

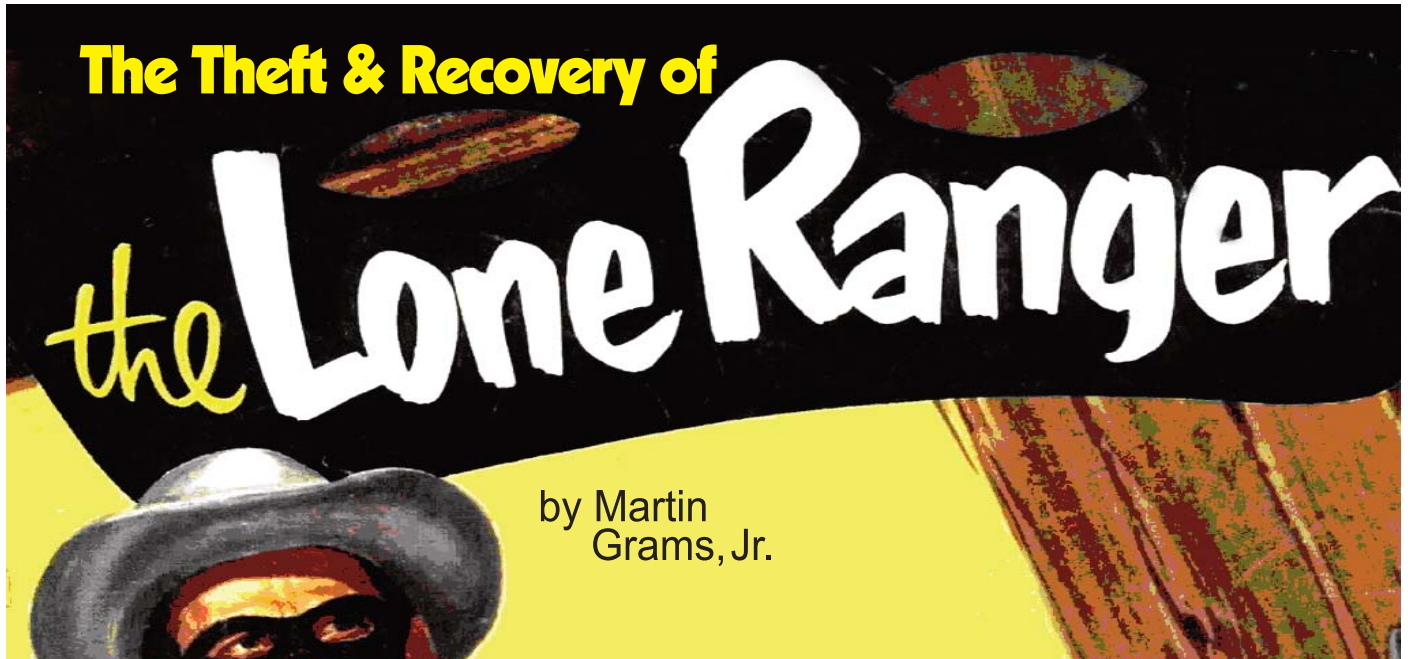


The Old Radio Times

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No.74



The Theft & Recovery of

the Lone Ranger

by Martin Grams, Jr.

The worst kind of news any devoted fan of nostalgic pop culture could hear is the theft of archival documents from a public library... especially when the archival materials impairs the valuable and necessary research and documentation of such classics as *The Lone Ranger*. But that is exactly what happened in the summer of 2013, when a long-time Detroit resident masterminded the unlawful theft of archival historical documents and attempted to sell them on the internet.

