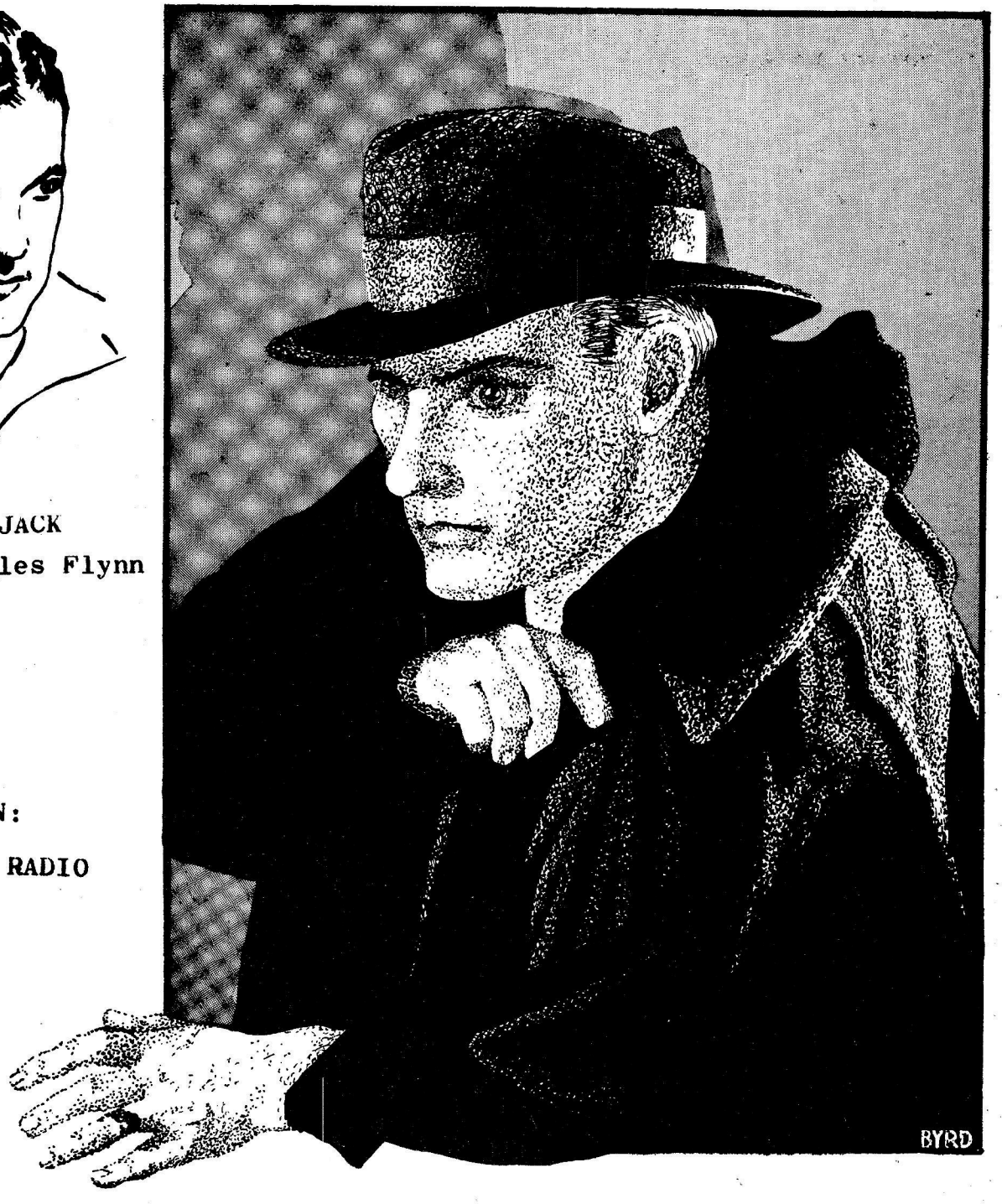
RadioHero

JACK ARMSTRONG * PERRY MASON * THE GREEN HORNET * TOM MIX * THE FAT MAN

VOL. II, NO. 1 * $1.00

JACK
Charles Flynn



BRETT MORRISON:

THE SHADOW OF RADIO

RadioHero

THE ONLY JOURNAL OF BROADCASTING'S HISTORY VOL. II, NO. 1

JIM HARMON, Editor and Publisher

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This is No. 162
of the Limited Edition,
Signed by:
Jim Harmon

NEXT ISSUE:

Besides contributions by Arthur Jean Cox, Richard Gulla, and others on "Peter Quill," "Hall of Fantasy," Orson Welles, Amos 'n' Andy, Carlton Morse, "Buck Rogers," RADIOHERO sports a new, offset PRINTED format. This will be like the cover on this issue, without the technical errors. Better papers, better type, better photos and illustrations. Please see the subscription data on this page, and remember RADIOHERO to your friends. RADIOHERO makes a unique, exclusive "in" Christmas gift.

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Jim Harmon, "Mr. Radio," will release a radio series of "Radio's Golden Age" to commercial AM and FM stations in the U.S. and elsewhere. The program will present interviews and highlights of broadcasting's nostalgic past. The Great Ones are here! Initial 13 weeks at 22;oo (adaptable to 25 or 30 minute formats). Written and produced by Jim Harmon. Narrated by Jim Harmon and Richard Scott. Associate Producer: Ron Haydock. Distributed by Sidney Koss Enterprises. "RADIO'S GOLDEN AGE," P.O. Box 57242, Los Angeles, Calif., 90057.

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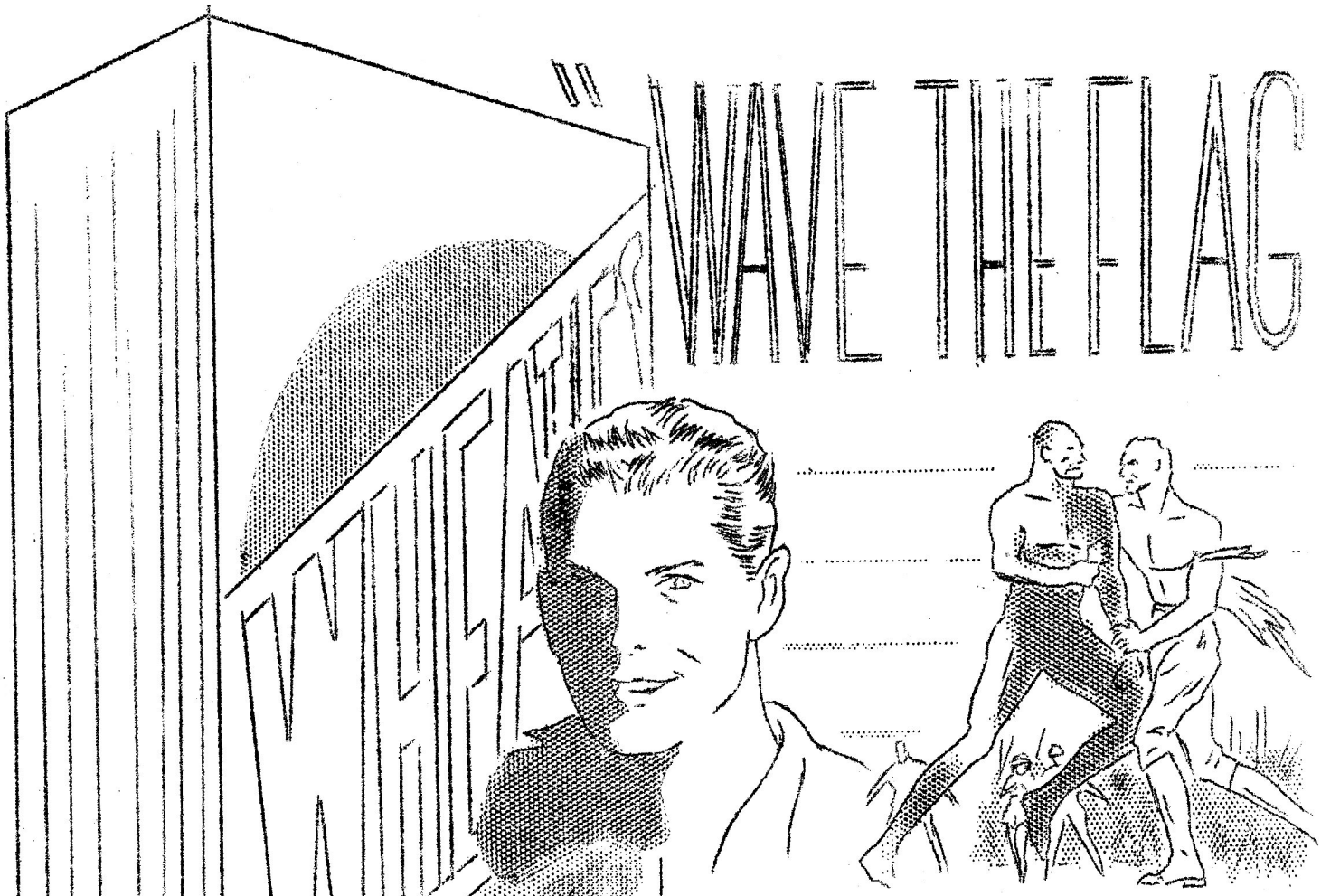


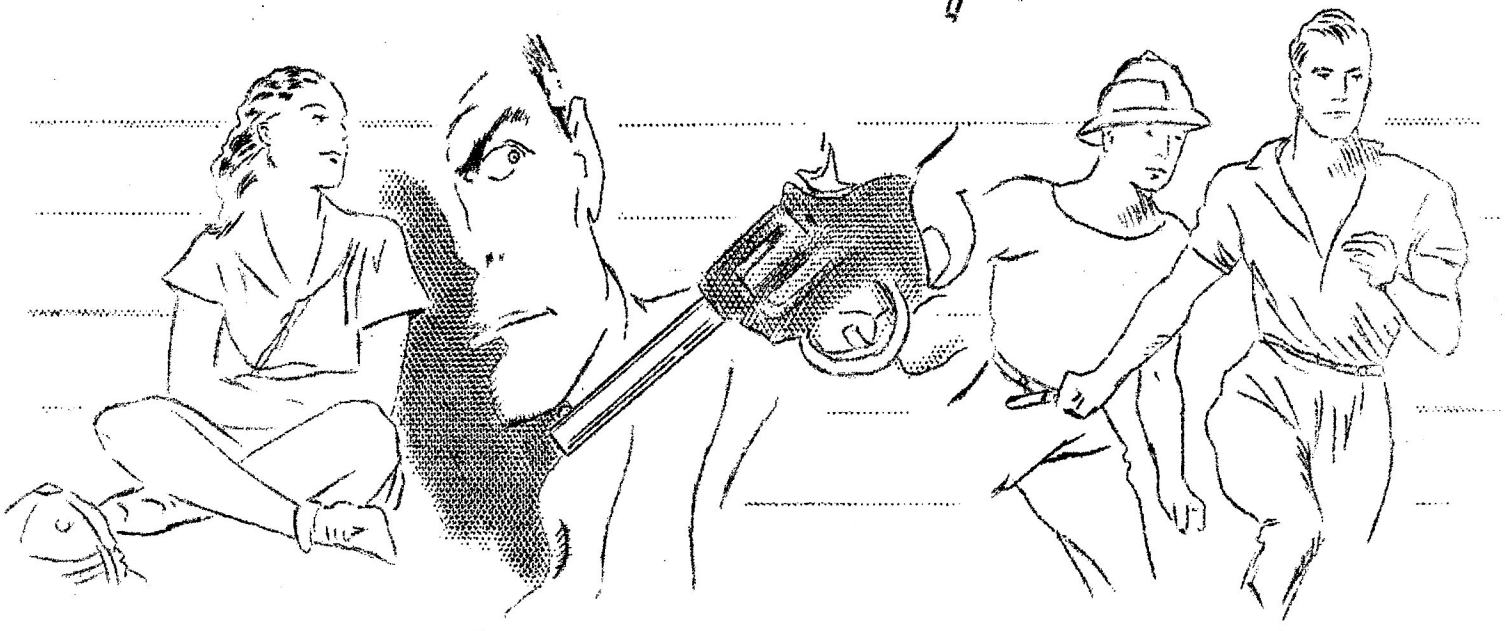
THE SAGA OF

JACK ARMSTRONG,

THE ALL-AMERICAN BOY!

