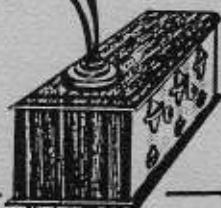


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Letters



from
our readers

For several years I was a member of NARA, but dropped out when the library rental material got so bad that it was a waste of money and time to check ANYTHING out of the library.

The cassette library was so bad that half of what I received was unfit even to listen to (bad sound, cheap tapes). In fact, I dropped out when one of the rental tapes jammed my high speed recorder and burned up the motor. A replacement motor cost over \$100.

Also, I donated several tapes and never did find out if they were received. I then joined two other clubs, one excellent and the other so-so. Neither one, however, has sent out bad tapes.

Al Harding
Washington, Missouri

EDITOR'S REPLY: Al's letter clearly demonstrates why NARA's cassette library had to be reorganized and restructured. His saying that half of what he received was "unfit to listen to" is pretty close to what I have found (please see my editorial on page 4). We know that our members have been discouraged by what proved to be a very long shut-down of the library, and the somewhat limited offering of what is so far available from it, but the number of very good sound recordings now available is literally increasing every day. The safeguards we now have in place are to prevent a recurrence of the library problems in the future. We appreciate Al's pointing out those problems so clearly for those of you who might not have been aware of them. And by the way, Al has now rejoined the NARA gang. Welcome back Al!!!



DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR NARA MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES?

Your mailing label on the cover of this publication shows the expiration date of your NARA membership. Why don't you check it now and send in your dues (\$20.00) if you are close to that date. That way you won't forget and it will save our membership director from having to remind you.



From The Editor's Desk...

Jim Snyder



I'd like to discuss a subject that really isn't any of my business; NARA's cassette library. I say it isn't my business because it has been at least fifteen years since I borrowed anything from the library, and I've never had anything at all to do with its operation. But I do have some observations. Last spring you received a listing of the first cassettes that had been rechecked and were once again available to you. Since then you have received two additional listings and you will receive more in the future as the process is completed.

Why was all this checking necessary? For some period of time our club's officers heard complaints (I did too) about the poor quality of the shows in the library. Because of this they closed the library on a temporary basis so that all cassettes could be checked. Contrary to what one person said in print, there was never any thought of closing the library permanently, but as you know there was a long delay in getting started with this. That delay was caused by an obstruction of several months that was beyond the control of our officers. The goal now is to see to it that all library cassettes are of "very good" sound quality.

To help get things moving, several of us have been checking these cassettes. Up to the point of this writing, I have personally listened to 3,336 cassettes and am continuing to do so. Of those, I have directed that 56 percent of them be removed from the library. That is an appalling number and certainly shows that something did indeed have to be done.

What have I encountered? Really flagrant problems such as completely blank cassettes, damaged and unplayable cassettes (some without any tape in them), interruptions recorded in the middle of tapes, and worst of all several cassettes that were deliberately sabotaged by someone. I won't dwell on this last item, but it was quite obvious that this was not accidental. Beyond these were the usual problems of crosstalk, sound waver, muffled sound, drop outs, outside noise, and just plain lousy sound.

There are some general observations I have after listening to all those cassettes. When the "listening project" has been completed there will still be some in poor sound that we missed, and we depend on you to call attention to them when you return the tapes. Please don't write on the cassette labels, but put your comments on a slip of paper and include that in your return package. Also, make sure that the tape is completely rewound when you send it back. Above all, please make sure that you get the cassette back into the correct plastic box (both are numbered). I have found that about seven percent of those that I have checked were in the wrong box, and that would certainly irritate the next person to get that cassette, only to find it is not the one they ordered and paid for.

I have not tried to answer your questions here. That isn't my job, but I did want to share what I have been finding. It is obvious to me that the officers took the right action. I know that you have been frustrated, but when all of this is completed I feel sure that you will appreciate what has been done.

RADIO ACTORS

by
Robert L. Mott



NARA member Bob Mott has had a long and distinguished career in both network radio and TV. He handled sound effects for such shows as *Gangbusters*, *Phillip Morris Playhouse*, the *Ed Sullivan Show* on TV, and the *Tonight Show*. He also was a writer for *Red Skalton*, *Dick VanDyke*, and *Andy Williams*, among others. He has written two books which you can order directly from the publishers: *RADIO SOUND EFFECTS* (ISBN #0-89950-747-6) for \$41.95 which includes shipping from McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 (800) 253-2187; and *SOUND EFFECTS: RADIO, TV, AND FILM* (ISBN #0-240-80029-X) for \$46.95, including shipping, from Focal Press, 225 Wildwood Ave., Woburn, MA 01801.

To those of us who worked in radio between the early 1930's and 1950's, radio was neither old time nor golden; it was simply live. This meant that whatever we did, good or bad, it went out over the air and into the homes of millions of listeners. If it was good, it was simply what was expected of us and therefore went largely unnoticed. If we made a mistake, however, it most certainly didn't go unnoticed. Unlike the movies, with their countless takes and retakes, radio was immediate and final. We only got one chance. Do it right the first time or suffer the consequences. As one movie actress so indelicately, but accurately, put it, "My God, if you make a mistake on radio, everybody hears it. It's just like farting in church!"

You might argue with her choice of words but no one who has ever done live radio would dispute the acumen of her statement. Once a sound went into the mike, it was gone forever.

In the theater, the fear of forgetting lines, missing a cue, being late for an entrance, or simply looking foolish in front of an audience is called stage fright. In radio, it was called mike

fright. In some victims, it made the throat so dry that they were unable to speak. For that reason, mike fright was also referred to as "drying up."

Interestingly enough, sufferers of this occupational hazard were always fine during rehearsals. But once the curtain went up, or the ON THE AIR light went on, something happened to their confidence, or focus, or whatever else it was, and these actors suddenly forgot their lines or became speechless.

Radio casting directors dealt with this problem in a number of ways. In the beginning, they hired the most competent actors they could find, crossed their fingers, and prayed that they had made the right choice. Through this process of elimination, actors who had on-air experience and had proven themselves under fire were given priority over actors without radio experience. Experienced actors were indeed the chosen few. They were all excellent actors, had good radio voices, could do several dialects, needed little if any rehearsal, were sober and reliable and impervious to that radio bugaboo, mike fight.

You would think that anyone possessing these talents could look forward to a bright and financially rewarding career in radio. Well, maybe, but only if they paid attention to some of radio's less obvious and rarely discussed requirements.

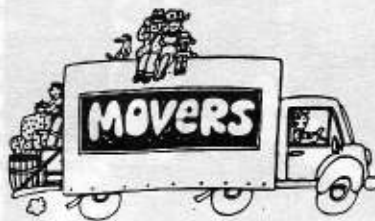
Radio was a very intimate medium. If the scene was busy, actors often pressed their bodies against one another as they delivered their lines. It was not a time for wandering romantic hands or overdoses of heavy, cloying perfumes. And if the luncheon or dinner special downstairs in ColBeeS had been liberally laced with garlic or preceded by dry martinis, experienced actors carried a generous supply of breath fresheners. Actors who ignored these and other good personal hygiene practices never understood why their radio calls became less and less frequent. Sen-Sen became to popular as a mask for boozy drinks that most actors were afraid to use it for fear of being guilty by association.

All in all, being an actor during the days of live radio was not easy. The few men and women who successfully met all these requirements were difficult to find. It therefore wasn't unusual

for directors to put together their own little stock company of people they could rely on and with whom they felt comfortable working.

When I worked on "Mr. Chameleon," I asked the star, Karl Swenson, why he did just about every show that required a Scandinavian accent. He told me it wasn't because he was that extraordinarily good (he lied; he was), it was because of his reputation: Directors were notoriously insecure about taking a chance with someone new. Besides, Swenson added, North Country voices are probably the trickiest to do. And if the directors put an ad in *Daily Variety* asking for auditions, there would be 10,000 actors knocking down the door, while probably only 50 would be acceptable. Here he paused and smiled, "What director has the time or inclination to find that fifty out of ten thousand?"

That, in a nutshell, sums up why it was so difficult to break into radio: insecurity on the part of the directors plus radio inexperience on the part of the actors. The lack or abundance of talent among untried actors never entered into it. There simply wasn't enough time or inclination to go looking for it.



ADDRESS CHANGE?

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

Janis DeMoss
134 Vincewood Drive
Nicholasville, KY 40356



AMOS 'N' ANDY by Frank Bresee

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

August 19, 1929 was a milestone in the history of radio. It was the date of the first network broadcast of the "Amos 'n Andy" program, which starred Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll.

The program had begun on Chicago station WMAQ a year and a half earlier, but it wasn't until the Pepsodent Company brought them to the NBC Network on that August day, that listeners to NBC could hear them live in their local area. It was several years after the beginning of the network, but it was most certainly the beginning of a regular daily comedy/drama program.

I talked with Freeman Gosden (Amos) who retired to Beverly Hills, California. He filled me in on the background of their first meeting and the beginnings of their first radio program, "Sam and Henry."

Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll first met 80 years ago. They were both working for the Joe Bren Company, an organization that was producing the Follies of 1919. For six years, until 1925, Freeman and Charlie traveled with the Bren Company performing in their Follies shows. During these years, they became inseparable friends and because the Bren Company had its headquarters in Chicago the boys took an apartment together and since they were both musicians (Charlie played the piano and Gosden played the ukelele), they spent evenings together and worked up a comedy/song routine. With radio just coming into its own in the spring of 1925, the boys decided to try out at the Edgewater Beach Hotel, station WRBH. Although their first program wasn't a smash, they were given a radio job singing one night a week without pay. It was during this time they were offered a regular staff job at WGN, the radio station of the Chicago Tribune. A few months later,



Bill Hay and Frank Bresee on Command Performance December 8, 1977. The ninety-one year old Hay passed away the following October.

-Courtesy Frank Bresee

Gosden and Correll joined the WGN staff. They were asked if they would be interested in developing something in the nature of a comic radio serial; a comic strip adapted to broadcasting.

The station wanted something like the "Andy Gump" newspaper serial but neither knew much of the ups and downs of married life. Their slant on life was not adapted to this style of broadcasting. They did, however, know about Black characters, which were popular in the minstrel shows of that time. So they suggested a comic serial based on the lives of two fellows they called Sam and Henry. In January 1926, they presented their first episode of "Sam and Henry." It was the first of its kind ever presented on radio.

Soon after the show went on the air, the *Chicago Tribune* signed them to a contract for their services, as "Sam and Henry." At the expiration of the contract, they signed for another year. At the end of their second year as "Sam and Henry," the team had written and delivered a ten minute episode each night for 586 nights. About six months before the expiration of their second year, Gosden and Correll conceived the idea of recording the program and sending it to stations all over the country. This would mean that the show could be heard in many other cities, in addition to the Chicago area. Their idea was turned down by WGN and since the boys felt that they had a marketable product, they decided to move to a station which would be willing to record and syndicate the program. Although they had spent two years building up the characters of "Sam and Henry" they were notified that the title was the property of the *Chicago Tribune* and they were not allowed to use it on any other station.

Thus, they created the name of "Amos 'n Andy" for their new program. Bill Hay was the announcer during the "Sam and Henry" days and continued through more than 10,000 broadcasts of "Amos 'n Andy." I joined Bill for his 91st birthday on April 19, 1978 and he reminisced about the "Amos 'n Andy" shows.

Bill told me that for over ten years, Gosden and Correll wrote all of their own scripts and very often they would finish writing just fifteen minutes before they went on the air. In those early days, the program was broadcast six nights a week, Monday through Saturday, for fifteen minutes. It was hard work, but they were paid well. They each received \$1,000 a week, 52 weeks a year, which was a salary unheard of in those early days of radio.

Bill Hay also told me that he only made one mistake during all of his years as announcer for "Amos 'n Andy," and that was on purpose. At the end of each program, Bill would say, "Use Pepsodent twice a day, and see your dentist twice a year." The president of the Pepsodent Company claimed that listeners did not stay tuned to the end of the program and would shut off the radio as soon as the skit was finished, thus missing the closing announcement. Bill Hay thought differently and asked permission to broadcast this closing, "This is Bill Hay reminding you to use Pepsodent twice a year, and see your dentist twice a day. Good night." That was on a Friday night and by the following Monday morning 58,000 letters had been received mentioning Bill Hay's error. This proved that the fans were loyal and were listening to "Amos 'n Andy" right down to the very end of the program.

The program continued in the fifteen minute format until 1943, when Correll and Gosden segued to a weekly half hour "Amos 'n Andy" show. From 1943 through 1948 their program was in the top ten of the Hooper ratings. Even when the rating dropped below the top twenty, the show continued to be heard as a weekly half hour sitcom. In the later years, and up to 1960, Freeman Gosden and Charlie Correll continued with the "Amos 'n Andy Music Hall" on the CBS radio network.

Bill Hay passed away in October 1978 ending one of radio's longest careers. He is missed by all of us who knew him, and by the millions who listened to his friendly voice, every evening for over two decades.

"Amos 'n Andy" faded out as time changed, but the memory of one of radio's most popular programs continues to be fresh in the mind of their fans everywhere.



**The AMOS 'n ANDY SHOW FEATURED
Charles Correll as Andy Brown and
Freeman Gosden as Amos Jones.**

A HISTORY OF AMOS 'N' ANDY

Things You Never Knew About Them Before

We are very happy to give you this history of Amos 'n' Andy. For, after reading it, we feel sure you will agree that the life story of these two young men is an intensely interesting one.

Freeman Gosden, now well known to millions of radio listeners as "Amos Jones," was born in Richmond, Virginia, on May 5, 1899. He began as a tobacco salesman, later sold automobiles. After the war he met "Andy," Charles Correll, with whom he became associated in the promotion and production of amateur theatricals.

Charles Correll, equally well known to radio millions as "Andrew H. Brown," was born in Peoria, Illinois, on February 3, 1890. He began as a newsboy, learned the bricklaying trade from his father, played the piano in moving picture theatres, then became a producer of amateur theatricals . . . meeting Freeman Gosden in Durham, North Carolina, while thus engaged.

After a short radio career on WEBH (one of Chicago's pioneer stations) . . . not as the now famous blackface comedians, but as Correll and Gosden, a vocal harmony team . . . in January, 1925, the boys were offered a job at WGN, Chicago, where they created "Sam and Henry" . . . the forerunner of their present act. This, incidentally, was the first radio work for which they were actually paid!

Three years later, on March 28, 1928, Correll and Gosden joined station WMAQ, Chicago, where they brought to life "Amos 'n' Andy." In the summer of 1929, The Pepsodent Co. decided that "Amos 'n' Andy" should be broadcast nationally, so they assumed sponsorship of the program beginning Aug. 19th, 1929, over the National Broadcasting Company network. A happy association that has been in existence for over six years!

It should be noted here that "Amos 'n' Andy" was the first 15-minute program broadcast and was also radio's first continued story with an episode broadcast nightly. In fact, their programs are now broadcast twice every night except Saturday and Sunday to assure all listeners a convenient listening hour. The first program, heard only on eastern stations, is on the air at 7:00 P.M. Eastern Time. The second broadcast is on at 10:00 P.M. Central Time which is also heard in the Rocky Mountains at 9:00 P.M. Mountain Time and on the West Coast at 8:00 P.M., Pacific Time.

Mr. Correll and Mr. Gosden write every line they speak. The average episode consists of about 1500 words. Their preparation is a fifty-fifty proposition, but it is no over-worked "Amos" who sits down at the typewriter to prepare the next story. It is "Andy" who does this, while "Amos" paces back and forth trying lines and dictating the dialogue. The only existing, complete set of episodes is in bound volumes closely guarded by "Amos 'n' Andy."

The one point to remember, however, about these episodes is that no one but "Amos 'n' Andy" themselves and the copyright office in Washington has ever before seen them! So you can see what a real treat it is to have a sample episode like this for your very own!

