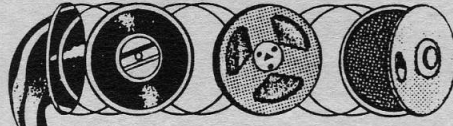
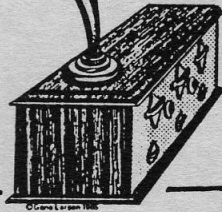


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A JOURNAL OF VINTAGE RADIO

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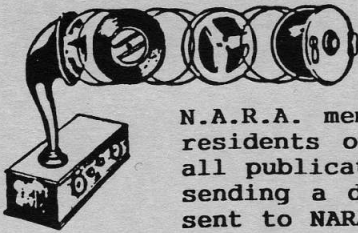
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our staff....

PRESIDENT:

Ronald Staley
141 Burbank Blvd. #4
Van Nuys, CA 91401

VICE-PRESIDENT:

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

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Tom Monroe
2055 Elmwood Ave.
Lakewood, OH 44107

TREASURER:

Don Aston
P.O. Box 1392
Lake Elsinore, CA 92532

PRESIDENT EMERITUS:

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

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PRINT LIBRARIAN:

Bob Sabon
308 W. Oraibi Dr.
Phoenix, AZ 85027

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR:

John Pellatt
47 Stuart Avenue
Willowdale, Ontario
M2N 1B2 CANADA

STAFF ARTIST:

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

EDITOR:

Jim Snyder
2929 E. Main St. #149
Mesa, AZ 85213

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RADIO SOUND EFFECTS

by ROBERT L. MOTT

NARA member Bob Mott was both a radio and TV sound effects person handling these duties on such radio shows as *Gangbusters*, *Phillip Morris Playhouse*, and also working with Edward R. Murrow and Lowell Thomas. He also worked the *Ed Sullivan Show* on TV. The following is from one of his books, *RADIO SOUND EFFECTS* which can be ordered from McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 (919 246-4460). Price is \$41.95 which includes shipping.

In trying to document any series of events, the passage of time is your enemy. Records get lost or destroyed and recollections become hazy. This is especially true when your subject matter is as unique as the men and women of sound effects.

Sound effects are to our ears what pulling rabbits out of a hat is to our eyes. It's the art of deception. It's the art of painting pictures for the imagination. It's taking an ordinary bowl of cooked spaghetti and convincing the listening audience they are hearing a giant worm hungrily devouring people in their sleep. It's eating an ear of corn in such a way as to conjure a picture in the audience's mind of a horde of terrified rats trying to escape from drowning by gnawing their way through the wooden walls of a lighthouse. Or using glass wind chimes for the sound of sunlight—or two moist rubber gloves twisted and stretched for the sound of a human body being turned inside out...or...or... The list of sounds is endless.



Bob Mott taking care of the sound effects on the *Captain Kangaroo* television show.

Despite how creative all those sounds were, what made this sleight of hand for the ears so convincing was the listeners' imagination. How frightening these scenes were depended on the listeners' involvement with the words and sounds that came out of their radio. Involvement—that's what made radio magic, the involvement of sound and imagination. Little wonder radio was called the theater of the mind.

As you might imagine, people who earned their living going around looking for things that sound like a terrified rat or a people-eating worm were members of a rather unusual occupation. An occupation that even during the heyday of radio probably had fewer members than the University of Michigan marching band.

You might also imagine that people who knew how to make things go bump in the night also knew how to dream up some rather bizarre pranks and practical jokes. And you'd be right. Have you ever tried to do the sound effect of opening a door to discover it's locked? Or push a button labeled DOORBELL and the telephone rings?

Although there was nothing new about mischief in the workplace, it was new when the workplace also happened to be live radio or television and the mischief was overheard by millions of people.

Today, in this world of computerized thinking, it's difficult to imagine some of the bizarre and outrageous stories and practical jokes that occurred during the early days of radio and television. But, occur they most certainly did.

One explanation for these practical jokes held that they were a test to see how resourceful and quick-thinking we were under fire. The problem with that theory was, doing a show live for an audience of millions was enough of a test. Most of

us didn't need any more excitement in our lives. This however didn't keep the pranksters from removing the phonograph needles from your pickup arms and replacing them with blunt pieces of paperclips--or fixing your door so that it would fall off its hinges the first time you opened it--or any number of other dirty deeds designed to keep you constantly on the alert for trouble--real or manufactured.

However, it's one thing to be prepared for a calamitous act. When it never happens, you begin to worry about that, too. It begins to create an atmosphere of paranoia. Waiting for the other shoe to drop will do that to a person.

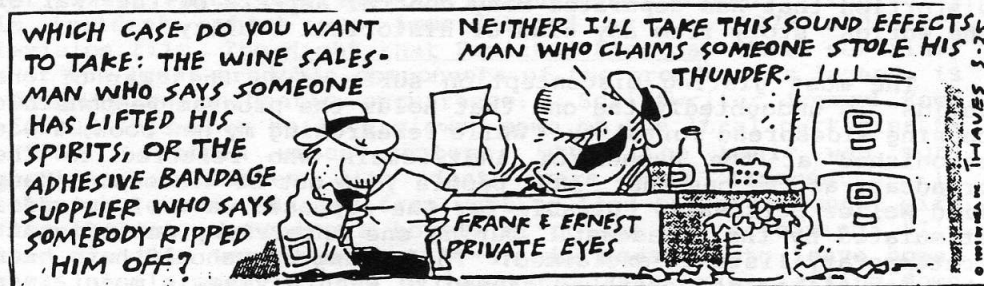
To paraphrase Mark Twain, once a cat sits on a hot stove, it will never sit on a hot stove again. Then again, it will never sit on a cold one, either.

That was what it was like during the live days of radio and television. In addition to the pressures of

doing programs that were live, we had to be constantly in a state of preparedness for the unpredictable because, like Twain's cat, we never knew when that seemingly cold stove was suddenly going to burn us.

Strangely enough, with the removal of the pressures that were inherent with live broadcasting, the pranks and practical jokes became less frequent. Today, with the increasing reliance on computers, they are all but nonexistent. It appears that Fred Allen, the radio comedic genius, was accurate when he prophesied those many years ago, "Broadcasting is rapidly becoming a triumph of technical equipment over people.

Perhaps that is true today, Fred. But back in the golden days of live radio and television, it most certainly was the people who mattered. And as important and serious as broadcasting was way back then, there were always a few who refused to take it that seriously.



EDITOR'S NOTE

We are pleased to have an article by sound effects artist, Bob Mott, in this issue of the NARA NEWS. This will be followed up with an article in our fall issue by CBS sound effects man, Ray Erlenborn, telling us about his "adventures in early radio." Also Frank Bresee has another of his insightful columns in these pages and another will appear in our fall NEWS. We are delighted to have these celebrities sharing their experiences with us.

When you write to me, I try to respond promptly. However there have been some long lags in my getting back to you for the last three months. I apologize. I am traveling extensively and current schedules call for this to continue on into January. At times I am gone for a full month and have the post office holding my mail for me. When I return from one of my jaunts I WILL answer your letters right away, but please understand the reason for the delay. I am not ignoring you!



THROUGH THE ETHER

WITH

ROBERT J. BROWN

THE "WAR OF THE WORLDS": THE PERSISTENCE OF MYTH

On October 30, 1938 Orson Welles and his Mercury players shocked the nation with their pseudo-news adaptation of the well-known Victorian science-fiction novel, "War of the Worlds. While this program is universally recognized by historians and collectors alike as the single most famous broadcast of all time, and there is scarcely an American who has not heard it, it also holds the unique distinction of being the most misunderstood. In the almost sixty years that have passed since that Depression-era Halloween Eve, the history of the broadcast: its evolution, social impact, and legacy, has been subjected to the most persistent mythologizing. The speculation of popular writers, the uncritical work of professional biographers captivated by the Welles mystique, and the comments of bewildered contemporaries, have all contributed to the process of distortion that has separated many central aspects of the "War of the Worlds" story from any kind of historical reality.

The most glaring misconception surrounding the "War of the Worlds" is undoubtedly the one that holds the program responsible causing widespread mortality. While researching my new book, I was astonished at the number of individuals who referred to the broadcast as the one that "made people jump out of windows." Many find Welles personally culpable for the supposed wave of suicides stimulated by the broadcast. During one interview, an indignant contemporary listener exclaimed: "That young man should have been shot for all of the death he caused!" Such a view is maintained not only by old-timers but by the younger generation as well. In a February 1996 National Public Radio interview with recent Welles biographer Simon Callow, one adolescent caller enquired: "Was Welles haunted by the fact that his program had compelled so many to take their own lives?"

Despite the pervasiveness of this interpretation, and its persistence over half a century, it is now clear that it is completely erroneous. Welles's aural Halloween prank was responsible for causing widespread terror and even panic -this is beyond debate. But reports of a twentieth-century Masada are totally unfounded. Of the estimated six million listeners who heard the CBS sustainer, over 1.7 million accepted the program as actual news and became frightened, and 1.2 million were so severely shaken that they took some kind of action to protect themselves from the supposed invasion. Had more than 12% of the potential listening audience tuned in to the broadcast, these figures would have been significantly higher. All across the country, panicky listeners prepared for the arrival of the rampaging Martian machines. In the northeast, where most of the script action

occurred, people donned gas masks, barricaded themselves within their homes, or joined the mad throng of traffic out of town. In town and country alike, police stations, radio studios, newspaper departments, and government offices were inundated with phone calls from frantic listeners seeking emergency instructions. After enduring a spate of natural disasters and the threat of impending war during the Munich Crisis, many Americans now felt that the end of the world was finally at hand.

The agitated state of the public's nerves certainly increased the possibility that someone would be hurt. While the reaction of most listeners had been of an overwhelmingly defensive nature (hiding out, fleeing, etc.), some chose to face their extraterrestrial attackers rather than await their fate passively. In rural districts across the nation, aroused civilians armed themselves and joined militia bands which roamed the countryside in search of the Martians. In the autumnal darkness (the broadcast was aired at 10:00 pm), there were several close-calls, as these trigger-happy amateur soldiers fired upon any object that they could not readily identify. Near the site of the real Grover's Mills, New Jersey, one such posse opened up on a "menacing" town water tower, which they mistook for an alien tripod. Ironically this incident, which was immortalized by the 1978 made-for-television film, The Night that Panicked America, while certainly one of the least credible components of the broadcast's legend, is in reality an authentic occurrence. Scriptwriter Howard Koch confirmed this when he interviewed some of the local participants in 1969. Within urban centers, where the panic was more concentrated, brushes with death were more frequent. In Pittsburgh, a man returned from work to find his overwrought wife in the bathtub clutching a bottle of poison and screaming: "I'd rather die this way than that!" In the scramble to leave home, several people were injured by breaking glass or by falling down stairs. On numerous highways experiencing the hasty exodus out of town, cars piled into one another, and high-speed accidents were common. For those who chose to take no self-preserving action, the sheer strain of the situation was sufficient to cause heart trouble and nervous complications. In many hospitals, people in large numbers were treated for severe shock. In this highly-charged atmosphere, it is certainly a miracle that no one suffered death.

Despite the mental anguish and physical strain that many experienced, the only casualties on this Halloween Eve were the fictional inhabitants of Welles and Koch's imaginations. The young producer was exceedingly fortunate in this, for the day after the broadcast CBS found itself faced with over \$12 million in lawsuits brought about by aggrieved individuals for non-fatal injuries alone. If there had been any deaths, even one that were not associated with the broadcast but could be conveniently attributed to it, Columbia could have been sued out of existence, and the career of the promising future director of Citizen Kane prematurely terminated. As it turned out, time took the sting out of the public's outrage, and the suits were eventually dropped.

If there was no loss of life as a result of the broadcast, where did the perception of large-scale mortality originate? It now appears that the source of this myth can be traced to a group of inquisitive newspaper reporters, who, anxious to discredit their electronic competitor and expose the baleful influence it maintained over the public, exaggerated the popular reaction during a press conference with Welles the morning after the broadcast. Ironically, in magnifying the negative consequences of the program, the newspapers acted in a much more hysterical fashion than the countless listeners whose actions they so roundly criticized and made light of. This hyperbolic assessment of the public response has been perpetuated, and in many cases embellished even more, by scores of radio disc jockeys who have re-aired the program every Halloween night since 1938.

Just as the press was responsible for establishing the suicide legend, it also played a role in perpetuating another widely-held myth -that the Welles broadcast was successful in eliciting a hysterical response only because of the peculiar political, economic and social environment in which it was aired. For days after the Mercury play, newspapers around the globe were replete with columns and editorials denouncing Welles for having played upon listeners' fear of war and their deference for the authoritative radio voice. Welles's critics, writing a few years after the event, have charged that he was only successful in frightening the public because somehow people "were less sophisticated and more credulous in those days." Subsequent writers, embracing this relativist notion, have argued that the "modern" listener/viewer is much better educated, more critical, and less gullible than his Depression-era forebears. Such observers have remarked that if the Welles ruse were to be attempted today, it would be laughed off as third-rate science-fiction. While this seems to be the prevailing view among most psychologists and sociologists today, one has only to look at the historical record to see its utter falaciousness. The history of broadcasting during the decades following the "War of the Worlds" is full of examples of Welles-style hoaxes being perpetrated on radio and television in many nations (to those such as Hitler who perceived it as a peculiarly American phenomenon), and with similar results -although nowhere near the scale achieved in 1938. As a matter of fact, as Harvard psychologist Hadley Cantril observed, in an era of enormous international tension (Cold War), the advent of nuclear bombs and other weapons of mass destruction, and the capability to deliver them suddenly and without warning on an unsuspecting population, has made a repeat performance of 1938 not only more credible, but far more possible. Recent trends seem to bear this out. In 1982, a German television spoof of an extraterrestrial attack sent thousands of people to their telephones to obtain help. Examples are even more readily at hand. Only a year and a half ago, on Halloween Eve 1994, CBS presented a modernized version of "War of the Worlds" as a made-for-television movie, and several hundred viewers were fooled. Local newspapers across the country reported that during the airing of this film, and despite numerous disclaimers, individuals phoned in to their local stations to enquire about this alien visitation. So much for the credulous masses of the 1930s as a "special" case.

While its technical excellence, superb scripting, and fine performances have established the "War of the Worlds" as one of the finest examples of early broadcasting extant, its much-exaggerated and heavily mythologized reputation has assured it a position as certainly the most notorious. Centuries from now, Americans will still remember this program, even those who have never heard it firsthand. While the familiarity and popularity of this broadcast are undoubtedly due to its infamous stature, it is important to keep in mind the historical truth that underlies the fiction. By examining the reality behind the Welles myth, we not only can arrive at a more accurate understanding of the program's true impact, we are allowed a glimpse into some of human nature's most timeless attributes -our fascination with sensationalism and our penchant for accepting and perpetuating rumor- as well as the often false conviction that as we advance with age we necessarily improve in mind. The Welles program was the most spectacular demonstration of broadcasting's influence over our lives and its dangerous ability to deceive, and the fact that it is still so pervasively remembered, even if somewhat fancifully, by the present generation is striking proof of golden-age radio's enduring quality.

