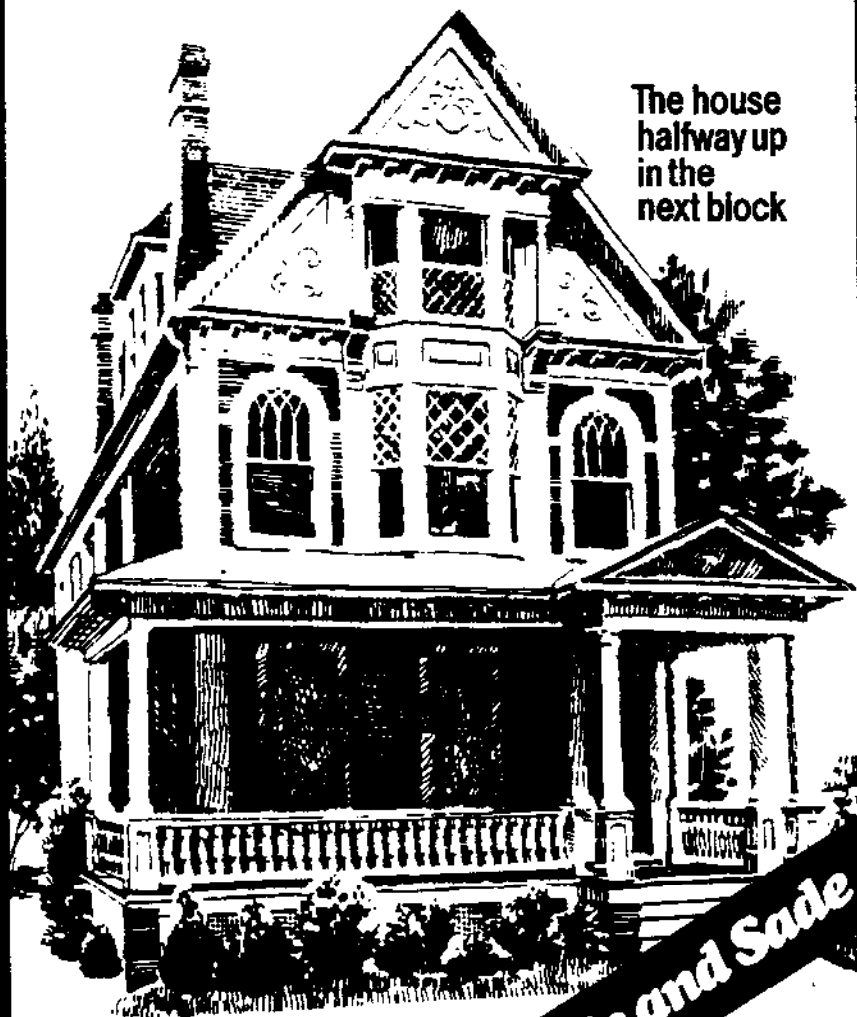


Old Time Radio **DIGEST**

No. 18 \$2.50 November-December 1986

The house
halfway up
in the
next block



Vic and Sade

Old Time Radio DIGEST

Old Time Radio Digest is printed and published by Royal Promotions and is edited by Bob Burchett and George Wagner.

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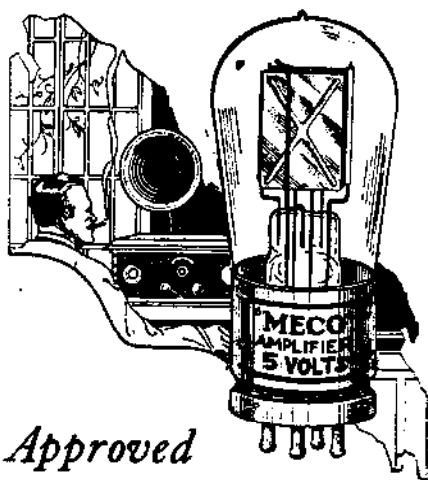
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To gain the approval of thousands of critical radiophans in every part of the country MECO Tubes have had to produce greater volume without impairing clear, distinct, receptive tones. That they have done this is attested by the increasing number of receiving sets that use no other tubes. Look for the name "MECO" on the base of the tubes you buy.

MECO Tubes operate in any receiving set, in 5-volt and 3-volt sizes with large or small bases. Your dealer has MECO Tubes at standard prices or can get them from recognized jobbers.

Metropolitan Electric Co.
Des Moines, Iowa

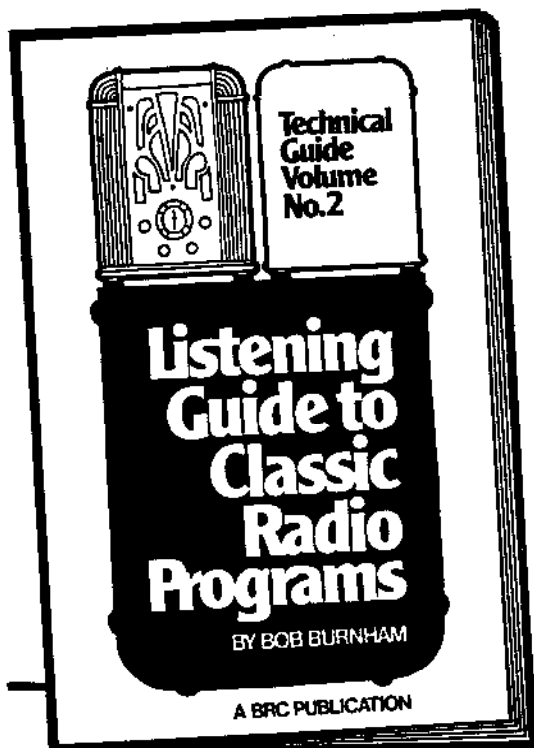
MECO RADIO TUBES

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



One year \$12.50
for 6 issues.

Royal Promotions
4114 Montgomery Rd
Cincinnati, Ohio 45212



AT LAST!

THE ULTIMATE
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
OLD TIME RADIO
IS AVAILABLE!

\$12.95

POST PAID

EFFECTIVE 1-1-87
SEND \$14.95

If you enjoyed the first volume of the Tech Guide, you'll love the all new book, A LISTENING GUIDE TO CLASSIC RADIO PROGRAMS (Technical Guide — Vol. 2), by Bob Burnham.

126 pages of information-packed discussion answering every imaginable question in depth on collecting old time radio shows!

Our previous publication — nearly a complete sellout, provided a working knowledge of "how to do it right" when trading or making recordings of shows for others. Our new book completely re-examines most of those areas, but with greater depth. It also covers areas only briefly touched on in the first book, and covers MANY BRAND NEW TOPICS, as well.

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But this is only a sample of what you'll find in the all new LISTENING GUIDE... You'll find detailed and comprehensive studies on...

