



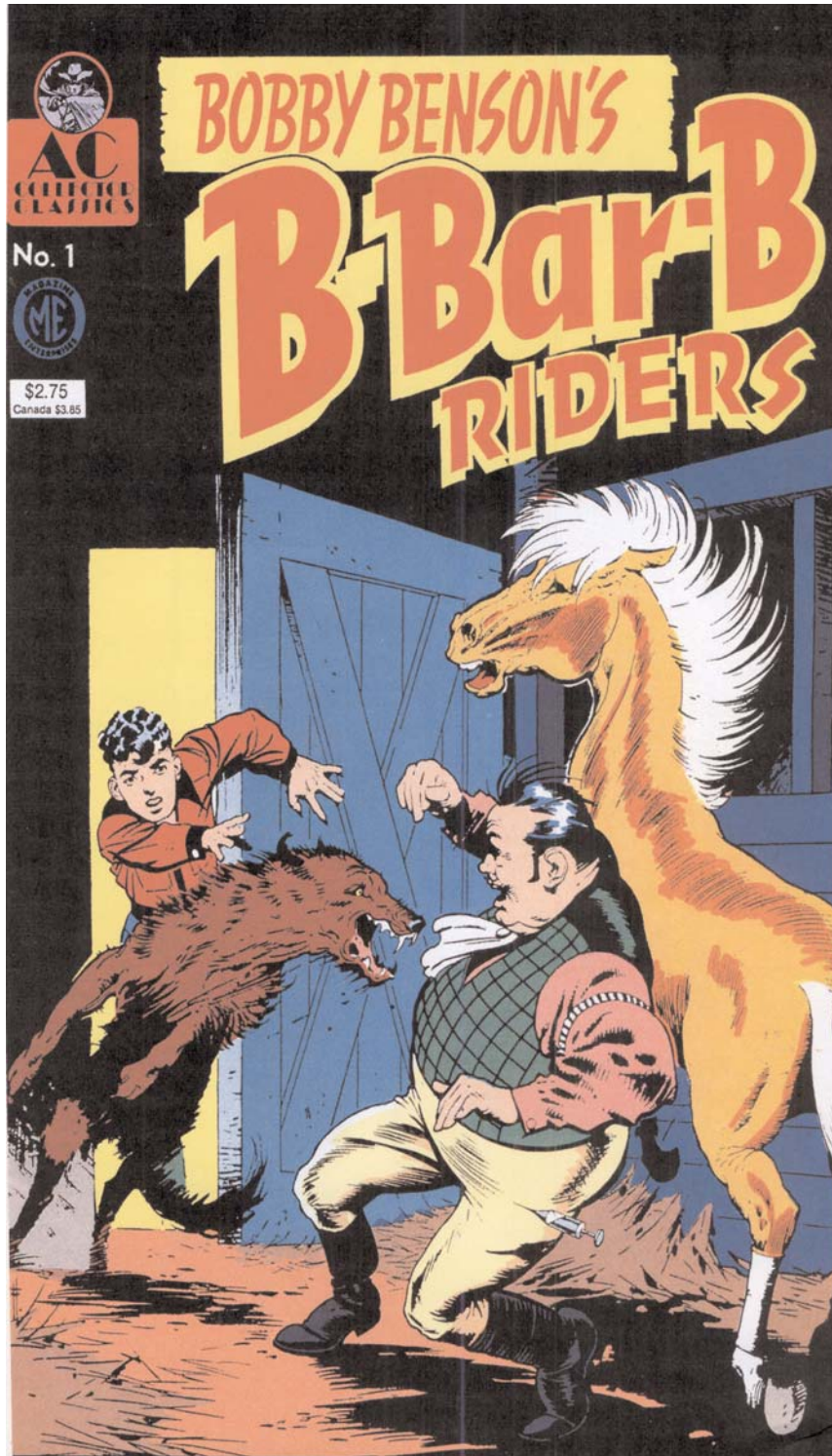
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BOBBY BENSON: THE COWBOY KID by Jack French © 2014



AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION:

Mutual's *Bobby Benson* (1949-55) was my favorite western as a kid but not until 1988 did I begin any serious research of that series and its CBS ancestor of the 1930s. Since then I've shared the results of my continuing research in articles in various OTR publications throughout the years, including *Radiogram*, *The Illustrated Press*, *RCA Newsletter*, *OTR Digest*, *Radio Recall*, and most recently, Bob Jennings' *Fade-away* #40. Some of these articles now appear on the Internet. What you are about to read represents virtually everything significant that I've learned about these two series and this contains substantial information I've not shared before, as well as correcting my previous errors. At the end of this article, I've tried to list all the wonderful people in this hobby who have generously contributed to my research on this series.

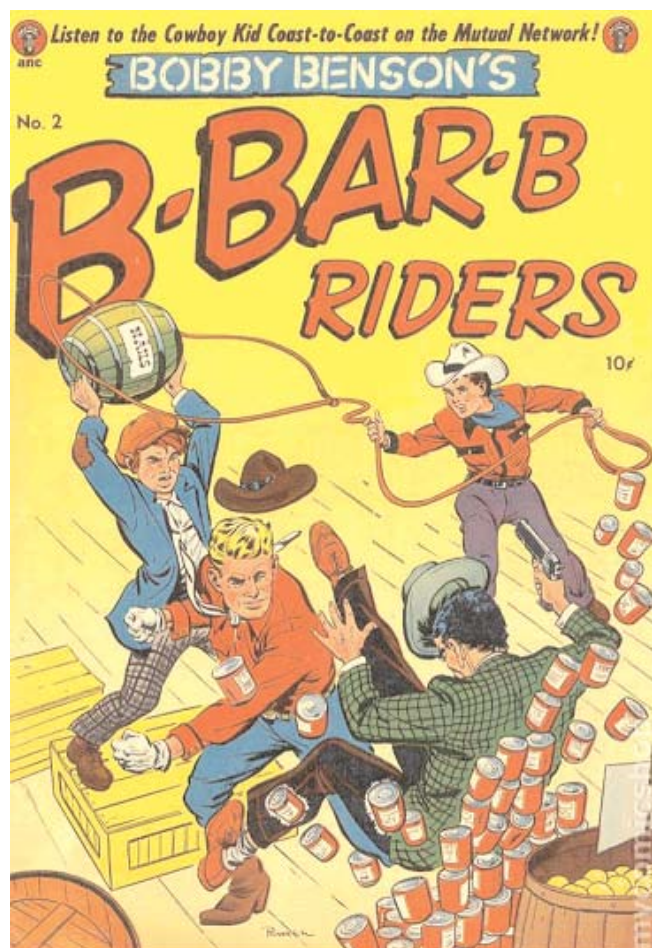
When Herbert Colin Rice first created the radio character of *Bobby Benson* for CBS in the summer of 1932, he had no idea that his yet-unborn nephew, Clive Rice, would eventually be Mutual's last

and longest in the role portraying “The Cowboy Kid” at the microphone. *Bobby Benson* would become both the first, as well as the last, juvenile western hero on network radio. It predated *The Lone Ranger* and *Tom Mix* programs, both of which debuted in 1933. *Bobby Benson* had its last broadcast in 1955, outlasting all other kids’ radio westerns, including *Hopalong Cassidy*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *Straight Arrow*.

Herbert Rice (called “Herb” by his American friends and “Bert” by his British relatives) was a talented immigrant who arrived from England in 1924 at the age of nineteen. He was briefly an actor in regional theatre in the Mid-Atlantic region but by the time he was 25, he had found his niche in broadcasting in Buffalo, NY as an actor, writer, director, and advertising salesman for the CBS affiliate. He was the first to pair “Budd and Stoopnagle”, and he discovered juvenile singer, Robert Smith (who grew up to be “Buffalo Bob” with *Howdy Doody*.) Prior to *Bobby Benson*, Rice had created and produced several local radio drama series, including: *The Green Rose*, *Police Story*, *Cloud Trail* and *The Cobra*.

The eventual sponsor of the first *Bobby Benson* series had begun when two Hecker brothers started a flour mill in 1843 in NY and by 1906 had formed a subsidiary, Hecker Cereal Company. The firm bought out Hornby’s Oats (H-O) in Buffalo, NY in 1909 and then both merged into the Standard Milling Company in 1925, but retained their brand name. The Hecker H-O Company in the early 1930s produced and sold flour, cattle feed, and cereals. In the summer of 1932 they approached Rice, through their advertising firm, Erwin, Wasey & Company, with an offer to sponsor a new kids’ adventure radio series to promote their cereals, primarily Force and H-O Oats.

Rice quickly created a scenario about a



young orphan, Bobby Benson, who under the guardianship of Sunny Jim, owned and operated the H-Bar-O Ranch in Texas. Sunny Jim, an old gentleman who looked like Ichabod Crane, was then a symbol for H-O cereals. The general scenario that Rice laid out was not complicated but allowed for plenty of western action and mystery, including cattle rustling, renegade Indians, and Mexican outlaws. A contract was drawn up with the cereal company to sponsor this new series and Rice talked CBS into airing the 15 minute show nationwide, which he entitled *H-Bar-O Rangers*.

There was a still-unexplained delay in getting this series on the air. Buffalo newspapers reported in July 1932 the show’s scripts had been written and the leads cast. In August similar news reports surfaced, indicating a September

debut. For whatever reason, the series actually did not begin until November 14, 1932. It would go on for a total of 78 episodes, all broadcast from CBS's affiliate in Buffalo, Station WGR, until March 1933.

Local Buffalo radio actors played all the roles. An 11 year old son of an attorney, Richard Wanamaker, voiced Bobby Benson: he had two years of radio experience when he won the role. Lorraine Pankow (Rice's first wife) portrayed Aunt Lily; she was also in charge of WKBW's *Dramatic School of the Air*. Other characters in the series were: Little Bart, Windy Wales, teen-aged Polly, and three ranch hands: Waco, Bill, and Miquel. Fred Dampier was in the cast, but his role is not known. Not only did Rice write and direct the series, he also played the cook, Wong Lee, and the foreman, originally called "Walt Mason" but later changed to "Buck Mason." The announcer was Edward Krug and the music was provided by Erwin Glucksman.

Within months, the Hecker Company had to assign a dozen employees to answer the fan

mail and process the box tops arriving daily in exchange for premiums advertised on the program: code books, cereal bowls, card games, glass tumblers, etc. Locally Rice promoted the radio show with Wanamaker, in western attire and astride a pony named Silver Spot, in numerous personal appearances.

Many radio programs of that era attempted to gain publicity for the sponsor's product by working it into the name of the radio series and that's why Rice titled it "The H-O Rangers." But the newspapers, in compiling daily radio guides for their subscribers, were unwilling to provide this free publicity so they at first referred to the show as "Rangers." Later, print media would call the show "Bobby Benson and Sunny Jim" or simply "Bobby Benson."

By the time the series ended in Buffalo in early 1933, its first urban legend arose, claiming that the character of Bobby Benson was being played, not by a juvenile actor as advertised, but by an 18 year old midget. This charge first appeared in the May 1933 issue of respected *Scribner's Magazine*. Rice and CBS proved this to be a lie and Scribner's printed a retraction and apology in their September 1933 edition, giving full credit to Richard Wanamaker, then 12 years old.

CBS executives, well aware of the series' popularity, decided to move the production to Manhattan in the fall of 1933 where they recast nearly all of the parts. The only actor who made the move to NYC was Pankow as "Aunt Lily" and she and Rice were eventually divorced. Twelve year old Billy Halop became the new Bobby Benson and his younger sister, Florence, was cast as Polly. Sunny Jim remained but would later be phased out in favor of a new character, Diogenes Dodwaddle, played by Tex Ritter. Harka, a Native American Indian (played



BOBBY BENSON BOOK FREE WITH

H-O OATS pkg. **10c**

PHILLIPS

PORK and BEANS

can **5c**

QUAKER

PUFFED WHEAT

10c Package **7c**

From the Schenectady Gazette 12-15-36

by Craig McDonnell) was added. McDonnell also portrayed occasional children, using a falsetto voice. "Bobby" now had two friends of his age, Black Bart and Jock, respectively portrayed by Eddie Wragge and Walter Tetley. Windy Wales was still in the cast, but the foreman's name was changed from Buck Mason to Tex Mason, who was played by Neil O'Malley. Cowboy music was handled by the Mitchell Brothers (Bill on guitar, John on banjo) plus Johnny Shea, who was also the voice of ranch-hand, Waco. Others in supporting roles were Jean Sothern and John Shea.

