

The Old Time Radio Club

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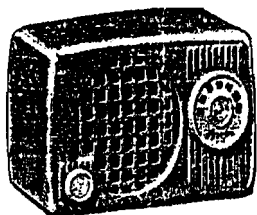
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SAME TIME, SAME STATION

by Jim Cox

BRIDE and GROOM

When people think of the sanctity of marriage, most agree it's an institution that is blessed of God. A radio series in the 1940s resulted in nearly 1,000 such unions. Oddly enough, the series was masterminded by a trio of males who bore the appellation John preceding their surnames. Does first, second and third John sound biblical enough for you?

John Nelson was master of ceremonies on *Bride and Groom* during a five-year ABC radio run. He later turned up in the same role for three years of a subsequent televised version (1951-54).

Co-producing the show with Nelson were John Reddy, who also wrote it, and John Masterson, who produced a highly acclaimed ABC weekday series, *Breakfast in Hollywood*.

Bride and Groom was an unusual half-hour Monday-through-Friday program on which couples were wed off-stage, then interviewed extemporaneously on-stage by Nelson. At its start, the program originated before a live audience at Los Angeles' Chapman Park Hotel. The location shifted to the Hollywood Knickerbocker later.

Vows were exchanged at an adjacent chapel with one of several ministers employed by the show officiating. The newlyweds then appeared on-stage where Nelson made small talk inquiring how they met, their courtship experiences and anything he could find to draw out the human interest element. At the time of the show the starry-eyed pair was showered with luxurious gifts, possibly wedding rings, luggage, jewelry, appliances, silver, a reception and a week-long all-expense-paid honeymoon to the destination of their choice. Before parting, Nelson would reach for the bride and steal a kiss! For him, it was just part of the job — as he saw it, somebody *had* to do it.

The lucky couple had earlier received a complimentary wedding, gown, tuxedo and other accouterments for the bridal pair and their attendants, a chapel, music accom-

paniment, flowers, minister, photographer and other amenities. In the 1940s it had to be one of the most elite ceremonies available. And how did they qualify for such a love feast?

First time engaged couples were asked to write to the show introducing themselves. John Reddy often reserved the determination of who would appear on the show to himself. Sometimes, however, a panel of several judges would pour over the applications looking for the most human interest potential they could find. As a matter of policy, divorcees were automatically eliminated; and some Roman Catholics weren't considered due to the fact that their faith required a church ceremony. The human interest elements were varied.

A young woman with the good fortune of winning the "wishing ring" on Tom Breneman's *Breakfast in Hollywood* hoped for a *Bride and Groom* wedding. She got it. John Masterson, recall, was producer of both shows.

One young couple told how they had met on adjacent stools at the fountain counter of a local drug store.

Another pair, both blind, found each other at a school for seeing eye dogs.

Sporadically there were celebrities who tied the knot on the show. Clayton (Bud) Collyer, serial actor-announcer and quizmaster-host-emcee of more than a dozen radio series, married radio serial actress Marian Shockley in 1948. He later went on to host television's *Beat the Clock*, *To Tell the Truth* and several more game shows.

On occasions *Bride and Groom* departed from its usual practice of marrying couples — whose ages ranged from the teens to the eighties — to honor a couple celebrating their golden wedding anniversary, or possibly newlyweds who were then on their honeymoon. These doublets, too, were bestowed with gifts, as if it were their own matrimonial day.

An organists' rendition of "Here Comes the Bride" appropriately sufficed as the show's theme. And in an interesting turn of events, Jack-of-all-trades announcer Jack McElroy, possessing an excellent singing voice, doubled as the program's soloist. When he wasn't crooning "Believe Me, if all Those Endearing Young Charms" or maybe "Together," he was touting one of sponsor Sterling Drugs' remedies — like Double Danderine shampoo, Bayer aspirin, Astring-O-Sol mouthwash, Energine spot remover or Haley's M-O mineral oil laxative — things every newlywed must be thinking of at a time like that.

The show debuted at 4:15 p.m. Eastern Time Nov. 26, 1945 and shifted to 2:30 p.m. Dec. 31, 1945. It remained in that time period until Feb. 5, 1950 when it moved to 3 p.m., remaining until the end of the run Sept. 15, 1950. On radio it was always on ABC. Sterling Drugs bought it Jan. 7, 1946 and carried it the rest of the way. While the series never drew lofty crowds of listeners, it reached a respectable 4.4 rating for its final three years — yet never as high as some audience participation shows, and never close to the numbers enjoyed by most soap operas.

