

# THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

Number 205

October 1995

**GENERAL  ELECTRIC** (1937)

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SERIES**

**PLAY BALL**

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Better,  
Easier,  
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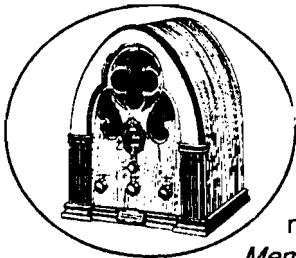
539 BLEECKER ST.

OPEN  
EVENINGS

The Old Time Radio Club

Club Officers and Librarians

**Membership Information**



New member processing, \$5.00 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from Jan 1 to Dec 31. Members receive a tape listing, newsletter, and the yearly *Memories Magazine*. Memberships

are as follows: If you join Jan-Mar, \$17.50; Apr-Jun, \$14.00; Jul-Sep, \$10.00; Oct-Dec, \$7.00. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The Old Time Radio Club meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd. Cheektowaga, N.Y. 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome.

**Club Mailing Address**

Old Time Radio Club  
P.O. Box 42E  
Lancaster, N. Y. 14086

The Old Time Radio Club is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

Back issues of our publications are available as follows:

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

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

The *Illustrated Press* is a monthly newsletter of The Old Time Radio Club, headquartered in Western New York State. Contents except where noted, are copyright 1993 by the OTRC.

Send all articles, letters, exchange newsletters, etc. to:  
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Clarence, N.Y. 14031

Tape Library Rates: All reels and video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; audio cassettes and records are \$0.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling. Canadian rates are the same as above, but in Canadian funds.

**Reference Library**

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392 George Urban Blvd.  
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## The War of the Worlds

by Dom Parisi

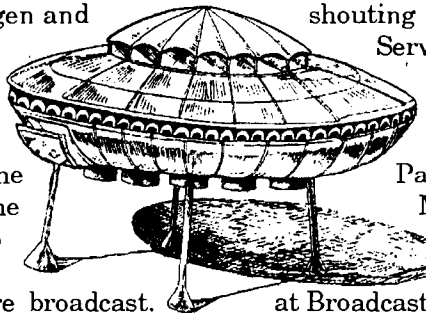
On October 30, 1938, Halloween eve, Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air presented H. G. Wells, The War of the Worlds. The listening audience was informed at the very beginning of the broadcast that the Mercury Theatre Group was presenting the radio show, but thousands either missed the opening lines or tuned in late. The reason so many people missed the opening was that the Mercury Theatre was opposite The Chase and Sanborn Hour, starring Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy. Bergen and McCarthy has a Hooper rating of 35, which means that 35% of all radio listeners were tuned into Bergen and McCarthy. During the first commercial break many of the listeners began turning their radio dials and were caught up in the excitement of the Mercury Theatre broadcast. People began to panic. They panicked because the show was dramatized in the format of an actual live news type broadcast. This was all very new in 1938. This was how it was presented. News flashes interrupted dance music from the Meridian Room of the Park Plaza Hotel in downtown New York city. The announcer said that "Strange activity was being observed from the planet Mars." More dance music was played. Another interruption and bulletin. More news flashes. Now the announcer reported that a flaming object had crashed near Grovers Mills, New Jersey. Next followed an on the spot remote pickup from New Jersey. "A thousand persons had been killed -- not by a meteorite as supposed, but by death rays guns fired by an army of invaders from outer space." An eyewitness described the scene -- "Weird creatures streaming from a huge cylinder and burning everything in its path!" Still more interruptions -- news bulletins -- "The National Guard has been called!" -- "The Army was mobilizing!" -- "The White House declared a state of National Emergency!" "Martians landing at Buffalo, Chicago, St. Louis!"

Telephone switchboards were swamped! People

donned gas masks! ! Crowds mobbed churches! Highways were jammed in many parts of New Jersey! Here are some actual events that followed the broadcast as reported by the Associated Press:

- Pittsburgh - Man returns home in midst of broadcast and finds his wife with a bottle of poison in her hand, screaming -- "I'd rather die this way!"

- Indianapolis - A woman runs into a church shouting the news of the invasion. Services were dismissed immediately! The *New York Times*, the next day ran this headline, "Radio Listeners in Panic, Take War Drama as Fact. Many Flee Homes to Escape 'Gas Raid From Mars' -- Phone Calls Swamp Police at Broadcast of Welles Fantasy."