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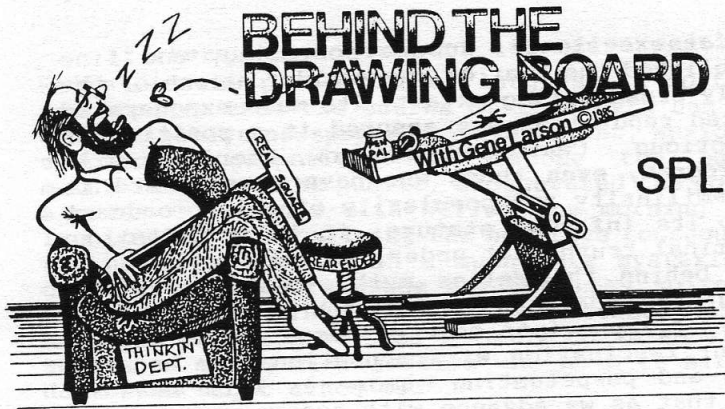
HONORS

Don Ramlow, NARA's "Midwest Aquisitions Chairman," was honored at the 10th annual Cincinnati Old Time Radio Convention in April, where he received the second annual "Stone/Waterman Award." The award is named after Ezra Stone (Henry Aldrich) and Willard Waterman (the Great Gildersleeve), both of whom were very active in this convention prior to their deaths. It is presented annually to people who have made outstanding contributions to the old time radio hobby.



Ramlow is a member of the public administration staff in the city of Portage, Michigan and is working on his doctorate at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. Each year, for a number of years, he has directed all the radio re-creations at the Cincinnati convention as well as many of the re-creations at the Newark convention. He and his wife Mary have been responsible for the video taping of each of those conventions with the tapes made available to all interested parties following the conventions. As the Midwest Aquisitions Chairman for NARA he has been working at getting outside financial grants for our club.

This award is certainly highly deserved, and we congratulate Don on this recognition.



SPLIT PERSONALITY

by
Gene Larson

Radio has always been an exciting experience for me from the early days of listening right on through my broadcasting experience. The world of radio has changed slowly over the years and then has seemed to surge into lightning-speed technology that makes a current broadcaster's head spin. I receive an ongoing publication covering today's radio world and the terminology from the first page-on is enough to immediately send my mind into complete meltdown. Radio has become largely computerized and satellite-oriented to the extent that the "latest" equipment is already obsolete before it can even be installed. Everything is just moving too fast in my estimation.

The big cities still have some "personality" stations where the listeners can identify with people on the air but that, too, is becoming more of a rarity. The personality trend leans more toward radio "talk" hosts who broadcast over a chain of stations nowadays which in itself is becoming less personable. And that is so unfortunate. The best radio days were in a time when we actually listened attentively for entertainment...."foreground" radio, so to speak. Now it has become more of a "background" media with only a few exceptions. British, Canadian, and our own Public Radio currently remain the closest to "radio for the mind", I believe.

Disc jockeys are giving way to "space jockeys"...those rather annoying satellite pedal-pushing-time-filling babbling people who push CD's all day and night. (Those do NOT include those rare individuals who downlink vintage radio and classical programming!) Don't mean to sound bitter, I just think there could be much better programming overall on the wonderful satellite technology. For instance, most of us have been traveling somewhere and just happened to catch a station carrying one of our favorite vintage radio shows. And after hearing three-quarters of the pure "mind candy" we'd suddenly hear it fade into nothing as we'd pass out of the station's range. MADDENING!! Right at the climax! So if satellite technology were properly used that wouldn't happen to us. Instead, we have the "pleasure" of hearing the same guy and his stale jokes and repetitious top-twenty tunes anywhere we go without skipping a beat. (Somebody's going to get me for this! Ha! Ha!)

Ah, yes. From the simple to the complex world of radio. Guess I "beat up" on the satellite form of broadcasting because I live in a small town where every station (we have five) is satellite-driven and every station echoes the other twenty-four hours a day, the only exception being different services that do the same thing. You could almost set your watch to the same song that plays at the same time every day on any one of the stations (seemingly.) I call them "live-automated juke boxes."

Not long ago I got the urge to go back into radio to see what it would feel like. If you've read this column before you may remember my writing about "radio nightmares." Well, THIS experience was a LIVING nightmare! And I believe that I have

exhausted my desire for broadcasting from this time forward. I've had some testy radio experiences in my time but this one makes the rest of them a joke.

I saw an ad in the local paper for the need of a "radio announcer" at a station within driving distance from here. I answered the ad and after six months of waiting received a call from the owner. Then reported for work the following week.

My first indoctrination was to check a switch to make sure it would be in the right position to be on "automatic" so the station would on satellite by itself all night. Then check another switch for the air conditioner/furnace operation. On to the answering machine and set it on "automatic" while I'd be on duty. Then climb some stairs and open a door in the loft so I could "eyeball" an array of transmitter towers and spot the right one to see if its strobes were firing. Back downstairs and fill out a form for "on duty." Fill out a transmitter log, an operator's log, and find the log I was supposed to sit on to work. Then I was shuttled to the production room and shown the operation there of things that did NOT actually operate. A cassette deck with an on/off switch that had no indication of whether it was working except whether the cassette would run or not. A reel-to-reel machine with a take-up reel that worked only sometimes. A turntable with a missing stylus that was "put away" somewhere so it wouldn't be stolen by whoever "put it away somewhere." The control board that ran the "AM" station on which "only part of it" could be used or you'd be on the air. A music library with hundreds of timed "music beds" with no indication of what they would sound like unless you listened to all of them. And a time clock you'd have to set with one hand as you turned on the microphone with the other and started the cassette or reel-to-reel machine (if they worked) with your third hand....while playing the record on the turntable with no stylus with your fourth hand. And that was supposed to be the easy part.

On to the control room. The first duty was to get the latest weather report from the weather radio (the station had long-since eliminated all wire services) and another unit had to be unplugged in order to plug in the weather radio. Then listen through world, national, and regional before coming to the local weather forecast and write down whatever information you could get from that. Other operations followed about the same line of reasoning: this wouldn't work unless that was unplugged first, etc. Of course there were the transmitter readings to be taken and satellites to be switched between programs.

My experience in radio has taught me that when a station had two services, one AM and one FM, they were either simulcast (same format broadcast on both stations simultaneously) or "split" (each station with its own format.) Here's where the nightmare begins: one person has to operate two different formats at once! From two different satellites! Each with its own commercial breaks where the operator has to play commercials on cartridges for each station....sometimes SIMULTANEOUSLY!

I was given a set of earphones and told to use only one side. I was to listen to the "contemporary" FM on the one earphone and the "country" AM from the monitor speaker overhead. And when the person at the satellite station hit the pedal to fire my cartridge machine I was to pull out another cartridge in the bank of machines so it wouldn't play over the one that had a commercial on it. And if I was to play a CD on the air in the control room I had to flip a switch under the console to disable the tape machine that I wasn't playing anyway. (And in case I went ballistic and had to disable everything else to play a record, the turntable didn't have AN ARM on it!!) [Had somebody actually tapped into one of my "radio nightmares????"] All of this was FOR REAL!

The man who was training me for that entry into the insane asylum was very patient with me as he grabbed my shirt tail each time I broke for the door. He first taught me how to run the AM side and to circumvent the myriad ways of obtaining meltdown. All went well during that week of sleep-loss and indigestion. I actually thought I was going to override that living nightmare as things began falling into place.

By the second week of training I had learned all of the pre-air moves and had them listed on a piece of paper in my pocket, as a backup. Then I began training on the FM side. In a few days I got things down fairly well. Then came the ultimate test of strength and sanity....working BOTH STATIONS AT ONE TIME. The guy left the control room and sat in the production room to observe my performance.

Earphone to my left ear, right ear cocked to the ceiling monitor speaker, I began as the first commercial break fired on the FM side. All right! Then, as if I didn't expect it, the AM side fired off its first commercial....and panic began to set in. I was told somewhere along the way that sometimes the SAME COMMERCIAL would be called for on both stations (with only one cartridge available) and it happened! I either had full control of the situation or had



OR.... THE NEW KIDS IN TOWN

gone into a trance and DIDN'T KNOW what I was doing, but it worked out fine. As the last of each side's commercials were playing I happened to look up to see my trainer laughing and shaking his head. Couldn't figure out his reaction until I got the AM station back on satellite and was closing out the break on the FM station. Then I discovered that I forgot to turn off the satellite music control on its side and WAS PLAYING MUSIC ON TOP OF ALL THE COMMERCIALS! At that moment I felt I had lost anything I had previously gained.

After several "AW, THAT HAPPENS!" in reaction to my verbal disappointment, the patient fellow took me into the production room to make a commercial...another regular duty for the shift. Usually this would take only a few minutes for me to do, since it was once my full-time job at a previous station. But with all of the equipment oddities in that studio, it took me about forty-five minutes to grind out a sixty-second spot. Even then it had no music behind it. So with the other guy's third and fourth hands to run the music, the commercial spot was finally finished. To me that was an insult to my integrity. By the time this unfit use of time had elapsed it was time for another break but the guy took pity on me and let me finish the shift on one station only.

When I came back the following week to continue my training, I told the fellow that I had miraculously gotten all ideas of returning to radio completely out of my mind! And that I'd stick with my memories from here-on, thank you. The very idea of running a radio station in each ear is absurd in itself, but to even attempt it at minimum wage is even worse. I always choose to learn the hard way, it seems.

You may think that the preceding story was fabricated....believe me, it wasn't. This really happened to me last year, and it IS hard to think such an occurrence could take place. However, I DID earn enough money to pay a couple of bills and had enough left over for soup and crackers.

The downside of it all is the fact that the next time I have one of my "radio nightmares" I might not question ANYTHING that happens! Happy listening!

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 CATALOG

The listing of the 20,000 shows in the cassette library is \$13.00 (checks payable to NARA). For a copy please contact Barry Hill, Route 1, Box 197, Belpre, OH 45714.

REEL-TO-REEL CATALOG

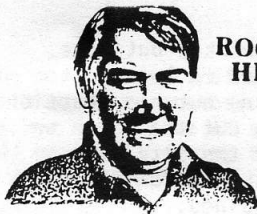
The catalog of the 15,000 shows available in our reel-to-reel library costs \$18.00 (make checks out NARA). They can be obtained from Scott Jones, 4741 East Grant Ave. Fresno, CA 93702.

SCANFAX CATALOG

A list of the various program series that are available in our new SCANFAX cassette library is available for \$1.00 and a self addressed stamped envelope. You can then request program titles for those series that are of interest to you. Send your requests to Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92532.

PRINTED MATERIALS CATALOG

The printed materials library currently has three catalogs ready, the book catalog (407 books), the script catalog (228 scripts), and the catalog of logs (29 logs). To receive all of these, please send ten 32 cent stamps to Bob Sabon, 308 West Oraibi Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85027.



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HILL

THE OLD CURMUDGEON

You may remember that a previous issue of NARA NEWS included one of the summaries a student of mine did for extra credit in the biology class I teach at City College of San Francisco. Well, I have some more turned in by students during the Spring Semester of 1996 and thought the editor might find these worth including for your reading. Bear in mind that my students range from 18 to 60 and work full time during the day {taking the class at night twice a week at the college}. They come from many ethnic backgrounds with quite a few being from Hong Kong, Vietnam, and other Asian/Middle Eastern countries.

I ask them to listen to the tapes given them and write a summary to tell me what the story is about and tie it into biology if possible. Then, include a paragraph of their own response or opinion of the tape. Sometimes the student misses the point entirely. Sometimes the writing is so illegible that I just give up. But here are portions of some of the summaries I thought of interest.

*"Ring of Toth" is one of those **Escape** programs concerning eternal life and the curse of living on and on and on. My student wasn't able to catch the name of the Egyptian so she just put "S_____". Here's what she had to say,*

John Smith, a student of Egyptian history, met the Egyptian master of science in the Lu Museum in Paris. The name of the Egyptian was S_____. He had invented a special fluid that enabled anyone who used it to exclude for all esternal harm for approximately 5000 years. S_____ gave his friend this fluid and persuaded his lover, Alma, to take this fluid too. Alma was confused about the ability of this fluid. While she was giving one more night to consider S_____ 's offer, she was killed by S_____ 's friend. S_____ 's friend also found the antidose for this special fluid, however, he refused to tell S_____ the exact location where he hid it. He only mentioned that it was in one of the ring and he died. S_____ searched for Alma and the antidose

for 3500 years, and was finally located them in the Lu Museum in Paris. S____ killed himsellf with the antidose, however, his death only merited the beginning of another life.

I do not correct their spelling or typo errors for this article. It helps you to see some of the listening difficulties people have when they are not used to such radio drama. The student's opinion comment was —

This story is very similar to "Romeo and Juliet". The Egytian's searching for the antidose so that he could kill himself and be with Alma in the underworld proves his love to Alma. However, I am more amuse of the advance science technology Egypt has compare to the rest of the world. Many historical objects discovered in Egypt are still cannot be explain with modern technology. The ability of the ancient Egyptian to invent medicine that could keep a person alive for 5000 years amuses me. If this technology is in use in today's world, it could give scientists and researchers more advantage to explore the unknown or the unsolve mystery of human.

It isn't clear to me if the student understood this was merely a fantasy story or if she thought it really had taken place.

*Then another person wrote about "The Thing On the Fourable Board" (a **QUIET PLEASE** show and one of my favorites)*

The story takes place at an oil rig in Wyoming. It is about an oil field worker, a "roughneck", named "Porky" and his strange experience one night at the oil rig. After a hard days work of drilling for oil, he and a geologist were at the oil rig relaxing, eating pork chops, and drinking Gin. The geologist was also examining core samples of rock when they discover a stone finger and a ring. They are shocked since this sample of rock comes from a mile down

beneath the surface, and a million years old. What was this finger doing there and who's was it? It was obvious that someone or something had escaped from the well, or was drawn from the well. Suddenly, the finger and the ring disappear as they wipe off the grease, oil, and dirt. It was invisible! *The student goes on to tell more of the story and concludes by saying,*

A very strange story.

Another person did a review of "Abominable Snowman" from the ESCAPE series. Their conclusion was....

This story reflects a lot of people is escaping everyday for many reasons. This will be stopped. It is the same as the scientists are doing their jobs everyday to observe or find out all the things in this world. It will be stopped either. We can tell the knowledge of the science has been improved from many centuries to today now. A lot of things could not discovered many years old because of the lack of knowledge. The scientists may find out a lot of things in the future that we don't know now.