THE FOG surrounds us, chill and thick and heavy, and we feel it in our lungs as we breathe. Beneath us, the endless tide of San Francisco Bay rushes silently toward the sea. Then, from a great distance, the deep groan of a foghorn comes to us, and then another and another. There is the creak of oars close by. Now we hear the slap of waves against a boat. And out of the curtain of fog comes a skiff, ghost-like, heavily-

FOR HUDSON HIGH, BOYS!"



BY RICHARD KYLE

artwork adapted by Jim Moriarty

laden, its crew bending to their oars. We can see them clearly now, two high school boys, one, the leader, bigger and more muscular than his companion, his features strong with an early maturity the other's boyish face still lacks.

Suddenly, the loud blast of a foghorn thunders through the mist and in its wake it leaves the pounding throb of a marine engine. A huge, grey body races out of the gloom.

"Pull, Billy!" cries the leader. "Pull like mad! That cruiser's bearing right down on us!" Their sweat-soaked bodies lean into the oars, their banks arch, and the skiff leaps forward across the surging water. The roar of the engine grows louder and louder, surrounding them like the fog itself. The oars, creaking, quicken in the locks. And now, looming high above them, the cruiser comes, plowing a great, heaving furrow in

the sea, throwing aside a wall of churning water. The struggling skiff balances at the top of the boiling wave, waiting -- and then rides down the far slope to safety. As suddenly as it has appeared, the cruiser vanishes into the fog, leaving behind it the muffled drum of its engine. In another instant, that too is gone.

"That was a close one!" exclaims Billy. "Lucky he was going slow. Can you see the Spindrift yet, Jack?"

The other boy's voice is clear and steady. "Not yet, Billy. Still too soupy."

"I'll feel safer when we get aboard her. I don't want to get run down right here in San Francisco Bay."

"Not even in the Sulu Sea." Jack laughs easily, and then his voice sobers. "Say, Billy -- we've got to be careful! Have you thought how terribly important this cruise of ours may be?"

"You mean -- ?"

"I mean, if we let that Uranium fall into the hands of the wrong kind of people."

"I know, Jack. Maybe with that supply of Uranium they could split the atom -- and then invent engines that could take airplanes all over the world without stopping."

"Billy, when I think of this country of ours -- with millions of homes stretching from sea to sea -- and with everybody working and pulling together to have a nation where people can be free, and do big, fine things -- why it makes me realize what a terribly important job we've got ahead."

"I'll say!" exclaims Billy. "This isn't just like hunting a chest of gold, or buried pirate's treasure."

"You bet it's not! If we can get that Uranium for our scientists at Hudson -- and discover where those pitchblende deposits are located -- why, we'll learn how to use all that energy in the atom. And we'll use it for the good of the whole world."

The voices, of course, are those of Jack Armstrong and Jack's closest friend, Billy Fairfield, and we have listened to them across more than two decades. This was part of an episode of radio's Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy, broadcast a full year before America was attacked at Pearl Harbor and many years before most Americans were to learn of the power of the atom. The year was 1940.

If you had tuned in a few minutes earlier, you could have heard the classic opening, still remembered by eighteen years of Jack Armstrong fans. At 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, it came out of tall living room consoles and bedroom table models, it was heard above the clatter of evening meals and in the silence of boys' own rooms. First there was silence. And then, slowly gaining in volume, it came...

"Jack Armstrong ... Jack Armstrong ... JACK ARMSTRONG ... THE ALL-AMERICAN BOY!"

And the organ and men's bass voices singing the them: "Wave the flag for Hudson High, boys! Show them how we stand! Ever tumpt-a-tumpt-a-tump-tump,* Known throughout the land!"

And the announcer's voice, quick with excitement: "Wheaties -- 'Breakfast of Champions' -- brings you the thrilling adventures of Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy!"

Wow!

After the commercial -- and Wheaties had unusually dignified ones -- the announcer returned with a synopsis of Jack's adventure. "Jack and Billy are rowing their hearts out -- getting the last of the supplies aboard the two-masted schooner Spindrift. The Spindrift rides her mooring like a grey ghost while the San Francisco fog hides her from the view of hostile eyes on shore. The schooner is all ready to start on her perilous journey to the Sulu Sea to recover a precious cargo of Uranium, sunk off an uncharted reef. Jack and Billy, as they bend to the oars, know that other persons are trying desperately to get possession of a mysterious ring which Uncle Jim has just received -- a ring which may contain the secret of the Uranium. Betty, alone on the schooner in the fog, is having the fright of her life -- but Jack doesn't know that -- yet! Listen!"

And we listened.

* * *

Jack Armstrong's own story, however, began in 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, but in the year Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as President of the United States with the calm, defiant, declaration that the only thing the sick nation had to fear was fear itself.

"Jack Armstrong was something the kids believed they could be," the program's creator, Robert Hardy Andrews, said not long ago. "It gave them a dimensional hero. He was a decent fellow, had a sense of responsibility, and didn't preach like Horatio Alger. In short, if you were like him you were a pretty good kid."

The program offered all this and more. Millions were unemployed then, desperation was an everyday emotion, and for countless children, as Dick York, Jack's Billy Fairfield, has said, "the voices offered an escape, taking youngsters where they thought they would never go." But, too, Jack Armstrong was a symbol of a resurgent America, and his adventures -- wild and woolly as they were -- became a reaffirmation of the American ideal. Sure, it was for kids, but Jack's steadiness of purpose, his coolness in the direst emergency, his innate idealism, and his courage in the face of fear paralleled America's own, after the first wild schems of half-baked economic and political theorists of the extreme left and right had reached their preposterous or tragic ends. And so, of all the children's serials, Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy endured the longest. Little Orphan Annie, Tom Mix, Dick Tracy, Captain

---

* The third line of Jack's theme remains more baffling than any mystery he ever encountered. No two nostagiasts agree. One says, "Every fellow can be a champion," another recites, "Ever fight to be a champion." It has even been reported by one authority as "Ever challenging we champions."

Midnight, had their vogues. Jack Armstrong and his friends, however, were always popular. Until the advent of Superman -- who personified the American ideal more grandiosely -- he had no real competition.

For most of his eighteen years, Jack Armstrong was young America. Or young America's daydream of itself, if there is any difference.

Before 1933, General Mills sponsored Skippy, a radio version of Percy Crosby's immensely popular newspaper comic strip. But Skippy was too young for all of the audience General Mills hoped to attract to their breakfast food, Wheaties, and so, after much trial and error, author Robert Hardy Andrews devised Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy. Andrews, a former newspaperman, and one of the early innovators in the radio serial -- and one of the first actors to portray The Shadow -- was the almost inevitable choice in those days. Singlehandedly, besides Jack Armstrong, he created Ma Perkins, Betty and Bob, Meet the Dixons, Just Plain Bill, and others. At one time, according to an interview he recently gave Art Ronnie of the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, he wrote 60,000 words a week, equalling 35 scripts a week for seven different shows, working seven days a week from noon to midnight.

The early shows, with young, rich-voiced Jim Ameche starring, centered around Jack's adventures while attending Hudson High (one of my fondest memories is the day in 1934 when I discovered Jack Armstrong, and he and Billy Fairfield discovered a secret passage behind a fireplace that led to a mysterious abandoned well), but soon Billy's adventurous globe-trotting Uncle Jim Fairfield came upon the scene with his marvelous airplane, the "amphibian" Silver Albatross, and the adventures became international. For many years the principals in the cast never varied. Jack and Billy and Billy's pretty -- and spunky -- sister Betty roamed the world with Uncle Jim, forever "on leave" from Hudson High.

Jack, of course, was strong and steady and courageous, every boy's ideal. Billy was more nearly like every boy his age. He was strong enough and courageous enough -- although, unlike Jack, he had qualms at times -- but he was never very steady. "What I remember most about Billy," says Dick York, the actor who played him, "is that he always had the answer to the problem first and it was always wrong. I did what Jack said not to do. I usually apologized by saying, 'It's all my fault. I shouldn't have done it.'" That's a bit of an exaggeration, though; Billy was no fall guy, no comic relief, he was just human. Uncle Jim Fairfield, former Army colonel, flyer, adventurer, owner of an aircraft company, the personification of reasonable authority and worldly knowledge, was an idealized father image with all the virtues and none of the drawbacks of a real father. He commanded his followers, but they obeyed him voluntarily, as nephews and nieces may, rather than involuntarily, as sons and daughters must. Betty Fairfield was for the girls and the older boys; she was courageous and pretty, as she should be -- and she was direct and straightforward, as no girl has ever been, but as every boy has hoped.

They were a good group.

One of their earliest international adventures took place in Africa, in 1937, when they hunted the fabled ivory treasure of the "elephants' graveyard," The Place The Elephants Go To Die. Despite the perfidy of a

villainous Brazillian -- with a Spanish name -- a man called Lopez, who wanted the ivory for himself, and the strange actions of the Elephant Man, Boo-loo-la, whose life was dedicated to the great animals, Jack and his friends won through. It wasn't easy. They survived fist-fights, attempted kidnappings and successful ones, the fierce leopards of an abandoned city, an attack by pygmies with poison arrows, the theft of their only treasure map (fortunately, Jack had memorized it), the crash-landing of the amphibian after Lopez had punctured the gas tanks, an on-slaught by a pack of enraged gorillas, a trial-by-combat with the son of a native chief (Jack defeated him handily), and countless other adventures. When Jack finally reached the ivory treasure, and the noble Boo-loo-la realized that the American had won, the problem was settled to the satisfaction of all: Jack revealed that the treasure would be used to preserve the living elephants of Africa, so that they would never become extinct.

With the end of the '30s, Jack Armstrong took on the cast for which it is most remembered. Jim Ameche, who had first been introduced to author Andrews by his brother Don, then of Betty and Bob, had left the show, and in 1939 seventeen-year-old Charles Flynn, curly-haired and sturdy-looking, took over the lead. He was to be Jack Armstrong to the very last program. There was a new rendition of the theme Art Jarret had first sung. Announcer Paul Douglas (who also boomed, "Buck Roger-r-r-r-s in the Twenty-fifth Cen-tur-r-r-r-y," elsewhere) passed the task on to Franklyn McCormick. Tyrone Power no longer did bits. And Dick York, Billy Fairfield to a T, became Jack's final and most lasting friend.

Jack Armstrong Big Little Books were coming out then, too, all based on Jack's radio adventures.* Among others -- including Jack's ivory treasure adventure -- the series featured Jack Armstrong and the Mystery of the Iron Key, taken directly from the daily scripts. Like the other Jack Armstrong books, it was illustrated by an astonishing artist, Henry E. Vallely, who had a unique and remarkably simple style and a gift for characterization many far more heralded illustrators have lacked. Jack, Billy, Betty and Uncle Jim were brought to life with an amazing fidelity to the images in the listeners' minds.

On radio, the Iron Key adventure was even more thrilling. For a long while, the sound effects department of the show had been among the best in radio, and with this series it almost became the star.

In a previous adventure, Jack had been given a mysterious key, which had originally come from India -- after examining it, Uncle Jim told Jack it had been carved from an iron meteorite -- as a token of appreciation for helping to recover a treasure. Now, as Uncle Jim, with Jack and the others, prepared to deliver his company's dirigible, the Golden Secret, to his old friend, "The Maharajah of Rawal Doon," the key began to whine and vibrate strangely and spectacularly, as though it were subject to some weird, unknown influence. Before the mystery was

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* Jack's success also inspired less authorized imitation. In 1936, a leading publisher of juveniles commenced issuing a "Jack Armstrong Series," apparently depending on the radio hero's fame to sell books. Otherwise completely unlike the radio series -- this Jack possessed mythic powers -- it seems to have met with little success.

solved in far off India, and a new science was uncovered, listeners were treated to an incredible succession of bizarre explosions, whines, vibrations, lightning bolts, whistles, drums, tiger screams, bugle calls, and you name it -- and the ever-present snick-snick-snick of Jack's Indian bodyguard and servant as he sharpened his saber.

