

Guide to Radio Programs for Sunday, Mar. 19

| WHEC CBS 1560 | WHAM NBC 1180 | WSAY CBS 1370 | WRNY 990 | WARG ABC 950 | WVET NBC 1280 |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 8:30 News 9:00 Church Service 9:30 Crusades Pre. | Morning Services Morning Services NBC Strings James | Organ Music Organ Music Advent. Review Advent. Service | News 10:30 Title Father's Week Pieces of Music | Revel Hour Revel Hour Revel Hour | News, Times Sister Heart Sister Heart Sister Heart |
| 10: World News 10:15 Public Choir 10:30 Music for Soul 11:15 Success Memo | News Church of the A.S. Christian Science D. W. H. Myers | Advent. Hymn 1919 Vespers Chorus Cantata Chorus Cantata | News, Church Church of the A.S. Church of the A.S. Chorus Cantata | News Church of the A.S. Voice of Prophecy Voice of Prophecy | Back to God Back to God Back to God Back to God Church Services Church Services |
| 10:15 Church of the Air 11:00 Church of the Air 11:00 Church of the Air | Church of the Air Church of the Air Church of the Air | Chorus Cantata Chorus Cantata Chorus Cantata | Church of the A.S. Church of the A.S. Chorus Cantata | Church of the A.S. Church of the A.S. Chorus Cantata | Church of the A.S. Church of the A.S. Chorus Cantata |
| 10:30 Jackson News 11:00 K. K. Show 11:30 Mr. Luke's Spot 11:45 Mr. Luke's Spot | Church Service Church Service Church Service Church Service | Church Service Church Service Church Service Church Service | Church Service Church Service Church Service Church Service | Church Service Church Service Church Service Church Service | Church Service Church Service Church Service Church Service |
| 10:30 Italian Melodies 11:00 Italian Melodies 11:30 Child Amateurs | News, Courier Commen-Journal Commen-Journal | News, Courier Commen-Journal Commen-Journal | News, Courier Commen-Journal Commen-Journal | News, Courier Commen-Journal Commen-Journal | News, Courier Commen-Journal Commen-Journal |
| 10:30 V. V. Philharmonic 10:45 V. V. Philharmonic 11:00 V. V. Philharmonic 11:15 V. V. Philharmonic | One Man's Family One Man's Family One Man's Family One Man's Family | Polish Hour Polish Hour Polish Hour Polish Hour | News, Melody Melody Making Melody Making Melody Making | Melody Melody Melody Melody | Worship to Song Sunday, April 1st Jubilee Fair Jubilee Fair |
| 10:30 Mr. Fox, Husband 10:45 Mr. Fox, Husband 11:00 Mr. Fox, Husband 11:15 Mr. Fox, Husband | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 |
| 10:30 Our Miss Brooks 11:00 Our Miss Brooks 11:30 Our Miss Brooks 12:00 Our Miss Brooks | Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan | Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan | Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan | Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan | Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan Henry Morgan |
| 10:30 Cecilia Archer 10:45 Cecilia Archer 11:00 Cecilia Archer 11:15 Cecilia Archer | Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad | Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad | Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad | Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad | Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad Theresa Glad |
| 10:30 Variety Hour 11:00 Variety Hour 11:30 Variety Hour 12:00 Variety Hour | Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 |
| 10:30 Mr. Fox, Husband 10:45 Mr. Fox, Husband 11:00 Mr. Fox, Husband 11:15 Mr. Fox, Husband | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 | News, Sports Radio-6 Radio-6 Radio-6 |

THE

OLD TIME RADIO'S

CULTURE'S

BIG BOOK

Guide to Radio Programs for Monday, Sept. 18

| WHEC CBS 1560 | WHAM NBC 1180 | WSAY CBS 1370 | WRNY 990 | WARG ABC 950 | WVET NBC 1280 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6:30 News Melodious 7:00 Musical Check 7:30 Musical Check 8:00 Musical Check 8:30 Musical Check | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports |
| 9:00 Musical Check 9:30 Musical Check 10:00 Musical Check 10:30 Musical Check | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports |
| 10:00 Musical Check 10:30 Musical Check 11:00 Musical Check 11:30 Musical Check | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports |
| 11:00 Musical Check 11:30 Musical Check 12:00 Musical Check 12:30 Musical Check | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports | Church of the Air News, Sports News, Sports News, Sports |

CHARLES SEELEY

\$1.00

**THE
OLD
TIME
RADIO
COLLECTOR'S
HANDBOOK**

BY CHARLES SEELEY

ROGUE PRESS

KENMORE • ATLANTA

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1. INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended to help beginning old time radio collectors learn about the "nuts and bolts" of their hobby, the "how-to" portion. Much of this material may seem rather obvious to the veteran collector, but new collectors are often confused by the basics of the hobby and bewildered by the many terms used by collectors. Up until now, the only places for beginning collectors to learn the basic information, aside from experience, have been scattered issues of the many OTR fan publications. The purpose of this handbook, then,

is to provide one central reference to all the facets of OTR collecting. If you're just thinking about getting into the hobby, this should give you an idea of what you're letting yourself in for.