I'm as confused as you probably are about what the student is trying to say. Seems they are drawing a lot of parallels to perhaps their own experiences or maybe trying to apply what they think they learned from the story to political situations today. Perhaps one problem is today's generation being unable to enjoy a story for just the sake of it being a story. And then there was the student who gave complete details as heard concerning the writer, narrator, director, actors, and music composer for "Zero Hour" {also an ESCAPE show}- The opinion paragraph said,

This was a good story- leaving up to me and my imagination of who or what was the waivering blue shadows controlling the children, as there was a bit of suspense to the story-making me wanting Mary to tell how once and for all what she thought was going on. My own thoughts is that the children had made up a really powerful imaginary friend that would destroy anybody that was in charge of dominant towards kids. Authority figures.

I have one student who is so very serious....as without humor as I've ever seen. And she's only 23 or so years old. Anyway, she took "Death of a Wombat", a story from Australian Broadcasting about a fire in the outback and how the various animals were affected. Koalas died in their treetops, dingos ran through the fire. And the centerpiece of the story...the wombat...shuffled and crumped along to reach water and then sank to his death after being so burned he couldn't survive. The student's comments took up a whole page and I'd just like to excerpt a few portions of it for you.

I had a good time listening to the tape. What a tragic end to the poor creature. And all because of the carelessness of human beings in their ways of disposal of hazardous chemicals and other wastes products. The fact is, it's up to us to help preserve our natural resources and make our environment a safe place to live. We need to pitch in to keep our environment clean and safe by disposing of our wastes in the right place and not just anywhere. We should avoid doing anything that may set off a forest or bushland on fire by carelessly tossing a lighted cigarette butt or something flammable, especially during the hot and dry season. Many similar incidents happen in a lot of places around the world, killing wild and endangered animals, birds, and other living creatures. By being more responsible human beings, we can help preserve nature or natural resources as God intended it to be in this wonderful creation of His.

Maybe I'm the one off base but when I've listened to these shows such as this above one, I don't think I've dwelt on how terrible mankind can be in destroying the environment. Rather, I was moved by the use of music to reflect the story and how the narration brought alive the images of these creatures and their reactions to the fire. I focused on mental images of dingo panting and waiting for the right moment to charge through the flames. I wept inside at the images of little koalas trapped in their Eucalyptus prison tops and bursting into little furry torches. I felt the determination and instinct of each waddle and crump of the wombat as he edged closer and closer to cooling water.....a coolness which would also be his grave. I savoured these images for the

images they were and not drawing conclusions about man's destructiveness on environment. Perhaps too many of today's younger generation are preoccupied with "doom and disaster" as stated by science and newspapers. Perhaps the pure enjoyment of stories such as we have in our old radio shows is beyond their abilities.

Another tape I like to provide is an all-time favorite from the *SUSPENSE* series, "Donovan's Brain" with Orson Welles. The student who summarized this one got almost all of it down right. Their commentary ended with,

...Leave it to the woman in the play to have the most sense. What I would like to know though is how she convinced the hospital that she was not insane? I remember watching television shows like this on Sunday mornings when I was growing up. The one that comes to mind is "Creature Double Feature". It is beyond my imagination to come up with a story that poses the question of "what if a human brain without its owner were to be kept alive?" This play kept my attention, because although it was a pretty outrageous plot it still had me listening to the outcome.

There were other summaries turned in besides the ones I've mentioned here. Some of them were just too shoddy to include, a couple I could barely read, and a couple of others were fine reports. I enjoy reading what the students experience in their listening because, like most of you, I am convinced in the values which hearing and enjoying these vintage radio broadcasts provides to us. We can learn history, tolerance, good behaviour, courtesy, patience, love, understanding, sympathy for others, how to share a smile, how to laugh at our own selves sometimes, how to feel afraid and yet know we're safe inside our homes. We can enjoy so many experiences through our

old radio shows. And even if it isn't politically correct, I enjoy many of the commercials too.....such as Lucky Strike on the *Jack Benny* show and Johnson's Wax with *Fibber and Molly*. Or Rinso White on *Amos and Andy*. I like hearing Johnny call for Philip Morris. I like hearing that little voice say, "Smoke Kools, Smoke Kools" I enjoy the singing, spelling "C A M E L S". And Cream of Wheat and Bromo Selzer which "Fights Headaches Three Ways". The pleasure of *Columbia Workshop*, a superb sustaining program series showcasing extraordinary talent and stories. The fright of *Lights Out* and wonderfully scary sound effects. William Conrad's deep voice on so many programs from *Escapes* to *Suspense* to *Gunsmoke*.

And the moral lessons to be learned; the careful use of language. I like enjoying a program without having to hear anything like "shock jock" talk. I like hearing the bad guys get their just rewards and the good guys winning. I like hearing programs that promote good neighbor relations between races, between cultures, between countries. I like hearing religion treated with respect. Clean humor, clean entertainment, clean performers, and wholesome attitudes. This is what radio gave us. And that's why I love it. If only we could convey to all younger people this sense of love for what was and should be once again. So in my small way, I try to expose the biology students to some of radio's greatness and see if it can make a difference to them.

If you haven't done this, try it Next time you are listening to one of your favorite shows, make a cassette copy and give it to a young person and ask them to listen and tell you what they think about it. You might get a conversation started and even end up with a convert to our vintage radio programs. And then you can write an item for *NARA NEWS* to tell of your experiences with some young people. See ya next issue!

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Jimmy Wallington, the announcer on Eddie Cantor's *Chase and Sanborn Hour*, made the mistake of mentioning that Samuel Johnson drank 24 cups of coffee a day, and the good doctor might have consumed even more if he could have bought a product from Chase and Sanborn. NBC received hundreds of calls to point out that the 18th-century man of letters drank tea, not coffee.

**BOOK
SHELF** by Hal Stephenson



The Route 66 Traveler's Guide and Roadside Companion by Tom Snyder. St. Martin's Press, 136 pages, softcover. The 1995 (second edition) may be ordered from *Arizona Highways* magazine customer service at 1-800-543-5432 for \$10.95 plus shipping.

This book is about the "Mother Road" between Chicago and Los Angeles that was commissioned in 1926. Route 66 was replaced by Interstates 55, 44, 40, 15, and 10. The last segment of I-40 was opened in 1984. The book has detailed up-to-date strip maps of Route 66. The accompanying narrative describes points of interest for the traveller of today. It gives specific directions for traversing one or more of the alignments that Route 66 took. The back of the book has useful information on books, maps, audio and video programs, club memberships, and an index.

A one-hour 1983 National Public Radio program *Route 66: The Mother Road* is available for \$15 postpaid from The Kitchen Sisters, 132 Rivoli, San Francisco, CA 94117.

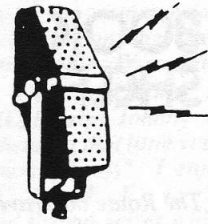
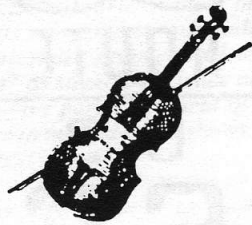
For music recordings, Collectors' Music Choice has a "great little catalog" obtainable by calling 1-800-923-1122. The catalog has something from the Great Gildersleeve and well-known music such as Bobby Troup's "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66" by 31 artists and Nelson Riddle's theme for the Route 66 television series.

Some of the radio-related narrative mentions places to visit such as Meramec Caverns in Missouri to learn about Kate Smith. Meramec Caverns was opened to the public in 1935 by Lester B. Dill "...who probably did invent that great American institution--the bumper sticker." (p. 20)

Most of the radio-related narrative is not unexpectedly in California. In Victorville, there is the Roy Rogers and Dale Evans Museum.

At Rancho Cucamonga there is a Route 66 Museum which celebrates radio days. It is in a corner of the Thomas Winery Plaza at Foothill Boulevard and Vineyard Avenue. Most readers will recall the running gag on the Jack Benny show about a train that went through "An-a-heim, Azu-za, and Cook-a-monga" (p. 110).

A pilgrimage from the California end of Route 66 could be to the Will Rogers 185 acre ranch. It is now preserved with the cooperation of the Rogers family as a state park.



FROM
JACK PALMER

REGIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC

I have often mentioned in these articles about the way early country musicians made their living. They would find a local station that would allow them to broadcast a 15 or 30 minute program for free, and then use the program to announce their personal appearances in the area. The more popular they were, the larger crowds they drew. Since their income derived from these personal appearances, and the sale of records, if they had been lucky enough to make any, they usually moved on in a year or so to another station after they had milked the local area.

However, by the late 30's, some country artists had grown popular enough that they were able to broadcast their daily program on several radio stations at the same time, and even get paid for it. Probably the best known and most popular of these regional artists was Bob Wills with his Texas Playboys. Although Bob never considered himself a country artist, his music, which eventually became western swing, was definitely rooted in the fiddle tunes of the southern whites and the blues of the southern blacks. And he and his band were eventually inducted into the Country Music Hall Of Fame, although he only appeared on the Grand Ole Opry once and swore he'd never return!

Bob Wills had started out in Fort Worth about 1930 as the Bob Wills Fiddle Band. Soon after, he and his band was hired by W. Lee O'Daniel of Burriss Mills. They worked at the mill when not broadcasting as the Light Crust Doughboys. The band felt tied down by the arrangement since they were unable to do personal appearances. Soon Bob and most of the band quit and formed a new organization. Hounded out of Texas by W. Lee O'Daniel they moved north into Oklahoma.

By 1934 the band had become The Texas Playboys and were broadcasting daily on KVOO, a 50,000 watt station in Tulsa, Oklahoma.. Within a year, or so, his show was so popular that his daily broadcasts were carried by several other stations in the Oklahoma and Texas area. In fact, in an interview many years later, Bob stated that the Texas State Network was formed just so they could carry his program. I don't know if that is a fact, but I do know that the Texas State Network was still in existence in the 1960's when I lived in Texas. I also remember hearing the Bob Wills program around noon every day from WKY, an Oklahoma City station, in the late 1930's, so obviously his regional network included more than Texas.

In the early 1940's, Bob moved his band to California, where many of his fans had migrated and were now making money in defense work. He became one of the most popular bands on the coast and his daily broadcasts were again carried on a regional network across most of California. Unfortunately, like all the dance bands, whether

western swing or big band swing, their popularity began to fade in the late 1940's and Bob no longer could command enough interest for a regional network.

About this time in northern California another group was broadcasting on a small regional network of at least three stations. This group was the Maddox Brothers and Rose, and consisted of four brothers and their sister Rose. They had started out before World War II, but went out of existence when all the brothers entered the service. After the war they reformed the band and started performing up and down the west coast. They called themselves America's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band and they lived up to their name. Not only did they glory in their fancy costumes, but their music was just as flashy. By the late 1940's they had become popular enough to broadcast regionally. However, within a few years they had abandoned their California roots and were touring the country. I remember in 1953, while I was working nights for the Air Force in Texas, I used to listen to them broadcasting from a honky tonk in downtown Fort Worth, and wishing I could be there instead of working! Rose Maddox is the only one of the group still alive and she still sings at occasional personal appearances.

But, as I discussed in a previous article, one of the biggest users of the regional network idea was Crazy Water Crystals. They utilized local programming, regional networks and transcriptions. Anyway they could get on the air with their country bands and their advertising. Actually they also utilized non-country performers, whom apparently were treated with a little more respect than the country acts. As far as the country acts went, the company seemed to have a policy that every act working for them had to have Crazy in their name. Even Roy Acuff called his group the Crazy Tennesseans when broadcasting for them.

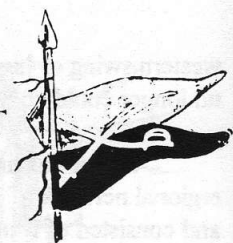
For those not familiar with the product, Crazy Water Crystals were actually a powder distilled from the waters of the mineral wells in Mineral Wells, Texas. They supposedly cured every ailment known to man, but were basically a laxative. At one time the Crazy Water Crystal Company were advertising on at least one radio station in almost every town in the south and shipping the stuff by the carload. I know of at least two regional hookups they used, but I'm sure there are others. They broadcast the Crazy Radio Gang daily on the Texas Quality Network, which may have been set up specifically for them. They also had a regional show called the Crazy Water Barn Dance on 14 stations in Georgia and the Carolinas. I remember listening to the Crazy Water Gang show often while growing up in Oklahoma. Today I couldn't tell you much about the programs, but I can still remember the commercials!

I am sure there were many other country acts popular enough to perform on regional broadcasts. But because the broadcasts were regional, there is not much information about them in other parts of the country. If any one does have knowledge of regional country music broadcasts, I would love to hear about it to add to my files.

Next time we'll discuss country music on border radio.

FORT LARAMIE

ONE OF THE LAST AND ONE OF THE BEST



by Jack French ©1996

The Golden Age of Radio ended, not with a whimper, but with a robust bang. Many of the best network and syndicated shows began in the 1950s, even though public interest and advertising dollars were switching to television. FORT LARAMIE was certainly one of the finest radio series, and were it not for GUNSMOKE, it could be termed the best adult Western program ever aired.

FORT LARAMIE is a close relative of GUNSMOKE since it had the same producer-director, same writers, same sound effects men, and many of the same actors. GUNSMOKE had been running for almost four years when Norman Macdonnell brought FORT LARAMIE to CBS. The latter had the same gritty realism, attention to detail, and integrity that audiences admired in GUNSMOKE.

Both Dodge City, Kansas and Fort Laramie, Wyoming were real, and significant, locations in our history of the Western expansion. The original Fort Laramie, located on the eastern Wyoming prairie (about 100 miles from where the city of Laramie is now located) was an important fur trading post from 1834 to 1849. For the next forty years, it was a U.S. Army post. Located near the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie Rivers, this military post was in the heart of the homeland of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe.

From 1841 to 1849 the fur trade in that area continued to decline, but the fort was a major stop-over for wagon trains of settlers heading west, enroute to Oregon. The U.S. government bought the site of Fort Laramie in 1849 to house a military force which would protect this part of the Oregon Trail from hostile Indians. The fort also served as a station for the Overland Stage, the short-lived Pony Express, and a supply depot for the lengthy military campaigns against the Sioux and the Cheyenne under Sitting Bull in the 1870s.

The earliest paintings of the fort, dating back

1837, show it to be a log stockade with high walls and raised blockhouses. However by the time it became a military outpost in the 1840s, this structure had disappeared and Congress refused to appropriate the money for a new and larger stockade. Never in the two decades the Army occupied Fort Laramie was it enclosed by walled fortifications. The "fort" was simply several military buildings grouped around a flat parade ground.

The military post was abandoned in 1890 and allowed to fall into decay, and no significant restoration was attempted until 1937 when the state of Wyoming purchased the site of some 200 acres and later deeded it over to the National Park Service. It is currently administered as the Fort Laramie National Historical Site under the Department of Interior and it is open to tourists year-round.