It was a bravura performance by the sound effects department, and certainly called for the Jack Armstrong Sound Effects Kit, which Wheaties offered as a premium. In it, to the lucky kid who had sent in his boxtop and ten cents, were a whistle that wailed like a passenger train's, red cellophane which crackled just like a burning campfire when it was crumpled, a balloon with BB shot in it that created thunder when inflated and shaken, and all sorts of amazing gimmicks.

Jack Armstrong and Wheaties always offered the best premiums on the air -- and they delivered them right away, too, which was more than many of the other kids' shows did. There were Jack Armstrong Secret Decoders and Jack Armstrong Whistling Rings and Jack Armstrong Hike-O-Meters,* besides the Sound Effects Kit and many other wonderful devices, all growing out of the offers originally made on the Skippy show. "We devised a secret code from the Baconian cryptogram," Andrews told Art Ronnie of the Herald-Examiner. "The secret grip was taken from one of most elegant of the Greek alphabet fraternities."

By 1940, Colonel Pashal Strong became a Jack Armstrong script writer -- Robert Hardy Andrews's interests were turning elsewhere -- and Jack's adventure to the Sulu Sea, aboard the schooner Spindrift, in the search for the lost uranium paralleled a similar trip to the Philippines that Strong had made with his family some years before. Following the scrap of chart and aided by the mysterious ring (the premium people did not overlook this possibility), Jack and Uncle Jim and Billy and Betty finally recovered the precious ore and learned the secret of the ring for the benefit of their country.

After Pearl Harbor, Jack and his friends aided in the battle against the totalitarian nations, acquiting themselves admirably. But in the post-war era, even the younger listeners began to feel that they were not doing nearly as well. Some of their problems were radio's own. Its early, informal days were gone, when it was possible -- as it had been in 1934 -- to broadcast the weekday Little Orphan Annie show on an odd Sunday because "Annie," fourteen-year-old Shirley Bell, had been sick for a couple of weeks and the program off the air. But gone, too, were the following years of nerve-taut perfection. Post-war radio became increasingly mechanical and cut-and-dried -- and it began to show first of the serials' endless programs where the illusion of "real life" was one of the basic attractions. But some of Jack Armstrong's problems were his own; he and his friends seemed a little out of place in the jet propelled world of the later '40s, a little naive. Time was upon them and they did not know it.

So, in an effort to breathe new life into the program, after the Summer vacation of 1946, the show returned to the air in episodic form, completing each wholly unrelated story in six weeks. A new character,

---

* A good simplified pedometer that Wheaties has recently revived as a premium. The only visible difference is the "Wheaties" name in place of the old "Jack Armstrong."

Vic Hardy, a scientific crime investigator, assumed greater importance, and in the first story, "The Adventure of the Devil's Castle," he completely replaced Uncle Jim. For this story, Betty Fairfield was dropped. A teenage "junior announcer," Jim Butterfield, was brought in to "help" the regular announcer, Bob McKee -- and to increase listener identification with the show.

But the old formula, though it was becoming dated, had been perfectly contrived. The new, stripped-down model merely diminished Jack Armstrong's strengths and magnified its weaknesses.

Although Pashal Strong's script had all the time-tested ingredients -- a "solitary scientific retreat" in a "castlelike stone house," a murder, a mad hermit, secret passages, a super-scientific "cosmo-tonic generator" to release the "electrical atomic energy of matter," and a near drowning for Jack and Billy and Vic Hardy in an abandoned mine shaft -- somehow the story lacked the life and vitality it should have had. Maybe, with Uncle Jim and Betty gone, with the brisk episodes clicking off one by one, the listeners ceased to quite believe in it.

Soon, the show went to complete-in-one-episode half hour adventures, but they were as uninspired as the Jack Armstrong comic book that was issued in 1947 by Parents' Institute. Finally, the program a pale ghost of its original self, Jack joined the SBI, the Science Bureau of Investigation, and said good-bye to that Jack of long ago who had so unscientifically discovered the Elephants' Graveyard and uncovered the mystery of the Iron Key and sailed across the great Pacific to the Sulu Sea -- and who had once found a secret door behind a fireplace....

In 1951, the last Jack Armstrong program was broadcast.

Jack's creator, Robert Hardy Andrews, had long since left the show to become a novelist and motion picture writer. Inevitably, he turned to television, adapting an early novel and motion picture of his, If I Had a Million, to TV. They called it The Millionaire. Today he has a new book on the market, A Corner of Chicago, and is scripting a high-budget film. A world traveller now, and a compelling speaker -- as a man who once played the Shadow and wrote 60,000 words a week would have to be -- he often talks on Far Eastern affairs. Tomorrow, 1964, Doubleday will publish his life of Buddha, written from material gathered during a long stay in the Far East in the 1950s.

Jim Ameche, with his incredibly rich voice, has had a long and successful career in radio. Dick York recently co-starred with Gene Kelly in the television version of Going My Way.

And Jack Armstrong, that is, Charles Flynn, what of him? Today, at 41, married, with four daughters, he is an advertising executive in Detroit who stays in shape by playing golf. Recently, he reminisced about the old days, and said he thought the time was ripe for a return of adventure series to radio. Then he was asked about the possibilities of a modern version of Jack Armstrong.

"Yes," Charles Flynn answered, "but he'd probably have to be flying rockets."

(Concluded on page 19)

THE ORIGINS OF THE SHADOW

BY BILL BLACKBEARD

(Edited from a letter by permission of Bill Blackbeard)

THE SHADOW was not the first or the "oldest popular double identity character."

Mask, signet ring, the wealthy man of leisure doubling as metropolitan crime fighter -- all elements of The Shadow character except slouch hat and cape -- were created initially by the gifted pulp writer Frank L. Packard during World War I when he created Jimmie Dale, alias The Grey Seal (yes, with the "The" capitalized) in "The Adventures of Jimmie Dale," a series of novelettes launched in a popular pulpzine of the period and followed in a couple of years by "The Further Adventures of Jimmie Dale." Both series were published as books with immense popularity and were succeeded by full-length novels about The Grey Seal, such as Jimmie Dale and the Blue Envelope Murder, Jimmie Dale and the Phantom Clue, etc. All these went into many printings, and as quality pulp writing vastly outmatch any production of Walter Gibson. A closer stylistic imitation, also much better as writing, was Norvell Page's The Spider, in the magazine of that name.

A quotation at random from Jimmie Dale and the Blue Envelope Murder (Doubleday, Doran, 1930) will illustrate the resemblance to The Shadow:

> He rose from his chair, crossed the room, and drawing aside the portiere that hung before the alcove, disclosed the squat, barrel-shaped safe that he had designed himself.... His fingers played for a moment deftly over the several knobs and dials that confronted him -- and the door swung open. An inner door, no less complicated in its mechanism, followed suit. And then, from a secret compartment within, Jimmie Dale took out what looked like a little bundle of leather that was rolled up and tied with thongs.... He unrolled it /and/ began to examine the tools critically, taking them one by one from their respective pockets.... There remained two pockets still uninspected. From one he took out a black silk mask, and from the other a thin flat metal case much like a cigarette case. On the top reposed a tiny pair of tweezers;

and beneath, between sheets of oil-paper, lay row upon row of gray, diamond-shaped, adhesive-paper seals.

These, of course, are the insignia of The Gray Seal, the equivalent of the Spider's spider-imprint ring and of The Shadow's signet ring. Later, after a nocturnal escapade involving a safe-cracking to recover wrongfully-obtained property and to return it to its proper owner:

> He sat bolt upright in bed and for a moment listened incredulously. It was the telephone!...
> He got out of bed, switched on the light, and lifted the receiver from the hook.
> Carruthers' voice came instantly and tensely over the wire: "Hello! Hello! Jimmie, is that you?"

Herman Carruthers, managing editor of the New York News-Argus, is the original of Police Commissioner Weston and of Commissioner Fitzpatrick of The Spider.

> "Look here, Carruthers," complained Jimmie Dale, "if this is your idea of a brilliant joke, I must say it's not mine! It's a bit stiff to yank a chap out of bed at this hour with the perverted hope of getting a rise out of him, just because of what I said at the club. I suppose you're going to tell me, as you did once before at such an un-Godly hour, that The Grey Seal has come to life again!"
> "Joke!" cried Carruthers wildly. "My God, Jimmie, The Grey Seal has just killed Ray Thorne!"
> Whitefaced, as rigid as a figure carved in stone, and as silent, Jimmie Dale stood there while the seconds passed. Mentally stunned, he was unconscious of his surroundings, unconscious that he was still holding the telephone receiver to his ear. Then slowly his brain began to emerge from torpor, and grief came -- and then horror and fury swept in a surge upon him. Dead! Ray Thorne murdered -- by The Grey Seal! There was something of abysmal mockery in that accusation which racked him to the soul. His best friend! The man he had tried to save -- and, instead, had but furnished the murderer with an alias that practically defied detection!

Later, when Jimmie and Carruthers are with the cops at the scene of the murder:

> "We thought we were through with that God..." Detective Sergeant Waud burst into fervent profanity, "forever. Hell will crack loose for this, and if we don't get him this time there'll be some heads falling -- and mine'll probably be one of them. But I'm hoping that you and Mr. Carruthers, being so intimate with the murdered man, may be able to hand us a line of something that will give us a lead." He smiled grimly. "We know who killed Thorne, and the only little question we have to answer is the question we've been asking for years: Who is The Grey Seal?"

Of greater interest should be the following quote. Jimmie Dale, near the climax of the novel, has been joined at the crooks' headquar-

ters by his female partner, the only person who knows who The Grey Seal is. Ensues this dialog:

> "Oh!" she said. "I wondered where you were, because I couldn't think of any place in there to hide. I was frightened when I heard Daddy Ratzler going down into the cellar. I went to his room and listened through the tube. I heard nearly everything that was said, and it was horrible; but I soon knew, of course, that wherever you were, you were all right, and hadn't been seen. Oh, it was horrible," she repeated, "but I was so glad, so very glad, to know that old Pascal wasn't one of them. Jimmie -- " her whisper was suddenly tense " -- who was that beast down there with Daddy Ratzler? I know from what was said that he is Daddy Ratzler's son, and that he must be the man who murdered Ray, but do you know who he is?"
>
> "Beaton!" said Jimmie Dale grimly.
>
> "Jimmie!" Her hand reached over the sill and clutched at Jimmie Dale's arm. "Ray's valet!"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "What are you going to do?"
>
> "Nothing -- yet. We know he killed Ray, but Mother Margot and The Grey Seal can't testify! I've got to get some other kind of evidence!"

Get that "Mother Margot." That was the alias of Marie Thorne in this novel, Jimmie Dale's equally disguised girl companion: surely the origin of Margo Lane in the radio show of The Shadow.

As for the slouch hat the the swirling cape so characteristic of both The Shadow and The Spider, these were lifted directly from Fantomas, a French series character of the '20s, whose exploits were regularly translated into English and jacketed with garish covers portraying Fantomas in full Shadow-style regalia. Fantomas, who possessed decidedly mystic and supernatural powers, was a master villain, however.

Let me state for the record that it is my memory that Lamont Cranston did turn up in at least one Shadow novel, and in such a way that he seriously embarrassed The Shadow posing as Cranston (who was really of course Kent Allard). It should also be made clear that Margo Lane did not figure in any Shadow novel before the early 1940s, when diminishing magazine sales led to teaming her with Cranston in prose -- at which time, also, the Allard identity was allowed to be forgotten.

To the magazine readers, the radio show was constant nuisance because of its dissimilarity to the novels. The show is mentioned frequently in the reader columns of The Shadow, and invariably with puzzlement and dismay. To my memory, no editorial comment was ever made to "explain" the differences in The Shadows of radio and prose. That the magazine was considered the truly definitive account of The Shadow's exploits and character is evidenced by the fact that the Hollywood studios chose to invest in serials and features based on the magazine hero -- at least initially.

The comic book adventures of The Shadow, both as "art" and as narrative were, to my mind, wholly beneath contempt. Possibly if I had been oriented to the radio show rather than to the magazine, this might not have been entirely the case, but the strip was so wretched that I

doubt it. The only delightful feature of the Street & Smith pulp-hero comics, including The Shadow, was the reproduction in early issues of covers in oils from the early pulp issues themselves, which made the comic magazines stand out in newsstand displays amid all competition.

