

Old Time Radio **DIGEST**

No. 15

May-June 1986 \$2.50

OTR DEALERS:



FRIEND

or



FOE?

Old Time Radio DIGEST

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

Published Bi-Monthly, Six Times a year.
One Year subscription is \$12.50 per year.
Single copies are \$2.50 each.

Past issues are \$3.00 each, includes postage.

Business address:

Royal Promotions 4114 Montgomery Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45212 (513) 841-1267
Office hours are; 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.

Editorial Office:

RMS & Associates: 2350 Victory Pkwy.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45206 (513) 961-3100
Office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.

Advertising rates as of January 1, 1985

Full page ad \$15.00 size 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ "W x 7"D.
Half page ad \$10.00 size 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ "W x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "D.
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July/Aug. issue closes June 1

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All ads display and classified must be paid for in advance. Make checks payable to Royal Promotions, 4114 Montgomery Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45212.

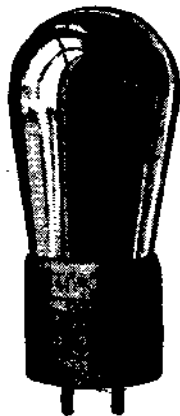
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The Role of Dealers in the Hobby

by Bob Burnham

For my entire old time radio career, I have been not just a collector, but also a dealer. Many of you who are aware of my activities in our hobby are already aware of this. Initially and to this day, my need to be a dealer is to support my collecting habit. To further illustrate this point, a little personal history of my collecting might be in order. I first started "selling" OTR for 50 cents a cassette, if the customer would supply the blank tape. This may seem like a giveaway price, but you must remember I was only 13 or 14 years old at the time! Today (this year) I turn 30 years old, so obviously, I've been around the hobby awhile. Anyway, back in my very young days, that 50 cents went toward—what else—a little fund I built up to order MORE programs from such dealers as Dave Golden—Radio Yesteryear; Bob Joseph—Sound Tapes of the Past; Don Maris—Remember Radio and Rex Bills of Golden Age Radio to name a few. These were a few of the dealers that I originally did business with in the early to mid 1970's. My need to collect more gradually grew to the point of where I needed a more economical and space saving format, so I made the switch to reel, and was eventually able to trade with some of the dealers who I originally bought from. However, to buy blank tape, I still needed some sort of money flowing in. A high school student doesn't have all that much—so I continued to sell old time radio, and ended up publishing catalogs. Sometime in my Junior year of high school, I started a newsletter similar to Jay Hickerson's, although I used it somewhat more like a sales tool to help

sell programs. Some of you may remember NEWS & REVIEWS (or as some jokingly referred to it as, in later years, "Nudes in Review.") It was strictly about the hobby of OTR, though...no models posed in it unclothed. The newsletter slowly evolved from a sales tool into a publication to help hobbyists, similar to Jay's. I never really made a profit. I just enjoyed writing it and helping others who were even newer to OTR than I was at that time. I had a strong interest in the technical side, and a lot of people were able to benefit from what I knew about this aspect of collecting and recording OTR. Sometime around then, I received a call from Bob Burchett, who was truly amazed at my young age back then. Later on when Bob offered to help with the art of News & Reviews, I told him about a new publication Joe Webb and I were planning called COLLECTOR'S CORNER. The rest of that story is well known history.

But anyway, through all those years of writing articles, newsletters, the thousands of letters written to collectors who had questions about certain technical problems related to OTR, I never asked for nor received payment for my services. True, I did SELL old time radio, but my prices were usually lower than the average, and I rarely ever did anything with what few profits there were other than gather more radio programs. In later years, my business of course, grew, but at the same time, so did my collection of BOTH radio programs, and equipment needed to keep up with the orders, plus trades. More money invested meant less money for "profit,"

and that continued to be the case. In an effort to keep the business equal to the amount that was going out, I invested in a lot of advertising space in national magazines. The 3 big "sound" magazines were Stereo Review, High Fidelity, and Audio. These magazines had several dealers listed—one even had a special category for "radio programs", and any newsstand in the world that carried these, and individual could pick up a copy, and read an ad about the old time radio hobby—ads were paid for by us dealers. At various times, some of us dealers ventured into other publications—mostly "mens magazine:"—including Popular Science, Popular Mechanics, Mechanix Illustrated, etc., and other general magazines like "Saturday Evening Post" and "Psychology Today." I even tried an ad in "Outdoor Life" to see if the outdoorsey type person could be encouraged to write to us...they couldn't.

The point of all this being that these ads in the magazines are *very expensive* for us dealers. A micro-sized ad in one issue can run \$100 plus per insertion, and there may only be a few (or one, or none) responses. But it is these types of ads that have developed our hobby into what it has become today. It is these ads that have mostly brought the majority of the collecting population into the "mainstream" of OTR. You might remember the shows as a child — maybe you heard a rebroadcast — but where did you first learn about Jay Hickerson's publication and the annual Friends of Old Time Radio conventions? You probably read about it in a DEALER'S catalog, then wrote to Jay for information. If you read Old Time Radio Digest with any regularity, you know all the great things that happen at these conventions to honor those who worked on the shows of the past, and the reuniting of casts, show recreations, etc.