The boys themselves also take the parts of all the characters they introduce. For your information here is a list showing which ones each man does:

"Amos"—Freeman Gosden
Kingfish
Lightnin'
Brother Crawford
Prince Ali Bendo

"Andy"—Charles Correll
Henry Van Porter
Landford
And such straight characters
as policeman, judge, etc.

The boys devote many hours a day to careful study of these characters. And, in their broadcasts no audience is permitted to observe them. For the world they have created around the "Fresh Air Taxicab Company, Incorporated," the grocery store and their many other enterprises is so real to them that they must guard against any diverting, outside influence that might spoil the illusion. This devotion, no doubt, has been a great factor in helping "Amos 'n' Andy" attract the largest regular listening audience radio has ever known!

Many people have asked about the "Amos 'n' Andy" theme song. And the boys themselves say this melody, even after all these years, seems more lovely every time they hear it. It is called "The Perfect Song" — and was originally used in D. W. Griffith's moving picture, "The Birth of A Nation."

HEARING VOICES

MICKEY MOUSE ON RADIO

by Keith Scott

These days, animation buffs have access to a fine collection of cartoon history, via a wealth of laserdisc and videotape collections. The gaps are still infuriating (are you listening, Columbia Pictures?), but certainly studios like MGM, Warners and even small outfits like the Ub Iwerks company are well represented via collectible box sets containing often obscure gems. Disney buffs, in particular, have been able to see the vast majority of the studio's output via the Disney Channel's constant screening of beautiful prints of early Silly Symphonies, or long hidden features like *So Dear to My Heart* and *The Reluctant Dragon*.

But one aspect of Disney's history has remained obscure for too long, and that is his long-running relationship with radio. Younger readers must try to realize that in the 1930s and 40s big-time network radio was as all-pervasive as television is today. Those animation legends we now revere like Chuck Jones, Jack Kinney, Dick Lundy and hundreds more spent all their waking hours in those decades surrounded by radio, an entirely different medium to what it is today. The big, national programs were controlled, produced and packaged by special radio departments of advertising agencies, who sought the best deals and biggest movie stars to help their clients pitch the products.

In the 1930s the ultimate aim of program producers was sponsorship and its accompanying large budget which bought big name stars. This practice was still in use two decades later when TV was launched, only dying out in the 1960s. By 1935, most of the top performers were being wooed to the West Coast, where the talent pool and drawing power of Hollywood movie industry star names was deemed desirable. Once the transcontinental hookup had finally been accomplished, Chicago and New York gradually lost their power bases as the main radio production centers.

One of the biggest names being lured to radio was Walt Disney, with his accompanying menagerie of famous car-

toon characters. The Mickey Mouse gang had made various local "novelty" radio appearances throughout the early to mid 30s. But by 1937, they were being scouted for the national radio big-time. Back East, the Max Fleischer characters were already rating well on the air in *Betty Boop Fables* and *Popeye the Sailor*.

In the summer of 1937, the advertising agency Ruthrauff and Ryan made a concerted push for Disney's cartoon gang. Their biggest account was Lever Brothers, makers of Rinso and Lifebuoy. The Lever company was committed to four and a half hours weekly on the CBS network. In mid 1937 they wanted a half hour program which could immediately precede (and build up the audience for) Al Jolson's *Lifebuoy Show*, which aired at 7:00 pm Sundays, just in time to be clobbered by Jack Benny's powerhouse NBC ratings. Disney consented to a trial of the idea. In September announcements began appearing which stated that Walt's famous animated characters would be likely contenders to fill the pre-Jolson time slot in a show budgeted at \$10,000 weekly, to commence October 5 in the new Fall season. This of course was pending Disney's final okay.

Ever the perfectionist, Walt was understandably edgy about exposing his characters in anything but the right program, yet the offer was tempting in that it would provide an excellent showcase to both preview and publicise his much anticipated first feature film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, due for release by Christmas 1937. It would also provide income which was sorely needed due to the budgetary blowout engendered by the tortuously detailed production of



One of three drawings offered as prizes for writing an essay in conjunction with the Hinds Honey Hall of Fame radio show broadcast on December 23, 1934.

Snow White.

It was decided to proceed with a show in which Mickey Mouse would present weekly guest stars, while Donald Duck would characteristically gum up the works. Leslie Howard was slated as the first guest. Radio actor J. Donald Wilson was to provide Mickey's voice (it was mentioned that this was the "first time anyone other than Walt Disney himself was allowed to speak for Mickey"), while Clarence Nash, the voice of Donald in the cartoons, would repeat his raucous role in the radio series. An audition record was made, with top bandleader Meredith Willson handling the musical chores.

In early September, Roy Disney flew to New York to close the deal. He met with Ruthrauff and Ryan's New York director Myron Kirk and comedy writer Ken Englund, who had recently scripted a successful Marx Brothers guest spot on Lanny Ross's *Packard Show*. Mickey looked set to become a national broadcast star in just a month.

This deal quickly soured, however, and was "liquidated" until the first of the year [1938]. Walt got cold feet, and at one point was quoted as saying he would rather wait until television became a reality. It was noted that the audition format was to be revamped, to allow a longer publicity campaign for the radio premiere. If this buildup, and a revised audition record proved successful, the Mickey Mouse show would be slotted into the ad agency's second half-hour Rinso spot which would be available in January 1938. The trades reported that Disney "refuses radio because he doesn't think his Mickey Mouse and others would broadcast well." It was also noted that Walt's main concern was the danger of overexposure, the *Hollywood Reporter* stating, "Disney is afraid [his characters] may sour on him if they [air] every week." This of course was so much ballyhoo, a smokescreen for a disagreement on monetary terms. Ruthrauff and Ryan eventually decided that Rinso would sponsor a dramatic show instead (this be-

came the popular Edward G. Robinson newspaper drama *Big Town*).

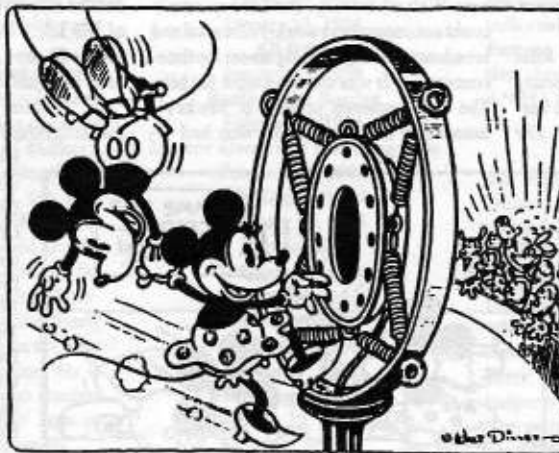
But various clients kept up the pressure on Disney, whose theatrical success in the 1930s was internationally spectacular. At first Lucky Strike expressed interest, but rather than a cigarette manufacturer (a doubtful choice to sponsor a kids show, even in those less medically informed days), Walt finally said yes to the Pepsodent Toothpaste company. Pepsodent was about to surrender their long-time stars Amos & Andy, whose nine-year contract expired on December 31, 1937 (the blackface comics were switching over to a new deal for Campbell Soups). Pepsodent

that, "Disney will need the money for increased salaries to keep his help, which is being raided to build-up MGM's new cartoon department." As most cartoon buffs are aware, even Warner's famous animation director Friz Freleng was wooed to Metro, where he spent a frustrating two years before returning to Schlesinger Productions.

And speaking of Leon Schlesinger, he too joined in the broadcast fray. The savvy businessman announced that he was to green light a radio show starring his own collection of animated zanies, like Porky and Petunia Pig. This program would be handled by the M.D.

Howe packaging and talent agency (which represented at least one of Leon's top vocal artists, Dave Weber, the voice of Egghead). Schlesinger planned to slot his Looney Tunes show opposite Mickey's. As far as can be determined, however, not even an audition disc was cut.

By late December Mickey's official title was decided upon - the show would be touted as *The Mickey Mouse Theatre of the Air* (although, strangely enough, it was never announced as such. The shows always began, "The Pepsodent company presents Mickey Mouse!"). The



all-important music duties were handled splendidly by Felix Mills, onetime arranger with the Raymond Paige Orchestra on Louella Parson's *Hollywood Hotel*, the West Coast's first important radio program.

Two specialty gag writers were brought on board. The head writer was Bill Demling, one half of the prolific and erudite comedy team Gill and Demling, who wrote special radio material for many big name comics, including Jolson, Ed Wynn and Joe E. Brown. He was assisted by Eddie Holden, radio actor and producer (and the voice of Disney's giant in *The Brave Little Tailor*).

The show certainly proved worthy of its high budget (between \$10,000 and \$12,000 weekly). Felix Mills employed thirty-three musicians for his main orchestra, six of whom doubled in the roles of

had confined its considerable spending to NBC, the biggest and most prestigious of the networks, and they offered Disney *Amos & Andy*'s recently vacated Sunday afternoon spot, for thirteen weeks with options.

Once more Roy Disney flew to New York to cut the deal with Pepsodent's agency Lord and Thomas, returning to the West Coast by train. This time the money was pleasing, and Walt even agreed to do Mickey's voice until a suitable replacement was found. As before, the Mickey Mouse show was to premiere in the first week of 1938, which Walt knew was the best strategy, coinciding with the international release of his \$1,200,000 feature *Snow White*.

With the Pepsodent deal closed, it was revealed that big bucks were indeed the motivating factor behind the Mouse's ether debut, when the trades mentioned

Donald Duck's "Webfoot Sextette," a novelty band that was the undoubted precursor to Spike Jones's City Slickers. These "extracurricular" musicians employed cowbells, bottles, temple blocks and rat-tat devices, all perfectly tuned. Also on board were three sound men, a twelve-voice female choir, an eight-voice male choir and a dozen regular cast members. The female choir consisted of four specialists in the art of bird whistling, for sequences featuring Minnie Mouse's "Woodland Bird Choir." The opening theme music was "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" while the Seven Dwarfs' jaunty "Heigh Ho" closed each show. The show was broadcast from a theatre studio on the RKO lot (now part of Paramount).

Mickey's announcer was John "Bud" Hiestand, a top radio voice, already known to the juvenile audience as the narrator of the transcribed 1937 serial *The Cinnamon Bear*. He plugged Pepsodent and tried to maintain some semblance of order with the cacophonous cast of cartoon characters. The regulars were Mickey, Minnie, Donald Duck, Goofy and Clara Cluck, with occasional (mandatory) appearances by Snow White. Each show took the cast of characters on an adventure through history or fairy tales. Mickey would summon Snow White's Magic Mirror (voiced by the versatile Hiestand) to provide the transportation, allowing the characters to visit such famous personages as Robin Hood, Cinderella, King Neptune, and even sit in on the trial of Disney's famous 1935 Silly Symphony *Who Killed Cock Robin?*

The regular voices were mostly familiar. Clarence Nash, of course, had exclusive dibs on Donald Duck while Florence Gill repeated her operatic crimes as Clara Cluck. From the fourth show, Mickey was portrayed by Joe Twerp, the excitable, stammering radio comic already heard in Warner cartoons (he was the iceman in Avery's *I Only Have Eyes For You*), while Minnie Mouse was the diminutive radio actress Thelma Hubbard who would later play the title role in the *Lux Radio Theatre's* excellent adaptation of *Snow White*, aired

at Christmas of 1938. The character of Goofy was the show's major vocal problem. He was portrayed by actor Stuart Buchanan, at the time a casting director for Walt (and the voice of the huntsman who couldn't bring himself to kill Snow White). While a mostly capable actor, his interpretation of Goofy was frankly amateurish and it hurt the show. Unfortunately, the great Pinto Colvig, Goofy's original voice, had left Walt's employ in 1937 to freelance in radio and movies. An essential part of Disney's vocal company and overall 1930s "sound," Colvig was sorely missed on the radio show.

Mickey's voice, too, should have been Walt all the way. But Disney simply could not commit to a weekly rehearsal and broadcast, finding the assignment too time-consuming. It was also awkward for him. The live audience present at Mickey's broadcasts disturbed Walt, who had al-

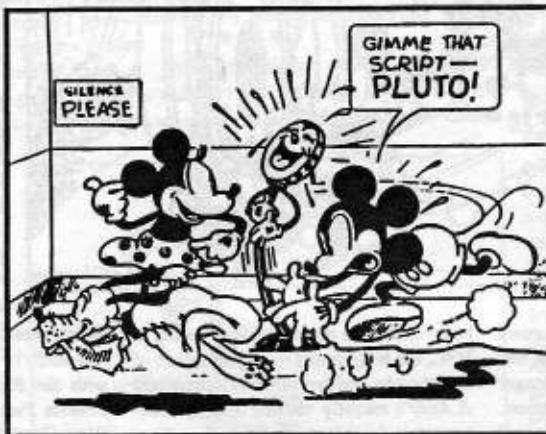
ways been a little self-conscious supplying Mickey's distinctive falsetto. Still, it's a pity he didn't do so here: as animator Mark Kausler astutely points out, only Walt was able to give Mickey his much needed "Midwestern" twang. While Joe Twerp did a serviceable job, it was much like the later mouse voice replacements (Jimmy McDonald and Ford Banes) in that it was simply a likeable "gee-whizz" falsetto, but not the real Mickey. John Hiestand recalled filling in for Walt on the later shows, in the role of Walt Disney!

The supporting cast was interesting, containing appearances by many future cartoon voice actors. Most intriguing was the presence of youthful Mel Blanc, then only twenty-nine years old. Blanc essayed various roles, including some slightly dizzy female dowagers, and in each of the twenty shows he played a recurring part, one of his earliest original characters. This was the "Hiccups Man," as Blanc referred to him. The voice was that of a little man who started out talking straight and ended up hiccupping violently. Disney later employed Blanc to do this voice for Gideon the Cat in *Pinocchio*, but the role was deleted as the film progressed: Disney felt it would be too intrusive. (Blanc was left with a couple of near inaudible hiccups in the finished film, and an anecdote he employed in interviews for the rest of his life.) Regrettably on the *Mickey Mouse Theatre*, this voice was wildly over-used and quickly became irritating.

Other support players included the delightful basso cartoon villain Billy Bletcher, who imbued the radio show with the necessary Disney-esque quality, which Colvig should have been a part of. There were also appearances by Hans Conried, Bea Benaderet and Walter Tetley (later the voice of Andy Panda for Walt Lantz), along with comic Cliff Arquette and various reliable radio actors like Lou Merrill, Fred Shields and Ed Max.

Each episode featured an artful arrangement of a popular or novelty song ("Casey Jones," etc.) by Felix Mills, and in reviewing the series it can be said that the musical moments actually hold up today as the best parts of these shows. By March 20, the contracted thirteen weeks were up, and the series was picked up by Pepsodent for the remaining seven weeks of the 1938 radio season, before being quietly cancelled. The industry trades pointed out that the *Mickey Mouse Theatre* had proven disappointing, vindicating Walt's early gut feeling.

A contemporary review (by *New York Post* critic Aaron Stein) is as valid today as it was back then: after qualifying his years of devotion as a fan of Mickey and the Silly Symphonies, Stein wrote, "...the Disney creations are securely established as the cinema's solid contribution to



the joy of living. It with these unshakeable convictions still unshaken that we now venture to suggest that the animated cartoon characters may not be microphone material. Come television, they will probably bring new joys to broadcasting, but in its merely audible phase radio is not deriving much good from them. Perhaps there is a genius who could adapt them to the microphone. We doubt it...

"Watching them on the screen, one finds it impossible to ignore the pictures to concentrate on their voices and sounds. All the strength, the vigor and logic of the Disney films lies in the pictures. The voices, the music and the sounds are usually funny and effective, but they register only as sound effects which point up the pictures.