Peter Dixon, an established writer for other network radio shows, including *Raising Junior*, became the head writer for the *H-Bar-O Rangers*, although John Battle would write the 1934-35 season. Dixon had significant influence on the series and was sent to Los Angeles to supervise the casting of the show for the west coast version of it. In addition to writing the scripts, Dixon wrote three books, "The Lost Herd" and "Tunnel of Gold" which the sponsor distributed from its cornucopia of radio premiums. His third book, "Bobby Benson on the H-Bar-O Ranch," containing its origin story, was released as a Big Little Book in 1934 by the Whitman Company. All of these books contained recycled stories from the radio series.

Juvenile listeners could obtain the two paperbacks, "Lost Herd" and "Tunnel of Gold" by sending in boxtops of H-O cereals. But the books were also promoted in grocery stores to boost sales of Force and H-O Oats. Newspaper ads from various food markets in the mid-1930s offered one of the books free with purchase of H-O Oats, which was only ten cents a package. Other souvenirs were available when a customer bought other H-O cereals. Hecker's Cream Farina was two 14 oz. packages for 25

DIAL TWISTING WITH KI



Billy Halop, radio's "Bobby Benson," has swapped his pinto for the real article which he is riding daily during the Madison Square Garden rodeo. Still in his chaps and spurs, he races

back to the CBS studios for "Bobby Benson," which is broadcast over the Columbia network on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I'd like to know if anyone can get the program here. It's on the air at 5:15 p.m.; and the nearest station carrying the broadcast is WCAU at 1270 k.c....

From the Topeka, KS "Daily Capital" 11-8-35

cents while two 10 oz. packages of Force were 23 cents. However with the latter a Bobby Benson glass tumbler was free.

In addition to the CBS version airing from New York with the Halops in the leads, a second production took place on the West Coast in Los Angeles as part of the Don Lee Network. The west coast cast while not fully identified yet, is beginning to be disclosed. Muriel Reynolds played Aunt Lily and Lawrence Honeyman was Black Bart. Detmer Poppen, a Gilbert and Sullivan actor, was cast as Sunny Jim. (Years later, he would be the radio voice of *Popeye*.) The two leads were portrayed by juvenile Hollywood actors, with George Breakstone as Bobby Benson and Jean Darling in the

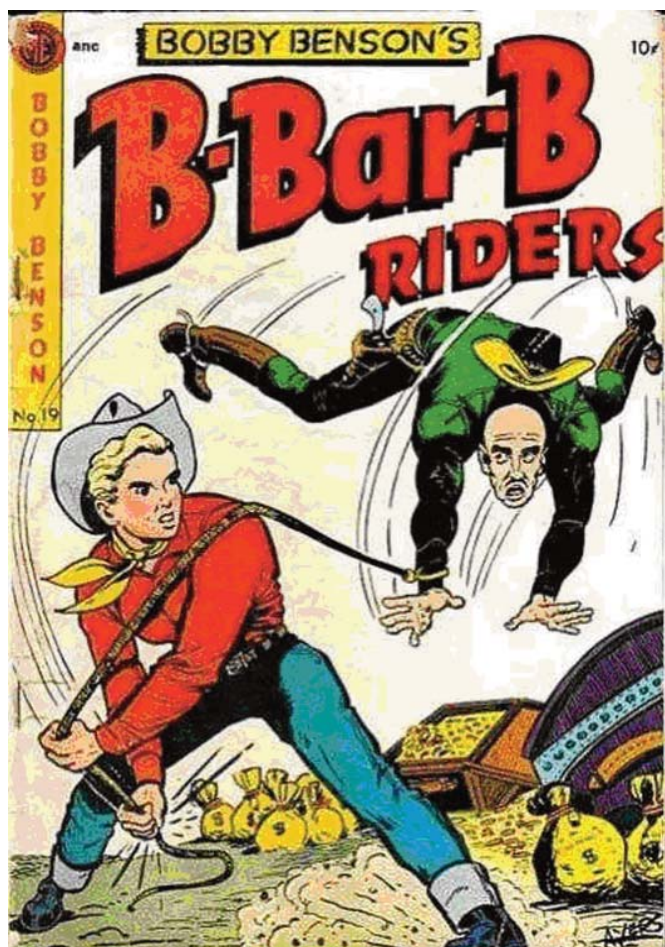
role of Polly Armstead. Both of them were well known to movie audiences of that period. Breakstone had played leading roles in several motion pictures (including *Great Expectations*, *Dark Angel*, and *Swanee River*) and almost got the part of "Puck" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which Mickey Rooney won. Darling starred in dozens of Our Gang comedies and was also in 1934's *Jane Eyre*. She would go on to be a Broadway performer and did television work in the 1950s.

Although there were an estimated 700 programs, not a single audio copy has surfaced yet and only two scripts from the entire CBS run have been uncovered so far. Both of them are contained in different anthologies. In one, the H-Bar-O Rangers are broadcasting a radio show promoting Tex's candidacy for sheriff when arch-

enemy "The Scorpion" tries to break into the studio. In the other, Bobby and Tex are flying in a "round-the-world" air race. This script, number #690, its first page bearing the name of the advertising company who handled the Hecker account (Erwin, Wasey & Company) shows how far the scenario had been stretched from its original western ranch concept. In this episode, the plane's passengers include Harka, Little Luke Ledbetter (voiced by a teen-aged Bert Parks), Hulda (a little girl) and Mr. Copeland, the inventor of their monoplane. The aircraft, with Bobby at the controls, passes above Shanghai, China and is over some isolated Pacific island where they see four survivors of a crashed airplane, and in the nearby lagoon, a sunken Spanish galleon.

With the leading role in this series, Billy Halop got star treatment away from the microphone. His photograph was displayed on radio premiums by the Hecker Company, and as "Bobby Benson" he made personal appearances at Madison Square Garden and toured summers with the W. T. Johnson Circus Rodeo. Four actors from the *H-Bar-O Rangers*, in character, rode proudly in Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus in Manhattan reported *Variety* in April 1934. They were Billy Halop (Bobby), Florence Halop (Polly), Lorraine Pankow (Aunt Lily) and Eddie Wragge (Black Bart). Halop eventually got a major role in Broadway's *Dead End* which led to a Hollywood career, thus ending his radio work. His sister, Florence, although she appeared in a few movies, stayed active in network radio, later playing major roles on *Duffy's Tavern*, *The Jimmy Durante Show*, and many others.

The canard about the use of midgets on the series was raised again in the November 18, 1936 issue of *Variety*, under the headline:



“Hecker Scams Radio--Kid Show Ran 5 Years.”
This article said in part:

“Bobby Benson and the H-Bar-O has been on the air since 1932.....Script was originated by Herbert Rice in Buffalo. Last spring the sponsor changed the show completely, employing a new writer and using midgets as actors, with only Billy Halop and Neil O’Malley from the previous cast.”

The midgets’ tale made no sense at all. None of the Bobby Benson radio programs on CBS were ever broadcast before a live audience; they were always produced in a closed studio. And even in the Thirties, there was no difficulty in finding youngsters skilled in radio work to fill out a cast. The Professional Children’s School (PCS) in Manhattan was filled with students who were talented and experienced performers, in radio and the stage.

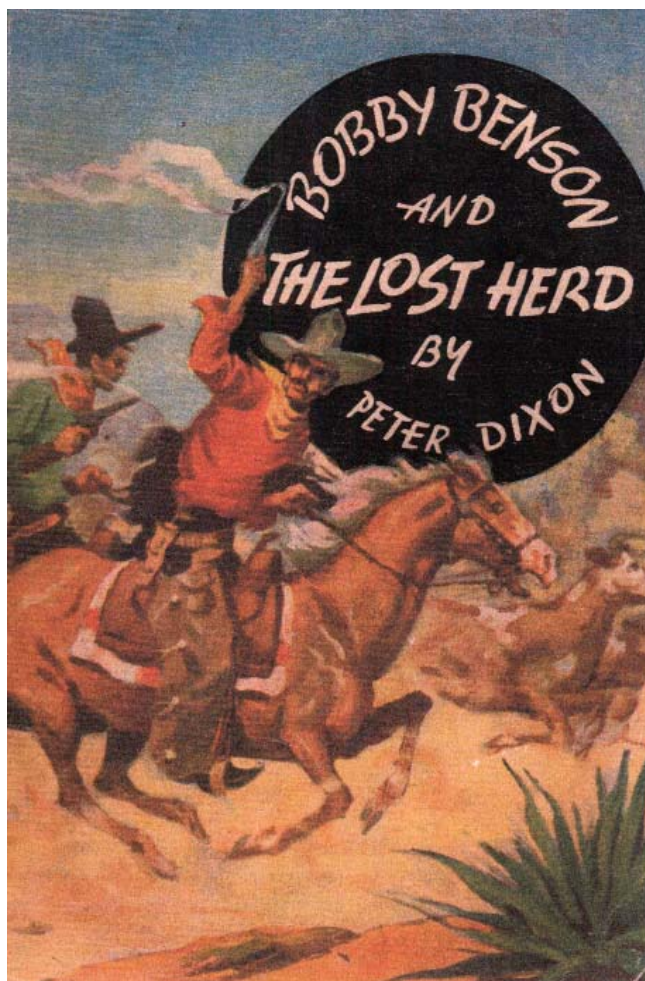
Both Billy and Florence Halop both attended PCS but that did not deter him from becoming too proud of being “Bobby Benson”. I interviewed Huntz Hall in St. Louis in 1974; he had been in the stage play *Dead End* with Halop and in many *Dead End Kids* movies after that. “It’s sad” Hall told me, “Billy never got along with any of the Dead End Kids, and we couldn’t get along with him.” Hall went on, “Billy just never got over being Bobby Benson. He had to be the star so he insisted on making more money than the rest of us. It just wasn’t fair.”

Although the thrice-weekly CBS version went off the air in December 1936, the Hecker Company continued to use Bobby Benson in its advertising campaign. In 1937, he was featured prominently on the backs of their cereal boxes, all of which contained “Bobby Benson money,” actually coupons worth two and a half cents that kids could use to buy gum or candy. Also a long

running Sunday comic strip, through 1938, promoted “Bobby Benson money” with drawings of his adventures.

Flash forward to 1949: by this time, kids’ radio adventures had switched from episodic 15 minute shows that took 6-10 weeks to conclude a story line to half-hour programs containing one complete adventure. In mid-1949, Herb Rice, now a naturalized citizen and a Vice President of Mutual in Manhattan, resurrected *Bobby Benson* as a 30 minute show. It would air from WOR two or three times weekly, alternating its time slot with *Straight Arrow*, produced on the west coast.

It was usually a sustaining show, although Kraft’s Candy did sponsor it for one season. The ranch was renamed the B-Bar-B and only



two people from the CBS show were in the Mutual one: Peter Dixon, the writer, and Craig McDonnell, actor. The latter played two separate ranch hands, Harka and Irish, the second with a Celtic brogue. (In his scripts, McDonnell marked his Harka lines with red ink and his Irish ones with green to prevent confusion.) Twelve year old Ivan Cury was "Bobby," veteran Charles Irving played "Tex" and the cast was rounded out by a mid-20s Don Knotts playing the geezer, Windy Wales. The rousing theme song was not original; it was "Westward Ho!" by Hugo Reisenfeld, first composed for the 1923 silent film, *The Covered Wagon*. All the animal sounds were voiced by Frank Milano, a talented guy who also was the voice of *Mighty Mouse* in Terrytoons. The announcer was Carlton Warren, nicknamed "Cactus Carl." Jim Goode performed the sound effects, assisted by Barney Beck.