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Reel To Reel Tape \$ 3.50 Per Hour — Minimum Order 3 Hours
Cassette Tape \$ 5.00 Per Hour — Minimum Order 2 Hours
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Stuart Jay Weiss • 33 Von Braun Ave. • Staten Island, N.Y. 10312

But it all was built on what a small group of us who call ourselves dealers have done. Just because we're dealers, doesn't mean we're any less collectors. Many of us make many donations of tapes and materials to worthwhile organizations. Many of us rebroadcast OTR on our own time. Many of us give lectures at conventions, do research so others may benefit, invest thousands of dollars toward exploring sources (or obtaining) MORE radio programs. We do these extra things for no profit. A labor of love. Producing an old time radio magazine is another example. I originally did that on my own, then teamed up with Joe Webb, Bob Burchett and later Herb Branderburg to produce Collector's Corner. None of us ever got rich — some of us actually SPENT money on it, yet it was a great experience I think all of us took some pride in...not only for the product itself, but also the sense that we were helping other collectors through relating experiences of our own. Today, I'm still writing articles. Bob Burchett, George and Herb are producing one of the hobby's best publications. Like myself, Bob is also a dealer offering cassettes. Bob must spend an incredible amount of time on the Digest. He also did the program for the convention. But I don't think anyone in our hobby would have anything bad to say about Bob Burchett.

Recently, an organization on the West Coast who shall go nameless, has launched an attack on collectors in this hobby known as "dealers." Certain individuals in this group claim that we dealers are ripping off the actors, writers, producers of radio during the golden age by not compensating them for sale of "their" shows. What this organization fails to recognize (or admit) is that there are no real profits being made by dealers. A recent column

by Jim Snyder in another hobby publication, The Illustrated Press, further explores this topic. What has happened is that this organization has apparently "brainwashed" (my term) many of their old radio actor "friends into *thinking* that Sam Jones of Radio Nostalgia of the Past (a fictitious company) is making a FORTUNE off their work. What this organization seems to be trying to do is run to the "aid" of the old radio personality and say "We'll stop these people for you, or at least get you a chunk of their money." They do this, however, without any apparent legal "rights" to the show (that I've seen), and merely get the radio actor to agree to "support any of their efforts to cease unauthorized sales" of their show. This organization has a so-called "Archives" lending library. Members may borrow from it, but must sign an agreement that they will not trade the materials to anyone. Of course, an organization as large as this one (1000 members) cannot hope to enforce such an agreement with any degree of accuracy. What happens is their members either for spite, or knowing any better, actually go and violate the "agreement" — and why not? It's their dollars that helped put the Archives library there in the first place. It takes very little time for the shows in question to appear in one of those terrible DEALERS' catalogs. The dealer entered into No agreement nor signed anything that said he would not trade something. He traded fair and square for the material which as far as he's concerned, can do anything he wishes with it. Right? Wrong...at least according to the way this West Coast organization likes to think. They seem to think that because they promised *their* sources the shows would not get into the hands of the "pirate" dealers, that they can actually control the

material once it gets into the hands of their general membership. The "general membership" seems fully willing to freely trade this material to those terrible DEALERS, so that must imply that they don't agree with the policies of this organization.

This organization recently published my name and address in a negative light in their publication. If they would have published MY side and THEIR side, I wouldn't have minded. However, they failed to even recognize anything I said in my favor. It's yellow journalism at its finest, folks. They even denied I responded to one of their threatening letters that I couldn't sell certain shows because so and so says so. My most recent letter to them requested Copyright numbers and any other applicable data — and if they could produce same, I said I would take the shows out of my catalog. They have not produced any such material.

The fact that this organization exists and with a policy that doesn't jive with mine doesn't bother me. What does bother me is having my name torn all apart, and making me look like a crook...and not even giving me a chance to tell my side to their members. I also received a piece of hate mail from one of their members claiming I was greedy and selfish. When I wrote back to that member and when he heard my side (which he otherwise would not have heard from this organization), he offered somewhat of an apology.

You may have noticed that I have not named them throughout this entire article. Unlike this group, I have a little more couth and class than they do and offer them much more consideration than they have given me.

I would like to hear comments from readers of Old Time Radio Digest on dealers. How do you feel about the

majority of us? Do you really think we're getting rich off the hobby? And for that matter, just where did you hear about OLD TIME RADIO? I mean after you heard the rebroadcasts, or remembered the shows when you were younger? Where did you year about this publication? Which clubs do you belong to? If you belong to a club that sounds like the one described above, how do you feel about their anti-dealer policy? If you are a dealer, would you support any legal action against the above group, if it became necessary?

NEXT TIME, I'll have a more cheerful subject. There's a new writer on the scene who specializes in technical stuff like me. Watch for Ed Cole's articles in the future. I'll still be around, but Ed's articles should compliment some of mine...By the way, you can write me (Bob Burnham), at P.O. Box 39522, Redford, MI. 48239. I'll run any pro or con dealer letters here in this column... Stay cool and I'll do the same until Summer at least, when things heat up (including my Sonys & Teacs).

