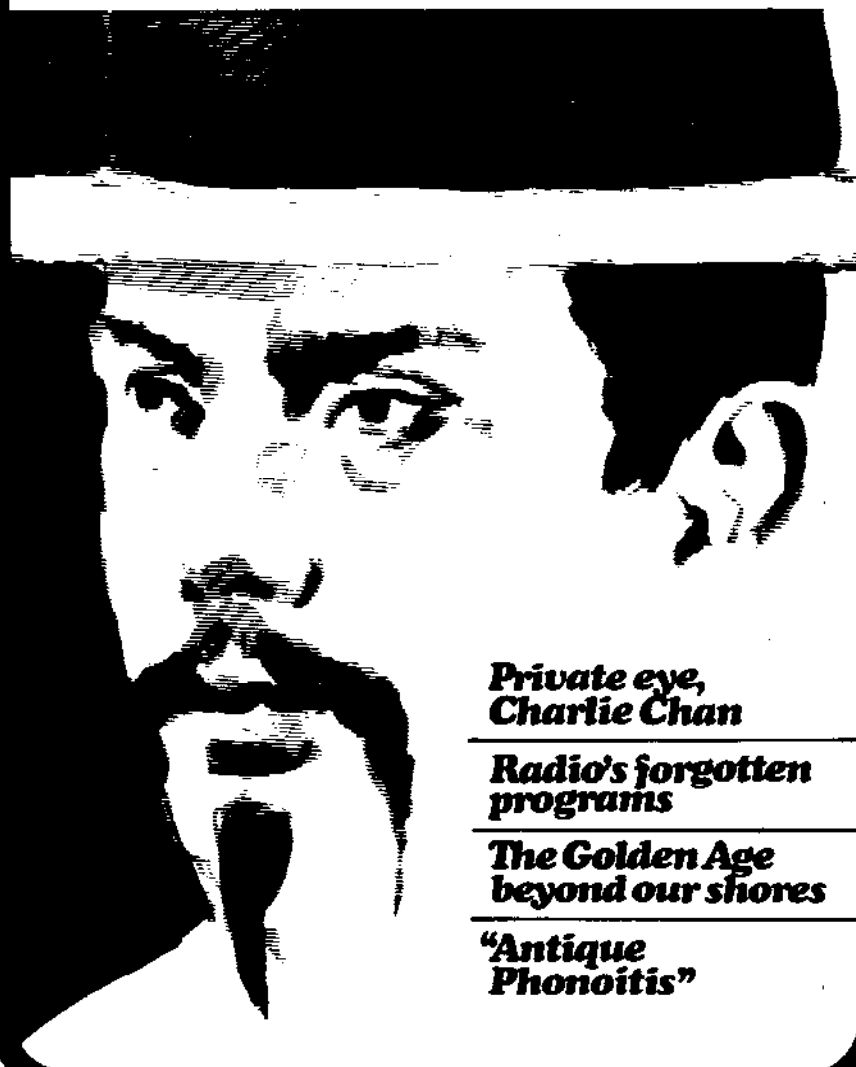


Old Time Radio **DIGEST**

No. 14

March-April 1986

\$2.50



**Private eye,
Charlie Chan**

**Radio's forgotten
programs**

**The Golden Age
beyond our shores**

**"Antique
Phonoitis"**

Old Time Radio DIGEST

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Publisher's note

One is a great big Thank You to all of you for keeping the Digest going. We are growing daily and hope to keep this the number one publication for traders, dealers and for those who just want to keep informed and read a little old news and some new news about the hobby of Radio - it's still alive and well in the pages of the Digest!

It is getting around renewal time for most of the subscribers and you should have gotten your issue with a Red Dust Cover on it, if you did that means that this is the last issue you will get if you don't re-up your subscription.

Thanks also to our many advertisers - they help pay the freight and allow us to keep The Digest coming your way.

Those who contribute articles do so without pay or other compensation - for the love of the hobby. I like to think it's one big happy family. We do our part, advertisers do their part, the contributors of articles do their part, and the subscribers do their part. Together we can make it work. We are going into our third year, so renew your subscription today so we can all benefit! 6 issues mailed 1st Class Postage is \$12.50, and we take Visa or MasterCard. Subscription cards are enclosed for your convenience - so if your subscription is up, please renew while you're thinking of it, so you don't miss a single issue! Most back issues are available for \$3.00 each if anyone needs them. Also they can be ordered from BRC Productions (Address in Classified Section.)

Again, many thanks and may God Bless each and every one of you for a prosperous 1986!

—Herb Brandenburg, Publisher

Old Time Radio is alive and well in the pages of the DIGEST!



Classified Advertising Rates

Commercial:
\$4 for first 20 words
plus fifteen cents per
word thereafter.

Non-Commercial:
First 20 words free,
then ten cents a word.

Private Eyes for Public Ears

by Jim Maclise

Charlie Chan is introduced in each and every episode of the 1936-37 sereal as "the most delightfully fascinating character in the realms of mystery." Most of us associate the inscrutable Chinese police inspector from Honolulu with Warner Oland, who portrayed him so definitively in the long-running sequence of thirties and forties films. But Chan was also the hero of one of the best (though short-lived) radio sereals of the 1930's starring Walter Connolly. Two examples of the series are currently available (from Aston's Adventures and BRC Productions): "The Colonel Willoughby Murder Case" and "The Madam Landini Murder Case" (which runs a rather incredible 39 episodes, the first six of which are not obtainable). An even earlier sereal from 1932 (or thereabouts - the dates of the Chan series are among the unsolved mysteries of the century) ran a single season but has not survived.

In the 1940's Chan appeared once more on radio, portrayed variously by Ed Begley and the ubiquitous Santos Ortega, plus one or two other actors whose atrocious performances are wisely protected by their anonymity. Charlie Chan's Number One Son, so evident in the films, seems confined to the half-hour shows only. This slang-spouting offspring of the great detective is merely referred to occasionally in the 30's serials. For example, in the Landini murder case a local sheriff corrects one of Charlie's deductions by pointing out that the victim was shot with her own gun. Chan admits his error by stating that his son, away at college, would have said, "Sheriff Holt, you have said a

mouthful." What with the sereals and the thirty minute shows, Charlie Chan covered the network spectrum, appearing on NBC, ABC, and Mutual.