Undoubtedly, there will be omissions and errors, no matter how extensive the research or careful the proofreading. If demand warrants, a revised edition of this handbook will be produced, and suggestions and corrections are solicited from the readers.

2. EQUIPMENT

Old time radio programs can be collected on several formats. It is wise to look at all of them before you start spending your money.

By far the most popular is the open reel, or reel-to-reel, format. Cassettes are next in order of popularity. Some collectors use eight-track cartridges, and some just collect the commercial LP records of OTR that are available from various companies. There are even those collectors who specialize only in the original transcription discs.

But whatever method, involving magnetic tape, that you choose to use, you will need two machines if you wish to trade: one to record and one to playback. Let us discuss reel-to-reel first, since most of the items will apply also to cassette and eight-track.

The initial cash outlay for two reel-to-reel tape recorders of the quality to be discussed will be fairly steep, if you opt for brand new machines. Used recorders are available via the want ads, garage sales, etc. but you should not buy one of these unless you know exactly what to look for.

As for new machines, all brands have good and bad points and it wouldn't be proper to endorse any here. Check around at your local stereo and electronics shops before you buy. It might be well to check back issues of Consumer Report (probably available in your local library), or equipment reports in the various OTR fanzines.

Whatever brand you decide to buy, make sure that the machine you purchase is fairly rugged. If you decide to get into heavy trading, you'll be using your recorders nearly every day, for perhaps weeks or months at a time. Recorders are precision-built pieces of machinery and you need one that will hold up under heavy use.

In some cases, it may be to your advantage to buy a recorder made for commercial use (such as those used in radio stations, etc.). The machine would pay itself off over many years of relatively maintenance-free service, but such recorders are usually beyond the means of the average OTR collector. However, the qualities of the commercial recorder can be used as a guide to which features to look for when buying your own machine:

1) A well-constructed servo-controlled motor drive may well be the best type of drive mechanism, although equally well-constructed direct drive and hysteresis synchronous motors are in-

dicative of a rugged recorder. The drive mechanism is a vital part of any recorder, so choose it with care. Among other features to look for here are dual capstans and tape tension regulators, both of which help keep the tape as steady as possible as it passes over the recorder's heads.

2) Obtain and learn to read the specification sheets for various brands of recorders. Specs will often tell you more about the machine than the salesman can.

3) Ferrite heads should last 10 years or so; they may be your best bet.

4) You might consider looking at recorders with pitch control, or variable speed. There are many programs in circulation that are either fast or slow, and a variable speed machine will allow you to correct shows in that condition, if they're not too far off-speed.

5) Definitely look for machines that have automatic shut-offs that will completely disengage all working parts when the tape runs out. This is important because a pinchroller will develop a flat spot if left pressing against the hard capstan for a lengthy time, which will cause the tape to run jerkily.

6) A pause control that will lock is very handy in editing tapes or when setting the volume level.

7) Recording level meters, or VU meters, are desirable for monitoring the sound level when recording. There are still some recorders that have distortion lights instead of VU meters, but stay away from them. The newest kinds of VU meters are LED monitors, which make for greater accuracy. However, the simple VU meter is your best bet.

8) If you buy a recorder with three heads (record, erase, playback) you'll be able to monitor both your master tape and the tape you're recording. Comparing the output of the two will tell you if the copy you're making is defective or not. With a two head machine you can only monitor the master while you're recording.

Obviously, it's up to the individual as to how much to spend. The buyer should consider all factors before deciding. Machine repair is expensive, so figuring long term should be a consideration. It's foolish to buy a cheap machine and then face a repair charge of half the purchase price or more a few years later. Study the manufacturer's guarantee.

If at all possible, when looking at used recorders, take along someone who knows what to look for. Failing this, here's a checklist of some things to check out:

1) Remove the head cover and look at the heads. You're looking for pitting, excessive dirt, discoloration, cracks, all of which indicate heavy use. The heads should ideally be smooth and shiny.

2) Make sure all the controls work. Check everything!

3) Take along a reel of tape pre-recorded with excellent sound quality material. Even with the usually poor speakers built-in on some recorders, this will help you judge the machine's quality. Some recorders won't have built-in speakers but the seller might have a couple plugged in. In any case, don't buy it if you can't listen to it.

4) Look at the general appearance of the recorder. Make sure the case isn't cracked or warped. When you pick it up, it shouldn't rattle.

5) Check the accessories sockets. They should be tight. If they're loose, it may indicate a poor connection somewhere and potential problems.

After you have your machine, read the instruction booklet carefully and follow its directions. Many beginners plunge right ahead without knowing what they're doing and they may damage the machine. So take the time and read the instructions.

The instructions will explain how to familiarize yourself with the recorder. It will tell you how to use patch cords to connect the recorder to your radio, phonograph, etc. It may be wise to practice recording inconsequential material first. This might seem "wickey wacky", but isn't it better to make your mistakes (and you will) during practice rather than when you're taping something important?

The same general guidelines hold true for cassettes and eight track. It's generally agreed that these two formats are less satisfactory than open reel for a couple of reasons, prime of which is a poorer sound quality when compared with open reel. This is changing, however, with some new cassette machines producing excellent sound.

