribute material. Chuck loved writing and books, (he had a degree in English from Canisius College) and continued as editor of the *IP* through issue number thirty five. He left the club in the 1980s to concentrate on his book and comic store in Kenmore New York.

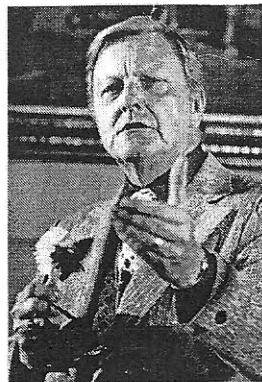
I would visit his store on a regular basis and he would always inquire about the progress of the club. I can say without hesitation that Chuck's leadership and writing ability were with made the club prosper. If Chuck had not participated to the degree that he did, there would not have been an *Old Time Radio Club (of Buffalo)*. Chuck will be truly missed, both as a friend and as an inspiration to us all.

Peter Bellanca.

Although I did not know Chuck personally I join with Peter and express my sincere sympathy to the Seeley family.

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Fred Foy



Radio Museum
Fred Foy in the late 1970s.

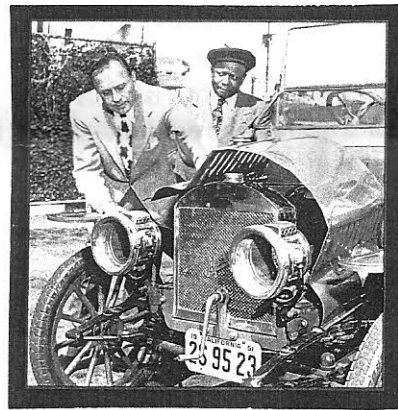
Last month I reported that we lost one of the greatest announcers in Old Time Radio and the movies with Art Gilmore's passing. On December 23rd we lost another truly great radio show announcer, Fred Foy. As a young boy I remember doing my homework and listening to Fred Foy giving the most exciting intro in all of radio. Fred passed away at 89. I am pretty safe in saying that nowhere in the pages of radio history will one find anyone that could duplicate his lead-in for *The Lone Ranger*. Actually I didn't know there was another announcer until I joined the club. Frankly speaking I don't enjoy the earlier episodes from previous announcers. It's just not the same. His daughter Nancy Foy says her father would give the intro to just about anyone who asked. He just loved doing it. And I loved hearing it. He was, indeed, the greatest.

Jack Benny

By Tom Cherre

This February 14th we celebrate Valentine's Day. We should also celebrate Jack Benny's birthday. It would have been Jack's 117th birthday. I can't say enough of, in my opinion the greatest comedian of all time, Jack Benny. Most of us in the club realize he was also a wonderful person in real life. I have to be honest with my readers and say, I remember Jack mainly from television. Since joining the club I've listened to hundreds of his radio shows, and I've enjoyed them all. As for Jack Benny playing a penny-pinching miser, and a conceded snob, proclaiming to be 39, he did a spectacular job. We all know in real life Jack Benny was very generous and a very humble gentleman. I doubt if you can say that about the many super stars of today. Jack Benny had the uncanny ability to get a laugh by just pausing, or not saying anything at all. Sometimes he just said one word or a short phrase, like, Well! Or now cut that out!. He had what they call great comedic timing. He first came to radio with his own show on May 5th 1932 on NBC. He continued to do his radio show until 1955 ending with CBS. All of those years Jack had great ratings. Jack had a lot to do with the ratings, and he also had some great supporting cast members. His wife Sadie Marks, who adopted the stage name of Mary Livingstone played his female friend. You wouldn't classify her as Jack's girlfriend, since Jack would try and date other stars, such as Barbara Stanwyck among others. Longtime announcer Don Wilson, vocalists Frank Parker, Kenny Baker, and Dennis Day rounded out the trio. Andy Devine, who

always called Jack "Buck" provided comic relief before Eddie Anderson came around as Rochester Van Jones. Phil Harris and much later Bob Cosby were the music conductors. Other contributors were Mel Blanc who in addition to doing the sound of Benny's old Maxwell car was the voice of many characters. Artie Auerbach was Mr Kitzel. Frank Nelson was usually a clerk or sales person who had the familiar "Yes Can I Help You?", Joe Kearns as Ed, guard of the vault, Sheldon Leonard, and Bea Benadaret were some of the lesser known, but equally funny cast. Ronald Coleman and wife Benita as Jack's neighbors, should also be included.