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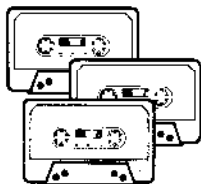
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C-10	.76	.70	.58	.69	.64	.53	.62	.57	.51	.47	.42	.38	.39	.37	.35
C-15	.78	.73	.61	.71	.66	.55	.64	.59	.53	.49	.44	.40	.41	.39	.37
C-20	.80	.75	.63	.73	.68	.57	.66	.61	.55	.51	.46	.42	.44	.41	.39
C-30	.86	.80	.67	.78	.73	.61	.70	.65	.59	.55	.50	.45	.46	.42	.40
C-40	1.00	.88	.76	.91	.80	.69	.73	.68	.63	.58	.53	.48	.47	.43	.41
C-45	1.05	.94	.78	.95	.85	.71	.75	.70	.65	.60	.55	.50	.48	.44	.42
C-50	1.10	.99	.88	1.00	.90	.80	.77	.72	.67	.62	.57	.52	.52	.47	.44
C-60	1.16	1.10	.92	1.05	1.00	.84	.80	.76	.70	.65	.61	.55	.55	.50	.47
C-70	1.32	1.21	1.10	1.20	1.10	1.00	.92	.87	.80	.77	.72	.65	.57	.53	.49
C-80	1.43	1.32	1.19	1.30	1.20	1.08	.97	.92	.85	.82	.77	.70	.59	.54	.51
C-90	1.60	1.49	1.27	1.45	1.35	1.15	1.05	.98	.90	.88	.83	.75	.60	.55	.53
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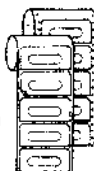
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OTR Dealers: On their behalf

by Jim Snyder

Over the past few years there has been an increasingly virulent "anti-dealer" campaign by certain elements of the hobby.

This is certainly uncalled for, is based on dishonesty, and perhaps actually threatening to destroy our hobby. That is a flat but true statement. Most of us have only found our way into the OTR fraternity through dealers. If it weren't for their existence, we would still be unaware that there is a hobby here; and so consequently, without them there would be no hobby. Dealers are currently receiving such a bad rap by some of these radical elements that I think it is time that someone spoke out in their behalf.

The main charge that is brought against them is that dealers are "making a fortune" off the efforts of others (old radio performers, technicians, writers, etc.). Not only is this untrue, but most of the people saying it know this is untrue. I have gone into this extensively with a large number of dealers and examined the books of several. There are **NO** "fortunes" being made. Most dealers are making nothing at all, a few are losing money, and a few are making as much as two or three percent profit. Some would tend to question these figures because obviously no one would ever stay in business if they were making so little, or if they were losing money. That point is precisely what makes OTR dealers a breed apart. For the most part dealers are not in this activity to make money (they have other jobs) but are in it because of their love of old time radio and their desire to share it. That "love" is exactly what causes them to lose money.

What they make they immediately plow back in so that they can obtain new shows, etc. I was recently present when three dealers together paid several thousand dollars to purchase a fairly short run of a certain show. Afterwards I told one of them that there was no way that he would ever get his money back from that purchase. I reminded him that as soon as he starts to sell those shows they will start moving through the trading circles, and so there will no longer be a market for sale. He said that of course he knew that, but that I was missing the whole point. He pointed out that if these dealers didn't pay that price for those shows they would be lost to collectors forever. They bought them so that we could all have them, even though the dealers would never get their money back out. Now that is the height of unselfishness. What "businessman" would ever buy something for resale knowing full well that he would lose his investment. The answer is "none," but these aren't businessmen; they are interested members of our hobby who are looking out for the rest of us.

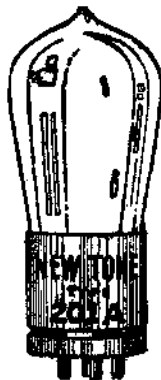
The dealers themselves have mentioned to me the names of three others that they thought were probably making a great deal of money off their sales (a pretty small number out of the sixty to seventy dealers currently operating). I would agree with them on two of those three. Those are individuals who I consider dishonest. But the critics of dealers don't single out the few "bad apples." They "condemn" the entire group. That is like condemning all dentists because you had a bad experience with one. Regarding that

third "money maker," I don't agree with that assessment and the dealers themselves immediately qualified their statements on that by pointing out that this particular dealer bought an awful lot of new material that he put into circulation, material that would not otherwise be available. The truth is that this particular dealer, that the others felt was making so much money, actually earns a little less than ten percent on his business. This is a big profit as far as OTR sales go, but I would like to point out that my newspaper boy earns a *great* deal more than that.

Why do these people attack dealers so constantly for "making fortunes on the backs of the performers" as one individual states it? These people know the truth. They know there are no fortune being made, no rip-offs of performers. If they know it, why do they keep heaping fuel on this fire? I have to view these individuals as greedy and dishonest in their own right. Some of them want to cultivate friendships with the performers, and how better to convince a performer of your friendship than to battle in their defense. Many of these performers don't know the truth of the OTR selling game. They do honestly believe that they are being ripped off. Now along comes a so-called friend who takes up the cause to prevent the performers from being hurt. Of course the performers are pleased. But, this is the dishonesty. These "friends" know the truth. Instead of playing on the fears, these "friends" should let them know the truth, the true state of affairs. These "friends" are the cruel ones; playing on the fears of the performers in order to win their friendship. But then, if the truth were known, they could no longer be "heros."

A few years ago one performer was quite outraged that people were making

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money off his work. He flatly stated that he was going to take OTR dealers to court in order to collect what was due him. He never followed through on that and so I asked him why. He told me that when he made the statement he didn't know the true facts of the issue, that he had been "misled". When he investigated, and found out just exactly what was involved, he no longer had any objections to the sale of his shows.

Two other performers have been widely quoted as being very vocal in their condemnation of the sellers of OTR shows. I have talked to one on this issue, and the other was recently interviewed on a Mid-western radio station on the same topic. They both made the same statement. They had no objection to the material being sold; quite the contrary they felt flattered that people still wanted to buy their performances. The one I talked to said that he had never taken an anti-dealer stand, and that those who said that he had were simply spreading falsehoods.

Some performers have actually given some of their own material to dealers to sell, with no return requested or expected. These performers know the truth, that there are no profits to divide up. The profits go right back into the hobby.