3. TAPE

Recording tape is made up of two layers. The first is the base material, usually acetate or polyester (mylar). The majority of collectors use the mylar tape, though some insist on acetate because, in the event of a snag or foul-up on the recorder, acetate backed tape will quickly snap, thus making repair a simple matter of connecting the broken ends with a piece of splicing tape. Sound quality won't be too badly affected. Mylar tape may, on the other hand, stretch before it breaks. The stretching will affect the sound on that portion of tape that is stretched.

P.V.C. (polyvinyl chloride) is also used as a base by some tape manufacturers. Some collectors won't use P.V.C. tape because it has a bad reputation as a "dirty" tape. Some people blame this on the P.V.C. itself, others on the manufacturers. You might try using a reel or two of each of the various base materials and decide which you like best.

Cassettes and, to a lesser extent, eight track have the advantage on open reel in ease of storage and handling. A stack of 12 cassettes measures about 10 inches by 2 inches by 5 inches compared with a stack of 12 reels at 8 inches by 7 inches by 7 inches. But this isn't really a valid comparison. The same amount of material that fits on 12 one hour cassettes will fit on 2 1800' reels, which measure about 12 inches by 7 inches by 7 inches and are a strange breed because of the odd tape lengths available. Also, since eight tracks are one unbroken loop of tape, you'll hear a click every time the tracks change.

Cassettes and eight tracks are ideal for use in car sound systems because of the ease of handling. It's tough to thread an open reel while you're speeding along a highway.

Care for your machine well, following the directions in the instruction booklet. Clean and demagnetize regularly. With proper care a tape recorder will last a long time. With abuse...forget it.

You may wish to invest in an equalizer. These are somewhat expensive but, if you're really concerned about having the best sound available, you'll find it very useful. An equalizer eliminates much of the extraneous noise found in many OTR shows and enhances the sound quality to a certain extent. Equalizers are definitely worth looking into if you want to build a really fine collection.

Demagnetization is a practice over which collectors disagree. Purists maintain that recorders should be demagnetized after every 8 or 10 or 12 hours of use to prevent damage to both the tape and the heads. Demagnetizers are available in most radio or electronic stores and come with instructions for use.

You might also be interested in a bulk eraser. Sometimes a tape will not be completely erased (because of different degrees of head alignment on different machines) and, if re-used, crosstalk can result. A bulk eraser eliminates this and makes sure that the tape you use is completely blank.

The second layer is an oxide coating of binding resin with either ferric oxide or chromium dioxide particles. The oxide particles are easily magnetized and it is these that carry the actual sound on a tape. When the tape passes the recording head on a tape recorder, the oxide particles are "re-arranged" into a series of patterns that correspond to the frequencies of the sound being recorded. Playback is the reverse of this, with the magnetized particles creating an electrical signal which eventually emerges from the speaker as sound.

The faster the tape passes by the recording head, the better the sound quality will be. Home recorders (open reel) are available with speeds of 15, 7 1/2, 3 3/4, and 1 7/8 inches per second, with most of the newer machines using 7 1/2 and 3 3/4 ips. Open reel collectors rarely use 1 7/8 because the resulting sound quality is poor. It is the 3 3/4 speed that is used most often. Remember, most of the OTR shows

currently available to collectors originated on transcription discs which are often decades old and the sound quality, not surprisingly, is often far from perfect. So 3 3/4 serves as the most desirable speed.

3 3/4 ips is also popular because of the amount of material that can be placed on reels at that speed. Below is a table of recording times based on tape footage and speed. The times are in minutes and are for all four tracks of a tape. For half-track, divide the times in half.

| Speed | 1 7/8 | 3 3/4 | 7 1/2 | 15 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Feet | | | | |
| 300 | 120 | 60 | 30 | 15 |
| 600 | 240 | 120 | 60 | 30 |
| 900 | 360 | 180 | 90 | 45 |
| 1200 | 480 | 240 | 120 | 60 |
| 1800 | 720 | 360 | 180 | 90 |
| 2400 | 960 | 480 | 240 | 120 |
| 3600 | 1440 | 720 | 360 | 180 |

Most collectors use 1800' or 1200' reels recorded four track at 3 3/4 ips, which yield six and four hours of recording time, respectively.

A tape is divided lengthwise into four tracks, or channels. A stereo recorder is capable of using all four tracks separately. A mono recorder will only use two tracks.

Of course, to the eye, there's just a single piece of tape. The separations between each track is equal to about the width of a human hair.

The tracks are properly referred to by their numbers. However, through usage, they've become known as Side One Left, Side Two Left, Side One Right, and Side Two Right. The tracks are usually recorded in this order.

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Track One..... | Side One Left |
| Track Four..... | Side Two Left |
| Track Three..... | Side One Right |
| Track Two..... | Side Two Right |

4. BUILDING YOUR COLLECTION

There are many ways to begin an OTR collection from scratch. If you are fortunate enough to have a radio station in your area that programs OTR, you can tape the shows right from your radio. The quality and completeness of these vary but it's probably the cheapest and most convenient way for a beginner to go.