Until the recent surfacing of the "Madam Landini Murder Case," there had been a scarcity of Chan shows. Two serials, a few odd episodes from others (mostly bad), and a handful of half-hour programs constitute the lot. Nevertheless, the Landini case runs to 39 episodes (the first six are missing) and constitutes most of the Chan material now obtainable. In this mystery Inspector Chan is vacationing at Lake Tahoe and is called upon to solve the murder of a famous opera star, Ellen Landini. (Do detectives ever spend murder-free vacations?) Among the house-guests at her spacious lake-side summer home are no less than three ex-husbands, a lovely young niece, plus such other household members as her current husband, her private plane pilot, a Chinese servant named Ah-Sing, and her personal maid. All of them are highly suspect, and our attention is in turn focused on each and every one of them throughout many episodes. Charlie Chan is particularly disturbed by the discovery of Landini's body amid a mismatch of colors, including jewelry box tops. "Red lid on yellow box, yellow lid on red box, pink scarf on green costume." (Veteran mystery buffs will scent color-blindness instantly.) At 39 chapters this is a sometimes long-winded mystery, which one might shuffle in cassette format like a deck of cards and come up with a slightly different story every time. Yet oddly enough this really doesn't matter; this is

terrific period stuff and has to rank high among radio mysteries. Addicts will not miss it.

"The Colonel Willoughby Murder Case" is lacking even more episodes from its first half, yet is still listenable. This time Charlie Chan is in San Francisco (another vacation!) involved in the solution of the murder of the colonel who has recently been searching for a missing son. A search for crucial papers belonging to Willoughby involves Chan in emptying wastepaper baskets, checking airline schedules, analyzing time zones, and eventually coming up with a solution. The sound quality of these shows may seem unsatisfactory to many collectors, yet those who fall under the spell of the han serials will want this one too. (See my final comments.)

The remaining Charlie Chan programs are mostly thirty minute complete mysteries, plus a few odd episodes not really worth collecting. "Deacon Jessup" and "The Marching Ants" involve a Chan who sounds more like a Chinese boy scout than the portly fifty-year-old Honolulu police veteran. But four half-hour mysteries are quite acceptable. These include "The Talking Doll," which hides explosives in its interior and is given as a gift to Charlie Chan's daughter (how many children does Chan have?); "The Sea Witch," a reasonably clever tale of escaped convicts and a rich girl's fiancée who is murdered (plus a foggy night in Honolulu; that's why you'll know this is fiction); and two Christmas stories, "The Man Who Murdered Santa Claus" and "The Firey Santa Claus." Whether Chan is played by Ed Begley, Santos Ortega, or Ho Chi Minh is anyone's guess!

Are the Charlie Chan shows really worth collecting? After all, the films and the Earl Derr Biggers stories are far

better known, right? You can answer these questions for yourself. Simply send away for a few of the "Madam Landini" episodes (BRC Productions). Listen to them. The theme music alone may get to you (sounds like Wagner, but what is it?) The Chinese fortune cookie wisdom goes like this: "Man whose honesty motivates his actions does not fear to have walls of house removed. But dishonest man keeps house closely guarded, lest one glancing through doorway see him stripped of his disguise." Or: "One essential clue always more important than many non-essential clues." (Always thinking, our man Chan.) Then there's that theme music, and the sound of ancient radio waves. Before yo know it, you could own all 33 existing episodes. And when you start playing them nightly and in random sequence, you'll know you're an addict.

Next time: A detective grab-bag. All those single/double episodes or not-so-famous shows that you've wondered about, but been afraid to investigate.

RICHARD HIMBER'S
STUDEBAKER
Champions

MONDAY
8 P.M., CST
WENR - KWK
and Coast-to-Coast
Network

NEW YORK'S
SMARTEST
DANCE
MUSIC

Radio's forgotten programs by George Wagner

Did you ever hear of a radio program called the "FLIT SOLDIERS"?

No? So, okay, don't worry, I'll educate you. FLIT SOLDIERS was a musical review broadcast over the NBC network in the year 1929. It was sponsored, of course, by Flit insect spray - "kills flies, mosquitoes, moths, bed bugs, roaches, ants."

Leader of the Soldiers was banjoist Harry Reser, one of the most prolific recording artists in the history of music. During the late 1920s and early 1930s

Reser recorded his orchestras under dozens of names on dozens of record labels. He was most famous as the leader of the CLIQUOT CLUB ESKIMOS, first heard on NBC in 1926. The Cliquot theme song was Reser's own "The Cliquot March."

Ukulele-player and singer Phil Cook was the number two man in Reser's musical organization. In 1930 Cook flitted over (sorry!) to his own show, also broadcast by NBC. The PHIL COOK SHOW was sponsored by the Quaker





Oats Company, and the star became widely known as the "Quaker Oats Man." By 1941, however, Cook ran a local show, MORNING ALMANAC, for WABC, N.Y.

Billy Hillpot and "Scrappy" Lambert appeared as THE SMITH BROTHERS (Trade and Mark!) over NBC; this program started in 1926. Both men later sang over the air with the famous Ben Bernie Orchestra. Lambert, who recorded hundreds of songs with Reser's musical groups, was a member of the "Town Hall Quartet" on Fred Allen's TOWN HALL TONIGHT. This same quartet also appeared on SHOW BOAT as the "Show Boat Four."

Harry Reser wrote the music for the FLIT SOLDIERS' theme song, "The March of the Flit Soldiers." Phil Cook wrote the words. This march, which implored listeners to "join the Flit Brigade on our Health Crusade," requires one rather unusual instrument - a Flit sprayer!

THE ARMSTRONG QUAKER PROGRAM was broadcast in 1930 (and

earlier?) from the studios of WJZ, New York. This N.B.C. show was heard on Friday nights at 10:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

The program was apparently a musical review, featuring the ten or twelve-piece "Armstrong Quaker Orchestra." Songs were provided by the "Armstrong Quaker Quartet." Hosting duties fell to the "Armstrong Quaker Girl." If I am not mistaken, the Quaker Girl appeared in Armstrong commercials until at least the 1940s.

The Quaker Girl's "Charming Friend" was another cast member. This attractive young woman was apparently an additional vocalist.