"On the air they offered only disembodied sound effects. Only in so far as the sound calls to mind a vision of one of the Donald Duck frenzies or of Mickey's dapper contours is it at all entertaining. Unfortunately, the sound is not very strongly evocative. On yesterday's program, for example, briefly while Donald Duck sang 'Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen,' the broadcast had a positive quality. Otherwise it seemed to be translating laboriously from animal talk to human talk. In the films Donald never requires translation. He is completely explicit visually with raucous quacks for punctuation. A half hour of undiluted punctuation is wearisome."

It was also noted by various columnists that any animated cartoon "illusion" was destroyed by the presence of the live studio audience, who were obviously watching human performers reading from scripts. And their laughter was also a distancing element in this supposedly fantasy world of mice, ducks and warbling hens.

Although Mickey's show failed to make much of a dent in the ratings, Disney did not forsake radio. Far from it, in fact. Prestigious anthology shows like *Lux* and *Screen Guild Theatre* adapted Disney feature classics like *Snow White* and *Pinocchio* several times, while Walt often guested on shows where he discussed the upcoming release of his latest projects. In 1943, he even appeared on comedian Bob Burns' show to talk seriously on the war effort and his propaganda film *Victory Through Air Power*. And in the 1950's, when radio was dying and Walt was get-

ting his feet wet in TV, *Lux* was still doing creditable audio versions of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*.

The Mickey Mouse Theatre of the Air ran for just twenty weeks before it bit the dust. A breakdown log:

- Robin Hood**
(First show of the series)
January 2, 1938
- Snow White Day**
January 9, 1938
- Donald Duck's Band**
January 16, 1938
- The River Boat**
January 23, 1938
- All Baba**
January 30, 1938
- South of the Border**
February 6, 1938
- Mother Goose and Old King Cole**
February 13, 1938
- The Gypsy Band**
February 20, 1938
- Cinderella**
February 27, 1938
- King Neptune**
March 6, 1938
- The Pied Piper**
March 13, 1938
- Sleeping Beauty**
March 20, 1938
- Ancient China**
(Snow White was a guest)
March 27, 1938
- Mother Goose and The Old Woman in the Shoe**
April 3, 1938
- Long John Silver**
April 10, 1938
- King Arthur**
April 17, 1938
- Who Killed Cock Robin?**
April 24, 1938
- Cowboy Show**
May 1, 1938
- William Tell**
May 8, 1938
- Old MacDonald**
(Final show of the series)
May 15, 1938

As Walt Disney predicted, back in July 1937, "I don't think this show will work. You have to see the characters to fully appreciate them." He echoed the reviewers and he was right: although a noble effort, Mickey's radio vehicle was the wrong showcase for such fully animated characters. The shows, while pleasantly diverting in themselves, suffered the same limitations as the later Capitol records featuring Disney, Warner and Lantz characters. Although the radio and film-cartoon industries constantly overlapped in talent, ideas and cross references, animation was the thing which Disney intended to perfect, and that highly specialized art-form simply wasn't suited for a weekly run on an audio-only medium. Still, it's an important footnote in the history of Disney animation, and thanks to the forum that is ANIMATO!, the story has at last been told.

Acknowledgments: My thanks this time to Rober Tieman of the Walt Disney Archives for access to original scripts, and to Dave Smith for allowing examination of several scrapbooks of press clippings. Thanks also to Mark Kausler, Hames Ware (co-author, along with myself, of an upcoming book on the vintage theatrical cartoon voice actors), John and Larry Gassman and especially to Marty Halperin of Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, who permitted me to listen to the *Mickey Mouse Theatre* shows, via the original discs donated by the Felix Mills Estate.

(Keith Scott is a voice actor and animation historian based in Sydney, Australia. He was recently heard as the narrator of Disney's feature film *George of the Jungle*, and as various Jay Ward characters in promos for the Cartoon Network.)

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Jim Cox

DAYTIME DIARY

They Spoke Volumes



In her delightful treatise, *Tune in Tomorrow*, which gives outsiders an introspective look at the performers on radio's daytime serials, soap queen Mary Jane Higby recalls a geographical patchwork that offered opportunity for scores of artists to do their thing in several places throughout the day.

For awhile New York's Radio City, the colossal 68-story RCA Building, was home of two NBC networks -- the Red and the Blue. CBS, meanwhile, broadcast at nearby 485 Madison Avenue, plus from upgraded space purchased at 799 Seventh Avenue. To this triune could be added the studios of MBS at the not-too-distant intersection of Broadway and Fortieth Street. These facilities provided a type of "triangular raceway" for the busy radio actor.

Substantial numbers of actors, actresses and announcers, in fact, added up to \$30,000 annually to their bottom lines via freelance radio assignments, a tidy sum in the 1940s. Dashing from one broadcast center to another, often on the thinnest of time margins, they paid stand-ins to work rehearsals, hold doors and elevators and reserved taxis in advance. On their way to the good life, they were often living on a narrow edge as their voices boomed out of Atwater-Kents at myriad hours during the first half of the century.

Actor Staats Cotsworth is a typical example. Labeled "radio's busiest actor" in 1946, Cotsworth began his day with an 8:30 a.m. rehearsal for *Lone Journey*. The day sometimes ended after a repeat live performance for the West Coast audience of *Mr. and Mrs. North*, in which he played Lt. Bill Weigand. Between the two he would appear on several of the 10 daytime dramas in which he maintained running parts, although not all were concurrent: *Amanda of Honeymoon Hill*, *Big Sister* (he was the male lead for awhile), *Front Page Farrell* (he was the best known actor in the title role), *Lone Journey*, *Lorenzo Jones*, *Marriage for Two*, *The Right to Happiness*, *The Second Mrs. Burton*, *Stella Dallas* and *When a Girl Marries*. Despite those, he was perhaps better recognized as the nighttime supersleuth *Casey*, *Crime Photographer*. And in his spare moments Cotsworth turned up on *The Man from G-2*, *Mark Trail*, *The Cavalcade of America*, *The March of Time Quiz*, *Rogue's Gallery* and various other series.

By 1948 *Newsweek* had put his salary in excess of \$50,000. Having earned a reputation as a Shakespearean actor, starting in the repertory theater of Eva Le Gallienne, why, then, would Cotsworth pursue a role on *Stella Dallas*? "Giving up a daytime show is like turning in your insurance policy," he sheepishly admitted.

Nor was he alone. Anne Elstner, the dowdy fictional matriarch who played *Stella* during an 18-year run, claimed she was appearing on as many

as 10 shows per day! Scores of others, while not reaching that pinnacle, found opportunity to ply their craft within the geographical triangle sanctioned by Ms. Higby.

There was an additional ingredient that gave these copious on-air performers an inside track toward gaining freelance assignments. The serial producers were adamant in ordering that rehearsals be held to very short time spans, often no more than an hour. Their intention was to minimize production costs in order to increase profits. The producers' on-site underlings, the directors, surmised that experienced actors, actresses and announcers could help achieve those goals; certainly it would eliminate the time necessary to train unskilled novices in what was expected. Thus, a cadre of professionals matured, a core group of New York performers who spent their days buzzing from building to building while sensationally increasing their own net worth.

Who were these skilled artisans? Far more space than is available to us here would be required to identify them all. In researching material on the soap operas, I have documented a measurable number. My intention was to publish a list of the 10 most active men and women on the air in daytime drama. That worked well for the men but not so well for the women.

My list of the 10 most prolific male personalities, in descending order, based on number of series on which they appeared, follows.

1 (tie). Clayton (Bud) Collyer and Marvin Miller (13 each). Both were equally adept at combining acting with announcing. Collyer was Procter & Gamble's Duz pitchman for years on *Big Sister*, *The Goldbergs*, *The Guiding Light* and *Road of Life*, plus *Truth of Consequences* Saturday nights. In *Kitty Foyle*, *The Man I Married*, *Pretty Kitty Kelly*, *Young Widder Brown* and others, he acted, often playing masculine leads. Miller, best recalled by early TV audiences as Michael Anthony, the secretary who dispensed checks on *The Millionaire*, announced for *Ma Perkins* but was more prominently heard in running parts on *Backstage Wife*, *Judy and Jane*, *The Right to Happiness* and *The Romance of Helen Trent*. On *One Man's Family* he was cast in more than 20 roles.

3. James Meighan (12). As Larry Noble, husband of Mary, *Backstage Wife*, and as *Just Plain Bill's* son-in-law Kerry Donovan, Meighan had a daily career before NBC microphones for years. But the busy actor also played male leads on *Dot and Will*, *I Love Linda Dale*, *Lora Lawton*, *Orphans of Divorce* and *Marie, the Little French Princess*. Beyond the serials he was best known in title roles as *The Falcon* and *Flash Gordon*.

4. Joseph Curtin (11). While he may be remembered by everybody as the male half of *Mr. and Mrs. North*, Curtin remained active in the daytime, too. He was male lead on *John's Other Wife* and *Second Husband* and acquired running parts on *Backstage Wife*, *Our Gal Sunday*, *The Story of Bess Johnson* and *Young Widder Brown*.

5 (3-way tie). Staats Cotsworth, Michael Fitzmaurice and John Larkin (10 each). Cotsworth is profiled earlier. Like Miller and Collyer, Fitzmaurice was equally comfortable as announcer and actor. He narrated *The Right to Happiness* and acted on *Rosemary*, *Stella Dallas* and *When a Girl Marries*. Larkin, radio's *Perry Mason*, played the male lead (Gov. Miles Nelson) on *The Right to Happiness*. He was familiar to fans of *The Brighter Day*, *Portia Faces Life*, *Road of Life* and *Stepmother*, and became the detective-lawyer-hero of early TV's daytime serial *The Edge of Night*.

8 (3-way tie). Ford Bond, David Gothard and Larry Haines (8 each). Bond was an announcer and worked all day. As the exclusive product spokesman for B. T. Babbitt, he plugged Bab-O on *David Harum*, *Lora Lawton* and *Nona from Nowhere*. He is recalled from stints on *Backstage Wife*, *Your Family and Mine* and others, and may be best remembered for *The Manhattan Merry-Go-Round* and a trio of musical programs sponsored by the Cities Service Oil Co. Gothard's most famous role was as perennial suitor Gil Whitney on *The Romance of Helen Trent*. He turned up on *Big Sister*, *The O'Neills*, *The Right to Happiness* and *Woman in White*. In the daytime, you could find Haines in supporting parts on *Pepper Young's Family*, *Rosemary*, *The Second Mrs. Burton* and *This is Nora Drake*. At night, he was featured on *Gangbusters* and a gang of other detective series. He is undoubtedly best remembered for three decades as Stu Bergman on TV's *Search for Tomorrow*.

While these gentlemen comprise the list of top 10 on-air male personalities of daytime radio, there was at least one other presence in the studios about as often as they. Arthur Hanna directed 9 soap operas, in addition to several nighttime series. Among his daytime wares: *The Brighter Day*, *David Harum*, *Front Page Farrell*, *Our Gal Sunday*, *Perry Mason*.

The "also rans" -- actors and announcers with 6 or more daytime series, include: Paul McGrath, Santos Ortega and John Raby, 7 each; and Don MacLaughlin, Karl Swenson and Ron Rawson, 6 each. Rawson was a veteran announcer; the others were actors.

Determining the list of the 10 actresses appearing most frequently on daytime radio was more challenging than developing the masculine list for 7 names vied for ninth spot on the list. Thus, the top 15 women follow.

1. Ethel Owen (16). She was the unquestioned master, turning up on series throughout the Golden Age -- *Betty and Bob*, *Helpmate*, *Houseboat Hannah*, *Lorenzo Jones*, *The Second Mrs. Burton*, *Today's Children*, *Valiant Lady* and scads more.

2. Gertrude Warner (13). Close behind, she acted, narrated and occasionally advertised on the series on which she was a part -- *Against the Storm*, *Ellen Randolph*, *Joyce Jordan*, *Modern Romances*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Whispering Streets*.

3. Joan Alexander (12). *Lone Journey*, *Rosemary*, *Woman of Courage* and *Young Dr. Malone* were in her repertoire. For years she played *Perry Mason's* associate, Della Street, and the heroine on *This is Nora Drake*.

4. Louise Fitch (11). Playing feminine leads on *Road of Life*, *Two on a Clue* and *We Love and Learn*, this character actress appeared in *Arnold Grimm's Daughter*, *Big Sister*, *Kitty Keene* and *The Light of the World*.

5 (tie). Charita Bauer and Leslie Woods (10 each). Bauer's best known character for decades was, ironically, Charita Bauer, on radio and TV's *The Guiding Light*. On radio she appeared in *Front Page Farrell*, *Orphans of Divorce*, *Our Gal Sunday* and *Young Widder Brown*. Woods played feminine leads on *Road of Life* and *This is Nora Drake* while acting in *Bright Horizon*, *The Romance of Helen Trent*, *We Love and Learn* and *Woman in White*.

7. Lorette Fillbrandt (8). *Bachelor's Children*, *Girl Alone*, *Midstream* and *Today's Children* filled her days and at night she turned up frequently on the detective dramas.

8. Alice Frost (7). Best known as the feminine half of *Mr. and Mrs. North*, she also worked many of the daytime dramas, including leads in *Big Sister* and *Woman of Courage*. Supporting parts: *Lorenzo Jones*, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, *The Second Mrs. Burton*.

9 (7-way tie, each with 6 series, 1 listed). Virginia Dwyer (*Road of Life*), Elspeth Eric (*Rosemary*), Mary Jane Higby (*When a Girl Marries*), Teri Keane (*The Second Mrs. Burton*), Grace Matthews (*Hilltop House*), Mercedes McCambridge (*Big Sister*), Joan Tompkins (*Lora Lawton*).

In determining who the most prominent actors, actresses and announcers of daytime radio were, there is another way of looking at it. If longevity says anything -- as opposed to being on the most shows -- there are other notables whose accomplishments cannot be summarily dismissed.

Virginia Payne appeared for 27 years and 3 months in the title role of *Ma Perkins*, never missing a performance. As a heroine, even she may be exceeded by Florence Freeman, who played leads on *Dot and Will*, *Young Widder Brown*, *A Woman of America* and *Wendy Warren and the News* for a combination of almost 32 years.

And were there men who hung around that long? Close. Murray Forbes put in 27 years and 3 months as *Ma Perkins'* son-in-law, Willie Fitz, and nearly 30 years as male leads on that serial, *Lonely Women* and *Today's Children*.

The "triangular raceway" described by Ms. Higby in her book was a testament to the physically fittest. By being in the right places at the right times, a few radio artists obviously made hay while the sun shone, and as a result claimed fortunes that few listeners realized existed.

NARA'S LIBRARY CATALOGS

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

CASSETTE LIBRARY:

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

SCANFAX CASSETTE CATALOG:

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

PRINTED MATERIALS LIBRARY:

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

"Cutting Edge"

Old-Time Radio on a budget?

(It all boils down to the basics)

By Bob Burnham

It seems like people are always asking me, "Well, what do **YOU** use or recommend for OTR?" as far as equipment. That question can never be answered properly if I don't have any knowledge of that person's background in OTR. Before any sort of meaningful answer can be given, I always have to ASK (in no particular order) a long series of questions, such as:

- What do you want to do with your collection (short term and long term)?
- Where will you be spending most of your time listening to the shows?
- What is most important to you: Minimal cost or maximum quality?
- How many shows do you plan to acquire in the future?
- How long have you been collecting, how many tapes and in what tape format?
- How many times do you think you'll be listening to (or needing access to) each individual show?
- What equipment do you already have/use? What is its condition?
- Do you do much (or any) trading? With whom? Or do you acquire shows primary from vendors?
- What type of shows are you interested in?

Why in the **WORLD** do I need all this information just to answer a seemingly *simple* question? You tell me! No actually, I'll tell you!