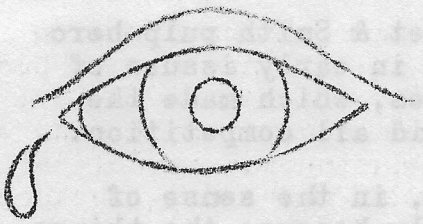
I indulge little nostalgia of a personal kind, in the sense of mulling over memories of past entertainment, largely because the things I enjoyed as a boy (movies, pulp magazines, books, comic strips) are all still at my right hand, either in my own library or viewable, with a little patience, on local TV or at the public library. I have found, in most cases, that my youthful taste has stood the test of time, and I have not had the experience of discovering that the joy I took in something at 12 can now be recreated or even understood only through turning on the nostalgia full blast.

It is bound to be different when childhood pleasures were intimately related to entertainment now largely lost or unobtainable, such as radio drama and comedy, movie matinee serials, stage plays, jazz performances, or silent pictures. In such instances there has been so great a gap between experience and the present that yearning has magnified quality disproportionately to fact, and the man obsessed with cherished memories finds himself grasping at flotsam of audible or visible survival from thse areas of his past: A publicity photo is as evocative as da Vinci, a theme song becomes as lovely as Beethoven, a brief exchange of dialog between two cardboard radio heroes is better than Shakespeare -- because the rest is silence.

I think, on the whole, that you'll find much less fond memory of radio heroes here in the southwest than in areas where the storm windows go up every autumn. As far back as I can remember, the winter practice of southern California kids is to use the after-school hours until sunset for outside play or visits between each others' homes, then and only then to go indoors for dinner and homework. Radio kid shows were nowhere in such a routine engendered by a decent climate. Such shows as I heard were listened to when I was sick (which is why I remember Ma Perkins in about as much detail as I recall Jack Armstrong or Little Orphan Annie) or when the folks had the later evening shows on, like Amos 'n' Andy, Lum 'n' Abner, and Jack Benny. I spent much more time indoors than most kids I knew, it is true, but this is because I was a hopeless bookworm and it seemed to me then, as it does now, that the poorest pulp or comic was rarely worth interrupting to tune in some radio continuity that I had not been following in the first place.

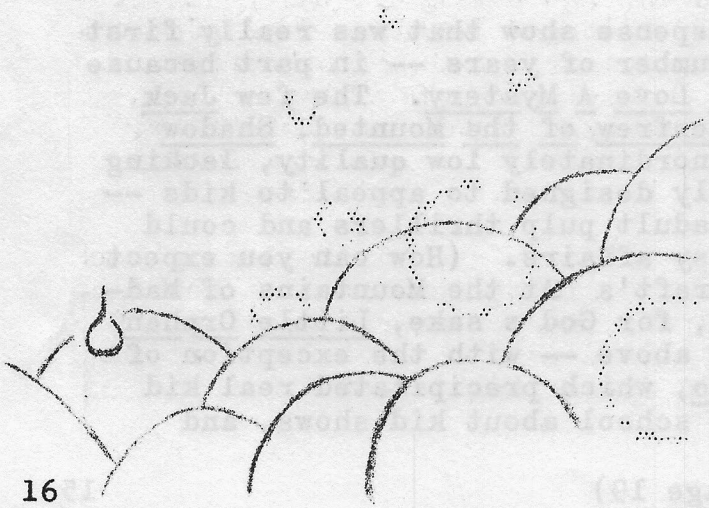
I thought that the one dramatic suspense show that was really first rate and that I did try to hear for a number of years -- in part because it was on later in the evening -- was I Love A Mystery. The few Jack Armstrong, Orphan Annie, Lone Ranger, Renfrew of the Mounted, Shadow shows I did hear seemed to me then of inordinately low quality, lacking imagination and ingenuity and too clearly designed to appeal to kids -- where I, by golly, was already reading adult pulp thrillers and could brook little interference from such noisy affairs. (How can you expect a 15-year-old kid reading H. P. Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness" to stop short at 5:45 and tune in, for God's sake, Little Orphan Annie?) Too, for the reasons mentioned above -- with the exception of the weekly half-hour show, Latitude Zero, which precipitated real kid response locally -- there was no gab at school about kid shows, and

(Concluded on page 19)



SOAP SUDS

BY THE REVEREND ROBERT E. NEILY



REMEMBER how often you feigned a sore throat in order to stay home from school and listen to the variegated miseries and dreams of all the scrambled personalities who bared their souls Monday through Friday in what were known as "soap operas"?

Remember how your "cold" sometimes lasted a week or two so that you wouldn't miss an "exciting" episode of STELLA DALLAS or PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY? Ah, the soap operas!

"A soap opera is a kind of sandwich," James Thurber once wrote. "Between thick slices of advertising, spread twelve minutes of dialogue, add predicament, villainy, and female suffering in equal measure, throw in a dash of nobility, sprinkle with tears, season with organ music, cover with a rich announcer sauce, and serve five times a week."

The "soaps" were an American institution. But like all the rest of the old-time programs, they, too, are gone. Mary Noble (Claire Nieson), Lorenzo Jones (Karl Swenson), Helen Trent (Julie Stevens), Young Dr. Malone (Charles Irving, Sandy Becker), Ma Perkins (Virginia Payne), Joan and Harry Davis (Mary Jane Higby, John Raby) -- all have vanished.

Remember all the intricate problems they and YOU faced together each weekday morning and afternoon? Remember how on Friday, when everything seemed to be turning out all right for everyone concerned: an old romance would be rekindled; a blackguard would start malicious gossip circulating; the heroine would wrap her roadster around a telephone pole (which would give rise to at least thirteen weeks of amnesia -- during which time she would become engaged to at least three different men); while, back home, her fiance vainly searched for her hither and yon (and in the process contracted some obscure South Seas illness)? Yes, those were the days! It was almost impossible for a character to get through a week of an old soap opera completely healthy.

The characters were supposedly "just plain people" who could be everybody's next-door neighbors -- the only thing was, they always had more trouble in a week than any Mr and Mrs Smith or Jones would have in an entire lifetime. Each and every one of our old bedeviled friends was subjected to every emotional torture the soap industry was capable of devising, plus a wrench or two from the cake-flour, shortening, headache remedy and bowel-movement people.

But they're gone now. No longer can we hear the odious strains of "Polly Wolly Doodle" played on harmonica and guitar as JUST PLAIN BILL, barber of Hartville (Arthur Hughes) comes ambling down the street, scattering bits of wisdom and goodness everywhere.

Gone forever are the gay bars on the organ from "Finiculi-Finicula" which heralded the entrance of that all-around buffoon and crackpot inventor, Lorenzo Jones (Karl Swenson) -- and his wife, Belle (Lucille Wall).

Lorenzo must be under lock and key today, as he was well on his way to the Funny Farm when I last heard him a few years back. His crazy inventions had led him into all sorts of mysterious entanglements, and when last heard from he had been kidnapped by a gang who were after his latest gadget. Meanwhile, back at Jim Barker's garage (where Lorenzo "worked" as a mechanic) Belle was in the arms of another man.

Here's a sample of dialogue from that perpetual weeper:

DENNIS SCOTT (one of Belle's many admirers): "Belle Jones, do you see that house?"

BELLE JONES: "Yes, I see that large, grey-stone house standing on a cliff, with a fifty-foot drop to the jagged rocks below, and surrounded by impenetrable forests, with not another house for miles and miles around. This is not the road to the house where I am to find my recently kidnapped husband, Lorenzo Jones. Why have you brought me here, Dennis Scott?"

However, the most unforgettable of the tear-provokers was OUR GAL SUNDAY (Vivian Smolen). You remember her -- she was the orphan waif who grew up to marry one of England's richest and most handsome noblemen, Lord Henry Brinthrope (Karl Swenson). Lord Henry was a pleasant enough bloke, but his bland naivete made Sunday's life a morass of hellish difficulties (like the time Henry's cousin Hubert, who looked exactly like Henry, appeared on the scene and disrupted things by trying to prove that Henry's title really belonged to him. Good old Henry played right into Hubert's hands and was imprisoned in the dungeon of his ancestral castle at Balmacruchie in Scotland. Needless to say, Sunday eventually rescued her beloved husband. However, Lord Henry continually blundered into scrape after scrape, leaving poor Sunday teetering on the thin edge of divorce, collapse, or suicide.)

I suppose Sunday's finally left Lord Henry and hightailed it back to the peace and quiet of that little old mining town in the West from whence she originally came, thus resolving the perennial question: "Can an orphan girl named Sunday from a little mining town in the West find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and titled Englishman?"

Obviously, the answer is: NO!

And what about "Oxydol's own MA PERKINS," girl busybody, and her bumbling daughters Fay and Evey (Rita Ascott and Kay Campbell)? Perhaps fussy old Ma and that saintly old bookshop philosopher Papa David Solomon (Ralph Locke) got married up -- or else they are probably in adjoining rooms at the Shady Oaks Rest Haven in East Podunk (sweet old Aunt Jenny (Agnes Young) is undoubtedly there with them, boring everyone with another of her "true life" stories).

If you ever visited Shady Oaks, I'm sure you'd find several wards full of scrambled radio personalities -- characters such as WENDY WARREN (Florence Freeman), FRONT PAGE FARRELL (Staats Cotsworth, who was also CASEY, CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER), NORA DRAKE (Joan Tompkins, who was recently released to become Sam Benedict's Girl Friday on TV), DAVID HARUM (Cameron Prud'homme), and NONA FROM NOWHERE (Toni Darnay), to name but a few -- all of whom had lived lives regularly subjected to an endless panorama of pain, suffering, jealousy, frustration, and, remarkably often, brain tumors. And, as if that weren't already enough for several lifetimes, ailments such as flaucoma and retrolental fibroplasia soon began to creep in. (It seems that plain old everyday amnesia or a tumor or two were not enough to hold the interest of modern post-1950 listeners).

And I wonder if PORTIA (Lucille Wall) has ever learned how to face life? (As I seem to recall, her life really wasn't worth facing!) And then there was kindly soft-spoken Ellen Brown (Florence Freeman), the sweet young "widder" with two fatherless children to support. For years on end Ellen carried on a torrid romance outside (and inside) her Simpsonville tearoom with Dr. Anthony Loring (Ned Wever). Question: Did Ellen and Anthony ever tie the knot, and did they ever get that new wing built on the hospital where Anthony interned for over twenty-five years? Perhaps he and YOUNG DR. MALONE have opened practice together, along with Dr. Jim Brent (Don McLaughlin, DAVID HARDING COUNTER-SPY) and JOYCE JORDAN M.D. (Gertrude Warner).

And what of Mary Noble, BACKSTAGE WIFE? Is she still having trouble hanging on to her husband, Larry (James Meighan), "the matinee idol of millions of other women"? Come to think of it, why feel sorry for her? Wasn't she always going off to the mountains or beach and getting chased around a bit herself by the gentlemen backers of Larry's plays?

And how about STELLA DALLAS (Anne Elstner) and her precious daughter Laurel (Vivian Smolen, the aforementioned OUR GAL SUNDAY)? Is Stella still sewing in that little shop on Beacon Street and is she still quarreling with Laurel's aristocratic momma-in-law, Mrs. Grovesnor? Ol' Stella was always up to her chin in troubles and self-sacrificing for the sake of her beloved daughter. And we mustn't forget Elmwood's pride -- PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY -- and what a family they were! Remember the agonizing search for Andy Hoyt in the wilds of Scuth America? I thought that episode would never end!

And did HELEN TRENT find romance after 35? Did she ever "prove to herself what so many women long to prove: that because a woman is 35 -- and more -- romance in life need not be over -- that romance can live in life at 35 and after!" After twenty-seven years and 7,222 episodes Helen still had not taken that long walk to the altar when THE ROMANCE OF HELEN TRENT finally bade us a fond farewell one day in 1960. As it was, Helen outlasted all of her colleagues but five -- MA PERKINS, philosopher widder woman of Rushville Center, Young Dr. Jerry Malone, physician extraordinaire of Three Oaks Medical Center, THE SECOND MRS BURTON (Patsy Campbell)

(the First Mrs. Burton was the Second Mrs. Burton's meddlesome old mother-in-law); Carolyn Nelson (Claudia Morgan, who was also Nora Charles on THE THIN MAN), who had a RIGHT TO HAPPINESS, and Hope Winslow, who played daily in WHISPERING STREETS -- and even these diehards got the ax by December of 1960.