Welles and the Mercury Theatre group were unaware of the havoc that their broadcast was having throughout the country. In fact it was announced four time during the broadcast that this was a presentation based the H. G. Wells' novel and Welles ended the broadcast stating that this "was the Mercury Theatre's own radio version of "dressing up in a sheet and jumping out of a bush and saying borrowed couldn't soap all your windows and steal your garden gates...so we did the next best thing. We annihilated the world before your very ears...you will be relieved, I hope, to learn that we didn't mean it...and if your doorbell rings and nobody's there, that was no Martian....it's Halloween."

The broadcast made such an impact on the public that an investigation was undertaken to find out why people reacted the way they did. A number of books and reports have been written on the subject. I feel President Franklin Roosevelt summed it up in a cable he sent to Orson Welles on the day after the broadcast. It said, "This only goes to show that all intelligent people were listening to Charlie McCarthy."

The following letter was included in a hard cover book, One Man's Family Looks At Life. The book was ordered by listeners of *One Man's Family* and sent out by Standard Brands Inc., in 1938. The book consisted of a script and pictures of the cast. In Paul Barbour's "personal" letter to the program's fans he includes a nice commercial message .

**PAUL BARBOUR**

*Dear friend of One Man's Family:*

*It is a real pleasure to send you this book — a printed record of our conversation one important afternoon.*

*We sincerely hope that these thoughts of One Man's Family will be of help to you.*

*As you know, this book comes to you not only from One Man's Family, but also from the makers of Tender Leaf Tea.*

*When you think of one, think of the other. For Tender Leaf Tea makes it possible for One Man's Family to meet your family over the radio. Each time you buy Tender Leaf Tea you are helping us continue on the air.*

*And of course you are also enjoying the very finest of tea.*

*Father Barbour and all the family send their warm good wishes and join me in thanking you for your interest and loyalty.*

*Sincerely,  
Paul*

**WGR 550 on your dial**

*Etiket* by Ed "Archie" Gardner

**COLUMBIA BROADCASTING NETWORK**

**DICK HAYMES SINGS WITH HELEN FORREST. TONIGHT!!! 9:00 P.M.**

**CASEY, THE WHAT?** Casey, the Crime Photographer! In this evening's exciting episode, "Girl on the Dock," Casey gives two juvenile delinquents a second chance.

**TONIGHT!!! 9:30 P.M.**

**RADIO READER'S DIGEST** Van Heflin! The smooth "toughie" of screenland stars as "The Man Who Conquered Devil's Island." Hear it!

**TONIGHT!!! 10:00 P.M.**

**NEW SHOW!! THE MAN CALLED "X"** Herbert Marshall begins a series as worldly wise, well traveled private agent. Mystery, adventure intrigue! Hear the premiere performance.

**TONIGHT!!! 10:30 P.M.**

[1947]

- When calling a waiter, it is considered a de trop\* to whistle. It is preference to tap a spoon on one's water glass.

- At a wedding it is impolite to kiss the bride more than twice unless you happen to be (a) the groom, or (b) bigger than the groom.

- Do not blow at your soup unless you can at the same time whistle some popular tune of the day. The "St. Louis Blues" has been found to go especially well with chicken mulligatawney.

\*pronounced de trow

Learn Bridge by Radio  
**Tonight!**  
WSAI 10:00-10:30 P.M.

### **Member's Mike**

I am writing in reference to Tom Heathwood's article in this month's (July '93) *Illustrated Press*. But first I want to tell you how much I am impressed with the new format. It is outstanding, and I am very happy with it. Please continue as you are.



But back to the TUNING IN article. I agree with most of Tom's statements and conclusions. However there is one point which I have belabored in the past and I want to mention again. As a long time collector, I never knew a dealer existed until I had several thousand shows. I think a newcomer's first point of contact should be a long time collector who is willing to help him get started, (which I have done with several newcomers, and which is how I got started) or an OTR club. I have no objection against dealer's and often buy from them myself. I just think they should not be considered the initial point of contact to start a collection.