- **THE CASSETTE VERSUS REEL DECISION** — The "best choice" for todays collector is different than what it was a few years ago. Find out why.
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- **ALL NEW SECTIONS ON: MAINTAINING TAPE DECKS, LOGS, RECORDING TAPE, CONNECTING TAPE RECORDERS, MONITORING OLD TIME RADIO**
- **AN EXCLUSIVE HISTORICAL SECTION**, which revisits the history of old time radio collecting, use of tape recorders for OTR, a comprehensive history of the tape recorder, and a log of significant events in its development.
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ALL THIS, PLUS A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF EQUIPMENT FOR COLLECTORS, STATISTICS, CLUBS, AN ALL-NEW DIRECTORY OF SOURCES FOR SPECIAL PRODUCTS & EQUIPMENT OF INTEREST TO THE COLLECTOR MAKE THIS NEW BOOK A MUST FOR EVERY OLD TIME RADIO COLLECTOR... WHETHER A BEGINNING COLLECTOR, OR A 20+ YEAR COLLECTING VETERAN.

FOR YOUR COPY SENT BY **FIRST CLASS MAIL**, THROUGH 12/31/86, SEND \$12.95 TO BRC PRODUCTIONS, P.O. Box 39522, Redford, MI. 48239-0522. Our special introductory price is good only through 1986. Effective 1/1/87, send \$14.95 for this new publication.

****Michigan Residents: Add 4% sales tax.****

'Vic and Sade' are still alive

By Marc Lebovitz

VIC: As soon as I jot down a few notes, I'll beat you nine consecutive games of rummy.

RUSH: O.K.

VIC: Are you in dismal spirits?

RUSH: I feel all right.

VIC: You sound melancholy as though the sedge were withered from the lake an' no birds sang.

RUSH: I'm kinda tired. Played third base over in Tatman's vacant lot ever since school let out.

VIC: Playing third base is fatiguing. I discovered that to be true when I played third base with the Yukon Rascals in 1910. I'll never forget how the pretty girls showered me with kisses when I won 11 games single handed an'...

Typical chit chat between father and son from radio's classic "Vic and Sade." Long before there was "The Prairie Home Companion," Lake Wobegon and Garrison Keillor, there was "Vic and Sade," the small house halfway up in the next block and Paul Rhymer.

The current American love affair with National Public Radio's "Prairie Home Companion" can find its roots, or at least a worthy predecessor, in "Vic and Sade," one of early radio's most popular series. Written by a former Bloomington man, Paul Rhymer, "V & S" ran for a dozen years on NBC, and five days a week introduced its national audience to people, places and life in Bloomington, Ill.

Rhymer, like Keillor, created a town and people and situations that gently, lovingly poked fun at being a member of the human race. He captured and held up for our examination the banality and sameness of our lives, but he not only made it funny, he extracted touching, illuminating truths.

Listening to "V & S," or reading the scripts or hearing the tapes today, was like eavesdropping on a family much like our own. Rhymer wrote every script, more than 3,500 of them, and today, 40 and 50 years old, they are fresh and funny and untarnished by time.

Victor and Sadie Gook and their young son Rush introduced themselves to the American listening public in June 1932 as a 15-minute morning program on NBC in Chicago. It was eventually sponsored by Proctor and Gamble, and it was eventually heard coast-to-coast until the final episode in 1944.

The appeal of "V & S" is hard to pin down. Only four characters were ever heard; dozens of others existed by reference only. During its reign, it had 7 million listeners and some of the great American writers and humorists, to whom Rhymer is often compared, were "V & S" fans: "All-time great pieces of American humor," Ogden Nash said. Edgar Lee Masters said Rhymer wrote "the best American humor of his day." Ray Bradbury said, "middle-class America was dramatized lovingly and forever by Paul Rhymer." Such talents as Steve Allen, Richard Schickel, Cliff Arquette, Henry Morgan and Studs Terkel were loyal fans of "radio's home folk."

Vic was a bookkeeper for the Consolidated Kitchenware Co. and a Skybrother and Exalted Big Dipper in the Drowsy Venus chapter of the Sacred Stars of the Milky Way. He could be vain, pompous and sarcastic, but his lively sense of humor and his love for Sade and Rush was uncompromised. He called Sade Dr. Sleetch, and Rush everything from Gertrude or Oscar to Thumb-tack or Coal-bucket.



Sade took care of the house, was president of the Thimble Club, didn't always have her facts straight, and spent many hours on the phone with, or in the company of, her best friend, Ruthie Stembottom. It was after an evening out with Fred and Ruthie Stembottom that Vic, who had argued with Fred on several subjects, decided he was "through with the fathead." But Sade explains:

"When you an' Fred have these flare-ups, naturally the wife sticks to the husband. I noticed it tonight. I was peeved when Fred was laughin' at your work and Ruthie was peeved when you were makin' fun of Fred's baseball players and his auto. We just couldn't help it. Like I said, Ruthie is my best friend, my very best friend. With Ruthie I can laugh an' cry an' fight an'

gossip an' talk nonsense an' just get along marvelous. With other ladies I sorta feel like here I am a woman that ain't a girl any longer an' got a 14-year-old boy to boot. Ruthie an' I get along a lot like kids get along. It's hard for married ladies with families to have close friends when you can just take your hair down. An' Ruthie's the only close friend like that I got. The only one I probably ever will have because I'm getting along to an age when women don't make close friends. If you tried, don't you think you an' Fred could hit it off better?"

Naturally Vic agreed and OK'd a game of cards for the next night. And with a few sentences, Rhymer had made a poignant statement about adult friendships. Rhymer permitted his characters to have disagree-

ments without rancor or meanness and to like each other and be affectionate without phoniness or sloppy sentiment.

Rush grew from child to young adult during the run of "V & S." He attended Edwards School before entering high school, had legions of friends from Smelly Clark to Blue-tooth Johnson to Rooser Davis, called his father "Gov" and particularly enjoyed "going down to the YMCA to watch the fat men play handball."

Art Van Harvey played Vic, Bernadine Flynn was Sade and Billie Idelson was Rush. In the late '30s, when Van Harvey was hospitalized for chronic heart trouble, Clarence Hartzell was added to the cast as Sade's absentminded, eccentric, somewhat deaf, amiable Uncle Fletcher who went through life hearing only half of what was said and only periodically brushing shoulders with reality. He reveled in the bizarre misfortunes of his friends and dwelled on unimportant odd happenings as if they were monuments:

"Remember Emmett Chowney, Sadie? Emmett Chowney left New Mexico for Dixon, Ill., because some relatives promised him a job. He got off the train, t homesick, began to cry, got back on the halfwit train and headed back to New Mexico. He was on the train to Dixon, happy as a horse, arrived in Dixon and got homesick, lingered five minutes, and only five minutes, in Dixon and returned to New Mexico. We learn a lesson from this."

Only Uncle Fletcher knew what that lesson was, but Vic, Sade and Rush were patient and kind with the old guy. What could you do with a man who tried to fix a loose leg on a chair while sitting on it and nailed his pants to the seat; who whittled a wooden address sign for the house, but got the numbers wrong; who observed that the doorbell wasn't loud enough and fixed it so well it wouldn't make a peep?

Rhymer took ordinary events and

showed them to us as the gold they are. The hilarity he provided came in names (Ike Kneesuffer, Robert and Slobbert Hink, H.K. Fleeber, Homer U. McDancy, Hank Gutstop and Y.Y. Flirsch), movie titles ("Yours Is a Magnificent Love, Petty Officer Griswold," "Gazing into Your Eyes Like This Is Heaven, Assistant Umpire Drake") and situations (Uncle Fletcher's landlady went out of town and left his meals, prepared ahead of time: Monday's on the library table, Tuesday's on the sideboard, Wednesday's on the buffet, etc.).