I always longed to author one of these tearjerkers myself. My head was always buzzing with ideas. There was "THE EVERYDAY LOVES OF LULU -- GIRL AX-MURDERER," and "BESS TOIL, SANITARY SCRUB-WOMAN," but the one with by far the most potential was "THE WIFE'S OTHER JOHN -- The Day to Day Dilemma of Claire Clorox" -- the story that asked the question: Can a woman find real happiness living in a home with only one bathroom? Although Claire's hubby was a plumbing contractor she had little success in convincing him that she, too, needed to have the finer things in life -- a second bathroom! And I had a sponsor all lined up too -- Sniff, the Room Freshener that smells like peanut butter.... But then the "soaps" began to die out, one by one.... Oh well, c'est la vie!

Late November 1960 saw the end of all our old friends' many and varied troubles. MA PERKINS, YOUNG DR. MALONE, THE SECOND MRS. BURTON, WHISPERING STREETS, and THE RIGHT TO HAPPINESS faded out for the last time, never to be heard from again.

"And so, after more than seven thousand broadcasts and 27 years, we say goodbye to Ma Perkins." Ma, looking at her loved ones gathered around the table "laden with the fruit of this good green earth," reminisced, then looked forward: "Oh, some day Fay will be sitting here where I'm sitting or Evey or Paulette or Janie or Anushka's child. I give thanks that I have been given this gift of life, this gift of time, to play my little part."

Amen, Ma. Music up and out.

WAVE THE FLAG FOR HUDSON HIGH, BOYS! (Concluded from page 11)

He probably would. But if he does, I hope Billy and Betty and Uncle Jim are right there beside him. They were as much Jack Armstrong as Jack was himself.

And Jack was as much America as any All-American has ever been.

* * * * *

NOTE: I wish to acknowledge the invaluable information supplied by Art Ronnie's columns for the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner. I am also indebted to Jack Armstrong author Pashal Strong; Luther Weaver's The Technique of Radio Writing; the Whitman Publishing Company, publishers of the Big Little Book series; and Newsweek magazine. Above all, I wish to thank General Mills, makers of Wheaties, Breakfast of Champions. -- R. K.

THE ORIGINS OF THE SHADOW (Concluded from page 15)

accordingly no creation of shared enthusiasm which might have sparked some real or at least artificial interest in me.

I am willing to suspend my long-held opinion of The Shadow radio show -- it is more than possible that I missed the really good shows. Some of those mentioned in the last RADIOHERO sound like extraordinarily good fun, and I want very much to hear them.

"ONE MAN'S FAMILY" REVISITED

by Sally Ann Sessions

THE MAN and the woman lying on the roof in the September sun engaged in sporadic conversation, more to help endure the 90-degree temperature than for conviviality. They knew each other, vaguely, as neighbors, but in the hit-or-miss fashion of neighbors in city apartment house they had as yet discovered no common ground.

Above the sky was almost cloudless, and there was little respite from the burning bright.

"One thing I'm doing this vacation," the girl said, "is watching whatever late movies I want to see on television. Some are pretty lousy, but I did get to see 'I Am a Camera' the other night for the third time. Have you see it?"

"I read the book."

"Oh? I never did. Do you watch much television?"

"No," he said with a tasteful shudder, "not unless something I really want to see is on. One time when I was home in California for a couple of weeks, I got involved in watching those daytime serials -- but they're so frustrating."

"Yes, I know," she said, "they change the actors on you. It's a little different from the old-time radio serials. With those you knew instantly when a voice was different, but it wasn't quite as bad as a whole different person to look at." She paused, then said reminiscently, "Do you remember 'One Man's Family'?"

"God, yes!" He sat partly up, then subsided. "Maybe I like that so much because I'm from San Francisco, but they made it so easy to visualize everything, and the places mentioned were places I was familiar with."

"Well, I'm from Massachusetts, and nobody could have gotten more involved with other people's lives than I did with the Barbers.* I think it was a sort of universal appeal, or, rather, country-wide. Did you feel you knew them all personally?"

"Oh, my, yes !" he smiled. "And you know, I think the thing that made them so damned attractive was the fact that they had money. And they didn't indulge in any of that false moralizing about how much better it would be to be poor. They acted as if they were glad they had money, whether that was the American way to feel or not."

"Come to think of it," the girl said, "I must have felt comfortable because of that, too. It probably seemed relaxing to us back in the thirties and forties to listen to people who never had to get out and grub for it.

"I always adored Paul, but it used to make me furious that he was so obtuse about Teddy. There she was, his adopted daughter, and you could see that he was so all-fired attractive that he was driving her crazy, from about age ten on. Every time he got involved with some female Teddy would go into all sorts of trauma."

"Well," the man interjected, "that's what kept you hanging on the ropes. The slight suggestion of incest (although they weren't related really, of course), and the difference in age, and this poor girl suffering because the all-wise Paul didn't see what was under his nose. Do you remember Paul's talks?"

"You mean his talks with the members of the family who were in some kind of trouble, or had a problem, and up they'd scoot to his room under the eaves?"

"Yes, and how it was always raining. I dearly loved the sound of rain on that roof. I'm sure that if you'd looked out of any other window in the house the California sun would have been shining, but his room was pure San Francisco." She frowned suddenly, and thought out loud, "Wasn't there some tragedy about Hazel?"

"Yes....Now let me see, what was it? Hadn't she been married to a guy who either disappeared, or went crazy, or something?"

"I can't remember. All I can remember is that she had two sons, Hank and Pinky, and they were twins, but very unlike."

He laughed, "I'll say they were unlike! Hank was the solid plodder who always did everything right, but I couldn't help liking Pinky better. He got into trouble without even trying, and he was so engaging you knew he'd come out of it smelling like rosebuds.

"And then Hazel married Dan. Didn't he have a string of furniture stores, or something mundane? I know he was always on the road someplace, away from Hazel and involved in business, and she always sounded just a little whiney about it."

"Yes," the girl agreed, "I always felt that she could should any of the many troubles that came her way, because she almost looked forward to it. She just didn't expect anything better.

"Didn't she have a daughter, too? Named Margaret? I all of a sudden can hear her saying that name, but the context is shaky."

"I'm fuzzy on that, too," he confessed, "but the twins are very clear. How did you feel about Jack and Betty, and their raft of kids?"

She mentally counted, "Seven, wasn't it? Now that was the nearest thing to a money complaint any of them ever voiced. It wasn't that Jack was earning such a poor living with his law practice, it was all those kids arriving on the scene with such monotonous regularity.

"In one way Jack eemed to be just a kid, a younger brother like Bobby Kennedy. He always sounded like a small boy making a conscious effort to be mature."

"Maybe that's why he had all those kids!" the man laughed. "Jack, I mean, not Bobby Kennedy. And maybe that's why Betty always seemed to be on the verge of complaining.

"Do you remember when Cliff died,* or committed suicide, or something? Not the real Cliff -- the voice, I mean."

The girl nodded vigorously. "I remember the voice changing, because I never got used to the new one. It was like when the Lone Ranger changed voices. Didn't they write Cliff out of the script for a long time so it wouldn't seem so odd when the new voice chimed in?"

"I think so," he said, "but did you remember that Claudia and Clifford were twins?"

"Yes. And it was funny, the very things that were attractive in Claudia were unmanly in Cliff. She could be frivolous and rattle-brained, and still manage to be adorable, but when Cliff manifested any of those qualities he was weak.

"There was something about Claudia, too. Was she married twice, or what?"

"I can only remember Nicky," the man said thoughtfully. "But there was some business about coming back from overseas on a boat, getting away from some horrible experience. I'm hazy on it, but weren't they in a prison camp? And didn't they lose a child and she never had any more? It seems to me you were always under the impression that Claudia had a right to be moody sometimes, and Nicky's indulgence of her was to be understood.

"How did you like the Sky Ranch?"

"Oh, yes. The Sky Ranch. Now, there was another evidence of wealth and horizons unlimited. I loved it up there -- the swimming pool, and the mountain air -- mmmm! Such luxury!"

"Yes," agreed the man. "And riding along mountain trails on those beautiful horses -- Sky King, and the rest. And wasn't there an old caretaker who lived in a cabin up on the mountain above the Sky Ranch? Old somebody or other. I always thought of him as a slightly rattly Delphic oracle."

"Me, too!" She pondered for a moment, "I can't think of his name, though. Tell me, wasn't Paul involved one time with a beautiful blond foreigner -- somebody on the order of Dietrich, with a hint of Madeline Carroll?"

"I can see her, but I can't get a name."

"Hildegarde? Heidi? Frieda?"

"No, it's just lost. But didn't she fly a plane or something? Paul did, I know. And I somehow think she was connected with his

flying. All I can remember about her is that Teddy hated her, re-remember?"

"She did!" said the girl. "Teddy hated anything in a skirt that flitted past Paul. I used to long for him to suddenly see her as a WOMAN, and crush her in his arms and say something like, 'Oh, what a blind fool I've been!' Seems to me she was headed for a miserable marriage at one time, and I never had much hope for her as an adult -- thought she'd just make herself miserable and die of something dire like alcoholism, or something. Come to think of it, she reminds me of an aunt I had who did just that. But she didn't have a Paul to blame it on -- my aunt, I mean.

"Clifford married a girl named Ann, didn't he? And the marriage was a failure. But wasn't there a child before she died in a car crash?"

"Yes!" he said. "A little boy who was brought up in Scotland with his mother's people. Andrew, wasn't it? You always felt so sorry for Cliff, not knowing his own son. Poor old Cliff was off going through amnesia, or some such. Maybe that's when the real one died and they had to get him out of the way for a while, so they could switch voices on us."

The girl turned over on her stomach, put her cheek against the hot planking of the roof, and said dreamily, "I loved Mother and Father Barber, too. Was it Barber with an E-R, or Barbour, sort of Frenchy?"

"I think it was E-R.*"

"They were exactly what a Mother and Father should be, you know? Always thre, always right -- well, maybe not always. Father Barber got testy at times, but Fanny always straightened him out. Wasn't his name Henry? And didn't Bob and Ray do a take-off on them?"

"God, did they? I can imagine it was devastating!"

"It was awful. One of those things that's so good you can't stand it. Father saying, 'Fanny, Fanny, Fanny,' on a downward scale, patience and fortitude. I could have cheerfully had them boiled in oil for the travesty, but I laughed."

The man turned over, too. "Did you ever hear a program called 'Hawthorne House'?"

"Uh-uh."

"Maybe it was only regional. It was a poor imitation of 'One Man's Family' -- a poor man's 'One Man's Family.' They had this mother who was such a busybody you'd never believe it. Always showing up in people's offices to straighten out legal tangles, and that sort of thing, sounding all wise, all motherly, all that malarky. Can you imagine Mother Barber doing that kind of thing, so unfeminine and all?"

"Gosh, no! She was always gentle and patient and right. She did get a little irritated with Henry now and again, but that was to be expected. The good Lord Himself would have gotten exasperated with Henry sometimes."

The man looked over at her quickly. "Did you ever feel that Henry was jealous of his son, Paul?"

"Well, you could hardly blame him. All that under-the-eaves-in-the-rain bit. They were practically waiting in line for Paul on rainy nights, and as the eldest son, he should have been going to his father for advice, but not Paul. He was born knowing all. It's probably why Henry was so partial to Pinky, who was the absolute antithesis of Paul. Hank, now, he was cut from the same bolt."

The man took the edge of the towel and mopped his face. "Now all you get on the radio is music of one kind or another. News and sometimes speeches. The death of radio. How did it happen? It's very sad that this generation can't know how pleasant it is to have your ears and mind engaged, and your eyes free. To use the imagination freely.

"Who did Claudia look like to you? To me she looked like Claudette Colbert -- I guess because of the name. Nicky was David Niven, right down to the accent. Paul was somebody stolid and wise, like that actor named Baxter. And Father Barber would have had to be Lewis Stone."

"Well, yeah -- if you could ever disassociate Stone with Andy Hardy."

He went on, "Do you remember 'I Love a Mystery'? It was a sort of exotic cousin to 'One Man's Family'."

"Sure," she said. "Wasn't it Clifford, Paul, and Nicky who were in it?"