The *motif* of the Armstrong show seems to have been that of a Quaker "at home" party. The theme song was "An Armstrong's Quaker Rug in Every Home" According to the sheet music, this was the "signature song of the Armstrong Quakers."

I'm sorry that I can't tell you more about this early show. Does anyone out there have any additional information?

George Wagner





AS you listen to the Friday night "At Home" of the Armstrong Quakers, perhaps you wonder about Armstrong's Quaker Rugs. "Are they pretty?" "Would they go well with our rooms?"

Why not stop in at the local store and look over the Armstrong's Quaker Rugs on display? You will find beautiful colorings and interesting designs.

And when you try out an Armstrong's Quaker Rug in your home you will appreciate other advantages—the Accolac-Process surface that protects the newness, seals in the beauty of the pattern, and keeps out the dirt, the sturdy felt-base that makes it wear so well. The rugs are reasonable in price and then, of course, the small amount you do spend is safely invested, for every Armstrong's Quaker Rug is guaranteed. The Certificate pasted on its face is the assurance of the manufacturer, Armstrong Cork Company, Floor Division, Lancaster, Pa., that they stand behind each rug.

"Antique Phonoitis"

I'm sick. I have what is known as a form of mental illness. In medical circles the illness is described specifically as "antique phonoitis". In layman's terms it is called the old-time radio fever. Every known case has been terminal and there is no known cure. The only way it can be treated is with constant fresh doses of old-time radio shows. The disease can be transmitted to other people but it poses very little threat to the television-watching public. The disease is transmitted from person to person by the exchanging of catalogs or by reel or cassette tapes whose oxide particles have been exposed to OTR.

When the time comes to go to that great recording studio in the sky (the same one that has every known show of OTR in its library including thousands that no one here on earth has), I wonder how they are going to bury me. Perhaps I'll be wrapped in Ampex 641 from head to toe with a copy of TUNE IN YESTERDAY in the casket with me. I'll be wearing a pair of headphones connected to a Walkman that is playing Amos 'n' Andy. Or if the setting is more serious I might be listening to Lux. When that time comes I know I will have plenty of time to listen to those thousands of shows that I've traded for and bought over the years. Now I tell people I no longer trade because I have no more room in this apartment for any more reels. Last week I transferred four boxes of reels to the bathtub because the oven was already full. Now I realize that my refusal to trade was a cop-out. There is simply no excuse

since there are places that rent warehouse space.

One of the symptoms of this disease is that it causes you to spend money impulsively on telephone calls and correspondence to other collectors. The person I call never gets a chance to say anything but "hello" because I am a chatterbox. I've just got to tell them about my new discoveries. Last month I set the world's record for the longest nationwide telephone call in A T & T history and my telephone bill came in last week. G.T.E. had it sent over in a box that a Whirlpool refrigerator came in. It cost them \$240 to mail it but it cost me \$240,000. And that's only the beginning. It can only end as I've described it above.

One of the most interesting aspects of this disease is that I don't want to be cured. If there is a series that I absolutely hate (and I say *if* there is), I will shortly have every surviving show in that series, and be thinking about a way for me to get the ones that didn't survive. Oh, well. Tomorrow's another day.

H. Edgar Cole

P.O. Box 3509 Lakeland, FL 33802

BE A RADIO EXPERT

Learn at Home-Make Good Money

Mail the coupon. Many men I trained at home in spare time make \$50, \$50, \$75 a week. Many make \$5, \$19, \$15 a week in spare time while learning. Get facts about Radio's opportunities and my amazingly practical 50-50 method of training. Home experimental outfits make learning easy, practical, fast-learning. Money back agreement protects you. Mail coupon for free 64-page book.

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 5KT6A,
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.
Send me your free book, "Rich Rewards in Radio."
This does not obligate me. (Please write plainly.)

Name..... Age.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

The Golden Age beyond our shores

OTR AROUND THE WORLD -by George Wagner

A rugged old pre-War Zenith or Philco or General Electric floor-model console will still bring in very clear reception from stations extremely far away. In the early 1970s, sitting here in Cincinnati, I used a 1938 Zenith to log stations from almost every major city east of the Mississippi, plus other transmitters in Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and even Venezuela. In addition, I regularly listened to KSL in Salt Lake City and KOA in Denver.

Back in the 1930s (long before my time, alas!) radio listeners were by no means limited to the commercial AM bands. A flick of one's Philco over to the short wave channels would bring in, for example, YV2RC in Caracas, Venezuela. This station broadcast mystery dramas and serials as well as music. (Many of the mystery programs seem to have been broadcast in English.) Some of the celebrities heard on this station included singers Anita Jurado, Conchita Ascanio and Margot Antillano (the latter also a mystery actress). There was also the musical trio of Lauro, Serana and Ayesta. Maryblanca and Alfonzo (Mr. and Mrs. Luis Alfonzo Lorrain) were apparently a Burns-and-Allen-type song and comedy team. Chief announcer Edgar J. Anzola was at home in English as he was in Spanish.

Other major South American transmitters included HC2RL at Guayaquil, Ecuador, PSK at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and LSX at Buenos Aires. LSX was the relay station for the weekly programs broadcast from Little America in Antarctica to the United States. While these reports were carried on the American commercial networks (do any

survive?), American listeners could tune in LSX and hear the preliminary test communications between Little America and the Argentinian operators. The Ecuadorian station, HC2RL, featured a young soprano named Paquita Parra who was apparently quite a great favorite with American listeners. (I have a 50-year-old photograph of Miss Parra - if her voice was anything as nice as her face, it's a wonder we didn't invade.)

I have photographs of several of these South American radio stars. The surprising thing is that they don't look like the typical stereotyped images one has of Latin Americans; in spite of Spanish names, they don't even look Spanish. For the most part these people look Northern European, and in fact they look downright *German*. Make of that what you will.

Over in Europe, one could tune in the great BBC transmitters GSA, GBS, GSC, GSD and GSE located at Daventry, near London. The BBC broadcast programs very much like those heard in this country - comedy programs, mysteries, dramas, plus dance band remotes from London cafes and hotel ballrooms. A turn of the dial brought in Swiss stations HBP and HBL in Geneva. These two transmitters, operated by the League of Nations, broadcast programs in English, French, and Spanish. Those who liked harangues mixed with their music and drama might try the big German transmitters DJA, DJB, DJC and DJD located at Zeesen near Berlin. Much was broadcast in English. The *Philco Radio Atlas of the World for 1935* stated that "German is making a good impression

on the world through her short-wave broadcasts," a statement which the Philco people doubtless regretted almost as soon as it hit print.