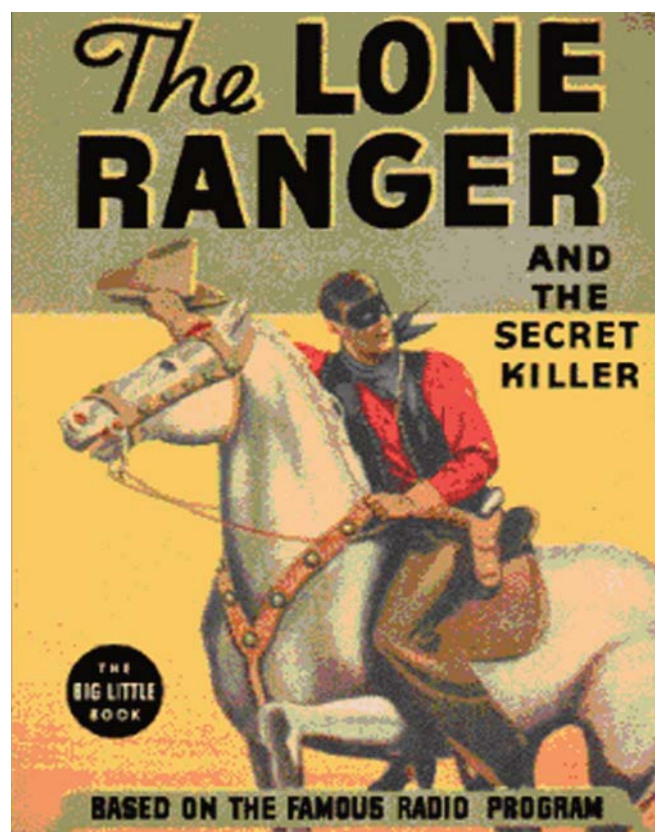
Because of the rising incidence of library theft and mutilation of library materials -- most likely caused by the recent economic decline -- public libraries have been suffering serious losses of books and other property. Radio research has taken a massive step up

the evolution scale as a result of the internet (provided researchers use the internet as a tool for research, not as a reference). Archival materials in libraries have been making the transfer to digital format as a means of preservation (provided the backups are stored off-site, else that loses the point of "preservation"). But there are still hundreds of thousands (potentially millions) of items that have never been digitally scanned and are still susceptible to theft.

In late June 2013, Hake's Americana and Collectibles Auctions in York, Pennsylvania, officially launched the sale of the "WXYZ Archives," offering boxes of vintage collectibles ranging from *The Green Hornet*, *Challenge of the Yukon* and *The Lone Ranger*. Included among the lot were em-

ployment contracts signed by the actual staff of WXYZ (Brace Beemer, Earle Graser, etc.), glossy photographs, promotional premiums, unpublished manuscripts, newspaper comic strips and more. The weekly SCOOP newsletter announced the "WXYZ Archive" and naturally, this caught my attention. I was aware of the George W. Trendle Archive, the Brace Beemer Archive, the Fran Striker Archive, the Raymond Meurer Archive, and other collections housed at public and university libraries, and private collections of family relatives. But what exactly is the WXYZ Archive and why did they have three factual errors wrong in their write-up? Turns out a resident of Detroit, Michigan, consigned his private collection to the auction house in the hopes of making a profit. But the collection was not his...

The auction caught the eye of a number of collectors, including a friend of mine in Brooklyn, New York, Alex, who called me over the phone to inquire about *The Green Hornet* comic strips (reprinted on my blog). They were for sale and he wanted to know the estimated value. I provided Alex and exact details of why the comic strip never went to print, how many rough sketches were made, the estimated value and other details that were not provided on Hake's auction site. Since only two were made and I know where the two reside, what puzzled me is where this third one originated. Even more puzzling was a number of other collectibles that had two similarities -- they contained autographs of George W. Trendle or "To George W. Trendle" and all of them were



among the inventory list in the George W. Trendle Archive, housed at the Detroit Public Library.

Researchers are responsible for the accuracy of the descriptions of the items sold on auction houses and auction houses make an effort to contact those researchers to ensure their customers are not being misled as to the validity of the item.

Reviewing the items for sale on Hake's auction , a number of them caught my attention. Ink blots, coffee stains, torn corners, carbon copy blemishes, rusted paperclips and other signs can individually brand any archival document. It was those same tell-tale signs that caught my eye. After examining the items for auction and comparing the photographs to the copies in my files, you can imagine my surprise when the blem-

ishes matched the items being offered on Hake's. Could the items being sold on the web site be the same housed at the library in Detroit? A phone call to Hake's in late July did not confirm my suspicions and the general consensus was that the items were the property of the consignor and therefore the auctions would conclude as scheduled. When I asked an official at Hake's what the policy and procedure is regarding stolen items consigned to the company, I was told "no comment." My next option was to contact the library. After all, the items were probably theirs and they should be notified. After taking down the necessary information, including an e-mail documenting photographic proof, the library staff began an investigation. A police report was promptly filed out with patrol officers, who turned it over to detectives.