Your public library may have some OTR on tape or record. You may or may not, depending on the library, be able to borrow these and dub your own copies. If you can't borrow them, you may be able to make arrangements to bring in your own recording equipment and dub the shows right in the library.

A growing source of OTR for the neophyte collector are the various record companies that market OTR on LPs. The vast majority of shows released on records can be found in circulation among OTR collectors. Here again, sound quality and completeness vary, and it might be a good idea to check around before you buy.

The "left" and "right" designations are derived from the location of the recording controls on the front of the machine.

A mono recorder will use tracks one and four only. However, if there is any material on tracks three and two, it will also be picked up. This results in garbling that makes the tape useless to the mono user. When trading with a mono collector, use ONLY tracks one and four.

You should use the track system when labelling your tapes. It is wise to keep a contents list with each tape. Most collectors just write the contents on the back of the tape box.

Collectors use and swear by many various brands of recording tape. The higher grades of Scotch, Ampex, TDK, and Capitol are generally agreed upon as being of the best quality, with Shamrock, Concertape, and computer tape being on the lower end of the scale. However, the latter are heavily used for trading because they are so cheaply priced. Many collectors use the higher grade tape for their masters and the lower grade for trading (which necessitates re-taping with resulting loss in sound quality). Others trade exclusively on the higher grade. Obviously it is important for traders to agree on the type of tape to be used before the trade takes place. Be sure that whatever tape you use is lubricated tape. Unlubricated tape will cause greater head wear.

There are as many varieties of cassette and eight track brands as there are in open reel. A good method to check cassette construction is to put it in your recorder and put it on Rewind. If you hear a severe rattle it isn't a very good cassette. Another method is to put it on Play and listen for rubbing or grinding noises. Good cassettes make very little noise. Good cassettes will also be put together with screws instead of glue. This facilitates tape repair, should the need arise.

It's pretty tough to check an eight track for construction quality. One, imperfect, way is to press lightly on the exposed tape. It should spring back when you release the pressure. But this isn't foolproof. With eight tracks more than with open reel or cassette, you pay your money and take your chances.

The disadvantage to limiting your collection to the commercially available LPs is, of course, that records wear out much faster than tapes will. If you have a tape recorder, it's wise to dub a taped copy before you play the LP too often.

Many collectors began their collections by buying shows from OTR dealers. While the unlicensed selling of copyrighted programs is illegal, the practice is very widespread. The unlicensed dealers usually get around the legality of the thing by stating in their selling lists that they are charging only for the tape itself and their time, not the actual shows. Prices range widely, as does quality. It's best to obtain catalogs from several dealers and compare them before spending your money, if you choose to go this route.

Licensed dealers normally charge higher prices because they have greater expenses. In some cases they've made great effort to locate

the actors, actresses, and production people of the shows to pay them their due. Licensed dealers often have better quality shows because, in some cases, they've been given access to the original program transcriptions.

Whatever you decide and whomever you buy from, you'll find that you'll need only a few shows before you can build your collection by simple trading.

Joining an OTR club that has a tape library is an excellent way to begin collecting. Most clubs charge members only a small postage and handling fee to borrow library tapes. Clubs are also useful for making trading contacts, learning various recording techniques, keeping abreast of news in the OTR world, and generally increasing your enjoyment of the hobby. Many of the OTR fanzines serve collectors in these ways, as well.

Long before the advent of magnetic tape, radio shows were recorded on electrical transcriptions, or discs. These are large, usually

5. TRADING

Alright. You now have two tape recorders, a supply of blank tape, and a few radio shows. The next step in building your collection is trading.

First, obviously, you have to make contact with other collectors. There are several methods to do this if there aren't any in your area. The best way is to join an OTR club that has some sort of regular publication in which members' wants, trade offers, etc. can be found. A club is especially useful to the beginning collector who might otherwise have trouble making trades because his collection is too small.

An alternative or auxiliary to joining a club is to subscribe to one of the OTR fanzines. Most of these have either free or cheap classified ad sections. There are several excellent OTR clubs and publications available. Check the listing in this booklet.

It is desirable for a trader to have a catalog or a listing of his collection that can be sent out to potential traders. This is by far the best and easiest method to achieve trades. It is considered common courtesy to send your catalog in return for another trader's.

Ditto and mimeo are probably the cheapest methods to use in making up a catalog. Also, many of the increasing number of fast-print shops can do your catalog for you at a very low price and save you the trouble of collating, stapling, etc.

One of the prime considerations in making up a catalog is legibility. Type your lists using a typewriter with clean characters. Follow the specialized directions for typing on ditto or mimeo masters, and use a new ribbon for the fast-print lithography.

Your name and address should appear somewhere on the catalog. It's a good idea to use a cover sheet that explains your sound ratings, the type of tape you prefer to use, mailing information, your special wants, and any other pertinent information.

The format in which you list your shows in the catalog depends largely on what method you use to keep track of your shows. Most collectors number their tapes and list the contents of each either on the tape box or on a

16 inch, record platters. Depending on its length, a program may use several discs, all to played in a certain order. Probably the majority of OTR shows presently in circulation were taped from discs that were found in radio stations, attics, basements, junk piles, and, in one case, buried in the ground. The condition of these discs affects the quality of the shows on them, and varies widely.

