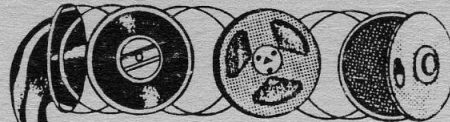
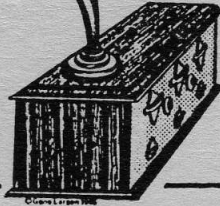


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"FOR THE BEST OF RADIO'S HISTORY"



A JOURNAL OF VINTAGE RADIO

# NARA NEWS<sup>®</sup>

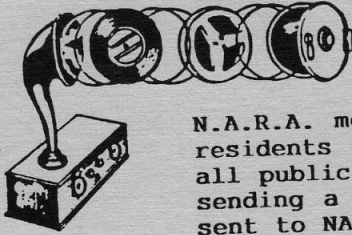
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## NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES

VOL. XXVI

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NO. 3



# NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES

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## our staff....

### PRESIDENT:

Ronald Staley  
14144 Burbank Blvd. #4  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91401

### VICE-PRESIDENT:

Robert Simpson  
4565 S.E. 57th Lane  
Ocala, FL 34480

### TREASURER:

Don Aston  
P.O. Box 1392  
Lake Elsinore, CA 92531  
aston@cosmoaccess.net

### PRESIDENT EMERITUS:

Roger Hill  
2161 Whitman Way #31  
San Bruno, CA 94066

### VICE-PRESIDENT EMERITUS:

Al Inkster  
7664 East Golden River Lane  
Tucson, AZ 85715

### MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR:

Janis DeMoss  
134 Vincewood Drive  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
jdemossidle@aol.com

### CASSETTE LIBRARY:

Don Aston  
P.O. Box 1392  
Lake Elsinore, CA 92531  
aston@cosmoaccess.net

### VISION IMPAIRED READING:

Bill Bright  
356 Huron Street  
Woodstock, Ontario N4S 7A6

### PRINT MATERIALS LIBRARY:

Bob Sabon  
308 West Oraibi Drive  
Phoenix, AZ 85027  
hornet29@juno.com

### CONTRIBUTING EDITOR:

John Pellatt  
47 Stuart Avenue  
Willowdale, Ontario M2N 1B2

### STAFF ARTIST:

Gene Larson  
P.O. Box 1316  
Miles City, MT 59301

### EDITOR:

Jim Snyder  
2929 East Main Street #149  
Mesa, AZ 85213

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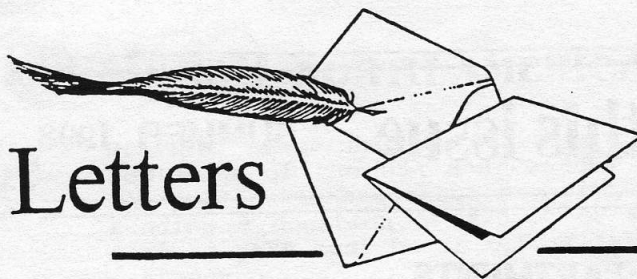
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# Letters

# from our readers

That virus warning [in the spring issue] was well meant but unnecessary. You cannot get viruses from e-mail (only from downloading programs or attachments, not by just reading e-mail). Just another internet "urban myth" or hoax based on paranoia.

John Pellatt  
Willowdale, Ontario

\*\*\*\*\*

I was shocked that a non-computer guy like you would print an internet virus warning in *NARA News*. You do realize now, I hope, that these are total hoaxes. Repeat after me: "No viruses can be spread through e-mail!"

Jack French  
Fairfax, Virginia

*EDITOR'S EXCUSE (???)*: As Jack has pointed out, I am a "non-computer guy." When I first received the information that I put in that "Internet Virus Warning," I questioned the source of that information. I was told that it was from the Michigan Attorney General's office. So, I called that office and after being switched from person to person and spending a great deal of time "on hold," I was assured that this information was true, and thus my statement that I had "confirmed the accuracy" of the material. In the future I guess I had better stick with what I know, but then on second thought, if I did that all you'd get in each issue would be 50 blank pages. I do apologize for the misinformation and hope that we didn't cause anyone to worry.

\*\*\*\*\*

I recall C.S. Forester, author of the Homblower novels, was on *You Bet Your Life*. Groucho asked him how to become an author and he said something like "You just start and keep on writing." A subject I would like to read about in *NARA News* is how to write scripts for audio programs. I would like to learn in sufficient detail to be able to write a script myself. Is there a rule of thumb to make the length for, say 30 minutes including laughs and applause and commercials or announcements? I'm looking at the Friends of OTR's script writing contest for last year. Another group would be 30 Minutes to Curtain. Maybe someone in your stable of writers could do this.

Hal Stephenson  
Rochester Hills, Michigan

\*\*\*\*\*

I received the spring issue of *NARA News* a couple of days ago. I haven't finished it yet, but I did enjoy "OTR in Japan." How about "OTR in Germany?" I don't know if my opinion of the *News* counts as I am a contributor, but for the most part I can't find much to complain about. Sometimes some of the articles are set in too small of print (and I'm just as guilty of that charge). I enjoy reading articles by Frank Bresee, Jim Cox, Jack French, and the rest of the gang. Still being somewhat new to this hobby, I'm always learning something. I have a suggestion. I used to belong to a circus club that offered small ads (about the size of a business card) for sale to members in their winter issue so that members could say "Merry Christmas from..." etc. This helped raise a little money for the club. I don't know how well it would go over in *NARA*, but it's food for thought.

B.J. George  
West Allis, Wisconsin

*EDITOR'S RESPONSE*: The "old time radio in Japan" article was indeed a good one. Several of our members told me at the Cincinnati convention that they hadn't bothered to read it because either they weren't interested in Japanese radio or they thought, from the beginning of the article, that it was too technical. If you haven't read it, I suggest you do so. It was written as a joke by Jack French and is really fun. Regarding the small business card "greetings" sort of thing you are asking about, we could accept Christmas ads (or any other time for that matter) that would be about 3 inches wide and 2 1/4 inches high. We would, however, have to make a charge of \$8.00 for those.

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## From The Editor's Desk....

---

Jim Snyder



I attended the Cincinnati convention back in May. On the way I stopped to see Janis DeMoss, NARA's membership director. We talked about a number of things that might help us to provide better service to you, our members. Janis does a truly outstanding job in her position and provides much useful guidance to the rest of us.

We had a NARA table in the convention dealer's room. While we were selling memberships and back issues of the *NARA News*, our main purpose was to talk with members about their concerns and questions about NARA. I found this to be very helpful to me, and I hope that our members also benefited from it. I was very pleased to be able to renew my friendship with columnist Bob Burnham and to meet columnist Jim Cox for the first time. I was also privileged to meet Bill Bright who records each issue of the *NARA News* on cassette for our members with vision problems. Few of you have heard the results of Bill's efforts, but let me assure you that he does a truly magnificent job with this. If you know of someone who would benefit from this service please tell them about this program. You can find information about it on page 24.

We were also happy to renew our friendship with two of NARA's "celebrity" members, Barney Beck and Bob Mott. Bob put on an original play he had written that was truly hilarious. Barney said that he would write another article for us and Bob gave us three that you will be seeing in these pages over the next year or two.

A couple of people told me that they would like to write to some of our columnists and were wondering how to contact them. I'm not allowed to give out addresses, but if you put your letter in a stamped envelope with the person's name written where the address should be, and send it to me, I'll cover that name with an address label and send it on its way.

You will note, on page 48, that we are offering Gene Larson's color poster for the last time. It's really outstanding and every time I look at it I see something that I had overlooked before. We have sold a number by mail and several at the Cincinnati convention, and because of Gene's generosity, ALL the money taken in from these sales goes directly to NARA. Christmas is coming, so don't miss this last chance.

Last fall we told you about a new book, *Manipulating the Ether*, written by NARA member Robert Brown. When I wrote about this the publisher had told us that it would be out in November, but when we called to order we were told that publication would be delayed until March. Well, it finally did come out in March and can now be ordered. The book tells how radio rose to an unprecedented level of influence over the lives of everyday Americans during the 1930's. It explains how politicians used this medium to influence domestic and foreign policy and how broadcasters, such as Orson Welles, demonstrated the full power that radio had on society. A VERY interesting and informative book. The price is \$49 postpaid and can be ordered by credit card at (800) 253-2187 or by writing McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640.

# THE LIBRARIES

The Latest Reports

by

Don Aston

I shall continue the good news that I reported in the last issue of NARA News. The cassette library has reopened. Many NARA Members have taken advantage and borrowed from the cassette library. Many others are waiting until the material they want becomes available. I want to assure all of the members of the archive, that NARA is working as fast as possible to get the cassette library up and functioning completely.

I appreciate those that have pointed out errors in the 19 page list of available cassettes that was sent to all. The corrections are being made as soon as we are told about them. So far there have been only a few. I have changed the format of the library listing in order to put more information on a page and cut down the printing cost. We can only shrink the type size so far before it becomes difficult to read. The biggest change is that the cassette number and both sides of the cassette are listed on one line. At the time of this writing, I have another 7 pages of the list made. There are now 77 lines per page in the new format. That means another 539 cassettes are checked, listed and ready to be loaned out. The original 19 page list has not been included in the new format. When all cassettes are checked and listed, a uniform list will be made. I have several boxes that have been checked by members, but I have not yet included their contents in the cassette library list. I am adding to the library list as fast as time allows.

I said the Reel to Reel Library would be in Southern California in the last article. Well, it still isn't here. A new time will be arranged for me to pick up the library in July, hopefully. Health reasons for the former librarian has caused the delay in transfer.

I am still getting requests by volunteers to check a box of cassettes for quality. Several have done more than one box. Right now, I still have several boxes to check. It really is necessary for the volunteers to be in Southern California. Cost of sending a box of 250 cassettes is expensive and the further the distance the more the cost.

I have also received several letters, phone calls, and E-Mail with complaints about NARA and its reorganization. Most of the criticisms are justified. Some are unfounded and others are puzzling. I believe I pointed out that if there were 10,000 cassettes in the cassette library and each one had to be handled 5 times: packaging to ship to me, sent to a volunteer, checked, reshipped back to me and finally listed or rejected, and if each time the individual cassette was handled averaged just 2 minutes, the total time involved for this project would be over 10 weeks working 24 hours a day every day. If I put in one hour a day, every day, just making the list, its going to take about 250 hours to finish the job and I am handling only the good cassettes. Whew! I am working on it.

I want to thank all of you for your very enthusiastic response to this mammoth undertaking. If I have not answered all of your communications, I will. Just please be a bit more patient.

Please continue to support the North American Radio Archives, Ltd. especially in this reorganization of the libraries. Your patience will be rewarded.

# **VOLUNTEERS ARE STILL NEEDED TO CHECK THE CASSETTES IN NARA'S LIBRARY.**

*As of the first of June about 65% of the library had been checked, or was in the process of being checked by someone, for sound quality. As you know, it is our intention to have every single show in our cassette library be in "very good" or better sound. This means that every single show on every single cassette must be checked.*

*You have received, and will continue to get, additional listings of those cassettes that have been retained in the library, and are now available, but the final catalog can't be put out until this "listening project" is completed. Additional shows for the library must also wait for the completion of this project.*

*Members living in southern California, or nearby areas, who can help, will receive a box of approximately 265 cassettes to listen to as quickly as possible. They would be free to make copies of any of those cassettes that they would like to have, and would then pay for the return shipping.*

*If you can help with this project, please call Don Aston at (909) 244-5242, or you can write him at P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531. His e-mail address is [aston@cosmoaccess.net](mailto:aston@cosmoaccess.net)*



## THE FABULOUS FIFTIES

by  
Frank Bresee

Radio historian Frank Bresee is heard on his "GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO" broadcast in the United States and Canada over the YESTERDAY USA SATELLITE NETWORK. Frank has a long and distinguished career as a radio performer and producer. He has worked with many greats of fantasy films.

Radio's fabulous fifties came in like a lion. Though the upstart medium of television was beginning to rear its head, the four major networks - ABC, CBS, NBC, and Mutual - acted as if it didn't exist, and were even joined by the johnny-come-lately network, the Liberty Broadcasting System, which began feeding ten hours of programming a day to 240 affiliates across the country. My radio station (KSCI), on Catalina Island, originated many programs and dance band remotes from Catalina for LBS.

Bob Hope signed a new five-year contract with NBC, and Groucho Marx followed suit with a \$3 million deal, one of the largest up to that time. ABC bought "The Screen Guild Players" from NBC, and re-signed host Don McNeill and his morning hit, "The Breakfast Club," for another 20 years.

In November of 1950, NBC tried a noble experiment, a lavish 90-minute Sunday afternoon spectacular called "The Big Show." It boasted a \$100,000 weekly budget and starred Tallulah Bankhead as the hostess of a star-studded variety program featuring the likes of Fred Allen, Jimmy Durante, Groucho, Rudy Vallee, Danny

Thomas, Ethel Merman, Martin and Lewis, plus Meredith Willson and his orchestra. When Milton Berle appeared on the program with Tallulah, he was already known as "Mr. Television," for a brief moment he proved that radio could still be king.

Arthur Godfrey, who had begun on CBS radio in 1945 with a 30-minute show, was entertaining the nation for 90 minutes a day and his sponsors were lining up around the block. What neither he nor they knew was that he would soon be doing the same thing on television for even bigger audiences and even better money.

It was about that same time that Steve Allen, a talented young comedian, was hosting a late-evening show on KNX radio in Los Angeles. But he too was soon to move on to the decidedly greener pastures of the small screen where he would become a big star as the first host of NBC's "Tonight Show."

Still counterprogramming to stem the tide of audience defections to TV, NBC began its long-running weekend series, "Monitor," in 1954. The program, created by the NBC network genius Sylvester "Pat" Weaver, was fed



to the affiliated stations all day all weekend, hosted by Gene Rayburn, Barry Nelson, and Henry Morgan among others, featured segments with Bob and Ray, Fibber McGee and Molly, plus newcomers Bob Newhart, Mike Nichols, Elaine May, and Shelly Berman. It was a big success (in the ten years it was on, Monitor achieved an audience of 13 percent of all adult Americans during the weekend broadcasts) but it didn't stop, or even slow down, the inexorable advance of television.

"The Hit Parade" with the "Lucky" seven songs of the week, continued on through the decade, as did other musical programs such as "Manhattan Merry-Go-Round," "Carnation Contented Hour," and the "Bell Telephone Hour." And on Sunday evenings, Bert Parks still had the whole country tuned in to hear "Stop the Music." But the nation's tune kept changing anyway. Far from ready to surrender, though, CBS debuted comedian Stan Freberg with a network comedy show in 1957, and we heard the most brilliant new comedy material radio had given us since Henry

Morgan in the mid-forties -- until Freberg was cancelled for poor ratings after 15 weeks.

Oblivious, Walter Winchell kept on with his weekly rapid-fire newscasts during this decade of change, continuing to report it all with an intense excitement that has yet to be equaled, let alone understood.

Though "Jack Armstrong, All-American Boy" vanished from radio in 1951, another Jack, Jack Benny, remained on CBS every Sunday afternoon, for another four years only. Then he too vanished into television for good.