One of the funniest gags the show had was the notorious feud between Jack Benny and Fred Allen. It started in 1937 when Jack had a young violinist by the name of Stewart Canin who performed on Jack's show and Fred Allen viciously criticized Benny for playing poorly to a twelve year old virtuoso. This kept going on for over ten years. According to Benny and Allen, both writing teams of the two shows would meet together and plot future episodes for continuing the unsavory feud. When each star would

guest star on the other's show Crossly ratings went to the roof. As I mentioned before, Joe Kearns would play Ed, the protector of the vault. This gag was used sparingly, but was one of the greatest laugh getter. The vault was in a sub basement surrounded by a moat. The huge alarm system was created by the Spike Jones Band, and it was more elaborate than "Fibber McGee's closet". Ed was down there so long he didn't know what a car was. It was a great laugh getter, but only used sparingly. Since this is Black History month I feel I should mention that Jack Benny helped break the racial barrier when he hired Eddie Anderson to play Rochester. Although Amos N' Andy had been on the air for a while, the major parts were portrayed by white people. Anderson in the role of Rochester was depicted as a regular member of the Benny household. Jack treated Rochester more like an equal partner than as a hired domestic. The gags were hilarious about the puny salary Rochester received from boss Benny. In actuality Anderson was the highest paid black actor on radio at that time. Like Liberace, he laughed all the way to the bank.

Jack Benny



Jack Benny in 1958

To put it plain, I loved Jack Benny and his show. All the good comedians are gone. George Burns, Bob Hope, Abbott and Costello, Red Skelton, Jackie Gleason, and William Bendix were actually funny people. There may be a handful more, but they're not the same. I'll leave you with some Benny tidbits. And Happy Birthday to Mr. Benny wherever you are.

Jack Benny lived for many years at 1002 North Roxbury Drive in Beverly Hills. His real life neighbors were Lucille Ball and Dezi Arnez.

One of Jack's best friends was Fred Allen. He was deeply upset when Allen passed away and took the time on his radio show to eulogize him on the air. Jack was a personal friend of president Harry S. Truman. He served as MC at his Inaugural Ball. When he arrived at the White House for the event a guard pointed to his violin case and asked "Mr. Benny, what do you have in there"? As a joke Jack said "It's a Thompson sub-machine gun." The guard said "Oh that's a relief, I thought it was your violin." Good Night Folks.



Harry Truman and Jack Benny

LONG RUNNING COMIC STRIPS SHORT RUNNING RADIO PROGRAMS

Peter Bellanca

After reading Tom Cherre's article, *Comic Strips to Radio* in the December, 2010 IP, I began thinking of the comics that I read while growing up. Tom wrote about some of the popular comic strips that had comparatively long runs on the radio, *Blondie*, *Dick Tracy*, *Little Orphan Annie*, etc. But what about the popular comic strips that were not long running on the radio?

Mandrake the Magician fits this category. It was one of my favorite comics that our local newspaper carried many years ago. I lost track of Mandrake decades ago, but recently found him on the web. As of this writing, at the age of seventy-six he's currently battling vampires.

Mandrake (The name comes from the mandrake plant, a member of the nightshades plant family that has long been used in magic and religious rituals.) was created by Lee Falk, who also created the *Phantom* comic strip. *Mandrake the Magician* first appeared as a comic strip on June 11, 1934. In the beginning Mandrake was endowed with super natural powers, but later these powers receded and he relied on superior intelligence and magic to triumph over his enemies. Falk was a 19 year old college student when he created Mandrake in 1924. He did the writing and the art work, but none of the major publishing syndicates were interested in the strip. Falk then met artist Phil Davis in 1933 and Davis improved the art work to a point where King Features Syndicate bought the rights to distribute *Mandrake* nationally. It became an overnight hit and Davis continued to draw the strip until his death in 1964.