Fans of "le musique hot" could hear some really good "swing" bands over FYA, the French short wave station at Pontoise, near Paris. FYA carried numerous dance band remotes from Paris hotels and restaurants. The station also broadcast radio dramas and comedies but these seem to have been exclusively in the French language. Station PHI at Huizen, Holland, also broadcast many dramas (I have a photograph of a broadcast in progress), but these were mainly in Low German (i.e., Dutch). However, the leading announcer at PHI, Eduard Startz, was fluent in seven languages, including English. (The number of Dutch who do not speak English can be counted on the backs of one's hands. The BBC AM transmissions roll right across the North Sea, and Dutch radio listeners are exposed to daily English from the cradle on.) For masochists interested in hearing America berated, there were the English-language "news" broadcast from the Comintern Broadcasting Station in Moscow. (As any current short wave listener can tell you, Moscow is broadcasting pretty much the same nonsense today. Russia *does* transmit some worthwhile music, however, and occasionally a decent radio play.)

American listeners who missed the Philco Hour here could catch it as a rebroadcast from EAQ in Madrid, Spain. According to the *Philco Radio Atlas* mentioned above, "EAQ is interesting also for its splendid Sunday evening programs which come to radio listeners all over the world through the courtesy of Philco. Philco sponsors these programs for the express benefit of short-wave listeners. Be sure to tune-in

EAQ each Sunday night at 7 o'clock, Eastern Standard Time (9.87 on your Philco dial)."

Other programs in English could be heard from stations JYT, JVK, JYM, JVS and JVR, all in Japan. (JVM and JVN were the min Tokyo stations.) There were also three powerful Australian stations - VK2ME in Sydney, and VK3ME and VK3LR, both in Melbourne. Still another English language station was ZLT in Wellington, New Zealand.

How much survives of the material broadcast on these foreign stations? I do have some BBC broadcasts. In addition, several speeches by Adolf Hitler are currently in circulation; these were broadcast by the Berlin transmitters, with extemporaneous English translation added by an English-speaking announcer. Other Berlin broadcasts in circulation include political talks by American and English traitors "Paul Revere," "Axis Sally" (she was actually known as "Midge at the Mike"), "Lord Haw Haw" and Robert Best. Best had been dean of the American press corps in Europe when war broke out; he surprized everybond by staying in Germany and broadcasting for Hitler. At least one or two of the "Tokyo Rose" broadcasts from Tokyo survive, but in pretty rotten fidelity; there are probably more in the National Archives. The great American poet Ezra Pound broadcast for Mussolini during the war; it would be interesting if these ever turned up.

NOISE-REDUCING TWINS

**LYNCH HI-FI
ASSEMBLED ALL-
WAVE ANTENNA**

All ready to hang.
Saves 90% of installation
time. Amazing re-
sults.

If your dealer
cannot supply
you, order di-
rect, or write
for folder.

\$6.75
List

**LYNCH
FILTERADIO**

Cuts out objectionable
noise from the high
line. Easy to in-
stall; simple to
adjust.

\$5.00
List

Arthur H. Lynch, Inc., 227 Fulton St., N. Y.
PIONEER OF NOISE-REDUCING AERIALS

Is this the future of OTR?

by George Wagner

There are many radio stations already located in former private houses. But these are mostly disc jockey/jukebox types of operations. We will not be striking off into totally uncharted waters. We are merely doing what has been done before — but this time doing it *right*.

If a defunct funeral home (no pun intended) should happen to come up onto the market, it might be the answer to our prayers. A realtor once told me that everybody assumes that a former mortuary will be haunted, or dark and damp, or smell like rancid hyacinths, or *something*. Because of this, the realtor informed me, the buildings often are sold for far below their true market value. (For the same reason, an old hearse, re-painted and re-decorated, might make a nice mobile unit for the station.)

A large suburban track house could be converted into a full service radio station. I have mentioned this particular kind of house simply because it is one that I once lived in many years ago; there are probably better ones for the purpose. The price of this house, were it up for sale, would be in the fifty thousand dollar range. However, it is located in a rather exclusive neighborhood (*not* zoned for business purposes); in another, cheaper location the same building might well list for under twenty thousand dollars.

The long living room has been transformed into Studio A, while the first floor powder room, with one wall knocked out, has become the director's booth. Studio A contains

room for both a stage and a small audience. The dining room is now the office and reception area, while the kitchen-breakfast room has become prop storage.

On the second floor, the master bedroom has evolved into Studio E. Smaller than Studio A, Studio E can be used for non-audience productions, interviews, and panel discussions. Another bedroom is now Studio C, for disc jockey-type programs. The former sewing room is now the news room. The third bedroom has become the staff lounge, doubling as the green room for dramatic productions.

In the basement, we have Studio D, formerly the garage area. It has almost exactly the same dimensions as Studio A, so it can also accommodate a small audience. The storage room running alongside the garage area is now the director's booth. The former laundry room has become the station library. The remainder of the basement is the domain of the production department. It can also be the transmitter area if the transmitter is not located elsewhere (as it is in our example.)

Behind the main building, the driveway apron has become our parking area. The grassy backyard now holds a cinderblock transmitter building. This building contains a satellite broadcast studio, so the station can — upon emergency — broadcast from the transmitter building alone. The main house also contains a finished attic, an area for which I am certain our inventive staff can find use.

Since we will be heavily into new radio drama and comedy, one of our most pressing needs will be for a staff organ. This will be neither so difficult nor so expensive as it may sound at first. We will probably be able to obtain a loaner from a local music store, in exchange for commercial time. Or it may be possible, through careful scouting, to pick up something second-hand. I know one fellow personally and well who bought a non-working 1938 Hammond electric organ (*the* radio workhorse, as I'm certain Rosa Rio would tell you) for less than two hundred dollars. He had the damned singing in less than a week. (This same character managed to scrounge up a 1935 Mills Empress jukebox for \$15.00 and an 1802 symphonic orchestra harp for \$25.00 — there are people out there *like* that!)