Another important point here is that dealers sell shows to us with no restrictions of any kind placed upon us. They may pay a great deal for a show, but after they have sold it to the first collector they have now lost their money, because that show is now able to pass through trading circles, with no restrictions at all. And, even if you never purchase shows, dealers will still be the original source of most of the shows you trade.

But this is not the only good that dealers do for our hobby and for the

public at large. These are "caring" people who spread the hobby in many ways. I have found every single one of these dealers involved in this effort in one or more of the following ways. Several dealers serve as officers and promoters of the various OTR clubs (in fact one dealer places flyers for one club in with all orders he sends out. This is sort of self defeating in that when they discover that club's tape rental library, his customer's purchases will certainly decrease if not stop all together). Several dealers broadcast OTR shows, and one makes shows available to stations throughout the world. Several have been involved with publishing newsletters and information sheets on the hobby, certainly a money loser. Large donations of shows have been made to both public libraries and club libraries. Some have been involved in college presentations, and in working with college archivists. Some have organized no cost lending libraries and tape clubs on a "no-pay" basis. Many logs have been published by dealers, usually (if not always) at a financial loss. One dealer has actually flown deserving people to the East coast convention out of his own pocket. Several have served as committee members of that same convention. There have been numerous documented donations to the blind, overseas missionaries, and the "Bedside Network" which is an organization that works with old radio shows in veterans hospitals. There are thousands of cases of aiding beginners and helping kids as far as the hobby is concerned. All of this in addition to the obvious item brought out earlier of subsidising "finds".

Although there are of course unsavory individuals to be found, this is not the selfish, uncaring group of people that they has been painted by certain elements in our hobby. They are

performing a service which is absolutely essential. They are not greedy fiends who are ripping off thousands of dollars from poor and defenseless performers. They are concerned and caring members of our hobby. If it were not for them there would be no hobby, and no one would remember those stars who gave us so much pleasure. But because of the service that these dealers are currently providing, we are able to remember the enjoyment that others gave us with the performances so many ago.

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Odds & Ends

A tentative new series called "Star and a Story" was auditioned and put on disc during December, 1945. The sub-title of the story was called "The O'Sullivan Fantasy" which in itself was to be developed as another series. Co-starring on this audition was Ronald Reagan, Joan Loring and Franklin Pangborn.

'Smilin' Ed McConnell and his Buster Brown Gang NBC Sat. 8:30 a.m. PT make the move to Hollywood, Dec. 1, 1945. It formerly originated in Chicago.

Staats Cotsworth in 1946 started a new radio series called "Lone Journey" for NBC sponsor Carnation Milk.

Alice Reinhart, Les Tremayne and Jackson Beck in 1945 formed a partnership and bought the rights to Katharine Brush's "Young Man of Manhattan" with a view toward serializing it on the Air. Edith Meiser will do the scripting.

Van Johnson, Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, Dinah Shore and the Dining Sisters will be featured on the 1st Command Performance produced in 1946.

In 1935 the 1st woman's voice was heard on the Amos n Andy Show. It was Eleanor Harriot portraying Amos' bride Ruby Taylor and she spoke just four words, "I do and I will".

Edward Carr

Private Eyes for Public Ears

by Jim Maclise

This month let's examine a quartet of Mutual detective shows which ran during the last two years of World War II: 1944 and 1945. Two of the four feature talented amateur sleuths, the other two being professionals. All four programs seem to be in short supply on the current OTR market, but are nevertheless well worth searching out and hearing.

Agatha Christie's Poirot starred Harold Huber as the Belgian detective, "complete with bowler hat and magnificent moustache" and irritating French accent. Hercule Poirot solves "The Case of the Careless Victim" while apartment hunting in New York City. When he assists an elderly guest at his hotel to open her room door, it proves to be blocked by a corpse. By employing "the little gray cells," Poirot quickly concludes that the body was brought down the fire escape from the room directly above. Thus apartment hunting gives way to the hunt for the murderer and the discovery of a second victim. But once the killer is caught, Poirot realizes that the villain's desirable Gramercy Park flat will now be vacated, so he announces happily: "To find an apartment in New York City is the essence of simplicity. One has only to solve two murders!" (And have lots of little gray cells.) This initial program of February 22, 1945, features an opening message from Agatha Christie herself. Though meant to be "live" via shortwave, an announcement follows a brief delay: "Due to atmospheric conditions we have been unable to bring you Miss Christie from London," and a recording is substituted. In her brief speech, Agatha assures us

that Poirot would be present were he not "heavily engaged on an investigation about which you will hear in due course." She thanks Poirot's readers for their "generous response" and hopes that the radio show will make "many new friends for him among a wider public." But alas the show was not a success (Poirot can grow tedious) and did not appear the following season. Aside from the opener, the Belgian detective visits San Francisco in "Death in the Golden Gate."

An equally famous detective, created like Poirot by an English author, is G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown. This Catholic priest and amateur sleuth was also limited to a single 1945 Mutual season (a summer replacement) with the title role portrayed by Karl Swenson. Only a single show seems available: "The Case of the Mystified Mind." This concerns a young woman who wishes to assist a fellow office worker's fiancée, Tony, accused of murdering his window washer partner by cutting a safety belt almost through, causing the victim to plunge many stories to his death. Tony is the prime suspect because of his secret engagement to the partner's daughter without his approval. Flambeau, the ex-criminal turned detective, has referred the case to his close friend, Father Brown (the two appear together in many of Chesterton's stories). The murder of the window washer is entangled with some missing industrial blueprints and an office safe which automatically unlocks shortly after nine each morning. Naturally Father Brown solves the case, but not without some brilliant deductions and a clever twist at the end. The show

features Will Geer and the young Mitzi Gaynor (yes, that dancing girl). What is needed are more Father Brown episodes from that summer of '45. One case merely whets the appetite!