If you are fortunate enough to discover some transcriptions, DO NOT try to play them on your home record player. With very few exceptions, the discs were designed to be played on special equipment, with compatible turntable, stylus, and filtering devices. You'll only damage a disc by playing it on your record player at home. Your best bet is to get a friendly person at a radio station to dub a tape from the disc for you, or find a collector who has the equipment to do it. If you can find such a collector, he'll usually make a tape from the disc for you in return for making a copy for himself.

piece of paper attached to the tape box, it's very wise to keep an alphabetical master list of all the shows you have. This will tell you at a glance which shows you have or don't have. Don't wait too long to begin keeping such a list or you'll soon find yourself hopelessly immersed in un-indexed programs.

The best method is to keep your master index and catalog as simple as possible. For example, list your collection on index cards, with a separate card for each program series like, say, ESCAPE or I MINUS ONE. List all the episode titles of a particular series on that series' card or cards. Include all pertinent information, including sound quality, broadcast date, stars, title, length of show, how complete the show is, and, don't forget, the number of the tape on which that particular show can be found. Some collectors list the show's network and sponsors in an effort to have as much information as possible. An index like this will give you a simple cross-index system so that you can locate any episode quickly given tape number and series title.

Program titles are often a sore spot among collectors. Most comedy, variety, and musical shows, and some dramas, don't give a title during a program and different collectors have often given the same episode different titles, which leads to confusion. There are some simple ways to avoid this confusion and the possibility of trading for shows you already have. If a title is given during the episode, USE IT, making sure that you copy it correctly. With comedy shows that aren't titled, use the first joke or sketch. Similarly, with untitled musical shows, use the first song. In all cases, list as much information as you can about the show to aid your trading partner in identifying it. If the original commercials are intact, say so. Note if the program is from the APRS. (The APRS is the Armed Forces Radio Network.)

Program dates are another sore spot. One collector's mistake on a date can be picked up and circulated through many collectors. One way to avoid this is to check the date you have using a perpetual calendar (almanacs usually have perpetual calendars). Using one of the OTR reference books, find out the day of the week that the program was broadcast. If the date you have doesn't match the date you've found on the perpetual calendar, obviously there's been a mis-

take. Usually it's just an error of a day or two, or the transposition of numerals, so it's easy enough to correct.

Probably the sorest spot of all among collectors is the rating of sound quality. It often seems as though each collector has his own personal system of sound rating which ends up at odds with someone else's. Despite countless fanzine articles, there is no strict standard to use in the rating of the sound quality of shows that are decades old. Some collectors believe that sound quality is the most important consideration, no matter how rare a show might be, and they tend to collect only the best sounding shows available. Everyone will probably agree that it's desirable to have shows with good sound, however we shouldn't lose rare shows because the sound is less than perfect.

As with the general program information mentioned previously, it is best to list all pertinent information regarding sound quality. While it is not really necessary to list every small imperfection, you should note things like hiss, hum, distortion, surface scratch, volume drop or fluctuation, crosstalk, squeal, station drift, static, and speed variation, if severe.

If you rate the sound quality of your collection using the usual terms, excellent (E), very good (VG), good (G), fair (F), and poor (P), be sure to explain exactly what you mean by them. A show that is broadcast quality would be rated excellent, one that has some minor defects might be rated very good, and so on.

Sound quality has been a bone of contention among collectors since the hobby began. Do your best to make sure your trading partner knows exactly what he's getting and you should not have any problems.

Probably the most common format of listing shows in a catalog is by tape number. Probably the most convenient format (for your trading partner) is the listing of shows alphabetically by series, with the tape number after each show. Some collectors just list their shows haphazardly. Whichever format you choose, include the most complete information that you can for each show (if this point seems over-emphasized, it's on purpose).

As your collection grows, you'll find yourself sending out supplements to your first catalog. Use the opportunity to include corrections to your first listing.

Some collectors use form letters when they send out catalogs. There's nothing wrong with form letters, but adding the personal touch will be appreciated.

Keep a record of your correspondence, making sure names and addresses are correct. Make carbons of letters you send out and keep them on file under that trader's name. As you get into active trading, you'll see that it's wise to keep a list of what programs you've requested from which trader. Keep track of what you owe to whom and who owes you what.

OK. You've exchanged catalogs with, say, Frank Remley. Frank writes to tell you he'd like to trade for the reel of ESCAPE shows you have. You decide that you'd like his reel of GUNSMOKE shows, so you agree to the trade.

The important thing now is for you two to agree on what kind of tape to use. Obviously, if you send Frank a reel of top quality Ampex and he sends you a reel of cheap Shamrock, you're going to feel a bit cheated. Work this out before you trade to save a lot of hard feelings.

When you're both satisfied, make up the tape and send it off to Frank Remley as soon as possible. Be sure, when you're making up a tape, to dub all of the show. Don't omit anything. Many traders will inadvertently cut off items such as network announcements at the end of a program because they're in a hurry. Don't be. You wouldn't want to receive an incomplete show yourself.