Perhaps Tallulah summed up the twilight of the era most touchingly when she sang Meredith Wilson's theme song from "The Big Show" for the last time: "May the good Lord bless and keep you, whether near or far away. May you find that long awaited golden day. May your troubles all be small ones, and your fortunes ten times ten. May the good Lord bless and keep you, til we meet again."

*This bit of nostalgic  
whimsey has been  
prepared for us by  
B. J. George*

This is to certify that  
the undersigned is an  
official member of



1998-99

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NARA 050898

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IMPORTANT-  
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WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES

*Captain NARA*

*Justice through Strength and Courage*

I REMEMBER:  
**"THE WAR OF THE WORLDS"**  
 by  
 Steve Allen



(John Pellatt received Steve Allen's kind permission for NARA to use this selection from his biography, **MARK IT AND STRIKE IT**, published in paperback by Hillman/MacFadden Books, New York, in 1961.)

It was in 1938 that mother, Aunt Mag, and I (along with several million other Americans) went through an experience that not many people, proportionately speaking, will ever be privileged to share. We were on hand when the world came to an end.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1938.

**Radio Listeners in Panic,  
 Taking War Drama as Fact**

**Many Flee Homes to Escape 'Gas Raid From Mars'—Phone Calls Swamp Police at Broadcast of Wells Fantasy**

A wave of mass hysteria seized thousands of radio listeners throughout the nation between 8:15 and 9:30 o'clock last night when a broadcast of a dramatization of H. G. Wells' fantasy, "The War of the Worlds," led thousands to believe that an interplanetary conflict had started with invading Martians spreading wide death and destruction in New Jersey and New York.

The broadcast, which disrupted households, interrupted religious services, created traffic jams and clogged communications systems, was made by Orson Welles, who as the radio character, "The Shadow," used to give "the creeps" to countless child listeners. This time at least a score of adults required medical treatment for shock and hysteria.

In Newark, in a single block at Heddon Terrace and Hawthorne Avenue, more than twenty families rushed out of their houses with wet handkerchiefs and towels over their faces to flee from what they believed was to be a gas raid. Some began moving household furniture.

Throughout New York families left their homes, some to flee to near-by parks. Thousands of persons called the police, newspapers

and radio stations here and in other cities of the United States and Canada seeking advice on protective measures against the raids.

The program was produced by Mr. Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air over station WABC and the Columbia Broadcasting System's coast-to-coast network, from 8 to 9 o'clock.

The radio play, as presented, was to simulate a regular radio program with a "break-in" for the material of the play. The radio listeners, apparently, missed or did not listen to the introduction, which was: "The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air in 'The War of the Worlds' by H. G. Wells."

They also failed to associate the program with the newspaper listing of the program, announced as: "Today: 8:00-9:00—Play: H. G. Wells' 'War of the Worlds'—WABC." They ignored three additional announcements made during the broadcast emphasizing its fictional nature.

Mr. Welles opened the program with a description of the series of

Continued on Page Four

The occasion, as the reader may have already divined, was the famous Orson Welles' "men from Mars" broadcast. I have never before told the story of my own reaction to that broadcast because I have seen the reaction of those who were not victimized by Welles to those who were. It is the standard reaction of the level-headed citizen toward the crackpot. In my own defense, and that of all the other crackpots who went squawking off into the night like startled chickens, I would like to offer a word of explanation. Admittedly, anybody who heard the entire Welles broadcast from beginning to end and believed a word of it should be put under observation. Unfortunately, millions of us did not have that opportunity. Some of us missed the introduction of the program. For various reasons, millions of people did not hear the first few minutes of the show. If some of these were in the mood for dance music they accepted that a randomly discovered orchestra was playing, lighted cigarettes, or picked up magazines, and settled back to listen.

In a room on the eighth floor of the Hotel Raleigh, a rundown hostelry on Chicago's near North Side that was our home for that year, I was lying on the floor reading a book. Feeling in the mood for background music I turned on my radio, fiddled with the dial

until I heard dance music, and returned to my book. In the adjoining room Aunt Margaret and my mother were sitting on the bed playing cards. After a moment, the music was interrupted by a special "flash" from the CBS news department to the effect that from his observatory a scientist had just observed a series of mysterious explosions of a gaseous nature on the planet Mars. After this fascinating bit of intelligence had been transmitted, the announcer said, "and now we return you to the program in progress," and the music was heard once more.

There soon followed a series of news flashes, each a bit more exciting than its predecessor, that indicated that the strange explosions on Mars had caused a downpour of meteors in the general area of Princeton, New Jersey. By this time the dance music had been entirely forgotten, I had cast aside my book, and sitting cross-legged by the radio, I listened with mounting horror while the smoothly functioning network news department went into action to bring America's radio listeners up-to-the-minutes reports on the New Jersey goings on.

More meteors had landed, it developed, and one of them in crashing into the earth had caused the death of several hundred people. CBS at once dispatched a crew to the scene and it was not long before first hand reports began coming in. Up to now, there was not the slightest reason for those of us who had tuned in the dance music to doubt the truth of a word that had been broadcast. This granted, there was no particular reason for being suspicious of what immediately followed.

With disbelief rising in his throat, a special events man on the scene near Princeton reported

that one of the Martian meteors appeared to be no meteor at all but some sort of space ship. It actually appeared, he said, although one could scarcely believe one's ears, that this giant blob of metal, half-buried in the New Jersey mud, was not a blind, inert fragment shrugged off by some burly planet hurtling through infinity. Rather, it appeared to have been fashioned somehow. Bolts and hinges were in evidence, and the National Guard had roped off the area, allowing no one near the gargantuan hulk. This move so far as one could determine was simply a formal precaution, for it seemed starkly clear that even if (fantastic thought) some strange form of life had made the flight from Mars inside the meteor it could certainly not have survived the crushing impact when the weird craft plunged into the earth.

By this time my mother and Aunt Mag were huddled around the speaker with me, wide-eyed. It was unbelievable, and yet we had it on the authority of the Columbia Broadcasting System that such things were actually happening.

But if our credulity had been strained up to now, it had yet to face the acid test. The network now presented an Army officer who made a dignified plea for calm, stating that the National Guard and the New Jersey police had the situation completely in hand. He requested that motorists give the area a wide berth until things had been cleared up, and concluded with a few words giving his complete assurance that it would be only a matter of hours until order had been restored. But it at once developed that his confidence was badly misplaced.

The network interrupted his sedate sermon with another report from the scene of the trouble, frankly

emotional in nature, which confirmed the suspicions of some authorities that there might possibly be life of some kind inside one of the rockets. Fearful listeners were now treated to the benumbing description by a patently frightened newsman of the emergence of strange leathery creatures from the space ship. I suppose if one has been convinced that there is life on Mars it matters not whether Martians be leathery or made of Philadelphia cream cheese. The description of grotesque monsters seemed in no detail too fantastic; what was fantastic was that there were any creatures in the rocket at all. Their slaving mouths, jelly-like eyes, and the devastating fire they directed toward the soldiers who dare stand and face them were all minor, almost unimportant details, and even now they are not clear in my mind.

The National Guard troops who had been dispatched to the scene were massacred almost at once by the interplanetary invaders (there were several of them now, for other ships were landing), and in the confusion of the battle the network's facilities were impaired and its Johnny on the spot was cut off in midsentence.

CBS, however, was equal to the occasion. Civic and governmental bigwigs were rushed to microphones; dutifully they instructed the public not to panic. An airplane was sent up over the trouble area and the network continued its blow-by-blow description from the clouds. My mother, my aunt, and I didn't wait to hear any more. We looked at each other, not knowing what to say.

"Good God," Aunt Mag gasped, "what's going on?"

"I don't know," I said. "What do you think we ought to do?"

"There's only one thing to do," my mother responded. "We can all go over to church and wait there to see what happens." She referred to Holy Name Cathedral, not many blocks from our hotel.

"I don't know if that's such a good idea," I said. "There might be crowds."

Just then we heard the word "Chicago" on the radio. "More space ships have been reported," a voice intoned. "Observers have seen them over Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago."

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph!" Aunt Mag shouted. "We'll be killed right here in this hotel!" She ran back into the other room and grabbed her coat.

"What are you doing, Maggie?" my mother said.

"What do you think?" Mag said. "We can't stay here and be killed. Let's get out of here."

"You're right," Mother said. "We'll go over to the church. Who has the key to the room?"

"Who the hell cares about locking the door?" Mag said. "It doesn't matter now."

I was putting my coat on, still too shocked to say much. Oddly enough, and this I recall quite clearly, my predominant emotion was not fear, but blank stupefaction. I remember saying, "Gosh," like Gary Cooper, over and over, and frowning and shaking my head from side to side. I couldn't believe it, and yet, I did. CBS had never lied to me before.

Aunt Mag was still fluttering around the room. The door was now ajar, but she was like a bird that with its cage opened doesn't know just where to fly.

"What are you looking for?" Mother asked.

"My glasses," Mag said.

"You're not going to have time to read anything, Maggie," Mother told her. "Just get your hat and let's get out of here!"

"If I don't need my glasses what good is my hat?" said my aunt, unaccountably.

"Never mind," said my mother. "Let's go." They both stopped to look at me. Perhaps I was a bit pale.

## 'Foreign Invasion' Causes Variety of Public Reactions

New York, Oct. 31 (AP)—The terror caused by radio's "end of the world" and "foreign invasion" as some listeners understood it, produced some strange repercussions throughout the country. It brought the following messages over Associated Press wires to the New York office:

PROVIDENCE — Weeping and hysterical women swamped the switchboard of the Providence Journal for details of the massacre and destruction and officials of the light company received scores of calls urging them to turn off all lights so the city would be safe from the enemy.

ATLANTA — The Birmingham Age-Herald reported people gathered in groups and prayed.

Reports to newspapers from listeners in the southwest had it that a planet struck in New Jersey, monsters, almost everything. Anywhere from 40 to 7,000 people reported killed. So confusing were the calls that editors were able to determine only that "something was happening in New Jersey." The calls taxed telephone facilities of the newspaper offices, but subsided almost as quickly as they started.

ASHEVILLE, (N. C.)—Times says five boys at Brevard College, Brevard, N. C., fainted as pandemonium reigned on campus for half-hour when students convinced world coming to an end. Many fought for telephones to inform parents to come and get them. Students finally quieted by few who knew program was dramatization.

"Are you all right?" my mother asked.

"Gosh," I said, and we headed for the door. By this time, people all over the nation were reacting similarly. Many stayed glued to their radios and heard the reassuring conclusion to the program, but millions, like us, rushed off wildly. They had not heard the introduction to the broadcast and they did not stay to be reassured by its finale.

Police stations, newspapers and churches were badly shaken by the first wave of frightened, fleeing citizens. In one New Jersey town a terrified man rushed into the First Baptist Church during evening services and announced that the end was at hand. The pastor made a futile attempt to quiet his flock by leading them in prayer for deliverance.

Switchboards at CBS stations from coast to coast were clogged for hours by callers, some angry, some panicky.

In New York's Harlem more than one police station was besieged by terror-stricken men and women seeking refuge.

Conscience-plagued sinners all over the country began making efforts to return stolen money, confess undisclosed sins, and right old wrongs. People in houses rushed into the streets, and people in the streets rushed into houses. About this time, Welles and the members of his cast, glancing toward the control room of their studio, perceived that it was crowded with policemen. They finished the program in a state almost as disturbed as that of many of their listeners. Needless to say, none of this was known to us at the time.

"Button your overcoat, Stevie," my mother said. "You'll catch cold when we go out."

This remark did not at the moment strike any of us as amusing. I buttoned my overcoat and we hurried out of the hotel. My mother and aunt ran down the hall and I followed at a slower pace, not because I was trying to maintain a shred of discretion but because I was too stunned to move with speed. Rounding a corner in the hall we burst suddenly upon a dignified-looking young woman with a little girl in her arms.

"Run for your life!" my mother cried at the woman, at the same time jabbing a shaky but determined finger at the elevator button. In response, the woman looked at her with no expression whatsoever.

"Pick up your child and come with us!" Aunt Mag shouted, wild-eyed. The woman laughed right in her face.

Mag was outraged. "Oh yes," she spluttered with withering sarcasm, "go ahead and laugh! But for the sake of that dear baby in your arms don't you laugh!" At this the young woman drew back in some alarm, concluding that she was confronted by three violently deranged people who might do her physical harm. She looked at me questioningly, and I felt some sort of explanation was due her.

"We just heard on the radio," I said, "that there's something up in the sky."

The merest flicker of bemusement crossed her face but she did not speak. Instead, she shifted the child in her arms to a more secure position and retreated a few steps down the hall, walking backward so as to keep an eye on us. But my aunt was not to accord this move

the honor of understanding. She moved angrily toward the woman and her right hand pointed up toward the heavens. She must have looked like a witch calling down a curse.

"You ought to get down on your knees," she shouted, "instead of laughing at people! We're going to church to pray and that's what you ought to be doing right this minute, praying!"

Before the woman could interpret this admonition a soft whirr and a click announced that the elevator had reached our floor. A moment later the door slid back and the smiling face of the colored operator greeted us. Never have I seen a smile fade so fast. If this scene were to be enacted in a motion picture this man's part would be played by Mantan Moreland, who would undoubtedly be called upon to open his eyes wide with fear and say, "Feet, get movin'!" In any event, the violence with which we dashed into the elevator convinced the operator that all was not well. My mother's first words confirmed his suspicions.

"Hurry up and take us down," she gasped. "They're up in the sky!"

"Who is?" asked the boy, aghast.

"How do we know 'who is'?" my aunt shouted. "But you'd better get out of this hotel right now while you've still got a chance!"

"Yes, ma'am!" the boy whispered, withdrawing completely to his corner of the elevator. For perhaps ten seconds he regarded us warily, holding the car control handle at full speed ahead, then, torn between fear and curiosity, he succumbed to the latter. "What did you say the matter was?" he said, frowning.

Aunt Mag's patience was exhausted. How many times did you have to explain things to people? "They're up in the sky," she repeated. "Haven't you been listening to the radio?"

"No, ma'am," the boy responded.

"Well, you'd better do something, let me tell you. The radio just said they're up over Chicago, so you'd better run for your life!"

I am sure that if the elevator boy had been convinced that an interplanetary invasion was under way he would have faced the issue with as much bravery as the next man. But instead he apparently concentrated on the idea that he was cooped up in a tiny cubicle with a trio of dangerous lunatics, and as a result, became positively petrified. Fortunately for his nervous system at this point we arrived at the main floor. Convulsively he yanked the door release and then shrank back against the wall as we thundered past him into the lobby.

Though we had met with icy disbelief twice in quick succession we were still ill-prepared for the sight that now greeted us. The lobby, which we had expected to find in absolute turmoil, was a scene of traditional palm-shaded, lobbylike calm. Nowhere was there any evidence of the panic which we had come to accept as the norm in a few short minutes. Aggravatingly, people were sitting about, smoking cigars, reading newspapers, speaking in subdued tones or dozing peacefully in thick chairs.