When Norman Macdonnell created FORT LARAMIE in late 1955, he made it clear to his writers that historical accuracy was essential to the integrity of the series. Correct geographic names, authentic Indian practices, military terminology, and utilizing actual names of the original buildings of the real fort, was insisted upon. So when the radio characters referred to the sutler's store (which is what the trading post was called prior to 1870), the surgeon's quarters, Old Bedlam (the officers' quarters) or the old bakery, they were naming actual structures in the original fort.

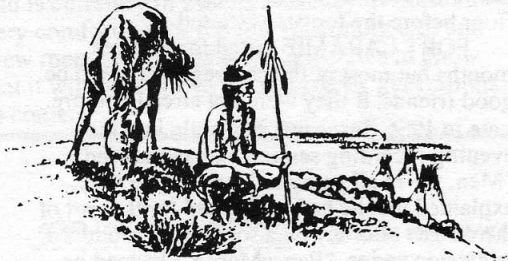
While Macdonnell planned to use the same writers, soundmen, and supporting actors in FORT LARAMIE that he relied upon in GUNSMOKE, he naturally picked different leads. Heading up the cast was a 39 year old, Canadian-born actor with a long history in broadcasting and the movies, Raymond Burr. He had begun his career in 1939, alternating between the stage and radio. He turned to Hollywood, and from 1946 until he got the part of Captain Lee Quince in FORT LARAMIE in 1956, he had appeared in thirty-seven films. A

few were excellent ("Rear Window", "The Blue Gardenia") some were average ("Walk a Crooked Mile", "A Place in the Sun") but many were plain awful ("Bride of Vengeance", "Red Light" and "Abandoned").

With Burr in the lead, Macdonnell selected two supporting players: Vic Perrin as "Sgt. Goerss" and Jack Moyles as "Major Daggett", the commanding officer of the post. (The original Fort Laramie usually had a Lieutenant Colonel as the C.O., but Macdonnell probably preferred a shorter military title.) Perrin, a 40 year old veteran radio actor, had been in countless productions, but had achieved name recognition only on THE ZANE GREY SHOW where he played the lead, "Tex Thorne."

Jack Moyles was also a busy radio actor, having started in 1935 in HAWTHORNE HOUSE, with later major roles in ROMANCE, TWELVE PLAYERS, NIGHT EDITOR as well as the lead in A MAN CALLED JORDAN. From 1947 to 1948 he was a regular in THE ADVENTURES OF PHILIP MARLOWE, which Norman Macdonnell directed, although I'm not sure that this was their first association.

By the mid-1950s when FORT LARAMIE began, most of the actors on the west coast were doing some television and movie work so the program was rehearsed and taped for transcription during the evening. Once a week the cast and crew gathered at CBS Studio One in Hollywood to tape the show. In 1956 this was the last radio production studio in use in California. The series debuted on January 22, 1956 with an episode entitled "Playing Indian."



FORT LARAMIE had one of the strongest supporting casts in radio history: John Dehner, Sam Edwards, Virginia Gregg, Barney Phillips, Larry Dobkin, Ben Wright, Jeanette Nolan, and Harry Bartell. Most of them were also working regularly on GUNSMOKE. And while Bill Conrad ("Matt Dillon") and Georgia Ellis ("Miss Kitty") never got to FORT LARAMIE, Parley Baer ("Chester") and Howard McNear



("Doc Adams") did. They both had major roles in the 7-29-56 program entitled "Nature Boy" and McNear had a reoccurring role as "Pliny" the sutler.

Later, to create a foursome of major cast members, Macdonnell introduced "Lt. Seiberts" in episode #7, which aired 3-4-56 and he gave the role to Harry Bartell. This show, "The Shavetail", was based upon the nickname that enlisted men in the U.S. Cavalry in the 1800s gave to new officers fresh out of West Point. The term originated from a custom of shaving or docking the tail of an untrained horse so the troopers would be wary of such a mount.

Bartell, who in 1956 was 42 years of age, and older than both Perrin and Burr, related to me recently that he had doubts about being able to project the voice of a young, junior officer. However anyone who has heard Bartell in this role will be convinced his fears were groundless. His voice clearly portrays that of a youthful, inexperienced but earnest college graduate.

For the next thirty three episodes, the expanded regular cast would consist of four characters: "Major Daggett" (Moyles) "Capt. Quince" (Burr), "Lt. Seiberts" (Bartell) and "Sgt. Goerss" (Perrin). While there were many other officers, enlisted men, scouts, and civilians in FORT LARAMIE, most of the actors who played them were present for only one or two separate episodes. In addition to Howard McNear, who had a reoccurring role as

the sutler, Sam Edwards appeared in several programs as "Trooper Harrison."

Like its counterpart, GUNSMOKE, this military adventure show had strong women's roles, realistic and sympathetic portrayals of Native Americans, and an emphasis on the ordinary struggles of the Western frontier. FORT LARAMIE was an honest reflection of the difficulties of life on an isolated military post in the early 1870s.



Four writers produced nearly all of the scripts for this series: John Meston, Kathleen Hite, Les Crutchfield, and John Dunkel--the same quartet that did most of the writing on GUNSMOKE. Hite, who died in 1989 (the same year as Vic Perrin), was recently described by Harry Bartell as "a hell of a writer" and she certainly was responsible for some of the best episodes in this remarkable series.

There was little room for humor in this gritty, poignant Western program, but Hite could manage to fit it into her scripts, both realistically and logically. Her stories provided little bursts of zest and humanity mixed with somber themes of betrayal, death, remorse, and in one episode, rape.

But regardless of who was writing the script, the storyline of each episode accurately reflected military life at the original Fort Laramie. The 8-26-56 program, "The Chaplain" dealt with the threat of scurvy, the 3-25-56 show "The Coward" described the residual pain of the Civil War, and the 2-5-56 episode, "Food For the Indians" chronicled the tragedy of the disappearing buffalo.

Occasionally an actual incident from the history of the West would be recycled in fictional form. For example, in the 8-5-56 show, "The Massacre", John Dehner plays a religious zealot, Major Petrie, who leads his troopers into slaughtering a large group of peaceful and unsuspecting Indians. This particular episode

closely parallels the historical facts of the Sand Creek Massacre of November 1864 when Col. J.M. Chivington (a former Methodist preacher) and his Colorado volunteers attacked a placid group of reservation Cheyenne and murdered 150 of them, mostly women and children.

The soundmen, Ray Kemper and Bill James, who were assisted by Tom Hanley, were simply second to none in this department. Just as they were doing on GUNSMOKE, they created the most convincing and imaginative sounds effects the most critical listener could appreciate. Every crack of a rifle, creak of the McClellan saddle (official Cavalry issue in the mid 1800s), and footsteps going across the dirt parade ground, over the gravel path, and up the wooden steps, were all done with authentic precision.

At the time, the sound effects were so well done, a casual listener wouldn't even notice. But now, of course, with the trained ear of us hard-core OTR fans, we can fully appreciate the skills of this talented trio.



Kemper, James, and Hanley never missed a chance to shade the texture of a scene with the perfect sound, whether they created it manually or pulled it from their reservoir of audio discs. Each time a character got up from a table, you heard the chair legs scrape against the wooden floor before the footsteps started.

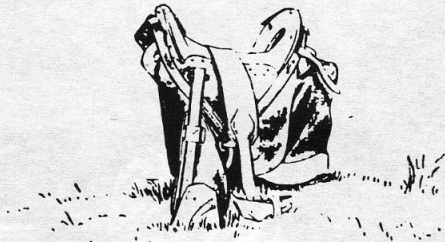
FORT LARAMIE lasted for only ten months but most of the cast regulars got to be good friends, if they were not already before. Late in 1956 Burr came jubilantly into the evening recording session and announced, "Men, we're all going to be rich!" He then explained that he had auditioned for the part of the district attorney on a soon-to-be-produced television series, "Perry Mason". Instead he was awarded the title role.

Unfortunately, Burr had overestimated the power of the leading man in a television series



to get work for his friends. Although "Perry Mason" ran for nine years in prime time, Bartell only received one day's work on the series and Perrin got none.

The final broadcast of FORT LARAMIE, the 40th episode, "Army Wife", was aired on October 28, 1956. Many of the cast regulars continued to see each other, both in a social and professional vein. Vic Perrin and Ben Wright were both close personal friends of Harry Bartell and their camaraderie was undiminished after FORT LARAMIE ended.



Dramatic radio was nearly gone now as television ascended quickly. FRONTIER GENTLEMAN (with John Dehner in the lead) lasted 41 episodes in 1958 and GUNSMOKE hung on until the summer of 1961 and many of the former cast members of FORT LARAMIE found work on these shows, among others. But the bugle was clearly sounding "Retreat" for network radio drama. Too soon, it was over.

Fortunately, for all of us OTR fans, every episode of FORT LARAMIE was transcribed and is currently in trading currency. It must be very comforting for the few remaining cast and crew members of that esteemed series to know that it will continue to be enjoyed by generations to come.

ADDENDUM: Since I began this research project, I learned that none of the current Park Service employees at Fort Laramie had ever heard of this radio series. I immediately sent copies of a few shows to the Park personnel who were both delighted and impressed. The Fort Laramie Historical Association, which operates the bookstore at the Visitors Center, wants to market copies of the series. They are currently in the process of securing the authority from CBS to do this. So it appears that after 40 years, the radio series is going to help support the fort from which its inspiration sprung.

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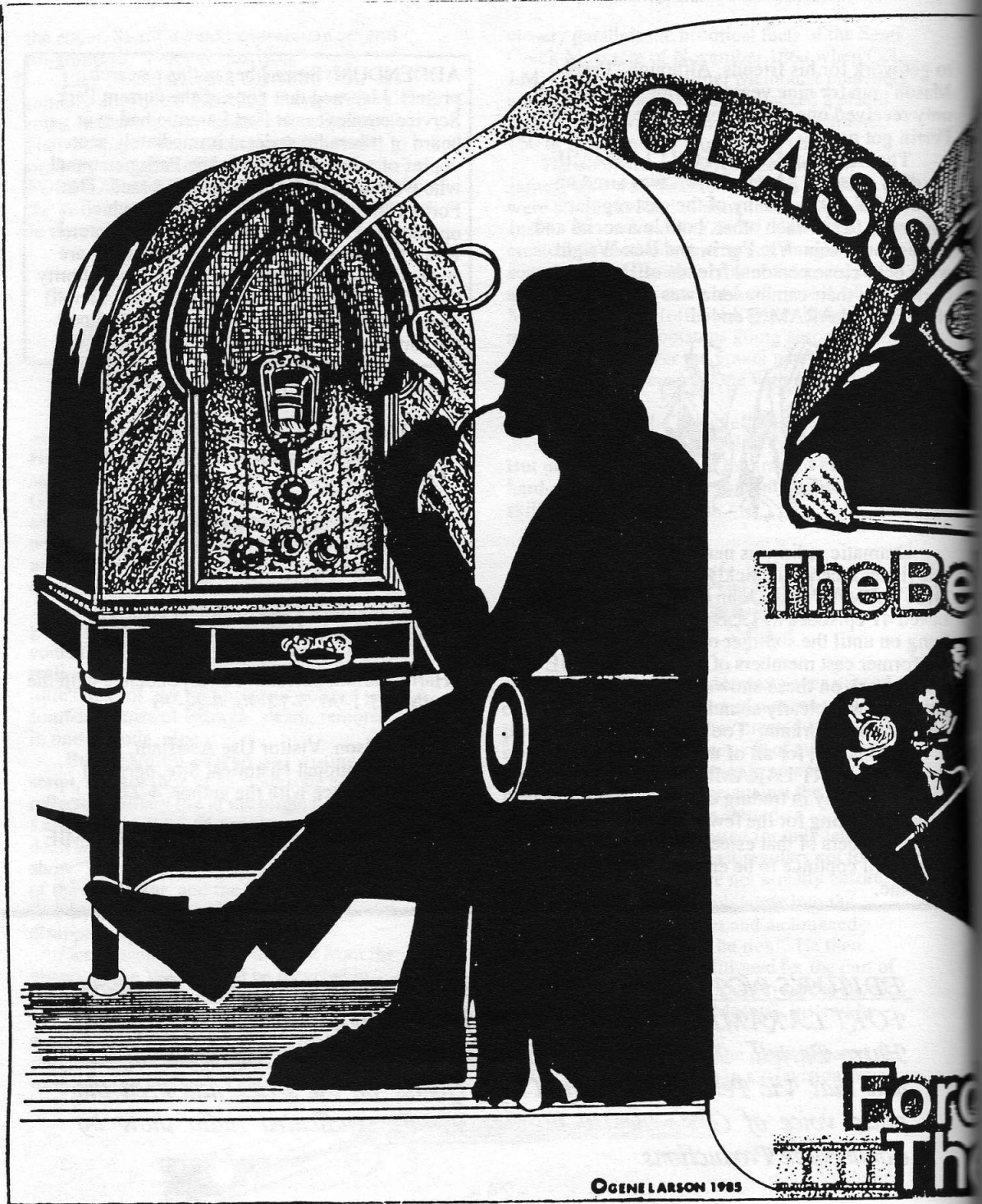
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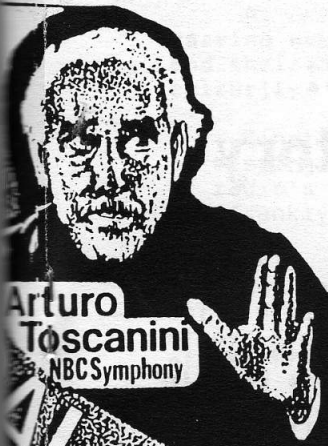
Linda Gilson, Visitor Use Assistant, Fort Laramie National Historical Site, personal correspondence with the author, 4-27-96

Numerous transcriptions of FORT LARAMIE radio series

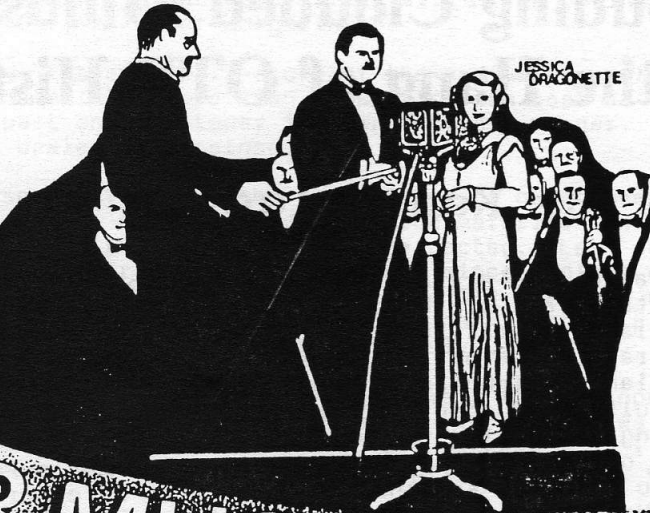
EDITOR'S NOTE: Since he was so helpful in the research of the above FORT LARAMIE article, Jack French sent a pre-publication copy of it to Harry Bartell. He enjoyed it thoroughly but thought it was important to add that Vic Perrin, who played "Sgt. Goerss" on the series, had been the radio voice of Clyde Beatty in the 1950-51 syndicated radio show by Commodore Productions.