Don't begin dubbing too close to the end of a reel of tape. Tape ends get frayed and creased through use and will affect the sound quality. Allow a few revolutions of the take-up reel before beginning to dub. Same thing goes for the end of a reel.

Leave a little space between the ending of one show and the beginning of another. Thirty seconds or so is fine.

The vast majority of shows in circulation are half-hour or hour shows. You can see that one-and-a-half hours of material will fit on one track of an 1800' reel recorded at 3 3/4 ips, or one hour on one track of a 1200' reel. Don't try to squeeze more on than that. It's very annoying to have to stop and turn a reel over during the middle of a show. The extra time gained isn't worth the hassle, so don't break up shows between tracks. If having a little tape left over after the end of the last show on a track offends you, you can always dub in five or ten minute extras or excerpts from shows. Many collectors do this.

Don't ever substitute another show for one that your trading partner requests unless you tell him first and he agrees.

When you package the tape to be sent, use a bit of tape to attach the free end of the recorded tape to the plastic reel. Use the piece of adhesive tape that comes with new reels or a good tape that won't "run" when it gets hot and gets everything sticky. In any case, don't attach the free end of the recorded tape to the rest of the tape itself. The adhesive from the adhesive tape can get on your recorder's heads, which is not good.

Be certain to include a list of the contents of the tape with the tape when you send it out. Many collectors have printed up insert sheets with spaces for program information by track. All you really have to do is simply type up a contents list and slip it into the tape box. It's also a good idea to put your name and address on the tape box.

Make sure that you package the tape well. The Post Office isn't noted for its gentleness in handling packages, so use heavy cardboard to protect the tape. It may even be a good idea to attach a copy of the trader's address to the cardboard in case the outside wrapping paper gets torn off (it happens). You can make sturdy mailing boxes easily enough with heavy cardboard and good adhesive tape. These boxes are reusable and can be sent back and forth by traders many times. Cut the cardboard just a little larger than the tape box to further protect the edges from damage. Some collectors use foam-packed "jiffy bags", and these work well enough. Just be sure to staple the open end securely closed.

If you enclose a letter with the tape, don't write "letter enclosed" on the outside of the package. If you do, the Post Office will charge you first class postage for the letter plus the charge for the package. Send the package at the Special Fourth Class rate, which is the cheapest rate for recorded material. There is no charge to mail recorded material to the blind.

It may be a good idea to insure the tape when you send it. This way, if the package is lost, you'll get something back. In any case, it's a good idea to send a postcard to your trading partner to let him know that you've mailed the tape. Do the same thing when you've received a tape so that the trader knows his tape made it through.

Remember, the decision to trade is up to you. If you feel unhappy about a proposed trade, simply don't do it.

There's always the chance that you'll run into a trader who'll try to cheat you. Warnings about such traders usually spread through the grapevine pretty fast, so don't be too concerned about it. Besides, the overwhelming majority of people you'll meet in the hobby are good people. Don't worry overmuch about the less than 1% that aren't.

6. DUPLICATING

Using double-tracking, all four tracks of an 1800' tape can be duplicated in an hour-and-a-half, and a 1200' tape in an hour.

No matter what duplicating method has been used, the tape should be at least spot checked before it is sent out. Listen to brief excerpts at various intervals spread throughout all of the recorded material.

It is possible that a defect in the tape (a poor oxide coating that causes a volume drop, for example) will slip by you when using the spot check method. Apart from listening to the entire copied tape, though, it is the most efficient way of checking the tape. If your trading partner returns the tape you sent to him, complaining of some defect, it is considered common courtesy to make another copy for him, using fresh tape.

When you receive a tape in trade, you should spot check it immediately. You should not hold a tape for long before sending it back, if need be.

It's not difficult at all to locate shows on a reel of tape. After you've been recording a short while, you'll learn how to judge the amount of tape a show uses so that you'll be able to fast-forward or rewind to the show's approximate location. Don't depend on using the tape counter on your machine since every recorder will come up with a different count. You can make up a chart for the counters on each machine you have, but you'll have to take into account each length and thickness of the tape you use. These charts are rarely worth the trouble.

There may come a time when you'll receive a tape on which you'll notice crosstalk. If you get such a tape, try it on another recorder. If you detect the crosstalk on this machine also, you can usually assume that the problem isn't with your recorders. Ask the collector from whom you received the tape if crosstalk is present in his master. If not, then one of you has a machine with badly aligned heads.

Some collectors insist that crosstalk is inevitable with four track or stereo machines because the recorders most collectors use are not designed to keep channels separate and distinct from each other. Everytime, therefore, that a copy is made on a four track recorder, a little more crosstalk is added. Early dubbings, or generations, are the most desirable,

then, although in some cases the crosstalk may be acceptably low through six or seven generations. As a general rule, the closer to the source, the better the sound.

Other collectors will tell you that crosstalk can be prevented on four track machines through proper recording techniques. Patch cords, jacks, switches, and all connections should be checked and kept in good repair; faults in these can cause crosstalk as well as other sound defects. When dubbing, try to keep the volume level on all channels as equal as you can. This will prevent the higher volume on one track from "spilling over" onto the lower volume of another channel.