It had been our intention to sweep through the lobby and proceed right across Dearborn Street, pausing only in the event that a sudden space ship attack should cause us to take cover, but something about the tranquility

around the registration desk of the hotel presented a challenge which we did not feel strong enough to resist. Indeed, we felt it our duty to warn the unfortunate souls who thought all was well that they were about to witness ultimate disaster.

The elevator boy peered after us from what was now the safety of his cage as we raced to confront the blase desk clerk. "Is something wrong?" this worthy said quietly, hoping that if something were amiss he could contain the area of alarm within his immediate vicinity.

"Well," said my aunt with a condescending sneer, "it's the end of the world, that's all that's wrong!"

The clerk's face was an impenetrable mask, although after a moment he permitted a suggestion of disdain to appear on it. I started to explain that on the radio-and then in some clear, calm corner of my mind I heard something. It was a radio, it was making soft sounds in a corner of the lobby, and the sounds were not the sort a radio should be making at a time of worldwide crisis. The sounds, as a matter of fact, were of a commercial nature. Some other announcer on some other station was extolling the virtues of a brand of tomato soup.

A wave of shock passed through me as in an instant I saw things as they really were. Turning to my mother I talked very fast, explaining exactly what had happened. For a split second she wavered, hoping, yet fearing, and then for her too the ice broke.

Light, followed by painful embarrassment, also dawned on Aunt Mag. Like bewildered sheep we retreated, excruciatingly aware that all heads were turned toward

us, that the clerk was smiling at us in a frightfully patronizing way, and that never again as long as we lived would we be able to walk through that lobby without casting our eyes to the floor.

"We'll have to move out of this place," my mother said.

Our next reaction, upon us before we could even stagger back into the elevator, was one of wild hilarity bordering on hysteria. We laughed until our sides ached. We fell into heavy chairs and laughed some more, and at last we pulled ourselves together, still shrieking with laughter, and started back toward our quarters. We laughed so hard going up in the elevator that I don't recall the elevator boy's reactions; he must have assumed we were still nutty as three fruit cakes, if no longer dangerous.

We spent a restless night, alternately laughing and saying, "We'll never be able to face all those people." The next day on

the way to school I glanced at a newspaper headline and knew that we had not been alone.

## **War's Over** **How U. S. Met Mars**

*The radio's "end of the world," as some listeners understood it, produced repercussions throughout the United States. Samples, as reported by the Associated Press, follow:*

### **Woman Tries Suicide**

Pittsburgh.—A man returned home in the midst of the broadcast and found his wife, a bottle of poison in her hand, screaming: "I'd rather die this way than like that."

### **Man Wants to Fight Mars**

San Francisco.—An offer to volunteer in stopping an invasion from Mars came among hundreds of telephone inquiries to police and newspapers during the radio dramatization of H. G. Wells' story. One excited man called Oakland police and shouted: "My God! Where can I volunteer my services? We've got to stop this awful thing!"

### **Church Lets Out**

Indianapolis.—A woman ran into a church screaming: "New York destroyed; it's the end of the world. You might as well go home to die. I just heard it on the radio." Services were dismissed immediately.

### **College Boys Faint**

Brevard, N. C.—Five Brevard College students fainted and panic gripped the campus for a half hour with many students fighting for telephones to inform their parents to come and get them.

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## **STEVE ALLEN KNOCKOUTS**

Floyd Patterson was being interviewed by Steve Allen, who wanted to know why the champion boxer had named his daughter Seneca.

"Well, my wife and I were trying to decide on a name for the baby," Patterson replied, "and one day we happened to be walking down this street in Brooklyn, and we looked up at the street sign and it said Seneca."

"You're lucky," Allen rejoined, "that you weren't walking on Flatbush Avenue."

At another time Steve Allen was conducting an interview from the studio with Sugar Ray Robinson who was on location at a training camp in upstate New York. There was equipment trouble, and while it was being fixed, the producer asked Allen to say something into the microphone.

"One, two, three, four . . ." the comic started counting idly, until he reached ten. Then realizing that the boxer could probably hear him, he added: "Nothing personal Sugar."



Jim Cox

# DAYTIME DIARY



## Soap Opera Superwriters

Aside from the most fluent of radio's daytime serial authors -- namely, Irna Phillips, Frank and Anne Hummert and Elaine Sterne Carrington -- there was a handful of other series creators/writers whose talent was frequently a cut above the typical banal dialogue supplied by nameless scribes who worked as underlings to the Hummerts and Phillips. Their approach, as may be recalled from earlier articles in this series, employed assembly line methods. Legions of dialoguers fleshed out scripts that had been given overall direction by the producers who then hired the writers. Carrington was an exception, preferring to dictate every word of every chapter herself without relying on outside parties to provide those important elements. As a result, her serials were often more appealing than many of those prepared on the assembly lines.

I would cite a half-dozen other writers (or writer-pairs) who, while not nearly as prolific as the aforementioned trio, upgraded the literary quality of the serials that were broadcast during radio's golden age. They include Don Becker and Carl Bixby, Carlton E. Morse, John Picard and Frank Provo, Addy Richton and Lynn Stone, Orin Tovrov, and Irving Vendig.

The versatile Becker and Bixby collaborated on two early serials, *This Day is Ours* (1938-40) and *The Man I Married* (1939-42). Each man also made his own contributions to radio individually. Becker was creator-producer of *The Light of the World* and *The Parker Family* and producer-writer of *We Love and Learn*. He also wrote the scripts and composed original theme music for *Beyond These Valleys*. Meanwhile, Bixby authored *Big Sister*, *Mrs. Miniver* and some of the scripts for *Radio Reader's Digest*.

The duo's crowning achievement, however, for which they will always be remembered by fans, was a mid-afternoon serial that first appeared in 1938. *Life Can Be Beautiful* soon grabbed a major share of the daytime audience, many of whom followed the exploits of Papa David Solomon and Chichi Conrad for the next 16 years. Becker and Bixby were able to project their own positive philosophies about daily living through the words of Solomon, the genteel proprietor of the Slightly Read Book Shop. Another of Becker's original compositions, "Melody in C," opened the serial each day along with a sage piece of advice frequently taken from a famous poet or thinker of an earlier age. The central message of the drama, that life can indeed be beautiful if people work to make it so, was reinforced through strong suggestion over the long run.

Bixby, who died at 83 on June 29, 1978, and Becker received accolades for professionalism. Each would write the show individually for awhile, confer by telephone on its direction, then relinquish the writing chores to the other for a spell. Becker was also the program's producer-director.

Carlton E. Morse's most notable achievement was *One Man's Family*. Begun as a weekly evening half-hour serial in 1932, it told the story of the Barbour family of suburban San Francisco. By 1950 it had moved to a weeknight quarter-hour basis and by 1957 transferred to weekday afternoons where it ended two years later. Morse's show was one of only two serials (the other, *Against the Storm*, penned by Sandra Michael) to receive radio's most distinguished literary recognition, the coveted Peabody Award.

In this drama, as in Becker and Bixby's strongest product, the author weaved his own philosophy about paternalism and high-minded principles into the utterances of Father Henry Barbour as he addressed a clan composed of a wife and five children ("bewildering offspring"), their mates, children and grandchildren. The preeminence of the family in contributing to the moral fiber of the nation was significant to Morse and that theme prevailed throughout the soap opera's long run. Morse, who wrote it with specific actors and actresses in mind, was also the serial's producer and director.

He created several other radio series: *I Love a Mystery*, *I love Adventure*, *Adventures by Morse*, *Family Skeleton*, *The Woman in My House* and *His Honor, the Barber*. After his radio series ended, his talent was channeled into novels. The Jennings, La. native died May 24, 1993 at 91.

John Picard and Frank Provo wrote absolutely brilliant lines for the characters in *Wendy Warren and the News*, a midday affair successfully combining realism and traditional soap opera plots. The series was set against a backdrop of a genuine news broadcast. For nearly a dozen years (1947-58) Picard and Provo turned out some of the most contemporary dialogue ever to reach the ears of radio listeners. They were able to make their characters believable while setting them in a melodrama whose action moved with the daily changes of the calendar. Sparkling dialogue and authenticity undoubtedly made it one of the better dramas on the air.

In addition to writing Provo acted in a trio of radio serials: *Jane Arden*, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* and *One Man's Family*.

Adelaide Marston was the pen name for writers Addy Richton and Lynn Stone, who combined their names and aptitude on several soap operas including *This Life is Mine* and *Valiant Lady*. Their most memorable achievement was *Hilltop House*, which ran from 1937-41, 1948-55 and 1956-57.

During the early run producer Edwin Wolfe freed Richton and Stone from much of the formality expected on other daytime serials. Peers throughout the industry recognized a superior literary quality. Yet when the show's sponsor shifted the account in 1941 from one advertising agency to another, those in charge at the successor firm decided to dispense with the widely respected writing excellence to reduce high production costs. Wolfe wouldn't hear of it and withdrew the series. The show returned to the air seven years later boasting a new sponsor, cast and producer. Adelaide Marston was still credited as author, although the recognition for distinctive penmanship had fairly well evaporated.

Orin Tovrov may have consistently written the best dialogue ever broadcast on daytime radio. For 21 years (1939-60) he enjoyed the favorable circumstance of interrelating the lives of major characters on *Ma Perkins*. While the series had been launched as a Hummert program, it eventually transcended those straits, being purchased and produced by its longtime sponsor, Procter & Gamble. Tovrov used his opportunity to develop

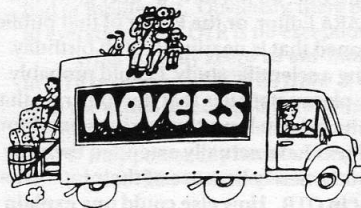
the drama's central figure into a warm, charming matriarch who presided over a homespun clan infected with earthy colloquialisms typical of rural America in the 1940s and 1950s. Not only was his dialogue excellent but the plotlines held millions of Americans spellbound as they followed the exploits and incidents in the lives of the citizens in the closely-knit community of Rushville Center.

Tovrov was elected by the Radio Writers Guild as its first president. In the 1930s he organized broadcasting's first strike. He also wrote scripts for two other serials, *The Brighter Day*, for both radio and television, and TV's *The Doctors*. He died in Boston August 16, 1980 at 69.

Finally, Irving Vendig was the author who breathed life into attorney Erle Stanley Gardner's alter-ego, *Perry Mason* (1943-55), turning him into a mastermind when it came to catching all sorts of criminals. Vendig developed the central character into one whose prolonged, yet absorbing action-packed exigencies caught the fancy of the radio audience, then ripe for a departure from traditional soap opera fare. His plots were gripping. His writing was marked by the way he employed sharp, disquieting chords on the organ at the most tactical moments.

Vendig went on to write for one of TV's earliest serials, *Search for Tomorrow*. Together, he and the musician from the *Mason* series, William Meeder, employed those sharp organ stings on *Search* that listeners heard on the radio series. In 1956 Vendig created one of TV's first 30-minute dramas, *The Edge of Night*. The late afternoon suspense thriller was loosely based on escapades of the *Mason* radio play and starred the same actor, John Larkin.

There were other writers, of course, who had their moments of excellence in writing daytime serials. In the opinion of longtime heroine Mary Jane Higby, Martha Alexander was one of them. For awhile Alexander penned *The Romance of Helen Trent* and *The Second Mrs. Burton*. *Backstage Wife* was once written by Ned Calmer, who surprisingly later became one of CBS's most distinguished news correspondents. Julian Funt gained some expertise as a medical sales representative before he entered radio, then put his knowledge to work on such medical-related dramas as *Big Sister*, *Joyce Jordan, M.D.*, *Road of Life* and *Young Dr. Malone*, coming up with some dandy scripts. But the unequalled and unchallenged author for sheer resiliency and volume among them was Robert Hardy Andrews. For a decade (1932-42) he concurrently churned out five scripts a week for four to seven Hummert dramas -- exceeding 100,000 words weekly. Undoubtedly, it was a record that no other author even remotely aspired to surpass!



## **ADDRESS CHANGE?**

If you are going to be changing your address please let NARA know! Send **BOTH** your old address **AND** your new address to our membership director:

Janis DeMoss  
134 Vincewood Drive  
Nicholasville, KY 40356

# Dirt and OTR just don't mix

By Bob Burnham



**N**O MATTER HOW MANY YEARS that go by, I simply can't think of enough good reasons to quit the OTR hobby! It seems I'm not alone. There are a few clubs that have been around for over 20 years that I knew of while they were still infants. Most of them are managed by different people today than those who were involved in the 1970's, but somehow, the organizations have survived and in a few cases thrived.

Those of us who have "been around" can all count the publications that were popular 20 years ago that have long since gone away. The long-running publications, however (excluding the club publications) still in production today can pretty much be counted on one hand. One popular old time radio newsletter has been in continuous operation for almost 30 years by the same individual. I know the editor of *NARA News* (who I suspect fondly recalls the time when dirt was new!) was probably one of the charter subscribers of that publication while it was in its earliest years.

Like the radio shows themselves, some of the publications that I had involvement in, in the early days were eventually "canceled." Radio drama was more or less replaced by television. My efforts in the printed OTR arena were replaced by other projects, and much of my writing drifted at least for a time, to the internet.

I was reminded of one of my early publications at this past Cincinnati convention in May. I met someone for the first time who I'd traded with in the 1970's. He was attending his first-ever convention. He had e-mailed me a couple weeks prior, more or less out of the blue wanting information on this convention, which I forwarded to him of course.

*"By the way," I had written to him, "didn't we do some trading 'way back when'?"*

He confirmed that we had.

At the convention, he proceeded to produce an original letter I had written to him in 1978 (I had typed it using a Smith-Corona typewriter so many of us had back then). I had written the letter on the

back side of a flyer for "Collector's Corner." I was co-editor of this publication which had about a 5 year life. Perhaps it could be said it was the father of today's printed "Old Time Radio Digest."

It is always an odd feeling revisiting your past unexpectedly. But just imagine my surprise when after reading the introduction in my old friend's brand new 1990's catalog I learned he had actually started in this hobby the same year and MONTH I was born! Yes, dirt \*HAD\* been around a while when I arrived on the planet — in fact, by the time \*I\* started collecting old-time radio shows, dirt was well on its way to becoming a senior citizen!

I then came to the realization that the relationship between *PEOPLE* in old-time radio and *DIRT* is extremely remote. In fact, it is probably not too far fetched of a concept to realize that the mixture of old-time radio and *PEOPLE* equals some sort of fountain of youth. With that in mind, even if your faithful *NARA News* Editor \*DOES\* remember the day *DIRT* rolled off the assembly line, the fact that he has hung around old-time radio programs and its people longer than some of today's collectors have been alive, he has absorbed enough OTR's Elixir of Long Life to make him seem like just a kid (Okay, a TALL kid!). This is especially true when comparing any OTR person who has "been around" to those who have spent a large part of their life collecting stamps, coins or beer cans (*and drank all that beer to build their collections!*).

Now I for one, do not have a "beer gut," nor does your *NARA* Editor, or the Editor of that publication I mentioned that is nearing its 30th birthday. If we were doing a scientific study, I could probably invent some phony statistics that demonstrate that people who have been long-time writers or editors in the OTR Press have actually extended their life and their youth merely because of their interest and involvement in OTR. How else could one explain the untiring energy that obviously is necessary to sustain the activities these people have pursued for so many years?