If we can't obtain an organ right away, we can use an old piano until something better turns up. Heaven knows we can junk an old piano cheap enough. Radio broadcasting *started* with pianos, after all, and we're certainly no better than those grand pioneers. It might also be possible to dig up an old Solovox — while walking with the "character" mentioned above, I once found one set out for the trash! The Solovox, a product of the 1940s, bolts to the front of the piano and gives the pianist one organ rank or keyboard.

In lieu of *all* of this, we can find a good accordianist! We're *allowed* to be inventive, since — yet once again — we are re-inventing radio from the start.

Now we must consider how we are to notify our potential audience that we are on the air. Most radio broadcasters seem to advertise themselves only over their own stations — surely

the broadcast equivalent of shooting fish in a barrel. A cheap and effective way of advertising is the neighborhood handbill blitz. I became quite familiar with the logistics of this many years ago when I was active in politics. One of our volunteer teams, working Saturdays *only*, delivered campaign materials to *every* household in Northern Kentucky. Our team was composed of five adults and three or four high school students, and we accomplished this feat in little more than a month.

This tactic worked *extremely* well. Our congressional candidate, a conservative Republican in a liberal Democratic district, wasn't given a Martian's chance, but he carried the district by a substantial majority — largely due to the vote in the countries we covered. (He has subsequently been re-elected to nine consecutive terms!) What is almost equally important is that this whole project didn't cost us a dime, except for the printing bills (at cost!) and Cokes and hot dogs for the kids. There is no reason why this form of advertising wouldn't work just as well for a radio station. We might even get the printing done free if we agreed to carry along a second handbill advertising the printer.

Other forms of advertising could include such faithful standbys as automobile bumper stickers, matchbooks, calendars, tee-shirts, buttons, etc. Removable door panels can be placed on the cars of station staffers and/or the members of the local OTR club — we now have "official" station cars. These panels could be easily traded back and forth between automobiles.

Yet another method of advertising might be carefully-placed classified

newspaper advertisements under such headings as "Personal" and "Miscellaneous Notices." To the best of my knowledge, no radio station has ever tried this before, even though these ads are among the most-read sections of any newspaper. And that is the whole point: we will not be limited to what has been done before. We will be, still once more, re-inventing radio, not merely trying to "bring it back."

By far the most important advertising tool will simply be the warm-bodied presence of station staffers and their friends in the community. A regular station presence at PTA functions, city council meetings, church festivals, on the streets, at the ball game, will prove invaluable. Attendees at church festivals should be able to look around them and see people wearing WOTR (or whatever) tee-shirts.

Once the station is well-established, our best programs can be offered to the networks — either public service or commercial. We can gather a lot of publicity from donating tapes to hospitals, institutions, and especially to societies for the blind and visually-handicapped. We can even donate tapes to the Missouri Home for the Tall. (If you don't understand that last reference, the next knock you hear on your door will be Paul Rymer — climbed up out of his grave to get you.)

One thing that we most expressly want to do is to make our new programs available on tape to the OTR community throughout the country. These people, after all, our us, and our *main* reason for starting our station in the first place should be to please *them*.

We cannot let retional bickering deter us from beginning and nurtur-



HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO RE-LIVE THE DAYS OF: "OLD TIME RADIO"

In your own living room, again hear the voice of *The Shadow*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Amos 'n Andy*, *Bergen & McCarthy*, *Gunsmoke*, and many others. Hear *Al Jolson*, *Judy Garland*, and *Bing Crosby*.

\$1.00 Brings You This Catalog!!

SHOWS COST:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Reel to Reel Tape | \$ 3.50 Per Hour — Minimum Order 3 Hours |
| Cassette Tape | \$ 5.00 Per Hour — Minimum Order 2 Hours |
| 8 Track Cartridge | \$10.00 Per 90 Minute Tape — Minimum Order 90 Minutes |

Stuart Jay Weiss • 33 Von Braun Ave. • Staten Island, N.Y. 10312

ing this station. I don't care whether the station goes on line in Peoria, or Pittsburgh, or Pismo Beach. Whatever I can personally contribute, I will do so regardless of *where* the station is located. I believe that over ninety percent of the American OTR community will come through as well.

So far, of course, we have been speaking of *one* radio station only. But certainly a number of cities have OTR groups capable of creating grassroots radio stations of the type I have described. Let's say that we come up with stations in New York, Chicago, Peoria, St. Louis, Atlanta, Denver and Los Angeles. We *now* have a *NET-WORK*. While I believe that our main emphasis should be on live local productions, our stations' best programs can now be fed coast-to-coast. ("My God, it's 1938 again!") Nonsense — it's 1990, the way God *intended* for 1990 to be.)

The only additional expense for the network hookup is the cost of the telephone company line charges. A thirty-minute program is equivalent to a thirty-minute long-distance telephone call. That's a low price, my friends, for making *this* reality again: "The OTR Network brings you, (approximately) coast-to-coast, *THE ASYLUM OF DOCTOR DEATH*, sponsored by Griswold's Toothpaste, and starring H. Arlington Frisbie as Doctor Death. Today's adventure: 'The Stairs in the Crypt,' written by Robert Blake."

In short, we can *have* live network dramatic radio again, *if we want it*. It is *not* going to come to us gift-wrapped some misty Christmas morn — we are going to have to *work* for it. It's *not* going to come from NBC, CBS, ABC, NPR, APR, Mutual, or the tooth fairy. It's up to *US* to create a *GRASSROOTS* network.

A very wise man once said to me, "George, there's only one thing more powerful than an idea whose time has come. That's an idea whose time has come *again*." Believe me, *this is* an idea whose time has come *again*." I don't believe that anything can stop us from changing the face of contemporary radio. Five or six years after we launch the very first station, we are going to be the cover story on *both TIME and NEWSWEEK*.

If the ideas expressed in these papers evoke only feelings of apathy on your part, we might as well face reality: OTR is a last survivor club, and when the last old radio actor or actress dies, and when the last old radio listener passes away, then our entire hobby will be a thing of dust and ashes, no longer even a memory. OTR will then be nothing more than a million rolls of used audio tape which a future generation will most likely toss onto the trash heap.