Two reasons for this opinion. First, the expense. Many new collectors are facing the typical expenses of a young family, and can not afford a lot for their hobbies. Even at the reasonable prices most dealers charge, it mounts up quickly. Renting from a club is cheaper, and working with another collector is cheaper yet.

Second. A person who only obtains shows from dealers misses a good part of the enjoyment of OTR collecting. The contact with other like minded people. Some of my most lasting friendships have been made through tape exchanges, and contacts with other club members. This is true even though I am many miles from any current OTR organization and have to do my visiting by mail.

Just an opinion, of course. Other than that I agree with his thesis. I most emphatically agree with starting to catalog your shows as soon as you start collecting. I started putting a twenty year collection on the computer two

years ago, and I haven't finished yet. I just wish I had started at the beginning.

All the best with the new *Illustrated Press*.

Sincerely,  
Jack Palmer

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Dear Old Time Radio Club Members,

I'm working on a research project which deal with all OTR series which had a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as the hero. My holdings include episodes from *Sgt. Preston* (or *Challenge of the Yukon*), Zane Grey's *King of the Royal Mounted*, and a Canadian network series called *Blair of the Mounties*.

The series of which I have no transcriptions include the following:

*Red Trails* - 1935 Blue Network show sponsored by the American Tobacco Company with Victor McLaglen in the lead

*King of the Royal Mounties* - 1930s show with Richard Dix

*Renfrew of the Mounted* - 1036-40 show on CBS (later the Blue Network) with House Jameson in the lead

*The Silver Eagle* - 1951-55 ABC show broadcast from Chicago with Jim Ameche in the lead as Jim West.

Jay Hickerson's compilations reflect that there are currently available two episodes of *Silver Eagle*, seven on *Renfrew*, four of the Richard Dix Show, and probably none of *Red Trails*.

I would appreciate hearing from any collectors who have episodes of any of the above four series and can send me cassettes of them. I'm willing to buy, trade or rent whatever you have, and I'll pay postage both ways.

Sincerely,

Jack French (703) 978-1236  
5137 Richardson Dr.  
Fairfax, VA 22032

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**BERLE**

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including:

**Arnold Stang and Pert Kelton**

**Allen Roth and his Orchestra**

**Frank Gallop, Announcer**

**WFUN --- 9:00 P.M.**

Presented

by

**TEXACO DEALERS**



## This is Johnny, Folks

reprinted from *TUNE IN* Magazine, July, 1943

Johnny Roventini, America's best known trade mark, is 31 years old, 43 inches tall and answers to the moniker of Johnny the Call Boy.

His is one of the most unusual radio success stories ever told. Eight years ago, Milton Biow, head of a New York advertising agency, sat in a New York hotel lobby waiting for a friend. Eventually, he heard a high, child like voice shouting, "Call for Mr. Milton Biow, Call for Mr. Milton Biow."

Then an idea came to him. If people answered pages in hotel lobbies, why wouldn't they react the same way on the air? Thus Philip Morris's *Johnny the Call Boy* was born.

Johnny Roventini is a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., and receives \$20,000 a year from Philip Morris for the exclusive use of his voice, his size and his picture.

He is the youngest of four children born to the wife of an Italian day laborer. All of the other Roventini offspring were normally tall, but Johnny stopped growing when he was ten. Johnny gladly gave up his hotel job, which brought him \$15 a week in salary and a similar amount in tips, to go to work for Milton Biow and Philip Morris for \$100 each seven days.

In the beginning, Papa Roventini soundly berated his youngest son for giving up a steady \$30 each week for a temporary \$100, but after a few months, as Johnny regularly received the sum for "doing nothing," as Papa said, he thought better of it. He celebrated by retiring completely from all work. That retirement has lasted to this day.

Johnny earnings grew larger in subsequent years and he was insured for \$200,000. This, Milton Biow says, is only a fraction of his worth to Philip Morris.

Today, Johnny enjoys the status of a radio star and this distinction rests becomingly on his pint size shoulders. His 20,000 a year made many things possible. He bought the two family house in Brooklyn where his family had formerly struggled to pay the rent. His sister and two brothers emulating the example of their father, decided to retire.

One of his brothers, formerly a cabdriver, functions as johnny's chauffeur and bodyguard. To him is entrusted the sacred duty of protecting Johnny's person and voice. He is constantly beseeching and admonishing johnny not to yell. He will not permit him to enter an air-conditioned movie theater for fear of drafts and colds.