There are of course, many people who **HAVE** in fact, **DONE THE DEED:** They "Quit the Hobby." They actually threw out or sold their collections, and even asked to be **REMOVED** from old-time radio mailing lists. They may have even told their once-favorite OTR club to "**STOP BOTHERING THEM with renewal notices!**" In some cases, sadly, these people died shortly thereafter. The morale of **THIS** story is (if there has to be one), that you can certainly stop acquiring NEW shows; maybe even STOP listening to your OLD shows; perhaps even DONATE the shows you REALLY HATE to a worthy charitable cause. Perhaps if you are starving and living under a newspaper on the street, it is permissible for you to even SELL your collection of shows to another collector, a club or even a vendor. But you can NEVER EVER expect to live a happy well adjusted life by completely severing all your connections to The OTR World. In fact, you might die if you do, and we wouldn't want THAT!

Now with all due respect, I know there are collectors no longer with us who WERE OTR fans up until their last breath. Some of them, however, have been immortalized with Awards named in their behalf. Your Editor and I (as well as other NARA Activists) both were honored with such an Award the same year, back when **DIRT** was a teenager. The reality of the situation then, is while OTR may not have given those who have passed on that curious **OTR Elixir of Life/Fountain of Youth**, they live on, if only in name on a handsome brass plaque.

On a slightly more serious note, just what is one of the key ingredients that keeps the many people whose columns appear in this publication regularly so active in OTR? Is it the fact that all of our reel to reel tapes are obsolete? Is it because in the 1990's, certain former hobbyist-collectors turned into greedy monsters and are trying to buy out the rights of every show on the planet? Is it because Jack Benny is still funny, or Suspense is still spine-tingling or a 60-year-old adaptation of a classic on Lux Radio Theater still has our ear glued to our tape machines? These things are in fact, all part of the climate of today's old-time radio hobby. They are what makes OTR good, bad or indifferent. Obviously, there is good and bad in everything and OTR is no exception.

What actually keeps us *old-timers* "keepin' on" in OTR however, is **EACH OTHER**. It has less to do with the actual listening to the shows than what it might have at one time. It has nothing to do with the fun "I" may personally have twisting knobs and "tuning out" hiss with the latest audio processing

contraption. It is actually more fun and interesting when an old friend whips out a long-forgotten letter I'd sent 20 years ago, and makes me think about **\*MY\*** relationship with OTR and **DIRT**, and also makes me realize how much better things are TODAY (compared to "back then" despite today's trials and tribulations in OTR). Things are better in OTR today thanks to our association with many people — some we never meet until that chance convention that both attend. Things are better thanks to the many of us who have been inflicted with this chronic case of **OTR Friendship**. I can see it written up in medical journals now: An absorption of **OTR's Elixir of Long Life** can only lead to one thing: Fewer "beer guts" in the world and more funny-looking people whose worst vice is conjuring up strange articles like this one!

Unlike **Dirt and OTR**, **OTR and the Internet** does have a happy marriage and is widely used by hundreds of OTR fans today, largely in the form of electronic mail. OTR "cyberchat" (typing back and forth to someone or a group of people in real time) hasn't quite become as widespread among OTR fans. In general, in "live chat" 99% of the strangers one may encounter one will probably never meet, which may be a good thing. In OTR, the various conventions do allow the scariest of us to emerge in the flesh.

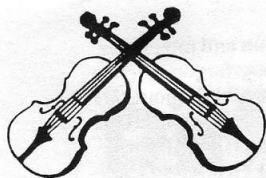
Next time, I'll present maybe another of my more technical columns. Meantime, stay out of trouble and try not to do anything I wouldn't do. Keep your heads clean, your ears to the grindstone, and keep taking **OTR's Elixir of Long Life** (oh yes, and if you want to "reach for the stars" while you're at it, that's fine too, but trust me, even up there, you **STILL** won't find a replacement capstan for that Sony reel to reel machine you bought in 1972).

Typeface fans (and if you truly are one of those like me, you really **ARE** odd!), I used the Adobe Utopia family for the text, Revue for the head and Helvetica Oblique for the byline.

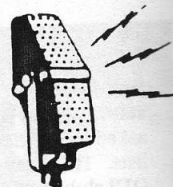
I can be reached via snail mail at P.O. Box 510264, Livonia, MI 48151-6264.

E-mail is Platecap@worldnet.att.net

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## From JACK PALMER



### THE PICKARD FAMILY

Several years ago, in one of my very early columns, I listed early radio network programs that featured country music artists. The earliest country music program I could find on network radio was THE PICKARD FAMILY, who broadcast on the NBC Blue network in late 1928. They were sponsored by Interwoven Socks and presented a 30 minute program every Saturday night. The program was billed as light music, but THE PICKARDS were definitely a country group.

Born in Tennessee, Obed Pickard started out on his own as a fiddle player and singer. Within a few months after the WSM BARN DANCE went on the air in 1925, Obed was appearing on it. He gradually added other members of his family and the group was soon appearing as THE PICKARD FAMILY. Through the years, the group consisted of him and his wife and varying numbers of children. They were at WSM when the change from BARN DANCE to THE GRAND OLD OPRY occurred in 1927. Unlike the other string bands on the program, which performed mostly instrumental numbers with only an occasional vocal, Obed Pickard's group featured himself as a singer. In fact, he usually sang and played the jews harp instead of the fiddle. The other members of the group played the piano, accordion, banjo, string bass and guitar in various groupings and also sang. Their repertoire consisted of ballads, old pop songs, hymns and even old minstrel songs. They became very popular on the Opry and eventually most of the other string bands also began to feature singers. One of the earliest groups to adapt a featured singer in their style was Roy Acuff's band.

THE PICKARD FAMILY left The Opry in 1928 to visit their son, who had left the band and was now living in Detroit. In Detroit they appeared on WJR and were paid the first money they ever earned from the radio. WSM didn't pay its performers in those days. It was while in Detroit that they met Henry Ford. Mr. Ford was a great lover of old time music and asked the Pickards to come out to visit and see his plant. To quote from an interview with Pickard's son: "Ford asked dad if he knew LITTLE OLD LOG CABIN IN THE LANE and dad played it on his jews harp. Mr. Ford took his harp out of a mahogany case and they did a jews harp duet".

According to their son, the first show they did for NBC was called THE CABIN DOOR, a sort of minstrel show. Shortly thereafter, they began their 1928 show for Interwoven Socks. Their smooth singing style (they never had the nasal sound of singers like Jimmie Rodgers) allowed them to sing parlor songs and hymns to a national audience without sounding like the bunch of hillbillies they really were. They remained on the air for four years playing and singing their old songs, although they were only sponsored by Interwoven Socks the first year when they were broadcasting from New York. THE PICKARD FAMILY show began as a thirty minute program broadcast every Saturday evening on the NBC Blue network.

After a year in New York, they moved to Chicago but continued to broadcast for the NBC Blue network. During the 1929-30 season they appeared on THE NATIONAL FARM AND HOME HOUR daily in addition to their own show. Their show was still on Saturday evenings but does not appear to be sponsored during this season.

In the 1930-31 season they were sponsored by Billiken Shoes as the Billiken Pickards, a dramatic program with music. Apparently the show was about a miner who was laid off at the mine, and decided to get money by him and his family playing at the local theater. The night of their

concert, the theater burned down! Their son remembers the Victor Young Trio playing the theme song for that program. With the new format, the show was cut to fifteen minutes every Saturday.

The following year, the show was changed back to a musical format and broadcast on Thursdays evenings, still remaining a fifteen minute show. No sponsor is shown for this last year. In the spring of 1932 the show disappeared from the network listings.

The Pickards returned to The Grand Old Opry and remained there for a year. They left the Opry again in 1933 to move to The National Barn Dance in Chicago, the same year the Barn Dance became a network show. The Pickards were also broadcasting over KYW and when it moved from Chicago to Philadelphia they went along. They became very popular in Philadelphia and, in 1935, obtained a new network show with Mutual. They appeared on a thirty minute program, three times a week. The sponsor was either nonexistent or unknown. Jay Hickerson lists no copies available of any of their network shows.

When this last network show ended in 1936, the group moved south to New Orleans and broadcast on the WWL barn dance type show called River Revelers. They were doing very well until the mail suddenly began to drop off significantly. Those who did write advised that WWL was being blocked out by Dr. Brinkley's border station. Their manager decided that they would do better on the station that was blocking them out, so they headed for Texas. By 1937 they were broadcasting on XERA. While there they made both live broadcasts and transcriptions for use on other border stations.

In 1940 they moved to California. There they broadcast on a few local radio stations. They were the first live show to appear on Los Angeles TV station, Channel 4 in 1949 and continued on the station for several years.

By the 1950s they had disappeared from the airwaves and from country music. When I became financially able to buy country music records in the late 40's, THE PICKARD FAMILY had so faded away, that I never heard of them. Years later I ran into the name when I began collecting old records. In fact, considering their long career, it is remarkable how they dropped from sight. Although their career spanned over 30 years and they were on network radio for at least 5 years, they are not even mentioned in most country music encyclopedias. DEFINITE COUNTRY: THE ULTIMATE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COUNTRY MUSIC AND ITS PERFORMERS does not even list their name. I have had to patch this brief biography together from at least half a dozen reference books plus a brief interview with two of the sons and I still know very little about their career.

Although it is very unlikely the Pickards ever made much money, they must have enjoyed what they did. In an interview with RADIO DIGEST in 1933, Obed Pickard said "I am mighty glad of the opportunity to play and sing these old ballads and folk songs. I feel we are doing something worthwhile, for we are helping to preserve something very sweet and fine, which otherwise would be lost." Bradley Kincaid, who considered himself a song collector, not a performer, expressed almost the exact sentiments many times.

THE END

NOTE. As many of you know, I am writing a biography of Vernon Dalhart and I still need information about his radio career. If anyone has any information about Vernon Dalhart and his career on, or off, the radio, I would be forever grateful to hear from you.

Review by Chuck Seeley

## SUPERMAN AUDIOBOOK

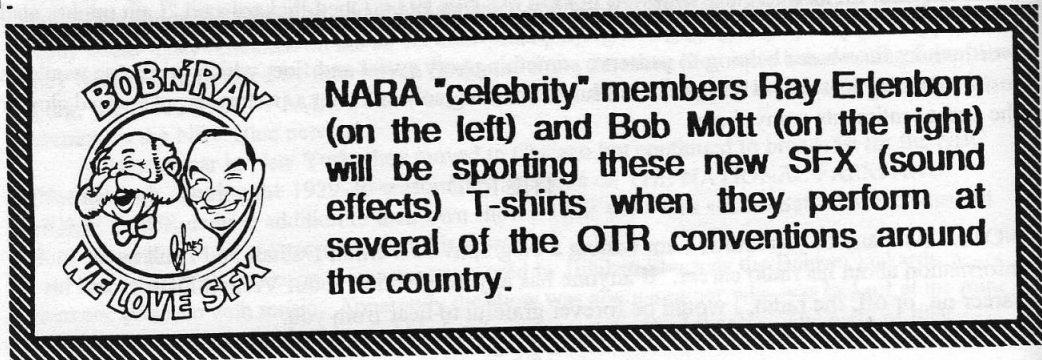
*Kingdom Come*, adapted by John Whitman from a story by Mark Waid and Alex Ross. Time Warner AudioBooks, 3 hours on 2 cassettes, full cast, \$17.00.

*Kingdom Come* was a big deal in the comic book world. An epic story and beautiful art, it won awards and sold lots of copies. I should point out that the *Kingdom Come* graphic novel compares to the average comic book as, say, Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* compares to *Dilbert*.

The story begins in the early 21st century. Ten years earlier, a mass murder in Metropolis took the life of Lois Lane and Superman goes into a bitter exile. With his absence, many of the heroes of his generation lose heart and also go their own ways. A new generation of super-humans arises, more violent and less concerned with the value of human life. When this new breed causes a nuclear explosion in Kansas, destroying much of America's breadbasket, Superman returns to lead his old comrades in teaching the new generation what it means to be a hero, by force if necessary. Besides the recalcitrant new generation, opposed to Superman's team are some of their former foes, who want to see a mankind free of the super-powered, and some of their former friends, who dispute their methods. Caught between these four immensely powerful forces are plain and simple humans, who attempt to save their world the only way they can.

The audio adaptation is very well done, doubly so because it's such a visual story. The acting is uniformly excellent and the stereo sound, at least through my earphones, is at times startling. There's a cast list on the package but, with one exception, I recognize none of the names. The exception, Mike Mearian, plays Arthur McKay, the viewpoint character who narrates most of the action. In the late Fifties, Mearian was the host of an afternoon kids' TV show in Buffalo, New York and I was a faithful viewer. Mearian later went on to much commercial work, but he's still Cap'n Mike to me and it took a little while for me to adjust to his voice on these tapes.

It's worth \$17.00. If you like it, check out the original *Kingdom Come* graphic novel. There is also a straight novelisation available, but the original is better. If you can't find it, contact me at 294 Victoria Blvd., Kenmore, NY 14217 and I can probably steer you to a source close to you.





## Honors

At the Cincinnati Old Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention, held in May, NARA member Jay Hickerson received the "Parley Baer Award" for his outstanding contributions to the old time radio hobby. The award is named for the actor who portrayed Chester on radio's "Gunsmoke" series. Mr. Baer himself expressed his pleasure over this award being presented to Jay.

Jay started as a collector in the OTR hobby in 1970, and in that same year he started publishing *HELLO AGAIN*, the hobby's longest running publication. It now comes out bimonthly at a yearly subscription rate of \$15.00.

In 1971 Jay helped organize the first OTR convention under the name of "The Society of Vintage Radio Enthusiasts." This was an annual affair which was renamed the "Friends of Old Time Radio" convention in 1976. This was held in Connecticut for six years and then in 1982 moved to Newark, New Jersey, thereafter being commonly referred to as the "Newark Convention." While there is a large committee helping with this annual event, which has an attendance of close to a thousand each year, Jay is the motivating force behind the whole thing.



Jay Hickerson  
"Mr. OTR"

In addition to *HELLO AGAIN*, Jay puts out a wide range of other publications and logs. Information on any of his publications can be obtained by writing to him at Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514.

Certainly there can be no one more deserving of the "Parley Baer Award," or any other awards or honors for that matter, than Jay Hickerson. To many of us, he is "Mr. Old Time Radio." Congratulations and thanks for all you have done for the hobby, Jay.



### NARA NEWS ON TAPE FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Bill Bright, a retired Canadian broadcaster, records the material from each issue of the *NARA News* on cassette for our members with vision problems. Don Aston duplicates the cassettes and sends them out to members who might need this service. If you know of members, or prospective members, who would benefit from this, please contact Don Aston at P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531. He can be reached by phone at (909) 244-5242.

ADVERTISING SECTION

HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED-THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!

MY RAISE DIDN'T COME THROUGH MARY-I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP. IT ALL LOOKS SO HOPELESS.

IT ISN'T HOPELESS EITHER. BILL, WHY DON'T YOU TRY A NEW FIELD LIKE RADIO?