"I think so," he answered. "It's significant that we thought of them with their 'One Man's Family' names, though. I have not one whit of recollection as to who they were on 'I Love a Mystery'.*

"Gad, hasn't this been a nostalgic bath!"

She stood up. "It sure has been, and I'm wringing wet. You going to stick it out longer?"

"A little." He sighed deeply and closed his eyes. "They ought to put those episodes in a time capsule. Fanny, Fanny, Fanny!"

* * *

* ERRATA NOTE

The 'One Man's Family' name was spelled Barbour, and it did have a Continental touch.

The character, Cliff Barbour, did not die on the program, but moved to Scotland when the actor who portrayed the role, Barton Yarborough, suffered a fatal heart attack in 1951. Many years earlier, in 1941, Walter Patterson, who played Nicky, died and was replaced in the role by Tom Collins.

(Concluded on page 35)

AIRMAIL

D. R. PATRISSI

I hope your magazine will be the beginning of bringing back to radio some of the good entertainment I knew as a boy. I feel sorry for the children who never heard of "Tom Mix," "Superman," "Captain Midnight," and many other programs that stirred the imaginations of millions. # # #

CARLTON E. MORSE

There's a great deal of interest in getting "I Love a Mystery" back on the radio just now.... I'm planning a new series.... Thanks for all your help in putting ILAM back before the public. # # #

DICK LUPOFF

Your articles on "Superman" and "Buck Rogers" hit me right here. Oddly, although I never thought too much of the Superman comic, I was a great fan of the radio version (possibly because there was no Captain Marvel radio series). Living near Trenton, New Jersey, I was able to hear the same episode of "Superman" twice each day -- on WOR New York and fifteen minutes later, transcribed on WIP Philadelphia.

I was also a "Buck Rogers" fan, and listened to it with equal fidelity, although only once a day. I remember the final broadcast of the series, around 1949 or 1950: the only time I ever heard a serial-type show really end. The others all either went off for the summer and were not renewed, or else were simply dropped, wherever they happened to be in the sequence.

But Buck, Wilma, and Doctor Huer had wound up this marvelous adventure and were rocketing away from the planet where it had transpired, along with a highly intelligent robot (("One")) in their ship's cabin. Everybody had a positive orgy of telling one another how happy they all were, when Wilma (or was it Buck?) turned to the robot and asked, "Aren't you happy too?"

As you know," replied the machine, "robots are not capable of feeling emotions. However, I might report that my lubrication system is functioning unusually well today."

Everyone had a good laugh as they blasted on into happiness, while the announcer came on with something to this effect: "Today's installment concludes 'The Adventures of Buck Rogers.' Perhaps someday Buck will be back on the air with a new series of adventures."

I near wept.

But say, with programs coming back, it may yet happen, hey?
# # #

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

RADIOHERO is an ingenious idea, but actually hits me no more than the average comic-book fanzine. I used to listen to radio serials and plays, to the extent my parents would permit, when I was a kid; but I lost interest in my early teens, and I've always been a bit baffled by the fandoms of nostalgia -- those which hark back with passionate love to the things of childhood, whether comic books, kiddies books, or radio serials. In fact, RADIOHERO strikes me as being on a par with paper-doll fandom -- an attempt to recapture the fresh emotions of childhood, and thus endowing the things which made you feel these emotions with some inherent power which actually lies within yourself. # # #

HARRY WARNER JR.

Somehow, every time I hear some old radio program ((in re-runs or from tape recordings)) I had thought never likely I'd ever again hear, I start to think how wrong I might be about theological matters. I know it's reasoning by analogy, but it's still a straw to grasp at, the half-hope that some day I might find myself suddenly in the presence of more substantial aspects of something that I believed was hopelessly vanished from the earth.

Something else that startles me about the first rehearing of some long-missing voice or style of writing is the way the first moments cause the memory to produce all sorts of forgotten things. Listening to your "Vic and Sade" sequence, for example, I don't think I was more than 15 seconds into that part of the tape before I started to chuckle over something that wasn't on that piece of tape, the way Vic used to refer to something in his lodge ritual library on days when he was getting ready for some great event in the local chapter. That particular phase of the "Vic and Sade" world hadn't been in my mind since the last time I heard one of the programs live, I suppose.

....I thought you might be interested in something I ran across by accident in a biography of an author who was proposing as a gimmick for his writings "a certain Shadow which may go into any place, by sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, candlelight....and be supposed to be cognizant of everything." The Shadow would issue "warnings from time to time, that he is going to fall on such and such a subject; or to expose such and such a piece of humbug... I want...to get up a general notion of 'What will the Shadow say about this, I wonder? What will the Shadow say about this? Is the Shadow here' and so forth That was Charles Dickens, who toyed with and dropped the idea while he was making tentative plans for the magazine he was preparing to edit. The publication eventuated into Household Words...I gather from Edgar Johnson's biography.... # # #

SID KOSS

RADIOHERO is only C*O*L*O*S*S*A*L, and it fills my heart with the sweet sadness of memory. I was very much in radio, as I have been in all show business. I worked with Shirley Bell, Little Orphan Annie herself. Yes, it was I who helped sing "Who's that little chatterbox we all know...?" Just the other Saturday at the Temple, the occasion came upon me to mention that I had portrayed the role of Rush on that stupendous little show, "Vic and Sade." This was greeted with surpris

but yes, it is true. Of course, these days I am distributing such fine television programs as "Space Patrol" and "Dangerous Assignment," both once outstanding radio properties. So, in a way, I am not away from radio.

Let me say that the projects you and I are working on together are going to be truly BIG, just like your little magazine. # # #

RICHARD GULLA

I grew up with radio drama, as many of us did, and while living in Chicago during my childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood, I haunted the radio studios and became acquainted with quite a few of the big names of that period when the audio medium was king. I can proudly number among my friends people like Earl Nightingale (("Sky King")), the late Pierre Andre, announcer ((of "Captain Midnight" and "Orphan Annie")), Curley Bradley ("Tom Mix"), John Mallow (announcer for Mutual's "Enchanted Hour"), Richard Thorne (writer, producer, director, actor on Mutual's "Hall of Fantasy"), Norman Ross (NBC announcer); the list goes on and on....

The Mix show, as well as "Midnight" and "Armstrong," were not open to the public. I did attend several broadcasts of each after acquainting myself with cast members and announcers. Not too much clowning at the shows I saw....

Relative to information on Curley Bradley and the "Tom Mix" show.... Bradley was part of a western trio called "The Ranch Boys," and could be heard vocalizing on the Alka-Setzer-sponsored segment of the old WLS "National Barn Dance" in the late thirties and early forties. He played Mix for many years (complete with Ralston Straight Shooters) on the 15-minute show orginating from WGN, then located in the Tribune Building on Michigan Boulevard. WGN (Mutual) has recently moved into its own building at 2401 Bradley Place.

One of the character actors on the show, Forrest Lewis, who played "Wash," the cook, moved out here to California in the 1940's, and played the Peter Lorreish Michael on the "I Love a Mystery" series. Franklin Ferguson, one of the announcers, was last heard of as program director for a small radio station in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

When the popularity of the Mix show waned, it left the airwaves and was revived a short time later in the form of a rather weak imitation which starred Curley Bradley as "The Singing Marshal." This farce flopped and Bradley faded from the broadcasting scene rather quickly. During a recent visit to Chicago, I chatted with some of the old-timers at WGN and no one seemed to know what has become of Curley. # # #

BILL THAILING

"Jack Armstrong" had some really fine plotting. The reason for this is not commonly known, but it was because Talbot Mundy was the script writer for it. A favorite "Jack Armstrong" story of mine (and the only one I can recall) dealt with Jack and his friends' adventures in India. They were bucking a group of Hindus known as the "13 Dorjas", with a leader called the Maharajah of Raoul-Doon. Whenever they'd hold their secret meetings, a strange piece of radiating metal was

placed in the center of the huge rock table. From the metal would emanate a weird, shrieking sound, and that haunting, pitch-changing quality is still ringing in my ears today! That's about all I can remember of that yarn. Of "Tom Mix" I can remember nothing in the way of a specific story plot, only the vivid characterizations of each member of the cast. From Wrangler with his "Well-I'll-be-a-lop-eared-kangaroo-with-big-black-eyes, it's-Roundup-time," to Amos Q. Snood, and his Pink Pills for Pale People, and all the rest of the TM Bar Ranch gang. Kids today are missing a lot through the unimaginative medium sometimes referred to as "the cyclops in the living room." # # #

DONALD FARMER

Have you done an article yet on a rather short-lived science-fantasy serial that was broadcast (in N. Y.) weekly about 1940 called "Latitude Zero"?

This was a world-saving opus written by Ann and Ted Sherdiman (who more recently did the movie script "Maracaibo") and was a sort of combination "Buck Rogers," Lost Horizon, and Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.

If I remember correctly, the fictional names of the principal characters were: Captain Craig MacKenzie, Simba, Brock Spencer, Bert Collins, Tibbs Canard, and "Babyface" Nelson, with villainous opposition from Moloch and Lucretia.

The main sequence involved recovering a stolen sacred idol of the goddess Kali from poisonous plants on the island of Zakoom with the aid of an atomic submarine.

Since none of this related directly to then-current events, it seems likely that "Latitude Zero" would be just as timely today. # # #

KERRY KENT KNUDSEN

While going through some very old copies of Time Magazine, I came across some interesting info on old radio programs.

Latitude Zero
1) NBC show
2) Produced in Hollywood
3) Created by Ted Sherdiman
4) One tale dealt with man-eating trees

Superman
Information from Time, Feb. 26, 1940
1) First sponsor H-O oats
2) Began at three times a week
3) Early episodes were produced in Manhattan by Superman, Inc.
4) At the start of early episodes a shrill shrieking sound effect caused by a combination of a high wind and a bomb wind (recorded during the Spanish-American war) was used.
5) In one early episode a steel ball was disintegrated. The sound effect was caused by tossing a dinner plate in air and busting it with a hammer on the way down.

Mr District Attorney

1) NBC show
2) Written by Finis Farr
3) Directed by Edward A. Byron
4) First sponsor Pepsodent
5) Later sponsors Vitalis and Bristol-Myers Co.
6) Once a mad scientist walled him in a sarcophagus.
7) Once a killer attempted to murder him in his sleep.
8) He once battled a midget crook. # # #

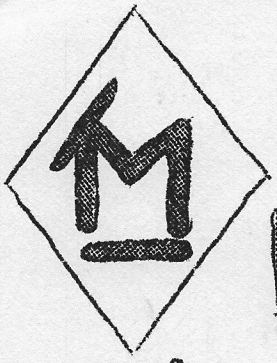
D. BRUCE BERRY

Back in the early thirties, I spent many a wonderful evening listening to the wonderful items that came over the scratchy airwaves. We had an old Philco radio in those days that was designed in the imitation Gothic style that was the rage in the early depression years. Fact is, I heard most of those programs in Los Angeles.

I lived in that city from my second to my fourteenth birthday. The street I lived on no longer exists; it is as much a part of the past as those old radio shows. It was London Street, and was just down the hill from the Queen of Angels hospital. I took a trip back there after World War Two and discovered that the city fathers had ripped a huge gash in the hill, completely obliterating all traces on my old stamping grounds. Alas, that was where I learned for the first time how completely the past vanishes. My memories are buried beneath a superhighway.

On many a rainy winter evening, I used to thrill to the adventures of Buck Rogers and scribble pictures of rocketships that the story conjured up in my mind. There was also another show that captured my fancy: "The Mysterious Island." I don't even recall what that show was about. Perhaps because the plot was more involved than "Buck Rogers." And, of course, there was "Chandu the Magician." Gad, how I remember his adventures in fighting the Red Ghost of Rangoon. Remember that one? I remember one terrifying scene where Chandu entered an old temple and challenged the Red Ghost. The Red Ghost was always identified by a special musical effect that sounded like it must have been made by an electronic instrument. A grating, rising pitch of sound that set the nerves on edge. When the Red Ghost appeared, no one could see it, but the air slowly turned crimson. The Red Ghost was a terrifying destroyer; and Chandu almost lost his life before he conquered it.