Paul Rhymer was a child when his family moved from Fulton to Bloomington. He grew up in the 700 block of West Monroe Street, probably where he visualized the Gooks' activities. He referred to this "small house halfway up in the next block," however, as being on Virginia Avenue, which was here his father built a house in the early 1920s.

At Bloomington High School, Rhymer exercised his writing skills as president of the Short Story Club, writing for the yearbook and winning the Merwin Cup for short story writing. At Illinois Wesleyan University, he was in literary clubs, worked for *The Pantagraph*, attended an occasional class, and mostly sat around with his fraternity brothers at the Sigma Chi house.

IWU grad and Rhymer friend Bernie Gummerman recalled that Rhymer would sit around, play a little piano, engage in clever bantering with his chums and poke fun at people, ridiculing them, but in such a humorous manner that no one would get angry. "He had a great command of the language and could make these very funny, outlandish remarks," Gummerman said.

During the years at IWU, Rhymer himself said, he "wore wide pants and sax 'hey, hey' conservatively on occasion."

In 1929, following the death of his

Vic and Sade invite you

Easy! All you do is to finish Sade's sentence given below

WON'T FOLKS
BE PLEASED TO WIN
THESE PRIZES!
\$5000! \$1000! \$500!
DID YOU SEE ALL THE
CASH PRIZES,
SADE?

YES, AND JUST
FOR FINISHING MY
SENTENCE —
I USE CRISCO AND ONLY CRISCO
FOR CAKES AND PIES AND FRIED
FOODS BECAUSE _____

(Finish this sentence in 25 words
or less. Embow it with metallic
wrappers from a can of Crisco,
any size!)

RUSH is the "young hawtful" who gives you a laugh every time you tune in on Crisco's "Vic and Sade." Enjoy the craziest folks of the air Mondays to Fridays.

VIC like Sade in Crisco's "Vic and Sade" ... and radio listeners get a chuckle every

time. Tune in Mondays to Fridays, NBC Red Network, 3:30 P.M., E.S.T.

SADE gives Vic a snappy comeback in Crisco's "Vic and Sade." These home-bake delight millions of friends in Crisco's Monday to Friday afternoon program.



CRISCO ★★

father, Rhymer left IWU to find a job. Former IWU student George Redman got him one in the continuity department at NBC in Chicago. For a few years, Rhymer wrote "Heystone Chronicle," a series about a small-town newspaper office (undoubtedly patterned after guess what small-town newspaper?) and a Saturday morning children's safety program. A pre "V & S" program called "Buck and Alice," which lasted only a few episodes, featured Bloomington actress Hilda Gummerman, wife of Bernie, as Alice. She later auditioned for the role of Sade.

After "V & S" was named top serial of 1937 by the Hearst Air Critic, Bloomington proclaimed a "Paul Rhymer Day" in town and Rhymer was honored with a dinner and program by the Young Men's Club. The actors and announcer Bob Brown came to town to present Rhymer's specially-written script, "Bloomington and Bloomingtonians." They also presented a surprise sketch written by Brown in Rhymer's honor. More than 800 attended the dinner.

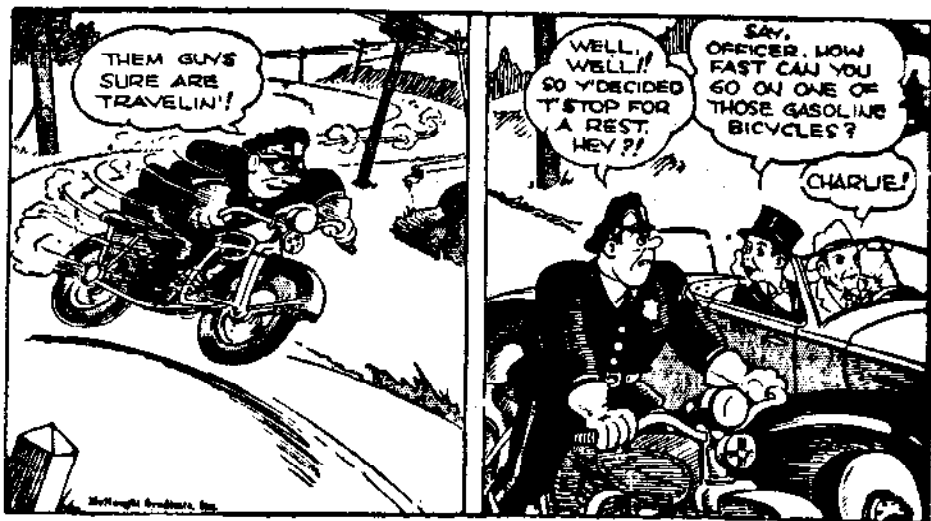
Rhymer was an avid reader, says his

widow, Mary Frances. He read and reread Dickens, read all of the American humorists and all those who described American family life: Twain, Ring Lardner, Tarkington, Ann Parrish, John O'Hara and James Gould Cozzens. Rhymer and his nibble-witted, bookish friends played games of their own invention and it was the greatest fun, she recalled, just to be around when they were improvising. His Bloomington associates and schoolmates remained the closest of these friends.

The experiences and relationships in the series, Mrs. Rhymer thinks, came from the writer's keen observational skills and, very likely, from his own experiences as a child and young man. Vic had to be patterned somewhat after his father, and Sade, somewhat after his mother. Rush was part Rhymer himself and partly fashioned after a boy he knew about in Bloomington.

Mrs. Rhymer, who lives in Chicago, supported her husband's work, but had her own career as curator of prints and photographs at the Chicago Historical Society, from which she retired in 1974 as

MORTIMER AND CHARLIE



the society's only curator emeritus.

She owns the rights to the "V & S" scripts, although they and other memorabilia are part of the Paul Rhymer Papers at the Mass Communications History Center at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison. She controls use of the material cautiously, but edited two books, "The Small House Halfway Up in the Next Block" in 1972 and "Vic and Sade: The Best Radio Plays of Paul Rhymer" four years later. They include 60 scripts, which is not enough for die-hard fans. But recently Mrs. Rhymer agreed another book could be added. In the meantime, another application of "V & S" scripts has appeared.

Stage One: Collaboration, a new theatre company, is presenting six "V & S" scripts in a simulated radio-studio format for a theater audience in the ballroom of the Commodore Hotel in St. Paul, Minn. Producer-director Paul Meshejian said the show runs through Dec. 15, and maybe longer, depending on the response.

"I picked up the 'Small House' book a

few years ago and instantly fell in love with it," he said. "I became more excited about producing some of the scripts after reading the second book. Like 'Prairie Home Companion' and the works of E.B. White, both of which are from this area, 'Vic and Sade' is truly humor, not comedy. These scripts were written for radio and to present them in any other format would be stealing from the power of Rhymer's writing."

Meshejian's show begins with the first "V & S" script, which introduces Rush, and finishes with the final episode from 1944, which ends with all the characters going out for the evening, but in different directions. "We'll see each other again," Vic says, and it is over. Period commercials for Crisco and Ivory Flakes and news items from St. Paul of the 1930s will be used in the production.