One of the key factors has to do with the format the person is already using. Most people are using standard cassettes, but not everyone. Some people jumped onto the reel to reel bandwagon late in the game. They saw that they could get a ton of shows for a bargain price, and someone offered them a used reel to reel machine that they were able to purchase at a bargain price. They dive head first into the reel format without having information about how difficult it is to: 1.) Find someone who can service their reel machine and 2.) getting parts for that machine in the first place. They could easily find themselves in a position of having oodles of reel tapes, but no functioning equipment on which to play them.

Do they have just a FEW reels... say 10, 20, 30 ??? If so, the best advice would probably be to abandon that collection, unless the shows are of really prime quality or are unusually rare. If they have hundreds or thousands of reels, and would like to stick with that format, they will face taking the plunge into purchasing a professional grade open reel machine, which range anywhere from \$3,000 to \$4,000 and up. Realize of course, that a machine of this caliber will likely be the LAST open reel deck they'll ever have to purchase in their lifetime!

If they listen to the shows primarily in the car, any of the more modern recording formats (other than open reel) would be preferable. Cassettes seem to be the most logical choice, but there are several Compact Disk as well as Mini Disk car players available. Some automobile manufacturers are providing sound systems equipped with BOTH cassette and CD. The

bottom line is however, that cassette is the format most regular suppliers of OTR as well as club libraries are using. Plan on making a lot of your own "listening copies" if you prefer another route. If listening is done mostly at home, then any equipment will be very suitable. Cassettes have reasonably easy access to individual shows being that the C-60 is the most popular format. The old style quarter track reel to reel format is much more inconvenient. Perhaps if you used half track reel and/or a higher speed reel format, that factor is less of a consideration.

I haven't been real active in the trading circles in the last few years, but from what I understand, the majority of that activity (as far as the mainstream OTR fans) is on cassette. There are, however, some collectors with large collections on open reel tapes. If you're interested in really rare or specialized shows, you may need reel equipment if you plan to deal with those people. Some may be willing to make up cassettes for you, but more often than not, they are already set up primarily for open reel and that is the only format they will be readily willing to provide. There was a time when the only way to get the best quality was to deal with only reel to reel collectors. To a degree, that situation may now actually be slightly reversed! The small-time reel collector may have aging equipment and his copies to cassette may not be very good at all.

If the person is interested in only the mainstream shows like Jack Benny, Suspense, Gunsmoke, etc. those shows are all readily available in abundance on cassette.

Cost is a factor for almost everyone, as well as sound quality. It makes no sense to start an old-time radio collection in 1998 on open reel tapes. After you've placed a \$4,000 charge on your credit card for that shiny new reel deck, you find that only dealer C and D still offer OTR on reel, and club "X," "Y" and "Z" has closed their reel to reel lending library, and club "W" still has reels, but 75% of their collection is in bad condition or even unplayable. And collectors "H," "I" and "J" are willing to send you OTR shows on reel as long as you buy all the blank tape and purchase an EXTRA blank reel for them for their trouble for each tape they make up for you. You get the OTR reels and they sound hissy and very mediocre, especially when compared to the cassette copy you borrowed from club "Y" or "Z." Suddenly, that \$4,000 investment doesn't seem so wise. Rather than having 2-3 hours of really NICE sounding, enjoyable shows on convenient cassette, you end up with six hours on a reel tape that sounds like mush. You say you LOVE that pitch control (continuous speed adjustment) on your high-priced reel deck? Well for probably \$3,500 LESS, you can get the same feature on the more expensive cassette decks!

Here's another question I love getting (*actually, no I don't love that question very much!*):

Why do the cassettes I get from you (as in ME) sound so bright and crisp, yet when I make copies, they seem to come out dull?

Again, there is no clear cut answer, without asking a series of questions. Yes, in fact, I do actually do a lot of *cool stuff* with sound enhancing, but the *real* key is in equipment quality and on-going maintenance.

Here's some of the questions I'd have to ask on this topic, pretty much in this order:

- Do you clean the tape heads of your machines regularly?
- What kind of equipment is it? How old?
- When was the last time you had it serviced?
- What kind of blank tape do you use?

The heads, capstan and (if applicable) tape guides on all tape equipment must be periodically cleaned and depending on the equipment quality (which determines if it is worth spending money on), professionally serviced merely to maintain the original factory specifications. All cassette equipment is notorious for drifting off speed, no matter how good

the equipment is. Heads have a tendency to slip out of alignment and/or become worn and require replacement after a period of time, especially when used heavily. If the collector uses only the cheapest equipment (such as the \$99 cassette deck special), if heavily used, it makes sense to actually throw out the machine every couple years and replace it with a fresh machine. If better equipment is used, it's probably worth it every couple years to spend \$50-100 to have it checked out and adjusted professionally. Believe it or not, it is actually POSSIBLE in this decade to obtain good results from one of those \$99 cassette deck specials. The thing to remember is that machine will have a limited life. If you're expecting to give the machine extremely heavy use, it may already be worn out within six months. In that case, it makes sense to buy the better machine. Expect to get 5-6 of useful years out of say a \$400 machine, but be prepared to have it professionally serviced yearly or if it seems to be running ON-speed, at least once or twice during that period of time. Now it is ALSO possible that your machine will be slightly off-speed brand new right out of the carton. How can you tell? The most obvious way is to play tapes that YOU KNOW are on-pitch from a variety of sources. If they sound OK, then the machine's speed is probably within tolerance. If not, take the machine back and get a replacement.

But are cassettes really *CUTTING EDGE* technology for the OTR fan? Absolutely *not*, but they *could* probably be considered at least *CURRENT* technology. What's cutting edge for us? Digital Audio Tape? Not really. I don't recommend it. Both the machines and the tape are expensive, and the under \$1,000 models are not really designed for extra heavy duty OTR use.

My all-time *FAVORITE* format that so far, has *NOT* been used for OTR is *Mini-Disk*.

For under \$300, you can buy an awesome record/play deck with capabilities that will blow your mind. Name brand blank disks made by companies like Maxwell, Sony, Memorex or TDK can be had for around \$3.50 a piece. Each disk holds 144 minutes of audio in mono, or half that for stereo recordings. Sony also makes Mini-Disk "Walkman" personal portables as well as car MD players. They tend to be a little on the pricey side, however, the basic home recording unit, as I mentioned, is *very* affordably priced. Are many or any collectors using Mini-Disk? I don't think so. Not yet. Remember, as I've mentioned before, the old-time radio world is *VERY* slow to accept new technology, and this is obviously an example of that. This format, however, *would* be the obvious choice if you really were looking to upgrade to a cutting edge OTR set-up on a budget. Just make sure you *also* have a decent quality standard cassette deck in good working order. Is Mini-Disk right for you? Is this format invented by Sony going to survive in the future, or is it going to the Sony Betamax video format...(superior quality to VHS, but a failure in the marketplace). I must say, all the *VITAL* signs for Mini-Disk are good. No one has invented a comparable system for recording digitally, yet a handful of manufacturers besides Sony are also starting to make the machines. There *ARE* Compact Disk (CD) recorders available, but the recordable blanks tend to be more expensive, as are the machines themselves.

If you really want to bring your OTR listening enjoyment into the 1990's, now that the

decade is getting closer to the end, Mini-Disk *is* the way to go. On the other hand, if you're content to live with 70's and 80's technology, or your reel collection is large and forces you into a corner, go buy that \$4,000 professional reel deck if you must. If you started accumulating OTR in this decade, keep your cassette deck in good repair. If it's a cheapie, *throw it out every year or two and replace it with a new one.* Want to keep your collection fresh and alive through and beyond the year 2,000? Pick up one of those new-fangled MD machines, a bunch of 4 or 5-pack disk blanks and start recording!

Write to me when you do! Then maybe, *just MAYBE* we can be the first collectors in the history of the OTR hobby to trade in the Mini-Disk format!

Seeya next time....

Bob Burnham, BRC Productions, P.O. Box 510264, Livonia, MI 48151-6264
 (313) 277-3798 • fax (313) 277-3095 • www.brcradio.com • platecap@aol.com

BOB'S WEIRD TECHIE INFORMATION

(for those who actually care)

FAVORITES

Bob's favorite OTR show:

Bob's favorite cassette deck brand:

Bob's favorite open reel deck brand:

Bob's overall favorite audio company:

Bob's favorite sound processing equipment companies:

Bob's current word processor:

Bob's page layout software:

Bob's current computer:

TODAY

(when in the mood)

Suspense, Gunsmoke,

Escape

Tascam

Otari

Sony

Symetrix, Behringer,
Rane

ClarisWorks® 5.0
for Macintosh®

Adobe PageMaker® 6.5
for Macintosh®

Apple Macintosh®
G-3 mini-tower

1970'S

Suspense

Sony

Teac

Sony

JVC, dbx, Kenwood,
Pioneer, Phase-Linear

IBM Selectric
typewriter

rub-on lettering

Texas Instruments
calculator

GET COPIES OF BOB'S PREVIOUS NARA NEWS ARTICLES AT:

www.brcradio.com/classical/articles.html

Yours free for the downloading!

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RADIO'S "RED STAR RANGERS"

Kids growing up in the mid-30s, within the listening range of radio station WOR in New York City, could hear a program that featured an airwaves club called the "Red Star Rangers." It was aimed strictly at youngsters and was sponsored by the R.H. Macy Company department store, located at 34th and Broadway. The show was broadcast each week at 5:15 Friday. All the club members were urged to come to the boy's department at Macy's for a "Red Star Ranger" meeting which would include a special guest appearance by some personality. Since the primary objective of the "Red Star Rangers" was the prevention of crime, the majority of the speakers dealt with the subjects of integrity, fair play, and cooperation with law enforcement authorities. Below, we've reproduced the first two pages from the official "Manual of the Red Star Rangers." This was sent to FBI headquarters with a letter requesting a speaker. Retired Special Agent Jack French found it in the FBI files and has provided it for all of us to see. We think that this gives a view into a bygone era, and certainly a more innocent time.

ARTICLE 1: THE RED STAR RANGERS

Section A: The Red Star Rangers are a division of the Macy Boy's Club, and are sponsored by R.H. Macy and Company, Inc., of New York City.

ARTICLE 2: OBJECTIVE

Section A: The objective of the Red Star Rangers is the prevention of crime.

ARTICLE 3: ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVE

Section A: The source of much of America's crime lies in young men whose early tendencies toward petty thievery eventually grow to full-fledged lawlessness. The objective of the Red Star Rangers will be achieved through interesting these young men in personal integrity, in clean sportsmanship, and in cooperation with our police.

ARTICLE 4: PLEDGE

Section A: The pledge of the Red Star Rangers, which is committed to memory by every Ranger, is as follows:

"On my honor as a Red Star Ranger, I pledge allegiance to the principles of integrity, clean sportsmanship, and cooperation on which my organization is founded."

ARTICLE 5: SALUTE

Section A: The salute of the Red Star Rangers is given by raising the right hand to the forehead just above the right eye, keeping the fingers and thumb of the right hand held closely together.

Section B: The salute is given whether the hat is on or off. When saluting with the hat on, the right hand touches the brim of the hat.

Section C: Ranger Scouts and officers give the salute when repeating the Pledge, when giving or receiving orders, and at the conclusion of each meeting.

ARTICLE 6: COLORS

Section A: The colors of the Red Star Rangers are red and white.

ARTICLE 7: GEOGRAPHICAL ORGANIZATION

Section A: Inasmuch as the problem of America's crime is nationwide, the geographical boundaries of the Red Star Rangers are the boundaries of America.

ARTICLE 8: QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

Section A: Boys of every race, creed and circumstances, who are ten years of age, or more, are eligible for membership in the Red Star Rangers.

ARTICLE 9: NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Section A: National Headquarters of the Red Star Rangers are located at R. H. Macy and Company, Inc., 34th Street and Broadway, in New York City.

ARTICLE 10: RED STAR RANGER REGIONAL POSTS

Section A: District Headquarters of the Red Star Rangers are called Regional Posts.

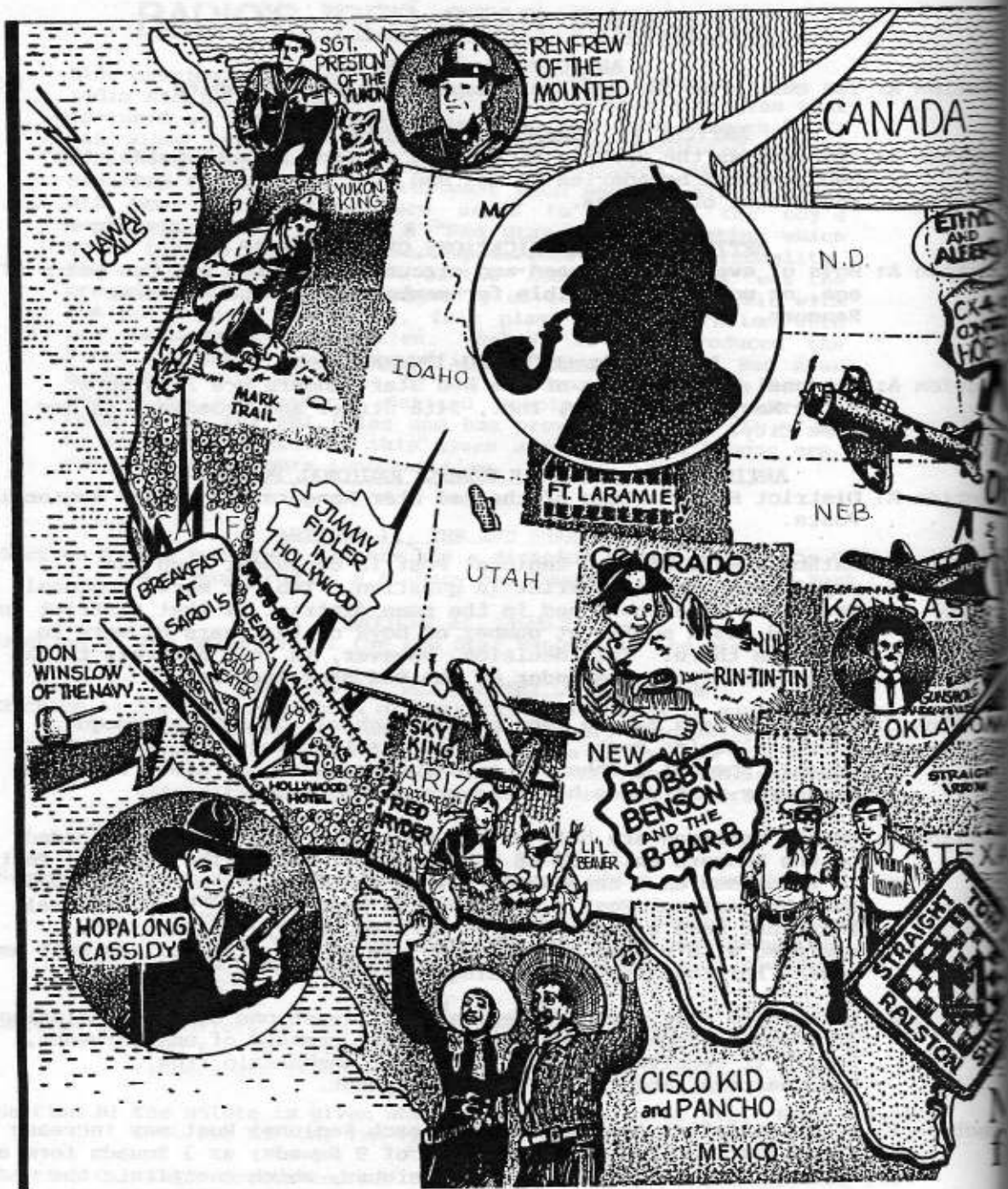
Section B: Establishment of each Regional Post is dependent upon the population of the district in question. Two, or more, Regional Posts may be established in the same district if that district is crowded and a sufficient number of boys of ten years or more in age live there. This decision, however, is left entirely to the judgement of the Commander of the Red Star Rangers.