Robert "Bob" Novak, only 31, but a very experienced radio director (he'd done *March of Time*, *Kate Smith Hour*, *Meet the Press*, etc.) was put in charge of the B-Bar-B and directed it for the entire time it was on the air. He used a variety of talented people in supporting roles: Jim Boles and wife, Athena Lord, Ross Martin, Bill Zuckert, Earl George and Gil Mack. J. Robert "Bob" Haag later replaced Irving as "Tex."

Peter Dixon, the chief writer, was a native of Canada and a former newspaper reporter. He really impressed Novak with his work ethic and concentration. Novak told me that Dixon "could grind out a stimulating half-hour script at the drop of a hat, and if necessary could do it sitting at his desk in the middle of Times Square during rush hour." But now Dixon was beset with overwork and illness so he was assisted by his son, David, to keep up the pace of the required scripts; at some periods the show aired 5-6 times weekly.



L to R Don Knotts, Bob Novak (Director) Ivan Cury, Jim Shean (Chief writer) SPERDVAC convention (circ 1993)

Writer Jim Shean, a Navy veteran, was hired in the fall of 1949 and within a few years was writing nearly all of the scripts. In the mid-50s, Shean had convinced Novak to let him write occasional humorous scripts, not those purely adventure and mystery. While the scripts still contained excitement, they were primarily written for laughter and usually featured Windy Wales in some sort of predicament. Some of these episodes still exist in audio form, including: "Cyrano Wales," "Tunnel of Trouble," and "Grandma Wales."

The music on the show, both the theme song and the scene bridges was originally done by a live trio (guitar, drums, and organ.) Later, the group was reduced to just the organist, usually John Gart but occasionally Hank Sylvern or Ernestine Holmes. By the end of the run, economical cost cuts did away with all live music, resulting in recorded music played by their usual studio engineer, Jim Shannon.

Over its many years, three boys (and one girl) would play the leading role of "Bobby" on Mutual radio and two of the lads would also star

in a local WOR television show. The first TV show included Ivan Cury and Don Knotts. McDonnell, a portly Caucasian, could not pass for Harka nor Irish so he was eliminated. Irving was too old to play "Tex" so Al Hodge was hired in his place. Hodge would later be used in personal appearances as "Tex" along with Cury and Knotts playing their usual roles.

The television series began in April 1950 and WOR-TV shot it live at the New Amsterdam Theater. Later it was shot in the new WOR-TV studios on 66th Street, formerly the Manhattan Riding Stables, so in summers, past odors returned. The show was sponsored by Foxe's U-Bet Chocolate. Hal Cranton wrote and directed the show; he had to use a lot of stock footage to convey corrals, horses, cow herds, etc. It was a rigorous schedule for the cast. Not only did they have to rehearse and perform the radio show

three times a week, they had to memorize their lines and blocking for the half hour TV show, rehearse it six hours on Mondays and three hours on Tuesday prior to the live show on Tuesday nights. The only relief the cast got was that the TV scripts allowed for some improvisation. While no video has survived from this show, virtually all of Cranton's TV scripts, from April 1950 to September 1951, are archived at the UCLA Performing Arts Collection.

Cury was sent out on several personal appearances, including the Pony Express Rodeo in St. Joseph, MO, the Macy's Parade, and Ringling Brothers Circus. Occasionally he was accompanied by Knotts as "Windy", David Dixon as "Tex" and whatever Native American local actor Rice could find to impersonate "Harka." (Only the latter was paid.) Since Ivan was expected to "perform" at some of these events, it was decided to get him a guitar (like Roy Rogers and Gene Autry.) His parents took him to a prominent NYC music store where they determined that the guitars were bigger than little Ivan. The second choice was a Martin tenor ukelele which was \$ 35, a steep price in those days but his parents hoped that they'd be reimbursed by Rice or the station. They were wrong, but Ivan got to keep the ukelele, which he has to this day. It's now worth \$ 1,200 and he still loves to play it.

The impressive popularity of the radio series could be demonstrated, not just on its broadcasting ratings, but also the turnout of fans at "Bobby's" personnel appearances. At such an event at the Manhattan Macy's Store, crowds of several thousand arrived to see Ivan Cury as "Bobby." The overwhelmed staff quickly steered the crowd into lines that slowly passed by "Bobby" for a quick handshake or autograph. Ivan's parents, who had brought his younger

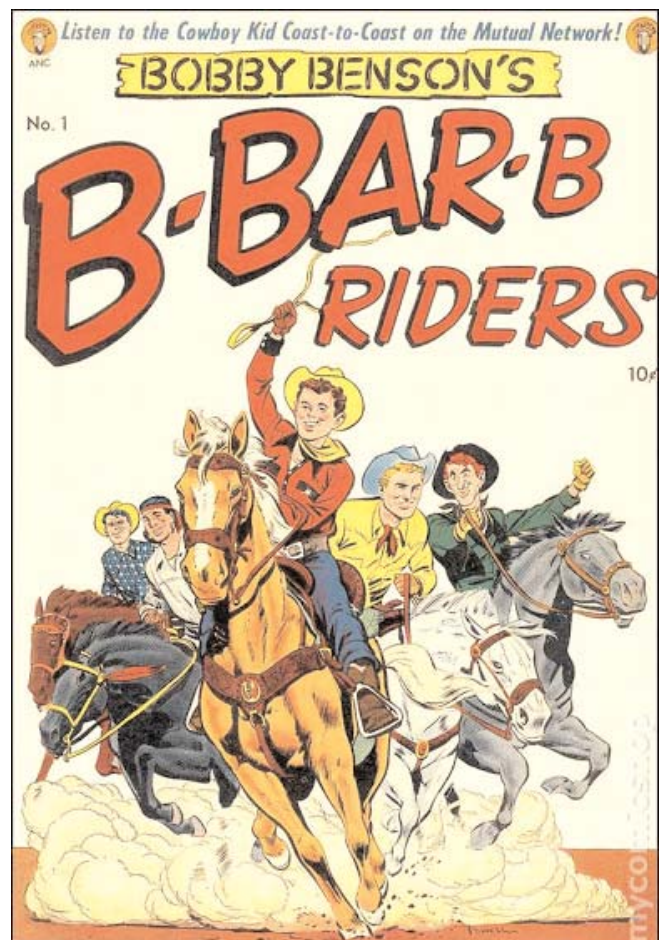


sister to see him, stood in the slow moving crowd for about three hours before they reached him.

While this was a sustained show, there were still good sources of income to be made by Rice and his associate, Edward C. Redding, since Rice owned the rights to Bobby Benson, including all merchandizing. Cury in his "Cowboy Kid" western attire was featured on the cover of the May 22, 1950 issue of *Sponsor Magazine*, displaying several items of B-Bar-B clothing and other items. These included a two-wheeler bicycle with pistol set and training wheels, a swivel lariat, cowboy cuffs, chaps, and fringed gloves, plus a variety of western shirts for boys and girls.

The main article in this issue of *Sponsor* related that over 40 different products of the B-Bar-B were sold in some 300 retail stores throughout the country. In addition to those items pictured on the cover with Cury, comic books, holster sets, snow suits, toy film games, swimming trunks, dolls, and even lamps were available. Bobby Benson merchandise was then being sold coast to coast at Macy's, Gimbel's, Wanamaker's, Kaufman's, Filene's, Neiman-Marcus, and Garfinckel's. Over 20 different manufacturing companies had produced these materials to Rice's specifications, using the services of Sid Dubroff's merchandizing firm. (The latter had previously done the same for Gene Autry.)

This article, and others in trade magazines, provide additional information about the Mutual series not available from surviving audio copies and the few scripts that are accessible now. For example there was a listener ruckus about Tex Mason's horse. Originally "Ginger" it was decided by the producer and script writers that the name was not robust enough so a decision was made to "kill off" the steed in a humane manner



and introduce a new mount with a better name. So in one episode, Ginger breathed his last, climbing a steep mountain trail. An avalanche of sympathy cards, telegrams, and letters from distraught youngsters flooded the Mutual offices which abated only after Tex got a new horse, a blue roan, and a contest was announced for B-Bar-B fans to name him. (Winners got Bobby Benson bicycles and runner-ups received B-Bar-B attire.) Two other "characters" were briefly in the series but were dropped after a few months: a girl companion for Bobby named "Doris" and a pet skunk of Windy Wales called "Honeysuckle".

In late 1951, Cury left for a role on *Portia Faces Life* and free lance work that paid better. Robert J. "Bobby" McKnight, a 14 year old singer and actor from Hoboken, NJ, who had

impersonated The Cowboy Kid in personal appearances (including an overseas tour of NATO countries) took Cury's place. But he didn't have much radio experience so when McKnight's voice began to squeak into maturity, another replacement had to be found.

But the two lads are bound forever on a record album that neither received name credit for. Decca Records released in early 1950 a 10 inch disc ("Unbreakable under normal conditions") entitled "The Story of the Golden Palomino". It was not about Roy's horse, Trigger, nor Straight Arrow's mount, Fury, but rather about "Amigo", Bobby Benson's horse. With only three and a half minutes of audio on each side, this 7 minute record was a dramatization of how Amigo, after being stolen by a horse thief, saved Bobby from an attacking mountain lion. Almost everyone associated with the record is identified on both sides: Herb Rice, Edward C. Redding, narrator Carlton Warren, animal impersonator Frank Milano, and musician Chauncey Kelley. However "Bobby Benson" is not mentioned, probably because he was played by two different boys: Cury handled all the dialogue while McKnight sang the theme song.

Mutual's last and longest Bobby Benson was 10 year old Clive Rice, who used the professional name of Clyde Campbell so as not to call attention to the fact he was Herb Rice's nephew. ("Clyde" was a U.S. version of "Clive" and "Campbell" was his grandmother's name.) Clive's British family had immigrated to the U.S. the prior year and he had "Americanized" his accent. Clive thereafter voiced "Bobby Benson" until the end of the run and also made hundreds of personal appearances throughout the year, weekdays in summer, and weekends the rest of each year.

For example In the fall of 1951 alone, he

We are offering a **FREE** issue in hopes you like what you see, and will want to subscribe.



Yes, send me a free issue of the Digest.

Enter my ____ year(s) subscription at
One year \$15 for 4 issues.

Name _____

Address _____

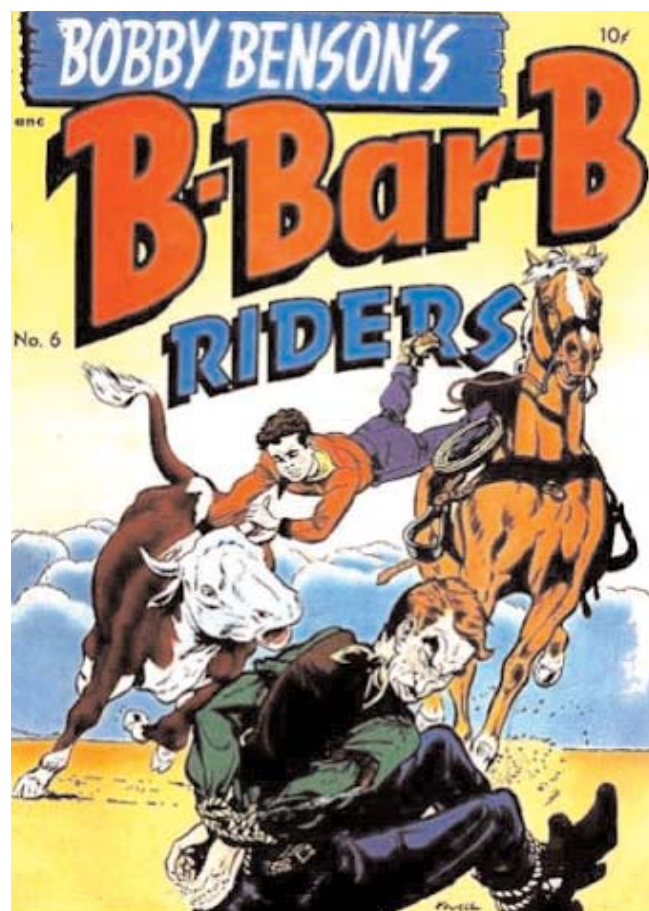
City _____

State _____ Zip _____

10280 Gunpowder Road Florence, KY 41042
bob_burchett@msn.com

made publicity trips to ten different states in the midwest and east coast, each of which could mean 5-8 separate appearances per day. Rice sent his executive assistant, Mary Jane Williams, to chaperone, claiming in press releases that she was Bobby's "tutor." "Bobby" would make radio appearances, stop at schools, churches, and hospitals, and headline festivals in various arenas. Occasionally they would be accompanied by Don Knotts, playing "Windy", and Tex Fletcher impersonating "Tex Mason." Fletcher (real name Geremino "Jerry" Bisceglia) played his guitar and sang cowboy songs with Clive. Don Knotts made it clear in his autobiography that he resented being sent out on these trips, for which neither he, nor Clive, nor Mary Jane were ever paid.