"V & S" fans were intense when the series was on air. Thousands of letters arrived each week and more than a few listeners believed the Gooks were real. The interplay and relationships rang so true, they had to be husband, wife and

(Copyr., 1939, by Edgar Bergen Interests, Inc. Internat. & Pan-Amor. Corp. Reserved.)

By EDGAR BERGEN



son. Flynn and Van Harvey, in fact, were a minority among radio couples of the day. Man — Goodman and Jane Ace, Fibber McGee and Molly, George Burns and Gracie Allen — actually were married.

Not only did listeners believe the Gooks were a family, but many also believed the show had dozens of characters. Rhymer's imagination and writing skill created an entire town of people never actually heard, but known by the audience as intimately as those who were heard. A four-person acting troupe was economical in the Depression, but thanks to Rhymer's clever writing "V & S" had a cast of hundreds.

After the 15-minute format ended, a half-hour show was introduced and many of the characters who had never been heard were given voices, and the beauty of the program was gone. With the new characters actually speaking, their behavior had to be brought into a more acceptable dimension, and without the requirement of listener imagination, "V & S" lost some of its appeal.

Rhymer wrote a TV series called "The Public Life of Cliff Norton" from 1950-52 and took book reviews periodically for a number of years thereafter. He died in 1964 following several years of recurring heart attacks.

Billy Idelson grew up to be a television comedy writer and director with credits on "Love American Style," "The Dick Van Dyke Show," "The Bob Newhart Show" and others. "There has never been anything like 'Vic and Sade' on radio or television," Idelson once said. "The more I see comedy scripts, the more I am in awe of what Paul did."

Luckily for current Vic and Sade-ophiles, the two books, the scripts in Madison and the audio tapes (some remain, although Proctor and Gamble had many destroyed after the series ended) preserve a body of work that, for the sake of radio history, literary history and humor history, will be enjoyed until we lose the ability to laugh.

FREE A MILLION RADIOS

A million pleased users will do us more good than ten million dollars spent in advertising. Hence, the most sensational offer since radio was invented, Set measure 5 1/2" in diameter and will take 3 sets of phones.

Aero Master Double Headset \$2.25 Extra.

To Quickly and Thoroughly Introduce a New Wonder Crystal Direct to Users and to Dealers

Aero-Master

CRYSTAL

At last—the perfect detector and rectifier for Crystal and Reflex sets. Superior to "Fixed" detectors for every Aero Master point, is a "hot spot" permitting adjustment at will. Puts new "bop" into your set. Guaranteed one year. Send one dollar, money or currency and set together with Aero Master Crystal will be sent postpaid.

\$1.00

DEALERS—Send for our special "Free" set proposition. It will attract "radio fans" to your store by the hundred. Sellin & Co., big radio dealers in Detroit, sold over 600 on one Saturday.

CONTINENTAL SALES AGCY., 507 Hodges Bldg., Detroit




July 21, 1923



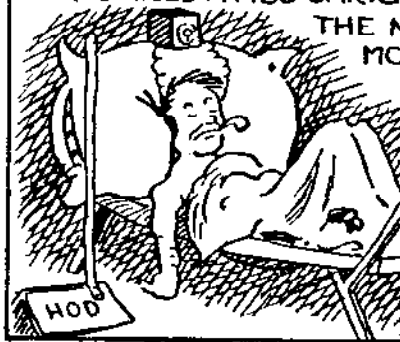
THE NAVY EXPERIMENTS
"LEARN WHILE YOU SLEEP"



WHAT THU
HECK DID
SHE WANT?

IT MIGHT
WORK ON
HUSBANDS
WHO FORGET

HE RETIRED A HOD CARRIER. BUT,
THE NEXT
MORNING



NEED ANY
PROFESSORS
TO DAY



Off The Wall

by Jim Snyder

Advertising is an accepted, though obnoxious, part of radio and television broadcasting. But, we have all come to accept it as a necessary part of the entertainment that we get in return. It was not always so. In this column I would like to discuss advertising's development in radio. There are several different versions of how this all came about, but I have waded through the various accounts and have come up with what I think is as accurate a picture as is possible.

By July of 1922 there were four hundred licensed stations and not a single one of them had even considered the idea of selling time for advertising. A number of reference books will tell you that the first radio advertising was of the indirect type, namely attaching a commercial name to a program (such as the A&P Gypsies), without including direct advertising. While this was a common early format it was preceded by about eight months by a more direct form of selling. On August 16, 1922 station WEAF in New York started up. This station was owned by American Telephone and Telegraph. This was to be the first in a proposed chain of "toll broadcasting" stations. AT&T called its planned stations "radiotelephone" stations which they said would work like phone booths, which you entered, paid a price, and talked to your party. Under their plan a person would enter a radio station (a "phone booth of the air"), pay a fee, and address the listening public. There was a great deal of public indignation to this proposal and AT&T had to defend its plan in print, in which it said in part "that it is against the public interest to broadcast pure advertising matter. This experiment is to see whether there are people who desire to buy the

right to talk to the public and at the same time tell the public something it would like to hear."

Anyway, the station went on the air on August 16, 1922 and two weeks later the first sponsor entered its "phone booth on the air." On August 28, the first commercial, I can document, went out. Late in the afternoon, the Queensboro Corporation bought ten minutes for \$50 to sell apartments in Jackson Heights, Long Island, in a roundabout way by talking about the benefits of suburban living. Within three weeks they had sales of \$127,000 that they attributed directly to that ten minute broadcast. The corporation then purchased four more ten-minute afternoon segments and paid an additional \$100 for an evening period

Even with this success, WEAF was finding it difficult to sell time. In September only two more companies, Tidewater Oil and the American Express Company, entered their "phone booth." Total revenues for the first two months of operation were \$550, but then the approach of Christmas brought in a number of department stores including Macy's and Gimbel's.

William H. Rankin, of the Rankin Advertising Agency, became interested and bought an evening period for \$100 to discuss advertising. He received a flock of letters and calls and so the "agencies" now entered the field. Even though a number of sponsors contracted directly with WEAF themselves, the station insisted on paying their advertising agencies the standard 15 percent commission, which then encouraged the agencies. At the end of six months, WEAF had sixteen sponsors.

This advertising wasn't quite of the type with which we are familiar today. It more or less took the form of an educational lecture that worked its way around to the sponsor in some indirect way. A greeting

card company, for example, offered a talk on the history of Christmas cards. My favorite was the presentation by Gillette on the fashions in beards since medieval times. This ended with the dramatic triumph of the safety razor (sort of like the Lone Ranger riding to the rescue). Station executives were very cautious. A toothpaste company wanted to give a talk on teeth and their care, but there was a long debate on whether anything as personal as teeth should even be mentioned on the air. The toothpaste company finally won out. There were strict rules, however: no prices could be mentioned, store locations could not be given, and samples could not be offered.

Indirect selling by sponsor identification started on April 25, 1923 with the advent of the Browning King Orchestra, sponsored by the Browning King clothing firm. There was no sales message and it was never even mentioned that Browning King sold clothing. This new format quickly became the policy of WEAF and we then got the Ipana Troubedours, Cliquot Club Eskimos, and the A&P Gypsies, among others.