If you can't stand Mr. Belvedere (as in "Mr. Belvedere Goes to College," the 1949 Clifton Webb film), then it's unlikely you'll willingly tolerate Leonidas Witherall, another summer replacement show during 1944 and 1945 on WOR, Mutual, New York. When a switchboard operator with a Brooklyn accent says, "Oh, ain't it a shame. Patty's such a sweet guy and that Forester's a high class stinker," then Witherall replies (in Belvedere fashion), "We must have you address our English literature classes at Meredith (Academy) sometime, Ruth. The tragedy of illiteracy might be the subject." Ruth enthuses, "Oh, gee, I'd be too happy!" Witherall spears her: "With you as exhibit A." He doesn't have that last name for nothing.

Leonidas teaches at the above named school for boys, while secretly writing the "Lieutenant Hazeltine to the Rescue" series for radio, when he isn't busy solving crimes in his rather pompous manner. He has a beard, the shape of which provokes numerous silly references to his resemblance to Shakespeare from anyone and everyone he meets. Each show also concludes with actor Walter Hampden, who plays Witherall, reciting a few choice lines from the Bard of Avon appropriate to the just-solved mystery. The early shows featured Agnes Moorehead as Witherall's housekeeper, Mrs. Mollett, and were performed before a live audience. By the second summer the audience was gone and so was Miss Moorehead, who was replaced by Ethel Ramey (who tends to screech). The opening show of June 4, 1944, finds Leonidas hosting a local ladies club tea, during which he

discovers a man's body in his coat closet. Soon a second body shows up at the public library, both having been shot through the back of the head. The solution involves an improbable confrontation between Nazi spies and a bust of Shakespeare. A more plausible mystery is unraveled in "The Corpse Meets a Deadline" from the second summer. This one concerns a hated

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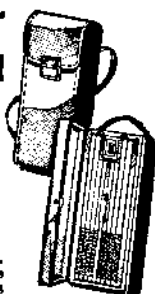
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newspaper publisher, a murder using hot melted lead (for those linotype machines, you know), and a description of Mrs. Mollett as "the only overage destroyer that never got to Britain." Worth a listen.

Results, Incorporated had its debut on Mutual on October 7, 1944, as a Saturday night mystery-comedy starring Lloyd Nolan and Claire Trevor. Nolan, a marvelous actor who died just last year and can currently be seen in Woody Allen's "Hannah and Her Sisters," plays ex-slide trombone player, ex-deck hand, detective Johnny Strange; the man

behind Results, Inc. In the opener he places two newspaper ads, one advertising his services ("your problem is our problem"), the other a want ad for a secretary. "Blonde, beautiful, between 22 and 28 years, unmarried, with the skin you love to touch and a heart you can't." Within a few radio minutes, Miss Trevor arrives as Teresa Travis, who quickly displays all the required qualities and then some. References? "Reporter on hometown paper, lingerie model, magician's helper, secretary to a show producer, and now secretary for Results, Incorporated." What about "that

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The Name of the Star is:

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skin you love to touch and a heart you can't?" inquires Johnny. "Try both, brother, just try," she replies. Who could resist? Besides, while citing her qualifications and prior experience, she's already hung her coat in the office closet, planned to put up orange drapes, and snagged the agency's first case by answering the telephone. A Mrs. Farnsworth, elderly writer of detective novels, wishes Results, Inc. to locate a genuine haunted house. As she offers a \$200. fee, Johnny and Terry are soon spending the night in a reputedly haunted mansion somewhere deep in the country, where they discover a secret passage triggered by a candlestick on the fireplace mantle. When it swings open, Teresa snaps a photo for Mrs. Farnsworth, then screams: "I saw it! I saw two hands reach for you, right out of the wall! And then the most horrible face!" Miss Trevor makes both this sort of thing and the comedy quips not only totally convincing, but downright sexy. She and Nolan make wonderful sparring partners, and even before the first adventure is wrapped and delivered, the listener already hungers for more.

The bad news is that only one show besides "The Haunted House" seems to be available: "Mummies Walk" broadcast December 30, 1944. Here Johnny plans a safe and sane New Year's Eve at some secluded little restaurant with gypsy violin music. But Terry talks him into accepting the case of an old museum guard who claims the mummies are putting him to sleep every night, then walking around, particularly a mummy named Queen Sheshak. "Weren't you the one who wanted a quiet homey New Year's Eve?" asks Terry (who originally had something livelier in mind). "And what could be quieter than an evening with a respectable mummy, three thousand

years old?" What follows is the kind of evening we could all use more of, but where are this single season's remaining shows? (Anyone know? Write me c/o OTR Digest.)

In closing it should be mentioned that in the 1940's Mutual was to the radio detective show what Universal-International was to the film noir. Namely, indispensable.

(Next time: *Murder and Mr. Malone* and *Barry Craig: Confidential Investigator*.)