Knotts who was then working on a nightclub act (as a nervous weatherman) would try to book a paying gig in the city where he was being sent out on tour with Clive and Mary Jane. On one occasion, he had such an arrangement and Mary Jane promised to come see his performance after Clive went to bed. They shared the same hotel room. She instructed Clive to lock the door before he went to sleep and she went off and saw Don's act. Returning a few hours later, she knocked on their hotel door but her key was insufficient as Clive had also bolted the safety lock. Repeated knocking could not raise the little cowboy from his slumber. She took her heavy purse and dropped it through the transom. The resultant crash did not awaken Clive either. Finally, the nearest other occupant came to his door and Mary Jane explained her problem. He suggested they try the door between their two rooms; they did and Clive had not locked his side. Mary Jane got access to their room, went to bed, and then told the well-rested youngster all about it at breakfast. When Kraft's Foods sponsored the 1952-53 sea-



son, it presented other problems for Clive on those personal appearances, many of which involved riding a horse in a parade. He never got the same horse twice; each local committee would just rent any horse from the nearest riding stable. During each such event, Kraft's hired part-timers to work the parade route, distributing their free caramels in cello-wrap to eager youngsters. But boys being boys, several of them would then throw their caramels at Clive's horse, "trying to make him buck." The flying sweet missiles made it difficult for Clive to control his mount but fortunately none of them bolted during parades. However, one did while Clive was getting to know a new horse on a practice run at a farm. The panicked horse bolted and raced back to his stable, with Clive desperately holding on in the saddle. Such occasional mis-haps did not dampen the enthusiasm of Bobby's thousands of fans, who

Bobby Benson's B-Bar-B Riders



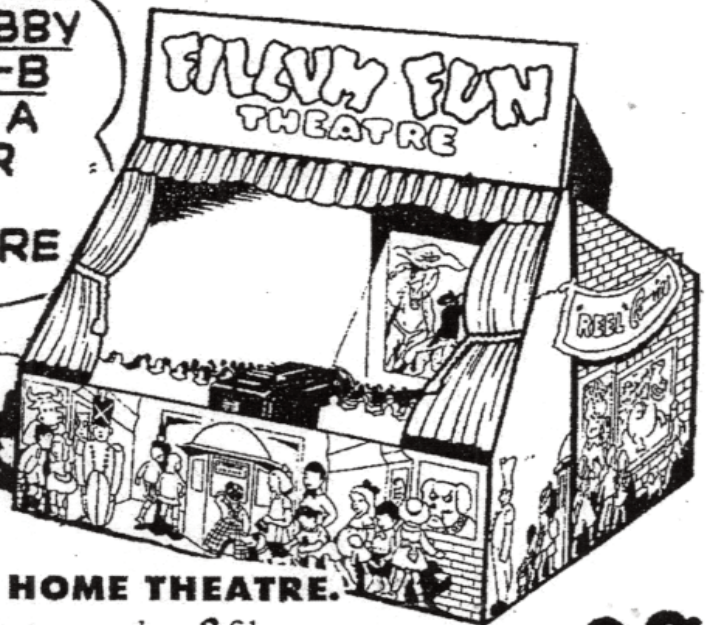
Harka

Tex

Irish

Windy

HI, RIDERS! THIS IS BOBBY BENSON AND THE B-BAR-B RIDERS, INVITING YOU TO A PRIVATE SHOWING OF OUR ADVENTURES IN FILMS, IN YOUR OWN MOVIE THEATRE AT HOME!



NOW! YOU GET COMPLETE HOME THEATRE.

Projector — plus screen — plus movie house — plus 2 films — plus 2 batteries — 78 pictures in all . . .

Theatre is of sturdy one piece construction, one foot high, wide and deep, with built in screen for daylight or night time viewing.

The projector is well made of modern plastic and equipped with three lenses. . . .

Runs on 2 standard flashlight batteries. . . .

Have Fun!

ADDITIONAL FILMS AVAILABLE

Only \$1.98

---MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY! DON'T DELAY!---

LIBERTY PRODUCTS, 277 Broadway, New York 7, New York
Send me one FILLUM FUN Theatre, so I can put on my own shows at home.

- Send C.O.D., I will pay postman \$1.98 plus postage.
- To save postage I enclose \$1.98. Same money-back guarantee.

Name _____

Address _____

City, Zone, State _____

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE: If I am not completely satisfied with my FILLUM FUN Theatre, I may return in 5 days for full cash refund.

turned up for every personnel appearance. Thousands of youngsters (alerted by Mutual's press releases) greeted "Bobby" at every arrival at even the most remote airports. Nationally syndicated AP columnist Hal Boyle when arriving at the airport at Wilmington, NC where both he and "Bobby" were head-liners at the 1953 Azalea Festival, found himself ignored as all the first greeters flocked to the plane depositing the B-Bar-B's "Little Boss." Cashing in on his popularity, Northwest Airlines, his usual carrier, named one of its planes "The Bobby Benson Strat-cruiser" which was printed on the fuselage.

Clive's older sister, Rosemary Rice (no relation to the radio actress of the same name) occasionally accompanied her brother from their home in Connecticut to his rehearsals and performance in Manhattan. One time, minutes before the "ON AIR" light went on at the WOR studio, Clive developed a severe nose bleed. If he held his head up, he couldn't see the script, and if he lowered his gaze, blood dripped on the script. Without asking anyone, Rosemary grabbed his script just as the program started and read his lines flawlessly until his nose bleeding subsided. Because their voices were so much alike, no one in the radio audience even noticed the brief switch.

In 1952 the makers of Chiclets and Dentyne gum agreed to sponsor a five minute version of this successful series, so a spin-off was created, *Songs of the B-Bar-B*. Written and directed by Jim McMenemy, this short program consisted of one song each by Clive and Tex Fletcher, with a funny story by Don Knotts as Windy in the middle. Clive recalled McMenemy as a nice young man with blonde hair who wore taps on his heels. These short programs were recorded in batches and then played once a day over WOR radio. Five of these survive in audio format. In

HI PARDS!
BE THE FIRST to wear the official Bobby Benson shirts and neckerchiefs!

Wear the same colorful western clothes worn by Bobby Benson, Tex Mason, Windy Wain and Marka Stone in the Big Bend country! These beautiful shirts have all the details usually found only in expensive western shirts. Note the white binding around yokes, collars, Gambler cuffs and authentic crescent pockets. Mothers will appreciate the long wearing quality in these washable poplin shirts. All these styles may be had for boys or girls in sizes 4 to 12 — \$1.00 each

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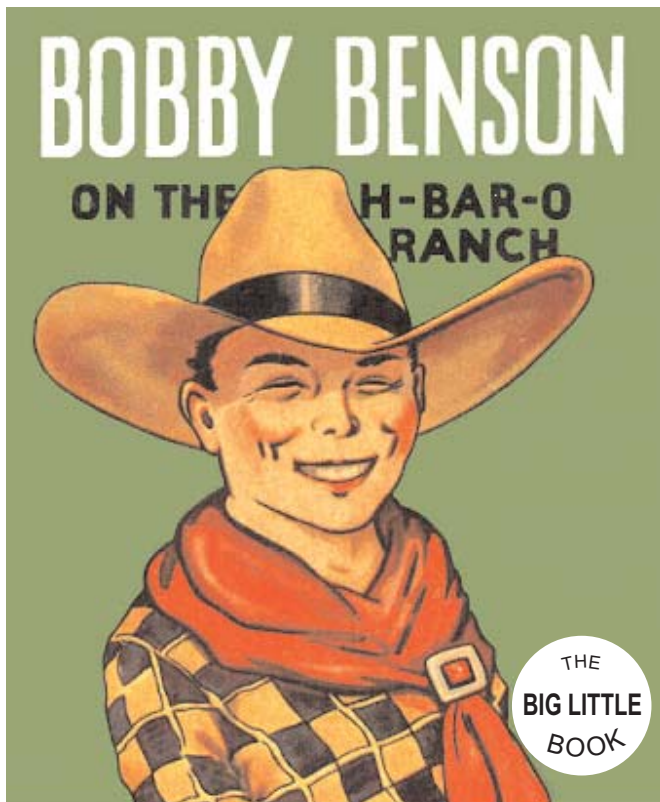
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the later stages, Clive went without Knotts to Fletcher's home studio in Yonkers and the two recorded up to five episodes of *Songs of the B-Bar-B* each session. None of these have yet surfaced.

Another local television show of *Bobby Benson* debuted on February 16, 1953 over Channel 9 WOR-TV at 6:35 PM. To avoid the problems of their earlier live TV series that Ivan Cury and his fellow cast members had to endure (missing props, difficulty in matching stock footage, cast accidents, etc.) the format of this new show was very simple. It had one small V-shaped set (next to that of *The Merry Mailman* with Ray Heatherton) and only three cast members. Clive and Tex Fletcher would sing a song or two and Paul Brown, a comedian called "Mr. Nobody," provided some humor. Clive also told



short western stories and read letters from his fans. Wilrich's Grape Juice was eventually signed on as a sponsor. No videos have survived from either of the two TV runs.

By the summer of 1955, the long radio run of *Bobby Benson* on Mutual was over. Kids on both coasts were switching to network western television shows including *Hopalong Cassidy*, *Cisco Kid*, and *The Lone Ranger*. It was finally the sunset for *Bobby Benson* broadcasts. His comic book series had ended in 1953 after twenty issues and the comic book series would not resurface until the 1990's in Bill Black's "AC Collector Classics".

Now in 2014 we have 19 audio copies of the Mutual show, plus fragments of two others, and an Australian audition recording. Five of the 5 minute *Songs of the B-Bar-B* are also in circulation. Countless radio premiums from both the CBS and Mutual series are traded among collectors; most of them from the CBS version. So

it's a safe bet that the Cowboy Kid will always be with us, in one fashion or another.

As for the "whatever became of....." portion of this article, death has claimed virtually everyone who had a part in either the CBS or the Mutual series. One would assume that everyone in that 1930s series would no longer be with us, and that's almost true, with one exception. Jean Darling who portrayed "Polly", had a long career in the performing arts, and retired to Germany, where she lives today, a still-spry 92 year old. She has her own web site <<http://indigo.ie/~jdarling>> and keeps in touch with her fans via email. She was recently hospitalized with an undisclosed illness and is now recovering at a convalescent home as of this writing (May 2014).

Craig McDonnell was the first to die. He was only 49 years old when he suddenly expired on November 24, 1956. His last few years were sad; he had filed for bankruptcy in 1952. Charles Irving, a native son of Ireland, died at age 81 on January 12, 1969. Cowboy singer Tex Fletcher was 77 when he died on March 14, 1987. "Bob" Haag was retired in Texas when he died there at the age of 83 on September 9, 1997. In his later years, Peter Dixon had relocated south of the border to Sonora, Mexico; he died there, aged 71 in December 1974.

Don Knotts was the most successful cast member after *Bobby Benson* went off the air. He was on Broadway in *No Time for Sergeants*, was featured in 25 motion pictures, did seven TV series, and won five Emmys. He died of lung cancer at age 81 at Los Angeles Medical Center on February 24, 2006. The writer, Jim Shean, was still writing up to his death on July 30, 2007 in Fullerton, CA; coincidentally, like Knotts, he was also 81. All of his scripts are

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being held by his two sons while they decide to which archive they should donate them.