When the radio series ended, messers Nelson, Masterson and Reddy merely transferred their successful radio show to television, then in its infancy. The TV version of *Bride and Groom* premiered Jan. 25, 1951 on CBS. With only minimal interruptions. It remained a daytime CBS feature through Oct. 9, 1953, sometimes five days a week, sometimes two. The program, with Nelson still as host, moved to NBC Dec. 7, 1953. It was cancelled Aug. 27, 1954. But it was given a six-month reprieve July 1, 1957 by NBC, running to Jan. 10, 1958. That time out Frank Parker (of *Arthur Godfrey Time* fame) began as host (and lasted a month). He was succeeded by the simultaneous singing duo of Robert Paige and Byron Palmer.

In July 1951 Masterson, Nelson and Reddy were awarded the largest legal judgement in broadcasting history to that date. They had gone to court seeking an injunction against a local Hollywood program called *Wedding Bells* that they claimed was *Bride and Groom* under another moniker. When a jury granted them \$800,000, the trio announced that all they wanted was an acknowledgment of the fact. They settled for \$800 which they applied to a cocktail party, inviting both plaintiffs and defendants. The court had never seen anything like it.

Host John Nelson, born in 1915, attended Gonzaga University, then spent three years in the Navy and later produced radio and TV series for the Air Force. He hosted another TV series, *Know Your NBC's*, in 1953-54, and became a program executive at NBC. He managed KPLM radio at Palm Springs and died there Nov. 3, 1976. He was 61.

The singing announcer who ballyhooed Sterling Drug products and crooned to the newlyweds, Jack McElroy, was pressed into service in 1948 as a replacement for Tom Breneman who hosted the famous *Breakfast in Hollywood* show. Breneman died unexpectedly in April 1948. For a brief while, rising radio (and soon, television) star Gary Moore filled in; that duty fell McElroy's way shortly, and he carried it for about a year. He, too,

died at an early age, 45, on March 2, 1959.

In all, counting the nearly 1,000 marriages performed on radio, the combined radio-TV *Bride and Groom* saw more than 2,500 couples tie the knot. It was a novel treatment of one of life's most meaningful moments, and millions were enthralled by it for beyond a decade.

"The Jack Armstrong Murder"

by Woody Smith
(Part Four)

For Those Who Came In Late: Kyle Foster, a man from our time mysteriously transported to a place where characters of old time radio really exist, had been wrongly accused of the murder of Jack Armstrong. Assisted by the Shadow, who believed his innocence, and Margo Lane and Sam Spade, Foster escaped to sea, only to fall into the clutches of Ivan Shark and his daughter Fury. Through trickery, Foster, Spade and Margo escaped Shark's underground base and emerged into the basement of the Hoobli Hotel in Calcutta. There, they helped Pat Ryan and Terry Lee get away from the Dragon Lady, only to learn that Fu Manchu had threatened the governments of the world with destruction by means of terrible futuristic rays. As the five escapees were sailing down the Ganges River, Foster suddenly disappeared from the craft and found himself materialized next to a strange rocket ship. Now, are you ready? Then hold your breath!

PART FOUR

"Hello Flash Gordon," I said. The well-muscled blond giant covered me with a ray pistol. I did not know then that it was a ray pistol, but it certainly didn't look like any gun I'd ever seen before. And, sure enough, he looked like Buster Crabbe.

"Who are you?" he demanded. I proceeded to tell him who I was, how I knew who he was, and all that I knew about the Fu Manchu/Ming/Lex Luthor alliance. Dr. Zarkov stopped me now and then to question me more closely. They seemed satisfied with my story; apparently it jived with some facts of their own. The really incredible part was the fact that they had come from yet another world, a world where characters of movie serials exist. I was still on the radio world.

"So you came through with a Door of your own invention?" I asked. "Yes," replied Zarkov. "It's something I had been working on for some time, and the recent space-time disturbances helped me to calibrate the device. You say a man named Clay Collier developed the inter-dimensional door here?" "Yeah. And for his efforts he was kidnapped by Fu Manchu. Listen, I've got to do something to stop Manchu but - - -" "Don' worry," said Flash. "We'll help you." "Terrific. Hey, how come I'm here, I mean, why did I disappear from the boat and end up here?" Zarkov scratched his chin. "Somehow," he began, "You are connected to the Door phenomenon. Our passage across the fabric of inter-dimensional interstices must have set up sympathetic vibrations in your body which drew you along with us." "Do you mean I'm going to pop around all the time?" "No, no . . . hmm . . . yes, I have something in the ship that I can alter into a personal neutralizer for you."