But I do *not* believe that this is the case. I was born in 1941, yet a good portion of my radio collection was broadcast years before I was born. In fact, the largest portion of my collection was broadcast before I was six years old! And by the time I was seven, I had been seduced by that most insidious succubus, television. Clearly, it is *not* "nostalgia" (thoroughly overused word!) which makes me champion OTR as one of the truly great, truly alive artforms. It is, instead, the recorded evidence I have heard in my *adult* life, over the past 15 or 20 years.

I warmly and especially invite correspondence from my fellow OTR collectors interested in the ideas expressed in these pages, so that we can get some productive discussion going. I especially would like to hear from

veteran radio performers, writers, directors, etc. I trust that you realize that in my insistence on a healthy proportion of *new* radio material, that I am in no way downplaying the sheer magic you gave us over the three decades of the Golden Age. Next to my Bod and a handful of beloved friends, OTR has become the single most important thing in my life, and I love you very much for giving it to me and to us. I believe that the greatest tribute we radio collectors can pay to you radio veterans is to re-institute dramatic radio as the living voice it was meant to be — *and will be again*. What I want for radio audiences 50 or 100 years from now is for them to know Nila Mack — and for them also to know a *new* Nila Mack, a new Nila Mack not even yet born.

I'd also like to hear from younger people currently involved in contemporary radio (and television) broadcasting. It is *your* ideas and input, *your* knowledge, *your* love of new and old radio that can, — that *will* — make these dreams into solid reality. If we can carry this thing off, I can guarantee you that the greatest days of your life still lay ahead.

Do you know what the finest gift is that we OTR people can present to the radio starts of the past, both living and dead? Quite simply put, that gift is the *future* of radio! Let's *do* it!

There is one thing more that we are going to do, and that may well be the most rewarding of all. When we do get this thing off the ground, we are going to scare the socks off contemporary jukebox radio broadcasting. That alone will be worth the price of admission.

When you go to church this Saturday or Sunday, *pray* for the boys and girls down at Arbitron. They're not

going to know what hit them. And the sappy pseudo-sociologists who go around prattling about "cultural shock" — those poor creatures ain't seen *nuttin'* yet!

Other OTR and "nostalgia" publications, please feel free to reprint. Please credit George Wagner and THE OLD TIME RADIO DIGEST.

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The Radio Reading Room

by George Wagner

I hope my recent article on tracking down old radio books and papers didn't bore anybody too much, for I am going to discuss book collecting again.

I forgot to mention that many radio books can be found in the Biography sections of used bookstores. That's where I found Eddie Cantor's *TAKE MY LIFE* (1957), Rudy Vallee's *VAGABOND DREAMS COME TRUE* (1930), and Howard K. Smith's *LAST TRAIN FROM BERLIN* (1942). None of these books cost me more than \$4.00. I also found *NEVER A DULL MOMENT* (1944), the memoirs of radio boxing announcer Charles Francis "Socker" Coe. I purchased this last book for 50¢ at the Cincinnati Public Library's annual sale.

There are a number of books of old radio scripts that are worth searching for. For example, *COLUMBIA WORKSHOP PLAYS: Fourteen Radio Dramas* (1939). This book contains such radio plays as Norman Corwin's "They Fly Through the Air" (April 10, 1939) and Archibald MacLeish's "The Fall of the City" (April 11, 1937). The Corwin play had been previously broadcast over his own program *WORDS WITHOUT MUSIC* (February 19, 1939). Another collectable book is Arch Oboler's *FOURTEEN RADIO PLAYS* (1940).

You might also keep your eye out for *THE PRIZE PLAYS OF RADIO AND TELEVISION: 1956*. While mostly devoted to television scripts, the book gives several radio items, including the *NEW EDGAR BERGEN SHOW* for November 27, 1955.

In my previous article I mentioned that the soap operas of the late 1930s often published novelized versions of their continuing broadcasts. One I didn't mention was *TODAY'S CHILDREN*, which published a book in 1937. Like the others, this book gave a synopsis of the story line up to the date of publication, plus a very nice selection of cast photographs. Most novelizations of this type were apparently published as mail-order premiums by the programs' sponsors.

Up into the mid-1950s, many colleges offered in-depth courses in big-time radio. Old college textbooks are rarely expensive, and the textbooks used in these radio courses are no exception. One very nice book of this sort is David R. Mackey's *DRAMA ON THE AIR* (1951). Another is Judith C. Waller's *RADIO - The Fifth Estate* (1950). John S. Carlile's *PRODUCTION AND DIRECTION OF RADIO PROGRAMS* (1939), mentioned in my previous article, is invaluable in that it gives *miking* charts for all types of radio programs, including *GANGBUSTERS*. Miking would be very nearly a lost art if it were not for books like this.

One of my most recent finds, in a bookstore's Religion section, was *RADIO PREACHING: Far-Flung Sermons by Pioneers in Broadcasting* (1924). Even if I had no interest in religion, I would find this book invaluable for the background it gives into very early broadcasting.

Collecting books on old radio, and reading them, does not - I confess - quite equal the thrill of actually listening to an old radio program. It does, however, beat all heck out of watching reruns of *IT'S ABOUT TIME* or *GILLIGAN'S ISLAND*.

Radio Humor

Jack Benny: Tell me, Phil, what did the doctors do about your headache?

Phil Harris: Plenty . . . them doctors sure are smart, Jackson . . . First they gave me a complete physical. Then they gave me all the allergy tests. Then they checked my reflexes . . . and then they psychoanalyzed me.

Jack: And did they find out why you have headaches?

Phil: Yeah, my band plays too loud.

A Friend: We haven't gotten together in a long time and I've missed you.

Ed (Archie) Gardner: It ain't because you wasn't aiming.

Pepper Young (Mason Adams): "The only reason everyone doesn't subscribe to helping feed the hungry is just because they've never known how it felt, never dreamed how real hunger felt. If they knew, if they had experienced it, they would not begrudge food to others; they'd be the first to give it."

Sez CBS' Abe Burrows: "Of course, radio-listener ratings aren't really important. A low rating doesn't necessarily mean that a radio comedian has a bad show. All it means is that he loses his job."

Bob Hope: How about a little kiss?

Girl: Oh, Robert, you always want to spoon.

Bob Hope: How else can I stir my sugar?