Robert Novak stayed in radio as producer and director and moved to San Francisco, where he was the program manager for a number of stations, including KGO. He was 77 when he died on June 18, 1995, just one year after he, Ivan Cury, Jim Shean, and Don Knotts got together for a B-Bar-B reunion in the Los Angeles area.

Mutual's "middle" *Bobby Benson*, Robert McKnight who was born in Hoboken, NJ on June 24, 1936 became a successful juvenile singer and actor in the 1940s and 50s. The lad was a winner on the *Ted Mack Amateur Hour*, was Sal Mineo's understudy for the role of the Crown Prince in Broadway's *The King and I* and did regional theatre after training at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. After a three year hitch in the U.S. Army, he entered a Catholic seminary in 1964 and following his ordination in 1973 he served as a Catholic priest for the next 36 years. During that long time, he was assigned to several parishes in New Jersey and Vermont, achieving "senior priest" status in 2005. He died June 29, 2009 at the age of 73 in his hometown of Hoboken. Tyne Daly, Emmy Award winner from *Cagney & Lacey*, gave the obituary at his funeral; they had appeared in summer stock together before he went in the Army and had kept in touch over the years.

Mary Jane Mastapeter (nee Williams) after leaving WOR, ran her own talent agency for a few years in NYC and then was a television staffer for EPI. After her marriage, she moved with her husband to central Virginia. There she enjoyed selling real estate and playing golf. Mary Jane was in occasional contact with Clive Rice, who lived with his wife in Roanoke, VA. She was instrumental in getting the *Songs of the B-Bar-B* audio copies into general circulation. I

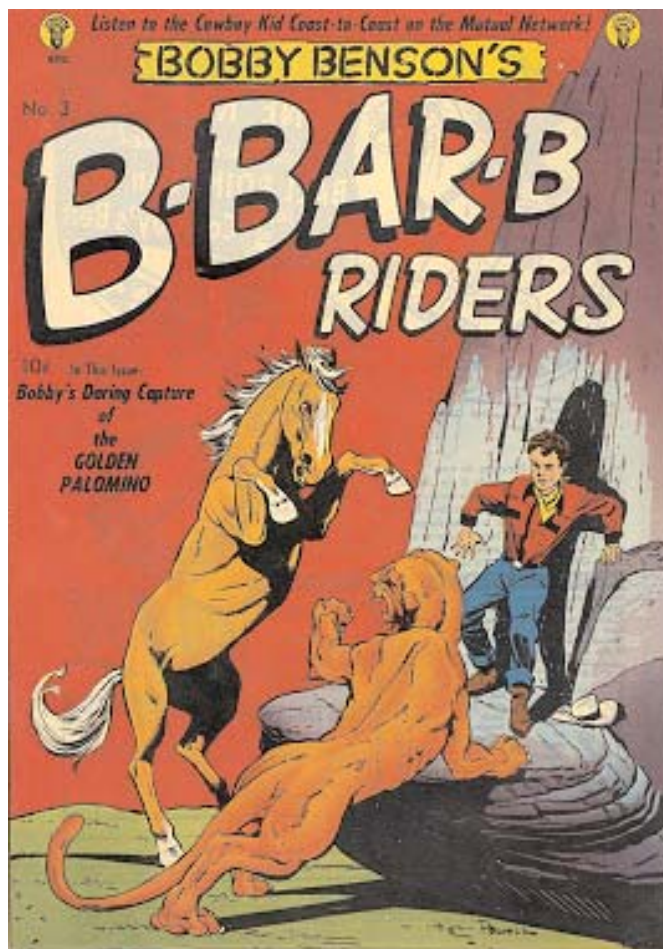


was able to get her to come to the 1995 FOTR convention in Newark, NJ to be on the same panel with Cury and Rice. She was 86 years old when she died on September 6, 2011 in Ashburn, VA.

I am in regular contact with the two surviving "Bobby Benson's". Ivan Cury lives in the Los Angeles area and stayed in the performing arts business as an actor, TV director, and instructor, teaching at Cal State in Los Angeles. He is also an accomplished writer and the author of two non-fiction books: *Directing and Producing for Television* (Focal Press) and a 2004 book, *TV Commercials: How To Make Them or How Big is the Boat?*. Ivan is a regular guest at OTR conventions throughout the country: his most recent appearance was the Nostalgia Expo in

Cincinnati, Ohio, May 16 and 17, 2014.

Clive Rice left show-biz after his radio career and next served his adopted country well on the oceans with a long career in the U.S. Navy, rising to the rank of Chief Petty Officer. He retired to Roanoke, VA where he has lived for several years and helped establish a local "Ships and Shipmates Museum" that featured all the U.S. ships that were named Roanoke plus photos of shipmates from the Roanoke Valley. His beloved wife, Betty, died in April 2012. As he has for years, Clive now devotes much of his time to Civil War research, battlefield tours, and planning a seminar on the Confederacy for April 2015. He still has his original Bobby Benson western costume and holster set, along with other B-Bar-B memorabilia, and has yet to decide which OTR archive will eventually receive it



as his donation.

Everyone I've interviewed from this show, both actors and the production personnel, enjoyed their association with both the series and the other people in it. The only discomfort occurred to Clive during personal appearances and direct interaction with his youthful fans, who believed he really was Bobby Benson and lived on a Texas ranch and had a real horse named Amigo, etc. "I never got used to telling those fibs, which I had to do with a straight face" Clive said "or destroy the reality they had created by listening to the radio." He certainly could not say to his youthful fans "Hi, my real name's Clive Rice, but using the professional name of Clyde Campbell, I pretend on radio I'm Bobby Benson, who doesn't really exist."

It was particularly tough visiting the young patients in children's hospitals, who would ask their hero, with wide open eyes, questions like: "Why didn't you bring your horse, Amigo?" and "Are Windy and Harka back at the B-Bar-B Ranch now?" Clive recalled, "I never broke character and I answered each question with a standard white lie....but it always bothered me."

These circumstances were not a difficulty for Ivan Cury. He regarded these personal interactions as just a part he played, including an improvisational element. For example, asked "Are you really from the west?" he'd always reply "Yes." (He lived on West 81st Street.) And reality could be confusing. Ivan recalled the time he made a personal appearance at a vintage carnival and while walking back to his trailer, he spotted a shooting gallery with candles. Followed by a swarm of kids and his nervous handlers, he headed for the gallery to try his skills. ("I used to hang out whenever possible at the shooting gallery at 52nd Street and had become a pretty good shot" he told me.) He picked up a gun and shot out 6 of the 7 candles

there, feeling quite satisfied. But his youthful fans were still disappointed....."Aw, Bobby, you missed one."

As for the gentleman that created Bobby Benson for CBS in the 30s and Mutual in the late 40s, Herbert C. Rice left Mutual in 1957 to purchase and operate small radio stations. His first one was KVNI in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, which he managed for two years with his wife Ethel . But missing the East, they sold that station and returned to Connecticut, buying WILI in 1959 and shortly after, WINY in Putnam, building these struggling stations into successful operations. In the 1970s, he and Ethel retired to Marco Island, FL where they were both active in church and community affairs. Rice died there, aged 86, in May 1991.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: I am deeply grateful to a lot of people who've helped me in my research of this show over the past twenty years, including some who are no longer with us. My special thanks to Clive Rice, Ivan Cury, and Mary Jane Williams for extensive personal interviews. Thanks to Bob Novak and Jim Shean (and his sons) for exchange of correspondence. My gratitude to Barbara Davies for finding Clive Rice and to Walden Hughes for finding Jean Darling. I also want to thank Richard Guarnio for making available the scrapbook of his uncle, Richard Wanamaker. Thanks to Jerry Collins for extensive review of the archives of Buffalo newspapers.

My gratitude to C & W singer Kenneth O'Rourke who gave me a copy of his TV script of Bobby Benson and to the sons of "Tex Fletcher" as well. Thanks to Russell Hudson of SPERDVAC for providing me with the original source of the B-Bar-B theme song. I'm obliged to three Internet explorers, Jim Jones, Don Ramlow, and Jim Widner, who helped me fill out



the identities of cast members, including the ones on the West Coast. Ron Sayles provided me with vital stats on many cast members and computer whiz Irene Heinstejn filled in many blanks on performers' backgrounds. Special thanks to Karl Schadow for his extensive research at Library of Congress.

Thanks to Edgar Farr Russell III for an original 1900 letter on H-O Oats stationery and to Peter Bellanca for graphics from 1930s H-Bar-O version. I'm grateful to Richard Rieve for giving me reproductions of 1930s premiums and a complete set of photos of that cast. Thanks to Eugene Clark, former WOR engineer, for audio copies of Songs of the B-Bar-B and to Barbara Watkins, for audio copies of the Mutual 30 minute version. If I've forgotten anyone, and I probably have in my advanced senility, please

accept my thanks again.

FUTURE WORK: As OTR historian and popular writer Jim Cox has said, "Despite our best efforts, we will never know everything about any given series." But he and I, Martin Grams, Jr., and Ryan Ellett, as well as other dedicated OTR souls keep trying anyway. At present, I'm working on two sub-projects relating to Bobby Benson. Since examining the scrapbooks of Richard Wanamaker and Clive Rice was so helpful, I hope to someday view that of Robert McKnight which should resolve if, and for how long, he voiced Bobby Benson on radio. His parents and one of his brothers are deceased but the remaining brother, John McKnight, Jr., who operates a funeral home in Hoboken, NJ, has all the surviving show-biz memorabilia of Robert. He's promised me access for over a year, but he has only continued to stall me. (Keep your fingers crossed.)

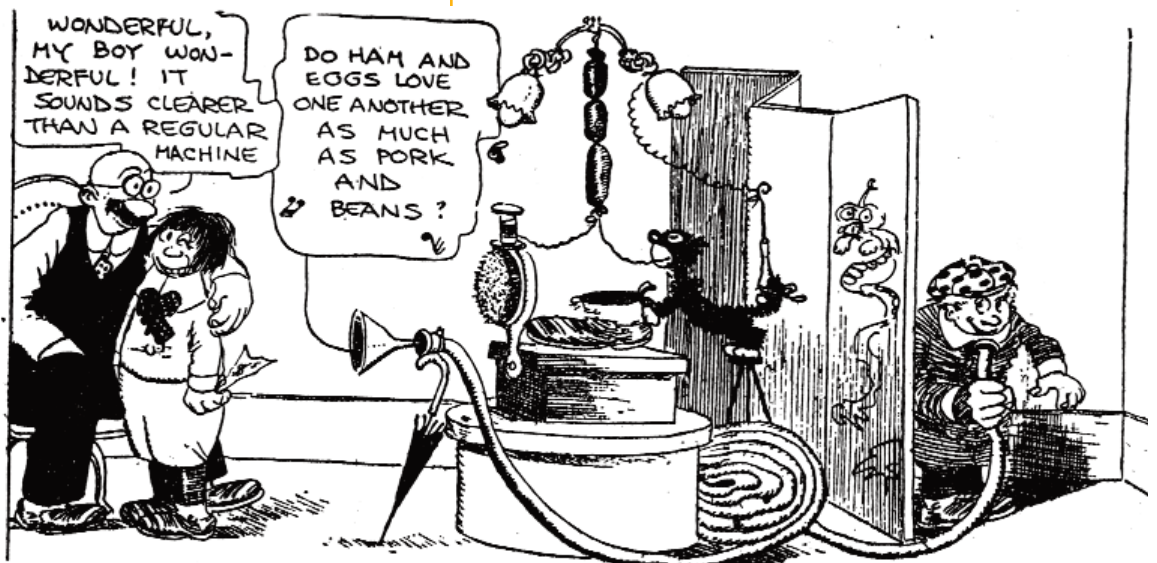
Secondly, in the 2013 book, *Super Boys* by Brad Ricca, reference is made to Eugene Baily, who asserts that his father, Bernard Bailey, a comic book writer, took over the *Bobby Benson*

program on WOR from his uncle, Mel Bailey. Eugene further says that this father and his uncle both wrote and directed this series for a time. I was able to contact Eugene, who lives in Montclair, NJ, but he has yet to provide me with any actual evidence to back up his claims. We shall see.....