Section C: Regional Posts may be located in a school, church, synagogue, American Legion Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, home of a Ranger, special clubhouse, or any other suitable place where the necessary permission has been granted for use.

Section D: Weekly meetings are held at the Regional Post, and are attended by the Rangers enlisted at that Regional Post. The Regional Post is also used as a headquarters when meetings are not being held, and the Regional Post's equipment is kept there. Each Regional Post must have a radio in good working order, and should be equipped with a desk or table for use of the officers, as well as chairs for the Scouts attending meetings.

Section E: A regional Post must have enlisted at least one Squad, consisting of 7 Ranger Scouts under the immediate command of one sergeant, before it receives its certificate of membership from Headquarters, and its official equipment.

Section F: After enlisting its first Squad, each Regional Post may increase its enlistment to a maximum total of 9 Squads; as 3 Squads form a Platoon, 9 Squads would form 3 Platoons, which constitute the full enlistment of a Regional Post. A Post at full strength therefore consists of 14 Ranger officers and 63 Ranger Scouts.





From
JACK PALMER



CARSON J. ROBISON

Carson Jay Robison was born in Chetopa, Kansas on August 9, 1890. He was involved in performing and composing by the time he was 15 and had moved to Kansas City by 1920 to further his musical career. He spent some time with the Coon-Sanders Orchestra and became one of the very early entertainers to appear on radio, broadcasting from WDAV, Kansas City, in 1922. He soon moved on to Chicago, where he met and performed with Wendell Hall. After Hall had his big hit record, IT AIN'T GONNA RAIN NO MO, he moved to New York and soon suggested that Robison join him. By now Robison had become an outstanding guitar player and had also developed a whistling technique where he sounded like two whistlers. Soon after his arrival in New York, he was signed by Victor as a guitarist and whistler. He wrote several songs for and performed with Hall. In September 1924, he met Vernon Dalhart in the Victor studios when Robison played guitar on Dalhart's monster hit record, THE PRISONER'S SONG/THE WRECK OF THE OLD 97.

Once Robison's Victor contract ended in 1925, he and Dalhart teamed up to continue their country song-writing and singing. They would spend an acrimonious but very profitable few years together. Robison wrote many classic country songs still being performed today and Dalhart introduced them on record. Robison also played the guitar and often sang on the recordings. They were one of the most popular duos of the 1920s and can be blamed, or credited, with introducing the record companies to the commercial possibilities of country music. Most of their success was on record, but in late 1925 and early 1926, during the height of their popularity they appeared as guests on several network shows. (Names of the shows are not known) They received at least a dozen additional offers to appear on various radio shows, but in an interview appearing in the October 23, 1926 issue of BILLBOARD they explained why they had not appeared on any more radio shows. "Maybe they think we're not worth what we ask. Well, we're kept pretty busy making records, but we're willing to make a wager that we can put on a 30 minute radio program that no broadcasting director will be able to better or even equal within 30 days." There is no record that anyone ever took them up on it.

Their next known radio appearance was a guest spot on THE EVEREADY HOUR on February 14, 1928. This was a variety show hosted by Wendell Hall. The team of Dalhart, Robison and Adelyne Hood sang many of their popular recordings during the hour, with their own accompaniment. (Hood played violin and piano; Dalhart, harmonica and Jews harp; and Robison, guitar and whistling) Shortly after this program Robison left Dalhart and teamed up with Frank Luther (Francis Luther Crow) They recorded under several names including Bud and Joe Billings and The Carson Robison Trio.

Within a few years, Luther and Carson parted to pursue separate careers, and Robison formed a band called Carson Robison and His Buckaroos. In 1932, they began a nationwide tour of Great Britain, introducing live country music to the British. While there, Robison renamed his band The Pioneers, since he doubted that the British would recognize the word Buckaroos. While in London, Robison and the Pioneers made transcriptions to be broadcast on Radio Luxembourg. Since BBC ruled the British airwaves in those days, Radio Luxembourg broadcast commercial

shows to England on a regular basis. Robison's transcriptions were on the air for at least two years introducing, for the first time, most of Europe to American country music.

Back in the US Robison appeared regularly on network radio for many years. His first starring show, featured Robison and the Buckaroos on a fifteen minute show on Friday nights. Starting November 29, 1932 the broadcast was sponsored by Barbasol on the NBC Blue network. The show last only four months. (Barbasol must have had problems with artists. Dalhart only stayed with them six months the previous year.)

In October 1933, he was back on radio, appearing on CBS four times a week in a fifteen minute daytime show. This show was on the air for six months. However, a few months later he was back on CBS in a new show titled BAR X DAYS. This was sponsored by Feen-A-Mint and was broadcast every Thursday evening. For some reason it lasted only two months before it was changed to a fifteen minute show appearing on Monday nights. It was still sponsored by Feen-A-Mint on CBS. After December 1934, Robison was off the air for six months until he appeared in July 1935 in the BUNKHOUSE FOLLIES sponsored by Hecker H-O. This show, also on CBS, was on for fifteen minutes twice a week in the early evening but lasted only three months.

Robison was not on the air in 1936 due to another extensive tour of Great Britain and Europe, but was back on the air for Musterole in October 1937. This time he appeared on the Mutual network three times a week in a fifteen minute morning show. The show ran the full season closing in April for the summer. He continued to broadcast for Musterole for the next two seasons. However the show was changed to a thirty minute, once a week, evening show for the NBC Blue network. It appeared on Monday evenings the first year and on Friday evenings the second year.

Robison, or his group, did not appear on network radio again, but did make transcriptions for use by interested radio stations. An advertisement for the transcribed program states there were 117 quarter hour programs, with a minimum contract of 39 shows. Out of the fifteen minute show two and one-half to three minutes would be allowed for the commercial breaks. The advertisement also lists some of the companies that are already using the show in cities scattered across the US. Robison also did a transcribed series of shows for Ford in the late 1940s.

During the war, Robison wrote and recorded several humorous songs about Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito, and shortly after the war came out with his biggest hit song, LIFE GETS TEE-JUS, DON'T IT? As one of the first country artists to record for MGM, this was probably their first country hit. Although he continued to record for MGM, his records were completely overshadowed when MGM signed Hank Williams. In later years, he spent most of his time on his estate in New York, but continued to be active almost to the end, including some broadcasts on WKIP, Poughkeepsie. He died March 24, 1957 in Poughkeepsie, NY.

I still need some information about Dalhart to complete my biography of his life and career. Particularly anything about his trip to England in 1931 and his early stage appearances in 1910 through 1912. Any information would be greatly appreciated. Jack Palmer

THE END



ROGER
HILL

THE OLD CURMUDGEON

I wish I were much more involved in the hobby aspect of collecting, trading, and listening to these old radio shows so I could write a decent column on some aspect of our common interest that would really appeal to you, the reader of NARA NEWS. As it is, the only times now that I have a chance to listen to even part of some of these vintage broadcasts is when I'm in the process of transferring them from reels to audio cassette.....and then it's to monitor the quality while tending to other matters at the store.

But there are quite a few people who do come in to rent or buy the old radio shows. I'd estimate that of every 10 people who sign up as members, two of them check off the box indicating interest in vintage radio broadcasts. In addition, quite a bit of the correspondence received here also entails comments on OTR.

Jim Stringham is one such correspondent who loves radio programs as well as silent serials, lobby cards, westerns and a wide variety of other vintage entertainment. He keeps me aware of what's going on in Lansing, Michigan where he lives. At the present, he's seeking another 4-track open reel audio deck just in case his current one gives up the ghost. He also tells me he's had no problem with using the Radio Shack 120 minute audio cassette tapes. I've always advised against such a length since it seems much more likely to jam, be stretched, or otherwise get damaged than a 60 or 90 minute cassette. But Jim swears they're great for hour-long programs like Lux Radio Theatre and he's never had problems with them yet.

Jim also comments on discovering for the first time some radio programs on reels I send him...such as HALLS OF IVY. In a recent letter he mentioned Radio Spirits offering volume two of the sixty-episode album of SUSPENSE for only \$39.98 and that they have two new CABIN B-13 shows.

Jim also makes it to the October Newark convention each year and then fills me in later on all the dealer's tables and other goodies he found there. If you've never gone, it's sure

worth going to at least once. Jay Hickerson has always done a superb job in pulling things together and enlisting the help of others devoted to such a gathering's success. There are more dealers at that convention than any other I've ever had the chance to attend.

When I went to Newark 3 years ago for the first time, I got a chance to meet Barbara Cook of Adventures in Cassette, Jack Shugg (who sells videos and books and such things mostly), and many others who I'd previously known only through correspondence or by third parties. I'd sure encourage anyone interested in OTR and in the stuff for sale relating to entertainment media to go to the Newark gathering at least once.

Lourdes and I have been fortunate enough to make it to two of the SPERDVAC conventions in L.A. and again, it's a place to meet people you talk to by phone or letter, or have heard about from others. The last time we went 4 years ago, I met Dave Breninger for the first time in nearly 20 years. Dave had served NARA as the first editor and as sound engineer at the Carlton E. Morse tribute dinner. What a treat to meet with him again.

An even greater surprise in late July was when Art Campos, a writer for the Sacramento Bee newspaper, came down one Saturday morning and brought with him Dave Breninger, who now lives in that area of California. It was Dave's first visit to Nothing's New so we had a grand time talking and showing him around.

Another member, Bill Anthony in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, sent several reels of NBC Radio News from the 1940's. According to him, this is "rare and uncirculated". We haven't had a chance yet to start transferring these broadcasts to audio cassette but when we do, if anyone is interested in the cassettes or reels, just let us know. Bill has been a strong promoter of Nothing's New since (in his words)... "To say I am enjoying them again would be a gross under-statement. It's great fun to finally see flicks that you've read about, but never in your wildest dreams would hope to see." As much

as he loves the old movies, he does admit that radio is his first love but "after Family, Country, and Baseball, in that order".

Another supporter of OTR is Michael Campbell, owner of Fireside Stamp Company in Sunnyvale, California. Michael is a very honest person so any of you who enjoy stamps....we can put you in touch with him if you wish. He's been putting together his complete collection of GUNSMOKE radio shows and we've been able to help him in that regard as I think we now have the full run pretty much. Another of his likes is COLGATE's BILL STERN SPORTS NEWSREEL. We've a couple dozen of these and have been happy to share them with Michael.

Unfortunately, I am still not on the internet but we have a member who maintains a website on our behalf and the address is: <http://members.aol.com/Henning7/nothingsnew.html>. And a company called USRC's Website Design Team has talked us into a trial period with them. Don't know what the result will be but I suppose they'll have links to old radio shows as well as vintage movies.

Member Robin Kleinz in Payson, Arizona sent in payment with the invoice and a simple "Wonderful Service! Thank You!" written on it. That's nice to hear. Then we heard from Herb Riley of Panama City, Florida who mentioned he's been a member of NARA for over 25 years. I had to admit to him that while his name was vaguely familiar, I really couldn't honestly remember our contact back then. But what an honor to hear from someone like Herb who has believed so strongly in NARA and has supported it for so many years. This is the kind of member I wish NARA could do something special for. From the bottom of my heart Herb, **Thank You!** Now it looks like Herb will be a member of Nothing's New also.

Charles Mysak of Flushing, New York has an interest in some movies we can't locate at all (Lancer Spy with George Sanders and a couple of 1930 movies with Gary Cooper) but he also has some movie books he's willing to sell. With our overcrowded condition in the store, we have had to decline purchasing or accepting many new books.

Speaking of books though, we did purchase a couple of new titles which are just the thing for anyone interested in Old Radio Broadcasts. The Witch's Tale is published by David and Susan Siegel under their Dunwich Press label and

contains 13 tales which apparently were scripts used in the program. There's also photos, history of the show and a program log. Cost is \$22.95 including shipping from Dunwich Press, POB 193, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598.

Another great book we couldn't turn down is the joint effort by Frank Bresee and Bobb Lynes. They've done a superb job of illustrating and giving the background of hundreds of radio shows and stars in their 264 page book, Radio's Golden Years. We recommend this one as a "must-have". It's \$25 including shipping from Bobb Lynes, Box 561, S. Pasadena, CA 91031. We bought 10 copies and in just 2 weeks since they arrived, 7 have sold.

Your editor, Jim Snyder, has always been very good about corresponding and keeping in touch with those involved in NARA. He surprised me by wanting to use the newspaper article which appeared here on our business, Nothing's New. While we do focus on the old movies and TV shows (people are more visually centered than aurally centered), there is a large area devoted to the radio shows and the equipment needed to convert reels to cassettes. The photographer and writer of that news article were suitably impressed with what we had here in the radio area and we only hope that anyone who reads the article would be interested enough to at least look at what we have in radio shows. But when Jim said he would bump Gene's centerfold....I felt like a sow's ear was replacing a silk purse. Gene Larson's work has always been a highlight of NARA NEWS so I know many readers will be disappointed that his talent is missing from this last issue.

Jim always mentions the dedication and devotion of Janis in handling memberships, taking care of the mailings, and all those tasks she willingly has done for so many years. I hope you all appreciate what efforts it takes for a volunteer staff person like Janis to continue doing this year after year. It shows determination to keep NARA going and loyalty to an idea which began over 25 years ago. Someone among our readers should take the initiative to contact Janis and offer any help they might be able to offer....if not now then perhaps in the near future when Janis feels too overwhelmed by all that needs to be done. She can't continue to give up so much of her time indefinitely and NARA is designed to be run by members who all should be prepared to do their part if they can. I know Jim has a life he'd like to spend more time pursuing, Janis does as well, and the

past 25 years have seen a variety of volunteers as president, librarian, secretary, treasurer. If you haven't submitted articles for Jim to print or previously offered to serve as staff, maybe it's time to think about how you can support NARA in this manner.

Dave Amaral in Southern California is another friend of many years standing and he has been kind enough to furnish some of THE SHADOW radio shows we've been seeking. By we, I mean not only us but also John Stanley. John is a member and frequent visitor to Nothing's New. He's not only a well-known author of horror and monster-type movies but former columnist for the entertainment section of a San Francisco newspaper, current provider of cross-word puzzles to national publications, television personality, and a fine friend. His interest in OTR goes back to 1968 when John Robbins and I first became interested in old radio and became acquainted through this mutual interest. John Stanley and John Robbins had, for a time, their own hour-long radio program called THE ANTIQUE EAR. We have a few of these here if anyone is interested. They would interview people such as Dr. George Steiner of San Francisco State University (he was a bit player on the LONE RANGER radio show in 1949-1951) and then would play one or two radio programs. In recent years, John Stanley has once more gotten interested in putting his own radio collection in order so together we've been trying to help each other out. Between contacts with Jim Stringham, Dave Amaral, Jack Shugg and others, John has managed to flesh out his SUSPENSE, QUIET PLEASE, WHISTLER, SHADOW and ESCAPE series. John Robbins is, unfortunately, as short of time as we sometimes are due to his having been a manager of Radio Shack stores for these past 25 years.

Anyone who has a business (or had a business) knows that advertising needs to pay for itself or it's not economically feasible to continue. As much as we would like to provide financial support to NARA NEWS each month, the ad we ran 2 issues ago simply did not pay for itself. It surprised us that we had only one inquiry and order for a single \$3.50 cassette. Perhaps we need to construct a better advertisement but

for now, our advertising dollars must be reserved for elsewhere. We felt that you, as readers and members of NARA, deserved an explanation why advertising sometimes is so sporadic.