The pictures conjured up by the old radio could never be duplicated by television.... I recall the ease with which one could step out of the troubles of the world and into a place where the hero always won. A satisfaction we do not always find in real life.... I am weary of stories...that show "how they <u>really</u> live." We need no one to tell us that life is not a fantasy, but we need the moment's respite that fantasy can bring.... A cool, refreshing draft of dreams. # # #



TOM MIX RIDES AGAIN

by JIM HARMON

THE TOM MIX RALSTON STRAIGHT SHOOTERS were on the air for eighteen years. Those four thousand broadcasts or more wove themselves as a minor strand in the pattern of American life, and many a grown-up child still carries the seeds of the debatable philosophy that "Law-breakers always lose -- Straight Shooters always win." But is "Tom Mix" a part of the air, that generation of broadcasts like so many other memorable programs of radio's golden age, gone forever? The answer, not a loud one, is today a small "no."

For a thousand yesterdays (over three years), for my own enjoyment and for the Hollywood Museum, I have hunted out recordings of old radio shows. The process might be described in a moment of unrestraint as locating hypodermics among the alfalfa. Yet one after another I uncovered a fix on most of my favorites. But not "Tom Mix," my very favorite kid show.

Now I know as an adventure series, "Tom Mix" lacked the literate charm of Carlton Morse's "I Love a Mystery," and it didn't have the professional polish and heroic solidity of a Western like "The Lone Ranger"; it just happened to be my favorite as a boy. I had learned Tom Mix was a real man, and off the movie screen he was as real a hero as grim reality produces. The radio series about him then took on a special patina.

This search for my personal will-o'-the-wisp demonstrated in darkest spades that radio programs were as perishable as a vaudeville matinee. While recordings were made for a "delayed broadcast," these were not kept after playing, but vanished even as the floor plans for a castle in the air.

Few were the programs popular enough for transcriptions to be syndicated for a concurrent series of re-runs on local stations. The select band, including "The Shadow," "The Lone Ranger," and "The Green Hornet," are all now in syndication as a part of the revival of radio drama. But in general, network programs, particularly serials like "Tom Mix" were not kept, because no one could see any possible use for them again.

The precariousness of the radio revival and of the existence of radio recordings was demonstrated in an article in the National Observer profiling the distributor of "The Shadow" and other current radio re-runs. Charles Michaelson said, "...When we started to clean out our

vault around Christmas of 1962, I couldn't bear to destroy those old radio recordings.... I phoned ten large radio stations around the country and asked if they'd be interested in airing some of them again.... I got six affirmative answers...." Only a moment of sentiment, and a number of half hours of hard cash, saved most of the known recordings of "The Shadow" and others from cremation, and resulted in radio's revival.

Potential syndicators such as Michaelson have searched for recordings of programs like "Mr. Keen -- Tracer of Lost Persons" and even "Jack Armstrong," but have apparently failed to find more than a possible specimen or two, not enough for even a 13-week series. The new productions of "The Fat Man" and "Big Sister" are evidence that not enough of the recorded original could be uncovered for a re-run package.

The sponsor of the old "Tom Mix" show, the Ralston Purina Company, made a search for a recording of their program for a different purpose. As a box-top offer, they had let escape an LP called OLD-TIME RADIO, a disappointment compiled almost exclusively of old songs from regular phonograph records. After a murmuring wave of response, Ralston decided to issue a second radio LP and wanted the often-suggested "Tom Mix" for it. An executive of the company appeared on KNX Radio, Los Angeles, saying that they had exhausted all potential sources for a TM-Bar show, and were willing to "pay almost anything" for a Straight Shooters stanza.

Of course the potential sources for any radio program are transcriptions that may have been kept by the station or network, or held by one of the actors, the producer, or the writer. Some of these transcriptions filter to dealers in collectors' item records and to private collectors. The only other source is the person who recorded the program off the air at home on disc, wire or tape. The Ralston company couldn't locate any type of recording of their program.

Very recently, several years and hundreds of dollars in search paid off for me. The word came to me from a dealer that he had an incomplete "Tom Mix" program. I was skeptical -- such promises have turned out to be in other cases an interview with the real Tom Mix on the B.B.C. (interesting but not quite the same) and singing records of "The Tom Mix of Radio," Curley Bradley. But I sent off the quoted price, ready for another magic ring made of brass. The tape came and I played it. I listened in disbelief. It was true. I was the first kid on my block to have a recording of "Tom Mix"!

As a collector, I experienced the letdown one feels when he completes his set of Tarzan bubble gum cards, or of French Colonial postage stamps (I would suppose).

I did get in touch with the Ralston company -- we had traded letters before -- and they informed me that they probably wouldn't be able to find use for the recording if I sent it, but they would send me (absolutely free) a copy of their next one dollar record premium. I did send them a dubbing of the recording and they may see fit to use it some time. I wouldn't know, because they didn't answer the letter I sent with the tape. I did receive the free premium (postage due).

The home-recorded "Tom Mix" lacks something in completeness and in fidelity, but I would like to share it with you in script form. (No script of "Tom Mix" has found its way into any known reference work, and that sure proves something.) Just imagine for a moment that "The Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters" are on the air ... and here comes Tom Mix, America's Favorite Cowboy, and his Wonder Horse, Tony!

It is after the Ralston on the Range theme song, and near the end of the rustling after a pack of chasers....

* * *

MUSIC: Staccato bridge

SOUND: GUN BATTLE (HOLDS THROUGH)

RED: Brand -- our men are dropping like flies! We got to do something, Brand!
BRAND: The only thing we can do is what we're doing right now....
RED: But they got us boxed in. They're forcing us back!
BRAND: Stop talking and keep shooting, you fool! If they nab us, it means six years in jail for us....
RED: Brand, I just saw him!
BRAND: Who?
RED: Mix! He just moved from one rock to another over there!
BRAND: Oh, he did, did he? Well, I -- (Cries out)
RED: Brand!
BRAND: My arm -- a flesh wound.... That bullet came from Mix' gun. He's after me personal. Okay, Mix -- that's the way I want it too. That's the way I've been hankering for it since you condemned my cattle last year....
RED: No, Brand, no. He'll kill you!
BRAND: Don't be a fool! He's never killed a man in his life. That's what I'm banking on, Red. He won't kill me -- but I'll sure kill him!

MUSIC: Dramatic bridge

SOUND: GUN BATTLE (HOLDS)

NARRATOR: The deadly game of hide and seek begins. Slipping from rock to rock, Jack Brand throws hot lead at Tom, desperate for the kill.... While Tom, hugging cover himself, fixes to capture the outlaw.... Time and again, the guns blaze, burning the air, chipping the rocks behind which the two men crouch....

SOUND: CLOSE-IN GUN SHOTS

Then suddenly from behind a boulder, a good ten feet above Tom,...

BRAND: Mix! Mix!
MIX: If you got anything to say, Brand, say it!
BRAND: My gun's empty, Mix -- I'm out of ammunition.

MIX: Then give up!
BRAND: Oh, no, Mix. A fight to the finish. If you got the nerve, throw down your guns and fight it out hand to hand.

SOUND: THUD OF DROPPING GUNS

MIX: Any way you want it, Brand. There. Now come on!
BRAND: I'm coming, Mix....
MIX: Oh, a knife. You didn't say you had a knife.
BRAND: It's too bad, Mix -- too bad for you --
MIX: Maybe not, hombre...

SOUND: STRUGGLE, PUNCHES LANDING

Now drop that knife -- drop it, Brand! NOW -- we will finish this, Brand, and with our fists --
BRAND: I'll kill you with my bare hands, I swear I will --

SOUND: STRUGGLE CONTINUES TO SMASHING CLIMAX

MIX (panting): Get up, Brand. I haven't even started on you....
BRAND: No you don't --
MIX: Get up!
BRAND: No you don't -- I've had enough. You win, Mix.
MIX: The law always does, hombre. Unfortunately, there's always some fool like you who just won't believe that.
MIKE (off): Tom ... Tom ...
MIX: This way, Mike. On your feet, Brand.
MIKE: Tom... Tom, you all right?
MIX: Yes. You?
MIKE: Except for my arm, sure. Well, we corraled the bunch of them, Tom, and all our cattle, too, I'm thinking.... From the looks of you, Brand -- you've learned your lesson.
MIX: Well, if he hasn't, he'll have plenty of time to learn it in prison.... Let's get started...

MUSIC: UP TO CLOSE

NARRATOR: And so Jack Brand, like all lawbreakers, loses to the gun skill and physical courage of ... Tom Mix ... United States Marshal!

* * *

The closing of the script suggests the famous line, "Lawbreakers always lose -- Straight Shooters always win. It pays to shoot straight." That classic American wall motto was more common to the Sunday comic strip advertisements for Ralston and their premiums than to the radio program itself -- probably it was never used after the days of radio's innocence in the 'thirties.

The writer of this script was George Lowther, who wrote the program from 1943 to the last season. From internal evidence, this is from that last year of 1950, when the show went to complete half-hour stories, instead of the 15-minute serial episodes. The excerpt is

obviously the closing of a complete story.

The role of Tom Mix was played by Curley Bradley, one time friend of the real Tom Mix, an ex-movie stuntman and cowboy singer. He graduated from playing Pecos Williams to the title role. Today, about 50 years of age, he manages a Nevada radio station. Mike -- Sheriff Mike Shaw -- was portrayed by the late Leo Curley. This character was virtually The Old Wrangler under a different name -- that was Tom's senior citizen in the early days.

Unfortunately, the excerpt does not have Forrest Lewis (still active on the current Arch Oboler's Plays) in his role of Tom's Negro pal, Wash. The boy and girl wards, Jimmy and Jane, had been gone from the program for years before this final season.

Those deathless lines about Straight Shooters always winning trigger off memories of many Mondays through Fridays at the TM Bar ranch. While I have strung out such memories of mine at great length elsewhere (see RADIOHERO No. 2), a brief review of the history of the show seems appropriate to go along with the momentous discovery of an actual specimen of "Tom Mix and His Ralston Straight Shooters."

Back in the days when Bradley played Pecos, and Russell Thorson was Tom Mix, Tony the Wonder Horse played a big part in the story. He could carry Pecos and a fresh propellor through the flames of a forest fire to Tom's downed airplane. (This was the contemporary west, remember.) Tony could even come back from the breaking of a leg, thanks to a miracle-working doctor. He was saved from Tom's mercy bullet in a tear-wrenching scene when Jane and Wrangler rushed up with the doctor's credentials from a newscast.

Depression news was as bad for Tom Mix around 1939 as for the rest of the country. Finally he had to put the TM Bar up for sale at auction. Amos Q. Snood, Dobie township's answer to Scrooge, managed to buy a cuckoo clock Wrangler had erroneously led him to believe was treasured by Tom, but everything else was bought by a mystery man, who was at last revealed to be the agent of Tom's ward, Jane, who happened to own a gold mine in her own right. She kept the ranch in the family.

Dobie was half a century behind the rest of the west. Tom and his band helped the railroad, the telegraph, even the settlers' land rush, come to the territory. Oil was discovered even a bit late, and one of the longest running villains on the series, the Big Boss, admitted he was after "Black Gold," but who knew what that stuff was?

Most of the villains had short shrift indeed. A variety of "invisible men" fell prey to the cowboy-detective's skill, and were revealed to have pretty mundane explanations -- ventriloquism, hidden loudspeakers, etc. Yet there was one "Man Who Could Work Miracles" who had a real science-fictional supersonic death ray, and Tom did run into a few genuine supernatural beings.

The plots by Lowther tended to be more mystery plots than cowboy stories. Lowther introduced his own Sherlock Holmes parody, Mycroft Soames. In a serial Lowther had room for more characterization than in most half-hour stories. Tom, Wash, and Mike seemed like real people

after you met them nearly every day for ten or twenty years. (That was a funny thing about radio.)

One of the more effective scenes in the history of the show had "big burly Mike Shaw" saying good-bye to his fatally injured horse, Redskin, who was saved by no miracle and actually died.

The very last show, probably just a few months after the episode represented herein, was also effective. The show went out in style. Tom said good-bye forever, remarked that the "big, burly figure of Mike Shaw would stride across the imagination of many a grown-up child," then mounted up and rode Tony into an echoing Valhalla. "In the mind and heart of the world, Tom Mix rides on -- and lives on -- forever," announcer Don Gordon intoned.

Yes, I remember those days when I thought Straight Shooters always won.

