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William Conrad, TV's 'Fatman,' is dead at 73

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — William Conrad, who played the rotund district attorney in TV's "Jake and the Fatman" and whose booming voice narrated such popular shows as "Rocky & His Friends" and "The Fugitive," died Friday of a heart attack. He was 73.



Conrad

Conrad became ill at his home and died at the Medical Center of North Hollywood, hospital spokeswoman Tricia Spellman said.

Conrad played J.L. "Fatman" McCabe, a tough district attorney and former cop, on the CBS-TV series "Jake and the Fatman," which ran from 1987 to 1992. He also starred in the detective series "Canon," which ran from 1971 to 1976 on CBS.

Conrad was the original Marshal Matt Dillon in the "Gunsmoke" radio network drama, which ran for 11 years on CBS. His

resonant voice provided background narration on many TV programs, most notably "The Fugitive" and "The Invaders."

During the 1960s, he also narrated the animated television series "Rocky & His Friends," a cult favorite also once called "The Bullwinkle Show."

In 1946 he made his motion picture debut in "The Killers." His other acting credits include "Body and Soul," "Sorry, Wrong Number," "East Side, West Side," "The Naked Jungle," "Five Against the House," "Johnny Concho," "-30-" and "The Road Back."

Conrad worked in the production and direction of such films as "An American Dream" and "First to Fight."

"He could be irascible and very blunt and direct in his opinions, but underneath it all he was a very decent, thoughtful and considerate gentleman," said Dean Hargrove, executive producer of "Jake and the Fatman."

He is survived by his wife, Tippy, and a son, Christopher, who lives in Seattle.

William Conrad, Dead at 73

William Conrad passed away on February 10 of a heart attack. **Ralph Doty** sent in this article...

As you probably know, William Conrad's impact on radio went well beyond "Gunsmoke". His voice was heard on dozens of radio programs as "heavies".

- One of "Escape's" best know episodes was "Leinengen Versus the Ants". William Conrad had the leading role. The radio program was the basis for a 1954 movie, "The Naked Jungle". A TV series derived from "Escape" was briefly on the air in 1950 and Conrad was the narrator. He sometimes also served as the narrator for the radio show.

- The "CBS Radio Workshop" was on the air from 1956-57. Conrad was the narrator on all 87 episodes.

- "The Damon Runyon Theatre" was on the air from 1949-50. Among the cast of regulars in leading roles was William Conrad.

- The little-known radio program "Jason and the Golden Fleece", an adventure series, starred Conrad as the bartender, Louis Dumont. Only three episodes of this program are known to exist. On the air from 1952-53.

- "Johnny Madero, Pier 53" was a summer show on the Mutual Network in 1947. William Conrad was one of the lead characters.

- The anthology program "Mr. President" was on ABC from 1947-53, featuring little known stories about various U.S. presidents. Conrad appeared frequently on this show.

- "Nightbeat" was on NBC from 1950-52. Frank Lovejoy was reporter Randy Stone. William Conrad was frequently a performer on this show.

- "On Stage" was on CBS from 1953-54, starring Elliott Lewis and his wife, Cathy. Conrad was often a supporting actor.

- "Pete Kelly's Blues" was on NBC in 1951. Only seven episodes exist. It started Jack Webb as Pete Kelly, and William Conrad was often a supporting actor on this show.

Research by Ralph Doty.

Editors Note: It's a shame that Mr. Conrad died... He had more impact on radio and TV than most other stars. Thanks, Ralph, for the article...

Deaths in Radio

Dinah Shore died on February 24 of cancer. Dinah sang on **The Eddie Cantor Pabst Blue Ribbon Show** on numerous occasions, and starred in many of her own films.

Carl Froelich, 'Collector' of Radio Programs Since 1947!!

The results of an interview with Carl Froelich...

Few old-time radio collectors and dealers have taped shows off the air in the late 1940s. Perhaps, most families had never even heard of "tape recorders" in 1947. However, Carl Froelich, Jr., taped radio programs that were aired over the networks in the late 40s. "I liked the shows very much," Carl explains, "and they never repeated them." "I never though anybody else would want to listen to it." Among his favorites were Jack Benny, Amos & Andy, and Burns & Allen.