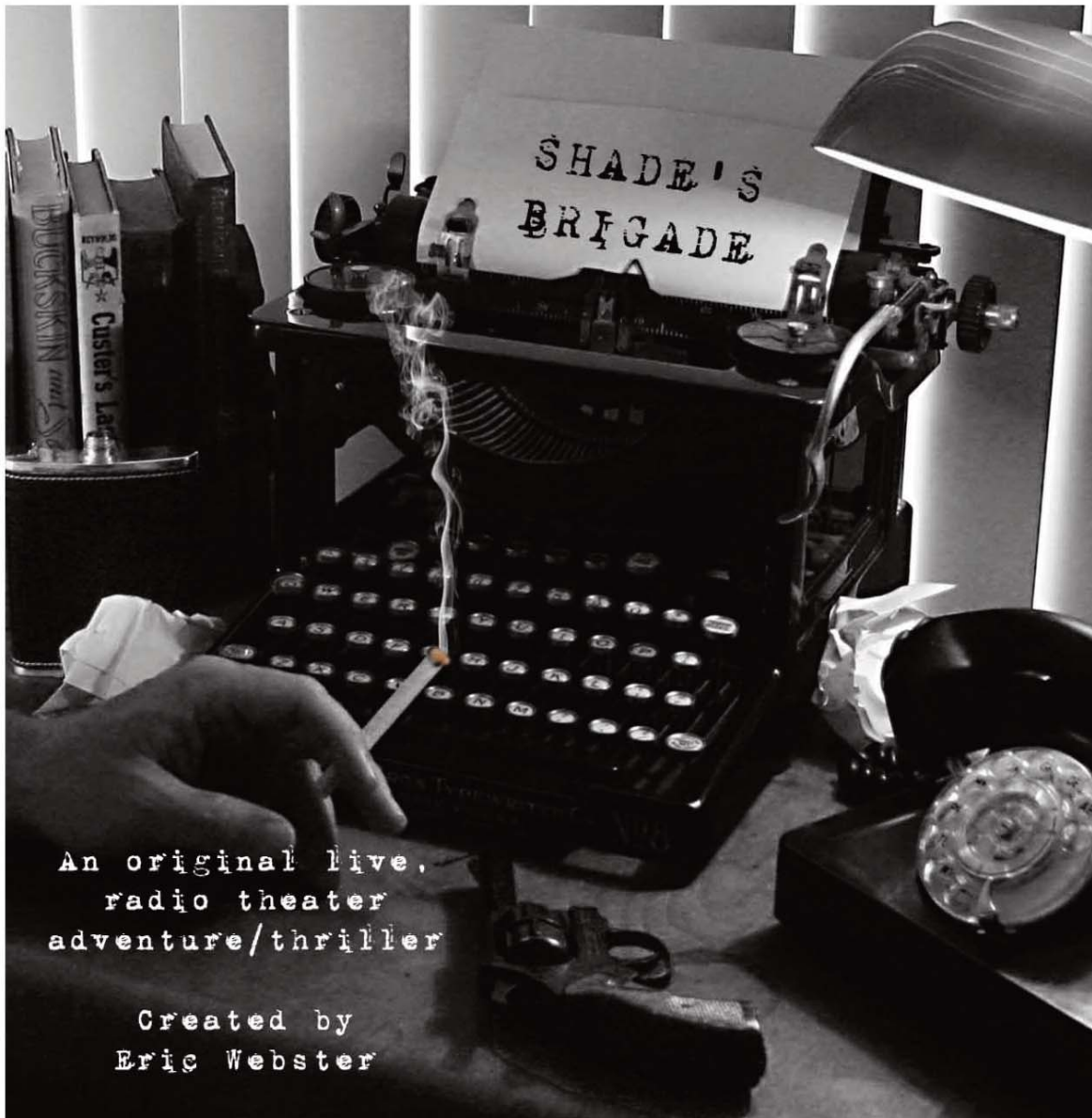
ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jack French is an OTR historian and author in Fairfax, VA. His first book, *Private Eyelashes: Radio's Lady Detectives* (Bear Manor Media) won the Agatha Award for Best Non-Fiction. His second book, co-edited with David S. Siegel, *Radio Rides the Range: A Reference Guide to Western Drama on the Air, 1929-1967*, was released by McFarland last November. Jack has won several honors for his contributions to OTR, including the Allen Rockford Award, the Stone/Waterman Award, the Ray Stanich Award and the Dave Warren Award. In 2011 he was inducted into the "Radio Once More" Hall of Fame for his lifetime achievement in the fields of broadcasting and the arts. ■

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THE NBC CHIMES MACHINE

by John F. Schneider

The sound of the NBC chimes is the sound of radio history itself. Probably no single sound better recalls the golden age of radio. The NBC chimes — the musical notes G-E-C — were played at the end of every NBC radio program beginning shortly after the network's inception, and continued in daily use on NBC radio and television until 1971.

Shortly after the formation of the National Broadcasting Company in 1926, network executives became aware of confusion among the affiliate stations as to the exact time when a program ended, and when it was safe to cut away for local announcements. The problem was assigned to a committee of three: Oscar Hanson, a former AT&T engineer; Ernest la Prade, an NBC orchestra leader; and Philip Carlin, an NBC announcer. They decided that a musical signal of some kind would be an appropriate way to indicate the ending of all programs. At that time, it was common for radio stations to use the sounds of chimes, gongs, sirens and other mechanical devices as a signature sound for their station, so the choice of a chime by NBC was not unusual or particularly innovative. There is in fact some evidence that the chimes may have been inspired by a similar chime sequence used at that time by NBC affiliate WSB in Atlanta.

During 1927 and 1928, the committee experimented with several combinations of notes. A seven-note sequence which was first used, G-C-F-E-G-C-E, was determined to be too complicated for the announcers to play correctly on a consistent basis. It was first simplified to G-C-F-E, and finally to just G-E-C. This familiar sequence was heard for the first time on November 29, 1929.

The chimes were sounded at :29:30 and :59:30 of each hour, to indicate the start of the 30 second local station break. They were initially struck by hand by the announcer, using a set of hand-held chimes held up to the microphone. But there were inconsistencies in the



way these chimes were played, in tempo, volume, and their exact timing. It was finally determined that the best way to solve these problems was for the chimes to be generated mechanically.

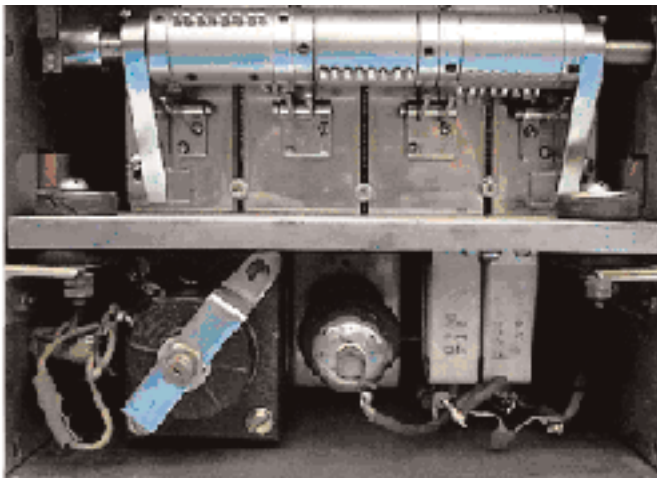
The man who designed the chimes machine was Captain Richard H. Ranger, who was also the inventor of the electronic organ and the RCA facsimile. Ranger created a device resembling a music box, where fingers on a revolving drum plucked a set of reeds. There were three sets of eight reeds, one for each note, allowing the generation of the fundamental note plus several overtones. Each reed formed one plate of a capacitor in an oscillator circuit, and the signal generated by all reeds was amplified by a single 6C6 pentode tube. It was activated by a timer, which would cut off the program two seconds before its end (whether it was finished or not!) and feed the chimes to the network. NBC built a limited number of chime machines. NBC in San Francisco had two of them - the main and backup machines. Others were installed in other cities around the country where network programs were originated — Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and perhaps a few others. It is likely that not more than a dozen chime machines were ever made.

The photo on page 21 shows one of the few chime machines still in existence, now in the hands of a private collector. (NBC had

the shortsighted habit of discarding large quantities of historical artifacts throughout its history. It's only through the far-sightedness of a few NBC employees, who saved some of these items from the trash bins, that we can today experience many recorded programs, photos, and other memorabilia from that era.)

The unit shown is the chimes machine serial number 2, probably from the first group ever made. Its mechanical parts, although finely crafted, appear to have been hand made. This unit is no doubt the original chimes machine placed in operation at NBC's studios at 111 Sutter Street in San Francisco. The schematic diagram, also shown, indicates that serial number 5 was fabricated in 1933, so this machine would have predated it. The main cabinet contains the motor drive reed mechanism and amplifier, which is accessed by removing the front panel's four thumbscrews.

The unit operated from an external power source, no doubt the same battery and motor generator system that operated the audio amplifiers in the studios. The smaller box contains the timer and switches that operate the chimes for both studio and "NEMO" broadcast lines. ("NEMO" was a term used in early radio to indicate a remote broadcast. It comes from a telephone term, and stands for "Not Emanating Main Office".) The chime machine could be operated in an automatic mode by the clock, which was the usual method of operation, or manually by the announcer in the



event of programs with imprecise ending times, such as sports broadcasts. The NBC chimes were officially registered with the U.S. Patent Office in 1950 as a registered service mark, the first known case of a sound receiving trademark protection. They were last heard regularly on NBC television in 1976, used to mark the 50th anniversary of the network. ■

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A History of the NBC Chimes, by Bill Harris
More on the NBC Chimes, by Brian Wickham
A Backstage Visit to Radio City, by Fred Krock
Author's inspection of a chimes machine in the hands of a private collector



One of the best: Dragnet

By James Mason

There may not be an old-time radio fan anywhere who doesn't listen to *Dragnet*. It's one of the all-time greats, thanks to Jack Webb's terrific imagination in coming up with the show.



For those who don't know, the radio show is almost a carbon copy of the television show, if you've seen that. Detective Joe Friday is a stern, fast-talking, no-nonsense gumshoe who is (somehow and without explanation) in a different department of the police in every show on radio (and television to boot.) He may be in Bunco one show but rest-assured, he'll be Homicide or Forgery or Juvenile the next. It's like a roulette wheel.

It's not just Friday who acts "robotic" as almost everyone on the show, including the victims, act this way. There are no long pauses and few words are used as possible. While this may seem to make the show cold and uncaring, it's just a directoral approach that now we can look back on and associate with *Dragnet*. It became it's own genre.

However, whoever was Friday's partner was a bit more slower-talking than Joe but generally this will be the only "slow talker" in the entire episode. It makes for a nice play off Friday.

Friday was prone to going off on some incredible verbal rant against a criminal to make them feel like a heel. He was pretty vicious when you come down to it - yet the 30-something year-old Friday lived with his mother. Go figure.

This is one of the all-time greats and there are about 300 episodes floating around, most with great sound quality - so if you haven't already, you should go download the entire lot of them and enjoy them. ■

You can follow Jims at his blog - <http://otrbuffer.blogspot.com/>

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It is the policy of The Old Radio Times not to accept paid advertising in any form. We feel that it would be detrimental to the goal of the Old Time Radio Researchers organization to distribute its products freely to all wishing them. Accepting paid advertising would compromise that goal, as dealers whose ideals are not in line with ours could buy ad space.