TOM GREEN WENT INTO RADIO AND HE'S MAKING GOOD MONEY, TOO. I'LL SEE HIM RIGHT AWAY.

BILL, JUST MAILING THAT COUPON GAVE ME A QUICK START TO SUCCESS IN RADIO. MAIL THIS ONE TONIGHT

TOM'S RIGHT - AN UN-TRAINED MAN HASN'T A CHANCE. I'M GOING TO TRAIN FOR RADIO TOO. IT'S TODAY'S FIELD OF GOOD PAY OPPORTUNITIES

TRAINING FOR RADIO IS EASY AND I'M GETTING ALONG FAST--

LOOM! I CAN GET A JOB SERVICING SETS-- OR IN A BROADCASTING STATION

THERE'S NO END TO THE GOOD JOBS FOR THE TRAINED RADIO-MAN!

YOU'RE KNOW RADIO-MY SET NEVER SOUNDED BETTER

THANKS!

THAT'S \$15 I'VE MADE THIS WEEK IN SPARE TIME

N.R.I. TRAINING CERTAINLY PAYS. OUR MONEY WORRIES ARE OVER AND WE'VE A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD IN RADIO.

OH BILL, IT'S WONDERFUL YOU'VE GONE AHEAD SO FAST IN RADIO.

I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME  
In Your Spare Time For A  
GOOD RADIO JOB



# HERE'S PROOF that my training pays



**With R. C. A. Victor**  
"I am with R. C. A. Victor. I have been promoted several times. Am in full charge of Radio Frequency Testing Dept. Louis F. Lyle, 17th & Turge Sts., Kenderston Apts., Philadelphia, Pa.



**Spare Time Jobs Earn \$15 a Week**  
"I have no trouble getting Radio work. I have the reputation of being the best Radio man in town, and average \$15 to \$30 a week for spare time only." G. Bernard Crey, 151 Bronson, Michigan.



**Owes His Success to Radio Training**  
"Since 1929 I have earned my living in Radio. I owe my last three jobs to N. R. I. I am now in the main control room of one of the large broadcasting chains." Serge A. De Somov, 1515 Library Ave., New York City.

with a future. N. R. I. training fits you for jobs in connection with the manufacture, sale and operation of Radio equipment. It fits you to go in business for yourself, service sets, operate on board ships, in broadcasting, television, aviation, police Radio and many other jobs. My FREE book tells how you quickly learn at home in spare time to be a Radio Expert.

**Many Radio Experts Make \$40, \$60, \$75 a Week**  
Why struggle along in a dull job with low pay and no future? Start training now for the live-wire Radio field. I have doubled and tripled salaries. Hundreds of successful men now in Radio got their start through N. R. I. training.

**Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning**  
Hold your job. I'll not only train you in a few hours of your spare-time a week, but the day you enroll I'll send you instructions, which you should master quickly, for doing 28 Radio jobs common in most every neighborhood. I give you Radio Equipment for conducting experiments and making tests that teach you to build and service practically every type of receiving set made. Cleo T. Better, 30 W. Beechwood Ave., Dayton, Ohio, wrote: "Working only in spare time, I made about \$1,500 while taking the Course."

**Find Out What Radio Offers**  
My book has shown hundreds of fellows how to make more money and win success. It's FREE to any ambitious fellow over 15 years of age. Investigate. Find out what Radio offers you. Read what my Employment Department does to help you get into Radio after graduation, about my Money Back Agreement, and the many other N. R. I. features. Mail the coupon in an envelope, or paste it on a 1c. post-card TODAY.

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 5ED5  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

J. E. SMITH, PRESIDENT, DEPT. 5ED5  
NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send your book which points out the spare time and full time job opportunities in Radio and your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts.

(Please print plainly)  
NAME.....AGE.....  
ADDRESS.....  
CITY.....STATE.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

DOC-1

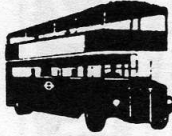
From the May, 1935 issue of  
Doc Savage magazine.



**J. E. SMITH, President**  
National Radio Institute  
The man who has directed the Home-Study Training of many men for the Radio Industry than any other man in America.



# FROM ACROSS THE POND



by Ray Smith



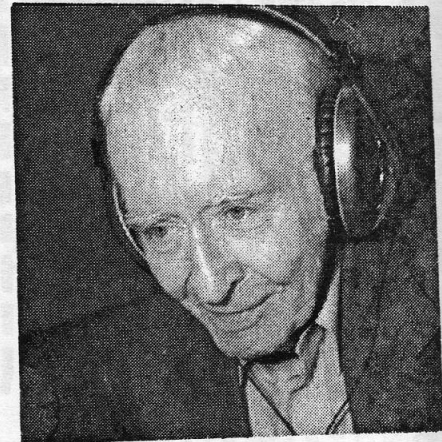
## CBC ICONS

Instead of reporting from across the pond, on this one occasion only, let's take a quick trip across the Great Lakes in a leaky boat, to find out what's going on at CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio these days. As one CBC staffer told me, "You know things must be looking up if you find somebody working for the CBC who hasn't yet received a lay-off notice."

The BBC panel-game *My Word* might take umbridge with my choice of headline, especially my use of the word, icon. Thanks to salacious and shabby tabloid journalism, we're all familiar with icons of one sort or another. Recognize the headlines? "Movie Icon," "Rock Icon," "Soap Opera Icon." The headline usually precedes a racy article describing nothing more exciting than what the icon pours over their cornflakes. OK. So hash oil and uppers won't replace milk and bananas in your house or mine. But we aren't icons. Being the intrepid reporter that I am, I decided to consult the Oxford Dictionary. Icon is "a religious statue or painting, usually depicting Jesus Christ or another prominent religious figure." Isn't it funny how words take on an entirely different meaning through constant use in the media?

The Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury will no doubt be surprised to learn, upon reading this edition of *Nara News*, that CBC radio personalities such as Vicki

Gabereau, Peter Gzowski and the Double Exposure comedy double-act, were all "icons." But if anyone deserves to be an icon, it must surely be the late Clyde Gilmour. His weekly show, *Gilmours Albums* was broadcast every Sunday



*The late Clyde Gilmour  
41 years on CBC*

lunchtime for 40 years across the CBC radio network. Clyde was as much a Canadian institution as the maple leaf flag, the Montreal Canadiens hockey team and the scarlet-coated Mounties up in Ottawa, who always get their man. Clyde played the most eclectic and varied mix of music, song and comedy on any radio show in the world. His recordings were chosen from his vast private collection. A typical *Gilmours Albums* broadcast might include such varied fare as, an ancient cylindrical recording by

Italian tenor, Benjamino Gigli; the American song-thrush Joan Morris performing a lusty Victorian drawing-room ballad; a folk song from an obscure Scottish-born medical doctor and singer, Dr. James Terry Lawson of Vancouver Island; a lewd Army ditty by Oscar Brand; and some gems of comedy performed by radio favourites Bob & Ray or the unique Jerry Colonna.

Clyde provided tid-bits of information about the operatic divas whose music he played. In that rich baritone voice of his, he recounted impeccably researched anecdotes about these singers, their perks and peccadilloes and frequently, their births, marriages and funerals. He didn't indulge in smut or innuendo and was a true "gentleman" of the airwaves. When his listeners complained that they could no longer find the records he played in the shops, Clyde gently chided the record companies for despatching another excellent recording to "cut-out-limbo." What a charming way of saying, "deleted from catalogue."

The past few years have been milestones, alas not always cheerful ones, for *Gilmours Albums*. In 1995 his lifelong partner and dear wife Barbara died. In October of '96, Clyde celebrated the shows 40th anniversary. In June of '97 during the 41st season of *Gilmours Albums*, ill-health forced Clyde to record his last show from home. And sadly, Clyde himself died of heart failure at the grand old age of 85, in November '97.

CBC program planners replaced *Gilmours Albums* with a totally different sort of show, *Vinyl Cafe* presented by the folksy yarn-teller Stuart MacLean. The show is a combination of music and stories. It has a sort of woodsy, farmyard, muck and manure, pig-barn, rural-Ontario appeal. *Vinyl Cafe* was a

wise program choice. Clyde Gilmour was as close to a true "icon" as CBC is ever gonna get. He is thus irreplaceable. We'll miss you, Clyde.

Another major "change of icons" at CBC Radio was the departure from CBC Vancouver of the afternoon network personality, Vicki Gabereau. Vicki gave up her 2-4 pm daily time slot, in favour of becoming an early morning worker, doing a daily morning tv show for the CBC's rival network, CTV. Vicki wasn't everyone's cuppa tea. The taxi-driver turned radio host is one spunky, gutsy, lady. She brought her own brand of inquisitive, impertinent and aggressive charm to the airwaves. And pity help any of her guests who chose to ignore "political correctness." They did so at their peril.

As for her TV debut, as I've said before, excellent radio doesn't always translate into outstanding TV. This much I do know. Vicki is no Oprah Winfrey or Rosie O'Donnell. But up here in the frozen north, we do things differently. We leave all that jazz, pizass and raz-matazz to our American friends who do it so much better. Vicki is well on her way to becoming the queen of Canadian morning TV. It's modest, it's laid back, it's unemotional, but it's typically Canadian. Come to think about it, those adjectives just about describe Vicki's radio replacement, *Richardson's Roundup*, which could as easily be entitled *Richardson's Repeats*. Announcer Bill Richardson, reprises the "best" music and interviews previously broadcast on other CBC programs.

And there's more shocking news about CBC icons! In the spring of '97, amidst much "wailing and gnashing of teeth" yet another



Peter Gzowski  
host of  
*Morningside*

legendary Canadian broadcaster decided to quit CBC radio. Peter Gzowski (pronounced Zosskey) threw in the towel, after 15 years of hosting the CBC's daily flagship talk-fest, *Morningside*, heard weekdays from 9 until noon. The man with the "brandy and cigars" vocal chords called it a day, no doubt fed up with the strain of arising every morning at 3 or 4 or 5 to commute from his rural home to the CBC broadcast centre in downtown Toronto. No sooner did word of this sacrilege get out than the prophets of doom and gloom took to the airwaves, eulogizing a man who was still in the land of the living. "Peter Gzowski and *Morningside* are the glue which holds Canada together!" they exalted. With his usual good manners, Peter gently chastised these rhetoric-raddled sensation-mongers. He pointed out that Canada couldn't be very "together" as a nation, if it relied upon a morning radio show that attracted no more than 2 million of Canada's 30-million souls. And that was on a good day! The other 28 million listeners were practicing their own version of Canadian unity, tuning in Golden Oldies, Barry Manilow, Tupack Shakur and the Spice Girls.

But I have to admit that Peter Gzowski was a cherished national treasure, a true gift to Canadian radio. In an age of frenetic TV

shows, when radio is very much the "poor cousin" Peter was the consummate radio personality. His approach at the microphone was intimate, personal and compassionate. Although he undoubtedly has his own political viewpoints and leanings, never once did I detect the strident, highly opinionated approach of which several CBC radio and tv personalities, have been accused. I'm not sure if you ever heard *Morningside*, or its forefather which Peter also hosted for several years, *This Country in the Morning*. It followed a tried and true formula. Peter would interview everyone from the Prime Minister of Canada, to an unknown woman in a tiny rural village, who wanted people across Canada to simultaneously "ring their local church bells" as a symbol of national unity. I miss his Friday morning Political Panel and Peter reading listeners letters with the assistance of another well-known CBC radio announcer, Sheila Rodgers. *This Morning*, hosted by CBC veteran, Michael Enright and his partner Avril Benoit, has replaced Peter's *Morningside*. They do a journeyman-like job, but *This Morning* will never quite have the "edge" on *Morningside*. Peter Gzowski was the perfect CBC radio host. But let's not shed too many tears. Peter, dastardly traitor that he is, signed on for TV!

Some people might allow that the Canadian comedy double-act of Bob Robertson & Linda Cullen, who brought us radio's *Double Exposure* for a decade or so, are at least "minor" icons of radio land. Robertson & Cullen "do impressions" and they do them with uncanny accuracy and biting satirical wit. In a typical edition of *Double Exposure* you could hear everyone from England's Maggie Thatcher to Russia's Boris Yeltsin, presented not in the conventional "standup" manner of vaudevillian impressionists, but in a series of



Robertson & Cullen, of  
*Double Exposure*

hilarious and unlikely situation-comedy sketches. Ideal fodder for radio. In the fall of '97, Robertson & Cullen said goodbye to CBC Radio and moved *Double Exposure* across to television. They couldn't strike a deal with CBC-TV, but found the Canadian media-giant, Baton Broadcasting (CTV Network; The Comedy Channel etc.) waiting with bated breath, to sign them on. I wondered if the real reason Bob and Linda left CBC Radio, was because icons like Gzowski and Gabereau were no longer around to impersonate. But it turned out to be an issue of economics. I'll buy that. Even icons gotta eat!

Cheerio for now.

## NARA'S LIBRARY CATALOGS

To obtain catalogs of what is available to members from the various club libraries, please write to the librarians listed below and enclose the price of the catalog.

### CASSETTE LIBRARY:

We are continuing to listen to all the cassettes in the library to insure quality before putting them back into circulation. As the cassettes are checked and catalogued you will continue to get listings in addition to what you have already received. If you have questions, or if there is something that you are looking for, please send your request, along with a stamped-self-addressed envelope to Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531. Orders should be sent to this same address.

### SCANFAX CASSETTE CATALOG:

A list of the various program series available in our SCANFAX cassette library is available for \$1.00 and a self-addressed-stamped envelope. You can then ask for program titles for those series that are of interest to you. Send your requests to Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531.

### PRINTED MATERIALS LIBRARY:

The printed materials library has four catalogs available: the book catalog (407 books), the script catalog (229 scripts), the catalog of logs (47 logs), and the magazine catalog. All four are available for ten 32¢ stamps. Send requests to Bob Sabon, 308 West Oraibi Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85027.  
E-MAIL: hornet29@juno.com

### FRED ALLEN/JACK BENNY

Fred Allen was asked by *Screen Guide* to review one of Jack Benny's films. "Mr. Benny first appears in a swing band," wrote Allen, "although he couldn't get a job wetting the finger of the man who turns the music for the washboard player with the Hoosier Hot Shots."

## MEMORIES OF OLD TIME RADIO

by  
Al Inkster

Al Inkster has served NARA for a quarter century. He was editor of the NARA News for four years, print librarian for thirteen years, vice-president for four years, and has been our vice-president emeritus for the last fifteen years.



This column is a memory piece about the good old days when people exercised their ears and imaginations more and their eyes and easy chairs less. Radio was approaching its ultimate as an entertainment medium when I was coming up. It never reached the zenith because the people with the money and talent chose to abandon radio in favor of television. Purely by chance I caught a few of the prestige programs like *The United States Steel Hour*, *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, and *CBS Workshop*. More popular at our house were the horror shows such as *Inner Sanctum* and *Lights Out*; the crime shows such as *Mister District Attorney*, *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, *Crime Doctor*, and *Casey, Crime Photographer*; the movie anthologies such as *Lux Radio Theatre* and *Lady Esther Screen Guild*; and the Tuesday night lineup of comedies, consisting of *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Bob Hope*, and *Red Skelton*.