Carl Froelich started recording radio programs off the air in 1947, when he purchased his

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HANDBOOK OF OLD-TIME RADIO
A Comprehensive Guide to Golden Age
Radio Listening and Collecting
Jon D. Swartz & Robert C. Reinehr

825 pp. 1993 92-42120 ISBN 0-8108-2590-2 \$92.50

BOOK REVIEW

BY JACK FRENCH

There are a few key attributes that we have a right to expect in a reference work: thoroughness, logical organization, accuracy and ease of usage. For the most part, this book satisfies these requirements. Authors Swartz and Reinehr utilized not only standard archival holdings in researching this volume, but also reviewed taped transcriptions, OTR journals, and recollections of OTR stars, researchers, and collectors.

The book is divided into three sections: a title-listing of about 4,500 network shows, a descriptive log of about 2,000 shows, and an appendix on OTR collecting. In the first section, the shows are broken down into eleven categories, i.e., comedy, musical, drama, juvenile, etc. Each show merits one line, setting forth the program title, network(s), inclusive dates of run, and number of shows now in circulation. This part of the book serves as a good reference for the shows not covered in detail in the second part.

In the second section, short descriptions (ranging in length from one sentence to a sizeable paragraph) are provided for about 2,000 shows. These brief narratives usually include: name of sponsor, frequency and duration of series, leads in cast, and the general premise of the show. If the show had other names, these are listed also, as are "spin-offs." The majority of the descriptions are well-written, informative and appropriate. Usually the relative length of the entry is proportional to the quality, popularity or tenure of the show, but not always... Sky King's write-up is twice the length of Gunsmoke; The Whistler rates more text than Suspense or Escape. Jack Benny and Jack Armstrong, for no particular reason, are the same length.

The summaries on the soap operas are particularly good, with cast changes over the years documented well. There are excellent summaries of many obscure shows, such as L'il Abner, Popeye, Affairs of Ann Scotland, Chick Carter, Road To Danger, and even Wheatonville Sketches.

In the last section, a good bibliography lists most major OTR reference books. Some are evaluated, including Dunning's "Tune In Yesterday", accurately described as the "best-known and best-written book on OTR", and Terrace's "Radio's Golden Years", which is termed full of mistakes. Tom Tumbusch's valuable "Illustrated Radio Premium Guide", usually ignored in standard OTR bibliographies, is present here.

The major failings in this book are two-fold: the factual errors in the descriptive logs and the outdated information in the appendix. The latter problem may be explained by the lapse of time (reputed to be three years) between acceptance of the final draft and the date of publication. That would account for the many inaccurate addresses for OTR libraries, fan clubs, and dealers. At least one OTR collector listed is now deceased. A more complete and accurate listing of these groups and individuals may be found in "The Nostalgia Entertainment Sourcebook" by Skretvedt and Young, or the current NARA NEWS OTR Source Sheet.

But the factual errors in the descriptive logs are more troubling because the twelve years of research the authors claim they expended, should have resulted in a more reliable source book. Among the mistakes: Straight Arrow was on MBS from 1949 to 1951, not 1948 to 1950. Steve Adams was not raised among the Comanches--he was a Comanche raised by white ranchers. And the only announcer for the entire series was Frank Bingman, not Fred Cole.

In the MBS 1949-55 version of Bobby Benson, he was not played by Billy Halop and Richard Wanamaker; they portrayed him in the CBS show in the Thirties. Ivan Cury did have the role on MBS, but his name is mis-spelled "Curry." No mention is made of Clive Rice,

Carl Froelich, continued from page 2.

first taperecorder. The shows were recorded on "paper" tape with an oxide coating, and the reels that the tape was secured on were made of aluminum. (This is why so many of the few "open reels" from the 1940s were most likely not preserved, as they were used to help the war effort.)

Mr. Froelich taped the programs when he had other obligations, or he would tape one show on a certain network, and listen to another program on another.

In the mid-1960s, when Froelich was in the Navy, he realized that "the younger guys that never heard them [old radio shows] before really liked them." At this time, he began to sell programs from his collection to others, for a small price.

Several years later, when working at the Brooklyn Navy Yards, he started a small enterprise by distributing "open reels" through a friend who owned a comic book store.

In the 1970s, Froelich assembled his own catalog and became one of the first old-time radio dealers in the business. Still distributing old shows, Carl explains that "I've taped a number of shows that nobody has ever gotten." Yes, this is the glory of having taped numerous radio shows when they were originally aired!

Among Froelich's rare shows that are not even mentioned in John Dunning's book, *Tune In Yesterday* are **Cousin Willie**, **The Couple Next Door**, and **The Mario Lanza Show** (these programs are all in his current catalog). He also received shows like **The Longines Symphonette** from Army officers that passed away and left behind Armed Forces Radio Network transcriptions.