"Better make it snappy, Doc," said Flash. "You're going to have to go back and get Prince Barin and King Vultan and their fleets. Meanwhile, Dale, Kyle and I will pick up his friends from that boat and begin searching for King's base." "Very well, Flash," agreed Zarkov, and he quickly put together a bracelet-like gizmo for me. He said I couldn't travel through a Door now unless I switched it off, and he was right. When he shimmered off back to the serial world, I stayed put. This was also the first time I actually saw a Door device. I was expecting, well, a door. Actually, it was a box-like affair, about a foot by a foot-and-a-half by half-a-foot, with all kinds of knobs, gauges and antennae on it. Zarkov put a headset on, flipped a switch, and disappeared. Weird.

Minutes later, Flash was flying Dale and I towards the Bay of Bengal. He had landed in a Himalayan valley, so we were heading south. It didn't take long to spot the little steamboat containing my friends, the craft a black spot on the stark blue expanse of the Bay. Flash landed us on the beach and I yelled and waved until they saw me and headed in to shore. They were not a little surprised and confused. Introductions and explanations were made in short order, we all boarded the rocket ship, and Flash took off again.

"Where are we going?" questioned Pat Ryan. Flash indicated an instrument on the control panel. "This device will pinpoint large concentrations of atomic power." "Of course," I said. "There is no atomic power here, is there?" Pat was filling his pipe. "If you mean the A-bomb," he said, "We used that in the second World War." "Yeah," I said. "But your nuclear plants are still in their early stages." "Right," Flash put in. "But you can be sure that Fu Manchu will have a working plant if he's allied with Ming." I looked around. Margo Lane was in the rear of the cabin, huddled in the

arms of Dale Arden. The terrible experiences she'd been through and the apparent loss of the Shadow was taking its toll.

We must have cruised for hours, and we were passing over the east coast of the U.S. when the detector began making noises. "North," Flash reported, and swung the ship onto a new heading. "Dale." "Yes Flash?" "Show them how to operate the weapons. Make sure everyone is armed." "Shouldn't we wait for Dr. Zarkov?" Flash's lady wanted to know. "No, there isn't time. It may take hours to get the fleets assembled and we've got to stop Manchu from destroying any cities. Oh, don't worry, Dale. I've set up a radio beacon so that Zarkov can find us when he comes through." Dale instructed all of us in the use of the ray pistol. It was quite simple really, much like firing a regular pistol, but instead of a loud report and recoil and a bullet, the ray pistol was almost soundless. There was no recoil and it emitted a terribly hot ray.

"We're coming up on Greenland," Flash told us. "Look there!" Below us, coal-black buildings outlined against the blinding white of the snow fields, lay the headquarters of the evil three. The insignia of Fu Manchu was painted on the roof of the largest building, a challenge to anyone who would destroy him. As we looked, a flight of six or seven rocket ships, similar to ours, swarmed out of a sudden opening in the snow. "An underground hanger. Hang on!" Flash said, grimly. It was a good thing we did. The spaceman put his ship into all kinds of acrobatics, avoiding the rays shot at us by the enemy ships. Flash fired back when he could, sending one of them flaming to earth. Dale was clinging to the back of Flash's pilot chair. "Flash, you can't fight them all!" "I know!" he shouted to make himself heard over the whine and the roar of the rocket engines. "There is a way though. It's a long shot, but it just might work. I'm going to land in their own hanger. When we stop, everybody get out and run for it. If we split up, we should be able to do some damage."