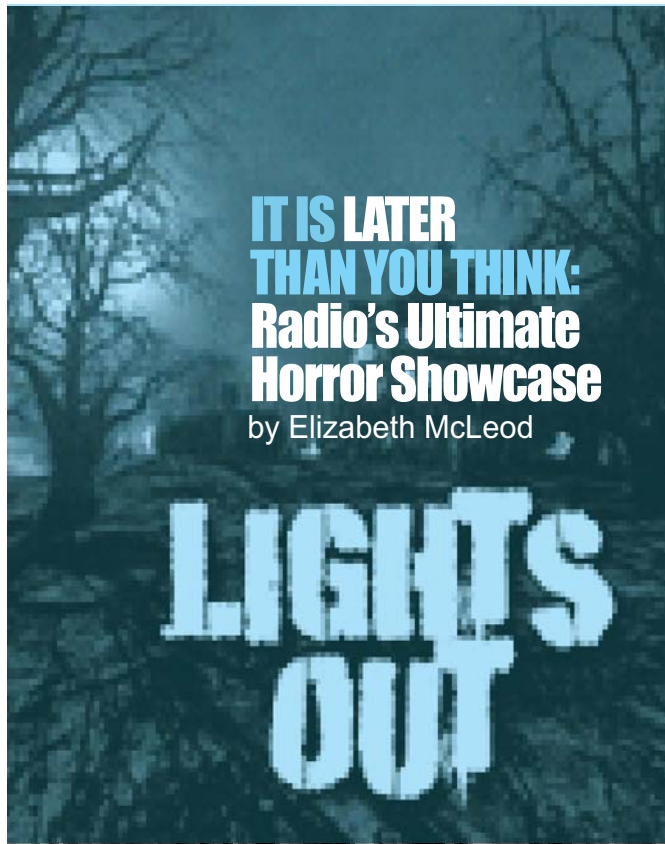
That being said, The Old Radio Times will run free ads from individuals, groups, and dealers whose ideals are in line with the group's goals and who support the hobby.

Publishing houses who wish to advertise in this magazine will be considered if they supply the publisher and editor with a review copy of their new publication. Anyone is free to submit a review or a new publication about old time radio or nostalgia.

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One of the great cliché images of the radio era is the listener huddled in a dark room, illuminated only by the dull orange glow of a radio dial, listening to a terrifying tale of horror. It's become such a cliché, in fact, that to those with only a casual acquaintance with the medium, radio was little else but horror tales.

In truth, there were relatively few hard-core horror features on the air during the medium's golden age. The broadcast environment of the period, focused on family listening, was not especially hospitable to programs emphasizing violence and gore, ensuring that most of the horror programs that did make it to the air tended either to underplay the gruesome or to defuse it by turning it into a broad joke.

The major exception was *Lights Out*, long remembered as radio's ultimate celebration of terror. There was no campy host bookending the stories with a wink and a nudge, there was no attempt at rational explanations for the supernatural. Listeners tuned into *Lights Out* knowing exactly what they were in for -- and if by chance they stumbled onto the program by

accident, the grim opening announcement made it clear. "*Lights Out* brings you stories of the supernatural and the supernatural, dramatizing the fantasies and the mysteries of the unknown. We tell you this frankly -- so that if you wish to avoid the excitement and tension of these imaginative plays, we urge you calmly, but sincerely, to turn off your radio now." That so many listeners didn't turn their radio off kept *Lights Out* a going concern in one incarnation or another for the better part of a decade.

The program emerged in the mid-1930s from two major influences: the fad for mystery thrillers that swept across the networks between 1932 and 1934, and the first flowering of the "experimental radio" movement during the early years of the decade. Beginning around 1930 with the Columbia Experimental Drama series on CBS and the Radio Guild on NBC, writers and directors moved beyond the common techniques of the medium to create a form of radio that lived in the moment -- emphasizing stream-of-consciousness, first person narration and vivid, provocative sound effects to make the most of radio's creative potential.

Wyllis Cooper observed these trends with interest. He was a continuity editor at NBC-Chicago, having entered radio in the late twenties through the side door of the advertising business. He was creative and ambitious, and he was as much a listener as a writer. He was familiar with the experimental techniques then being pioneered in the radio medium, and he had a few ideas of his own about how these methods might be developed further. All he needed was an opportunity -- which he got in 1934, when the network gave him a late-night fifteen minute slot over local Chicago outlet WENR.

The first incarnation of *Lights Out* had a sporadic run, but by the spring of 1935 it had expanded onto the full network for a half-hour at midnight every Wednesday. No sponsor was interested in the program, and the censors paid little attention -- giving Cooper an

open door into a world radio had rarely tapped before. In the words of its early epigraph, *Lights Out* "let evil loose upon a sleeping world." Its' scripts emphasized violence, torture, and gruesome, grisly death -- complete with vivid bone-shattering, skin-peeling, skull-crushing sound effects. Competing against dance band remotes and local "slumber music" features, *Lights Out* was unlike anything else on the air -- and it built a fanatical corps of enthusiastic, insomniac fans. Although the network finally caught on to what Cooper was doing and pressured him to tone it down a bit, the early impression made by the program was a lasting one -- and *Lights Out* never totally moved away from its reputation for graphic, disturbing imagery. Cooper's scripts were at their best when they placed ordinary people in horrific, unexplainable circumstances -- and then mercilessly tightened the screws. There were no happy endings, no hand-waving explanations, no rational answers. Cooper's horrors were inexplicable, inescapable, and no matter how earnest the warning at the beginning, it was impossible to tune them out.

The program survived Cooper's departure in 1936 by replacing him with a writer who had an even greater flair for the experimental. Arch Oboler had been kicking around the Chicago studios for several years before receiving the *Lights Out* assignment, and immediately jumped on the chance to build on Cooper's foundation. His taste ran more to psychological terror than to gory violence, but he could skin or crush a victim as well as Cooper ever did when the plot required it. But Oboler wasn't satisfied to write pulp, even creative pulp. He had aspirations to use radio as a platform for his social and political views, and during his *Lights Out* tenure he began to work complex social commentary into the fabric of his scripts. While they never failed to leave the listener in a cold sweat, Oboler's scripts also left the listener with something substantial to think about after the sweat passed. Oboler told stories of scientists deluded by their own

imaginations into believing themselves omniscient, of dictators blinded by their own ambitions, of businessmen willing to sell anything to get ahead, of married couples whose own hostilities manifest before their eyes as things of fear and



Willis Cooper

terror, of a universal solvent so universal that it threatens to dissolve the universe, and of a simple chicken heart (bubbling and churning in a chemical bath and growing so large that it eventually grows to engulf the world).

Oboler left the series in mid-1938, feeling played out from writing horror. Moving into his own Arch Oboler's Plays series the following year, he built on the social themes that had highlighted much of his later *Lights Out* work. *Lights Out* itself ended in 1939 -- but it was too vivid a concept to disappear for long. Oboler himself brought the format back on CBS in 1942 -- but in prime time and with a sponsor. Most of the scripts were repeats from the last years of his NBC run, with some carried over from Arch Oboler's Plays as well, and most of the scripts continued the emphasis on psychological horror over violence for its own sake. Most of Oboler's finest scripts were reintroduced to listeners over the single-season run of this version of *Lights Out*. With recordings surviving of most of the broadcasts, it remains the most accessible window into the series for modern listeners. Oboler moved on again in 1943, becoming heavily involved in wartime propaganda, but *Lights Out* would be back for summer revivals in 1945 and 1946, again reusing old scripts. These broadcasts emphasized episodes from the Cooper era, and stand for the most part as the only surviving aural specimens of Cooper's work on the series -capturing its dark, mordant wit as well as its taste for aural splatter.



An attempt to bring back the series for another summer in 1947 fizzled when the prospective sponsor found Cooper's old scripts a bit too grisly for contemporary audiences. But even that wasn't the end. *Lights Out* was an early translation to television, beginning with experimental broadcasts in 1946 and progressing to a regular series in 1949. This version adapted a few Oboler and Cooper scripts for video, but emphasized original productions. Although it created a suitably murky, spooky atmosphere, the technical limitations of live television couldn't hope to keep up with the imagination-driven pace set by the radio version. The TV *Lights Out*, while having its moments of interest, is still little more than a footnote to the program's radio run. Wyllis Cooper moved on to other things, making a vivid impression on horror fans with his postwar thrill series *Quiet Please*, but Arch Oboler became disillusioned with the sausagegrinder mentality of late-forties radio, and stepped away from the medium for more than a decade, focusing instead on movie work. But he could never totally escape from the long shadow *Lights Out* cast over his career. In the early 1960s he produced a record album for Capitol entitled *Drop Dead*, featuring vignettes taken from his *Lights Out* scripts -- among them the notorious "The Dark," in which a thick, greasy, malevolent fog turns its victims inside out. In the early seventies, he tapped the well yet again, repackaging much of his surviving *Lights Out* work for syndication under the title *The Devil and Mr. O*. To the end of his life, Oboler, for all his many projects and all his di-

verse interests remained most identified with a tolling bell, a crashing gong, and a quiet voice whispering "It is later than you think." And as long as there's a single listener huddled in a room listening to that voice, the terrifying memory of *Lights Out* will endure.



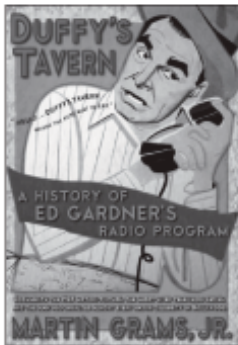
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“Hello, Duffy’s Tavern, where the elite meet to eat. Archie the manager speakin’... Duffy ain’t here”

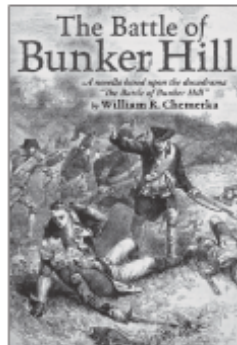
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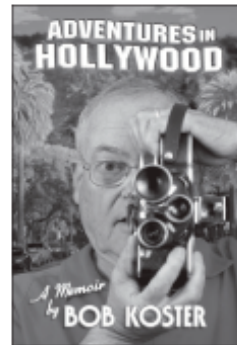
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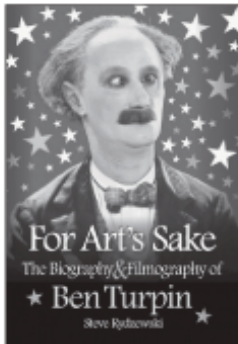
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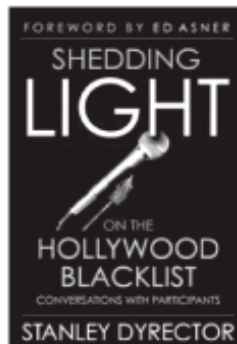
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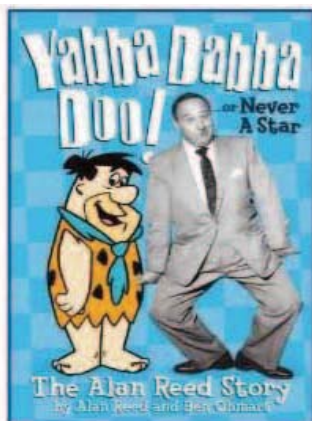


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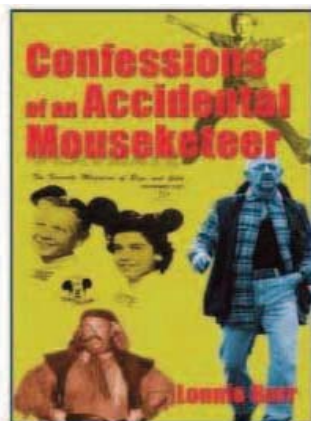


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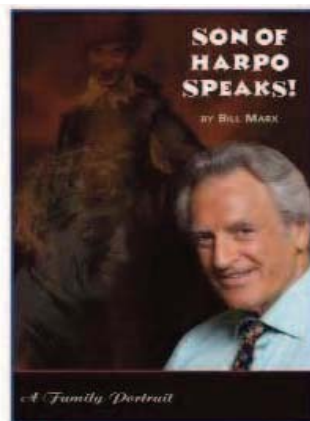
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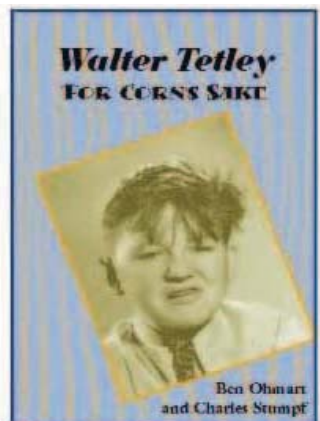
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OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES AND UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES FOR May/June