Other stations wanted to get in on sponsored advertising but AT&T felt that it had the "exclusive rights" to what they considered to be simply one phase of the telephone business. The government started an investigation and in time AT&T removed itself from the broadcasting industry, and we had the formation of NBC. Many felt that government action was required for advertising to become what we know it to be, and while many reference books tell us that the Radio Act of 1927 was responsible for the commercial broadcasting system, the act itself says nothing at all about the sale of time. In fact, there is only one sentence in the whole document that might have any reference at all, and that only stated that a person or company buying time or

furnishing a program had to be identified. The first code of the National Association of Broadcasters, adopted in 1928, said "Commercial announcements should not be broadcast between seven and eleven p.m."

The fledgling CBS network broke the ice towards what we would now recognize as commercials in 1929, when it was desperate for sponsors in order to stay in business. This led them to the first mention of price, in ads for Cremo cigars. The public was told that they cost five cents and were not made with "spit." With the Cremo military band playing in the background, the announcer yelled, "There is no spit in Cremo!" Not only was the price mentioned, but in the very same ad we dropped to the poor taste shown in commercials today. The floodgates were now opened and NBC issued an announcement, that "after long consideration, the company has decided to alter its policy with reference to the mention of price in commercial announcements." Commercials, as we now know them, were on the air.

RADIO VISE



No.
1008

\$2.00

Weight
4 Lbs.

2 in.
Jaw

The Handiest Tool for Building Your Own Set
From Your Dealer or Send \$2.00

\$2.00 (\$2.25 west of Mississippi)
and We Will Send One Postpaid

Bonney Forge & Tool Works
Gilgman & Meadow Sts.
Allentown, Pa.

Letters

Dear Mr. Burnham,

How do I feel about dealers?? "I love dealers" — I feel the same applies to dealers as the rest of the people in this world. "99% of them are great — 1% — nerds." Those are pretty good statistics, eh?

I saw my first advertisement for OTR in *Grit* and sent in for their catalog. That was 10 years ago, and I've been at it ever since. In all of that time, I only ran into ONE company that was over-priced and sent me inferior cassettes. You can't say the same for practically any other lines of business in this country today. After I found out about OLD TIME RADIO DIGEST, I really was in heaven! (That was only last year). I thought at first I was in some small minority that was interested in great, clean, truly PURE entertainment, without all the sleazy filth, bad writing, obscenities, etc. that they pass off as so-called entertainment today. I'd reached the point where I couldn't take it any more. I stopped going to the movies somewhere in the late 1960's, and by the late 1970's, I was ready to gag on what they were throwing at us on TV. I was raised on the great radio shows, so at least I knew the difference between real entertainment and garbage — shame — the younger generation will never know the difference. Their brains have already been bent out of shape by the steady diet of garbage they are fed on TV, and movies. . .

I only have a regular small cassette player, but I have all the joy from it and my cassettes as someone with all the fancy equipment in the world. About those "stuck-ups" (my word for it) that would ruin the enjoyment of collecting for all of us — I say a curse on them — may they be forced to spend all of eternity 24 hours a

day watching Sylvester Stallone movies. I would never join any of THEIR stupid clubs or their stupid ideas. You said you wouldn't name names in your article (which I loved and learned a lot from). I wish you would though, so people like me who are unaware of all this skullduggery can be protected from having anything to do with such "nerds." I'd better end this letter. I enjoyed writing it because I got a lot off my chest. You asked for it! No fooling though, I wish you'd write more articles to educate people like me who have become so isolated that we don't know what's going on in the world. Thank you for taking the time to read my opinions.

Mrs. Louise Kula
Lithia, Florida

P.S.: I can't wait for your next issue of OTR Digest. Do you have a club yourself or do you belong to one?

One other thing. Some shows are listed by name of show, then others will just end up with 2 or 3 copies of the same show, which drives me crazy. Where or how (if possible) could I get a listing of the shows which are my favorites like *Gunsmoke* and *Jack Benny*? I really send for lots of those, but I've gotten disgusted with getting repeats. You know what I mean. Thank you for any help you can give me . . . My collection is in "utter chaos" — It has run away from me . . . help! Thank you again.

Dear Mrs. Kula,

Many thanks for your interesting letter and your vote for dealers. You are not alone in your opinion, and as a dealer myself, I'm-touched that there's so many collectors who support us, not just with your many generous orders, and friendly letters, but when a problem comes up, it's

reassuring that most collectors seem to be on "our" side.

ON A MORE CHEERFUL TOPIC, you may be elated to learn that the number of "young" collectors in the OTR hobby is on the rise (those of 25 years of age and lower). I don't have any exact statistics as of yet, but based on some of the Collector's Directory applications (for my new publication) I've been receiving, you'd be surprised at how many *high school students* are getting involved in old time radio. You are definitely not alone in OTR! I would estimate that there are upwards of 3,000 old time radio fans in this country, plus our Canadian friends. There's also a club of old time radio collectors in England numbering over 100 (The source for such great BBC programs as Earthsearch and Pay Any Price and No Place to Hide).

Many of us involved with writing in OLD TIME RADIO DIGEST are participants in the annual Friends of Old Time Radio convention, which is sort of a "club" in itself. To find out more, keep watching the pages of OTR Digest, or subscribe to Jay Hickerson's newsletter, HELLO AGAIN (Box C, Orange, CT 06477).

There are many other *good* clubs in the hobby — only 2 or 3 have anti-dealer policies. Some are of interest primarily to local members, while others are interested in providing a service and a quality publication to collectors throughout the country. Unfortunately, some of these clubs lack membership — one in fact, actually DIED after only a couple short years of existence.

The Vintage Broadcast Society, which started in 1983, and *ceased* during the past year was based in the metro-New York city area — one of the largest concentrations of collectors in the country is in that area. So obviously, they need support.

Two clubs come to mind, which I am quick to recommend. They are THE OLD TIME RADIO CLUB (Buffalo, NY based), and NARA (North American Radio Archives). Both groups have high quality publications, libraries of programs and materials which members may borrow for a small fee. Their addresses can be found in the first volume of my Tech Guide to Collecting OTR.

Your final question is easily answered. You need a log, or a group of logs. Jay Hickerson has authored both Jack Benny logs and Gunsmoke logs. They can be ordered directly from Jay or my own company. A log, in general terms, is a list of every episode/broadcast made of a given series, with various additional bits of information given (guests on show, plot synopsis, episode title—if there is one, program and/or transcription number, cast, where it originated, etc. along with broadcast date). The purpose of course being to identify the shows you have. On some series, there were also *repeat* broadcasts, so even if it's the SAME story, your dates may still be accurate. The show may have been re-done with the same script, but different casts, directors, etc. This was the case with many Escape programs. A further update on logs is provided by Terry Salomonson in my upcoming publication.