As for me, the hour and a half from 4:30 till 6:00 was so sacrosanct for a few years that I threw tantrums when my mother would forget to call me in on nice days when I was involved in a game of tag or hide and go seek and lost track of time. She and my older brother tried to tell me that I could easily catch up the next day on what had happened to *Dick Tracy*, *Hop Harrigan*, *Terry* and the pirates, *Don Winslow*, *Jack*

*Armstrong*, and *Captain Midnight*. I never believed them. The fault was not always theirs when I did not get my programs. The weather sometimes interfered with reception of Chicago stations in Springfield, 225 miles away, and come spring WGN insisted on periodically preempting the adventure serials for the ballgames. I suspect that the reason I'm not a baseball fan today is that early traumatic experience.

Like all radio listeners of my generation I built up quite a collection of junk. Among the things I have the fondest memories of are a periscope from *Terry and the Pirates* (paid for with two boxtops from Quaker Puffed Wheat or Rice Sparkies, the cereals shot from guns), a Jack Armstrong bombsight complete with three wooden bombs and a small wooden ship (I think) courtesy of the *Breakfast of Champions*, and a codograph, which enabled me to decypher a message about tomorrow's program from *Captain Midnight* (for which I was forced to drink Ovaltine because my mother wouldn't buy anything unless I agreed to consume it to the last miserable drop).

The really overwhelming premium offer was from *Little Orphan Annie*. Along with the cardboard controls of an airplane and instructions for learning to fly



came a whole catalog, which listed premiums, all pictured in color illustrations showing kids having a great time playing with them, that you could get by sending in boxtops and/or money. It was enough to make a kid drool. I don't think I ever got to order anything from that catalog. I believe what happened was that the outbreak of World War II created a shortage of toys and the catalog premiums had to be discontinued. Another neat thing about that catalog was that some of the type was printed upside down and backwards so that you had to turn the page upside down and hold it up to a mirror to be able to read it.

I don't know whether Annie's being replaced by Terry in my listening pattern had anything to do with the demise of the catalog premiums. If so, Terry was almost as good as the merchandise. For me his adventures were much more exciting than Annie's. And I liked the characters much more; as a matter of fact, I think I was in love with two of them, April Kane and the Dragon Lady, who, during the war years, confused me about whether she was a good guy or a bad guy. And Pat Ryan, what a reliable best friend to get a kid out of a jam. Big Stoop could provide the muscle to help too. And Connee---what was he good for? Anything more than a laugh? I don't remember. And the introduction . . . The first foreign language phrase I ever learned: "Watunga something or other." My friends and I used to wait for our parents to leave home, so we could invade the kitchen, take out all the pots and pans from the cabinets and grab two spoons each and do our own version of the *Terry and the Pirates* intro complete with that foreign language, whatever it was. Imagine my disappointment when I learned in Buxton and Owen's *The*

*Big Broadcast* that the phrases were simply nonsense made up to sound like Chinese. I don't remember what it was like to find out Santa Claus was not for real but . . .

What happened to all that junk? I remember selling my collection of over a thousand comic books at an auction sale; tied together in groups of 25. They brought fifty cents per bundle. It seemed almost a coming of age at the time. How I wish I had them now, and not to sell at the fantastic prices charged for vintage comics today.

The periscope, the bombsight, the codograph---what became of them? The periscope, a couple of mirrors in a cardboard frame, probably got dropped and broken. The bombsight too, though of sturdy wood, could have been broken. But that codograph? All metal, as I recall. No way it could ever fall victim to accident (although it had turned a little green, I believe). Now when I receive a tape of a *Captain Midnight* show from NARA, how will I ever be able to decypher the message about the adventures to come on tomorrow's program?

My brother was never as interested in the afterschool adventure serials, probably because he was more athletically inclined and was not about to sit around participating vicariously in the adventures of Terry Lee or Jack Armstrong when he could be at the school playground belting homeruns or on the vacant lot down the street running for touchdowns. His time for listening was late evening when the mystery and horror shows took over.

Nine-thirty or ten o'clock was supposed to be bedtime at our house, but my brother would sneak the table model radio upstairs to

our room, and, keeping the volume low, dial for tales of mayhem and terror. At that time of night we were able to pick up many clear channel stations not available in the daytime and to discover delights hitherto unknown to us. Our favorite was *The Hermit's Cave*, which opened with the mingled howling of wind and wolves and the eerie voice of the Hermit cackling and inviting us to listen to ghost stories and weird stories. In the dark the opening caused gooseflesh to rise, and the chill didn't leave until I fell asleep, which usually occurred before the program was over.

Falling asleep to late night radio shows was one hazard that kept me

from hearing the end of stories. A second was that programs from far away drifted out and in, going out frequently at the worst possible time. One story which I'll never forget, perhaps told by the Hermit, had a mad scientist, obviously a psychologist this time, test his theory that hunger was more powerful than love. To do so, he imprisoned a couple of young lovers in a room, and when they were just at the point of dying of starvation, he gave them one slice of bread and told them that only by eating the whole slice could one of them survive. . . . What happened? I don't know. Either the station drifted out at the climactic moment or I fell asleep.



### NEW BOOK

When the publishers sent me a copy of *The Airwaves of New York* by Bill Jaker, Frank Sulek, and Peter Kanze I wondered what possible interest someone living in Arizona could have in the "illustrated histories of 156 AM [radio] stations in the [New York] metropolitan area." After a couple of weeks, when I had fifteen minutes to spare, I picked it up to get it out of the way. Two hours later I was still working my way through the book. While the information on most of those stations would be of little interest to an "outsider," there is a substantial amount of old time radio history, well presented, about some of America's pioneer broadcasting stations. This is a book that would mostly be of interest to residents of the New York city area, and to those who are serious about the history of broadcasting. The 296 pages contain a number of historical photographs and posters. The book can be ordered for \$59 postpaid from McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, or by calling (800) 253-2187.

There is information on another new book on the "editor's page" (page 4).



# BOOK REVIEW

by JACK FRENCH

## ON THE AIR: The ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OLD-TIME RADIO

by John Dunning  
Oxford Univ. Press (1998) 822 pgs.

Since it is imperative that any reviewer declare their association with the book and/or author, let me state that I am one of numerous people who assisted Dunning in this book. I reviewed and made additions and corrections to his sections on the FBI shows, Bobby Benson, Candy Matson and other female detectives.

That being said, let me now declare that this is, far and above, the best OTR reference book ever written. For those of you holding Dunning's prior book, "Tune In Yesterday" which came out in 1976, you will definitely want to obtain this new book. Unlike the most recent edition of Buxton and Owens' "Big Broadcast", which had no discernible pluses over their prior one, Dunning has completely written a new book: bigger, better, and far more comprehensive.

Over 1,500 OTR series are covered in this volume. There are entire sections devoted to separate categories, such as newscasters, band remotes, religious programs, etc. Every series is listed with dates of broadcast, cast & crew, sponsor, network, etc. followed by a brief or lengthy discussion of the series, depending on its duration and significance.

Dunning is not opposed to giving his own opinion on several shows, but more often cites contemporaneous views from "Radio Guide" and other period sources. The book also has ten authoritative pages of the most detailed OTR biography ever assembled, as well as an index that makes it a joy for researchers.

Mistakes in his first book have been duly corrected (i.e. Straight Arrow was a white child raised by Comanches) and recent discoveries have been incorporated into the entries (i.e. all four actors who played Bobby Benson are given credit.) The superfluous photographs, which were in his first edition, have been eliminated, possibly to make room for more factual data in the text.

The book is an absolute treasure to read, whether the reader chooses to start at "The A & P Gypsies" and read straight through to "The Ziegfeld Follies of the Air" or just dip in anywhere and enjoy individual entries of their favorites.

This book, some eleven years in the making, is certainly the resultant product of

many decisions, some by the author and others by the publisher. From my contacts with Dunning, I know that consideration was given to make this a two volume set, which he opposed. To get it into one massive volume, cuts had to be made, though no one could guess that from reading this book today.

Individual entries on commonplace shows are about 6-10 lines, while the popular series rate up to nine entire pages. For example, Fred Allen gets 9 pages, Jack Benny and Fibber McGee 7 each, Burns & Allen 5, and The Great Gildersleeve three and a half.

Most of the popular soaps get three pages or less while the ponderous Sunday night soap "One Man's Family" logs in with a full 8 pages. Some comparisons of like shows seem to indicate inequality. For example, "Vic and Sade" occupies six and a half pages while the equally funny "Easy Aces" and "Ethel and Albert" merit two pages and less-than-a-page, respectively.

The kids' Western shows seem to have a lack of parity also. "The Lone Ranger" sprawls over five pages, but its equal in popularity and duration, "Tom Mix", is accorded less than half that amount, while "Red Ryder" is reduced to half a page.

The episodes in circulation are only mentioned occasionally (i.e. "Only one copy has surfaced" or "All 52 shows are in current circulation.") The vast majority of shows that are discussed contained no mention of what, if any, copies are available. Probably this was another "cut" dictated by space necessity.

But let's not quibble.....this is OTR at its finest hour, in terms of research and writing. The book is an superb compendium of the history of American broadcasting, series by series. It's fascinating, it's factually accurate, and it provides a wealth of anecdotal material never before published. John Dunning has done us a tremendous service and we are all in his debt. This book is an absolute "must" for every OTR hobbyist!

NOTE: The retail price of this book is \$ 55 and most book stores are charging the cover price. Some of the large chains, including Crown Books, are discounting it in varying amounts. If you're "on-line" you can go to any of the Internet shops, such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (or the web site for Barnes & Noble) and obtain a copy at reduced price. Amazon has copies available for \$ 38.50 plus three bucks for postage and handling. It's not important where you buy this book, but it is vital that you obtain a copy, without fail.

# BOOK by Hal Stephenson SHELF

*My Life With Groucho* by his son, Arthur Marx

G. K. Hall Large Print Book Series, 1992

A Vaudevillian whose hobby was giving nicknames, Art Fisher, named the Marx brothers. Julius, who tried to care for the brothers' business affairs, was named Groucho because he was sort of grouchy. Grouch (without the o), is what his first wife and son called him.



Women were also called "chickens" so Chico got his name because he chased them. Gummo, who became an agent after leaving the act as a straight man, got his name by wearing gumshoes whether or not it was raining. Harpo is from his harp. Zeppo's name is not explained. Zeppo quit school at 16 and replaced Gummo.

The Marx brothers success came only after a period of perseverance with mediocre experimentation on stage and then serendipity. In exasperation at an audience in Texas, they began flinging insults at the town. "Nacogdoches is full of Roaches!" is a line Groucho remembered 30 years later.

The book confirms what many of us have heard or surmised. The brothers were out to defy conventions and see how many people they could shock. If they insulted people, the theory was that the people would be so taken aback that they would not notice the Marxs' shortcomings. In a restaurant, a husband asked Groucho to say something to his wife--"She's just dying to be insulted." The night Calvin Coolidge came to see *Cocoanuts*, Groucho eyed the President for a moment, and said "Aren't you up past your bedtime, Calvin?"

Grouch would rather be inconsistent than dull. One result was that it was practically impossible to win an argument with Groucho. Groucho did say that he regretted some of his insults but they could not be recalled.

John Guedel listened to Groucho ad libbing and asked him why he didn't have a radio program. An irritated Grouch answered that he couldn't keep a sponsor. John asked if he wanted to know why. Grouch said to the young punk "Yeah, why?" John answered a couple days later with what I would call a concept of operation--a page and a half of typewritten ingredients for a proposed venture. It stated:

1. The program would be recorded (and later filmed for television). It would be edited to remove undesirable portions by contestants and Groucho. Groucho was free to say anything but later filter out the regrettable remarks.

2. The contest questions and answers should be honest. There would be no cheating with contestants that other prize shows years later would pay dearly for.

3. **Guedel's theory was that it is better to be not so funny and a person the audience likes than to be the funniest person ever but the audience doesn't care about you as a person. (Maybe Don Rickles should read this.) Guedel changed Grouch's character into the Groucho towards whom audiences felt sympathetic.**

Groucho was ready to warm up the audience before the first show in October 1947. John Guedel asked Groucho to tell the studio audience some cute little story about his small daughter Melinda. Big laughs are *not* needed. "The purpose is to show them that you love your child and that underneath that exterior of yours is a devoted father and a warm person. They'll like you and want to laugh and that feeling will carry over onto the air waves."

*You Bet Your Life* was broadcast for 14 years. John Guedel also originated concepts of operation for *People Are Funny* and *House Party* with Art Linkletter.

George Fenneman: "The one..., the only..." Audience: "Groucho!"





JIM SNYDER

## LUX RADIO THEATRE

I never heard Lux when it was on the air, and yet I have become very fond of this series, over the years. I have tried to think back to how this happened. When I started trading old radio shows, the first Lux I picked up were "Two Years Before the Mast," "Dark Victory," and "Broken Arrow." I didn't care for any of them and had very little interest in the series. Then I picked up a copy of "Miracle of the Bells" with Fred MacMurray and Frank Sinatra. It really struck me. For some reason that I have never really understood, I really loved that particular show, and I still consider it a favorite. I then picked up Robert Young in "The Physician in Spite of Himself," by Moliere. Now, since college days I have had a real weakness for Moliere who wrote 300 years ago. This is the only place I have ever found a Moliere play to listen to. I was hooked on Lux. Certainly I don't like all the shows, but there is no series where I like everything. But Lux was an extremely polished presentation and for the most part what they did, was done well, whether I liked that particular show or not.

The writers of books on the history of radio pretty much ignore the Lux Radio Theater. I have one book that claims to be "the definitive history of radio." It mentions Lux only once, and that is a one sentence statement in talking about Fibber McGee and Molly. They state that at one point Fibber was playing opposite Lux and so his ratings were very low, but by the end of the year

Fibber had gained a little. The author then goes on for a number of pages discussing the importance of the Fibber McGee and Molly program, without again mentioning the show that was more popular. Now I enjoy Fibber and Molly, but essentially when you have heard one program, you have heard them all since the same basic format is followed week in and week out. Lux, on the other hand, was truly creative, but the author of that "definitive history" found Jim and Marian Jordan's show to be far more important. It can be argued that this author was thinking of personalities in radio when he devoted all this time to one show instead of the other, but Jim and Marian really weren't very creative. If something worked, like the closet for example, they milked it to death, over and over again, ad nauseum. Lux did, however, have a truly creative personality in the person of Cecil B. DeMille, and some of the innovation that he started, with Lux, is still being copied in present day television.

The series began in late 1934 with Vernon Radcliffe as producer. It really wasn't a great success with a regular audience of only around 13 million. DeMille later was to raise it to 30 million. After seven and a half months on the air, from New York, NBC replaced Lux with the Radio Guild, and Lux moved to CBS and Hollywood, which was closer to name movie stars. It also moved from 2:30 Sunday afternoon to its permanent slot of 9:00 Monday evenings. It stayed with CBS until its last year when

it went back to NBC to die. Now every single written account I have read of the show states that DeMille moved the show to Hollywood. That is simply not true. He took over on the first of June 1936, ten months after the show moved to Hollywood. To listen to the tape of the first show under DeMille, is to become aware of their great nervousness. There seem to me to be more fluffs in that first show than in any other. There are several dropped lines by the actors, DeMille himself dropped a couple cues, and there were a couple of sound effects slips, but all this was to be expected when something was being broadcast live. This first show provided us with "a glimpse behind the scenes in Hollywood," which was the dramatized Lux commercial that was to become a standard, and then there was DeMille doing an interview with a casting director, who also got in a Lux recommendation.