In closing, let me just tell you of some of the reels we've been getting transferred to audio cassettes. Sometimes it's a real "trip down memory lane" for me as I pick up a reel which came from a friend many years ago. This is how I felt when I dubbed a dozen HALL OF FANTASY shows which originally came from Dr. Esteban Moreno in Puerto Rico. Dr. Moreno and I had many years of trading and correspondence but I have no idea now of what has happened to him. What a fine person he was. Another reel has some enjoyable BING CROSBY and PHILCO RADIO SHOWS from 1949 and 1950. And I found on another reel something I'd been seeking for a friend in France, STAR PARADE #1 from 1942 in French with Dinah Shore, Charles Laughton, Chico Marx, and Donald Duck all speaking French. What an item!

A series of 1956 GUNSMOKE shows in a 4th reel, 1946 COLUMBIA WORKSHOPS in a 5th reel, 1944 and 1946 FRED ALLEN SHOWS on yet a 6th reel, 1944 YOUR HIT PARADE programs, 1937 PALMOLIVE BEAUTY BOX THEATRE shows with Jessica Dragonette, and HANCOCK HALF HOUR BBC shows with Tony Hancock complete some of the recent transfers. A couple hundred more reels to do before they're all cleared up. Probaby 2 more years before it's all done. Then we may be able to make some more headway on the radio show directory for our holdings here.

That's about all I can dredge up for now in this column. After such a dismal effort in this issue, Editor Jim may decide to never again bump Gene Larson's submissions for a column like this! Be that as it may, we wish you all the best of holidays (past and present) and many good hours of listening to those wonderful voices of the past and enjoying the humor and performances of artists who understood the value of clean entertainment and showed some respect for their audiences and fans. So long for now!

FORGOTTEN LINES

Ed Wynn forgot his lines on one of his shows and could not see the cue card. "I must have something to say," the old vaudevillian improvised, "otherwise I wouldn't be standing here."



TRANSCRIBED FROM TORONTO

by John Pellatt

A warning to home taping enthusiasts in Canada: Big Brother is Watching (and Listening!) to You! (Friends in the USA please take note, this could happen to you too.) As a result of an Act of Parliament, the Copyright Act will soon begin to impose a new tax upon the purchase of all blank recording tapes. This tax will allegedly be distributed to owners of copyrights on mass produced music CDs who claim that home taping of their products is depriving them of their rightful income. While I am not condoning the illegal taping of ANY copyrighted material, the net result of this far reaching and draconian legislation is mind numbing. Those of us who buy blank tape to record old radio shows now in public domain for our own personal non-profit use will be subject to this levy just as those who buy tapes to illegally record contemporary CDs will be. In short, we are being accused (and found guilty!) of making illegal tapes of the likes of MADONNA, PUFF DADDY, and JEWEL--simply by the purchase of blank recording tape! Why else-- goes the befuddled bureaucratic non logic--would anyone buy blank tape except to make illegal recordings of currently available commercial CDs? (Well, duh! We're called vintage radio fans.) An organized response from collectors and industry personnel resulted in over 3000 letters of protest from Canadians across the country--but to no avail. Big Brother has decided. If you buy blank tapes, it must be to make illegal copies of today's CDs and so you shall be punished for it. Small matter most of us who listen to public domain vintage radio wouldn't be caught DEAD listening to the majority of today's audio junk. You don't think this could happen in the USA? Don't be so sure. This insane piece of legislation (which should kick in some time next year if it goes through without amendment) was (in the opinion of many) brought about by intense lobbying by the big record labels who want to make sure they get everything that is rightfully theirs--and everything else that is not rightfully theirs, too. For shame Ottawa, giving in so cravenly to these corporate bloodsuckers! (Gee... can you tell I am not entirely pleased?)



My all time favourite Canadian radio hero, **Max Ferguson**, retired this past September, after 52 years on the air. Max started his CBC Radio career in 1946 in Halifax where he was an announcer. There he created his inspired comedic alter ego "Rawhide" amongst a cast of characters all played by himself. The satirical sketches (mostly ad lib) were such a hit that the local Maritimes CBC show was transferred to the full coast to coast CBC network in 1949 where it stayed for 17 years. (Some of you might have heard his wonderful work on the three Folkways LPs issued in the mid to late 1950s, especially recorded for those vinyl pressings.) Somehow Max also found time for TV hosting duties and to write two excellent books, including the award winning "And Now... Here's Max", a light hearted autobiography charting his career in Canadian broadcasting. In the late 1960s Max dropped the "Rawhide" character and began turning out topical satirical sketches--often two or three a day--in which he played all the parts. This is the period I remember him for the most fondly--brilliant audio harpoonings of our political leaders and their foibles. Think Bob and Ray by way of Stan Freberg meeting Mort Sahl and you get the idea. He also starred in the 1970s in a satirical CBC Radio series "Inside From The Outside" which gave Max a weekly showcase in which to verbally impersonate the contemporary politicians and newsmakers of the day. Although he had long given up the grueling demands of churning out the daily topical sketches, Max has been continuously heard hosting a music and chat show on CBC Radio until this past September, when he decided enough was enough and that it was finally time to retire. Max Ferguson's anecdotes about life at the CBC during its latter golden years has filled one book and I'm sure could fill many more. The memories of his radio shows, sketches and on air good natured distinctive tones will long be treasured by his millions of fans. And an era has really ended at CBC Radio with his departure--Max was the last professional broadcaster of his time, the last of his background, training and calibre, the last truly inspired national radio character we all had our lives enriched by--an audio magician who created rich comedy in our minds' eye every day by evoking the true imaginative potential of the medium. Happy Retirement, Max! And thanks for all the great radio memories...



FROM ACROSS THE POND



by Ray Smith



LOWELL GREEN

Wasn't it Scotland's national poet,
Rabbie Burns, who wrote these
immortal lines back in 1779?

"The best laid schemes of NARA
News go oft awry
And leave us with an empty
page
And a deadline looming nigh!"

By the time this issue of NARA News lands in your mailbox, you will probably have celebrated Robert Burns birthday, January 25th, in typical Scottish style by enjoying a heaping helping of haggis, neeps and tatties. Or, to provide the American translation, "Yucky Scottish sheeps-entrails pudding, turnips and boiled potatoes!"

My thoughts were with Scotland's greatest drinker a couple of months ago. There I was relaxing in my lazy boy, enjoying a 16 year Lagavulin single malt Scotch whiskey, from the Inner Hebridean island of Islay (pronounced eye-la). So precious is this Scotch that it comes with an instruction booklet telling you it is excellent for 'sipping.' And that's what I was doing. OK, so the booklet didn't tell me to sip all 2 liters at once. But I was simply trying to keep up with Mr Burns! (Rabbie not George) In the midst of sipping, the mail man delivered a letter in the familiar handwriting of Editor Jim. Oooops-a-daisy! The deadline for this issue of NARA News was being moved forward. My plan to tell you about a day in the life of Australian radio went down the tubes. The information I was expecting from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation was languishing between Sydney Harbor

Bridge and the Great Barrier Reef. Not to worry. The jolly swagman will still be 'camping' by his bilabong under the shade of a koolabar tree, when Jim is assembling the NEXT edition of North America's favorite radio magazine.

But there I was, with nothing but a tumbler-ful of Lagavulin as my inspiration. I suppose I could tell you about CBC Radio's Max Ferguson Show, but I won't. Back in September, one of my favorite disc-jockeys retired. Max was even more of a legend than the late Clyde Gilmour or public affairs 'honcho' Peter Gzowski. When I paid tribute to Clyde in NARA News (Summer 98) I thought 40 years on the airwaves must be a CBC record. Was I mistaken! Max has been on radio for over 50 years. And in the words of the old British vaudeville ballad, "It don't seem a day too much." Max and his famous announcer side-kick Alan McFee, were thorns in the flesh of CBC management. But the irascible cronies were too popular to be fired. Max interspersed a wide selection of records with his 'repertory theater of the air.' He was a brilliant mimic and an entire nation fell in love with his most infamous character, Old Rawhide. In recent years, you could hear Max every Saturday morning between 9 and 10.30 am on CBC's FM Stereo Network. After Allan retired, that delightful and highly under-rated CBC broadcaster, Shelagh Rogers, became Max's 'ersatz' Allan McFeel Long before the current wave of Celtic (Scottish and Irish) folk music became the entertainment of

choice for millions of North Americans, Max featured celtic and related folk music by the likes of Ewan McColl, Hall & McGregor, The Tannahill Weavers, the Chieftains, Eric Bogle, John Allan Cameron and Irish colleen, Moyra Briody. On the politically correct CBC, only Max Ferguson would have the guts to air a ribald (and quite bawdy) comedy routine by the lanky Scottish cult comedian Billy Connolly; or dedicate an entire half hour of his show to the 'tape' of an after dinner lecture by an English air traffic controller (sounds deadly?) who could give Bob Hope a run for his money in the gag department! Maybe I SHOULD tell you about Max Ferguson? On the other hand..I could write about Francis Durbridge who died in 1998 at age 85. He was one of my favorite crime novelists. His books are available in the 'mystery' sections of public libraries from Tallahassee to Timbuktoo. Although his novels are great reading, wireless fans are more familiar with his famous radio creation, detective Paul Temple, who, together with his wife "Steve" solved crimes on the BBC Light Programme between 1935 and 1968. On both radio and tv, the Paul Temple murder serials were 'nail-biters.' Each complete murder mystery was serialized in 6 or 8 weekly episodes. Like all good 'serials' there was a shocking revelation at the end of each weeks episode. It left you NO alternative but to tune in 'at the same time next week.'

I could tell all you Goon Show fans out in radioland, that in 1998 Sir Spike Milligan, the man who created, wrote and performed in UK radio's most famous comedy show, celebrated his 80th birthday. The BBC aired a nostalgic tribute to his career in a program called 'Spike At 80.' I could also inform Goon Show fans that while Spike lives on, two more radio personalities associated with his program have passed along to that

famous 'Goon Show In The Sky.' (The BBC's former chief announcer and 'Oxford versus Cambridge' boat-race commentator John Snagge who often made guest appearances on the program; and the last surviving 'resident' Goon Show announcer, Wallace Greenslade). But the real inspiration for this column comes from a long distance phone call from my wife, who recently returned to her hometown, Ottawa, for a wedding. "There we were" she told me, "sitting in a restaurant, enjoying won ton soup, sweet and sour chicken balls and mushroom chop suey. Jenny (our 20 year old 2nd daughter) looks up and exclaims, 'mom..that's Lowell Green!" Sure enough, at a discreet corner table, sat the Godfather of Canadian Hotline Radio Hosts, Lowell Green. They were truly in the presence of greatness! "Gee mom, I love that grumpy old guy" said Jenny. "He really stands up for Canadian unity. That guy really CARES!" At that moment, my wife saw her life pass in front of her eyes. Back in the late 50's she grew up in Ottawa, where the only station you listened to was CFRA 580. What a team! The 'Morning Man' who told the best (and corniest) jokes in Canada was 'General' Ken Grant. Ernie Calcutt had the iside dope on sports, my wife's one-time date, Al Pascal was the teeny bopper deejay, and Skipper Collins did the drive home



CFRA's
Lowell Green

show. And that lovely man, Lowell Green stirred up the capitals stuffy civil servants, with his controversial, but always top-rated Green Line! 30 years later, my daughter Jenny who currently lives in Ottawa, is a dedicated fan of the Lowell Green Show, still located at 580 CFRA, although several years ago, 'FR' became an ALL talk station, part of the CHUM group.

Thankfully for a united Canada, patriot Lowell Green is no wimp. He refuses to give in to the zealots of political correctness, or to what he calls, the 'granola crunching left-wingers.' Lowell is still as feisty and outrageous as ever. But he is not a Canuck version of Howard Stern. Lowell hosts the most thought-provoking and stimulating hot-line show in Canada. His ratings continue to soar. Meanwhile, at CBC Radio, a hot-line host of a very different stripe holds court every Sunday afternoon. The Newfoundland journalist, Rex Murphy emcees Cross Country Checkup, 2 hours dedicated to the 'hottest' topic of Canadian conversation during the previous week. If Lowell Green is on the so-called 'right wing,' Rex Murphy is perched somewhere to 'centre-left.' I enjoy hearing both viewpoints;. My 'dream' edition of



*CBC's
Rex Murphy*

Cross Country Checkup would be one in which Lowell and Rex shared the CBC microphones for one occasion only. The debate would be nothing short of brilliant.

The two generations of my 'Smith Family Robinson' who were weaned on Lowell Green, were sorely tempted to approach his table just to shake his hand and say, "Keep up the great work, we love ya guy!" But they wisely decided to respect his privacy and instead, "tell dad the great news!" (Who knows, he might use it in a column one of these days.) God Bless you Lowell!

Cheerio for now.



NARA NEWS ON TAPE FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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

BOOK SHELF by Hal Stephenson



Detectives and Crime Fighters This 46-page booklet comes with boxed audio tapes of the 12 programs listed below.
©1995 by Radio Spirits, Inc. and Smithsonian Institution Press.

Radio's believability to its listeners was shown in the *Gangbusters* series. Elpheth Eric often played the "gun moll" or girlfriend of a gangster. She actually received several letters proposing marriage from prison inmates. They listened to the show and had fallen in love with her character.

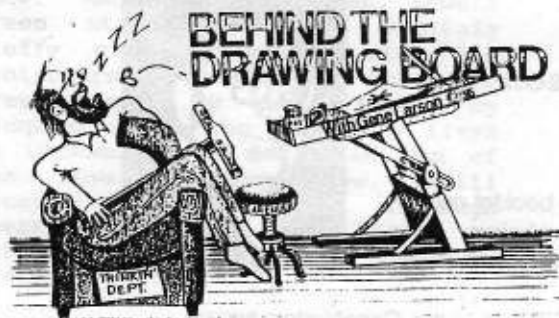
Each *Gangbusters* show began with Phillips H. Lord interviewing a law official who detailed the case until faded out to the dramatization. Lord's role was taken over by Col. H. Norman Schwartzkopf (father of the Desert Storm commander), and then Lewis J. Valentine, a retired commissioner of the New York City Police Department.

Stacy Keach, Sr. was producer and director of *Tales of the Texas Rangers*. Stacy's preface tells of visiting Texas every few months to get authentic stories directly from a ranger of 30 years, Captain M. T. "Lone Wolf" Gonzauillas. About 20 of the 97 episodes were written based on Cap's personal, detailed recollections of cases.

Simon Templar was the Saint in books by Leslie Charteris, who produced the radio series. *The Saint* began in 1944 with Edgar Barrier in the title role, followed by Brian Ahearn, and in 1947, by **Vincent Price pictured below**. The series ended in 1951. The Saint in movies was acted by Tom Conway, Barry Sullivan, and George Sanders. Roger Moore, in the 1960's British television series, became the quintessential Templar, the role that propelled him to become the third James Bond.



The Green Hornet, 4/18/43
The Saint, 11/19/50
Gangbusters, 1940s
"Cincinnati Narcotics Ring"
Texas Rangers, 7/27/52
Sherlock Holmes, 4/7/47
Boston Blackie, 1945
Dragnet, 4/5/55, Jack Webb
This is Your FBI, 1950s
Ellery Queen, 5/6/48
Philip Marlowe, 6/17/47
Richard Diamond, 1940s
Academy Award Theater,
"The Maltese Falcon", 7/3/46



A KID'S PERCEPTION OF RADIO

by
Gene Larson

Association is a funny thing. As I look through pictures of the many personalities I heard on the radio as a kid, I marvel at how much they *DON'T* look like my imagination pictured them. Of course, this is true of all of us because we each have our very own "theater of the mind." Therein was the magic of old time radio. And because of all the photographs printed since our on-the-spot magic faded out on us when radio took a drastic change, we are now able to compare the actual people with our "mindful" images of yesteryear....if we can remember that far back. Fortunately, some of us were able to see some of our radio friends when their shows were on the air because they were in the movies. This kid was awe-struck when he saw Jack Benny in "A Horn Blows at Midnight," and especially Fred Allen in "It's In the Bag," to name a couple. Jack Benny sort of fell into my mind's eye acceptably, but Fred Allen....well he looked as funny as he sounded and I came to "adapt" him into my mind's eye. I don't exactly know how I thought they should've appeared back in the 40's, but today I believe that Fibber McGee and Molly came the closest to looking as they sounded back then.