Bob Burnham

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HUDSON-ROSS
123 W. Madison St. Chicago

Hi, I found *your* article and the other on dealers VERY interesting. I have a few comments. I'm a 66-year-old, who remembers some of the original broadcasts, and I enjoy hearing them and some of the others I don't recall. I learned about OTR dealers from magazine ads and have been collecting for about 4 or 5 years, and ordered from half a dozen or so dealers during that time. I don't belong to any of the clubs, but have a few complaints on dealers: 1.) Many have cassette prices too high. For shows which are not "custom," \$4 per hour is reasonable—over that is not. For "custom" cassettes, \$5 per hour is reasonable, over that is not. Plus \$1 for postage & handling is reasonable, over that is not. Some dealers use over-priced, name brand Japanese tape, which is contributing to the U.S.-Japan trade deficit, as well as being grossly overpriced. A buddy and I buy from Missionary Tape & Equipment of Garland, TX. at 50¢ for C-62's, with no minimum order...only a \$3 service charge for orders under \$15. There's nothing to keep these dealers from buying at those prices and lowering their price. These are not "el cheapo" quality either. We have not had a bad one. This is

even more reasonable than one of the advertisers in OTR Digest...

2.) Hardly any dealer offers custom cassettes. I know it takes a whale of a heap of \$\$\$ to buy one of those high speed machines that copy one or both sides. But if a dealer can't afford one of that kind, nothing to keep him from charging another dollar an hour for custom recording on conventional equipment unless he is lazy.

3.) Cassette rentals are almost non-existent. I know there is risk and low profit in rental—anyone can see that. However, you mention some dealers being big-hearted about buying rare shows. There's nothing to keep some from being just as big hearted by renting to us who have low income and enjoy OTR as a main hobby. I know of only one, Phil Kiernan of San Diego. He has a small selection which I've gone through thoroughly already. If you know of others, (not including clubs, which offer little other benefit to members), I'd appreciate knowing of them.

4.) Dealers who offer both reels and cassette only offer a handful of shows on cassette that are on their reels. Do they have NO consideration for us who can

THE ANTENNA BROTHERS



afford only cassette, or don't care to take all of the time to monkey with reels? I'm not naive enough to think that dealers are reaping huge profits, and know nothing about this organization, club or whatever you mention. However, I do feel that the performers who were in the shows have had their compensation and are **not** entitled to "royalties," like songwriters, etc.

One more small complaint: I have placed 3 or 4 moderate-sized orders with dealers who have only A VERY SMALL SELECTION of shows. When I send them a list of shows that are outstanding it is unusual that I have not seen in any big dealer catalogs and offer to trade, they reply, "Sorry, we don't do any trading now." Now, or any other time is what they mean.

If you have time and energy to make any comments, or think that any of my complaints are not entirely justified, I'll be pleased to see your comments . . .

Sincerely,

John Etter

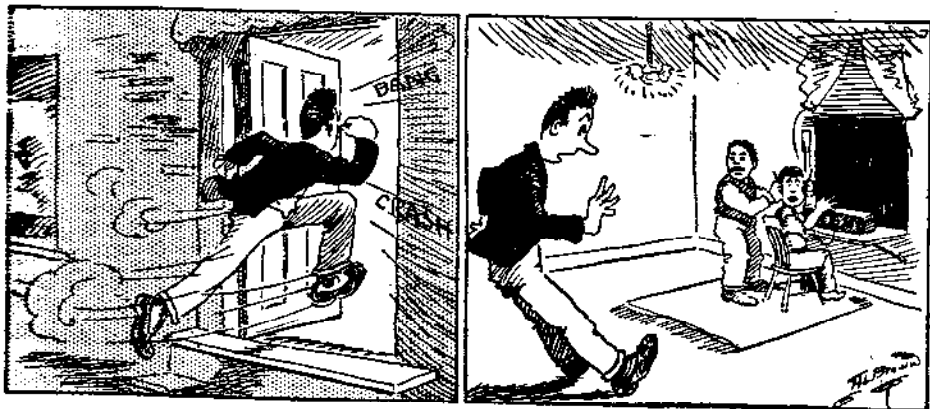
Hood River, Oregon

I wrote directly to the writer of the letter and responded to his comments in greater

detail than I will take the space to here. John has some legitimate complaints, and some definite ideas about what he feels should be the correct price for him to pay, and some reactions to what he's experienced that he doesn't like about dealers.

Dealers come in many different shapes and sizes. They operate their business in many different ways. Some operate "under the table" — Uncle Sam doesn't know about them, and that's OK, because they don't take in enough money for the I.R.S. to be concerned, anyway. The majority of the middle to large dealers do not operate in this manner. A percentage of their income goes to their state and Federal government. They may only come out "ahead" a few hundred dollars at the end of the year, and part of the money you send to them for tapes is never really theirs, anyway. It also costs much more than \$1.00 in postage and materials to ship an order. The first pound sent special fourth class rate costs 94¢ alone. Shipping bags or cartons can add another 40¢ to \$1 to the cost of mailing the average order. A supply of packing tape must also be kept on hand. Perhaps the smaller dealers get around

Spir L. and Lew P.



some of these costs by re-using old shipping containers—but many of the larger dealers—because they have more customers—MUST BUY containers. Perhaps \$1 is more than adequate for the shipping of 2 or 3 cassettes, but past that, it doesn't cover the costs. The cost per tape, by the way, is a direct reflection of what the dealers' expenses are—which would include obtaining the program (as much as \$25 has been paid for ONE half hour show—in order to get the best sound, or release shows never before available). Also, the cost reflects what the dealers feels his time is worth. This is the reason the cassettes copied on high speed duplicators can be sold at a lower price. A single cassette can be copied in about 3 minutes (both sides) on many of these machines. Many dealers handle several orders at the same time, running reels on one set of equipment, cassettes on another, etc. In the time it takes to copy a custom cassette, he could have run off $\frac{2}{3}$ of a 6 hour reel. This is the reason for the higher price and the dealers who tend to discourage custom orders. Dealers are collectors. They are busy trading at the same time, and if their main trading mode is reel, they will tend to devote more time to that.

I would recommend clubs for rental cassettes. There are some clubs who tend to stress the importance of their local organizations and are of no interest to you if they are not in your area. There are other clubs, however, who put out excellent publications, and offer use of their extensive lending libraries on both cassette and reel. Many dealers donate to these groups (I'm one who does). You may get a list of clubs for a self addressed stamped envelope from Jay Hickerson, Box C, Orange, CT. 06477. Two clubs I would recommend highly for their fine libraries and publications are NARA (North American Radio Archives), and

The Old Time Radio Club, which is based in Buffalo, NY. NARA has an excellent cassette library of over 1,000 cassettes, which was started from scratch by a collector in Cleveland just a couple years ago. The Buffalo groups has a library that grows faster than most people can keep up with. Both clubs have first rate publications that **ALONE** make membership worthwhile! There are other clubs that have also made valuable contributions to OTR. The one I discussed in my dealer article is destroying the hobby.

Dealers of course, have the option of trading with you or not. If they trade reel, they will not want to trade cassette. For trading cassettes, I would recommend contacting some of the individuals who *specifically are looking for cassettes* (as listed in OTR Digest's classifieds or in my upcoming publication's directory of collectors). Dealers who do not offer a large selection of cassettes are making a mistake. Cassettes are the fastest growing medium of collecting OTR. I recently have hears that one major dealer is switching fro reel to an all cassette mode. That, I'm sure, will be good news to you and the other collectors who use cassette primarily.