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Unclouding Clouded Minds: Getting the Hang of OTR History

By Ken Weigel

As old time radio fans are aware, popular radio histories often clash with the facts. Part of the blame for this and for other gaps in the record can be laid squarely at the feet of the industry itself. For openers, radio's practice of omitting credits did nothing to lighten the load of the historian who labored to dope out the past. The record is also clouded by faulty or fudged biographical remembrances of radio personnel, including especially the headliners themselves. In the matter of jokes, a couple of examples will suffice. Jack Benny's famous retort to Fred Allen--"You wouldn't say that if my writers were here!"-- has been attributed to Bob Hope, Red Skelton, and Fred Allen himself--as if Allen needed help ad libbing. Another example: Jack Benny's "Your money or your life" gag is said to have produced the longest laugh on radio. What began as a good belly laugh has been stretched in recollection to something bordering on an eternity in radio time.¹ The facts, however, are something else: on the night of the broadcast it never got half the laugh it deserved. The Capt. Ramshaw episode, "l'affaire eagle," suffers from a similar Mike Fink recall.² These chroniclers overlook the fact that it's the gag, not the laugh, that's timeless. Stretchers like those, and like the so-called Amos & Andy "craze," are so firmly pickled, salted, and preserved in radio history that they've taken on a life of their own. The fun is in watching them grow.³

¹ See, e.g., Don't Shoot, It's Only Me, Hope, Shavelson, 1990, p.5.

² Fred Allen Show, March 20, 1940. Allen stood alone among comedy writers. His ability to draw humor from the teat of calamity has been captured in a letter describing the incident to a radio exec in fred allen's letters, Joe McCarthy ed., 1965, p.44-5.

³ A dissertation could be written on the double-distilled acceptance of Amos & Andy. The program's popularity in the early Depression years has never been questioned--only the size of its audience. Some time in its peak years (1930-4) it was so popular that some department stores and movie theaters played it over their loudspeakers to keep business from falling off. Later it was reported that this was being done to bolster business, i.e., to draw customers into the store. In time "almost the entire country" listened to Amos & Andy. Enter the next generation of historian,

As well, too much of the chronicle is weighted down by excess baggage carried over from the radio hypemill. Winchell, Hopper, Fidler, Parsons and their copycat legions were, after all, in the business of trading on celebrity, i.e., of rumor-mongering.⁴

Finally, the ethereal nature of the medium accounts for great stores of missing data. In proportion to what's been lost or destroyed, the sum of radio's past on view today is comparatively meager. Most early radio was frankly bawled up a rainspout.

Well, so what? Given the fallibility of human memory, the natural tendency to color, and the erratic source material that survives, a certain hazing of the record is to be expected. Less acceptable are the errors finding their way into the record since radio's decline by virtue of indifferent research. Eventually, the OTR buff who wants to dig up a fact or fill in a radio blank on his own hook must be prepared to do some tall sweating. Enlightenment can be elusive.

I discovered this for myself the time I tried pinpointing the dates Orson Welles played The Shadow on radio. It's old news now, but it was a mystery to me then, on that rainy fall weekend when I began hauling books and tapes down from my radio library. My intent was to learn when

the pop scholar: now "everybody listened." This embroidering of facts continues to this day: a 1993 radio history claims that when *Amos & Andy* came on, "America came to a standstill"--this not just in the early thirties but during WW2. A considerable jump from department store and movie house loudspeaker. *Amos & Andy* was one of the most durable comedy programs ever broadcast. But from 1931 to 1940 the show's CAB and Hooper ratings fell in every year but one, and by 1935 at least ten other programs, including a musical concert and an operetta, drew larger audiences. In any case, the popularity of this blackface team speaks less for the early show's merit than for the absence of good raillery, for the dial was then full of comedians dispensing stale Joe Millers. *Eddie Cantor*, *Ed Wynn*, *Jack Pearl*, *Joe Penner* and *George Jessel*, all top draws in radio comedy in *Amos & Andy*'s peak years, were also honest practitioners of the high and moldy arts of vaudeville. What made *Amos & Andy* so memorable was its prevalence--on the air six days out of seven, it received more attention than the family goldfish--and its emphasis on characterization, a refreshing escape from vode buffoonery.

⁴ Such fringe reporting gave enormous color to these venerable bobolinks. The oft-quoted Winchell began his career printing buzz heard on the main stem in his *New York Graphic* column, "Broadway Hearsay," and never looked back. A 1940 analysis of his published material showed that three-fourths of it hailed straight from the snake's chin--i.e., was wrong or unverifiable. Press agent plants--more innuendo--from the old radio slicks are still being reprinted today.

Kenosha, Wisconsin's favorite son started and vacated the Shadow role, and when Bill Johnstone succeeded him. In pursuit of these noble aims I learned not only about Welles and Johnstone, but also about The Shadow, Mercury Theater On the Air, and the pulps. I also learned a little about pursuing the merry goose.

Going in, I was under the impression that Welles had begun his Shadow reign more than two years before his Mercury Theater radio work. But I had also seen it reported that those two roles overlapped. Consulting the histories, one biographer said Welles came to The Shadow on radio in 1930.⁵ Another had him playing The Shadow in March 1937.⁶ A third implied The Shadow was on the air in 1936-7, viz: "In 1937, when the program needed a boost if it was not to disappear from the air...Orson Welles assumed the role."⁷ At least three other reliable histories also mentioned that the series came to Mutual in 1936.⁸ But a lifelong student of broadcasting claimed The Shadow was off the air in 1936-7, and had been off for two years.⁹ Few of these savants seemed to agree on any of the dates.

One of these accounts implied that Welles was wearing two hats at the start of the 1938-9 radio season, appearing as The Shadow on Mutual at 5:30 on Sundays, and later that night on Mercury Theater On the Air for CBS.¹⁰ Following the "War of the Worlds" broadcast,¹¹ which garnered national headlines, Welles was suddenly too well-known to continue as The Shadow, and was asked to step aside. Mystery, after all, was the mainstay of The Shadow's persona, and Street & Smith, which owned The Shadow property, intended to keep the mystique intact. As with the later Superman series, some pretense was needed to protect the hero-actor's identity from the common herd. But this seemed to be mere cavorting. Because by the time a "strange object" had fallen on the New Jersey farmlands and CBS listeners began emptying into the streets in

⁵ Quentin Reynolds, The Fiction Factory, 1955, p.203. This was the official history of Street & Smith, the house that published The Shadow magazine. Welles was 14 in 1930.

⁶ Dunning, Tune in Yesterday, 1976, p.408.

⁷ The Serials, Raymond W. Stedman, 1977, p.166.

⁸ The Big Broadcast, 1920-1950, Frank Buxton, Bill Owen, 1972, p.211; Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection, Chris Steinbrunner, Otto Penzler eds., 1976, p.169. Robert L. Mott also indicates The Shadow was on radio in 1936. Radio Sound Effects, 1993, pp.238, 293.

⁹ A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States, 1926-1956, Harrison B. Summers ed., 1958.

¹⁰ Dunning, p.544.

¹¹ Mercury Theater On the Air, October 30, 1938, CBS.

panic, some months had passed since Welles had been heard on radio as The Shadow.¹² Bill Johnstone, his successor, already had six Shadow performances to his credit, and Welles' Shadow scrapbook was already bound and in the vaults by the time of the "great disillusionment." Welles was then dividing his time between Mercury Theater radio and stage productions. The authority for this was Shadowphile Anthony Tollin.

This scrambling of dates and facts and my growing confusion led to an unscheduled search for the Shadow's radio origins. Faster than you can say Dime Detective, I found myself in the fascinating world of the pulps. Both Dunning and Tollin dated the first radio appearance of the "dark gliding man of mystery" to 1930,¹³ but Summers and Stedman fixed it at 1931, on a program called Radio Revue, an hour-long musical variety show dosed with crime drama.¹⁴ Tollin put the Shadow's 1930 debut on a show called Detective Magazine.¹⁵ The point they all agreed on was that the shadowy character came to the sound medium in the limited role of host-narrator, with decidedly macabre mala fides.

According to Summers, the Shadow remained on radio in that role for two seasons, disappeared for a year, returned to thrill the kiddies in 1934-5, and fell silent until the Welles revival in 1937-8.¹⁶

¹² The "War of the Worlds" audience has been estimated at six million. American Institute of Public Opinion, quoted in Cantril, Invasion From Mars, 1940, 55-7. In September, radio's sweeping coverage of Hitler's Czechoslovakian adventure, which threatened the peace of the world, had mentally prepared listeners to half-expect calamity. Welles' biographer, however, blamed the mood of widespread "martian" panic not on the Sudeten muddle but on "the recent news of Hitler's annexation of Austria," which took place back in March. Orson Welles, Barbara Leaming, 1985, p.196-7. A minor point without psychological or sociological significance, but typical of the flaws a wanderer is apt to encounter footloose in the fields of OTR in headlong pursuit of True Inwardness.

¹³ Dunning, p.542-4. See also the taped 4-part "Story of the Shadow."

¹⁴ Blue Coal was the sponsor. Stedman agreed on the year only, admitting The Shadow's derivation seems to have been "blurred in serendipity."

¹⁵ Reynolds concurs (p.203). Also called Detective Story Hour, the show aired live over CBS on Thursdays at 9:30, heard primarily in the east but also as far west as Omaha and Kansas City. Detective Story Magazine, the first of the detective pulps (1915), was Street & Smith's attempt to exploit escalating crime in the cities. Formerly Nick Carter Stories, the dime novel, it eventually embraced mystery as well as crime. See also The Pulp--Fifty Years of American Popular Culture, Tony Goodstone ed., 1970.

¹⁶ The Shadow aired twice a week on CBS in 1934-5. Tollin says Welles first portrayed The Shadow on September 26,

Tollin went further. He showed the Shadow holding down two jobs in 1931-2:

--Hosting Radio Revue, on 40 half-hour crime dramatizations (September 1931-June 1932); and

-- Dramatizing stories on Love Story Hour, in 52 half-hour broadcasts (October 1931-September 1932).¹⁷

Tollin further claimed the Shadow also appeared in five half-hour broadcasts in January and February 1932, this time as the lead character in the first series to carry his name. If this is true, unless the dramas were appallingly bad, why would the Shadow later revert to the limited role of narrator, as Tollin and Gibson claim he did? Apparently only the Shadow knows.¹⁸

In any case, in the sound medium, the voice of the "nearly omniscient" narrator was tailored to the picaresque adventures he introduced. It was the roguish predisposition implied in his "wickedly mirthful" laugh that transfixed the escapists, whose numbers multiplied as the Depression dragged on. (Nancy the witch performed a similar function for horror fans on Witch's Tale starting in May 1931.)

By April 1931, the radio Shadow's popularity prompted Street & Smith to create The Shadow, A Detective Magazine. With the publication of "The Living Shadow," book-length Shadow stories began flooding the magazine racks. Early tales featured gangs of unwashed toughs hanging around booze joints and flea traps planning the Shadow's demise when not

1937 ("The Invisible Shadow" in The Shadow Scrapbook, Walter B. Gibson, 1979, pp.78, 94). But in a dated puff piece in the same work, Welles was placed under the cloak and slouch hat in 1934 (p.118). Tollin's date is probably correct. Besides radio, Tollin's interest in The Shadow takes in the pulps, comics, films, games, collectibles, and whatever else turns up. Tollin, it should be remembered, had access to Dunning, having published his Shadow findings three years after Dunning's towering contribution to the OTR brotherhood hit the bookstands.

¹⁷ Summers claims these installments ran 15 minutes. Love Story Magazine was among the first (1921) of the single-theme magazines. Yesterday's Faces, Vol. 1, Robert Sampson, 1983, pp.15-16. Sampson, like Tollin a Shadow aficionado, has written a history of The Shadow Magazine: The Night Master (1982), and has contributed to The Duende History of The Shadow Magazine (1980).

¹⁸ Stedman concedes that "time has obscured the switch from Detective Story to The Shadow"--i.e., from disembodied-host to principal-character--but claims the change happened "almost overnight" (pp.152-68).

plotting underworld hijinks.¹⁹ The prolific Walter Gibson kept the pot boiling for 18 years under the "Maxwell Grant" alias before the paperback vogue finally did in the pulps altogether. Apparently Gibson could have gone on writing Shadow yarns forever.²⁰

Before long Maxwell Grant's readers began clamoring for radio dramas featuring the magazine Shadow, whose waking hours were rarely ever dull. Street & Smith were hot for the idea, but Ruthrauff & Ryan were reluctant to tinker with what, in their view, didn't need fixing. In good time Street & Smith persuaded Blue Coal to sponsor magazine adaptations for one season. Blue Coal agreed on the condition that if the Shadow flopped as a crimefighter he could revert to his narrator's role. Blue Coal then turned the adaptations over to R&R, which had dramatists on staff who had the crime formula down pat. These adaptations began airing on Mutual beginning with Welles in September 1937.²¹

Some time in early 1938 Charles Michelson, a young entrepreneur operating out of New York, learned that only a handful of Mutual stations on the east coast was sponsoring the new Shadow program, by now the hit of the season.²² Michelson arranged with Street & Smith to

¹⁹ "The denizens of the underworld--toughened, growling mobsters--who spat their contemptuous desire to meet this mighty being were the first to quail when they gained the desire that they had expressed." Gibson, Scrapbook, p.17.

²⁰ The Great American Detective, 1978, p.399. Editors William Kittredge & Steven M. Krauzer report that Gibson hammered out 283 of these misdemeanors, though Gibson himself admits to only 282. Stedman puts the number at 178. The editors further say the Shadow character began hosting radio mysteries "in the late twenties" (p.58), a claim supported by Steinbrunner & Penzler (p.358) but disputed by Gibson. Gibson says Ruthrauff & Ryan, Street & Smith's ad agency, only conceived the idea of a weekly mystery anthology in 1929 ("Story of the Shadow"). Though there may have been others, to my knowledge the only network crime show broadcast in the late twenties was True Detective Mysteries (1929). Stedman concurs (p.145).

²¹ Gibson, "Story of the Shadow." "Death House Rescue," September 26, was the first Shadow Magazine adaptation and the first Welles Shadow appearance.

²² The show also went out to New England over the small Boston-based Yankee Network.

place the series with additional local and regional sponsors.²³ He also enticed Mutual outlets that had shunned the series to give it a trial airing. This not only extended the Shadow's influence in the east and midwest, it also ran it deep into the Greeley environs.