The main characters were Mandrake, his servant Lothar, and girl friend Narda, the exotic and lovely princess of the European mini-nation of Cockaigne. They met in the second episode, and it was love at first sight. They were married 1997. In the comics, a 63 year old romance really isn't a



long time. She accompanied Mandrake on many of his adventures, often proving that she was as capable of fighting evil doers as he was. It should be noted that Lothar was also of royal blood. He was prince of a federation of seven African jungle tribes, but was never addressed as prince in the strip. In the first episode he decided he would rather be Mandrake's servant and bodyguard than wait to become king. He wore a fez, short pants and a leopard skin

shirt with one strap over his left shoulder. In the beginning he wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, but over time his intellect improved and he became a partner to Mandrake. The three of them spent all their time keeping us safe by righting the wrongs of evil humans, extra terrestrials and super natural villains.

During World War II when Phil Davis was drafted, his wife, Martha helped draw the strip, and after the war she continued to draw Princess Narda with her husband illustrating the rest of the strip. Lee Falk continued to do all the writing. Mrs. Davis, an artist in her own right, always kept Princess Narda's wardrobe in tuned to the latest fashions of the day.

Some *Mandrake* fans think that Davis drew Mandrake in his own likeness. Others think there is a resemblance between Falk and Mandrake, while still others think he was a direct copy of Leon Mandrake, who was a well known stage magician. Leon was already performing for around ten years when Falk came out with the comic strip. It is assumed that the comic character was intentionally drawn to resemble Leon as both had a pencil line moustache and wore the similar attire. It's one of those nostalgia questions that will never be answered.



Phil Davis

We do know that Mandrake dressed in a black tuxedo, top hat and cape. His black hair was slicked down, (probably with Wild-Root Cream Oil) and lived in house called Xanadu, which was filled with all types of cutting edge gadgetry. He learned his power of illusion and magic as a young boy in a mysterious Tibetan valley in the Himalayas. In this valley was the College of

Magic which held the ancient magic secrets of Egypt and China. For ten years he studied and became a greater magician than his teachers, Theron (who later turned out to be his father) and the evil Luciphor, aka, The Cobra (who later turned out to be his half brother).

With Lee Falk's death in 1999, Fred Fredericks, who took over the art work from Phil Davis in 1964, is currently writing and drawing the strip.

Mandrake's magic incantation was, *invoco legem magicarum* (I invoke the law of magic).

THE RADIO SHOW

Mandrake began his radio life on the Mutual Network on November 11, 1940. It ran Monday Wednesday and Friday, then went to five days per week. It starred Raymond Edward Johnson as Mandrake, Juano Hernandez as Lothar and Francesca Lenni as Princess Narda. Even though the program followed the comic strip without a lot of changes, it never caught on with the public. It was last broadcast on February 6, 1942.

Raymond Edward Johnson was born 1911 in Kenosha, Wisconsin and became one of radio's busiest actors. His radio career began in Chicago in the early 1930's where he worked with Arch Oboler. Later he relocated to New York City and in 1941 Himan Brown hired him as host and narrator for a new radio program called *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*. On the program Johnson would introduce himself as, "Your host, Raymond" and end the program with, "Pleasant dreaaaams, hmmmmmm?" This was his most famous role. He left the series in 1945 to join the army. After his discharge in 1946 he was the "Librarian" in the premiere episode of the *Crime Club* radio series. A program that was

very reminiscent of *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*. He left the series shortly after episode one. Sadly he developed multiple sclerosis in the late 1940's. His illness curtailed his activities, but he did appear in numerous radio programs in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Many OTR fans recall seeing him at various Old Time Radio conventions recreating his role as Raymond in *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*, often from a portable bed or wheelchair. He died at the age 90 in 2001.