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Technical Talk and Radio Rumblings

by: Bob Burnham

Those of you who are using some of the older Sony reel equipment (such as the TC-399 and earlier versions) may occasionally find that because the deck is a ONE MOTOR machine, problems with tape skew may be more common — although this problem has been known to happen to the more recent Teac decks (NOT the 2300/3300 decks). It seems to be most common among the Sony decks. First, what is skew? Basically, this situation involves the tape which is straying off the normal path it's supposed to follow passing the heads, capstan and tape guides. Some times you can actually see it happen. When it's severe enough, it can actually completely slip off of the capstan and the tape can go into a "fast wind" mode. More commonly, the problem will occur so that it will slip just SLIGHTLY off the heads but not so much you'd notice it if you weren't paying strict attention. What happens when this happens? CROSSTALK.

There are some people who are afraid to go NEAR a 4 track machine because they had a bad experience with one at one time. The crosstalk/channel leakage problem is minimal and for all practical purposes, NON-EXISTANT when the machine is properly maintained. If it's a 3 motor deck, they will be easier to maintain and the skewing problem will become less of a problem. WHAT CAUSES SKEWING IN A TAPE DECK? Skewing is usually caused by lack of tension on the supply reel. This can also happen with cassettes, although there may be other reasons which can cause this in a cassette. But with a reel, in most

cases, it's insufficient back tension. The back tension of the supply reel is what holds the tape snug in the tape guides and if there's no pressure pads, the back tension holds it against the heads as well. In 1 motor decks, this back tension is provided by a spring and lever mechanism. As the deck gets used more and more, the spring starts to wear out, and less and less tension is gradually applied, until it's not enough, and the tape slips out of place. Also, some of the metal parts can become bent. This is one of the many reasons why 3 motor decks are more reliable and less prone to malfunction. In a 3 motor deck, there is no such spring mechanism for this purpose. A slight reverse current is applied to the motor. If you were running the deck with no reel on that side, the spindle would actually run backwards. This backward motion is not so strong as to affect the speed of the speed of the tape motion, but just enough to keep the recording tape in the proper grooves. The motor is controlled by electronic circuitry to regulate this. There is a trimmer somewhere in your 3 motor deck which will affect this very circuit and control the back tension. Electronic parts do age with time, and this control will need adjustments every few years, however, this is a far more reliable scheme than the mechanical one in the single motor decks. What should you do with the deck if it skews? Have it fixed by your friendly technician. In the case of a 1 motor deck, it may require parts replacement, and the new part will last no longer than the old. With a 3 motor deck, a few simple adjustments may be all that are necessary with a tiny screwdriver. These adjustments should not be done by yourself, unless you know what you're doing and have a service manual. Some of those trimmers regulate other operations of the deck, which would include pitch (speed) which you DON'T want to tamper with.

AMPEX 641 — What to do about short tape?

You may find with certain batches of used Government surplus tape that the reels run out before your programs do. My best suggestion is to set them aside until you need a 1200' reel. Some collectors will splice on an actual extra 100 or so feet of tape, when the reel is short. If you or whomever you're sending the tape to doesn't mind a splice near the end, and you can make high quality splices with a splicing block, this idea is also a good one, although one concern might be how the adhesive in the splicing tape will age several years down the road. Of course, use ONLY splicing tape intended for recording tape, such as the products made by 3-M. NEVER EVER USE CELLOPHANE ("Scotch") TAPE TO SPLICE RECORDING TAPE!

And now what to do about long articles? End them. I am working on a survey for my new publication having to do with WHICH SHOWS ARE GOOD TO LISTEN TO . . . NOT in terms of sound quality, but of enjoyment. Some interesting insights will be revealed that I've learned from my work in a future Digest article. One thing revealed will be that the most popular shows during radio's heyday are NOT necessarily the best listening today. In fact, some of the more obscure shows are actually BETTER. If you'd like to know more, stay tuned for my next article. If you want the complete scoop, you'll have to wait for my new publication which will be out in time for the October '86 convention in Newark . . . Until then, keep those cards and letters coming.

Bob Burnham
P.O. Box 39522
Redford, MI 48239

Radio Humor

● Phil Harris: Does Fred Allen always talk through his nose?

Jack Benny: Yes, he's the only comedian that tells them and smells them at the same time.

—*Jack Benny Show (NBC)*

● Gracie Allen: Brother Willie is going to be a bombardier so I'm going to send him a bucket of waste kitchen fat.

George Burns: What for?

Gracie Allen: Brother Willie will drop the grease on the streets of Berlin and hundreds of Germans will slip and fall—and boy, will that make those Heinies sore!

—*Radio Hall of Fame (Blue)*

● Joe Laurie: My girl's very handy and economical. She just made herself a dress from some old drapes she had. I took her out to a play last night and when the usher called out, "Curtain going up!"—she fainted!

—*Can You Top This? (NBC)*

● Phil Baker: They've got a new spelling for the German capital. They now spell it B-E-R-I-N. The Allied Air Force has bombed the 'L' out of it.

—*Take It Or Leave It (CBS)*

● Florence Halop: Wait 'til Archie hears you're married. He doesn't know it yet.

Dinah Shore: That's funny. It was in most of the papers.

Florence Halop: Was it printed in the racing results?

—*Duffy's (Blue)*

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Private Eyes for Public Ears

by Jim Maclise

The world of private eyes might seem at first glance to be strictly a man's world. But several women successfully gained admission to the club. One of the best, Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, seems never to have made it to radio (correct me, if I'm wrong). And two other sterling representatives of the fair sex, Nora Charles and Pamela North, solved crimes within a marital partnership, and thus cannot be counted as independent female sleuths. (Although Pam North comes awfully close and is, in fact, my favorite lady detective, amateur or otherwise.) But in the realm of radio detection, independent female crime solvers seem limited to Jane Sherlock of *Meet Miss Sherlock* and Candy Matson, YU-2-8209. (The *Miss Pinkerton* show with Gloria Blondell seems to have been a non-series audition.)

For collectors with no feeling for the forties, *Meet Miss Sherlock* will have little interest. But as a typical program of the "cute" detective variety, the show is worth acquiring in its currently circulating two episodes. The July 1946 story "The Case of the Dead Man's Chest" strikes me as superior to "Wilmer and the Widow," but why not have both? Each opens with Jane Sherlock's lawyer boyfriend Peter Blossom proposing immediate marriage and Jane refusing with "not tonight, Peter, I have to solve the case of . . ." Then the announcer describes our heroine as "smart a little gal as ever stumbled across a real live clue" accompanied by bouncy organ music. Forties cute; that's the style.

In the earlier of the two episodes, Jane purchases a redwood chest at an auction where she represents her antique dealer employer. Once she gets it back to the shop, she receives several offers via

telephone and in person for monetary amounts far in excess of the chest's value. These offers lead Jane and her beau Peter to pry open the chest and discover a false bottom containing a skeleton. Soon they are involved in a neat little murder mystery which fans of the genre should enjoy. But bear in mind that Miss Sherlock is strictly an amateur and not quite in the same league with our second female detective, who is indeed a genuine professional.

Candy Matson had a fine show even before she changed phone numbers. In the 1949 audition episode "The Fortune Teller" for San Francisco NBC, her phone number was Yukon 3-8309, and her photographer pal, the boozier Rembrandt Watson, was suspiciously similar to Jocko Madigan on *Pat Novak for Hire*, probably because Tudor Owen acted both roles. (Which may explain why the actual *Candy Matson* series featured Jack Thomas as Watson, played nearly as well.) But the audition story, involving the exposure of a phony fortune teller amid the San Francisco fog, was good enough to make it easy to understand why NBC decided to include the series in its 1949 West Coast line-up.