Over a period of weeks following, photocopies of the archival documents in my files were scanned and sent to the library at their request; some of the scans were forwarded to detectives in York, Pennsylvania. The staff at Hake's were cooperative with the library and the detectives, even providing the name

of the consignor to the library. The library staff began investigating and documenting every visit the library patron made, including every box and file number he reviewed, matching every item being sold on Hake's. A search of the perpetrator's apartment found nothing so we can only hope that all of the stolen items were recovered and not sold prior to this discovery. (Ironically, the perpetrator is quoted on the internet (twice) as a historian and as a preserver of the arts.)

On August 15, the suspect was arrested and charged with larceny from a building. He confessed that all of the material was in fact stolen. He has since been released but not yet sentenced. Hake's has returned everything that was in the auction and will return the remaining materials that they received from this person as soon as they photograph and catalog the items for their own records.

The library has since taken the precaution of installing lockers. Researchers are allowed only note-taking items when consulting the Burton manuscripts. All bags, coats, hats, briefcases, handbags, folders, books, newspapers and other belongings must be stored in the locker. Security cameras have been installed throughout the entire reading room, covering every square inch of the room.

The perpetrator cleared Hake's of any wrong doing. It should be noted that the internet has granted auction houses such as Heritage and Hake's vast market potential with a virtually unlimited number of buyers as opposed to a brick and mortar building. High-valued items that are too valuable for

eBay's marketplace can be found on these type of auction sites. For researchers, these websites offer the occasional treasure such as the existence of a promotional poster unheard of prior, a rare collectible or prototype. Private archives from family relatives grant researchers temporary research potential during the auction tenure, when family relatives were impossible to track down or such collections were not known to exist. (Some theorize the dispersement of archival documents also makes research more of a challenge because the buyers often remain anonymous.) Hake's, like any auction house, provides a contract to every person wanting to sell their valuables and among the clauses is a statement from the consignor attesting to the ownership of the items. The auction houses can only assume the consignor is honest.

This story is not a common one. Theft like this does not happen every day. It is simply an isolated, quickly discovered and remedied incident. But there can be no doubt that many thefts have occurred from other libraries across the country. At an archive years ago, a business contract signed by Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall regarding their production company and ZIV regarding *Bold Venture* had been discovered missing. Thankfully, a carbon copy of the original contract was still in the collection. Without the carbon copy, the financial terms of the contract would have remained practically unknown to historians. In the case of the George W. Trendle Archive, imagine if the stolen items had gone unnoticed and sold to private collectors. Writeups docu-



menting various facets of *The Lone Ranger* would have gone undocumented. (In the past, collector who buy archival items from online auctions have personal agendas and reasons for making their purchases and have not, in the past, cooperated with serious-minded researchers thus handicapping future published findings.)