Raymond Edward Johnson

His radio credits would fill this issue of the IP, so here are some highlights:

Soap Operas: *Myrt & Marge*, *Bachelor's Children*, *Joyce Jordan-Girl Intern*, *Stella Dallas*, *Story of Mary Marlin*, *Today's Children* and *Valiant Lady*.

Prime Time: *Cavalcade of America*, *Dimension X*, *The First Nighter*, *Cloak and Dagger*, *Grand Hotel*, *Philip Morris Playhouse*, *Studio One*, *Famous Jury Trials*, *Gangbusters*, *Lights Out* and *Nick Carter, Master Detective*. He also appeared on Broadway and in the movies.

Juano Hernandez was an African-American actor born in Puerto Rico in 1896. Most of his childhood was spent in Brazil as a street singer, a circus performer and a seaman. He immigrated to the United States in the 1920's and worked the vaudeville circuit and then went on to the Broadway stage where he was in the chorus of the 1927 play, *Showboat* and later had various small parts in other shows. In the early 1930's he appeared in a number of black orientated movies and was one of the first

black screen actors, who neither sang nor danced, but played regular characters. His deep voice was a natural for radio and he played Lothar for the entire run of the *Mandrake* program. After *Mandrake* he continued in radio and had parts in *African Trek*, *Amanda of Honeymoon Hill*, *Tennessee Jed* and *We Love to Learn*. His major radio role was Kolu, on the *Jungle Jim* program. He also had a successful movie career that included, *Young Man With a Horn*, *Kiss Me Deadly*, *Ransom*, *The Pawnbroker*, *Stars In My Crown* and *They Call Me Mr. Tibbs*. His portrayal of Uncle Famous Prill in *Stars In My Crown* earned him a 1950 Golden Globe nomination for new star of the year.

On television, he appeared many programs including *Studio One*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Route 66*, *The Defenders* and *Naked City*. He was 69 when he died in 1970.

Francesca Lenni had a short radio career. She had a minor part in the soap opera, *Your Family and Mine* from 1938 through 1940. She then joined the *Mandrake* program in the second episode and continued until the series ended in 1942. After *Mandrake* she dropped out of radio to pursue other interests.

Mandrake the Magician is still syndicated by King Features, a division of the Heart Entertainment Group. It can be found at: www.masslive.com/comics/.



Lee Falk

From the desk of the Club Librarian:

Several months ago I received a package from Richard Nowack containing 33rpm records for our club's record collection. Most are old time radio programs, but some are music records of the 1940's. Once again on behalf of all the Radio Club Members, Thank You Richard. A short time later I received a box containing 100 radio cassettes from Tom Monroe. That has to put Tom's total somewhere over 500 cassettes Tom has donated to The Radio Club. A big thank you Tom from all the Club Members. Gee gosh, wow. My friend Tom Cherre remembered my 39th birthday again this year. But Tom let me down. He didn't tell me how many 39th birthdays I've had. He was right about Orphan Annie this time, because I really do remember Annie. And as a matter of fact I, "Arf" "Arf" remember Annie's dog Sandy. At that time in my life I was a member of Annie's Secret Circle and I was also the proud owner of Annie's Shake-Up Mug. The following little tale happened way back when I was in the 5th grade in school. I don't remember what year it was, well you know when you have so many 39th birthdays, sometimes you forget things, but I still remember my name.