Here's how to check your recorder for crosstalk: Using a blank tape, record both tracks at once, but put material on one track ONLY, leaving the adjacent track blank. Play the tape back with the volume on the blank track up full and the volume off on the other. If you can hear the recorded material on the blank track, you've got crosstalk, and the loudness will tell you how bad it is.

Most reel-to-reel collectors use 1200' or 1800' reels, of the seven inch diameter variety. An important consideration in choosing tape is the tape's thickness, measured in mils. 1200' is 1.5 mils thick (on seven inch reels, as are all these), 1800' is 1 mil, and 2400' is 0.5 mil.

Generally speaking, the thicker the tape, the better it will be for long term storage. Thin tape, especially 0.5 mil, after having been stored for some time, will tend to allow bleed-through. Remember, the sound on a tape is encoded by the arrangements of the magnetized oxide particles. After a long period of time with only a thin barrier between them, the particles' magnetism may affect each other. This results in a "scrambling" of the signal which you can hear as an echo or "ghost" sound. It is advisable, therefore, to record programs you want to keep on thicker tape.

Some collectors store their reels wound "tail out". This means that the tape has to be rewound to the beginning before use. This method decreases the chance of bleed-through since the tape is stored with a much looser wind than it would be if it was rewound before storage. But most collectors involved in trading use their reels often enough not to have to worry about tight winds.

Sometimes a tape user will get carried away and snap his controls quickly from, say, Play to Rewind, never pausing at Stop. This is not advised! The sudden and violent change

7 CONCLUSION

So what do you do with your collection after you've amassed a few hundred shows? Obviously, you listen to them. But there are other things you can do that will increase your enjoyment of OTR.

Give yourself a knowledgeable background. Learning about the history of the networks or the biographies of the stars can be fascinating. Reading copies of old radio magazines to learn what audiences thought of the programs back when they were originally broadcast is very interesting. Most of the OTR club publications and fanzines carry background pieces on various shows and these, too, can add to your hobby. Giving yourself this type of background will, not incidentally, also allow you to have intelligent conversations with other collectors. OTR collec-

in tape speed and direction can break the tape or stretch it, not to mention possibly harming the machine. Also, when using Rewind or Fast Forward, make sure the tape is taut between the reels. Too much slack will also cause breakage because it tends to snap taut when the extra speed is applied.

You may receive tapes on which the programs are off-speed, running either too fast or too slow. This is caused by the programs being dubbed on a machine that isn't running at the correct speed. If you use a battery powered machine, be especially careful because the machine's speed will slow as the batteries get low. Similarly, a machine that uses tubes, instead of being solid-state, is prone to special problems. A tube may be defective and go undetected, causing sound problems and other difficulties. It's wise to keep regular checks on tube equipment.

There are a couple of methods to correct off-speed shows, other than using a variable speed recorder, though that's probably the best and most accurate.

You can use a transformer to act as a rheostat to vary the speed of your recorder's motor but this can't be done on all machines. Check with a knowledgeable repairman before attempting something like this. If you don't know what you're doing, leave it alone.

Another method is to put tape around the capstan on reel-to-reel recorders. The slight increase in the capstan diameter will slightly increase the tape speed. Be sure to thoroughly clean the capstan when you remove the tape.

When you're recording cassettes, be sure to allow time for the non-magnetic leader tape to run past the recording head or you'll miss the beginning of what you're going to record. You can manually wind the cassette up to the magnetic tape using the hub gears.

If you have a recorded cassette, it's a good idea to break off the little tabs on the back of the cassette. The resulting holes will trigger a lock on the cassette recorder to prevent you from accidentally erasing material you want to keep. You can always cover the holes with a bit of tape when you want to reuse the cassette.

Keep your tapes, whatever format, out of direct sunlight, high heat, high humidity, and strong magnetic fields, such as those found in speakers or electric motors. The plastic cases on cassettes and eight tracks will warp or crack in high heat or direct sunlight.

tors are never strangers; their hobby gives them ample common ground.

You might choose to specialize in collecting, say, one particular series or one actor's or writer's shows, and concentrate your research on them. Should you choose to share your knowledge, there are many OTR fanzines that would be eager to print your writings. You'll find participation in active OTR fandom very stimulating and lots of fun.

Perhaps you feel that you'd like to share your enjoyment of OTR with others. You might contact hospitals, schools, and institutions in your area and offer to play some shows for the patients and students. This can be very rewarding. Associations for the blind and homes for

the aged are excellent places for this. You might set aside a few hours a week to go over and play some OTR for the people in these places; it'll make many of them happy, and should give you a good feeling, too.

Use OTR to entertain your friends and family. People who remember listening to OTR will usually enjoy hearing them again, especially favorite shows. Also, various clubs and organi-

sations might ask you to play a show or two for the enjoyment of their members.

There are, then, a good many things you can do with your collection. Personal enjoyment ranks highest, however. An active imagination while listening to, for example, a science fiction show can easily outstrip the visual splendor of "Star Wars". The Theater of the Mind knows no limits.