As sales of anthracite flattened out with the coming of spring, Goodrich Safety Silvertown tires replaced Blue Coal as sponsor, and Welles plowed Shadow ground for another 15 episodes on transcription.²⁴ These transcriptions put a sweet lump of sugar in the Street & Smith coffers, and helped to get Michelson's new packaging operation off to a strong start.²⁵ Assuming no hiatus followed the "White Legion" broadcast²⁶ (the record is silent), Welles' final performance as The Shadow was probably heard early in July, just days before First Person Singular made its debut.²⁷

Discovering that those same 15 transcriptions were rebroadcast the following summer let additional light in. Shadow fans--and historians--hearing Welles in the role in the summer of 1939 could be forgiven for

²³ Grove's 4-Way Cold Tablets sponsored in the west and midwest, and Carey Salt in the mountain region. ("Story of the Shadow.") There were three other sponsors, including one in Canada.

²⁴ Air dates varied with locale. Recordings enabled manufacturers to buy time from any Mutual station whose signal reached into their distribution areas. If an advertiser could place a transcribed series on a set number of stations, the network paid for the transcriptions. As for Goodrich tires, in a telling episode of ill-advised showmanship, Welles read the tire commercials in character as The Shadow, filter mike and all. Listeners heard the vigilant crimefighter jump from derring-do to lowly tire salesman and back to derring-do, all in the space of 60 seconds. So much for protecting the Shadow "mystique." We know from this, notwithstanding claims to the contrary, that the sun had not quite risen on the Golden Age of Radio.

²⁵ They appear in Shadow logs today as the "1938 summer series."

²⁶ March 20, 1938, the last of Welles' 26 live Shadow performances.

²⁷ "Dracula," July 11, 1938. If there was a hiatus, Welles' transcribed Shadow appearances may have overlapped with First Person Singular's live summer series (below). This would give some credence to the theory that Welles was holding down two full-time radio jobs simultaneously. This part of the Welles record, like the Shadow's radio origins, eluded me.

thinking he was in the role from the start of the season. Yet it was Johnstone, not Welles, who began accumulating Shadow fans that September.²⁸

As mentioned, in July the Mercury Players were given a shot at radio, an hour on Monday nights compliments of CBS. For Welles it meant giving up The Shadow. Why would an actor bolt from such a plum role when things were going well? After all, it was The Shadow, more than all his other radio work, that lifted Welles out of the limited confines of theatrical celebrity.²⁹ I did not have far to look. In brief, Welles quit The Shadow because he wanted national exposure for his Mercury Theater Players. He was pinning all his hopes on that venture.³⁰ The Mercury Theater's first season plying the boards had caused a stir in the theater district, and the Kenoshan wunderkind quite naturally wanted to capitalize on his success.³¹ He found a willing partner in CBS, and that at no really great risk to the network. The networks were always looking for new talent.

²⁸ Johnstone was heard on *The Shadow* in a variety of character roles under Welles, but "Traffic in Death" (September 25, 1938) was his first lead role. Agnes Moorehead provided romantic interest as Margo Lane during the Welles season and continued in the role she originated.

²⁹ Welles had been appearing on *March of Time*, *Columbia Workshop*, *The Wonder Show*, etc. He had the lead role in "A Comedy of Danger," the *Workshop's* first play (July 1936). His 2-act *Workshop* staging of "Hamlet" (September 1936) brought the largest mail response of any program in that gutty young series. His radio stock rose again a few months later when he narrated Archibald MacLeish's acclaimed allegoric verse play, "Fall of the City" (April 1937).

³⁰ Indeed, in a few months the Mercury Theater would have more exposure than it bargained for, and Welles would put on the braid that identified him thereafter as radio blueblood. It is perhaps ironic that the biggest casualty of the martian "invasion" was Welles' beloved Mercury Theater. Shortly after the martians laid waste to the east coast, Mercury Theater stage plays themselves came under heavy bombardment--from the critics. The radio side, *Mercury Theater On the Air*, hooked a sponsor (Campbell Soups) and changed its name to *Campbell Playhouse*. Within a month of that the Welles-Houseman partnership went bust. Thus within two months of the panic broadcast the Mercury Theater operation passed into history.

³¹ The 22-year-old Welles landed on the cover of Time in May 1938.

The inaugural broadcast of First Person Singular was followed by other impressive literary adaptations.³² As the summer series ended,³³ CBS moved Mercury Theater On the Air, still sustaining, to Sundays at 8. Unfortunately, that put it up against NBC's Chase & Sanborn Hour, only the most popular show on the dial.³⁴ After several more impressive broadcasts,³⁵ Mercury Theater began mowing down a modest following of its own, Charlie McCarthy notwithstanding, though still not enough to fetch a sponsor. All that would change after "War of the Worlds."

As for Bill Johnstone's Shadow, the veteran actor's interpretation was right on the money. In its Sunday 5:30 placing in the 1938-9 season, the series easily held its own against Guy Lombardo (CBS), Smiling Ed McConnell (Blue), and new kid show Mickey Mouse Theater (NBC). Among crime-drama shows it rated just below Big Town and Gangbusters, both huge favorites.

³² After "Dracula," ambitious performances of "Treasure Island," "39 Steps," "Count of Monte Cristo" and "Julius Caesar" distinguished the summer season. During this trial run the series went out under the First Person Singular banner. The principals were allowed to rename the series in September when CBS renewed it for a full season. Without hesitation, Welles and co-producer John Houseman chose Mercury Theater and tacked "On the Air" onto it. (Handbook of Radio Writing, Erik Barnouw, 1939, pp.21-2; Mott, p.100). The device, whereby a character in the play steps out of his role to narrate in the first person singular, then steps back in again, was canny for radio in that day, though Stedman traces its use to 1930, on a show called National Surety's Secret Cases (pp.146-9). In any case CBS listeners were well served. Mercury radio adaptations were usually collaborative efforts by Houseman and Welles. Howard Koch, who would script "War of the Worlds" with help from Welles, Houseman and Paul Stewart, joined the Mercury Theater staff in September.

³³ G.K. Chesterson's "The Man Who Was Thursday," September 5, 1938. Adapted by Welles.

³⁴ Also called The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show and The Charlie McCarthy Show, The Chase & Sanborn Hour outpolled each of the comedy (Jack Benny Program), drama (Lux Radio Theater), and variety (Kraft Music Hall) favorites, and by wide margins. Mutual listeners at that hour, as on the night of the "War of the Worlds" broadcast, heard a panel debating the day's issues on the sustaining American Forum of the Air. (See Summers.)

³⁵ Notably "Hell On Ice," October 9, 1938.

So ended my search. I put away my books, tapes and notes, poured myself a bromo, and saluted my plaster bust of Max Wylie. I had pinpointed the primary dates I'd set out to find, and gave the merry goose a good chasing. So what if I didn't have all the answers? Get Dick Tracy on it.

Actually, I don't have a plaster bust of Max Wylie. I was just fudging about that. It's really porcelain.

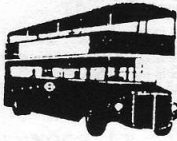
END

RARE MILLS RADIO RECORDINGS DISCOVERED!

by
Anthony DiFlorio III

While attending the April meeting of Record Research Associates I made a discovery that most collectors dream about! We were visiting the studios of audio restoration engineer Craig Maier of Diamond Cut Productions in Hibernia, New Jersey. Craig demonstrated the revolutionary new PC based sound restoration program he developed with his partner, Rich Carlson. After the presentation, Craig showed us some of his antique Edison memorabilia. I noticed a 10" record with an odd orange and black label and dense grooves. I looked closely at the label and did a double take. It read, "Hold That Tiger" Mills Bros. Oct. 9-10-12/32. "Is this a test pressing?" I asked Craig. "No, they're home recordings made on an old RCA home recording machine. Some are airchecks from radio." The significance of this struck me like lightning. If these were indeed cuttings from the radio, then they were the earliest known Mills Brothers airchecks in existence! Next to the elusive Gennett's from 1929, nothing has been more fervently sought! I asked Craig if he had heard them. "Only a few," and he cautioned, "remember this was a home recorder, so it isn't Hi-Fi." Craig had received a box of records from a family friend, whose parents and relatives had made them at the local music store. They had even kept a log book of what they had recorded. I was flabbergasted! Among home recordings of Wilma, Agnes, Helen, and May tuning up the Uke and Harmonica I saw the names: Ed Wynn, Paul Whiteman, Russ Columbo, Ben Bernie, Guy Lombardo and the Mills Brothers. Radio stations like WABC, WAAT, WOR, WAAF, and WMCA were listed. "If these are what I think they are you've got a treasure trove here," I told Craig. His gracious wife Marla photocopied the logs for me for publication. We've discussed his transferring the disc to tape for future commercial exploitation. Happily, with Craig and Rick's new D.C.A.R. program this should be an achievable goal. Their user-friendly program that operates on DOS or Windows will allow the average audiophile to become his own sound engineer for under \$50! If you want to learn more about Diamond Cut Productions D.C.A.R. program and the rare radio recordings, contact: Diamond cut Productions, P.O. Box 305, Hibernia, NJ 07842-0305 (201) 316-5772.

FROM ACROSS THE POND



by Ray Smith



Back in the early 50's, despite floods of protest, the BBC cancelled the evening radio adventures of an American-style British hero, Dick Barton, Special Agent. Barton kept us glued to our wireless sets with one cliffhanging adventure after another. Together with his faithful companions Jock Anderson and Snowy White, Barton took on spies, thugs and nutty professors who invented weapons of mass destruction. It was comforting to know that at least in the Land of Hope and Glory, we were safe from the "red menace" or from any other perils lurking beneath the bed. Although in later years he claimed that his typcasting as Barton killed off a promising radio career, Noel Johnson (appearing incognito this time around) repeated his BBC success as Radio Luxembourg's "Dan Dare" a 50's version of Scott Glenn, Neil Armstrong and Captain James Kirk!

Dick Barton's nightly 6:45 to 7:00 p.m. slot on the BBC Light Programme was taken over in 1951 by those genial Midlands of England farm folk The Archers. Still running today, the everyday story of country people has become the world's longest running radio soap opera. The Archers had the distinct advantage of being written at least in their early years, by the two gents who had just finished scribing for the banished Barton...Geoffrey Webb and Edward J. Mason. As a Barton fan I was absolutely livid. Not only did they kill off "our Dick," but they also had the nerve to steal his scriptwriters! Besides which, my then youthful ambition was to break into radio as a writer of action-packed secret agent dramas.



NOEL JOHNSON
as Dick Barton

This prompted me to write a letter of protest which I somehow sent to the Controller of Programmes, BBC Scotland. Since he was mainly concerned with north of the border offerings like "Scottish Dance Music," "Down At The Mains," "Farm Forum," and the "News in Gaelic" it was unlikely that he could do much to restore "deadeye Dick."

But in my correspondence I suggested an alternative. Why not play one upmanship with the "English" BBC and put on a nightly show with Scotland's very own ace detective, Dandy MacLean. Who knows, they might even let me submit a pilot script! Now in case you are thinking that even in 1951 I was well on my way to becoming a radio drama writer, I have to 'fess up. Dandy MacLean was already an established adventurer in Scottish "folk" fiction. Those were the days when people read newspapers in a big way. There were dailies, weeklies, Saturday papers, even Sunday papers. It seemed that if we weren't listening to the wireless, we had our noses stuck between the pages of the Daily Record or the The Sunday Pictorial. Scotland had two national Saturday newspapers, The Weekly News and The Peoples Journal both of which carried a lot of colloquial Scottish news, features and cartoons. The papers were distinguished from

their "daily" cousins in the sense that they usually didn't print a lot of what we in North America might call "hard news." Some might describe them as "tabloids" but if so, they were definitely not of the "rubbishy" variety, at least not in those days.

THE WEEKLY NEWS

In addition to regular columns by stars like Molly Weir, the radio "cook" on Life With The Lyons, they carried a bunch of ongoing features including Saturday Sannie, a sort of Scottish "Andy Capp" cartoon character who created havoc at "fitba'" (soccer) games and The Adventures of Black Bob, a blackhaired cartoon-strip version of America's Lassie. The tales of brave Black Bob, who saved his beloved master Andrew Glen the Shepherd, from one peril after another, were almost as exciting in illustration, as Barton had been, on the air.

After reading the Black Bob cartoon strip, I invariably turned to the opposite page to find a 1500 word feature entitled The Adventures of Dandy MacLean, Scotland's Ace Detective. Dandy was a "dapper dan" of a Scot, who always managed to put nasty lawbreakers behind bars, which made for an exciting Saturday night "read." So you see, my humble suggestion to the head hombre of the Scottish wireless may not have been original but it was at least inspirational. A few weeks later, I received a polite, albeit typical BBC reply. The Controller had been delighted to hear from me. Whereupon he had immediately referred my letter to the powers that be, to receive all due consideration and attention. A nice BBC version of "File 13." Or so it seemed at the time.

But a couple of years later, after enjoying half an hour of lively jigs, reels and marches on the BBC Scottish Home Service program Scottish Dance Music (these days still running under the title Take The Floor) I hesitated before jiggling the dial across to the Light Programme, where I would usually find the public affairs magazine, Radio Newsreel. At that precise moment, the old saying, "He who hesitates is lost" suddenly became, "He who hesitates finds great things on the Scottish Home Service." At exactly 7 pm that evening long ago, the BBC Scottish Region broadcast the first episode of a "made in Scotland" murder series which featured a somewhat low-key Scottish detective by the name of Steve Gardiner. The series was written by one of Scotland's best-known authors and story-tellers, Eddie Boyd. Eddie was himself a periodic broadcaster on radio and tv, usually doing light-hearted editorial commentaries on topics of public interest. He also wrote best-selling paperback thrillers.

The actor chosen to play Steve Gardiner, Ace Scottish Detective was himself one of the legends of British broadcasting. The Scottish-born Teddy Johnson, had been one of the most popular disc jockeys on Radio Luxembourg during the late 40's and early 50's. He was the original broadcaster of the Top Twenty Show. Later on, this program measured the twenty best-selling "pop" records in the UK. But during Teddy's tenure in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, his Top Twenty pertained to the best selling "sheet music" of the day. After leaving Radio Luxembourg to continue his career as a singer with the big bands, Teddy was invited by the BBC to be a guest presenter on the daily record request program Housewives Choice. The informal, off-the-cuff style he had learned at Radio Luxembourg endeared Teddy to millions of British housewives, but not, it transpired, to the BBC. And it was several years before he was invited back to do another record request program on the Beeb. Meanwhile, Teddy had met



PEARL CARR and
TEDDY JOHNSON

and married another popular radio personality of the day, the lovely singer Pearl Carr. The vivacious Pearl, delighted radio listeners as a regular on Breakfast With Braden, starring the ex-patriot Canadian comic and actor, Bernard Braden and his wife Barbara Kelly. Through the 50's, 60's and 70's Pearl Carr and Teddy Johnson became one of the best-known singing duo's in British vaudeville, radio and tv. In addition to headlining on such radio programmes as Mid Day Musichall, Blackpool Night and Workers Playtime, they were featured in long-running Christmas pantomimes and seaside summer shows as well as making best-selling pop records. One of their best known international recording successes was a bouncy little number called Sing Little Birdie. It was the British entry in the famed Eurovision song contest for 1959 and was so popular with UK audiences that it quickly went right to the top of the same British Top Twenty that Teddy Johnson had introduced on Radio Luxembourg from 1948 until 1951.