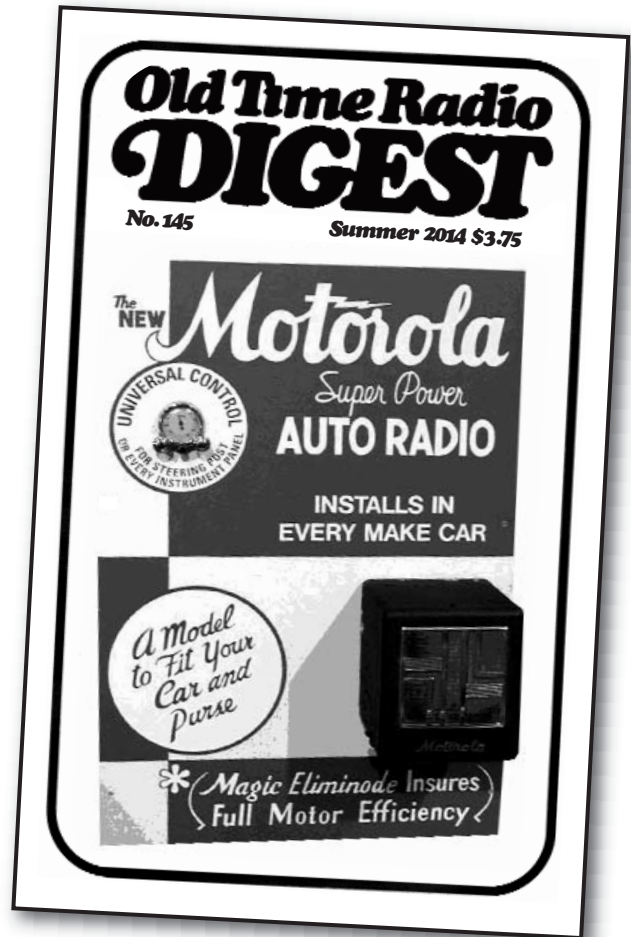
For researchers hoping to document "the complete story," and fans who enjoy reading such documented findings and incidental bits of trivia, with libraries doing their absolute best with security, with auction houses and libraries cooperating to ensure the safe return of archival materials, why are people constantly choosing greed over historical preservation? That answer will never be fully resolved. Which leads us to question: What can libraries do to ensure that the materials are safe from future raids, and what will they do to provide guidance to similar libraries?

Closing comment: This story should

never deter any parties from donating collections to public or university libraries. No matter what they do with the collection (including storing it in their attic), the threat of fire, water or theft is always a roll of the dice. No matter what security measures are placed, someone will always defy Darwin's theory of evolution by attempting to steal valuable, archival materials from libraries. The age old proverb is tweaked in accordance with today's technology: How much someone has or what they have is never impressive -- but what they do to ensure the preservation of those documents may be impressive. Half a dozen private collections have suffered serious water damage as a result of burst pipes, hot water heaters, and other factors beyond our control. For hoarders who bragged about their archival collections but failed to do anything to preserve them in the event such a disaster happens... we can only shake our heads in shame. For public libraries, stricter policies, procedures and punishments ensure stronger security of the archival documents. But now at what cost to the researcher? ■



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Random Musings: Remembering Bob Hastings

by Rick Keating ©2014

Bob Hastings died June 30 at the age of 89. Younger audiences might know him best as the voice of Commissioner Gordon in *Batman: The Animated Series*, but Hastings had a long and varied career. He voiced *Archie Andrews* on radio for about eight years after he got out of the Army Air Corp in World War II and was a frequent guest performer on the radio series *X-Minus One*. He also co-starred in the adventure serial *The Sea-Hound* and was a regular on the children's show *Coast-to-Coast on a Bus*. To name just a few of his radio credits.

His TV roles included the voice of Clark Kent/*Superboy* in the 1966 *Superboy* animated series; Lt. Carpenter on *McHale's Navy*; Capt. Burt Ramsey on *General Hospital*; Tommy Kelsey on *All in the Family*; and guest spots on shows such as *Captain Video and His Video Rangers* (in which his brother, Don, played the *Video Ranger*); *The Twilight Zone*; *The Incredible Hulk*; *The Rockford Files*; *The Dukes of Hazzard*; and *Remington Steele*. He also did various voices on animated series over the years.

Hastings was also a frequent guest at the annual Cincinnati Old-Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention (now the Nostalgia Expo). At the 2003 convention, I had the honor of watching him perform in a radio play I'd written for that year's convention.

I first met Bob Hastings at the 1999 Cincinnati OTR convention and interviewed him for an article on the continuing appeal of old-time radio. It appeared in *Zoom! Magazine*, the in-flight magazine of Vanguard Airlines, in 2002. He told me the beauty of radio is that an actor can play any type of



character. "That's all we did in those days," he said. "We all did different kinds of accents."