The Shadow seemed to be an invisible cloud floating around (maybe from "....to cloud men's

minds....") and I really didn't think about what Lamont Cranston would look like, maybe because the Shadow himself clouded my mind, too. There were at least two different versions of the Shadow's intros and, of course, different actors, but the voices sounded the same to me when run through the telephone-like filtering used to differentiate the Shadow from Lamont.

There was a famous bandleader who I thought must've somehow looked like a cow, even though he was a man. At least I thought he sounded like he was mooing when he sang. Just didn't like his singing until I saw him one day in a local movie theater. Then I enjoyed his singing thereafter because he really *didn't* look like a cow. Well, that was this kid's reasoning. And yes, it was Vaughn Monroe.

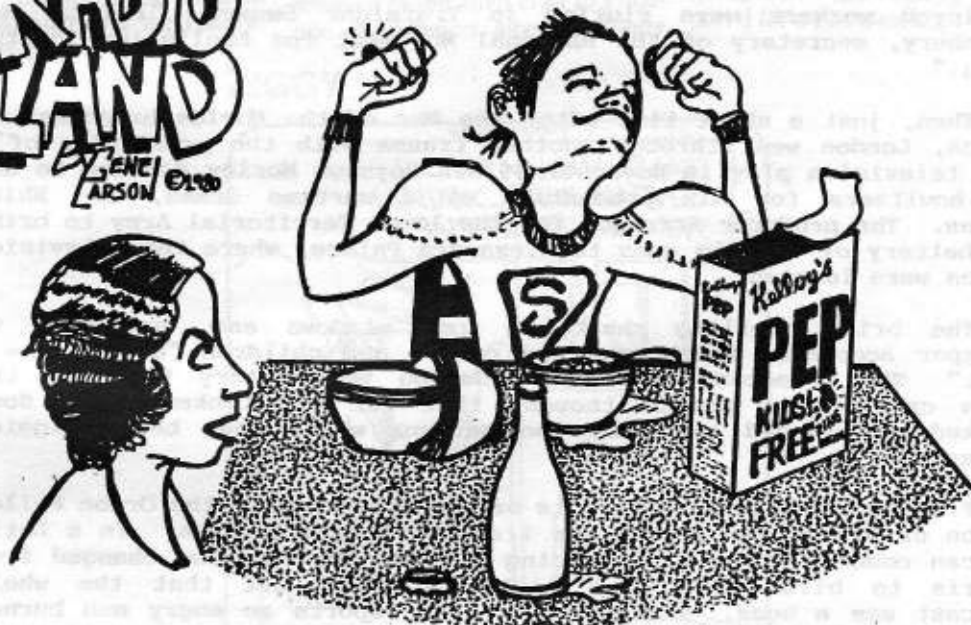
I suppose my first big disappointment came at the local level when I visited the hometown radio station. Back then there was a fella who did a local version of Big Jon and Sparky, even before Big Jon came to us on the network. The D.J.'s name was (coincidentally) Gene and he had a "partner" named "Groovey." Well now, I was so enthralled by the daily program that I became a certificate-bearing member of the listening audience (I still have that certificate around here

somewhere). The big letdown came on the day I decided to go and meet "Groovey." There at the studio I remember pressing my nose to the control room window and watching Gene "spin the platters," waiting anxiously for "Groovey" to pop up somewhere within that mysterious room. For a time I was fascinated by all the knobs and dials on the control panel, the patch plugs, that big Mutual microphone with the grills in it, the giant "record players" (back then they were large, having to play the 16-inch transcriptions of that era), and all the holes in the acoustical tiles covering the walls all over the station....you know, a kid's curiosity. Well, (here it comes now) as I was

locked in my curiosity of things, the familiar voice of "Groovey" broke through! Now, I tell you, my eyeballs almost left their sockets when they snapped into the direction of ole Gene and saw that "Groovey" was not a "partner" at all, but Gene himself, squeezing his own voice out of one side of his mouth! Creepers! A world gone bad! Little was I to know that some day I was to do a similar "partner" myself on the radio, but then that's another story.

Except for the above statements, there were few disappointments about old time radio. Ironically, the real disappointment is that radio as we knew it is gone forever. Well, back to the drawing board.

**RADIO
LAND**
BY GENE ARSON ©1980



JUNIOR! YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO 'SUPERMAN' TOO MUCH!

PANIC IN THE STREETS

by
Clarence Runden

Though Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* broadcast in 1938 is the most famous of hoaxes perpetrated on a radio audience, it was by no means the first of its kind. On the evening of January 16, 1926, the BBC interrupted a religious lecture being broadcast from Edinburgh to bring live reports of disturbing events taking place around the heart of London. Among other things, an eyewitness claimed that "the Houses of Parliament are being demolished by an angry mob equipped with trench mortars. The clock tower, 320 feet in height, has just fallen to the ground, together with the famous clock, Big Ben, which used to strike the hours on a ball weighing nine tons. One moment please . . . Fresh reports announce that the crowd has secured the person of Mr. Wutherspoon, the minister of traffic, who was attempting to make his escape in disguise. He has now been hanged from a lamp post in Vauxhall. London calling . . . That noise you heard just now was the Savoy Hotel being blown up by the crowd . . ."

Despite its generally broad humor, the broadcast was taken in earnest by hundreds of Britons, who flooded the telephone exchanges and telegraph offices, even after the government and the BBC had issued official explanations. Many people had missed the introduction to the program by the Reverend Ronald A. Knox, who intimated that a burlesque would follow. They then took seriously a piece of humor that unemployed workers were rioting in Trafalgar Square, "led by Mr. Popplebury, secretary of the National Movement for Abolishing Theatre Queues."

Then, just a short time after *The War of the Worlds* broadcast in America, London went through another trauma with the production of an early television play in November 1938. Royston Morley decided to use real howitzers for his production of a wartime drama, *The White Chateau*. The producer arranged for the local Territorial Army to bring up a battery of the big guns to Alexandra Palace, where the television studios were located.

The brief shelling shattered some windows and, according to newspaper accounts, frightened old people and children "out of their lives." The broadcast took place during the jittery times of the Munich crisis, and people thought that war had broken out. Some panicked and rushed out into the gardens where they began digging shelters.

Finally, many years after its original broadcast, the Orson Welles version of *War of the Worlds* was translated into Spanish. In a Latin American country where it was being played, the reaction changed from hysteria to blind fury when listeners found out that the whole broadcast was a hoax. According to news reports an angry mob burned down the radio station, killing several actors.

Broadcast tricks new generation

KTAR's *War of the Worlds* reprise angers listeners

BY MATT BURGARD
THE TRIBUNE

Sixty years later, the aliens returned. And this time, they wanted Phoenix.

That was the storyline for an updated tribute to Orson Welles' classic *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast, produced and aired on KTAR (620 AM) over the Halloween weekend.

And like the original broadcast, which caused mass hysteria throughout the country, the scenario dreamed up by KTAR radio personality Pat McMahon and his wife, Duffy, didn't sit too well with many unsuspecting listeners.

News director Connie Weber said the station received dozens of angry phone calls Friday and Saturday night from listeners who didn't appreciate being fooled by the broadcast.

KTAR interrupted *Sportstalk* host Brad Cesmat with news of a meteorite crash near Williams.

In homage to Welles' Oct. 30, 1938, broadcast, which announced the arrival of hostile Martians in Grover's Mill, N.J., the KTAR version declared that Martians used "death rays" to kill 40 people during a confrontation in Williams. Among the "casualties" was KTAR newscaster Ned Foster.

As the broadcast reported the advance of the alien craft to Phoenix, the station aired a phony

statement from U.S. Interior Secretary and native Arizonan Bruce Babbitt. Babbitt, played by newscaster Bart Graves, urged citizens to remain calm in the face of disaster.

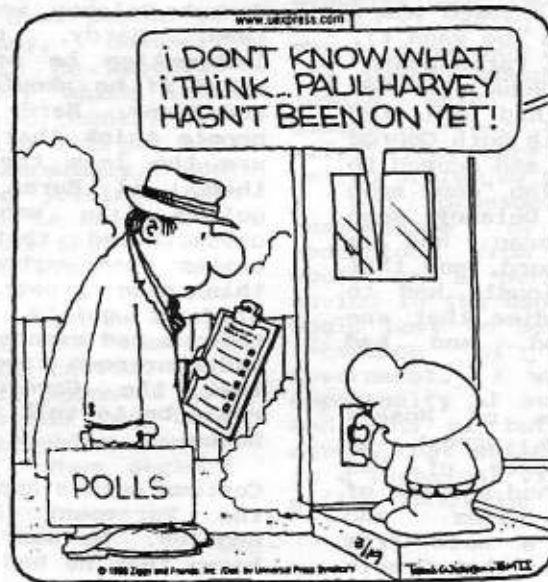
KTAR ran disclaimers all week, and reminded listeners before and after the program that *War of the Worlds* was fiction.

But the station's telephone lines lit up after the broadcasts, which aired 9 to 10 p.m., just as switchboards around the country were barraged after the Welles broadcast 60 years ago.

Many listeners said they were not amused by the Halloween tribute, including a woman who said she was afraid her relatives in Williams may have been killed by the Martians.

After the original *War of the Worlds* broadcast, terrified radio listeners ran screaming into the streets, flooded police stations, tried to flee the country and prepared for a gas attack.

ZIGGY



Wireless Wanderings



JIM SNYDER

In 1939, both George Burns and his close friend Jack Benny plead guilty, and were sentenced in Federal Court in New York City, to the charge of smuggling. This is how it happened.

It all began with a totally unrelated matter when a certain German maid named Rosa Weber lost her job. Rosa was a strong supporter of Adolph Hitler and when her employer, Elma Lauer and her guests, made derogatory comments about the Nazi at a party in the Lauer home, Rosa blew up. Mrs. Lauer promptly fired her and refused to give her references. "Very well," said Rosa, "I'm going to see the United States Attorney." And she did.

Rosa told the government agent, Joseph L. Delaney that a Mr. Albert N. Chaperau, who she assumed was a diplomat for Nicaragua (he wasn't), had "smuggled in some Paris gowns" for Mrs. Lauer. Rosa further stated that Chaperau had indicated a close friendship with both George Burns and Jack Benny, and seemed to suggest that he had also "done some favors" for them. Delaney soon learned that Chaperau had a previous criminal record, and that Mrs. Lauer had previously had to pay fines on merchandise that she had obtained abroad, and had "neglected to declare."

Further investigation of Rosa's claims led to the arrest of Chaperau and a search of his apartment. Chaperau had a habit of keeping careful notes and investigators found a note from George Burns that said that Gracie

GEORGE BURNS & JACK BENNY:

SMUGGLERS

was crazy about her bracelet. A memo read, "See JB re clips for ML." The investigators then sent a teletype off to the Los Angeles office of the United States Customs Service that said, "Confidential. We are about to lean on phoney commercial attache one Chaperau for smuggling with local woman. Suspect as outside possibility he may have brought in stuff for Burns and Benny of radio. Please scout around and ascertain if wives of comedians are flashing new jewelry." This brought the response from L.A. that Gracie Allen had a new diamond bracelet which she said was a gift from her husband. Also that Mary Livingstone had jewelry that was probably the same as referred to in papers seized in Chaperau's apartment.

Joseph Delaney went to his boss, Lamar Hardy, told him what information he had assembled and asked if he should go after Burns and Benny. Hardy responded: "Many people think that the bigger they are the less the rules apply to them. If Burns and Benny are guilty, I want it clearly demonstrated that they are no better than anybody else. I want this case prosecuted." Since a plea of guilty saves a lot of tedious and expensive investigation and courtroom time, it was decided that the Government's strategy would be to talk frankly to George Burns.

Customs agents approached George at the Paramount Studios in Los Angeles. He was told that it was known that he had been keeping bad

company with a certain Mr. Chaperau and that he was suspected of having something to do with diamonds being smuggled into the country. It was suggested that Burns meet with Assistant U.S. Attorney Delaney. Scared to death, George was in Delaney's office in New York thirty-six hours later. He cooperated fully. He told Delaney that Gracie had known nothing about how the jewels were brought to America. He said that he had met Chaperau through mutual friends and didn't know that the man had a criminal record. Chaperau, who appeared to be a diplomatic attache who could pass through customs without examination, explained that he often carried little items in for his friends. He offered to help George save a little money, and that seemed logical to Burns, who accepted his offer. Burns was then asked to implicate Jack Benny and after some hesitation he admitted that Chaperau had given him jewelry to take to Jack.

George Burns plead guilty in court, was fined eight thousand dollars, given a suspended sentence of a year and a day, and then placed on probation for that same period of time. Jack Benny, however, remained a holdout. He appeared before a grand jury which then indicted him on three counts, one of which specifically charged him with "willfully, knowingly, and unlawfully smuggling jewelry into this country." Back in Hollywood, Jack told his friends that he was going to fight the case to the finish. He believed that he was not guilty and he thought he could prove his case. He felt that no jury in America would convict him. He then went to his sponsors and offered to tear up his long-term contract if his troubles caused them embarrassment. They decided to stick by him.

Finally, Jack's lawyers convinced him that his "actions constituted violation of the customs laws of the United States," so he instructed them to change his plea. Judge Vincent Leibell fined Benny \$10,000, gave him a suspended sentence of a year and a day, and placed him on probation for a similar period. Counting the civil fines automatically imposed on the undeclared jewelry and the money that he had to pay to buy it back from the Government, Mary's jewelry ran him over \$14,000, ten times the original cost. The Judge gave Benny a tongue-lashing, telling him that this country had been pretty good to him, what with Benny's huge earnings, but that Benny had been pretty small in his attempt to evade payment of a measly \$700 duty.

After the trial and sentence, Jack passed out statements of explanation to the press that read in part: "I feel that some explanation is due my fans of the radio and screen concerning the circumstances of this case. I was accused of having brought a bracelet and two clips into the United States without paying duty. There is not now and never has been any dispute about the facts. The jewels, which cost \$1,400, were bought in France as a present to my wife. They were brought into the United States by Mr. Chaperau, whom I had previously met as a businessman of standing. I understood from him that there would be a perfectly legitimate saving in the amount of duty which would have to be paid. I had no intention of defrauding the Government. I want to take this opportunity of assuring my friends and fans of both the radio and screen that while I know that this is a technical violation, I had no guilty knowledge that a crime was

being committed. I regret most deeply that through a stupid mistake on my part, however natural and honest it may have been under the circumstances, I have offended against the laws of the United States."

And what of the other parties in this matter?

Elma Lauer, whose firing of her maid started this whole investigation, was sentenced to three months in jail and fined

\$2,500 for the smuggling of her Paris gowns into this country.

Albert Chaperau, chief instigator of the plot, was sentenced in Federal Court to five years in prison and fined \$5,000.

Rosa Weber, the German maid formerly employed by the Lauers, and who tipped off the Government when she got mad at Mrs. Lauer over her anti-Nazi remarks, received \$6,712 as a reward for her information.



MINI-REVIEW

SUPERMAN: THE COMPLETE HISTORY (Sixty Years of The Man of Steel)

by Les Daniels

Chronicle Books San Francisco 1998
(In Canada: Raincoast Books, Vancouver)
\$29.95 in the USA; \$44.95 in Canada

Mini-review by John Pellatt

Can SUPERMAN really be sixty years old? It seems impossible that there ever WAS a time when Superman did not exist, so pervasive is his presence in contemporary popular culture. Yet it was in 1938--the very year in which a youthful Orson Welles allowed Martians to invade the Earth--that Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster first had their colourful caped crusader published. No one really had any idea of Superman's impact or future earnings potential. Nor did anyone foresee the seemingly endless evolutions the character would take on as he adapted to every medium (including our favourite, radio, of course) and every generation. Superman's continuing popularity and resilience is the ultimate proof that he truly deserves the accolade "The Man of Steel".