There are a number of reasons given for why this show was more or less a failure before DeMille took over. I find most of them faulty. The first is that the show, before DeMille, was based on stage plays and musicals that were not widely known. There were 82 shows in this period of time, and an analysis shows that 27 of them were based on plays or musicals, but that is only about a third of them. One was based on a script heard earlier on another radio show, 12 were based on silent movies, and 42 (more than half) from sound movies, just as they were under DeMille. I don't really know how you take a visual story, such as a silent film, and adapt it to a sound medium, such as radio, but they did. The interesting thing is that this didn't change all that much under DeMille, at least at the start.

In his first seven weeks DeMille also used three silent movies and one stage play. During his tenure he had four shows based on books. One was Bob Hope's "I Never Left Home." There never was a movie made on this story. The other three were "Dark Victory," "How Green Was My Valley," and "This Above All." While all of these were made into movies, they appeared on Lux before they came out on the screen. The second reason given for the improvement in audience acceptance is that DeMille brought in name stars for the show, something that didn't happen before his reign. While it is true he was responsible for bringing in names that had refused to appear on radio before this, the names were there before DeMille: Helen Hayes, Walter Huston, Ethel Barrymore, Tallulah Bankhead, James Cagney, John Boles, Claude Rains, Paul Muni, Wallace Beery, Claudette Colbert, Irene Dunne, Gary Cooper, Lillian Gish, Cary Grant, Robert Montgomery, Loretta Young, Joe E. Brown, Joan Crawford, Joan Bennett, Clark Gable, Edward G. Robinson, Lionel Barrymore, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Bette Davis, George M. Cohan, Irene Dunne; all of these stars appeared on Lux before DeMille, and there are others. Even the script writer on Lux, George Wells, was the same before and after DeMille.

The truth is that I am not really sure just exactly what the difference was when DeMille took over, since I have not heard any of the 82 shows prior to his tenure. I suspect, though, that the big difference was DeMille himself. He was a big name in Hollywood. On his first show you can sense the electricity of his personality in the reactions of others. He did seem to be the perfect liaison between the movie

and radio industries since he had a background in both. There is no question that he was able to get stars that had previously refused to do radio. He apparently did lay out the format of the shows. He insisted on a live studio audience. His predecessor had felt that this would interfere with the actor's performance. Instead it seems to have pushed up their adrenaline. There seems to be little question that it was DeMille himself who pushed the show to its achievement level. It obviously didn't reach these levels before him, and I personally feel that it never reached those levels for the ten years that it was on the air after he left.

The show's plays were of all kinds with no concession made to what might be thought of as most popular at the time. But the most popular plays, however, were those which were supposed to appeal more directly to women: namely "Dark Victory," "The Constant Nymph" and "Wuthering Heights."

Actually, while each show was 60 minutes in length, the story itself only ran about 40 to 45 minutes, the rest being taken up by the introduction (on one show this ran 11½ minutes), closing, commercials, station break, interview with the stars, and interviews with other interesting people. But it did give a chance to do a fuller presentation of the movie than the usual 30 minute format did. It also gave a chance to tighten up the movie version which to me was a help. There are several Lux shows that I enjoy, based on movies that I didn't like.

Before the DeMille era Joan Fontaine received \$250 and Alan Ladd received \$100 for their

appearances on Lux. Under DeMille the top price for a star was \$5,000. One star, however, was paid "higher than scale." That was Clark Gable who was paid \$5,001, just so he could say that he was the highest priced star. DeMille himself initially received \$1,500 per show. This was later raised to \$2,000. It is interesting to compare the costs of Lux with some of the other shows of the period. In 1938 Lux cost \$32,300 per week. At the same time the Chase and Sanborn Hour (the Edgar Bergen/Charlie McCarthy show) cost \$3,600 more than Lux and Major Bowes Amateur Hour cost a full \$12,800 more than Lux to put on each week.

All together there were 927 presentations of the Lux Radio Theater. There were no reruns in the present day sense of the term. A number of shows were presented more than once, but always as a live presentation, so there are differences in the script, however slight, and certainly a difference in presentation, particularly since the actors were often different. While most shows appeared only once, quite a few ran two or three times. Only one show, "Seventh Heaven," was presented four times, and it had different stars each time. It was also the first show ever presented on Lux.

Since he was a movie director, many are under the impression that DeMille directed the Lux Radio Theater. Although there were a few individual shows that he did direct, these were the exception and he can't by any stretch be considered the director. He was listed as the producer, but in the strict definition of the word, he didn't produce. Many have written that he was nothing more than an announcer. That is absolutely not



true. He truly shaped the format of the show, as no announcer would be permitted to do. He was personally responsible for obtaining many of the name stars, who had simply refused to do radio. He even took an acting part in at least one show I can think of: "The Seven Keys to Baldpate," with Jack Benny. Frankly, I found him to be the best actor in that particular show. He's the only one who didn't "overact."

DeMille thought big. Remember his production of the Ten Commandments. Often the Lux Theater stage couldn't hold all the people required for a particular show. There were often more than 50 people on the stage for a performance.

A DeMille touch was the interviewing of interesting people related to the movies or related to the subject of the evening's show. We have the only interview I've ever heard with D.W. Griffiths, one with a real butler (on Ruggles of Red Gap), and on the program of Kid Galahad he interviewed both Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney. In movie related fields he had interviews on costumes, writing for the movies, and how to get into the movies, among other things. I found these interviews often more interesting than the show itself, but they faded out before he was through with the show. Apparently he ran out of ideas for them.

DeMille said that his philosophy for the show was to present the "cream of Hollywood's crop of screen productions, neatly packaged and cased for delivery on the air." Generally speaking the show did not use original scripts, but adaptations of movies. When asked why, DeMille responded,

"When you are giving a show for 30 million people, you don't dare be original. You have to know what you are showing is liked. It could only be your own opinion that an untried show was good." But he ran into difficulties from time to time. When he wanted to adapt the film "The Song of Bernadette" for Lux, the sponsor, Lever Brothers, was very reluctant. Finally they agreed and said it could be done, "Providing all religious implications were cut." Obviously this was impossible, so he scrapped the idea. It was presented twice later on, after William Keighley had the show, but I have never heard either production to find out how it was handled. Keighley's philosophy, by the way, was that the show must be "good, solid, clean entertainment in which nothing is ever used to offend." That's a big order.

Each show had four rehearsals before the actual on-the-air broadcast. DeMille did not work through the first three of these rehearsals. The show was put on each Monday, and he would look over the script on Wednesdays. He would not make an appearance until the full dress rehearsal on Sunday. According to Carroll Carroll, one of his writers, he would show up for that rehearsal wearing director type puttees splattered with mud and other stable litter. Once DeMille was snowbound on his ranch a couple of hours before he was due for the on-the-air performance. He borrowed a mule to take him to a place where he could rent a car, and made it to the studio on time. On one occasion (January 9, 1939) he had to be brought to the studio in an ambulance, since he had just had an operation and the doctors restricted him to bed. He spoke his lines from a cot.

Since many people couldn't get into the theater each week, CBS tried to make up to those turned away by distributing little brochures on the stars "mike mannerisms." These pamphlets tell us that Bing Crosby always rehearsed with his pipe clenched between his teeth, even when singing. Robert Cummings read his lines from a semi-crouch, like a boxer. Joan Crawford was a microphone-clutcher, Barbara Stanwyck was a shoe-taker-offer, and Don Ameche drank a pint of milk before every performance.

In its early days some stars wouldn't appear because they couldn't be bothered with radio, or they were afraid of the huge audience they couldn't see. DeMille had his greatest influence in getting people to appear such as Ronald Colman and Shirley Temple. He stated that the only Hollywood stars of importance that had not appeared on Lux were Chaplin and Garbo. Those who were most popular, of course appeared most often. Don Ameche appeared the most, 18 times. Fred MacMurray had 17 appearances. Tops among the women was Barbara Stanwyck at 15. Claudette Colbert and Loretta Young each had 14 appearances. The more popular the star, the longer the lines to get into the show and to get autographs. The longest line was for Roddy McDowell when he appeared in "My Friend Flicka."

There was one occasion when a bee stung a performer as she was entering the theater. She refused to go on until the bee was removed from the theater. The wife of a famous star, in her first radio performance, dropped her script and spent several seconds bewailing the fact before someone thought to turn off the mike.

Lever Brothers sponsored the show throughout its 21 year run. Their commercials were the usual ones heard at the time, including the singing ones. There were mini-dramas on how the poor girl couldn't get the boy of her dreams because she hadn't discovered how Lux toilet soap would help her maintain her feminine daintiness. There were also the endorsements of the stars including an occasional rare one where an actor such as Edward G. Robinson would claim that he always used Lux flakes to wash out his undies.

DeMille was the host from the first of June 1936 to January 22, 1945. It is frequently reported that he was forced off the show because he refused to join the American Federation of Radio Artists (AFRA), the radio actor's union. This is not true; he was a member. It was a dispute with this union, however, that did force him out. In August of 1944 AFRA levied a one time, one-dollar assessment on all its members to fight a proposed "open-shop" law in California. Since he didn't believe in the proposed campaign DeMille refused to pay this fee and he refused to let anyone else pay it for him, so the union suspended him, making it impossible for him to appear on radio. He obtained a temporary injunction permitting him to continue while it went through the courts and they all ruled against him. When the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case he had to leave the show. January 22, 1945 was his last appearance, although no mention of that fact was made during that program. This is truly standing up for your beliefs when you give up a hundred thousand dollar a year job, because you won't pay one dollar. It is interesting to note, by the

way, that the Supreme Court upheld the position that he was taking in the early 1980's. Lionell Barrymore was the first of a series of guest producers that carried the show for almost a year. Then William Keighley took over and carried it to the end of the series on June 7, 1955. While the show maintained its high level of quality under both men, it somehow seems to me that it was rather flat by comparison, under Keighley. It just didn't seem to sparkle any longer. During this final ten years, I find the program to simply be another good dramatic program, with occasional high points.

Following each broadcast, the stars and DeMille were each given "presentation discs" of the show. There were six records in each of these sets, and this is where we have gotten many of our Lux shows that are in circulation today. Many of you have copies of the program "13 Rue Madeline" but your copy has act two missing from this show. Don Aston obtained Marsha Hunt's presentation set for this show, and she had only four instead of the usual six discs, but they were numbered consecutively with that middle act missing. The person who made up these sets, for some reason or other, left act two out, so we are currently operating with only two-thirds of that broadcast.

There were several reasons why the Lux Radio Theater went off the air. It pretty well retained its

audience, but production costs and actors salaries made a spectacular rise. The size of the audience was no longer large enough to make it financially viable. Then of course, there was television. Lever Brothers started sponsoring the Lux Video Theater at a cost of \$5.5 million a year, and they no longer had the money to spend on the radio version. The movie industry itself was being severely hurt by TV and the quality of movies dropped dramatically. Thus Lux Radio Theater found itself producing some pretty low budget stories of questionable value.

Lux was copied overseas. South African radio also had a Lux Radio Theater, based on the same format and with the same sponsor as the American version. Quite a number of those shows are circulating through trading circles (often mistitled as the "English" version of Lux), but they are really terrible.

Of the 927 shows on Lux, I had (and have) 657 in my personal collection before I gave up trading. I uncovered more than a hundred of those and was able to put them into trading circles. I'm sure that a few new ones turn up every year.

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*NOTE: The above material was taken from a talk that your editor delivered at the Newark Friends of Old Time Radio convention on October 23, 1982.*

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Cecil B. DeMille's grand-daughter, Cecilia, was not overly impressed with her grandfather's fame. On one occasion the director overheard someone ask what her grandfather was doing. "He's selling soap," she truthfully answered.

One evening Cecilia did not want to say her prayers. Cecil knelt with Cecilia at her bed and did a rousing rendition of the Lord's Prayer. The child remained obstinately silent until the end: "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. . . ." when she cut in: "This is Cecil B. DeMille saying good-night to you from Hollywood!"

# PRACTICAL JOKE ON THE GREEN HORNET

by  
Clarence Runden

A good friend of mine was Lee Allman who played the part of Lenore Case (Casey), Mr. Reid's secretary on radio's *Green Hornet*. She was very fond of telling the story of a practical joke that had been played on her on this popular series, a joke as she put it, that brought her to a "near collapse."

Each show was broadcast twice, once for the East Coast and then again, after a thirty minute break, for the West Coast audience. On this occasion, Lee described herself as being "very" pregnant. Everyone else knew that the second performance was to be cancelled because of a presidential broadcast, but this information was carefully kept from Lee.

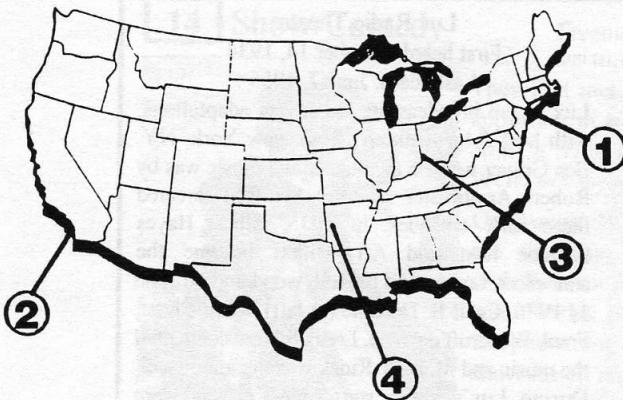
The 7:30 first broadcast went well and then at 8:30 the cast assembled for a "phoney" broadcast of the second one. The announcer gave his usual opening and then the music came up for the usual short period that led into the opening commercial. This time, though, the music didn't fade out. It just went on and on and on with what Lee termed that "stupid bumblebee." The announcer finally got a cue to cut in over the music. At that moment he burped and broke into giggles. The music continued until the announcer could recover. He tried again, but broke up again. The director signalled for someone else to take over. This new individual got through the introduction down to the point of saying "the Green Hornet strikes again," but instead said, "the Lone Ranger strikes again. At this point the entire cast broke up.

Lee said that she was the only one who appeared concerned and that she was getting panicky. But then they managed to get under way with the story line, until one of the actors dropped his script right in the middle of one of his speeches. As he bent to pick it up he started swearing a blue streak, all this with an open microphone. Everyone, except Lee, was laughing or talking all at the same time. She was scared to death of the complete pandemonium all around her, since she thought it was going out over the air.

At this point the director, laughing hysterically, came down out of the booth to let her in on the joke. Trying to sober him up she slapped him across the face just as hard as she could. The others started yelling for her to "hit him again."

The others explained the gag to her. Apparently she had been so upset that they became concerned that she might have her baby right there on the studio floor. In later years, this always seemed to be Lee's favorite story. She repeated it to me a number of times.

# CONVENTIONS:



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The various conventions around the country are outstanding places to enjoy old time radio. All provide re-creations of old radio shows and workshops with some of the stars of old time radio. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities to add a new dimension to your hobby.

We list dates here as soon as we receive them so that you can plan ahead.

- ① **THE FRIENDS OF OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION** is held at the Holiday Inn North at the Newark, New Jersey airport. The hotel provides free shuttle service back and forth to the airport. Contact person is Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514. Jay can be reached by phone at (203) 248-2887 or by e-mail at JayHick@aol.com. Future convention dates are:  
23rd Annual Convention -- October 22 thru 24, 1998  
24th Annual Convention -- October 21 thru 23, 1999
- ② **THE 16TH ANNUAL SPERDVAC CONVENTION** is scheduled for November 13 thru 15, 1998 at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Los Angeles International Airport. A free shuttle service is provided for those flying. The person to contact for information is Larry Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603. He can be reached by phone at (562) 947-9800.
- ③ **THE 13TH ANNUAL OLD TIME RADIO AND NOSTALGIA CONVENTION** is scheduled for April 23 and 24, 1999. Note the return to it's April time slot. This convention is held at the Marriott Inn on the north side of Cincinnati, Ohio. The contact person is Bob Burchette, 10280 Gunpowder Road, Florence, KY 41042. The phone is (606) 282-0333.
- ④ **THE 15TH ANNUAL LUM & ABNER SOCIETY CONVENTION** will be held on June 25 and 26, 1999 in Mena, Arkansas at the Best Western Lime Tree Inn. For information please contact Tim Hollis, 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062. His phone is (205) 648-6110.

**12 Show-Drama****Lux Radio Theatre**

First heard: October 14, 1934

Last heard: June 7, 1955

Lux began broadcasting Broadway adaptations, with host John Anthony, from New York, NY. Ben Grauer was the announcer and music was by Robert Armbruster. Antony Stanford directed these early episodes. In 1935, Albert Hayes became host and Art Millett became the announcer. Lux moved to Hollywood and on June 1, 1936, Cecil B. DeMille (at left) became host, Frank Woodruff directed, Louis Silvers conducted the music and Melville Ruick was the announcer. During Lux's entire run, sound effects were handled by Charlie Forsyth. Other hosts included William Keighley and Irving Cummings. Writers were George Wells and Lux director Sanford H. Barrett. Other directors included Fred MacKaye and Earl Ebi.

When asked in February 1937's *Radio Stars* magazine, what three qualities are most essential in an individual, Milton Berle replied, "Clean humor, original material and distinctive style of delivery." Did Milton Berle say, "Original material?"

**13 Comedian Fred Allen**

born: John Florence Sullivan  
Boston, Massachusetts  
May 31, 1894

Whether he was billed as John Sullivan, Fred St. James, or the "World's Worst Juggler," Fred Allen honed his skills as comedian and master ad-libber during amateur nights, and on vaudeville and in Australia. Fred moved on to Broadway appearing in the *Passing Show of 1922*, where he met his future wife, Portland Hoffa. Fred's radio debut came October 23, 1932 on *The Lint Bath Club Revue*. In 1939, Fred began *Town Hall Tonight*. Later he hosted *The Fred Allen Show*, which lasted until June 26, 1949. Fred moved to tv in 1950 with the *Colgate Comedy Theatre*. And he also served on the panel of the *What's My Line?* tv game show. Fred's movies included *Love Thy Neighbor* (1940) and *It's in the Bag* (1945). Mr. Allen died March 17, 1956.



**14** Show-Comedy



Amos 'n' Andy

Freeman Fisher Gosden \* Charles Correll

May 5, 1899 Richmond, Virginia \* February 2, 1890 Peoria, Illinois  
They first met in Durham, North Carolina in 1919 while appearing in an Elk's Club show. They formed the act of *Sam 'n' Henry* and began their radio career in 1926 over WGN in Chicago.

On August 19, 1929, NBC put them on nation wide with Freeman playing Amos and Charles playing Andy. Despite strong criticism, the show lasted until 1961 after about 10,350 episodes.



The team is said to have played over 500 male parts on their show. Mr. Gosden died December 10, 1982 and Mr. Correll died September 26, 1972.

*Did you know...* That Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy are the only performers ever to receive a *wooden* Academy Award?

**15** Comedian



Edgar Bergen

born Edgar John Berggren

February 16, 1903 Chicago, Illinois

Edgar began perfecting the art of voice-throwing as a child, having learned from a 25¢ mail order ventriloquism book. He helped pay his tuition at Northwestern University by performing a small-time act with his side-kick, Charlie McCarthy. The pair dropped out of college to play the vaudeville and tent-show circuit. The duo's radio debut came December 17, 1936 on *The Rudy Vallee Show*. The following year they had a show of their own, which ran from 1937 to 1955. Their movie debut came in *The Goldwyn Follies* (1938). Along the way Edgar's family added Mortimer Snerd and Effie Clinker. Edgar's last movie appearance was in *The Muppet Movie* (1979). Mr. Bergen died September 30, 1978.

# BUY SELL TRADE

NARA CLASSIFIEDS

Non-commercial ads are free to all members. Your ad will be placed in one issue, but you can resubmit it as often as you like.

The 1998 edition of the OTR SOURCE LIST is now available. This six-page compendium lists every OTR club, dealer, publication, archive, convention, web site and library in the U.S. and Canada, with over 140 separate listings. Each citation contains name, address, telephone and e-mail address, if available. If you have a prior edition, it may be time to update. These lists are color-coded to designate the year. The 1998 version is on yellow paper. Copies printed on white paper are over six years old and the others: gold (1994), purple (1995), green (1996), and orange (1997). Cost is \$2 to NARA members and \$3 to others. Send payment in stamps or cash to Jack French, 5137 Richardson Dr., Fairfax, VA 22032. PLEASE, no checks...our profit margin cannot justify sending Jack to the bank and post office. And send stamps in some usable denomination. Seven 32¢ ones would be about right. All profits go to NARA so be generous. Orders filled same day by return first class mail. (Please do not post this list on the Internet since it is a NARA fund-raiser.) Get your copy soon.

\*\*\*\*\*

PLEASE CALL TOLL FREE if you can recommend scary episodes of any program involving DRIVING AT NIGHT. Carlos Lozano (800) 772-3785.

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: Information that might lead The International Al Jolson Society to the Bing Crosby Chesterfield Show script files. We are looking for the script or script remnants for the program scheduled to be recorded Oct. 24, 1950 which would have featured Al Jolson, who died Oct. 23, 1950. Any lead, no matter how slim, will be appreciated. Contact: Edgar Bullinton, 905 Paseo Grande Circle, Duarte, CA 91010. E-mail address: eb2@rocketmail.com

\*\*\*\*\*

We have a listing of 181 books dealing with old time radio that might be useful to you in building your OTR library. Each entry lists the title, author, publisher and date of publication, a brief description of the contents, and the ISBN number if applicable. We know of no other list that is as complete as this one. Cost is \$2 to NARA members and \$3 to others. Please send payment in cash or seven 32¢ stamps (NO checks please) to B.J. George, 2177 South 62nd Street. West Allis, WI 53219. All profits will be given to NARA.

## NARA NEWS COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATES

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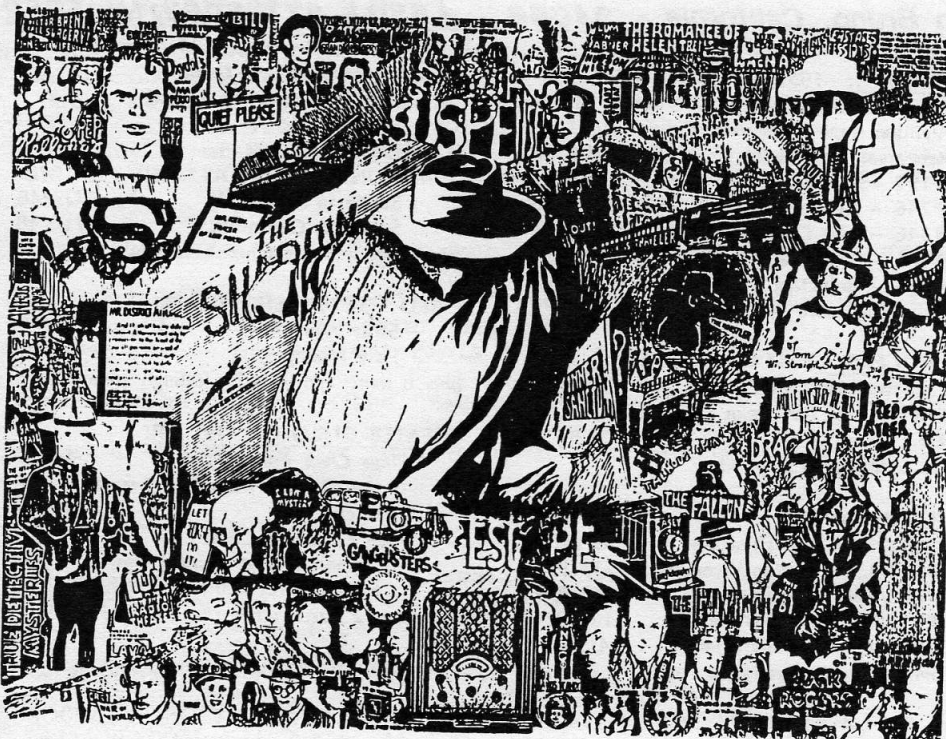
Full page	- \$50.00
Half page	- 25.00
Quarter page	- 15.00

### FOUR ISSUES:

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# LAST CHANCE



This is your **LAST CHANCE** to order Gene Larson's beautiful **FULL COLOR** old time radio poster. It has extremely fine detail that simply doesn't show up in the above black and white reduction. It measures 10 inches by 14 inches, is surrounded by a wide white margin, and comes on high quality card stock ideal for framing. It will be sent in flat packaging (not folded or rolled) and will be shipped by first class mail.

The price, including shipping, is \$15.00 (U.S. funds) for one poster or \$13.00 each if two or more are ordered at the same time going to the same address. Checks should be made out to N.A.R.A. and sent to:

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# FOR RADIO FANS = ALL AGES

\$3.50 each tape {postage included}

Payments to: Nothing's New; #23 Bayhill Shopping Center;

San Bruno, California 94066 {650} 871-6063/fax:6062

## GUNSMOKES: 1952 to 1960 {samples}

Audition show with Rye Billsbury 6/11/49  
Audition show w/Howard Culver 7/13/49  
Rehearsal-New Hotel 2/19/56  
#193 - Scared Kid 12/18/55  
#246 - Beeker's Barn 12/23/56  
#346 - The Correspondent 11/23/58  
#401 - Don Mateo 12/13/59  
#431 - Reluctant Violence 7/10/60

plus over 330 more episodes.

## ROY ROGERS: 1951 through 1953

Outlaws Manson & Norris 12/28/51  
Lee Fox and Len Dean 10/23/52  
Dog Story 3/26/53

and an additional 45 episodes.

## THE LONE RANGER: {a small sampling}

#552/1336 The Breaking 8/15/41  
#593/1377 War In Wyoming 11/19/41  
#895/1682 The Barbary Coast 11/1/43  
#913/1700 First of Lumber 12/13/43  
#971/1751 Calamity Jane 4/10/44

and over 45 more available.

## HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL : (1958-1960)-

#1 Don Miquel Rojas 11/23/58  
#46 The Contessa 10/4/59  
#70 Caesar's Wife 3/20/60

and over 90 more.

## WHATEVER BECAME OF...: (w/R. Lamparski)

Let's Pretend w/Uncle Bill Adams 1/21/69  
This Is Nora Drake w/Mary Jane Higby  
One Man's Family w/Page Gilman  
Young Widder Brown 12/22/70

plus a dozen more.

## And From The BBC:

LORD PETER WIMSEY - 6 episodes of  
"Strong Poison"

BBC World Theater - ROSS {about T. E.  
Lawrence, aka: Lawrence of Arabia}  
4 episodes

BBC World Theater - Pablo Neruda's poem  
*The Radiancance and Death of*  
*Joaquin Murieta* in 4 parts

## FOR HUMOR:

### MILTON BERLE SHOW - 1947 & 1948

Salute to New York 1/27/48  
Salute to California 2/10/48

{and over a dozen other 'salute to' shows}

### RED SKELTON SHOW {1946}

Stray Animals 2/19/46  
Easy Money 4/16/46

plus 6 more and all with Raleigh commercials.

## THEATER GUILD ON THE AIR:

*Wings Over Europe* 9/9/45

{w/Burgess Meredith, Everett Sloane}

*Dead End* 2/24/46

{w/Richard Conte}

*The Importance of Being Ernest* 4/13/47

{w/Margaret Rutherford, John Gielgud}

and over a dozen other fine plays as well.

And there are many many more such as:

## SPOTLIGHT REVUE + CHASE & SANBORN

with Spike Jones and Dorothy Shay

{*The Beverly Avenue Hillbilly*}

32 plus shows of these.

ABBOTT & COSTELLO with 24 broadcasts  
covering 1944 through 1948.

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GILDERSLEEVE, AMOS & ANDY and more !!!

For more details, send SASE (55¢) to Nothing's  
New {address above} or \$3.50 for a trial  
cassette to same address. Specify custom  
labeling such as "Library of John B. Doakes".

# A TIP OF THE ATWATER DIAL TO....

The following for financial contributions to NARA:

Don Aston of Lake Elsinore, California  
Janis DeMoss of Nicholasville, Kentucky  
Jim Snyder of Mesa, Arizona

More members who have been reviewing boxes of cassettes for NARA's library, and the approximate number of cassettes they have checked:

Bobby Mayes of San Pablo, California - 1,100 cassettes  
Jack Smith of Victorville, California - 530 cassettes  
Jim Snyder of Mesa, Arizona - 1,700 cassettes

If you are able to help with this project, please see page 6 for information.

Robert Simpson, NARA's vice-president, for clippings and other materials.

B.J. George for "Gildersleeve" and "Fibber McGee" scripts, and for logs of the "Six Shooter" and "Frontier Gentleman" radio series. These have all been placed in our printed materials library.

Jay Hickerson on receiving the "Parley Baer Award." Please see page 24.

Robert Brown on getting his long delayed book finally out and available (see page 4).

Roger Hill and *Nothing's New* for the ad on page 49.

B.J. George for making a list of available OTR books for us and donating the profits from the sale of this to NARA. Also thanks for the "Secret Squadron" card found on page 8.

Our columnists in this issue: Steve Allen, Don Aston, Frank Bresee, Bob Burnham, Jim Cox, Jack French, B.J. George, Al Inkster, Jack Palmer, Clarence Runden, Chuck Seeley, Ray Smith, and Hal Stephenson.

Those who have already sent in articles for future issues (we appreciate the your early submissions): Frank Bresee (4 articles), B.J. George, Gene Larson (3 articles), Bob Mott (3 articles), Jack Palmer, Ray Smith, and Hal Stephenson (8 articles). PLEASE NOTE OUR EARLY DEADLINE FOR THE WINTER ISSUE.

*Thanks to all of you!!!*

## DEADLINES:

September 15 for the fall issue

November 15 for the winter issue

(Please note that this is one month earlier than usual.)