8. OTR REFERENCE BOOKS

There are many books concerned with OTR. The volumes listed here are not the best or worst but are perhaps the most general. Some of these are still in print, others are not. Out-of-print books can sometimes be found in used bookstores or public libraries.

The first two titles listed are the books most collectors use for immediate reference, because of the format and information.

The Big Broadcast 1920-1950, by Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, Viking Press, 1972.

Tune In Yesterday, The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio 1925-1976, by John Dunning, Prentice-Hall, 1976.

A Tower in Babel, by Erik Barnouw, Oxford University Press, 1966.

CBS: Reflections in a Bloodshot Eye, by Robert Metz, Signet paperback, 1976.

The Golden Web, by Eric Barnouw, Oxford University Press, 1968.

The Great Radio Comedians, by Jim Harmon, Doubleday, 1970.

The Great Radio Heroes, by Jim Harmon, Doubleday, 1967.

The History of Broadcasting: A Thirty Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States, by Harrison Summers, Ohio State University Press, 1950.

The Image Empire, by Eric Barnouw, Oxford University Press, 1970.

The Panic Broadcast: Portrait of an Event, by Howard Koch, Avon paperback, 1971.

The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment, by Raymond William Stedman, University of Oklahoma, 1971.

Whatever Became of... series by Richard Lamparski, Bantam Books, 1967 to present.

9. OTR CLUBS

MILWAUKEE AREA RADIO ENTHUSIASTS, c/o Ken Pabst, 4442 North 77th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53218. The club publishes a newsletter and maintains a tape library.

NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES, c/o Sherill and Gayle Bland, Box 11962, Reno, Nevada 89510. Single membership is \$10 per year, family membership is \$15. The club publishes a quarterly newsletter, usually about 50 pages long, and various extras. Book, magazine, and tape libraries are maintained.

OLD TIME RADIO CLUB OF BUFFALO, P.O. Box 119, Kenmore, New York 14217. Membership is \$10 per year. The club meets monthly and maintains book, magazine, and tape libraries. A monthly twelve page newsletter and a quarterly twenty page magazine are published, as well as various extras.

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO, c/o John Lloyd, 2667 East 99th Avenue, Thornton, Colorado 80229. Membership is \$8 per year. The club meets monthly, publishes a monthly newsletter, and maintains a tape library.

SOCIETY TO PRESERVE AND ENCOURAGE RADIO DRAMA,
VARIETY, AND COMEDY, P.O. Box 1587, Holly-
wood, California 90028.
Membership is \$15 per year. The club has
monthly meetings, often with OTR stars as
guests. A monthly newsletter and an annual
magazine are published. The club maintains
a tape library and program log and script
services.

10. OTR PUBLICATIONS

- AIRWAVES, 900 Elmwood, Wilmette, Illinois 60091.
Editor: Jerry Chapman
Subscriptions: \$10 for one year, \$16 for two.
Frequency: monthly.
Format: 8½" by 5½", 12-16 pages.
Contents: Feature articles, program logs,
classifieds, OTR news, traders'
ads.
- THE BIG BANDWAGON, 3055 Hull Avenue, Bronx, New
York, 10467.
Editor: Roselle Scaduto
Subscription: Sample copy for \$1.25
Format: 8½" by 11", 4 pages.
Contents: Brief articles on the Big Bands,
reviews, classifieds.
- COLLECTIBLES MONTHLY, P.O. Box 2023, York, Penn-
sylvania 17405.
Editor: Margaret Olds
Subscriptions: \$5 per year mailed Bulk Rate,
\$9 per year mailed First
Class.
Frequency: Monthly
Format: 28 tabloid pages, newsprint.
Contents: Feature articles on all kinds of
collecting, with a good amount
devoted to OTR, many classifieds.
- HELLO AGAIN, Box C, Orange, Connecticut 06477.
Editor: Jay Hickerson
Subscriptions: \$6 per year
Frequency: monthly
Format: 8½" by 11", 2-4 pages, mimeo.
Contents: OTR news, collectors' wants,
trade offers.
- NATIONAL RADIO TRADER, P.O. Box 1147, Mt. Vernon,
Washington 98273.
Editor: Phil Cole
Subscription: \$8 per year
Frequency: quarterly
Format: 8½" by 10½", 8-10 pages, typeset.
Contents: OTR news, articles, many classi-
fieds. Recommended.
- NOSTALGIA RADIO NEWS, Box 2214, Syracuse, New
York 13220.
Editors: Allen Rockford & Don Richardson
Subscription: \$6 per year, sample 25¢
Frequency: monthly
Format: 8½" by 11", 28-30 pages
Contents: OTR news, classifieds, logs,
articles, current radio listings.
Recommended.
- WORLD OF YESTERDAY, 13759 60th Street North,
Clearwater, Florida 33520.
Editors: Linda & Ron Downey
Subscription: \$5 per year controlled cir-
culation, \$10 per year First
Class.
Frequency: 5 times a year.
Format: 8½" by 11", 36+ pages.
Contents: Feature articles, classifieds,
heavily illustrated. Recommended.