This is a beautiful book containing over 200 colour illustrations. Full colour page after page of the comic book Superman (throughout his various changes and incarnations) compliments an easy to read text covering the key behind the scenes personalities and historical milestones in the Superman saga. The radio series is given a couple pages and its significance in developing unique story lines that added to the ever growing body of Superman lore is noted. It was the radio series that first teamed up Superman and Batman long before they ever appeared together in print. It was the radio series that first introduced Kryptonite--and who can now conceive of Superman without the existence of Kryptonite? The radio version is hailed as the medium clocking in more hours of Superman (and therefore entertainment value) than any other. In addition to the history of Superman in print and (albeit too briefly) on the radio, this well researched book gives full coverage of Superman's various movie and TV versions too so that the true fan will not be disappointed.

As an officially sanctioned publication of DC Comics, the owners of the Superman copyright, the disgraceful treatment (in the opinion of many) of Superman's creators is handled with some tact and diplomacy. Still, the fact it is mentioned at all is a tribute to the current DC Comics management who did try to do the right moral thing in the end even if it was a bit late. Superman has made millions maybe billions and yet Siegel and Shuster never saw more than a tiny fraction of that over their entire lifetimes. DC Comics had won in the courts in 1948--they had bought the original Superman story AND copyright from those naive eager-to-be-published youngsters Siegel and Shuster back in 1938 for a mere \$130. That infamous legal battle was the only battle the Man of Steel was ever to lose.

Any fan of Superman, of the comic books, the radio series, the films or the various enduring TV versions, will be thrilled to own this marvellous publication. In it they will rediscover the memories and magic of their own particularly beloved incarnation of Superman. I can certainly recommend it for any Xmas Super-stocking.

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 13TH ANNUAL OLD TIME RADIO AND NOSTALGIA CONVENTION** is scheduled for April 23 and 24, 1999. This convention is held at the Marriott Inn on the north side of Cincinnati, Ohio. The contact person is Bob Burchette, 10280 Gunpowder Rd., Florence, KY 41042. The phone is (606) 282-0333.
- ② **THE 10TH ANNUAL RADIO CLASSICS LIVE** will be held on May 7 and 8, 1999 at Massasoit Community College, Brockton, MA. Information can be obtained from Prof. Bob Bowers, Massasoit Community College, 1 Massasoit Blvd., Brockton, MA 02302. Phones: (508) 588-9100 - ext. 1906 or (508) 295-5877 evenings.
- ③ **THE 15TH ANNUAL LUM & ABNER SOCIETY CONVENTION** will be held on June 25 and 26, 1999 in Mena, Arkansas at the Best Western Lime Tree Inn. For information please contact Tim Hollis, 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062. Phone is (205) 648-6110.
- ④ **THE REPS RADIO SHOWCASE VII** is scheduled for June 25 and 26, 1999 at the Seattle Center in Seattle, Washington. You can obtain information on this event from Mike Sprague, P.O. Box 723, Bothell, WA 98041. Phone: (425) 488-9518 - Fax: (425) 402-6988 - Email: hrrmikes@aol.com
- ⑤ **THE FRIENDS OF OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION** is held each year at the Holiday Inn North at the Newark, New Jersey International Airport. The hotel provides free shuttle service back and forth to the airport. Contact person is Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514. Jay can be reached by phone: (203) 248-2887, Fax: (203) 281-1322, Email: JayHick@aol.com
The 24th annual convention will be held October 21 thru 23, 1999
The 25th annual convention will be held October 19 thru 21, 2000
- ⑥ **THE 17TH ANNUAL SPERDVAC CONVENTION** will be November 12 thru 14, 1999 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Los Angeles International Airport. A free shuttle is provided for those flying. The person to contact for information is Larry Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603. He can be reached by phone at (562) 947-9800.

20 Show-Comedy



William Bendix

Life of Riley

First Heard: January 16, 1944

Last Heard: June 29, 1951

The *Life of Riley* was created and produced by Irving Breecher. It starred William Bendix as Chester A. Riley, a riveter who worked at an aircraft plant with his good pal and next-door neighbor, Gillis Riley's long suffering wife, Peg, was played by Paula Winslowe. Sharon Douglas was their daughter, Babs and Conrad Binyon was their son, Junior. In addition to playing Gillis, John Brown was Digby O'Dell. Hans Conried was Uncle Baxtor and Charlie Cantor was Uncle Buckley. Announcer included Ken Niles, Ken Carpenter and Jimmy Wallington. Music was by Lou Kosloff. The show was directed by Al Kaye and Don Bernard. Sponsors were the American Meat Institute, Teel, Drefl, Prell Shampoo and Pabst Blue Ribbon.

A tv version of the *Life or Riley* debuted October 4, 1949 with Jackie Gleason in the starring role. Bendix resumed playing the tv Riley in 1953.

21 Show-Soap



Hugh Studebaker

Bachelor's Children

First Heard: September 28, 1936

Last Heard: September 27, 1946

Bachelor's Children got its start locally over WGN, Chicago, in 1935. It went nationally over CBS in 1936. Hugh Studebaker starred as Dr. Bob Graham, a bachelor who looked after his dying friend's twin daughters. Ruth Ann, was played by Marjorie Hannan and Laurette Fillbrandt. Janet was played by Patricia Dunlap. Olan Soule played Sam Ryder. Ellen Collins, the housekeeper, was portrayed by Marie Nelson and Hellen Van Tuyl. The show was written by Bess Flynn with sound effects by Ed Barley. Announcers included Russ Young and Dan Gordon. The theme song was *Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life*.

22 Show-Western**The Lone Ranger**

First Heard: January 31, 1933

Last Heard: May 25, 1956



Brace Beemer

The Lone Ranger was first heard over WXYZ in Detroit. Capt. Dan Reid was a Texas Ranger who's command was attacked by a gang of outlaws. Surviving as the lone ranger, Reid donned a mask and with the aid of his faithful Indian companion, Tonto, the two fought for justice in the American West. Among those who portrayed the Lone Ranger were George Stenius, Earle Grasser and Brace Beemer. John Todd played Tonto. Announcers included Harold True, Brace Beemer, Harry Golder, Charles Wood, Bob Hite and Fred Foy. The show was directed by James Jewell and Charles D. Livingstone. It was written by Fran Striker, among many others. The theme music was *The William Tell Overture* by Rossini.

In one year Striker wrote 156 *Lone Ranger*, 104 *Green Hornet* and 52 *Ned Jordan* radio scripts. Striker also wrote 355 *Lone Ranger* comic strips.

23 Series Log

Gunsmoke - Second Year

37	1-3-53	Westbound	56	5-16-53	The Big Con	75	9-26-53	Fawn
38	1-10-53	Word of Honor	57	5-23-53	Print Asper	76	10-3-53	How to Kill a Friend
39	1-17-53	Paid Killer	58	5-30-53	Fall Semester			
40	1-24-53	The Old Lady	59	6-6-53	Sundown	77	10-10-53	How to Die for Nothing
41	1-31-53	Cavalcade	60	6-13-53	Spring Term			
42	2-7-53	Cain	61	6-20-53	Wind	78	10-17-53	Yorky
43	2-14-53	The Round-Up	62	6-27-53	Flashback	79	10-24-53	The Buffalo Hunter
44	2-21-53	Meshouga	63	7-4-53	Dirt			
45	2-28-53	Trojan War	64	7-11-53	Grass	80	10-31-53	How to Kill a Woman
46	3-7-53	Absalom	65	7-18-53	Wild West			
47	3-14-53	Cyclone	66	7-25-53	Hickock	81	11-7-53	Stolen Horses
48	3-21-53	Pussy Cats	67	8-1-53	Boy	82	11-14-53	Professor Lute Bone
49	3-28-53	Quarter-Horse	68	8-8-53	Sky			
50	4-4-53	Jayhawkers	69	8-15-53	Moon	83	11-21-53	Custer
51	4-11-53	Gonif	70	8-22-53	Gone Straight	84	11-28-53	Kick Me
52	4-18-53	Bum's Rush	71	8-29-53	Jesse	85	12-5-53	The Lamb
53	4-25-53	The Soldier	72	9-5-53	The Sutler	86	12-12-53	The Cust
54	5-2-53	Tacetta	73	9-12-53	Prairie Happy	87	12-19-53	Big Girl Lost
55	5-9-53	The Buffalo Hunter	74	9-19-53	There Was Never a Horse	88	12-26-53	The Guitar

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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 OTR SOURCE LIST, prepared for NARA by Jack French, is a six-page compendium which lists every OTR club, dealer, publication, archive, convention, web site and library in the U.S. and Canada, with over 140 separate listings. Each citation contains name, address, telephone and e-mail address, if available. If you have a prior edition, it may be time to update. These lists are color-coded to designate the year. The present one is on yellow paper. Copies printed on white paper are over six years old and the others: gold (1994), purple (1995), green (1996), and orange (1997). Cost is \$2 to NARA members and \$3 to others. Send payment in stamps or cash to Jack French, 5137 Richardson Dr., Fairfax, VA 22032. PLEASE, no checks. Our profit margin cannot justify sending Jack to the bank and post office. And send stamps in some usable denomination. Seven 33¢ ones would be about right. All profits go to NARA so be generous. Orders filled the same day by return first class mail. (Please do not post this list on the Internet since it is a NARA fund-raiser.) Get your copy soon.

I'M SEEKING your memories of listening to war related radio drama during World War II. Where and with whom did you listen to Corwin, Oboler, The Man Behind the Gun, Words at War, etc. I'm writing a history of World War II drama and your input would help a great deal. Howard Blue, 22 Cedar Valley Lane, Huntington, NY 11743. (516) 424-9475, or Khovard@Juno.com

LOOKING for any copies of the radio show, "We the People." Contact Jack Palmer, 145 North 21st Street, Battle Creek, MI 49015.

WANTED: Any copies of the show "Reuben, Reuben," a music show broadcast on NBC (possibly from San Antonio) in 1952/53. Henry Hinkel, 254 Florida Avenue, Amsterdam, NY 12010.

We have a listing of 181 books dealing with old time radio that might be useful to you in building your OTR library. Each entry lists the title, author, publisher and date of publication, a brief description of the contents, and the ISBN number if applicable. We know of no other list that is as complete as this one. Cost is \$2 to NARA members and \$3 to others. Please send payment in cash or seven 33¢ stamps (NO checks please) to B.J. Goerge, 2177 S. 62nd St., West Allis, WI 53219. All profits go to NARA.

NARA NEWS COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATES

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Half page	- 25.00
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Mail Tribune

Old-time radio programs turn back hands of time

THURSDAY

June 11, 1998

MEDFORD, OREGON

By PAUL FATTIG
of the Mail Tribune

TALENT—When Garry Papers was a youngster in upstate New York in the 1930s, he loved to stretch out on the living room floor with his dog Freckles.

His father would be in the easy chair, his mother in the rocker. His kid sister would sit on the floor beside him; his older sister on a stool near the radio.

And the old radio would crackle to life with the antics of Fibber McGee and Molly, the adventures of Captain Midnight, the chilling drama of Suspense.

"We always had a night at the radio when I was a kid," recalled Papers, 64, of Talent. "You came home and listened to the kids' hour, the variety hour, then the drama.

"Those were the good old days to me," he added. "I wanted to bring some of that back."

Papers has brought back the memories of his youth in "A Night at the Radio," a series of old radio programs restored on cassette tapes. He links each program with an introductory narration that talks about the life and times of that era.

Each volume of four tapes—more than four hours long—sells for \$28, including shipping. He sells the tapes to more than 200 subscribers around the world. The business is operated out of his home, although he does the narration at the Oregon Sound Recording studio in Medford.

His son, Jerry, who lives in Florida, writes the narratives.

Papers pays a royalty

to reproduce the old programs to Radio Spirits Inc., based in Chicago, which has the rights to the programs.

"It started out as a retirement project," explained Papers, a retired

businessman who has collected some 8,000 hours of old radio programs. "I wanted to keep alive the good memories of my childhood."

"When I retired from my manufacturing business, I started thinking that a lot of other people must be interested in old-time radio," he said.



Mail Tribune photos by Jim Craven

Garry Papers, above, and his son, Jerry, recreate an era in their digitally remastered and restored recordings of old-time radio shows. "A Night at the Radio," above right, features the programs with some slices of life of the times.

"Today, if you can find old-time radio programs, you are bombarded by modern commercials. It kind of jolts you out of the mood."

In his tapes, Papers retains the original commercials, many offering products no longer produced, because they were part of the program.

"Some of them, you couldn't take them out if you wanted," he said. "On Fibber McGee, you are always trying to figure out how they are going to get the commercial into the program. They weave it right in."

Papers, who keeps in his office a tall 1936 Zenith radio that still works, doesn't just offer reproductions. He uses his narrative to take the listener back to those days.

"We dedicate each volume to a year, and tell people about how life was," he explained. "We tell them who won the Oscars, who won the World Series. We tell people how central heating in the old days was a grate between the living room and dining room, tell them about the coal man who used to go through the cellar window."

While he works on the programs, he also gets to spend some time with old friends.

"My favorites as a kid were Jack Armstrong, Captain Midnight," he said. "Later, it was Fibber McGee and Molly. They always worked in what was going on at that time. Suspense was always good and eerie. Gosh, I could rattle off thousands of them. Life with Riley, The Great Gildersleeve.

"Yeah, I still laugh when Fibber opens that closet," he said of the thunderous crash that always followed McGee's opening the stuffed closet. "That never gets old."

Garry Papers is a NARA member.
For further information on his "A Night at the Radio" offerings, write to him at P.O. Box 126, Ashland, OR 97520, or see his ad on page 49.

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 Al Henry, Seattle, WA



A TIP OF THE ATWATER DIAL TO....

Patrick Duquette, publisher/editor of *ANIMATO!* magazine, and Keith Scott, the author, for permission to reprint the Mickey Mouse article on page 11.

Al Inkster, NARA's vice president emeritus. Your editor spent an afternoon with him in his home and Al gave us a couple boxes of material, including back issues of *NARA News* and a number of scripts for NARA to sell. Also many other materials that can be used in the *NARA News*.

Don Aston for volunteering to replace shows in NARA's cassette library. As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, large numbers of cassettes are being removed because of their poor sound. Don has volunteered to replace many of those shows from his own and AVPRO's extensive collections after the present listening and updating has been completed.

Hank Hinkel for displaying and selling Gene Larson's old time radio posters for NARA at the Newark convention.

Don Aston for providing space at the AVPRO table at the SPERDVAC convention for NARA to display and sell posters, back issues, scripts, and memberships.

Garry Papers for several cassettes.

John Pellatt for reference material.

Bob Mott who has just signed the contract for the publication of another book (his third) which will carry the title *When Horses Were Coconuts*. This will be dealing with live radio and TV.

Gene Larson, NARA's staff artist for our centerfold and the cartoon found on page 40.

Garry Papers and "A Night at the Radio" for the ad on page 49.

Our columnists in this issue: Frank Bresee, Bob Burnham, Jim Cox, Jack French, B.J. George, Roger Hill, Gene Larson, Bob Mott, Jack Palmer, John Pellatt (2 articles), Clarence Runden, Keith Scott, Ray Smith, and Hal Stephenson.

Those who have already sent in articles for future issues: Frank Bresee, Gene Larson, Bob Mott (2 articles), and Hal Stephenson (7 articles). Your early submissions are appreciated.

Many thanks to you all!!!!

DEADLINES:

March 15 for the spring issue
June 15 for the summer issue



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