Johnny's principle love is baseball. Last year, his friend George Raft arranged a season pass that would enable him to sit on the bench with the Brooklyn Dodgers. This was found to be impractical after he virtually y-lled himself hoarse during the game. Today he sits in the stands with his brother at his side. One yell,

and Johnny is literally "thumbed out" of the game by his brother.

He plays baseball, too. In order to be able to do so, he completely equipped a sand-lot baseball team in the vicinity of his home. His team is a perpetual advertisement for his sponsor. They are known as the Philip Morris Flashes and that name is emblazoned on their uniforms. Johnny plays the "hot corner" - third base. He come to bat using a kid size club. He invariably gets a hit. Opposing pitchers always permit him to do so. Johnny knows that all his hits are gifts, but he enjoys them anyway.

His car, chauffeured by his brother, is a community bus. All the youngsters in the neighborhood are welcome to ride and as many as fourteen have been crammed in at one time.

Eight years ago, his suits, shoes and hats were purchased in boys' shops. Today, everything is made to his measure. His wardrobe is much more expensive and extensive than the average man's.

Johnny's most important radio program, as far as the neighborhood is concerned, is the Friday night CBS *Philip Morris Playhouse*, on which movie stars appear in radio adaptations of motion pictures. Before and after each program, he is asked by the neighbors to describe in detail what Marlene Dietrich said, what Dorothy Lamour wore, what kind of guy George Raft is - and did he get any autographs? Johnny gets as many autographs as possible from the stars for the neighborhood youngsters. Dorothy Lamour gave him fifteen on as many slips of paper. Miss Lamour idly asked, "What are you going to do with all my autographs, trade them in for one of Betty Grable's?"

"No," replied Johnny, "I give them out to my relatives."

"With the number of autographs you requested," she replied, "you must be related to the Dionnes."

Johnny attended a Brooklyn Dodgers game with George Raft. Raft later reported that just as many people asked Johnny for his autograph as requested his signature.

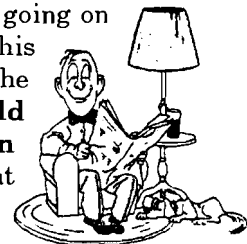
Johnny likes to feel he is an adult when dining out so he orders a regulation size dinner. After a few bites he gives up. His hunger is completely sated.

He is an exceedingly generous tipper, a throwback to the days when he was a hotel page boy. He still remembers the disappointments over no tip and the joys of a large pourboire.

Besides the Friday CBS *Playhouse*, he is heard on the Sunday CBS *Crime Doctor* series and the Tuesday *Johnny Presents* programs over NBC. All three are coast to coast airings and Johnny is the first and last person heard on all of them. As the Ray Block orchestra plays Ferde Grofe's *On the Trail*, Johnny's "Call for Phillip Morris" rings out clearly.

### *From the Editor's Chair*

Not much new and exciting going on in Western New York this month, but in Newark, NJ, the 18th annual **Friends of Old Time Radio Convention** will be held on Oct 21-23 at the Holiday Inn North. There is a very impressive list of guests who will share their OTR memories with convention goers. For more information contact Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514, (203) 248-2887.



And next month there is the **Sperdvac Convention** held at the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza Hotel, in Los Angeles, November 12-14. For more information contact Larry Glassman, PO Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409, (310) 947-9800.

**SHERLOCK HOLMES**

**TO-NIGHT**

**WKBW 7:30**

*starring*

**RICHARD GORDON**

[1936]



**FOUR TIMES DAILY**

**7 A. M., 12 NOON, 6 P. M., 11 P. M.**

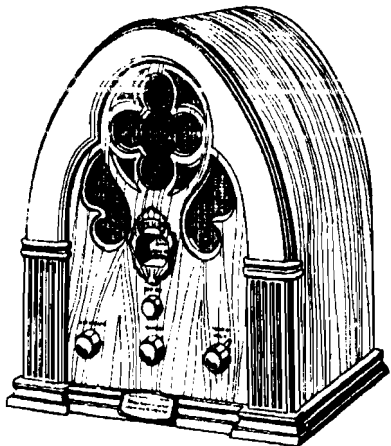
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**WHAM**

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**First Class Mail**