One thing he told me that didn't make it into the article was that working on an animated series is the same as working on radio, except for the set up. "The big difference, actually, is in radio you stood opposite each other and you played," he said. "When you do these cartoon series, everybody has his own little spot, so you're never looking at the actor you're working with." Hastings also said there were little partitions between the actors; and that both he and Mark Hamill (who played the Joker) liked to stand up during tapings. "If everybody's there, you just do the whole show. Just like you would regularly," he said. "Otherwise somebody reads the part of the person who isn't there. It's radio. I loved radio. The best

actors I ever worked with were radio actors. By far, because you had to be an actor.”

Hastings started as a singer. In 1939, he commuted from New York to Chicago to sing on the radio show *National Barn Dance* until his voice changed on the air. He still sang as an adult. In 1967, he released an album called *Bob Hastings Sings for the Family*. The late Hal Stone, who played Jughead on Archie Andrews, wrote in his autobiography, *Aw... Relax, Archie! Re-laxx!* (page 213), that Hastings was once hired to be one of the celebrities making appearances at the Universal Studios tourist attraction; and that he became known as the “mayor” of the Universal Studios tour. The Cincinnati convention is a casual affair. Hastings and other radio actors mingled with the other attendees. In fact, the convention’s casual nature could lead to some fun moments. One year Hastings performed the lead in a re-creation of a detective program. When his character demanded some information, one of the other performers ad-libbed Jughead’s “relax” line from the opening of *Archie Andrews*. Hastings gave him a look that was beyond priceless; but pro that he was, he continued on with his lines, unfazed.

In his autobiography, Stone wrote that Hastings, “didn’t become afflicted with the ‘smell me, I’m a star’ Hollywood nonsense.” That’s certainly true. In this age of “reality” shows and people who are famous for being famous more so than for any significant accomplishments, it’s good to know that at least one “celebrity” was as ordinary and down-to-earth as the rest of us. I put “celebrity” in quotes because I doubt Bob Hastings ever used that word to describe himself. Rest well, Mr. Hastings.

Editorial Policy of the Old Radio Times

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.

Dealers whose ads we carry or may carry have agreed to give those placing orders with them a discount if they mention that they saw their ad in ‘The Old Radio Times’. This is in line with the group’s goal of making otr available to the collecting community.

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Written by Jay Hickerson December, 2013

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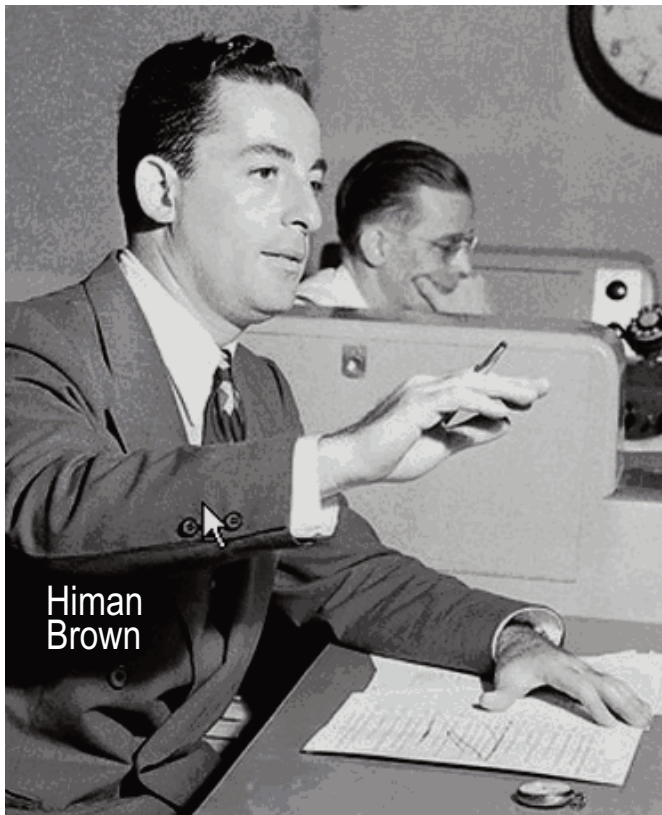
Deep in the memories of a certain generation there lurks a presence -- a sinister voice that manages to be both gruesome and hilarious. This unsettling combination, which contributed to many a sleepless night for those who encountered it as children, has gone on to become a popular-culture institution. Even today, in the age of personalized media and rampaging technology, the Horror Host is fondly and reverently remembered. From the fifties through the eighties, a legion of local television announcers, news reporters, and weathermen were pressed into duty late at night or on Saturday afternoons - rigged out in fright wigs and bloody lab coats, pointy fangs and Dracula capes, and sent out in front of the camera to introduce gritty old 16mm monster movies. Everyone remembers their