Once Candy got her number straight, the standard opening began with a ringing telephone. "Hello, Yukon 2-8209. Yes, this is Candy Matson." Then the organ spun out "Candy, I call my sugar Candy . . ." And an announcer asked: "Do you have a little unsolved murder in your home? Got some blackmail you want to unload? Are you the victim of a vulgar extortionist? I know a girl you should meet. She may not be the greatest private eye in the world. So what if she costs you three or four hundred dollars? She sure is sweet!"

Natalie Masters (whose husband

Monte Masters directed the show) played Cindy with a crisp, no-nonsense enunciation which uniquely defined the character. As "The Cable Car Case" opens, Candy is warned via telephone to lay off. Candy replies to the anonymous caller: "I'm afraid I can't. You see, I was sitting beside him when I found that his transfer had been punched, sort of permanently." But before getting on with the investigation, Candy informs us that "I used to be a model. I've been told that I have the proper displacement for such a career. But I found there wasn't enough money in it. A girl has to maintain a nice apartment on Telegraph Hill, keep enough clothes to highlight the displacement I mentioned, and also eat, doesn't she? Sure . . . So I turned private eye. You meet a better class of people . . . mostly named Rigor or Mortis. Now take this cable car deal. It's positively fantastic. But, after all, this is radio, isn't it?" Then Candy spins a murder yarn good enough to keep her listeners tuned to KNBC for the next twenty-five minutes or so. Soon she's in contact with her friend Rembrandt Watson the local photographer who spends "most of his life in the dark room dabbling with bottles" and drinks most of his formula. Rembrandt plays Watson to Candy's Sherlock and assists in the investigation which leads to a local Victorian mansion where the cable car-shooting victim's brother resides with his wife. Soon Candy's thigh-deep in a steamship company scandal, a second murder, and confronted by a nasty sharpshooter. Before this case is neatly tied with a colorful ribbon, Candy requires a timely rescue by her police lieutenant boyfriend Ray Mallard amid the bay city's atmosphere of cable cars and fog horns.

Candy Matson is an enjoyable counterpart to *Pat Novak for Hire* (see last issue), and it's too bad these San Francisco

crime solvers never met. They could have fished each other out of the bay or a bar, and maybe made beautifully crisp, sardonic music together. As it was, by May 21, 1951, it was too late for that because Candy announced her retirement due to her forthcoming marriage to her police lieutenant in "Candy's Last Case." Not even Sam Spade could locate the pair after that, and (given their clever dialogue) they presumably lived snappily ever after.

Next time: The New Adventures of Michael Shayne starring Jeff Chandler.

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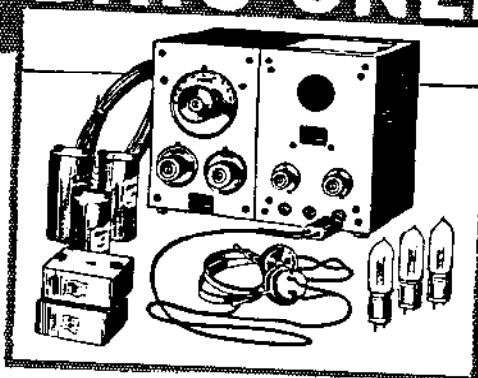
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Raymond Stanich, 173 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201
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Co-authored book: "SOUND OF DETECTION-ELLERY QUEEN ON RADIO." Do research on old time radio. Issue logs.

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 Mystery. Interested in books about OTR or OTR performers.

Radio books, parts wanted prior 1950 from radio repair shops. Send price list. Richards, Box 1542-D, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201.

Old-time Matinee Serials & Westerns on VHS Videocassette! Tom Mix, Buck Jones, Zorro, etc. Free list! Send S.A.S.E. - Serials, P.O. Box 173 R Boyertown, PA 19512.

WANTED: Extended runs of juvenile adventure serials on cassette. Trade or buy. Ken Weigel, 7011 Lennox Ave. #126, Van Nuys, CA 91405.

WANTED: To hear from anyone with Baby Snooks programs. Buy, sell or trade. Will buy or exchange catalogs. Lynn Wagar, Box 202 B.C.A., St. Cloud, MN 56301.

HAVE MOST BIG BANDS in chronological order in exchange for Boswell Sisters, Annette Hanshaw, Ruth Etting, Lee Whitley from 78 records or broadcasts. Have most of their LP's. Walter M. Keepers, Jr., 6341 Glenloch Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19135. 1-77.

Old-Time matinee serials on videocassette! Tom Mix, Buck Jones, Zorro, etc. Free list, send S.A.S.E: Serials, P.O. Box 173, Boyertown, PA 19512.

OLDTIME RADIO BROADCASTS on superior-quality tapes. Free catalogue! Monthly special: Eight "Gunsmoke" programs featuring Marshall Matt Dillon, Chester, Doc, and Kitty. Only \$7.95. Specify cassettes, eight-tracks or open-reel. Carl K. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

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WANTED: Classical music broadcasts, ET's, Acetates, tapes, all speeds, sizes, formats, for cash. Joe Salerno, 9407 Westheimer #311A, Houston, Texas 77063.

WANTED: Classical music broadcasts ET's, Acetates, tapes, all speeds, sizes, formats, for cash. Joe Salerno, Houston, Texas 77063.

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)

TUNE IN YESTERDAY. Old-time radio on cassette. Free catalogs; thousands to choose from. **Great gifts.** Call (904) 377-7480, or write BWP Radio, Inc., 1105 N. Main St., Gainesville, FL 32601.

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Over 6,000 OTR shows—Many very rare on reels or cassettes...as low as \$1.25 per hour! Fastest service anywhere, best quality anywhere. Catalog \$2.00, Ed Cole, Box 3509, Lakeland, Florida 33802.

Trade Fibber McGee and Molly Cassetts VG/EX only. Offer 110 shows. Exchange list. Bill Oliver, 516 Third St. North East, Massillon, Ohio 44646.

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Old radio programs, cassette reel, 88 page catalog free. Okay, Box 441-RP, Whitestone, N.Y. 11357 (33)

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.

WANTED: RADIO MAGAZINES before 1935, such as Radio News, Popular Radio, Radio Retailing, Short Wave Craft, etc. Gary B. Schneider, 9511 Sunrise Blvd., #J-23, North Royalton, Ohio 44133.

WANTED: Kid Shows, Serials, Big Band Remotes, Transcription Recordings on Reel to Reel only please. Write to Wally Stall, 8408 N.W. 101 Oklahoma City, OK 73132.

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This series lasted 47 broadcasts and starred Jeff Chandler for the first 23 programs and Reed Hadley for the balance. Some consider this to be the first of the adult westerns. I have made them available on 24 cassettes for \$53.00. (\$2.21 per cassette)

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This is a great serial for children. From the 1930's, only two episodes are missing, but nothing is lost. Of the original 130 episodes, 128 are available here from the original disc's in 32 cassettes for \$72.00. (\$2.25 per cassette)

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