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Secrets ... of the UNSEEN STAGE

RECENTLY the prize-winning motion picture, "Mr. Deeds Goes To Town," was put on the air in an elaborate and expensive full-hour show. The lines were the same as spoken on the screen. Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur played their original roles. Yet "Mr. Deeds," like so many other radio adaptations from the stage and the screen, didn't seem to click.

Why? You cannot begin to understand one of radio's most challenging problems—how to bring radio drama up to the excellence of other types of air shows—unless you become acquainted with the Columbia Workshop and with Irving Reis.

In 1932, Reis was an engineer on the CBS staff. But he was a different sort of engineer. He was interested not only in how his programs went over but what was in them, especially in the way of dramatizations.

Reis tried to make some of the script-writers who were always hanging around the studios understand what he meant. He talked until he was blue in the face. In desperation he decided that he himself would write a "radio drama." He wasn't a writer, he knew that. But he also knew what kind of writing radio needed.

REIS worked on his "radio drama" in spare time. He was kidded unmercifully by the other engineers, who told him to stick to "playing the dials." But he stuck. The result was the famous "St. Louis Blues," vastly different from other shows.

This "radio drama" used sound-effects consciously, not haphazardly. It took advantage of radio's ability to "shift scenery" in the twinkling of an eye. It was "written for the ear" by a man who knew the mechanics of sound—and it was good!

"St. Louis Blues" was enthusiastically received by the press, the audience, by the people in radio. It was rebroadcast a number of times. It was presented in England by the British Broadcasting Company. It was reprinted in books on radio-writing.

But, Reis insisted, this was only the beginning. What was needed was an experimental workshop—a sustaining program on which actors, writers and technicians could produce scripts of a nature which commercial sponsors might be afraid to try.

While Reis was trying to interest radio executives in his idea, he himself continued to experiment with the new radio drama. In his "Meridian 7-1212," Reis wrote another drama which could be done nowhere as effectively as over a mike. In this play, an editor of a paper, desperate for a story, sends a reporter to see if there is any "human interest stuff" in the lives of the girls who give the exact time every few seconds in a monotonous, cold voice. The listener is shown, in a number of powerful flashbacks, how important the exact time may be in the lives of some people. One of the girls at the Meridian exchange has a brother in the Sing Sing death-house. Midnight is the hour set for his execu-

tion. The girl continues to give the exact time as she watches the big clock. In her trained, efficient voice she says, "When you hear the signal, it will be exactly 12 o'clock." Then follows a dull thud. The girl had collapsed. As the play closes, we hear the reporter saying to the editor that there's no drama in Meridian 7-1212. The only people who call, he says, are ones whose watches have stopped or those who are too lazy to go into the next room to find out the time.

SO THE Columbia Broadcasting System announced that it would establish the Columbia Workshop under the direction of Irving Reis, and that its only aim and final achievement would be "the development of a drama technique which is best suited to radio."

Today the Columbia Workshop is an established success. Under Reis, it has produced a number of important radio dramas. In its short existence it has already perfected a number of important new sound-effects, conquered a number of technical difficulties, given a number of radio writers a chance to

REPRODUCING echoes over the air has now become routine, thanks to the Workshop and the inquisitive mind Reis sets to any technical problem.

Some time ago, he spent days in the control-room trying dozens of sound-effects, to provide a reverberating echo for a play he was producing. A few hours before the show was to go on the air, he stumbled on the solution. A mike was set up in a separate studio. Some feet away was placed a loudspeaker connected to the mike in to which the actors spoke their lines. Both microphones were fed into the same mixing panel, but the time-lag which occurred while the voices traveled the space between the loudspeaker and the mike in the second studio was sufficient to produce the effect of a reverberation.

But the work of the Workshop is not all confined to the studio or to synthetic reproduction of sound. In experimenting with sound, Reis has not forgotten that, above all, a play must be entertaining. He also has not forgotten that man-made sound is at best an imitation of the real thing it is try-

A YOUNG MAN DREAMED DREAMS —FASHIONED NEW BEAUTY, NEW DRAMA OUT OF THEM FOR RADIO!

experiment with sound and music, and has had a definite influence on the quality of radio drama as a whole. Many other radio shows have profited from its wide experimentation.

A great deal of credit for the success of the Workshop must also go to the Columbia Broadcasting System. It gives the Workshop a half-hour on one of radio's choicest nights—Sunday. It refuses to allow the program to be commercially sponsored (although it had several offers) in order to insure for it freedom from interference. It gives the Workshop the pick of CBS actors and actresses, technical equipment, world-wide contacts.

ing to copy. In "Broadway Evening," a Workshop show, Reis placed no less than ten mikes at various points between Forty-Second Street and Fiftieth Street. The clatter of dishes in a busy cafeteria, the roar of traffic, the shuffling and milling of thousands of sightseers and theater-goers, the hawking of pitchmen and newsboys—the hundreds of discordant noises of Broadway were picked up by the sensitive microphones while Reis, in the studio, blended them all in a highly dramatic symphony of sound. Fan mail received by the Workshop gave sure proof of the success of the experiment.

It is easy to get Reis to talk about

radio drama. He is enthusiastic about its future—and impatient with its present.

"The next time you are in a theater," he tells you, "shut your eyes for a few minutes and see if you can follow the story effectively through dialog and sound alone. You will find that you can't. That's why most of the so-called radio 'adaptations' are flops and that's why we need a brand-new technique for radio drama."

What will the radio drama of the future be like? No one knows. Reis will not even venture an opinion, since, he says, his efforts with the Workshop are still in an experimental stage.

But Reis' own "St. Louis Blues" will probably give you a good idea of what the radio drama of the future may be like. For here is a play which is "custom-made" for radio. The action takes place in the five minutes that elapse between the start and the finish of a rendition of the St. Louis Blues. But, as the announcer says, listen:

The scene is a Harlem night club. A bored radio engineer is chatting with the announcer. Both are anxious to get home. There are only a few more minutes to go—another number from the colored orchestra and they can pack up for the night.

The announcer kids the engineer. He asks him whether he isn't thrilled with the power he has at the controls of a program which is going out into the vastness of the night and over the expanse of two continents.

The radio engineer isn't impressed. It sounds much more exciting than it really is, he says. Besides, who's listening at that hour, anyway? That's it, the announcer exclaims, who is listening? Wouldn't it be interesting to get a look at the places where they're hearing the St. Louis Blues?

And that's exactly what the audience sees—or rather hears.

A scene in the tropics. The tent of three white men who have come in search of rare animals for a zoo. One of the men is sick, seriously ill, at times delirious. The other two men are free from the fever that is racking their comrade's body but far from free of anguish and bad nerves.

AS THEY sit with their sick comrade, they hear the sound of native drums. When someone is dying in the jungle, one of them explains, and the natives believe that he is beyond hope they beat the drums. The two naturalists are driven into a frenzy by the sound of the tom-toms. If their feverish comrade should awaken and hear these death-drums, all fight and hope would leave him. He must be prevented from hearing them. But how? Then an idea occurs to one of them. He turns on the portable radio. In a few seconds you hear the wail of the saxophone as that Harlem band swings into the opening strains of the St. Louis Blues.

Two policemen in a radio car are cruising their beat. "Whoever said radio cars are exciting assignments was talking through his hat!" says one of them. The voice which they hear at regular intervals from their loudspeaker is getting under their skin.

The two policemen pull up alongside of an expensive car, the driver of which seems to be having some trouble. He's out of gas. Could they let

"St. Louis Blues" On the Air!

By special arrangement with the Columbia Broadcasting System, Radio Guide has provided for a broadcast of radio's most famous drama, "St. Louis Blues," excerpts from which appear in this story. Listen to it on Sunday, April 25.

him have some? No, they couldn't do that. But they'll be glad to watch his car while he goes for some. That's great, the driver tells them, going to look for a filling station.

While he's gone, the cops look over the powerful motor with unconcealed delight. Must be a big-shot, they decide. Look at the low license number on the plate, which bears the California state mark. They turn on the expensive radio set. What a set! Listen to the way the St. Louis Blues comes over—

what a relief from that guy's voice on the police system!

WHILE they're listening to the St. Louis Blues, their short-wave set is barking at them—but they can't hear a word. The voice—the voice they hate—is telling them to be on the lookout for a high-powered car with a low-numbered California license plate. It is the car that was stolen from the Governor and the man driving it is a much-wanted gangster.

The gangster returns with the gas. The cops bid him an effusive farewell. When they come back to their own car, the voice tells them to go and try to release a kitten which was caught in a drainpipe. "Nothing ever happens!" they grumble as they drive disgustedly away.

In a tenement a sick child wails in discomfort. A frenzied young man is finding it difficult to sleep and seeks distraction from the child's crying. He turns on the radio. "You will now hear the St. Louis Blues," comes the announcer's voice.

On the high seas a boat is battered by a storm. We hear two radio operators reporting to the captain on their success in locating a ship which, however, is many miles away. Too many miles, probably, to reach them in time. One of the radio operators is a youngster—this is his first trip. The captain tells them how serious the situation is. He explains that the news of impending disaster must be kept from the passengers. He suggests that the radio be turned on—loud. The opening bars of the St. Louis Blues blare through the doomed ship.

WE ARE tuned in on a conversation between a mail pilot and an operator at the airport. It's a dark and foggy night. The mail pilot can't see where to land. The land operator turns on the radio so that the mail pilot can follow it in. The last thing the pilot hears as he crashes is the wail of the St. Louis Blues.

Short scenes. Breath-taking changes in the locale. A story that unfolds dramatically through the clever use of sound alone—that's the new radio

technique—the technique of tomorrow!

But there's one thing that bothers Reis. Why is there only one Workshop—that at Columbia? There should be some time—no matter how small—and some money—no matter how little—devoted by the other networks and even local stations to experimental drama. Sure, he agrees, many of these experiments will be bad. Sure, many of them will be duplicating each other's work. But in Workshops lies the future of radio drama!

Radio Guide May 1, 1937

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21801.

Raymond Stanich, 173 Columbia
Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201
Music, personalities, drama, comedy,
Railroad Hour, Chicago Theater of the
Air, Fred Allen, Richard Diamond, Baby
Snooks, Bickersons, Ray Bradbury.
Co-authored book: "SOUND OF
DETECTION-ELLERY QUEEN ON
RADIO." Do research on old time radio.
Issue logs.

WANTED: Amos & Andy radio
program items, puzzles & stand-ups.
Bob Morgan, 4005 Pitman Rd., College
Park, GA 30349.

Tom Monroe, 1426 Roycroft Ave.,
Lakewood, Ohio 44107. / (216) 226-8189
Cassette and reel, mystery, adventure,
sci-fi, westerns, drama, some comedy.

James L. Snyder, 517 North Hamilton
Street, Saginaw, MI 48602
(517) 752-4625, All, except music/sports

Want these Lux shows: Red River,
Alice in Wonderland, Paradine Case.
Kent Coscarelly, 2173 Willester Ave.,
San Jose, Calif. 95124

Steve Dolter, 577 West Locust, Dubuque,
Iowa 52001. (319) 556-1188
200 reels, comedy, mystery, drama, Fred
Allen, Jack Benny, Suspense, I Love a
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or OTR performers.

Radio books, parts wanted prior 1950
from radio repair shops. Send price list.
Richards, Box 1542-D, Brooklyn, N.Y.
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of our mail bid auction catalogues. Each
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WANTED: Classical music broadcasts,
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CAN YOU HELP/ I am looking for programs with magic or related material. My catalogue has 48 pages, November 1976, and grows. Will trade recordings of anything and catalogue with you. Drop a line: Snader, Box 12-655, Mexico 12, D.F. Mexico.

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Wanted: Space Patrol - Tom Corbett, Capt. Video, old radio cereal giveaways, gum cards, pep pins, nostalgia, comic character items 1930's - 1950's. Joseph Fair, 10 Crestwood-R.D., New Castle, PA 16101 (35)

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William R. Lane, 236 W. 6th, Brigham City, Utah 84302./1-801-723-3319/reel to reel, 2600 hours/Hill Air Force Base. All types, Lum & Abner, Jack Benny, Lux Radio Theater. Will buy or trade.

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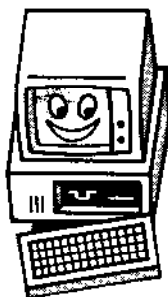
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* 5 12/13/48 Gold Strike On Mission Creek;
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