local horror host, their Uncle Mouldy or Auntie Gruesome or Doctor Fang, but not everyone remembers the origin of these cathode-ray goblins. Not everyone remembers a horribly squeaking door keening out of the radio speaker, followed by a greeting dripping with menace: "Good evening Friends of the *Inner Sanctum* ... "

And not everyone remembers the man responsible for it all, a hard-charging bundle of energy named Himan Brown.

Hi Brown lived for radio. He came of age just as the medium was becoming a vital part of the American scene, and he spent his entire adult life believing in radio as the definitive method of storytelling. Even after nearly all of his contemporaries had moved on, assimilated by television or movies or the stage, Hi Brown continued to believe in radio. He even brought it back to life at a time when just about everyone thought he was out of his mind to try. And, he owed it all to that squeaking door.

Some innovators entered radio through the side door. Some climbed up the fire escape and snuck in a window. Some drifted in to get out of the figurative rain. But, not Hi Brown. Hi Brown walked right up to the front door, shoved the guard aside and pushed his way in. As a teenager, he worked out a deal with cartoonist Milt Gross to bring Gross's hilarious Yiddish-dialect characters to the air. While this feature didn't last long, it did catch the attention of another innovator with something to prove. Gertrude Berg was just then trying to sell 'NBC on her idea for a serial telling the story



of a working-class Jewish family in the Bronx -- and this voice telling funny stories on WEAJ sounded like just the voice she wanted to play the family patriarch, Jake Goldberg. Although Berg was nonplussed to discover that voice was coming from the throat of an adolescent boy, they nevertheless formed a partnership and *The Rise of the Goldbergs* began a long and successful run.

Hi Brown didn't last long, though. There was to be only one boss on *The Goldbergs*, and that was to be Gertrude Berg. Hi Brown became the first of many people to discover that truth. After a few weeks, he found himself back on the street, hustling for another radio job. He spent the next decade building himself up, creating a raft of program ideas, hooking up for a stretch with soap-opera im-

presarios Frank and Anne Hummert, and finally made his way back to the big time with the romantic comedy-drama anthology *Grand Central Station*. With a successful long-term network series on his resume, Brown was finally ready to have some fun.

Horror wasn't new to radio. It had had a presence on the air since the early 1930s, ranging from the pulpy mayhem of *The Witch's Tale* to the highbrow terror promoted by Wyllis Cooper and Arch Oboler on *Lights Out*. But, the one thing these early programs had in common is that they took themselves seriously. They were, pardon the expression, dead earnest about the horrors they presented. Hi Brown decided that radio had had enough of that -- and proposed to wring laughs out of the format, blended right in with the gore.

His show, originally called *The Squeaking Door*, featured stage actor Raymond Edward Johnson as the master of ceremonies—a caustic ghoul with a voice like a rusty razor, who would introduce each week's tale with just the right note of cheerful sociopathy to get the proceedings off on a "light" note (if your idea of "light" included jokes about decapitation, amputation, strangulation, or leisurely baths in a steaming vat of acid). There was nothing on the air quite like *The Squeaking Door* in 1941, and the makers of Carter's Little Liver Pills loved the whole package ... except for the title. Just at that time, the publishing firm of Simon and Schuster was having moderate success with a series of grade-B mystery novels under the umbrella title *Inner Sanctum Mys-*

teries. With his well-honed talent for wheeling and dealing, Brown immediately worked out an arrangement with the publishing firm to use their title in exchange for free plugs on the air, and *Inner Sanctum Mysteries* was ready for radio.

And that, essentially, was it. The format remained the same throughout the program's long and successful run: each week, organist Lew White pounded out a low, rumbling progression punctuated by a sudden terrifying sting—the aural equivalent of whisking the sheet off a mouldering corpse. