

Old Time Radio **DIGEST**

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ORSEN
WELLS

WAR OF THE WORLDS | PART 2

Old Time Radio DIGEST

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PROGRAM GUIDES Station WQXR 1949

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'Incredible as it may seem': Radio's Most Famous Broadcast Revisited

A fifty year retrospective by Gary A Yoggy, Professor of History, Corning Community College, Corning, N.Y.

In Pittsburgh a man arriving home, found his wife in the bathroom with a bottle of poison in her hand screaming, "I'd rather die this way than that." In Minneapolis a woman ran into church screaming, "... this is the end of the world. You might as well go home to die. . ." From Kansas City to Boston, from Salt Lake City to Birmingham, Alabama, the reaction was the same: the United States had been invaded from the air, New York was being destroyed and the enemy was threatening to move westward.

But inside Studio One at CBS, Welles and his company of actors continued the show, blissfully unaware of the wholesale havoc their broadcast was creating across the country. The second part of the show was well-written, and sensitively played — but who heard it? It recounted the adventures of the lone survivor of the Martian invasion, Professor Pierson, with interesting observations on the nature of human society.

As Pierson made his way toward what was left of New York City, he came upon another survivor (again played by the versatile Frank Readick). In Wells's original novel, he was also an artilleryman, "the man on Putney Hill." In Koch's adaptation, he's got a plan to outsmart the Martians, get in good with them, turn the tables on them — and then take over the world himself. Muttering that the man was mad, Pierson moved on toward Manhattan.

The end of the story was quietly sober and philosophical — especially considering the uproar the first act had produced. But Wells had been a science teacher and he was quite ready with the answer to an invasion from Mars. When the professor completed his trek up Broadway and through an empty Times Square to Central Park, he discovered that all the Martians had died. All powerful in their military and technological superiority, they had succumbed to the common cold — or as Pierson explained, "... slain, after all man's defenses had failed, by the humblest thing that God in His wisdom put upon earth."

Orson's closing commentary that Sunday was delivered in a jovial mood as he explained that this was *the Mercury Theatre's own radio version of dressing up in a sheet and jumping out of a bush and saying Boo! . . . we couldn't soap all your windows and steal all your garden gates. . . so we did the best next (Orson transposed these words from the script) thing. We annihilated the world before your very ears. . . You will be relieved, I hope, to learn that we didn't mean it. . . and if your doorbell rings and nobody's there, that was no Martian. . . it's Halloween.*

Some of the supervisory staff already had an inkling that something in the outside world was wrong. At 8:32 p.m. precisely, a CBS program supervisor named Davidson Taylor had been called away from his control

panel in Studio One to take a call which notified him that nearly two out of every three local stations had interrupted the broadcast to calm listeners and stress that the program was pure fantasy. Later a phone call had come from a police station to the CBS control booth asking what was "going on up there?" One policeman peered through a porthole window in the studio to see for himself, but when he tried to enter, an actor pushed him out. Either to protect the staff from frantic citizens outside or, perhaps, more likely to cage the staff in so some tough questions could be asked, a swarm of policemen with billy clubs surrounded the building.

During the playing of the final theme, the control room phone started to ring again and "a shrill voice" through the receiver announced itself to John Houseman as belonging to the mayor of one of the bigger midwestern cities. He was screaming for Welles. "Choking with fury, he reported mobs in the streets of his city, women and children huddled in the churches, violence and looting. If, as he had now learned, the whole thing was nothing but a crummy joke — then he, personally, was on his way to New York to punch the author of it in the nose!"

By the nine o'clock close of the program, several high-ranking CBS executives had arrived or were in full flight toward 485 Madison Avenue and everyone in the studio was aware that they were in trouble. It was immediately decided that at the end of the *Ford Sunday Evening Hour* (at ten o'clock) CBS would broadcast a simple statement of the fact that it had announced four times within the show that they were presenting a play based on H.G. Wells novel et cetera

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and if the American public was as stupid as the critics said it was "for putting up with most of what it had to listen to, it was just too bad. Or words to that effect."

Houseman offers the most vivid account of what occurred next: *The following hours were a nightmare. The building was suddenly full of people and dark-blue uniforms. Hustled out of the studio, we were locked into a small back office on another floor. Here we sat incommunicado while network employees were busy collecting, destroying, or locking up all scripts and records of the broadcast. Finally the Press was let loose upon us, ravening for horror. How many deaths had we heard of? (Implying they knew of thousands.) What did we know of the fatal stampede in a Jersey hall? (Implying it was one of many.) What traffic deaths? (The ditches must be choked with corpses.) The suicides? (Haven't you heard of the one on Riverside Drive?) . . . Hours later,*

instead of arresting us, they let us out a back way and we scurried down to the theatre like hunted animals to their hole. . .

The next morning Orson found himself on the front page of the *Times* as the perpetrator of a hoax that had panicked the nation. Seeing him there, his lawyer, Arnold Weissberger, phoned him "to instruct the typically expansive Orson neither to talk to reporters nor to apologize for all that had happened lest he appear to admit any indiscretion."

The newspapers had a field day. For years they had been angry at those "broadcast upstarts" who had "only to chatter into a microphone" to reach the public, while they had to work through typewriters, printing presses, and newsboys. Now they cried vengeance. Editors blasted "those irresponsible idiots" who managed the airwaves. Cartoonists pilloried the broadcast media with a more realistic sense of humor. The usual vigilant

MORTIMER AND CHARLIE

GENEROUS REWARD.



viewers-with-alarm screamed for "investigation, censorship, practically everything but lynching, including revoking the CBS license."

The story made the front pages for two days. Having had to take a back seat to radio as a news source during the recent Munich crisis, the press was eager to expose "the perilous irresponsibilities of the new medium." And Orson was their whipping boy.

A few journalists, however, actually thought Welles and company had done the country a favor. Dorothy Thompson in her column, "On the Record" for the *New York Herald Tribune* (Nov. 2, 1938) called the panic broadcast "the story of the century" and went so far as to say the "far from blaming Mr. Orson Welles, he ought to be given a Congressional medal and a national prize for having made the most amazing and important contribution to the social sciences... (in the understanding of Hitlerism, Mussolinism, Stalinism, anti-Semitism and all the other terrorisms of our

times..." The public should realize she went on to say, "that the greatest organizers of mass hysterias and mass delusions today are states using the radio to excite terrors, incite hatreds, inflame masses, win mass support for policies, create idolatries, abolish reason and maintain themselves in power."

Ms. Thompson cited four "moral lessons" that should be learned from the broadcast:

... no political body must ever, under any circumstances, obtain a monopoly of radio.

... our population and universal education is failing to train reason and logic, even in the educated.

... the popularization of science has led to gullibility and new super-situations, rather than to skepticism and the really scientific attitude of mind.

... the power of mass suggestion is the most potent force today and... the political demagogue is more powerful

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By EDGAR BERGEN



than all the economic forces.

Explaining that the "new warfare" will be waged by propaganda, the "outcome depending on which side can frighten the other to death first," she concluded:

... radio must not be used to create mass prejudices and mass divisions and schisms, either by private individuals or its officials, or its opponents.

If people can be frightened out of their wits by mythical men from Mars, they can be frightened into fanaticism by the fear of Reds, or convinced that America is in the hands of sixty families, or aroused to revenge against any minority or terrorized into subserviance to leadership because of any imaginable menace.

Hugh S. Johnson, writing for the United Feature Syndicate, also believed that the Mars panic served a useful purpose. He offered the opinion that it revealed dramatically "a state of public mind." "Too many people," he continued, "have been led by outright propaganda to believe in some new and magic power of air attack and other developments in the weapons of war."

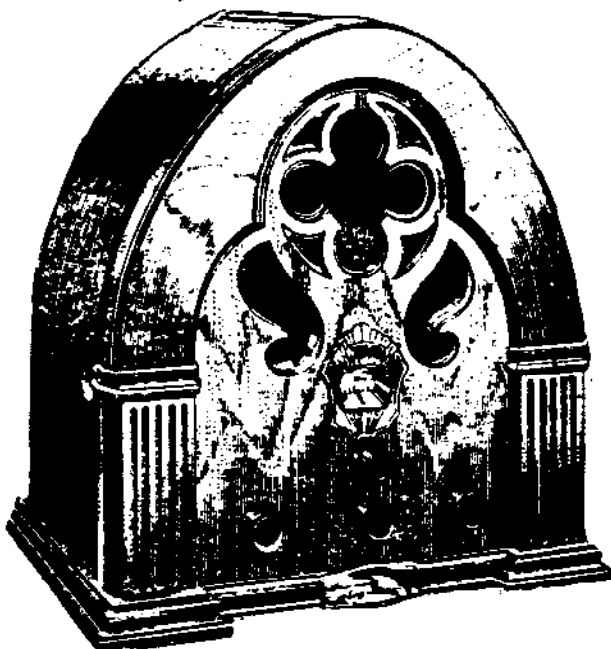
While Johnson admitted that there were more powerful weapons than ever before, he pointed out that "the defensive weapons against them were also far more powerful." Hopeful that when the smoke cleared away the incident would provide "unintended assistance to the President's great defense program," he concluded that if the broadcast served no other purpose, "it will have proved its value."

Nevertheless, as a more immediate consequence of the program, a spate of law suite - over three-quarters of a million dollars worth, all told - was

about to begin. While no one died, plenty of broken legs, heart attacks and miscarriages were attributed to the broadcast. In addition, there were a number of crank suits - like that of the life-long stutterer who had just been cured by psychoanalysis only to begin stuttering again after the hoax, and who sued Welles for two thousand dollars to pay for his return to therapy. Then there was Sara E. Collins, a stage actress, who claimed she suffered a "nervous shock by listening to the show" and filed a suit for fifty thousand dollars. Fearing that he would be ruined, both financially and professionally, Welles was immensely relieved to learn that the rider Weisberger had wisely attached to his CBS contract freed him from any responsibility for "unforeseen and unknown results" of his broadcasts. All the claims that had been sent to Orson by the Network lawyers were returned to them for disposal.

According to Houseman, Welles did settle one claim, however. Much to the dismay of his lawyers, Orson agreed to replace the shoes of a man from Massachusetts who wrote: *I thought the best thing to do was go away. So I took three dollars twenty-five cents out of my savings and bought a ticket. After I had gone sixty miles I knew it was a play. Now I don't have money left for the shoes I was saving up for. Will you please have someone send me a pair of black shoes size 9B!*

Later the Federal Communications Commission held some hearings and announced it would consider establishing a new radio code, but CBS forestalled any serious attempts at government censorship by issuing the following public apology:



OLD TIME RADIO BROADCASTS

Classic programs recorded on high quality tapes.
Write for your free catalogue.

Special offer: "A Night of Old-Time Radio"
A three hour assortment that will take you back many years ago, to listen to a typical evening on the radio... *The Shadow, The Lone Ranger, Amos 'n' Andy, Screen Director's Playhouse, Edward R. Murrow and the News, Colgate Sports Newsreel, Bing Crosby*, and more!
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CARL K. FROELICH
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NEW FREEDOM, PA 17349

The Columbia Broadcasting System regrets that some listeners...mistook fantasy for fact...In order that this may not happen again, the program department hereafter will NOT use the technique of a simulated news broadcast within a dramatization when the circumstances of the broadcast could cause immediate alarm to numbers of listeners.

With that announcement, the official aspects of the incident were closed.

Although many citizens still wanted to wring Orson Welles' neck, some were amused. One was Franklin Roosevelt. The day after the program the President sent him a cable saying, "This only goes to show that all intelligent people were listening to Charlie McCarthy."

Actually, it soon became apparent that the scare had worked largely in Orson's favor, turning him into an overnight celebrity. His name was no longer familiar only to elitist theatre groups. The broadcast made him known around the world. His radio program gained in popularity and acquired a sponsor - Campbell Soups at seventy-five hundred dollars a show - becoming *The Campbell Playhouse* with the beginning of its second season (September 10, 1939). It continued in its sixty minute format until November 1940 when it was reduced to thirty minutes as *The Orson Welles Theatre*. The show left the air on June 13, 1941. (In 1946, the Mercury Players were heard as a summer series for Pabst Blue Ribbon, broadcasting half-hour classics from June 7 through September 13.)

According to Welles' biographer, Barbara Leaming: *From Orson's point of view, the most curious result of the Martian scare was a letter he received from a lady in*

Marin County, California, to say that a local amateur group was planning to put on a reenactment of the Halloween broadcast. Enclosed was a clipping from a local paper...None of this would have merited Orson's attention were it not for the fact that the production was to be headed by Richard I. Welles, of whom the letter said: 'He is planning to put on a presentation of "The War of the Worlds," which he wrote for you.' It was the first Orson had heard of his daffy brother for some time. After having been confined on and off at various mental institutions, Richard had spent a brief stint in a monastery: then gone on to become a social worker in Chicago's Hull House until a scandal ended his tenure there...after the Martian scare...he hoped to cash in on his celebrated sibling by passing himself off as Orson's creative collaborator.

Welles seemed genuinely surprised that the broadcast had been taken so seriously. Far from expecting the radio audience to take the program as fact, he later explained that he feared that the "fantasy might appear too old-fashioned for modern consumption." (How wrong he, of course, was.) Yet on another occasion he said cryptically that "radio was a voice from heaven and I wanted to destroy it. So it was a huge practical joke."

The fact remained, however, that no other broadcast, before or since, has produced a panic comparable to the one which resulted from *The War of the Worlds* roadcast. Reports of an invasion from Mars had been broadcast over a national network from New York City, our greatest metropolis, where people should have known (or been able to ascertain for themselves) what was going on.

Most analysts of this psychological phenomenon have agreed that "the broadcast was so realistic for the first few minutes that it was almost credible to even relatively sophisticated and well informed listeners." One notable exception to this viewpoint was columnist Dorothy Thompson who unequivocally stated that:

nothing whatever about the dramatization... was in the least credible... The entire verisimilitude was in the names of a few specific places... A twist of the dial would have established for anybody that the national catastrophe was not being noted on any other station... A reference to the (published) radio program would have awakened skepticism... the time element was obviously lunatic...

The opinion of Ms. Thompson notwithstanding, the results of an exhaustive study by the Professor Hadley Cantril of Princeton and his research staff indicated otherwise. He concluded that the foremost reason for the surprising number of listeners who accepted the broadcast as fact was "the sheer dramatic excellence" and "unusual realism of the performance."

Among other factors influencing listeners discovered by the Princeton study were:

Radio as accepted vehicle for important announcements (e.g., election returns, the recent war scare in Europe)... they had learned to expect that musical programs, dramas, ... would be cut off in a serious emergency to inform or warn the public... a large proportion of listeners, particularly those in the lower income and educational brackets, have grown to rely more on radio than on the newspapers for their

news...

Prestige of speakers... "experts" were mentioned including college professors, astronomers, representatives of scientific bodies, ... the commander of the State Militia... the vice-president of the Red Cross... a Captain of the Signal Corps and finally the Secretary of the Interior...

Familiar locations mentioned... Grovers Mill, Princeton, Trenton, Allentown, Wachung Mountains, Bayonne, Newark, Times Square, Fifth Avenue, the Pulaski Skyway, the Holland Tunnel, were all familiar to New Yorkers. And listeners throughout the country could certainly recognize many of these names as real...

Tuning in late... Forty-two percent (of those surveyed) said they had tuned in late... and there was a very pronounced tendency for those who tuned in late to accept the broadcast as news, and for those who tuned in at the beginning to take it as a play... (only twenty percent who listened from the beginning thought they were hearing a news report, while almost two-thirds who tuned in late thought so.)...

Of course, as we've already noted, many persons tuned in late because they had been listening to radio's most popular program, the Charlie McCarthy Show, until the first commercial break. They "cruised" around on the dial until they became caught up in the excitement and urgency of the Welles broadcast.

A second important reason for the increase in the number of late arrivals to the Mercury Theatre program was "the contagion the excitement created." People who were frightened or disturbed by the news often

hastened to telephone friends or relatives.

The Cantril study also revealed the importance of the social and historical setting to listeners' susceptability of being misled. The broadcast came during the waning years of the great depression, a time of economic uncertainty and instability for many. The loss of a job, business, farm or home was still fresh in their minds. Add to these anxieties the "shadow of war" hanging over Europe and the 'felt threats' of Fascism and Communism — "these together with a thousand and one other characteristics of modern living" — created an environment which the average person was not only unable to understand, but which seemed to be "completely beyond his own immediate control."

Furthermore, the broadcast followed closely on the heels of the Munich crisis. During August, September and part of October, 1938, millions of Americans listened regularly to the latest stories of the developing international crisis - thanks to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the large broadcasting companies who had special reporters on the spot. As Cantril pointed out, **Probably never before in the history of broadcasting had so many people in this country been glued to their sets. Stations at all hours were willing to interrupt prearranged programs for the latest news broadcast. Hence both the technique and the content of this broadcast tended to fit into the existing mental context which had resulted from world events of the previous weeks.**

Consequently, some listeners translated the monstrous creatures into Germans. They assumed that Hitler had developed a "secret devastating

weapon" and was taking over the whole world. As Howard Koch put it, "in one terror-filled night our accumulated fears and insecurities came home to roost."

Finally, Cantril concluded that "people who suffer deeply or whose lot in life is generally miserable frequently compensate for their situations by seeking some change or escape from their troubles. . . . A few persons represented in his case studies "showed signs of welcoming the invasion and their consequent extermination because of the relief it would give them." Cantril called this "the thrill of disaster."

Along these lines, another way people might find "relief from their troubles" was "by submerging their own responsibilities and worries into a battle their whole society is having with some threatening force." Cantril found evidence that **Some of the frightened listeners to the broadcast had a feeling of self-importance while they were listening or relaying vital information regarding the invasion to uninformed friends whom they thought they were helping.**

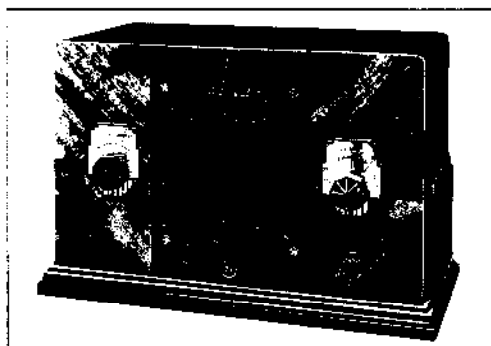
After all the words written about the broadcast - pro and con - had been considered and all of the studies about the incredible incident had been analyzed, there was indeed one obvious lesson to be learned and remembered for years to come. Radio had the potential power to drive people to the streets in panic. Howard Koch has stated it somewhat differently: "if the nonexistent Martians in the broadcast had anything important to teach us, I believe it is the virtue of doubting and testing everything that comes to us over the airwaves. . . ."

In *Tune In Yesterday*, John Dunning

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FROM I-71 SOUTH - EXIT I-471 SOUTH/NEWPORT, KY. AND FOLLOW THE SAME DIRECTIONS AS ABOVE.

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mentions "two strange footnotes" to the original Martian scare which tend to prove that some of the people can be fooled all of the time. . . It seems that a script similar to *The War of the Worlds* was broadcast in Charleston, South Carolina about a year later. It was called "Palmetto Fantasy" and concerned a deadly anti-aircraft ray that went out of control and plunged into the Santee reservoir. Hundreds of people had supposedly been killed. Station WCSC in Charleston was deluged with frantic phone calls as were local police stations and newspaper offices. Another incident occurred some years later after World War II in South America when Welles' script was broadcast in Spanish with the same widespread panic. However, this time, when the people (of Quito, Ecuador) discovered it was a hoax, they set fire to the station (HCQRX) and killed fifteen people in the process.

H. G. Wells' novel was also made into a fine motion picture filled with dazzling, Oscar-winning special effects in 1953 by George Pal (whose prior credits include *Destination Moon*, 1950, and *When Worlds Collide*, 1951.) This time, however, the story was told "straight" (although updated to contemporary times), moved to Los Angeles and starred Gene Barry as Dr. Clayton Forrester of Pacific Tech from whose perspective the story is told. This version was also dramatized on the *Lux Radio Theatre* with Dana Andrews playing the Gene Barry role and provoked no public reaction whatever.

The book is also being used as a basis for a syndicated television series by the producers of the successful *Star Trek: the Next Generation* premiering this fall. The TV version picks up

where the radio/movie versions left off - with the aliens revived by radioactivity after a thirty-five year hibernation. And guess what? They're not Martians. According to executive producer Greg Strangis, "Mars was only a staging ground. They come from much farther away, and have as much respect for us as we do for the cockroach."

Their goal is the same, however, as in Wells' novel - colonization of Earth. Their methods include sabotage, terrorism and, in a new twist, taking over human bodies. Opposing them is a team of four science/military/computer experts. Whether Paramount Studios will be successful with *Wars* as it was with *Trek* remains to be seen. (The Halloween weekend episode of the new TV series was set in a mythical Grover's Mill - a motorcycle gang, possessed by aliens, terrorized the small town.)★

The most elaborate commemoration of the original broadcast is being produced by the Seattle-based Otherworld Media - a recreation distributed free to all public radio stations featuring Jason Robards, Jr. and including (as newscasters) Douglas Edwards and Steve Allen. Howard Koch collaborated on the updated script. About one hundred fifty stations were planning to carry the broadcast.

The most interesting follow-up to the original broadcast, however, occurred in 1975 when ABC produced a special television file, *The Night They Panicked America*. It should be

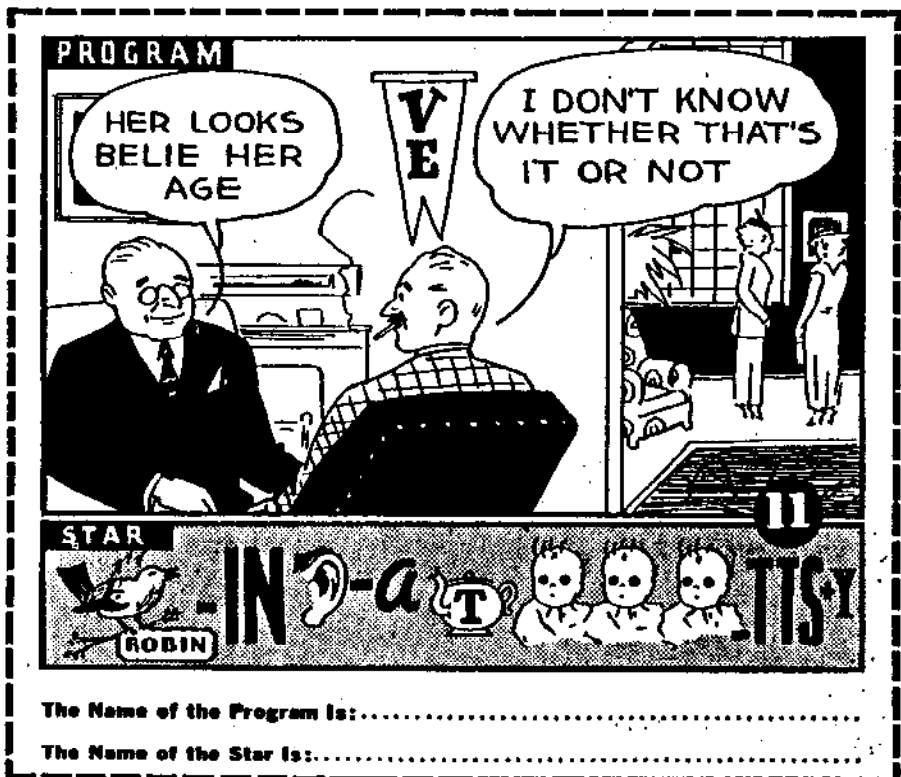
★ A *War of the Worlds* comic book is also being published by Eternity - a "loose, updated adaptation of the novel" - to tie in with the 50th anniversary of the broadcast.

noted that a network other than CBS, which broadcast the original program, was responsible for the production and, ironically, it was filmed by Paramount Studios on the same stage where Orson Welles made his classic *Citizen Kane* in 1940, regarded by some critics as the finest movie ever made.

Stage 30 was transformed into CBS Studio One exactly as it looked on the night of the original broadcast. Produced and directed by Joseph Sargent (*The Marcus Nelson Murders*, 1973; *Hustling*, 1975) and written by Nicholas Meyer, author of the best selling Sherlock Holmes novel, *The*

Seven Per Cent Solution, the film dramatized the broadcast on two levels: the actual Mercury Theatre drama (reproduced right down to every chilling word) and the reactions to the program throughout the country (as the film moves from one fictitious family to another).

Paul Stewart was used as a special consultant on the film (which was shown on Halloween night) and every single line of Koch's script was kept intact - some of it is presented as the actors portraying Welles (Paul Shenar) and his players are shown delivering their lines in the studio and the rest over speakers in car radios, and radios



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in private homes, apartments and bars.

The telefilm, which effectively recreated both the tensions of the live radio production, as well as, the effect the broadcast had on listeners, also established the social and political climate in which it was being heard. The threat of Hitler's Germany and the unsettling economic conditions brought about by the depression were shown to have conditioned people to panic at any hint of impending destruction.

ABC was not willing to chance the possibility that people tuning into the movie while bulletins were being read would make the same mistake as earlier listeners to the radio broadcast and ran disclaimers throughout the telecast. This, of course, raises the ultimate question - could such a think happen again?

Hadley Cantril, writing in the 1966 Torchbook reprint to his Princeton study, claims "that it could happen today and even on a much more extensive scale." Pointing out that the weapons of destruction are far greater today (with atomic bombs, ICBMs and satellite) than they were then, he states, "Such destructive forces against which there appears to be so little protection can only enhance the possibility of delusions that would be even more plausible than the invasion of Martians - and that would not require the combined talents of H. G. Wells and Orson Welles to set off." (He cites the blackout caused by the massive power failure in the Northeastern U.S. in November, 1965, which produced a situation where "millions of people plunged into darkness...stranded in isolated places... must have endured various fantasies... as to what had caused it.")