So saying, he put the ship into a screaming power drive. The white ground filled the forward viewscreen before he leveled off, and hurtling into the hanger, he reversed the engines. The force threw us forward, but we hung on. The ship slid to a halt inches before crashing into a parked rocket. "Everybody out!" yelled Flash. I was out first. A couple of armed and uniformed men were running at me so I rayed them. I headed for a door off to my left. Behind me, I heard shots and the steady hum of ray guns. The guards were armed as we were. One ray came close; its heat raised blisters on my arm. And then I was through the door, raying anyone who got in my way. I had no idea where to go or what to do except to cause as much damage as I could. I continued down the

corridor I was in until I came to a large machinery filled room. I shot the people that were there and began blasting the machines. There was a terrific explosion that threw me to the floor. When I looked up again, I was staring down the barrel of a ray pistol in the hands of one of the guards. Several more guards entered and dragged me off into a gigantic chamber. It was, incredibly enough, a throne room. At the far end of the chamber were three thrones on a dais. A balcony ran around three walls and a huge viewscreen was suspended from the center of the high ceiling, facing the three thrones. Two of the thrones were occupied. Nobody had to tell me they were Fu Manchu and Ming, the Merciless.

They looked astonishingly alike, save for Manchu's yellowish skin. Also in the room, arranged before the thrones, were Sam Spade, Margo Lane, Pat Ryan, and Terry Lee. My heart leaped. Were Flash and Dale still at large? Or were they dead? I was thrown roughly to the floor, next to my friends. We were all under the guns of the guards.

"Ah," hissed Fu Manchu. "Five down and two to go." Flash was alive, then. "Once that meddler Gordon is finished," growled Ming, "We can proceed with our plans." "On the contrary, my dear emperor," said Manchu. "We must proceed at once. Gordon has undoubtedly alerted his friends as to our whereabouts. We must attack at once!" "Hmm. Very well." Ming gave an order and we heard the far-off thunder of the immense rocket fleet taking off. "What's your target?" Pat Ryan demanded. Manchu laughed cruelly and Ming chuckled blackly. "Why, New York City, of course." Manchu's voice was oily. Terry Lee looked especially defiant. "You guys don't have a chance," he cried. "Superman will make short work of your rockets." They laughed again. Manchu gestured to a guard. "My compliments to the good doctor Luthor. Ask him to bring in our . . . prisoner." The guard saluted and marched off.

"Do you really think," Ming began, "That we would be so foolish to attempt our present undertaking while Superman was still at large? Fools! Look there! There is your so-called invincible hero!" It was a large glass cage. In one end was a ray projector. It emitted an intense green ray. Huddled in the opposite end of the cage was a crumpled figure of red, blue and yellow: Superman! He was being continually subjected to a bath of Kryptonite rays! The cage was on wheels, and several guards pushed it to the center of the throne room. Walking beside it was a medium sized bald man, dressed in purple coveralls. It was Lex Luthor, Superman's nemesis and all-around arch-criminal. He took his place on the third throne. "Superman is dying, my friends," he cackled. "A few more hours . . ." "So you see, fools," Ming said, "Your greatest hero is dying,

helpless to save himself, let alone the world. Your world will soon be ours, the first of many." "We shall let you live," Manchu took up "To see the description of New York City. Then you will die . . . painfully . . . slowly. You will all die then except this Kyle Foster. He will live a little longer." Manchu grinned, showing yellowed teeth, and leaned forward on his throne. "We wish to hear more of your world, Kyle Foster. We understand that you have none of the irritating super-powered characters so prevalent in the other worlds." "None to speak of," I replied evenly. "Though you may be surprised at that. But how would you know? There's only one man on this world that I've spoken to at any length about my world, and he's dead." They all laughed again. It was beginning to bug me. And then, there was another laugh, a deep, chilling laugh that came from everywhere and nowhere . . . "The Shadow!" I cried. "Lamont!" Margo nearly screamed. "Lamont!"

Lamont Cranston appeared before me. "So you are here after all, Foster," he said. "It seems that I went to a great deal of trouble for nothing." "What do you mean?" Cranston smiled thinly. "I meant to bring you here all along. My employers wished to question you." I couldn't believe it. The Shadow is supposed to be a good guy. "Lamont, darling," sobbed Margo, "I---I thought you were---were dead?" Cranston laughed his grin laugh. "A necessary deception, my lovely. Ivan Shark would have killed me. It is a pity about you, though." Spade got mad and took a step towards Cranston. A guard clubbed him down. "What," I asked, "Could buy out the Shadow? Not mere money?" Manchu answered. "Of course not. Mr. Cranston will rule this world, as our vassal. Every man has his price, Mr. Foster. Cranston's was . . . power." "Then," I asked, "The whole bit was a put-on, wasn't it? You knew the ship was infiltrated with Si Fan." "Yes," replied Cranston, lighting a cigarette. "But I hadn't counted on that fool Ivan Shark. By the way Dr. Manchu, have you dealt with him?" "Ivan Shark's submarine lies in pieces somewhere on the bottom of the Arctic Ocean, was Fu Manchu's gleeful reply. "Why did you hire Spade?" I persisted. "I had to leave you somewhere while I made arrangements with my Si Fan contact." Cranston explained in a mocking voice. "I knew I could dispose of him when the time came." "Is Collier still alive?" Pat Ryan wanted to know. "Oh yes, oozed Manchu. "These scientist types, with apologies to the good doctor Luthor, are single-minded chaps. Give them a laboratory and unlimited time and they are happy. Who can say what weapons he will create for us? "You mean he's working for you willingly?" "Hardly. The drugs do help." One other thing puzzled me. "Who really killed Jack Armstrong?" I asked. The Shadow smiled. "Why I did, of course. With that pretty little knife." Just then, a guard ran in and knelt before the thrones. "My lords," he said, breathlessly. "The fleet is