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CBS RADIO
**myMystery
theater**
by Ed Cole

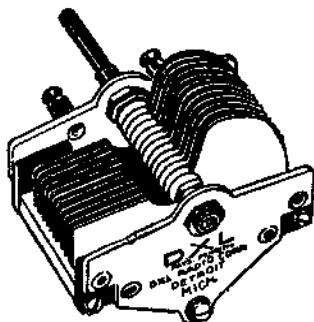
The date was January 6, 1974 at 10:07 P.M. EST when listeners to the CBS Radio Network via their local CBS affiliate got their first taste of what was to become one of the most ambitious projects in modern audio history—the beginning of the CBS Radio Mystery Theatre. Reknown actor E.G. Marshall was at the microphone along with Agnes Moorehead and the cast of the first show “The Old Ones Are Hard To Kill”. To the listener who had no advance notice of the series, the opening sounded remarkably like “Inner Sanctum” which was produced by Himan Brown and hosted for the bulk of its run by Raymond Edward Johnson. And why not? Himan Brown produced both series, and everyone remembers the famous creaking door used on Inner

Sanctum. The opening words on the CBS Mystery Theatre by E. G. Marshall set the stage for drama and suspense. “Come in. Welcome. I’m E.G. Marshall. Welcome to the sound of suspense . . . to the fear you can hear”. This was usually followed by a reflection on some aspect of human life, often in the “what if” theme which sets the stage for the drama which is to follow. Himan Brown was certainly no newcomer to producing radio shows. He had in fact in his 40 years in the business produced and directed such serials as Dick Tracy, Joyce Jordan M.D., as well as the famous Inner Sanctum series of mysteries. It is not surprising that through Brown’s associations, he attracted some really top-notch talent to the Mystery Theatre casts. To name them all would take pages, but to name just a few; Agnes Moorehead, Mercedes McCambridge, Larry Haines, Mandel Kramer, Santos Ortega, Bret Morrison (“The Shadow”), Ian Martin (who also wrote many of the scripts), Fred Gwynne, Tammy Grimes and so many others. I think one of the reasons for the show’s success is not only did it have top-notch talent but actors who were willing to try almost anything different. And this had to be the case when one stops to realize that not only did this show run more than nine years, but it did so 365 days a year, 7 days a week. Regardless of one’s constructive criticism of the shows, this sheer volume of work is to be commended. It may be true that perhaps one-third of the scripts were horrible and not much could be done with them regardless of who the actors were, but the middle third were very good and highly enter-

taining works. Mystery Theatre featured some outstanding adaptations of classics by Edgar Allen Poe, Shakespeare, etc. There was once an entire week of shows devoted to the works of Poe, most of which were excellent. If you're like me you rarely get time to sit down with a book and read it through. Years ago I did read these Poe stories and I found the Mystery Theatre's adaptation of them excellent. I still think about the night I heard Mercedes McCambridge in "Carmilla" (7/31/75) or the night I heard "Dracula" also with her (5/2/74). I had collected many versions of Dracula on videotape in later years, but the thrill of radio, of using your imagination, added a new dimension to the enjoyment of this Bram Stoker classic. Again, as usual, marvelously adapted by the Mystery Theatre. As for the last third of the MT scripts, they go in with the last third. Most all of the shows were complete dramas in the one-hour length. There were, however, a few that were done in five parts. "The Legend of Alexander" starred Russell Horton and was presented on five consecutive nights beginning Monday, June 2, 1981. Mystery Theatre opened its sixth season in January, 1979 with a week of stories about Nefertiti, Queen of Egypt, starring Tammy Grimes in the title role. Another classic, written by Victor Hugo that dealt with the poverty and injustice in Paris was Les Miserables, and Mystery Theatre presented that also in five parts beginning Monday, January 11, 1982 which starred Alexander Scourby. The Mystery Theatre version of Les Miserables was similar to the Les Miserables produced in 1937 and starring Orson

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Welles, but the Welles version was in 7- 30-minute parts and the Mystery Theatre version was in five sixty-minute parts.

As if CBS felt they didn't have enough at the outset of Mystery Theatre in 1974 with their acting staff and excellent scripts, they also began by giving away such things as clock radios, etc. to people who would send in a card with their name and address, and preferably comments about the new shows. This was in the form of a drawing, and probably several hundred prizes were awarded each week. And beginning August 4, 1975 someone won a seven day, six night all-expense paid trip for 4 persons to Disney World. This went on every week for four weeks.

The talents of the actors and actresses on the Mystery Theatre cannot be diminished by the fact that most earned only around \$100 per script. Like Hi Brown, they believed in what they were doing and they did it well. There were no demands for \$10,000 per script, or as we see it today in the movies \$1 million per script, by top-rated personalities. And I believe that says something about the dedication of the staff of Mystery Theatre toward what they were doing. One of the main problems with getting more audience for the shows was the fact that most stations aired the shows late at night. CBS fed the shows over its network lines at 10:07 PM EST, and that excluded a good percentage of the possible audience for this excellent series. But, in retrospect, I doubt that anyone my age or older has ever driven down the highway at night on a trip without finding that marvelous companion, CBS Radio

Mystery Theatre somewhere on the radio dial.

At the time of the 2,000th broadcast of the CBS Mystery Theatre which was on Friday, June 29, 1979, there had been 1,035 first-run shows and 965 repeats of Mystery Theatre. I'm sure none of us will ever forget this excellent contribution to radio history or the appreciation we feel toward all who brought it to us. Executive producer Himan Brown has perhaps put it best in his comments during the last show "Resident Killer" starring Mason Adams, aired on December 31, 1982. "These have been the happiest nine years of my 50-year career of creating radio drama. The response to all that we have been doing has been most joyous. The theatre of the imagination once again became a vital part of all that radio is and can be. Unhappily, this broadcast marks the end of the CBS Radio Mystery Theatre as part of the network's schedule. After 3,000 broadcasts, we hope we leave you with many fond memories. I want to say thank you to you our listeners, to CBS, and the station you're listening to for the support and encouragement, and most of all to the hundreds of talented writers, actors and technicians who helped stretch our imaginations. I hasten to assure you that, although this series draws its final curtain, radio drama lives. Until we meet again . . . and we will . . . thank you. Good night. Pleasant dreams." (Creaking door closes).