Since Carl Froelich began "collecting" in 1947, he has more than quadrupled his library. He offers many shows from his collection on reel-to-reel and cassette to the public for a very good price. "I'm doing it for fun," Mr. Froelich explains... Isn't this the way it should be????

**Carl Froelich can be contacted at (717) 235-6122; or written to the following: 2 Heritage Farm Drive, New Freedom, PA 17349.

"Book Review," continued from page 3.

who under his professional name of Clyde Campbell, was radio's last and longest Bobby Benson; he had the part from 1951 to 1955.

Gangbusters began in 1936, not 1935, and the show had no cooperation from the FBI. Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the show's narrator briefly, was not in the U.S. Army then. His rank came from the New Jersey State Police, which he headed during the Lindbergh Kidnaping investigation. His well-known conflicts with J. Edgar Hoover led Phillips Lord to pick Schwarzkopf for his show.

The long list of friends, colleagues, and OTR enthusiasts who are personally thanked in the foreword as helpers in this book may offer an explanation for what went wrong. Since I knew many of them, I contacted several to ascertain their contribution to the book. Most of them said they had little contact with the authors, and none had an opportunity to view the galley proofs. One of them did not even know the authors and had never been approached by either. It is regrettable that this body of OTR experts was not afforded the chance to point out the many errors---before it went to press.

Bottom-line: is this source book worth ninety-two bucks? Yes, with reservations. Price is a relative thing, of course. Jim Harmon's newest book, as well as Bob Mott's, are around forty dollars, and are certainly less than half the size and scope of this handbook. This book does have many strengths and covers plenty of shows not previously described in any other OTR reference source. But, because of its errors, most OTR fans and researchers will utilize this volume as a starting-place, not as the authoritative reference book it should have been.

**"Old-Time Radio Drama" is aired each Sunday evening from 8:30-11:00 p.m.
on the Ideas Network of Wisconsin Public Radio!**

03/06/94 Challenge of the Yukon, "The Big Strike Mine," 02/20/39
03/06/94 Lux Radio Theatre, "Stage Door"
03/06/94 Gangbusters, "The Cowboy Killers"
03/06/94 Inner Sanctum, "Killer at Large," 01/09/50
03/06/94 Mindwebs 055, "The Bible After Apocalypse," 04/30/76

03/13/94 Bold Venture, "The 12-Year Pact"
03/13/94 Mark Trail, "The Rabid Foxes," 03/20/50
03/13/94 Dimension X, "The Competitor," 11/19/50
03/13/94 Weird Circle, "Murders in the Rue Morgue"
03/13/94 Suspense, "The Fountain Plays," 08/10/43
03/13/94 Mindwebs 054, "The Metal Man," 04/23/76

03/21/94 Lives of Harry Lime, "El Zorro"
03/21/94 Nine o'Clock Theatre, "Home Thoughts from Abroad"
03/21/94 Lone Ranger, "Capture Billy Behung," 08/30/50
03/21/94 Topper, "Rahja the Mystic," 09/16/45
03/21/94 Carling Theatre, "The Skeleton Coast Incident"
03/21/94 Mindwebs 053, "En Passant," 04/16/76

03/28/94 Gene Autry, "Grandma Bryan"
03/28/94 Gunsmoke, "Help the Hantrees," 12/18/52
03/28/94 Theater Five, "Big Deal on Sutton East"
03/28/94 Fat Man, "Murder Makes a Ham"
03/28/94 Man Called X, "The Wagenov Formula"
03/28/94 Mindwebs 052, "The Imposter," 04/09/76

91.5 FM WGBW Green Bay	90.3 FM WHLA La Crosse
91.1 FM WLFM Appleton	93.0 AM WLBL Auburndale
90.7 FM WHAD Milwaukee	88.3 FM WHWC Eau Claire
97.0 AM WHA Madison	90.3 FM WHBM Park Falls
91.3 FM WHHI Highland	91.3 FM KUWS Superior
	90.3 FM WRST Oshkosh

**Special thanks to Norman Gilliland for the mentions of the
OTRG on Wisconsin Public Radio!**

***Classic Film & Television: It Still Lives* will not be published! We are sorry for any confusion in last month's issue of OTRG...**

Old-Time Radio Gazette

Tom C. Miller

2004 East 6th Street

Superior, WI 54880-3632

First Class Mail

Inside!

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