over New York and is being attacked by another fleet of rockets!" "What? The screen, quickly!"

A picture took form on the huge viewscreen suspended from the ceiling. We were looking at the sky over New York City. It was filled with zooming rocket ships and slower Air Force propeller-driven pursuit ships. A battle royal was taking place. Zarkov had returned! and with him, the not inconsiderable rocket fleets of Prince Barin, rightful ruler of the planet Mongo, and King Vultan of the Hawkmen. And it looked like the bad guys were taking the worst. Ming cursed vehemently, damning Flash Gordon to the Seven Hells of Mongo. After all, those were his ships being shot out of the air. A moment later, the air in the throne room crackled with energy. The cage that held Superman shattered, the Kryptonite ray projector exploded. I looked up. Flash Gordon and Dale Arden stood on the balcony with drawn ray pistols. Their next shots destroyed the giant viewscreen. The guards scattered away from the falling pieces of screen. Ming uttered a single cry! "Gordon!" and disappeared with his cronies. It was time. I dropped the guard behind me with a knee in the groin and a rabbit punch in the throat. Scooping up his ray pistol, I wheeled around and let fly at Cranston just as he blinked out of sight. He immediately reappeared, clutching his side in pain. My shot had nicked him, breaking his mental hold on us.

Battle raged all around. I was forced to turn my attention to the guards swarming into the room. "Quick!" yelled Ryan. "Behind the thrones for cover!" We started to retreat to the questionable safety of the thrones and I saw Margo Lane bent over the now limp form of Lamont Cranston. She held a bloody knife. Cranston was dead. Grabbing her arm, I pulled her behind the thrones with the rest. Flash and Dale were still firing from the balcony, which was rapidly disintegrating under the fire of the guards. It looked bad. Pat Ryan fell, clutching a badly burned leg. The throne caught fire. Just then, there was a whooshing noise and a blur of red and blue. The guards collapsed as the blur swept past them. Superman! Recovered from his terrible Kryptonite bath, he wreaked havoc amidst the enemy. A slight tap from his steel-hard fist put them out for hours. Very soon, we were the only people conscious in the room. Superman flew Flash and Dale down from the balcony and put out the fires with his super-breath. He did look like Bud Collyer.

Dale treated Pat's wound from a medical kit she carried, with an anxious Terry Lee hovering near. Sam Spade was consoling a weeping Margo Lane. Maybe he would score after all. "I want to thank you," Superman said, in that low-octave voice, "For saving my life. I

couldn't have lasted much longer." "Thank you," Flash smiled back. "It's a good thing you recovered so quickly." "Hey," I said. "What about Ming and the rest? And New York?" Superman got a far away look in his eyes. He was using his super-vision. "The attack on New York has been repulsed," he announced. "Ming's ships are fleeing. However, I don't see Luthor or Ming or Manchu anywhere; they must have used a Door. But Clay Collier is several floors below us." "Good," said Flash. "Let's get out of here." I agreed one hundred percent.

Two days later, I was the guest of honor at a party held at the palatial estate of Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks. Yes, Little Orphan Annie was there, along with Punjab and the Asp. Captain Midnight put in an appearance, still recovering from wounds received in battle with one of Ming's rockets. Uncle Jim Fairfield was there, apologizing for having thought me the murderer of Jack Armstrong. I met Bruce Wayne, Dick Grayson and Britt Reid. Dick Tracy had to leave early and David Harding arrived late, his intelligence group being responsible for the mop-up on Greenland. I can't begin to list everybody who was there; it was a hell of a party.