This is a list of newly acquired series/episodes. They may either be new to mp3 or better encodes. These were acquired by the Group during the months of Mar and Apr. They were purchased by donations from members and friends of the Old Time Radio Researchers. If you have cassettes that you would like to donate, please e-mail beshiresjim@yahoo.com For reel-to-reels, contact david0@centurytel.net & for transcription disks tony_senior@yahoo.com

Ambassadors of Melodyland

31-xx-xx (01).mp3
31-xx-xx (02).mp3
31-xx-xx (03).mp3
31-xx-xx (04).mp3
31-xx-xx (05).mp3
31-xx-xx (06).mp3

America's Popular Music

xx-xx-xx Artie Shaw 1938-39 Broadcasts.mp3
xx-xx-xx Artie Shaw Early Recordings.mp3
xx-xx-xx Casa Loma Orchestra Story.mp3
xx-xx-xx Sidney Bechet.mp3
xx-xx-xx The California Rambler's Story.mp3
xx-xx-xx The Count Basie Story.mp3
xx-xx-xx The Dukes Of Dixieland Story.mp3
xx-xx-xx The Glenn Miller Story..mp3
xx-xx-xx The Stan Kenton Story.mp3

Asher and Little Jimmie

38-05-05 First Song - There's A Blue Sky Way Out Yonder.mp3

Big City Serenade

53-03-28 Salute to Florence, Italy.mp3

Camel Caravan

38-06-21 In Montreal, 1st Anniversary of Show.mp3

Cartune-O

40-07-03 Listener Call-In Show.mp3

Crime On The Waterfront

49-03-01 Second program of the series (35min).mp3

Fantasy

47-08-23 - Audition - Entity From The Void.mp3

Guest Star

xx-xx-xx First Song - Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea(Benny Goodman).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Beyond The Blue Horizon (Perry Como).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Gloworm (Mills Brothers).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Gonna Find Me A Blue Bird (Eddy Arnold).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Hey Little Baby (Jimmie Rogers).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - It's only A Paper Moon (Nat King Cole).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Just One Of Those Things (Sarah Vaughn).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - La Harbanero (Cordettes).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Lulu's Back In Town (Mel Torme).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Remember You're Mine (Pat Boone).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (Gogi Grant).mp3
xx-xx-xx First Song - Tea For Two ChaCha (Tommy Dorsey Orchestra).mp3

Let's Go To Town

xx-xx-xx (01) First Song - Delacado.mp3
xx-xx-xx (02) First Song - An American In Paris.mp3
xx-xx-xx (03) First Song - Let's Go To Town.mp3
xx-xx-xx (04) First Song - Joshua.mp3
xx-xx-xx (100) First Song - Boo Hoo.mp3
xx-xx-xx (101) First Song - Love Me Or Leave Me.mp3
xx-xx-xx (102) First Song - Rollin' Home.mp3
xx-xx-xx (103) First Song - Sweet And Gentle.mp3
xx-xx-xx (104) First Song - Drivin'.mp3
xx-xx-xx (105) First Song - Hummingbird.mp3
xx-xx-xx (106) First Song - Rhythm And No Blues.mp3
xx-xx-xx (107) First Song - Song In Blue.mp3
xx-xx-xx (108) First Song - Trumpet Soliqiqy.mp3

Let's Go To Town

xx-xx-xx (109) First Song - The Fish.mp3
 xx-xx-xx (110) First Song - Beat Boop.mp3
 xx-xx-xx (111) First Song - Hold Me Tight.mp3
 xx-xx-xx (112) First Song - On The Beat.mp3
 xx-xx-xx (121) First Song - I Hear You A'-Knockin'.mp3
 xx-xx-xx (122) First Song - Indian Love Call.mp3 13602KB
 xx-xx-xx (123) First Song - Somethings Gotta Give.mp3 13568KB
 xx-xx-xx (124) First Song - Jazz Me Blue.mp3 13434KB
 xx-xx-xx (129) First Song - It's A Good Day.mp3 13783KB
 xx-xx-xx (13) First Song - You're Driving Me Crazy.mp3 13364KB
 xx-xx-xx (130) First Song - Juke Box Baby.mp3 13476KB

xx-xx-xx (131) First Song - Whoo-De-Do.mp3 13924KB
 xx-xx-xx (132) First Song - I Found A Million Dollar Baby.mp3 13543KB
 xx-xx-xx (133) First Song - Penthouse Serenade.mp3 13539KB
 xx-xx-xx (134) First Song - What's New.mp3 13814KB
 xx-xx-xx (135) First Song - My Hero.mp3 13471KB
 xx-xx-xx (136) First Song - Hot Toddy.mp3 13601KB
 xx-xx-xx (137) First Song - I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me.mp3 13818KB
 xx-xx-xx (138) First Song - Song In Blue.mp3 13768KB
 xx-xx-xx (139) First Song - Dry Bones.mp3 13715KB

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Let's Go To Town

xx-xx-xx (14) First Song - All of Me.mp3
13411KB
xx-xx-xx (140) First Song - Johnny Is The Boy
For Me.mp3 13750KB
xx-xx-xx (141) First Song - Manhattan.mp3
13591KB
xx-xx-xx (142) First Song - September.mp3
13812KB
xx-xx-xx (143) First Song - I Dream Of
You.mp3 13598KB
xx-xx-xx (144) First Song - Once In A
While.mp3 13770KB
xx-xx-xx (145) First Song - After You've
Gone.mp3 13705KB
xx-xx-xx (146) First Song - On The Right
Way.mp3 13617KB
xx-xx-xx (147) First Song - Love Is A Feel-
ing.mp3 13747KB
xx-xx-xx (148) First Song - Doll Dance.mp3
13951KB
xx-xx-xx (15) First Song - When Your Lover Is
Gone.mp3 13404KB
xx-xx-xx (153) First Song - American Pa-
trol.mp3 13234KB
xx-xx-xx (154) First Song - Ain't That A
Shame.mp3 13210KB
xx-xx-xx (155) First Song - Little Brown
Jug.mp3 13528KB
xx-xx-xx (156) First Song - Why Baby,
Why.mp3 13792KB
xx-xx-xx (157) First Song - Love Me To
Pieces.mp3 13423KB
xx-xx-xx (158) First Song - I Love My
Baby.mp3 13460KB
xx-xx-xx (159) First Song - Please Don't Talk
About Me Til I'm Gone.mp3 13533KB
xx-xx-xx (16) First Song - When My Sugar
Walks Down The Street.mp3 13405KB
xx-xx-xx (160) First Song - The Trolley
Song.mp3 13451KB
xx-xx-xx (161) First Song - How High The
Moon.mp3 13865KB
xx-xx-xx (162) First Song - The World Is Wait-
ing For The Sunrise.mp3 13607KB
xx-xx-xx (163) First Song - Via Con Deos.mp3
14085KB

xx-xx-xx (164) First Song - Song In Blue.mp3
14073KB
xx-xx-xx (165) First Song - Crying Over
You.mp3 13470KB
xx-xx-xx (166) First Song - Don't Get Around
Much Anymore.mp3 13567KB
xx-xx-xx (167) First Song - Ask Me How Do I
Feel.mp3 13551KB
xx-xx-xx (168) First Song - What's New.mp3
13360KB
xx-xx-xx (169) First Song - You Make Me
Feel So Young.mp3 13816KB
xx-xx-xx (170) First Song - The Man On The
Street.mp3 13537KB
xx-xx-xx (171) First Song - No More Tears To
Cry.mp3 13866KB
xx-xx-xx (172) First Song - Lullaby Of Bird-
land.mp3 13543KB
xx-xx-xx (173) First Song - The Lady Is A
Tramp.mp3 13904KB
xx-xx-xx (174) First Song - Taking A Chance
On Love.mp3 13469KB
xx-xx-xx (175) First Song - A Foggy Day In
London Town.mp3 13871KB
xx-xx-xx (176) First Song - This Is My
Song.mp3 13972KB
xx-xx-xx (177) First Song - Its A Big Wide
Wonderful Love.mp3 13864KB
xx-xx-xx (178) First Song -.mp3 13859KB
xx-xx-xx (179) First Song - New Sun In The
Sky.mp3 13897KB
xx-xx-xx (180) First Song - I'm Independent
And On My Own.mp3 13883KB
xx-xx-xx (221) First Song - How High The
Moon.mp3 13833KB
xx-xx-xx (222) First Song - The World Is Wait-
ing For The Sunrise.mp3 13769KB
xx-xx-xx (223) First Song - Fantasy.mp3
13813KB
xx-xx-xx (224) First Song - Johnny Is The
Boy For Me.mp3 13737KB
xx-xx-xx (37) First Song - The Jersey
Bounce.mp3 13587KB
xx-xx-xx (38) First Song -.mp3 13435KB
xx-xx-xx (39) First Song - Thunderbird.mp3
13548KB

Let's Go To Town

xx-xx-xx (40) First Song - Idaho.mp3
13620KB
xx-xx-xx (49) First Song - The Song Is
You.mp3 13734KB
xx-xx-xx (50) First Song - You Do Something
To Me.mp3 13631KB
xx-xx-xx (51) First Song - Dutch Treat.mp3
13539KB
xx-xx-xx (52) First Song - Do You Ever Think
Of Me.mp3 13726KB
xx-xx-xx (81) First Song - Take Everything But
You.mp3 13872KB
xx-xx-xx (82) First Song - Zing Went The
Strings Of My Heart.mp3 13466KB
xx-xx-xx (83) First Song - I Can't Give You
Anything But Love.mp3 13614KB
xx-xx-xx (84) First Song - Take Everything But
You (repeat of #81).mp3 13860KB
xx-xx-xx (85) First Song - Deed I Do.mp3
13687KB
xx-xx-xx (86) First Song - Lover Come Back
To Me.mp3 13850KB
xx-xx-xx (87) First Song - Miserlou.mp3
13646KB
xx-xx-xx (88) First Song - Yankee Doodle
Town.mp3 13930KB
xx-xx-xx (97) First Song - Song In Blue.mp3
13483KB
xx-xx-xx (98) First Song - Buck Dance.mp3
13620KB
Let's Go To Town xx-xx-xx (99) First Song -
Auchioneer.mp3 13584KB

Let's Go With Music

xx-xx-xx (01) First Song -.mp3 13964KB
xx-xx-xx (02) First Song -.mp3 14025KB
xx-xx-xx (05) First Song -.mp3 14135KB
xx-xx-xx (06) First Song -.mp3 13788KB

Manhattan Melodies

58-xx-xx (211) First Song - Achetson, Topeka,
And Santa Fe (Neil Heafy Orchestra
14063KB
58-xx-xx (214) First Song - Love Eyes (Rose-
mary Clooney).mp3 14253KB
xx-xx-xx (198) First Song - Picnic (Steve
Allen).mp3 14127KB

xx-xx-xx (85) First Song - Poor Little Rich Girl
(Chris Connor)(False Start).mp3 14589KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - Getting To Know You -
(Della Reese).mp3 14238KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - Its A Grand Night For
Singing (Nelson Riddle).mp3 14322KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - Kiss Me First (Neil
Heafy Orchestra).mp3 14000KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - Minuite On The Rocks
(Skitch Henderson Orchestra).mp3
14244KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - My Happiness (Connie
Francis).mp3 14157KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - Old Man And The Sea
(LeRoy Holmes Orchestra).mp3 14280KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - St Louis Blues (Pat
Boone).mp3 14221KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - The King Porter Stomp
(Benny Goodman Orchestra).mp3
14182KB

Music On Deck

xx-xx-xx First Song - My Little Red Book.mp3
13940KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - Rose Of San
Antone.mp3 13924KB
xx-xx-xx First Song - Won't You Wear My
Ring Around Your Neck.mp3 13927KB
xx-xx-xx First Song -Let Me Walk You Down
To Lover's Lane.mp3 13938KB

Sports Memory Lane

47-10-10 Guest - Jimmy Constanman.mp3
19773KB

The Century Clock

39-06-23 In the land of King_Arthur (audition
show).mp3 44846KB

The Modern Touch

52-06-27 First Song - Hallelujah.mp3
34072KB

Tomorrows Talent

54-xx-xx Audition (Tapes by Amateurs).mp3
25207KB



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