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The Radio Reading Room

by George Wagner

I've been a Spike Jones fan since as long as I can remember — and probably before. My collection includes several of Jones' radio broadcasts, numerous airshots, plus a nearly complete collection of his commercial recordings. The latter are mostly on tape, but I do have a considerable assortment of both Jones' original 78 rpm recordings and his later long-playing albums.

The surprising thing, though, is that while I have been a Spike Jones fan for nearly 40 years (I am now 44 years old), I until very recently knew almost nothing about the man other than what I had heard on his recordings or had picked up from casual conversations with fellow OTR and/or record collectors. That serious gap in my knowledge has been rectified by Jordan R. Young in his recent book *SPIKE JONES AND HIS CITY SLICKERS: An Illustrated Biography* ("The Untold Story"). This book was published in 1984 by the appropriately-named Disharmony Books, a division of Moonstone Press, Post Office Box 142, Beverly Hills, California 90213. The oversized paperback volume (11 inches by 8½ inches) retails for \$14.95.

The volume contains a comprehensive history of Jones and his musical ideas from his childhood on. It is lavishly illustrated, even containing full-page reproductions of Jones' musical arrangements. (How many arrangements have you ever seen which call for hand grenades?)

Most important for our purposes, the book contains approximately a

dozen pages on Spike Jones' radio career. Reading this, I was reminded of how I first discovered Spike Jones' radio broadcasts. It was the later Winter of 1949, and I was a second grader sick as a dog with tonsillitis; so very sick, in fact, that my parents believed that I might be dying. One evening my father tried to cheer me up by bringing a table-model radio into my bedroom and switching it to the Spike Jones broadcast. I still remember one skit from that broadcast; had I not been so headachely/feverishly ill, I'd doubtless remember more.

Spike Jones announced that he would hold tryouts for a pianist for the band. Thereupon a procession of pianists proceeded to audition before the mike, each of them better than the last. Each aspiring pianist was then informed by Jones that "sorry — you're not quite good enough for us." The final pianist sounded as though he had fallen drunkenly over the piano and was crawling around on the keys. "Great!" Jones shouted. "Just what we need!"

I remember how surprized I was when my father, a veteran dance-band musician himself, informed me that there had probably been only one pianist used throughout the entire skit. Needless to say, if this episode ever turns up, **I WANT IT.**

I hope it is not a blasphemous offence to mention *television* in the sacred pages of *THE OLD TIME RADIO DIGEST*, because the book also contains a goodly number of pages on Jones' television shows. What I remember most vividly about the 1950s Jones television shows was seeing Adolf Hitler playing in the band! I can't recall now whether it was Freddie Morgan (Banjo) or George Rock (trumpet) who so perfectly lampooned "Der Fuehrer." Can anyone out there

help me? On the other hand, can anyone anywhere help a Spike Jones fan?

Mr. Young's book contains a "who's who" of just about everybody who ever played with the band, or sang with it, or performed in the Olsen and Johnson-style City Slicker stage shows. It also contains a marvellous Jones discography compiled by Ted Hering and Skip Craig. This lists all the commercially issued stuff, special pressings, rejected takes, and more, plus a complete filmography/videography.

Oh, it's the radiography you're interested in? Why didn't you say so? Well, that's here too — back to SPIKE JONES AND HIS FIVE TACKS over WFOX, Long Beach, in 1928. Between the years 1937 and 1943 (even after the founding of the City Slickers), Jones was the drummer in top studio orchestras on leading radio shows. These shows included: THE AL POLSON SHOW (Victor Young Orchestra), BURNS AND ALLEN SHOW (Henry King Orchestra), BING CROSBY SHOW (KRAFT MUSIC HALL (John Scott Trotter Orchestra), SCREEN GUILD THEATER (Oscar Bradley Orchestra), TOMMY RIGGS AND BETTY LOU (Freddie Rich Orchestra; Glenn

Miller also came out of this band), and FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY (Billy Mills Orchestra). Like I said, *big shows*.

The City Slickers themselves became the studio orchestra for such programs as THE BOB BURNS SHOW, FURLOUGH FUN, THE CHASE AND SANBORN PROGRAM (Summer run, 1945), THE COCA-COLA SPOTLIGHT REVIEW, and finally Jones' own program.

The radiography gives a *dated* list of more than three dozen radio guest shots by the City Slickers between 1942 and 1950. In addition, Jones appeared solo on BILL STERN'S COLGATE SPORTS NEWSREEL (twice!), THE AMOS 'N' ANDY MUSIC HALL, ART LINKLETTER'S HOUSE PARTY, etc. I've never seen any of these episodes in circulation? Do any survive?

In short, SPIKE JONES AND HIS CITY SLICKERS is an excellent book, one that has earned a permanent place on my reference shelf. (That is, if I can ever get it back from my brother, who has "borrowed" it!) My question *now* is "When are we going to get books this comprehensive on THE HOOSIER HOTSHOTS and THE KORN KOBBLERS?"