I learned that the remainder of Ming's ships had given up or had been destroyed over the North Atlantic. Of Ming, Manchu and Luthor, no trace could be found. Before the night was over, an agreement was reached among all these good-doers to outfit a special force to hunt them down. They even wanted me to head the group. Well, I declined. I wanted to go home. Though no one would worry over my week's absence, I'd probably lost my job by now. Before I left, Zarkov gave me a Door device, as well as a ray pistol. The machine he gave me was tied into another device that could detect and pinpoint any space-time disturbances around our own world. They entrusted me with being the "guardian" of our own world. I also kept the neutralizing bracelet, which I would have to switch off whenever I used a Door. Zarkov still couldn't explain why I was affected by the Door phenomenon. Finally, after many farewells, I turned the proper dial on my Door and winked away. I emerged on the back porch of my fishing cabin in Michigan. It was raining very hard. The fish on the hibachi were done. The hot coals under them were sputtering and steaming as rain hit them. It dawned on me that I hadn't been gone long at all. I looked at myself. I was wearing the clothes that Warbucks had given me. The Door was under my arm. The bracelet was on my left wrist. And the ray pistol was holstered to my belt. I guess it happened. Later that night, warm and dry in my cabin, I sat with a large bourbon and stared at the things that I had brought back with me. Much later, I was drunk. I could go back. I could . . . THE END

The Master Mentalist

By John Rayburn

It may have been one of radio's most unusual programs. It started in September of 1943 and ran until the end of 1944 on the Blue Network. It was on NBC in 1945 and 1946 as a summer replacement for *Amos 'n' Andy*.

Joseph Dunninger was a magician and a hypnotist and also claimed he could read minds. His Sunday radio performances were certainly startling and baffling but he stated that none of the so-called telepathy was supernatural but could "be done by a child of three — with 30 years of practice." He said he discovered his own telepathic powers while he was still in grammar school.

The bizarre program had the "mentalist" sitting at a desk with a committee of three judges at a long table nearby. They were always well-known, trustworthy citizens on hand to assure the studio audience of around 300 people that everything was on the up-and-up.

After the opening introduction and explanation of what was about to happen Dunninger would peer out at the audience with no hint of dramatics other than his slightly Shakespearian voice.

He would calmly ask something like, "Some woman is thinking of the letters T and O?" A lady responded by standing and holding up her hand and Dunninger would say, "The T is for Tojo, your parrot. The O is for Oscar, your goldfish." The lady would gasp a weak "yes," sink into her seat and the audience would sigh in awe.

Dunninger would make each person vow there was no collusion so it would be known he wasn't in cahoots with the parrot lady. As a matter of fact, he vowed he would give \$10,000 to anyone who proved he had any "confederates, employees or stooges" in the audience and no one tried to collect.

This was a man who was a veteran trickster and, as a magician, he would saw a woman into eight pieces, his personal improvement on merely sawing her in half. His close friend, Harry Houdini, willed him some of his apparatus.

At one time Dunninger offered to make battleships invisible for the U.S. Navy. They turned him down and Dunninger wouldn't explain his proposal on the grounds that it was a military secret and a magician's secret.

Some of his more spectacular mind reading demonstrations took place with the program judges who were sworn to testify if they noticed any deceit. He used such diverse people as band leader Paul Whiteman, Judge Edward Koch of the New York Supreme Court, Professor Robert Merton of Columbia University and Sergeant Joe McCarthy, the managing editor of *Yank*, the Army weekly.

Before one broadcast, Dunninger asked professor Merton and a couple of other Columbia faculty members to go to the Columbia library, select any book from the many thousands, pick any page and settle on any quotation. At air time Dunninger announced, "The name of the book - it's a sort of thesis - the name is *Middletown*. The page is 444." The good professor responded in an awed voice that he was correct.

But then Dunninger had a problem - he was obviously struggling. "All I can get . . . all I can get . . . they must be playing a joke on me . . . all I can get is, 'Does not know the answer.'"

Merton said that was partially correct. The quote selected was, "The Middletown junior class does not know the answer." Dunninger explained later that when he got *Middletown* twice he thought he was getting the same impression, the name of the book.