"ONE MAN'S FAMILY" REVISITED (Concluded from page 24)

Of course Paul, Cliff, and Nicky (Michael Raffetto, Barton Yarborough, and Walter Patterson) were Jack Packard, Doc Long, and Reggie York on "I Love a Mystery."

This unusual and effective piece by Sally Ann Sessions is, she tells me, an accurate transcript of a genuine conversation between herself and Dr. Hafley. As such, it contains a few of the errors common to human memory. We can understand the omission of the actors' names: J. Anthony Smythe and Minetta Ellen as Father and Mother Barbour, Hazel Berwin and Page Gillman as Hazel and Jack Barbour. But, Sally Ann, how could you neglect to mention the name of the creator-writer-producer of "One Man's Family" and of its "exotic cousin," "I Love a Mystery," that remarkable man, Carlton E. Morse? -- THE EDITOR

ART RONNIE'S PAGE: THE LONE RANGER and THE GREEN HORNET

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from the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner

"THE GREEN HORNET" BACK TO WAR ON CRIME

THE BITE AND STING of drama returns to radio with vigor tomorrow at 6 p.m. when KHJ revives "The Green Hornet," who ended his 17-year fight against crime in December of 1952. These will be re-runs of the old shows.

John McCarthy was the first actor to don the Hornet's green mask. Al Hodge took over later and is best remembered as the waspish character. Hodge later portrayed Captain Video in 1949.

The Green Hornet was one of the many successful creations of George W. Trendle, who also fathered "The Lone Ranger," "Challenge of the Yukon," "Under Secret Orders," and "Muck and Mire." Trendle intended the Hornet to be a modernization of the Ranger series.

The "masked rider of the early American west" and The Hornet had much in common. Both were crime fighters and both hid their true identity behind masks. The Lone Ranger had a "fiery horse with the speed of light," called Silver, and his modern counterpart drove a souped-up, low, purring automobile called Black Beauty. The Ranger shot silver bullets, never with the intention to kill, and The Hornet used a gun which emitted a green whiff of non-toxic gas, causing instant unconsciousness.

The Ranger paid for his silver bullets with the proceeds from a silver mine while The Hornet depended on a rich father to pay his gas bills. Both had the same family name, Reid. Devoted fans will recall one Hornet episode where he mentions his grandfather (or grand uncle) who fought for law and order in the old west. The Lone Ranger had his faithful Indian companion, Tonto, and The Hornet had his faithful valet, Kato.

Radio demonstrated its great ability to capture the imagination when it changed Kato's nationality overnight. For five years he was Japanese. The Monday morning after Pearl Harbor he was Filipino.

In private life Britt Reid masqueraded as a young man about town. His father turned over to him management of the Daily Sentinel, the town's biggest newspaper, hoping it would make his son take life seriously. In addition, he assigned the lad a bodyguard, Michael Axford, who, ostensibly, was a police reporter. Others in the cast are Reid's secretary, Lenore Case, ace reporter Ed Lowry, and Sandy, a copyboy.

Since Kato was the only one to know about Reid's alter ego, the police could never decide whether The Hornet was on their side or was the leader of a vast underworld organization.

The Green Hornet's theme music? Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumble Bee." The show's closing line each week? Newsboy shouting: "Green Hornet still at large!" And he is, for the first time since he ran out of gas a dozen years ago.

ACTOR RECALLS RADIO'S GRAND OLD DAYS

"We went broke in Olivia."

That sounds like the title of a song from a Cole Porter musical. But it tells in five words how veteran stage, radio, motion picture, and television actor Chuck Webster first broke into radio.

"I was stage manager and co-owner of a Columbus, Ohio, stock company that included Lyle Talbot and Edith King," recalls Webster. "It was 1931 and at the height of the depression when we moved to Olivia and went broke. Looking for work, I went to Pittsburgh and got on KDKA as an announcer."

Webster had a morning show for Penco Tobacco and an evening program for the Duquesne Light company. When he wasn't announcing he was selling telephones. He stayed with KDKA until 1937 when he received a letter from John Todd, an actor friend, asking him to come to Detroit and join a stock company enjoying some success on WXYZ.

Todd was a well known character actor in his late 70s, playing the radio role of a certain masked man's Indian companion -- Tonto -- on "The Lone Ranger."

"It was the greatest show on the air," says Webster, with the air of a man recalling fond memories. "Jim Jewell, the producer and director, threw a script at me when I arrived and put me on the air cold as a test. We had our own little stock company and all of us, except the stars, worked on 'The Lone Ranger,' 'The Green Hornet,' and 'Challenge of the Yukon.'"

This was comparatively easy because the three shows were owned by their creator, George W. Trendle. On the acting roster were John Hodiak, Jack Petruzzi (Lowry on "The Green Hornet"), Jay Michaels, Herschel Mayal, Ted Johnstone, and Rollon Parker (Kato on the "Hornet" show). Movie director George Seaton played the first Lone Ranger in 1931, followed by Earl Grasser. Following Grasser's death in an automobile accident in 1941, Brace Beemer, the announcer, gradually worked his way into the role until listeners became accustomed to his voice. Webster played the role several times when Beemer hit the road for rodeo performances.

The Ranger's writers were Bob Green, Shelly Stark, and Bob Shaw. Fran Striker was chief writer and story editor.

"Sixty per cent of our audience was adult when I first joined the show," Webster says, "which was proof of its quality. On the day of Grasser's funeral, thousands of children were at the cemetery. Detroit

schools were let out so they could attend the 'Lone Ranger's' funeral."

Webster paid tribute to the soundmen ("The finest in the business"), explaining that sound was 90 per cent of the "Lone Ranger" show. Three rooms were used. One for the actors, one for the ten soundmen, and a third for the musicians. The actors would go through all the motions of mounting a horse, walking, fighting, and dying, while the soundmen would be duplicating in sound every movement they made.

Sometimes actors would fail to show up for the second show to the west coast (before transcriptions), and it was necessary for one actor to take two roles, playing against himself. "It was tough, but we never made a mistake," Webster says.

Accusations were leveled at the Masked Rider of the Plains in the late 1930s that he was a vigilante, taking the law into his own hands. Alarmed, the FCC issued bulletins saying what the Lone Ranger could do and what he couldn't do. This was hardly necessary, because the character followed strict rules laid down long before by Trendle. The Lone Ranger never killed a man, never took the law into his own hands. Indians were never shown in a bad light, and correct grammar was stressed.

When Jim Jewell left "The Lone Ranger" and went to another station as program manager, he developed "The Black Ace," a World War I aviation thriller, and asked Chuck to leave the "Ranger" show to play the lead. Another regular "Ranger" actor, Amos Jacobs, joined Webster as his sidekick. He later changed his name to Danny Thomas.

Webster went to New York in 1945, which was considered THE test for radio actors. He evidently passed the entrance examinations. "I had running parts on 15 different serials," he recalls. "It became a matter of running from studio to studio on a close timetable. My schedule was so tight that stand-ins rehearsed for me, marking and accenting the scripts. Then I would come in for the live performances.

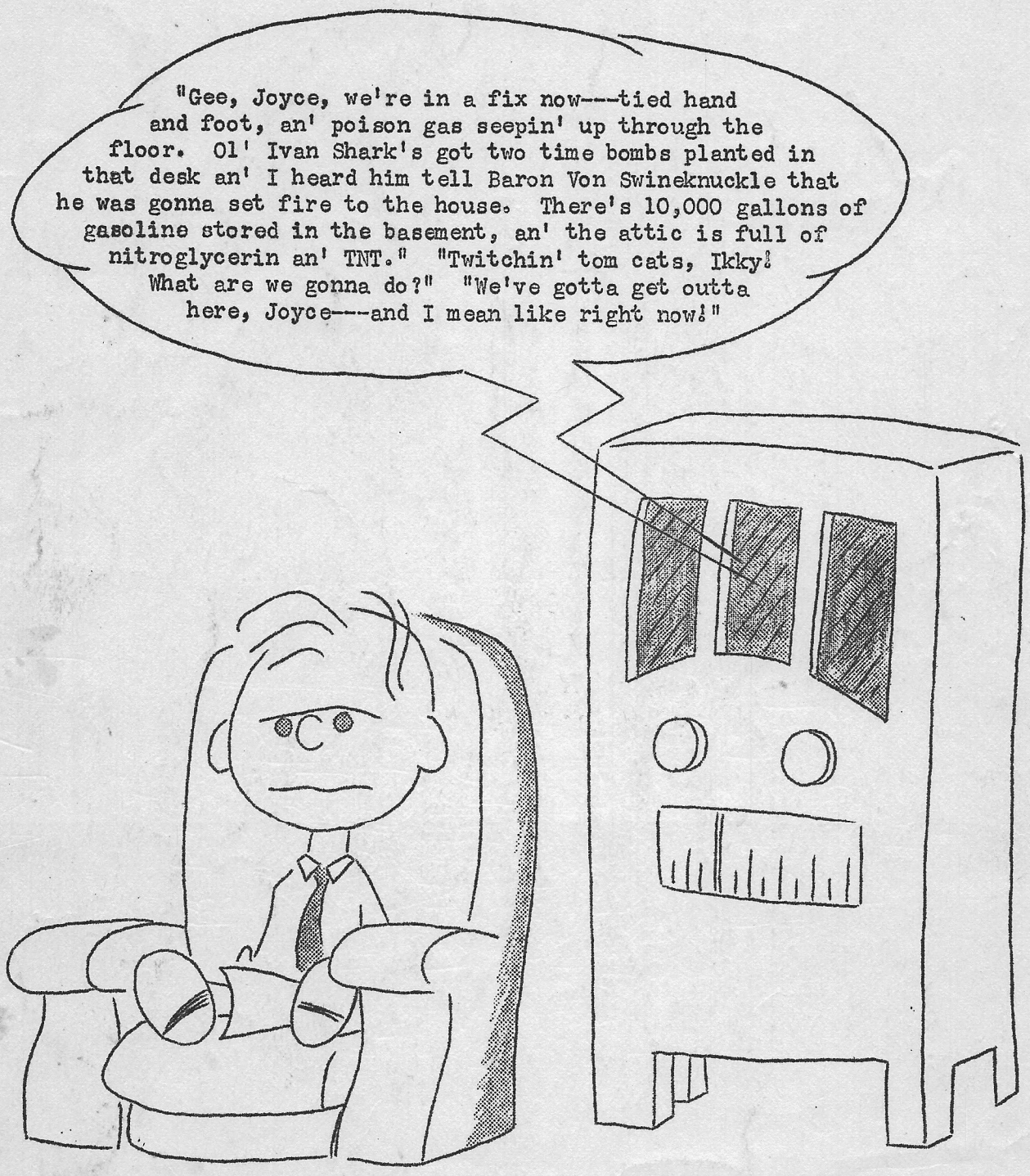
"On radio, the voice had to be used like a violin," Webster says. "Listeners had to believe the actor and the only way they could was through the voice. The work was no joke. It was a dead serious business. When you got on mike you knew millions of people were listening. You sweat as you read a line, and you believed every word of it. When you did the show a second time for the west coast you would really sell it.

"You had to be able to do anything. Actors like Ed Begley, Frank Lovejoy, and Richard Widmark were in constant demand. They came from stock companies. When I started in the business, Pennsylvania alone had 68 stock companies working 52 weeks a year. Other states were comparable, forming the nucleus for radio's actors."

Today, Webster devotes most of his acting to television and motion pictures. But of his days in radio as The Man of 99 Voices, he says: "They were grand, just grand."

THE COLLECTORS' CORNER

Radio programs on tape are available for trade. Purchases arranged. Wanted: Certain Tom Mix, I Love a Mystery, Captain Midnight. Write to Jim Harmon, P.O. Box 57242, Los Angeles, California, 90057.


"Gee, Joyce, we're in a fix now---tied hand and foot, an' poison gas seepin' up through the floor. Ol' Ivan Shark's got two time bombs planted in that desk an' I heard him tell Baron Von Swineknuckle that he was gonna set fire to the house. There's 10,000 gallons of gasoline stored in the basement, an' the attic is full of nitroglycerin an' TNT." "Twitchin' tom cats, Ikky! What are we gonna do?" "We've gotta get outta here, Joyce---and I mean like right now!"