More recently, *Special Bulletin*, a 1983 TV movie, simulated (via videotape) news coverage of the city of Charleston being held hostage by terrorists armed with a nuclear weapon. Despite constant disclaimers, TV stations were *still* flooded with frantic calls from people who, like those who had listened to *The War of the Worlds* forty-five years earlier, thought that what they heard... and saw... was real.

There is hope for the present generation, however, for Cantril admits that, some mitigating factors not present 1983 may help to neutralize... fears and allay anxieties... Television... could hardly compete with scenes created in the imaginations of frightened listeners... Furthermore, the Orson Welles performance and its aftermath have instilled on the part of all major networks in the United States a deep sense of responsibility in seeing to it that such a situation does not occur again...

Nevertheless, Cantril concludes that in other parts of the world, "where such a sense public responsibility on the part of those in control of communications may not be as great..." and where "radio alone is relied on for news and information," similar scares "might be perpetrated either by chance or by design."

In any case, as communities from Grovers Mill, N.J. to Elmira, N.Y., observed in a variety of ways the fiftieth anniversary of "the hoax remains an event that both fascinates and amazes the ever growing number of old time radio enthusiasts.

Addendum

This author has discovered that a "rock opera" version of Wells' novel was recorded by CBS Records (Columbia) in 1978. The music and most of the libretto was written by

Bulls & Boners

Bulls and boners are a part of broadcasting. No matter how experienced the performer or how famous the star, chances are that he will make an occasional slip or a statement with twisted meaning which is extremely funny.

Guest on Bing Crosby's KMH: "The soldiers in our Army eat more than 60% of the civilians each year."—Clarence Ecker, Stanford, Montana.

Announcer: "Sir Walter Raleigh smoking tobacco never bites your tongue—it burns slow and even, etc. . . ."—M. A. Miller, South Bend, Ind.

Mary Livingstone: "What are you going to give him—a Wilson with handkerchief on it?"—Mrs. Oren A. Fish, Walnut, Kans.

Dan Seymour on "Duffy's": ". . . then you get prompt relief from your cold or your youngsters."—Mrs. H. D. Emerich, Lansing, Mich.

Announcer: "Did you get your Chase and Sanborn kiss this morning? If you didn't, see your grocer tomorrow."—Mrs. Charles Roy Castner, Upper Montclair, N. J. (June 21 over Station WEAJ.)

Jake Higgins: "Old Glory is now occupying the place of honor with everyone assembled standing at attention at the top of the mast."—Kathryn Fava, Westville, Ill.

Parker Wilson of "Light Crust Doughboys": "Mrs. — writes, 'My husband and I were married twenty-five years ago. Our first grocery bill included a sack of Light Crust. We are still using it.'"—Elbert Evans, Jr., 903 South Hickory, Pine Bluff, Ark.

New York born Jeff Wayne who studied in England at the Trinity College of Music. (Wayne won the New Musical Express award for "Rock On" as the best produced Pop Single of 1974.)

The War of the Worlds was the "culmination of nearly two and a half years of work" and featured distinguished British actor Richard Burton in the role of "the journalist" with the highly respected British rock star David Essex as "the artillery man" and Julie Covington, star of *Godspell* and the *Rocky Horror Show*, as Beth. Wayne followed the original story much more closely than any of the previous dramatic adaptations of the novel and included several "word-for-word" passages taken directly from Wells' novel. Among Wayne's original vocal selections are the lilting "Forever Autumn," the driving "Thunder Child," the questioning "The Spirit of Man" and the hopeful "Brave New World." Superb guitar work (by British musician Jo Partridge) is used throughout the production to represent "the heat ray" of the Martians.

After completing the basic story with the Martians dying from contamination by Earth's bacteria, Wayne adds an intriguing "Epilogue." NASA has just lost contact with the first manned expedition to land on Mars:

Pasadena Control: What's that flare?
See it? A green flare, coming from Mars, . . . It's getting closer . . .
Come in Bermudal Houston, come in! What's going on? . . . Canberra, come in, Canberral Tracking Station 63, can you hear me, Madrid? Can anybody hear me?
Come in, come in . . .

This ends "Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of *The War of the Worlds*" in

Radio Guide

Doubles Your
Radio Enjoyment

Why English Listeners Leave Home

Old Johnny Bull has just suffered a shock to his nervous system. First, a Yankee horse named Battleship ran off with his biggest race this spring. Now he has been told that his radio programs aren't as popular as the American type.

If you were an Englishman, until recently your radio day would have been filled with gardening talks, sopranos and military bands. Good, solid stuff that informed and educated. You knew it was good for you because the government said so. If you wished to adventure a bit, you might tune to Radio Luxembourg or Radio Athlone, two powerful stations which broadcast commercial programs from outside England but whose waves could be heard from Plymouth to Edinburgh. Here were swing bands and hillbillies and comedians, and men who talked of toothpaste and cold-creams. More often than not, here was fun and something to get the mind off the income tax and Hitler's war talk. In short, here were American-system programs.

If you were an Englishman, you

would have voted recently for your favorite radio station. The result of that poll is what gives John Bull the jitters, for English people selected Radio Luxembourg as their favorite. Their second choice was Radio Athlone. The best an English station could do was third.

So the American system wins again. It should be a lesson to those die-hard radio reformers who wish to put all our wavelengths and programs under direct government control. It should likewise be a lesson to all listeners who think they might prefer unsponsored, government-financed programs.

If, even in the ears of English listeners, our system is better, we should be proud of it. We should defend it.

Church Bows to McCarthy

"If we go to church we can't listen to Charlie McCarthy" is the excuse given by a surprising number of young people these days. Up at Herb Lake, Canada, a minister tired of hearing it. He invited his audience to stay home until they had heard Charlie, then come to services. It worked. Now his flock listens until after Charlie's last "spot" on the coffee show and then repairs dutifully to worship.

Fibber's Crack

President Roosevelt is reported to have stated his favorite joke of the year is the one tossed off recently on the Fibber McGee program. Against a background of "My



America Wins Again!

friends . . ." chatter, a woman listener said, "Oh, Frank, get another station." The response that cheered Roosevelt was, "Myrtle, when you hear 'my friends' on the air you can't get any other station."

Thanks, Walter!

We are indebted to Walter Winchell for one of broadcasting's lesser triumphs. The Pulitzer prize committee had decided to make the awards on a certain evening, and the networks were going to broadcast the entire proceedings, putting each winner on the air. The show is history now—perhaps you heard

it—but it took a curious twist.