On one Sunday radio show, the "Master Mentalist" handed Paul Whiteman a slate, told him to leave the studio and write down a bar of music from any song he had ever played. While he was gone, Dunninger jotted down a bar of music on another slate and gave it to a pianist, saying he couldn't say what the music was because he didn't know anything about music. When Whiteman came back in the pianist played Dunninger's bar and it was exactly the same that Whiteman had written out in the corridor. The band leader's slate was never out of his hand and the pianist had no possible way of seeing it. Magic? Mind reading? Who knows? But one way or the other, Dunninger baffled a lot of people. Except for the summer replacement programs, though, *The Master Mentalist* had a relatively short run on the air with criticisms that the whole thing was getting repetitious. Even so, such an eminent personage as Thomas Edison, who did several different experiments with Dunninger, said, "Never have I witnessed anything as mystifying or as seemingly impossible."

An unusual radio program, to say the least.



Dial 'em For MURDER

by Philip Clarke

Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons has been making friends and terrifying evil-doers for some seventeen years now, over the air, and during all that time he's been played by only two men. My predecessor, Bennet Kilpack, and me. Oddly, we were both British-born, and had most of our theatrical training on the Shakespearean stage. I rather like to think that Mr. Keen borrows a bit from Shakespeare. After all, that master entertainer combined a certain amount of comedy, a certain amount of drama, a certain amount of music and romance and put them all together to make classics. His work was psychologically sound, and it's my opinion that a mystery program such as ours is, in a broad sense, a mild study in psychology. We get into the minds of Keen and the people with whom he works — the murder is got rid of in a hurry, glossed over, at the beginning of the show, in nine out of ten scripts. Our emphasis is on the solution. It's a puzzle we put together. A parlor game for half an hour

Sometimes we do as Hamlet did, and trick the subject into revealing himself. There's little blood-letting, lust, gangsters and hoodlumism in our show. Children form a large part of our audience, and we like for them to get not only clean drama, but drama in the English language. Too many of the programs today are full of corruptions and slang to cover up the lack of good story material. Walt Disney has grasped this lack; his stuff never depends on vulgarity. If we'd brought in some "dese, dem and dose" boys, the way many typical detective stories do, *Mr. Keen* never would have lasted so long.

Keen, like Sherlock Holmes, is a gentleman and a lovable character; we try to maintain his stature. Of course nowadays radio and TV shows often use gimmicks to get listener attention. These shows don't last long. We feel that it's the telling of the story, not the story itself that's most important. Mr. Keen, by the way, has over the years become an investigator; he's no longer just a tracer. I get an average of 150 letters a month from people who want me — or Mr. Keen, at any rate — to trace people, or to help solve their problems. Recently, I had a letter from a man in a department of the Government in Washington, D.C., asking if I could help trace an heir to an estate. There he sat, right in the home of the

F.B.I., and yet he wrote to me! As if this wasn't enough evidence of fame.

Mr. Keen has been satirized by those two deft and rapi-er-tongued lads, Bob and Ray. They do a little skit now and again which is entitled, "*Mr. Trace, Keener than Most Persons.*" If there were a real Mr. Keen, I'm sure the courtly old soul would enjoy all the fun. Myself, I'll always be grateful to Mr. Keen. He has given me such a wonderful life. (1954)

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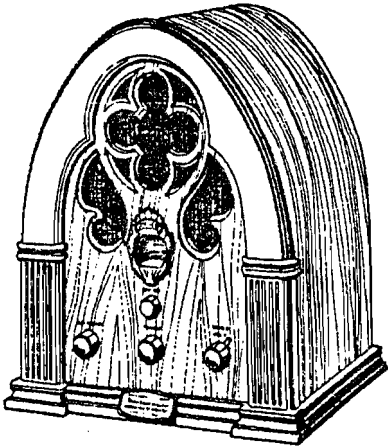
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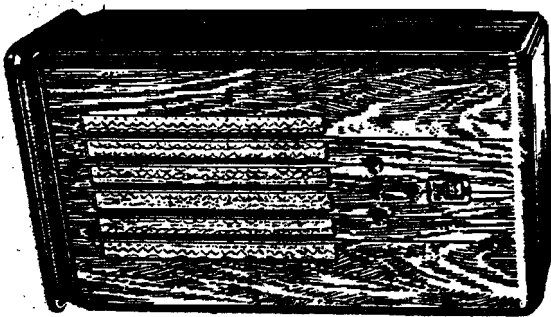


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