*I truly hope you enjoy my little story.
Also hope all my fellow Club Members
had a very Merry Christmas and the
New Year will bring happiness to all.
Your Club Librarian Frank
"Forgettable" Bork.*

The Orphan Annie Decoder Badge:

I was lucky enough to have Sister Charlotte for both the 5th and 6th grades. Sister Charlotte was my all time favorite teacher, next to my Marine Corps D.I. that is. Back in the 5th grade, when

Orphan Annie was the most popular cliff hanger on radio, with her "Secret Circle" and "Secret Decoder Badge", well, almost all the guys in class had the Decoder Badge and were members of Annie's Secret Circle. All except me that is, but that was soon to be corrected, for I finally convinced my mother to buy me a jar of that delicious, nutritious, chocolate flavored Ovaltine. I suffered through that entire jar. Yuck, but I did get my secret decoder badge. The next day in class secret messages were passed back and forth. I'm not sure what day it was, maybe a Wednesday. All I new was, if you don't have a decoder badge you could not read the messages. During mid-morning, Sister said all right class open your history books to page ?. Just then I received my first secret message. Oh boy I thought, now I can read all these secret messages. History? What's that anyway? Junk. I started to decode the secret note from who? I don't know. So What? Francis what is that you are holding in your hand? Oh, nothing Sister I replied as I tried to hide my prized possession under my note book. Sister walked over to my desk, picked up my notebook. There shining in its golden beauty was my Orphan Annie Decoder Badge. Well Francis, as long as this is nothing I'll just put it in my desk drawer for a week or two for safe keeping, Sister told me. Oh no, I thought, now I wouldn't be able to read the secret messages passed around. Two whole weeks. Well at least I'm a member of the Secret Circle, the guys will tell me what the messages are. Wrong! Not one of the guys would tell me what Annie's message was the next day. Two weeks oh my gosh, I gotta wait two more weeks before I can read Annie's message. Why there might be something that would save the whole world. And

after I drank that awful tasting stuff, Ovaltine. Well anyway I thought, I'll keep all the messages for the whole two weeks, then I can decode them. Finally the great day came. I got my decoder badge back. After school one day Sister came over to my desk as I was putting my books away. Here Francis, I truly hope you have learned a lesson from this. Oh, yes Sister I have I said. I rushed home right after school was dismissed that day. The first message I decoded was the one passed to me that fatefuk day in class. It read, Hi Frankie, see you at lunch time in back of the school, we can play handball. For this I waited two weeks? Now as I think back, well School Days. They were really Great.

Frank Bork

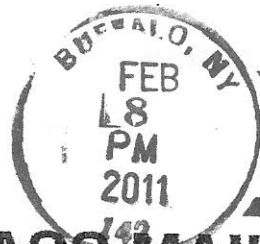
Thanks so much for the fine nostalgic article. It brings back pleasant memories of my days at St. Margaret's back in North Buffalo 1950's circa. I had one of my prized yo-yo's, either a Duncan or Cheerio's taken away from me for a week or so by one of the good sisters. I guess you can't do a "walk the doggie" or "around the world" in the classroom. Well, we all know how Frank feels about the taste of Ovaltine. Frankly, I don't think it taste that bad. It's a nice tasting malted milk drink. I'm sure I've tasted worst drinks. I may even bring some in at a future meeting and we can have a taste test. For those readers who are unfamiliar with Ovaltine let me enlighten you . Ovaltine was developed in Berne Switzerland when it was known by its original name Ovalmaltine. When it was introduced to England in 1909 a spelling error led to the product being called Ovaltine. It started being

produced in the states in Villa Park Illinois in 1915. It consisted of malt, milk, eggs, flavored with cocoa. I don't see anything wrong what that ingredients Francis. Anyway it became immensely popular when it started sponsoring Little Orphan Annie and continued its popularity with Captain Midnight on both radio and TV. In addition to the secret decoder badge you could also get other premiums for a little change and proofs of purchase labels. There were watches, mugs, pens, lunch boxes, rings, and many, many more. Actually Ovaltine as late as the year 2000 offered a decoder badge as a premium. This offer went over so well the Ovaltine company extended this offer for a considerable length of time past the original deadline. And if Frank only knew, an original decoder ring from Ovaltine and Captain Midnight in 1948 recently sold on E-Bay for \$111.00. Sorry about that Frank.



The Old Time Radio Club

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