One winner, Arthur Krock, who is a hard-working journalist, had promised his wife to take her to the theater that evening. When he was named a winner and invited to the presentation banquet, he sent his regrets—his wife came first. NBC was determined that its plan to broadcast the voices of all the winners should not flop. So they followed Krock to the theater and put him on the air between acts of the play he was witnessing. NBC's special-events department managed it by connecting him via a phone in the "little boys' room."

obvious homage to Welles' 1938 broadcast.

(The two record album was apparently issued in only a "limited edition" and is extremely rare. It includes a beautifully illustrated sixteen page booklet with the complete libretto and eight full color paintings by Peter Goodfello, Geoff Taylor and Michael Trim.)

Sources of Additional Information

Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968 - Pages 84-89. The most scholarly account of the event by America's foremost authority on the history of radio and television broadcasting.

Hadley Cantril, *The Invasion from Mars, a Study in the Psychology of Panic* New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966 (reprint). An invaluable source of information on the ways in which the broadcast affected listeners, complete with statistics, charts and grafts, and quotes from those interviewed. Also includes the first published copy of the original script.

John Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1976 - Pages 407 - 413. This is the best "brief" account yet written; obviously and understandably based to a great extent on Houseman's autobiography.

Larry Stearns Harding, "The Night the Martians Landed," published in a periodical called *Intouch* (date unknown) - Pages 51 - 52, 64, 66, 111. I discovered this fascinating article in the Library of Performing Arts (3rd floor) files at Lincoln Center in New York (along with numerous other articles and clippings relating to the broadcast and its aftermath). What makes

this article particularly useful is that the author was one of the "engineers" present in the control booth during the broadcast and he seems to have remembered which actors played each of the key roles (which cannot be found elsewhere). Written in an informal, "breezy" style, it's fun to read this eyewitness account. (Beware, however, of the inaccuracies in his chronology of Mercury Theatre broadcasts.)

John Houseman, *The Panic Broadcast*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1970. Although lacking in details as to background information surrounding the writing and broadcasting of the script by its author (Houseman is much more illuminating on this), this book is extremely valuable for its inclusion of the entire original script and reprints of a number of relevant newspaper articles. There's also an interview with Arthur C. Clarke, "one of the foremost authorities on space exploration"; information about the planet Mars; and Groves Mill (31 years after the event). I also found the last chapter, "The Privileged Voice" interesting for the author's personal views on radio.

Barbara Leaming, *Orson Welles, a Biography*, New York: Viking Penguin, 1985 - Pages 158 - 163. A disappointingly brief account considering the length of the biography, the author's access to Welles and the obvious importance of this event to his career. (The story of Orson's brother Richard and his role in the affair is the only new information I discovered here.)

Robert Slater, *This... Is CBS, a Chronicle of 60 Years*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988 -

Pages 74 - 81. The most recent "scholarly" account of the broadcast, this book offers little new information (although I did discover the story of FDR's cable to Welles in this account).

Ray Stanich, unpublished radio log of *Mercury Theatre on the Air*, 1988. Extremely useful for citing in accurate chronological order all of the series' broadcasts plus other info about directors, announcers, writers, orchestras, sponsors, etc. (There is some discrepancy in other sources regarding the sequence of shows.)

H.C. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*, (originally published in 1898 in London). You owe it to yourself to read the original (if you've been interested enough to read this far). Available in every library and most bookstores (in recent reprinted editions).

RADIO *and Television* TODAY

SEPTEMBER, 1939

As the second in RADIO TODAY's series of "Programs that Help You Sell Radios," Orson Welles is particularly well qualified. Although only twenty-four years old, Welles has been in radio since 1934. Some of his programs in the last five years include: "The March of Time"; "The Shadow," which he played for two years; "First Person Singular"; and "The Campbell Playhouse." The size of his audience was dramatically demonstrated last season when he frightened the daylights out of many an American home with his "invasion from Mars." Campbell's and Columbia have seen fit to renew his program for another year and with the usual Welles confidence he moves into the Sunday evening spot opposite Charlie McCarthy. While his competition will be keen there's no doubt about his ability to "help dealers sell radios." The selections he will record for Columbia disks should prove another product which his personality will help dealers to sell.

Since the ability to enjoy the \$100,000,000 worth of programs that are free for the dialing is the underlying motive in radio sales, emphasis on radio features and personalities is the best sales inducement the dealer has. By keeping in touch with programs that are on the air, learning about new ones and those scheduled to return to the air, the dealer can insure his customer continuous satisfaction from both the beauty and performance of the radio and the hours of enjoyment it can offer.



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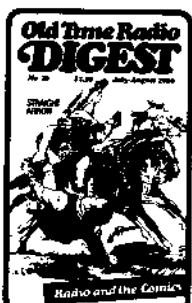
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OLD!**

The Good Guys (and Gals) in the OTR Hobby

By Bob Burnham

With all the negativism that's been in print and talked about in the OTR hobby... talk of dissatisfaction with this organization or that, this individual, this dealer, this club, etcetera, I've been thinking that some "positivism" in the hobby is long overdue. But first, let's briefly look of the facts as far as the state of old time radio in the late 1980's:

THE GOOD NEWS:

1. There are more programs in circulation today than ever before. Nearly complete chronological runs of radios best shows have been available for some time.
2. The sound quality in *general* circulation *far exceeds* what was available a decade ago. Quality sound is readily available if you acquire your material from reputable collectors or dealers.
3. Today's recording equipment technology has made possible professional sounding recordings on affordable equipment. Some collectors may whine about the demise of consumer reel to reel equipment, but the fact is today's better cassette decks will *far out-perform* most consumer grade reel decks of the previous decade running at 3-3/4 ips speed. Furthermore, with digital audio tape equipment on the horizon, the total demise of ALL current home recording methods (with the possible exception of the compact disk) will become reality in time.
4. The tools available to the collector to organize a collection, notably the microcomputer, is rapidly making the

manual cataloging/hand typing of a catalog a thing of the past. Today's computers are more versatile, powerful, affordable and *easier to use* than ever before. That last item, EASY TO USE, is especially true, if you buy the right computer (I'm very biased toward the Apple Macintosh®).¹

5. Today, the major organizations and activities within the hobby are *stronger and better than ever*. This is due largely to the excellent leadership and work done by a relatively small number of individuals. Their work in promoting the hobby, preserving the programs and providing an uncompromising quality of services and activities have kept the old time radio hobby from faltering. We need to mention a few names here, because they deserve the recognition.

First, to *Jay Hickerson*, for his work on the "Friends of Old time Radio" conventions--the biggest and best in the country, and publication of *Hello Again* and numerous researched program logs.