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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)

OLD TIME RADIO BROADCASTS on superior-quality tapes. Free catalogue! Monthly special: "The Whistler" narrates three hours of stories full of twists, surprises, unusual endings. Only \$7.95. Specify cassettes, eight-tracks or open-reel. Carl K. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

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 Cassettes VG-EX only. Offer 110 shows. Exchange Est. Bill Oliver, 516 Third St. North East, Massillon, Ohio 44646.

BRC PRODUCTIONS—Now your full-line Nostalgia Supermarket! Wide selection: OTR on reel and cassette, related magazines, books, classic TV and movie videos, more. General/cassette catalog free. Reel catalog - \$2.00. BRC Productions, P.O. Box 39522-D, Redford, MI. 48239.

OLD TIME radio. Original broadcasts on cassettes. Comedy, mystery, drama. Free show with first order. Catalog 44¢ (stamps). Charlie Garant, P.O. Box 331-D, Greeneville, TN 37744.

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.

The movie star interview broadcast, "ELZA SCHALLERT REVIEWS," is currently on the air over the NBC-Blue network Fridays at 10:45 p.m. EDT (9:45 EST or CDT; 8:45 CST; 7:45 MST; 6:45 PST). It seems that no station in your immediate locale carries the show and the nearest outlet that I can find is WREN (1220 Kilos.) in Lawrence, Kan.—F. C. J., New Orleans, La.

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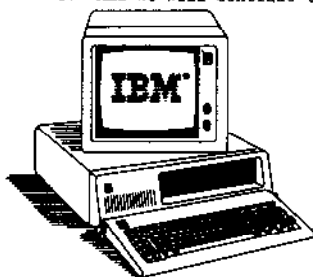
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Ten complete sets of Ken-Rad Radio Tubes given away every Wednesday night to listeners.

AUDIO CLASSICS

OLD TIME RADIO PROGRAMS ON CASSETTE TAPE. You've seen this same opening statement in many of our ads, and it's still true. We offer the best of radio's golden past on not only cassette tapes, but also on reel-to-reel tapes. You can order our cassette or reel-to-reel catalogs and see the many and varied programs that broadcasting gave us over those precious few decades. And while not everything listed in our reel-to-reel catalog is listed in our cassette catalog, every single program IS available on cassette tape. We are working very hard on a big update to both catalogs that should please everyone. When these new additional pages are sent out, all our current customers will receive them automatically. If you are not an AUDIO CLASSICS customer and would like to be on our mailing list and receive the current catalog(s) and the new update pages, just send for our current catalogs. Each catalog is \$5.00 and that will include new additional pages as they are released. Nothing could be simpler. You order the catalog(s), and the programs that you would like to collect, and we do all the rest of the work.

As an example, in our last ad we offered four programs not available to collectors before, three of the four missing HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL programs (all four are now available), and a not before release of CHALLENGE OF THE YUKON (we have 80 more such titles). We received an truly unexpected response for these shows. And we will continue to bring you the best of new finds.



Now AUDIO CLASSICS is offering something brand new. As we mentioned in our last ad, AUDIO CLASSICS catalogs are now available on computer diskettes!! This has never been available to old time radio collectors before, but with the growing use and popularity of home computers now, we felt that now is the time to bring together the best of the past with the today's technology. AUDIO CLASSICS reel-to-reel diskette catalog No. 1 is now available. No more searching page by page for that one title. In AUDIO CLASSICS printed reel-to-

reel catalog we eliminated that problem by providing a complete alphabetical listing of all 9,235 programs offered and the catalog page number they could be found on. With the AUDIO CLASSICS diskette and your computer the searching process is taken one step further, you can scan for and find any entry by date, program number, title, etc., in just seconds - electronically. Also available from AUDIO CLASSICS, is the very well received LONE RANGER radio log. Hundreds of these logs sold in printed form and it is now available on diskette with the same electronic features already mentioned, plus THE LONE RANGER diskettes are personalized and plays THE LONE RANGER theme music through your computers speaker!! AUDIO CLASSICS is in the process of producing it's second diskette for reel-to-reel collectors and it's first diskette for you cassette collectors.

Other computer diskettes will be announced in the future. OTR and the computer! These diskettes are for the IBM, or IBM compatible computers with at least 128KB of memory, and one diskette drive, w/color graphics adaptor. The introductory price for the reel-to-reel diskette is just \$10.00 plus \$2.50 shipping. THE LONE RANGER diskette is just \$15.00 plus \$2.50 shipping.

AUDIO CLASSICS also announces yet another new step. We have all heard for years that the cheapest way to collect OTR programs is to join a buyers group. And there are some great buyers groups around the country for reel-to-reel collectors. But the cassette collector has never had cassette buyers group to join before. Right? Well now there is a cassette buyers group and cassettes are already being circulated among members for a fraction of the cost per show than you've been paying. Buyers groups are not for everyone, but if you're interested in getting information about joining a cassette buyers group, write us and we'll be happy to send it to you. AUDIO CLASSICS is also starting a cassette rental library, and if you would like more information on this, please write.

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Authored by Terry Salomonson, contributor to Bob Burnham's Technical Guide To OTR —

chapter 18 "The Log — The Serious OTR Collector's Essential Tool." Interviewer, writer, collector, dealer, and broadcaster of Old Time Radio, Additional information to be added after Oct. 1985, will be provided free to those who obtain this log of The Lone Ranger now. Cost \$19.95 + \$2.50 shipping Send orders to: Terry Salomonson, P.O. Box 1135, St. Charles, Mo. 63302-1135



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