BRYAN JOHNSON

Incidentally, another favourite radio personality in the good old days was Teddy's brother Bryan (not to be confused with the popular sports broadcaster of similar name) who was gifted with a rich and distinct baritone voice. He used it to advantage a year after Pearl and Teddy's Eurovision hit, when his recording of an upbeat song called Looking High, High, High, was chosen as the second Johnson "family favourite" to be entered in "Eurovision 1960."

Teddy Johnson made a wonderful Steve Gardiner, a role he recreated for the Scottish Home Service through several separate series of adventures featuring the great Clydeside sleuth. In each series, he was partnered by his radio "wife" the lovely Scottish actress Rhona Anderson. Rhona was something of a rarity in the world of showbiz. When she married it was for life. And no wonder. Her husband was that gentleman actor who achieved fame and some modicum of fortune later in his career, as the world's most famous butler, Mr. 'Udson, on Upstairs, Downstairs. By now you will have guessed that off microphone, Rhona was Mrs. Gordon Jackson. It was no surprise to learn that Rhona was at his bedside, when Gordon sadly passed away a couple of years ago.

Dick Barton makes a periodic comeback on radio nostalgia shows. But as for Steve Gardiner and Dandy MacLean, they both seem to have slipped into quiet obscurity, having rightfully earned their places in the Scottish media, as "yesterdays heroes."

Cheerio for now.

ARTHUR TRACY - THE STREET SINGER

NARA member Anthony DiFlorio III has informed us that Arthur Tracy, who was radio's "Street Singer" in the 1930's and 40's, has been awarded the ELLIS ISLAND MEDAL OF HONOR by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO). The medal is presented to outstanding American citizens from all walks of life who have distinguished themselves among their specific ethnic groups. These individuals are recognized for their significant contributions to this country. The Ellis Island Medal of Honor Award is sanctioned by Congress and recipients are recognized annually in the CONGESSIONAL RECORD.



THOUGHTS OF A COLLECTOR

by

Henry R. Hinkel

Being an OTR collector and living where I do, I am at a disadvantage as far as the hobby is concerned. I know a few people in my area that collect some OTR. Except for one person, they do not get involved in the hobby. By that I mean they do not belong to any OTR clubs, they do not subscribe to any of the newsletters, and they never attend any of the conventions. When I do see these people, there really isn't much to talk about concerning the hobby.

I belong to several OTR clubs, but have not attended any meetings because they are not in my area. But I do enjoy reading their newsletters, which is the only connection I have with these clubs. I find the articles educational on certain topics, informative with the hobby, and in general, very enjoyable. Even when an article is on a topic that I'm not really interested in, it usually tells me something that I didn't know before. We all can't have the same interests in the hobby, so with the variety of writers and the variety of topics, we all learn a little bit more about the personalities and the programs that we are not that familiar with.

I've been attending the Friends of Old Time Radio convention in Newark since 1982 and have met a lot of very nice people from all over the country. Some, I like to consider as friends, even though we only see each other once a year. A few others I correspond with from time to time during the year. The convention itself is always pleasant and friendly. I can only remember one time that there may have been a problem and that was a personality conflict. That took place a few years ago when one of the "regulars" kept continually making comments and remarks about one of the "dealers" and how he conducted his business. The "regular" then made the mistake for some reason of going into a storage area behind the Dealers Room.

The "dealer" saw this and wandered into the storage area too. I don't know what took place back there, but the "regular" came scurrying out with a pale look on his face, and the "dealer" came casually strolling out with a smile on his. After that everything seemed to be very peaceful. I think there was a lesson to be learned by that situation...that remarks made sometimes become worse than the conduct that one may find objectionable.

Anyone who has attended or has read about the convention in Newark knows what an isolated and strange place the Holiday Inn is located at. In 1982, the hotel was surrounded to the east by Routes 1 & 9, which are eight or ten lanes wide, and the New Jersey Turnpike. To the south was a large empty field, to the west was an abandoned railroad freight yard, and to the north was a huge junkyard with a car crusher in the center....a big car crusher in the outback of New Jersey wastelands???...hmmm. Today there is a big new hotel replacing the junkyard to the north and a new prison was built to the south (you can look out your window and watch the inmates exercise out in the yard). The highways and the abandoned freight yard are still there.

I always go to the convention with John Furman. If you know John, the only way to describe him is that he is unique. He is a one of a kind and probably the most honest, sincere, and trusting person you could ever meet. When he sets up his dealer's table you never know what "treasures" you will find. Besides the OTR tapes, there could be antique radios, regular radios of all sizes, tape players, headphones, LP's, books, hard covers, paperbacks, pulps, comics, games, videos, and any number of collectibles and surprises. You can never go to John's table and just browse, because somebody is always in the way.

John always looks forward to the convention and he starts getting a little antsy about a week before the event and his excitement builds as the week progresses. Traveling with John is a whole adventure in itself. We usually leave about 5 AM to arrive between 9 and 10 AM. At 4:30 AM I get a phone call from John's wife with the warning "HE'S ON HIS WAY." He picks me up and I drive the rest of the way. The trip down the New York State Thruway and the Garden State Parkway is uneventful until we get to Exit 140. That's where the adventure begins. That's when John starts getting nervous. Actually he starts getting nervous just before we cross the state line. He starts to peak at Exit 140. At this point I must tell you that in 14 years we have never traveled the same road all the way twice! We always get off at Exit 140, but from there on it's like traveling into uncharted waters, you never know where you are going to wind up. After turning off at Exit 140, the first thing you must do is go 180 degrees to 22 East, that is if you didn't wind up on 22 West. Then you make a quick right again and do 270 degrees onto a road that runs parallel along the ramp you originally got off of now going in the opposite direction. Confusing??? This is where you first lose your sense of direction. The couple of years we missed the quick right was because the road sign was missing. How could a major road sign be missing for several years? The only reason I know it was missing is that a couple of years ago I noticed it was put back up.

One time while traveling those uncharted waters John said "There's a ramp coming up, I think we have to take it to get to the Holiday Inn." I told John I thought it was too soon, but John said "turn now, turn now" as we approached the ramp with a tractor trailer on our tail. So I quickly turned down the ramp and in a short while we turned into the parking lot of the Holiday Inn. John looked at me and said "I told you." I looked around and said to

him "This parking lot looks awful small and there's no parking lot around back." We were at the Holiday Inn, but this was the Holiday Inn South, the wrong one.

Another time when traveling those uncharted waters, I pulled into a side street to turn around after missing a turn someplace. John said "There's a police car, let's ask them for directions to Routes 1 and 9." "I don't think we should" I said, but John insisted and we got our directions to Routes 1 and 9. "What was wrong with that?" John asked. "Nothing," I replied, "but I don't think we should have bothered them with directions when they have three guys spread eagled against a car." Needless to say we did find our way again. Actually the last two trips down were correct and without incident in getting to the convention. But I shouldn't count last year's trip as correct because I really thought I made a wrong turn at Exit 140 and was mumbling to myself when I made that 180 degree turn and found myself at the right intersection. A pleasant surprise.

John did not attend last year because of other commitments but he does plan on going this year. Hopefully we will find our way without any incidents and save an hour of travel time. Jim Snyder, have your wallet ready. John wants to talk to you about something he has in one of his boxes.

It's fun thinking about and remembering the activities, events and friends at the convention. It's also fun thinking about and remembering how to get there.

Just some thoughts of a collector

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Newark convention, of which Hank is speaking here, will be held this year on October 17 through 19. See the "convention page" in this issue for further information.*

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Forgetting just how powerful the medium of radio had become, Eddie Cantor told his audience one night that it was his fortieth birthday, that he liked chocolate cake, and he gave his shirt and sock size on the air. He received 15,000 gift packages the following week.

THEATRE OF THE IMAGINATION.
RADIO STORIES BY ORSON WELLES
AND THE MERCURY THEATRE

by Chuck Seeley

Voyager Company
278 Broadway, Suite 406
New York, NY 10012
(800) 446-2001

This is a CD-ROM usable by IBM type and Macintosh computers. It's contents include a total of 15 broadcasts by Welles and/or the Mercury Theatre, an audio documentary on the Mercury Company by Leonard Maltin, an article on Welles by Andrew Sarris, reminiscences by members of the Company, an interview with John Houseman, and a 1939 theatrical short subject about radio sound effects. Among the broadcasts are a Shadow episode, "White Legion," "Tale of Two Cities," "Rebecca," and a bunch of excerpts from *Lady Esther* and other shows. There are scripts for all of the audio selections.

According to the producer's note, the whole package was put together from 80 audio tapes owned by Dick Wilson, a Mercury Theatre actor and Welles business associate, and from copies of material at the Lilly Library at Indiana University. The producer's note is dated June, 1988, and mentions an audio cassette edition.

The disc installs easily enough, and the main menu screen is an old radio with some books piled next to it. You click on the book spines to access the text portions and on the radio controls to work the audio stuff. There is no Quit icon; you do CTRL-Q to exit.

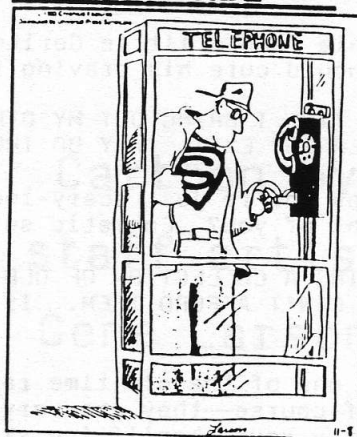
When you play the audio, the script for that selection appears and automatically flips pages to keep up with the broadcast. The sound quality is fine. The video of the theatrical short, "Back of the Mike," is shown in a 5" by 4" screen, and you can

freeze-frame it, reverse, and, most fortunately, fast forward. The short has nothing to do with Welles or the Mercury Theatre. It shows how radio sound effects were done in 1939.

The thing with these kind of CD-ROMs is that, for me, it's like watching a dog walk on its hind legs. Neat trick, but not especially useful. When you play the audio selections, you're basically using your computer as a cassette player. The program won't allow you to do something else on the computer while the audio is playing. The documentaries and reminiscences are interesting, though.

I've been out of the OTR hobby for years, but it seems to me that the broadcasts on this are readily available elsewhere. The CD-ROM retails for \$29.99.

THE FAR SIDE



GERITOL CAN SOLVE OTR PROBLEMS

**Wireless
Wanderings**



JIM SNYDER

I've been writing this column for nineteen years, and have been the editor of the NARA NEWS for almost two years now. This leads some people to automatically assume that I must know something. Incredible, I know, but it happens. To disprove this notion, I will now answer some of my reader mail.

Q: BECAUSE MY OTR COLLECTION IS GETTING SO BIG, IT IS NOW FILLING UP EVERY LITTLE NOOK IN MY HOUSE. MY WIFE HAS TOLD ME THAT I MUST GET RID OF THE COLLECTION OR SHE IS GOING HOME TO MOTHER. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

A: Get your wife a really nice "going away" present.

Q: MY CASSETTE PLAYER SEEMS TO RUN SLOW. THE REPAIR SHOP ISN'T ABLE TO FIND THE PROBLEM. IS THERE A SOLUTION TO THIS?

A: Your machine seems to have, what those in the industry call, "tired blood." Squirting a little Geritol into the mechanism should clear that up.

Q: I HAVE A CAT THAT CONSTANTLY CHEWS ON MY OTR CASSETTES. THIS IS DESTROYING MY COLLECTION, BUT IT SEEMS TO BE THE CAT'S FAVORITE FOOD. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

A: I don't think this is providing a balanced diet for your cat. I suggest that you spray a little Geritol on each of your cassettes. That will give the little creature the vitamins and minerals that it needs.

Q: MY TEEN AGE SON KEEPS TAKING THE OTR TAPES OUT OF MY MACHINE AND THEN HE STARTS PLAYING WHAT HE CALLS "HEAVY METAL" MUSIC. IT'S AWFUL, AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.

A: Have him take a little Geritol every time he does this. The iron in Geritol should cure his craving for metal.

Q: EVERY TIME I BRING OUT MY OTR TAPES, ALL MY FRIENDS START RUNNING FOR THE NEAREST EXIT. WHY DO THEY DO THIS?

A: Perhaps you're just scary-looking. Do people often run when they catch sight of you? Cosmetic surgery is perhaps your answer.

Q: BUILDING A COLLECTION OF OLD RADIO SHOWS IS VERY EXPENSIVE, AND FRANKLY I CAN'T AFFORD THEM. IS THERE A CHEAP WAY OF OBTAINING NEW SHOWS?

A: Go to one of the old time radio conventions and sneak in (without paying, of course—they are very lax and it is easy to "gate crash") and then try your shoplifting skills. Watch out for the AVPRO table however. They have a very sophisticated alarm system.

Q: I HAVE A GREAT IDEA FOR A NEW RADIO DRAMA SERIES. I THINK THAT IT WILL BRING RADIO DRAMA BACK, AND REVIVE THAT TYPE OF PROGRAMMING ONCE AGAIN. HOW DO I GO ABOUT GETTING THIS PROJECT UNDER WAY?

A: Consult a good psychiatrist. You're out of your head!

Q: AFTER LISTENING TO SOME OF MY OTR SHOWS, MY SIX YEAR OLD DAUGHTER HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH CHARLIE MCCARTHY AND WANTS TO MARRY HIM WHEN SHE GETS OLDER. HOW SHOULD I HANDLE THIS?

A: Relax. She could have fallen for Mortimer Snerd.

Q: MY SON, WHO JUST STARTED SECOND GRADE, OCCASIONALLY GETS UP IN THE MORNING SAYING HE DOESN'T FEEL WELL. I THINK HE JUST WANTS TO GET OUT OF GOING TO SCHOOL SO THAT HE CAN STAY HOME AND LISTEN TO OLD RADIO SHOWS. HOW CAN I TELL?

A: Buy the kid a heart-lung machine. If he uses it, let him stay home. If he pretends it's the Batmobile, hand the little faker his lunchbox and send him packing.

Q: IS IT TRUE THAT A CASSETTE PLAYER BREAKS DOWN EVERY 23 SECONDS?

A: Yes. It's happening to Clyde Schultz of Murdo, South Dakota, and he's getting awfully tired of it.

Q: MY CHILD IS TERRIFIED OF THE SQUEAKING DOOR ON INNER SANCTUM MYSTERIES. SINCE THIS IS MY FAVORITE PROGRAM I HATE TO GIVE UP LISTENING TO IT. ANY SUGGESTIONS?