Second, to *John and Larry Gassman* and all who have worked on the SPERDVAC² committee more recently. SPERDVAC is the largest old time radio club in the country, which offers the collector many services and an annual convention held in Los Angeles. A few years back, there were some problems between dealers and SPERDVAC. The problem was

1. Macintosh® is a registered trademark of Apple Computer, Inc.

2. The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy.

addressed, and while some philosophical differences may remain, SPERDVAC and dealers as a whole seem to be existing in harmony and working together toward the same basic goals. SPERDVAC has an excellent newsletter called "Radiogram," and various tape and literature libraries. Speaking of "Radiogram," a word of praise is in order to *Barbara Watkins*, one of their past editors for a job well done. While we're at it, additional mentions should be made of the following individuals:

Dick Olday, who served as editor for several years for the Illustrated Press, the publication of the Old Time Radio Club, based in Buffalo, New York. Along with *Frank Boncore*, and first columnist such as *Jim Snyder*, they have made their club and publication, while not the biggest, one of the very best and most interesting in terms of content. Their current editor, *Linda DeCecco*, seems to be carrying on the tradition which began many years ago by *Chuck Seeley*.

Last, but certainly not least, a tip of the hat to *Bob Burchett*, as well as *Herb Brandenberg*. If you have subscribed to Old Time Radio Digest for any length of Time, you know who I mean. Bob and Herb have succeeded all these years with a magazine for the hobby, where others have failed, lost interest or became discouraged trying to do the same thing.

In more recent years, they have hosted the annual convention for the Cincinnati Old Time Radio Club.

"Good Guys" in the dealer category--
This is a strange one for me to write about and make listing of, because I am a dealer myself. So I will modestly NOT put my name on this list, but I

Radio Humor

BOB BURNS: My uncle has pretty table manners. The other day I took him over to the Waldorf for dinner, and he started eating, using his fingers instead of a knife and fork. My aunt tried to stop him, saying it wasn't sanitary, but he said that if the food ain't clean enough to pick up with your hands then it ain't fitten to eat at all!



Uncle was put in jail for stealing hams out in Van Buren, and that pleased my aunt, 'cause she figured he couldn't disgrace her any more.

But one day she went down to the judge and begged to have uncle let out. The judge asked her why, since her husband would only disgrace her again. And she said: "We're all out of ham again."
(BOB BURNS on Whiteman Music Hall.)

—♦—
CANTOR: What's this—only hash? Don't I get any choice?

PARK: Sure! You get choice. Take it or leave it! . . . What dessert you want, you lucky fellow?

CANTOR: Lucky fellow! But I haven't had anything to eat yet!

PARK: You don't know how lucky you are!

(**EDDIE CANTOR, PARKYAKARK-US, and WALLINGTON in Pebeco Program.**)

will say I am *not* one of the bad guys. This list is not intended to be complete and comprehensive. There are other dealers out there who may be just as good. In other words, just because they didn't make the list *doesn't* mean they're necessarily bad! These are just a few that come *immediately* to my mind. You always hear of people who have BAD experiences with certain dealers. Here's just some of the highly reputable ones:

Ed Carr (Boyertown, PA.)—You've read his columns in the "Digest," (now see the movie—no just kidding!). I've heard a lot of Ed's recordings, and he is one of the best, if not the best for sound quality. His two main sound ratings are "OK" and "NICE." In the average collector's mind, "OK" might correspond to "very good" or even "excellent." Ed's "NICE" is nothing short of fantastic. . you won't find better anywhere!

Ed Cole (Lakeland, FL.)—Same initials, different last name, but still

great sound and selection. You may have read Ed's columns in the Illustrated Press or The Listening Guide to Classic Radio. Ed Cole has lots of unusual and rare material, and some long chronological runs of certain series, including some not readily available from other sources.

Don Aston (Aston's Adventures, Inglewood, CA.)—Don was the first to put together mostly complete chronological runs of shows such as *Gunsmoke*. His catalog is large, comprehensive and extremely well done. He has a top notch sound, as well.

Ron Barnett (Alexandria, VA.)—Today, Ron is probably best known as one of the hobby's best suppliers of blank tape, but you can depend on Ron for good radio show recordings as well. He has an attractive, comprehensive catalog, with sound ratings. Included are many nice runs including Hack Benny. Depend on Ron Barnett for very fine sound quality.

Larry Kiner ("Nostalgia," Redmond, WA.)—Here is another immense

MORTIMER AND CHARLIE

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collection of first rate material. Most series are available, including a tremendous collection of big band/music programs in very good sound.

Terry Salomonson (Audio Classics, Inc., St. Charles, MO.)—Terry is one the best in the midwest. . .he originated several different long runs including most recently, Challenge of the Yukon, and previously, programs like Jerry of the Circus, and the first ENTIRELY complete broadcast run of Speed Gibson of the International Secret Police. Terry has fine sound with a personalized touch.

Gary Kramer (Great American Radio, Mt. Morris, MI.)—Gary offers exclusively, stock cassettes, but has been offering them longer than almost anyone, and has an extensive selection. Like everyone else on this list, Gary is concerned about providing quality sound, and in recent years acquired all new stereo duplicators.

Dan McCoy (McCoy's Recordings)—The McCoy's have been providing

radio shows to collectors for a great many years. Pat and Dee started the business. Dan is their son. Their catalogs are large and attractive, and sound quality is first rate.

Other "Good Guys"

Bill Bragg—(Richardson, TX.) Bill is the founder of The National Museum of Communications in Dallas, and also director of the Yesterday USA Satellite Superstation, which carries public domain old time radio and vintage musci 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Bill has 14 volunteer announcers (many of whom are old radio show collectors) who originate their shows from both coasts and many points in between. Bill's station can be received throughout the continent if you have a home satellite dish, or are connected to a cable company that carries Yesterday USA. The station is non-profit, with facilities designed and financed by Bill, and satellite uplink courtesy of the Shop at Home network. The National Museum of Communications opened to the public

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By EDGAR BERGEN



May 1988, and holds the largest collection of broadcast artifacts in the world.

Barry Hill—Barry is in England, and is probably the best known source for BBC and other foreign programs, as well as U.S. I have heard a great many of his recordings, and he does a beautiful job of preserving fine programming that would otherwise be forever lost.

Although this is an article about the positive things and people in OTR, there are some negative things that need to be recognized.

THE BAD NEWS:

Providing there continues to be an influx of *youth* into our small circle of OTR hobbyists—no matter how few, the future of old time radio is somewhat assured. The central “core” of collectors serving on club committees, and helping with conventions, and the dealers who help bring the shows to the general public serve as a backbone to old time radio.

The conventions being held will allow us to enjoy the fine radio actors, actresses, sound effects men, etc. for many years to come, but being human, they are not immortal. If you’ve never attended a convention, and are somewhat serious about your appreciation of old time radio, you owe it to yourself (and those involved) to attend a convention. . . for without the work these people did in past decades, our hobby would not exist. These are the people we *really* have to thank! Yet at the same time, *without the collectors* many of these people would be largely forgotten today.

Sometimes in pursuit of quality sound, you may encounter one of the “bad guys” within the hobby.

Unfortunately, OTR has its share, and it is sometimes necessary to deal with these people to acquire certain shows. In this situation, all you can do is grin and bear it, then after your dealings are complete, drop the turkey quick! Otherwise, make it a regular habit of dealing with only the “good guys” in the hobby. You can tell they’re the “good guys..” they all wear white hats!...well...maybe not all, but at least Don Aston does!...

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SPECIAL GUEST
WILLARD WATERMAN
WHO PORTRAYED
THE GREAT
GILDERSLEEVE
ON RADIO AND TELEVISION

By all odds, *Gildersleeve* should have been doomed, but into Peary's shoes came Willard Waterman, whose interpretation was so much like the original it was startling. He had come to Chicago in 1936, and had played many of the same bit parts that Peary would play in the following year. Waterman freelanced for such shows as *The First Nighter*, *Ma Perkins* and *Mary Martin*. He was a prolific actor, doing as many as forty radio parts a week. In 1945, he took the lead in *Those Websters*, a zany situation comedy that eventually moved to Hollywood. Waterman went with it, playing such big-time shows as *Escape*, *The Lux Radio Theatre*, *The Whistler*, and *The Screen Guild Theatre*.

Peary's last show was June 14, 1950; when the show returned from vacation on September 6, Waterman was *Gildersleeve*. So well did he blend into *The Great Gildersleeve* that, from one year to the next, the voice is almost indistinguishable.



AUDIO CLASSICS, Inc.

OLD TIME RADIO PROGRAMS ON AUDIO CASSETTE TAPES. AUDIO CLASSICS, INC. is your best source for collecting broadcasts of the golden age of radio. We are again making a special offer of just \$2.50 each for the following cassettes. These prices are below our normal catalog prices and orders will be honored until the end of June 1989. Please mention this ad (#31) when ordering these cassettes, and be sure to include \$3.50 per order for postage and handling. NOTE: These programs are for private home use and enjoyment only. No broadcast rights are stated, implied, or given. AUDIO CLASSICS, INC., assumes no responsibility for unauthorized use.

We have released our new reel-to-reel catalog. More than 20,000 programs are listed in its 200 plus pages. We have also included a complete index so you can find just the right program in only a few seconds. This large catalog is yours for only \$5.00 plus \$2.50 postage and handling. A certificate worth \$10.00 in tapes is included. Order yours today.

For those collectors who collect these programs only on cassettes, you will be pleased to know that you can order cassettes from our reel-to-reel catalog also. Send for your copy.

THE FBI IN PEACE AND WAR (CBS)

- C53001 The Eighty Grand Exit, \$25,000 Bond
- C53002 The Target, The Scientific Touch
- C53003 The Good Boy, The Serious Type
- C53004 The Traveling Man 06/10/53, The Fence 08/17/52
- C53005 Room For Improvement, The Windfall
- C53006 The Executive Type, The Snake Ring

THE BLUE BEETLE (First 12 shows are 30 minutes each)

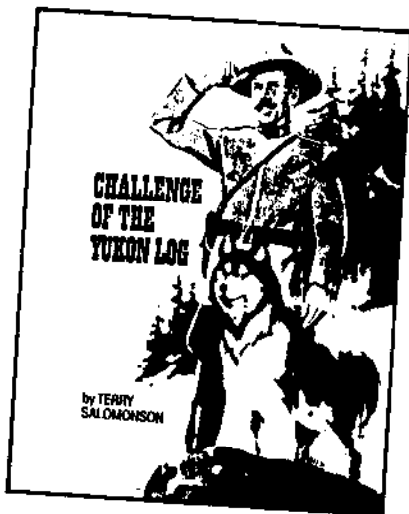
- C60491 05/15/40 # 1 Smashing The Dope Ring
- 05/17/40 # 2 Sabotage And Liquidation
- C60492 05/22/40 # 3 Murder For Profit
- 05/24/40 # 4 Blasting The Dynamite Ring
- C60493 05/29/40 # 5 The Invisible Ghost
- 05/31/40 # 6 Death Rides On Horseback
- C60494 06/05/40 # 7 Death Strikes From The East
- 06/07/40 # 8 The Sea Serpent
- C60495 06/12/40 # 9 The Frame-Up
- 06/14/40 #10 Spirit's Don't Talk
- C60496 06/19/40 #11 Thoroughbreds Always Come Through
- 06/21/40 #12 Smashing The Arson Ring

THE BLUE BEETLE (These shows are two parts and 15 minutes each)

- C60501 06/26/40, 06/28/40 Rounding Up The Payroll Bandits
- 07/03/40, 07/05/40 Crime, Inc.
- C60502 07/10/40, 07/12/40 Saved By A Hair
- 07/17/40, 07/19/40 Finesse In Diamonds
- C60503 07/24/40, 07/25/40 Sabotage, Inc.
- 07/31/40, 08/02/40 Smashing The Restaurant Racket
- C60504 08/07/40, 08/09/40 Two Rackets In One
- 08/14/40, 08/16/40 The Underworld Goes Underground
- C60505 08/21/40, 08/23/40 The Dancing Ghost Of Rocking Hills
- 08/28/40, 08/30/40 The Whale Of Pirates Folly
- C60506 08/04/40, 08/06/40 The Asylum Of Dr. Drear
- 08/11/40, 08/13/40 The Jewel Mystery Of Channel Island

OUR MISS BROOKS (CBS)

- C20601 10/24/40 Surprise Party, 10/31/40 The Football Game
- C20602 11/07/40 The Workhorse, 11/14/40 Babysitting For Three
- C20603 11/21/40 Model School Teacher, 11/28/40 Magazine Photo
- C20604 01/02/49 Old Clothes, 01/09/49 The Heating System
- C20605 01/16/49 Student Government Day
- 01/23/49 Head Of The English Department
- C20606 01/30/49 Custodian Of Student Funds
- 02/06/49 Working In The Stockroom
- C20611 02/13/49 Stretch, Basketball Star, 02/20/49 Le Frog
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- C20613 03/13/49 Cafeteria Boycott, 03/20/49 Poetry Mix-up
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