A: Sure. A little WD-40 on the cassette playback heads should clear up the squeak when they open the door.

Q: I'D LIKE TO BECOME A CONTESTANT ON IT PAYS TO BE IGNORANT, BUT I NEVER SEEM TO KNOW ANY OF THE ANSWERS. IS THERE SOME PLACE THAT HELPS YOU TRAIN FOR THIS PROGRAM?

A: It sounds to me like you are a graduate of Notre Dame University. There's not much we can do for you.



Cartoon by
staff artist
Gene Larson

"...AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR 'IT PAYS TO BE IGNORANT'"



REPORT

by
Jack Palmer

I left home Thursday morning and arrived at the hotel just outside Cincinnati (The convention is actually in the town of Sharonville) about 2 PM. After checking in I went back to the lobby and met with several early arrivals. Surprisingly many of this group had arrived the day before, and had been expecting me on Wednesday also. I had assumed I would be early arriving on Thursday. We spent the rest of the day getting caught up on the news and discussing old time radio. I hate to name names when writing about these things because I always leave several people out, but among the group were Tom Monroe and Barry Hill of NARA, Barb and Dave Davies, the Alston's, Terry Salmonson, Ted Davenport, Dave Warren and of course, Bob Burchett, the Ramlows and the Robert Newmans. No Cincinnati convention is complete without them! In fact, by the time we went to eat that evening at the Bombay Bicycle Club across the street, there were over 30 people in the party, including three of the honored guests and their spouses. Parley Baer, Peg Lynch and Barney Beck. And the convention didn't start until tomorrow! After dinner a few of us gathered in Tom McConnell's room for more discussion on old time radio and everything else. We finally broke up about midnight and I hurried to get rested up for tomorrow.

Although the dealer's room did not officially open until the start of the convention, Friday noon, most of us were there around ten AM to harass the dealers while they were setting up. And also to check if there was any new material for sale. The 10th Annual Old Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention officially opened at noon. It was difficult to realize this was the 10th year for the convention and the 5th year I had attended. After a quick saunter through the room to be sure we hadn't missed anything, several of us went to lunch, then returned to make our first purchases. As usual, I ended up buying more than I intended at the convention. Among my purchases were a new book on old time radio, BLAST FROM THE PAST, RADIO'S FIRST 75 YEARS and an updated listing of Science Fiction on Radio. I also made my usual cassette purchase although this year I restricted myself much more than normal, even though there were some great selections available. The crowds were larger than usual and most dealer's seemed to be doing well. Sometime during the day, I ran into Barbara Schwarz of The Friends Of Vic And Sade and we had a long visit. This was her first time at Cincinnati and she seemed to enjoy it.

About 4 PM they issued a casting call for several recreations to be performed during the convention. I always ignore this as I don't consider myself much of an actor, and besides it interferes with my visiting! By the time I had made my purchases it was after 6 PM, so Tom and I headed for a quick bite so we could get back for the recreation at 7:30 PM. Unfortunately we picked a place that was crowded and the service was slow. The recreation had been going on for some time when we returned to the convention site. The evening program consisted of a Johnny Dollar recreation with Parley Baer as Johnny Dollar in the Burning Carr Matter. The room was

packed and we were unable to get close enough to see much. Although I caught only a few minutes of the show, Parley seemed to be doing a fine job. But it just did not sound the same without Bob Bailey. He was Johnny Dollar. After standing all day, I was just too tired to remain until the end of the show, so I walked back through the dealers' room and then to bed.

Saturday morning was a beautiful spring day. It was almost a shame that we had to stay inside all day. But after breakfast I was back in the dealer's room, mostly talking, but also making a few more purchases. All the guests, which now included Fred Foy, were in the dealer's room at various times and available for visiting with the attendees. Fred Foy had a book, cassette and CD all available for sale that covered various parts of his career. At 11 PM, Barney Beck had a sound effects demo, where he demonstrated many tricks of the trade. After lunch there was a Lone Ranger recreation with Fred Foy performing as the Lone Ranger in the episode where he had actually played the Lone Ranger. Since I am one of those anomalies, a person who does not care for the Lone Ranger, I did not attend this recreation. I understood later they also did an Ethel and Albert skit, which I would have enjoyed, so it doesn't pay to skip anything. Later they had a raffle and door prize drawing, which is always a waste of time for me since I never win anything. At 5 PM, everything closed down to prepare for the evening banquet.

After a short cocktail hour, dinner was served about 6 PM. Bob said it was the largest crowd ever to attend the convention, or the banquet. 121 people were served a sit down dinner of roast beef and all the trimmings. Shortly after 7, the entertainment began with Ed Clute playing a few requests on the piano. Then the Boogie Woogie Girls, whom I had previously seen at Newark, entertained with a few songs from the 40's. The entertainment ended with two recreations. A Suspense episode, Variations On a Theme and another one of Peg Lynch's Ethel and Albert skits with her and Parley Baer. These skits are jewels and every one is full of chuckles and outright laughs. Peg is always great as Ethel and Parley did a fine job as Albert. I was +sorry I had missed the other one. The Suspense show was good, but it is not one of the better scripts, which handicapped the production somewhat.

After the entertainment, Bob Burchett made the presentation of the 2nd annual Stone-Waterman Award to Don Ramlow. Don has been very active in presenting re-creations over the past few years as well as taping the entire convention. A well-deserved award. Just when the program was to be over, Robert Newman made a surprise announcement of an award to Bob Burchett for his 10 year's effort in keeping the convention going. Several OTR organizations had sent various remembrances, but the highlight was the announcement by the Mayor of Sharonville (In person!) that today had been proclaimed Bob Burchett Day in his honor. Bob was almost speechless for the first time in his life. A fitting ending to a great evening. However, it wasn't the end, since many of us gathered in Don Alston's room later for a farewell party. Peg Lynch was the hit of the evening with her hilarious anecdotes up which she had based many of her scripts. I finally got to bed about 1 PM.

Sunday morning I was up early and had breakfast with several of the attendees and guests. However, I wanted to visit a few antique malls on the way home, so I left the hotel about 9:30 headed for downtown Cincinnati. A great convention. The biggest crowd, one of the best dinners and some great recreations. In addition I picked up some new items for my collection. You can't ask for more than that.

THE END

OTR BECOMES TV FOR THE BLIND NATIONWIDE

BY

Jim Dolan

Because O.T.R. was written for sound alone, we believe that old time radio programs are the best form of entertainment for the blind and people with poor vision. This is the idea behind the Radio Entertainment Network. REN is a joint effort of old time radio collectors and broadcasters. We are a noncommercial / nonprofit organization that supplies a weekly format of OTR radio series for radio reading service stations to broadcast free of charge.

Radio reading service stations are on the air to provide news/information and entertainment for people who are blind or cannot read easily. These R.R.S. stations are on the air in most parts of the U.S. They typically broadcast on your local public "noncommercial" FM and TV stations. These signals are hidden in the signal of your public broadcast station. To hear the radio signals called (SCA) you will need a special radio receiver that can be purchased by mail order. Someone who is blind or has poor vision may qualify for a free one.

In some parts of the country your local radio reading service station may be broadcasting their program on your area's PBS television station. These signals are also hidden in the regular television program. They are called Second Audio Program (SAP). Listening to TV SAP audio is not as complicated as listening to SCA because you may already own a stereo TV that can receive SAP audio. To find out if your local PBS station rebroadcasts your areas radio reading service, find the audio button on your TV, VCR, or remote control and select the SAP option. If the sound is different from the picture on your TV, you are probably listening to the radio reading service.

The Radio Entertainment Network is typically one of the most popular programs on the stations that broadcast it. The REN programs are available as a two or ten hour weekly program and are distributed on tape or by satellite weekly. If you would like to assist us in promoting dramatic radio or if you would like to listen to REN on your local radio reading service station please contact your radio

reading service or library for the blind and ask them to contact us at our address below or call us on our comment line at (206) 689-1708 and we will contact your local station.

If you have a satellite receiver or a computer with sound, you can listen to REN on the Yesterday USA Superstation on Sundays from 6:00 a.m. (eastern) to 4:00 p.m. on C band satellite at Galaxy 5 channel 7 6.8 mhz audio. You can also hear it on the Internet at the same times at www.yesterdayusa.com or www.audionet.com (all small letters) click on "HOT NEW STATIONS." To listen to this live audio, you will need to have a rate of 14.4.

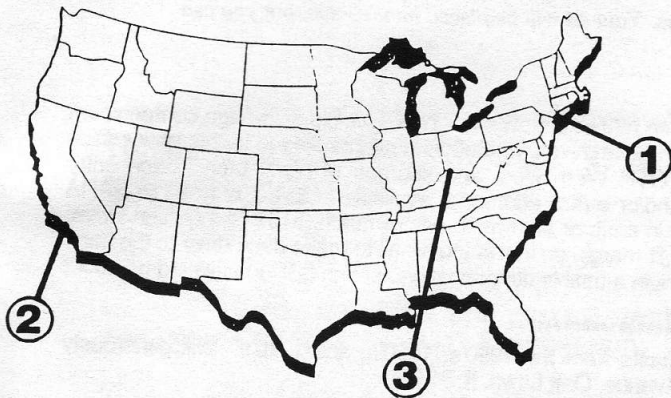
At some time in the future we hope to expand the Radio Entertainment Network into a full time service. If you would like to help put OTR back on the radio where it belongs, please call your local radio reading service and ask them to consider scheduling the REN programs, and help bring about a renaissance for old time radio, this time as theater for the blind.

If you would like to contact us our address is: REN, P.O. Box 51161, Seattle, Washington 98115.

THESE RRS STATIONS ARE CURRENT REN AFFILIATES:

- Asheville, North Carolina
- Billings, Montana
- Champaign, Illinois
- Chicago, Illinois
- Dalton, Massachusetts
- Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
- Los Angeles, California
- Omaha, Nebraska
- Portland, Oregon
- Portsmouth, Ohio
- Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina
- Seattle, Washington
- York, Pennsylvania
- Yucaipa, California

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 an annual affair held at the Holiday Inn North at the Newark, New Jersey airport. The hotel is located just off the interstate highway, and for those flying into Newark, the hotel provides free shuttle service back and forth to the airport. Contact person is Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, Connecticut 06514. Jay can be reached by phone at (203) 248-2887. Future dates for this event are:
21st ANNUAL CONVENTION - October 17-19, 1996
22nd ANNUAL CONVENTION - October 23-25, 1997
- ② **THE SPERDVAC CONVENTION** is held each year at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Los Angeles International Airport. For those driving it is located on the airport entrance road off I-405. The hotel provides a free shuttle service for those flying. Contact person is Larry Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, California 90603. He can be reached by phone at (310) 947-9800. Future dates:
November 8-10, 1996
November 7-9, 1997
- ③ **THE 11TH ANNUAL OLD TIME RADIO AND NOSTALGIA CONVENTION** is scheduled for April 18 and 19, 1997 at the Marriott Inn on the north side of Cincinnati, Ohio, just off I-75. You'll find a report on their 1996 convention elsewhere in this issue. The person to contact for information is Bob Burchette, 10280 Gunpowder Road, Florence, Kentucky 41042. Phone: (606) 282-0333.

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 greatly expanded 1996 OTR SOURCE list from NARA is now available! This big, five-page compendium contains over 112 listings of OTR clubs, publications, archives, and audio dealers. Added to this new edition are dealers in OTR premiums, books, scripts, OTR Web Sites, and sources of blank tape. Each entry includes full name, address, telephone number and/or e-mail address if available. Cost is only \$2 to NARA members and \$3 to everyone else. Send money in cash or stamps to Jack French, 5137 Richardson Drive, Fairfax, VA 22032. Please NO CHECKS...our profit margin on this is too small to make Jack drive to the bank and the post office. And make sure the stamps are in a usable denomination...seven 32¢ ones would be about right. All profits go to NARA, so be generous.

WANTED: NBC, CBS, and ABC network newscasts from the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's. Will generously compensate. George F. Miller, 9733 South 51st Avenue, Oak Lawn, IL 60453.

I am looking for Desi Arnez remotes from the late 1940's and early 1950's, or his 1951 CBS radio show "Your Tropical Trip." Henry R. Hinkel, 254 Florida Avenue, Amsterdam, NY 12010.

WANTED: Tape copies of any 1947/48 Tom Mix radio shows starring Curley Bradley, featuring Skeets McWilliams on guitar. Shows probably originated from the Mutual Radio Network in Chicago. Keith Titterton, 3903 18th Street S.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2T 4V3.

WANTED: Information for a research/biography project on the life and career of Arthur Tracy, "The Street Singer." Specifically his radio career from 1929-35: airchecks, transcriptions, tapes, program logs, etc. [1929-30 WMCA & local N.Y. area radio] - [1931-32 CBS network sustaining & sponsored] - [1932-33 Chesterfield "Music that Satisfies" NBC] - [1932-35 Network and local NY guest spots] Please respond to Anthony DiFlorio 1124 South 7th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147-4830. Tel/Fax: (215) 271-3170.

STILL WANTED: Information about any radio appearances of Vernon Dalhart. He is known to have starred in a network program for Barbasol about 1930 under the name Barbasol Sam (not the Singin' Sam of later fame). He also appeared in a series of programs on a local station in Schenectady, NY in 1938. Any information about these or any other radio show in which he appeared is needed to complete research on Vernon Dalhart's life and career. Jack Palmer, 145 North 21st Street, Battle Creek, MI 49015.

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATES:

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Half page - 25.00

Quarter page - 15.00

FOUR ISSUES:

25% off above rates

A TIP OF THE ATWATER DIAL TO....

David Richardson of Berkeley, California for a generous financial donation to NARA. It is greatly appreciated and very helpful to the club.

Our columnists for this issue: Frank Bresee, Robert Brown, Anthony DiFlorio, Jim Dolan, Jack French, Roger Hill, Henry Hinkel, Gene Larson, Bob Mott, Jack Palmer (2 columns), Chuck Seeley, Ray Smith, Hal Stephenson, and Ken Weigel.

Those who have already sent in articles for the fall issue: Frank Bresee (5 articles), Ray Erlenborn, B.J. George, Henry Hinkel, Chuck Seeley, and Ken Weigel (2 articles).

Roger Hill for a handful of clippings.

Gene Larson for a bunch of clippings and for the centerfold and two cartoons in this issue.

Anthony DiFlorio for the information on Arthur Tracy, the Street Singer, found on page 39.

Jack French for informing the National Park Service about our hobby, and getting them involved, at least at one location (see page 24). Now that they know about old time radio perhaps they will find other locations where they can use shows from the past. A couple that immediately spring to mind would be "Mr. President," which could be used in Washington, and "You Are There" which could be used at Gettysburg and other historic locations.

THANKS TO ALL!!!

DEADLINES:

September 1 for the fall issue.

December 1 for the winter issue.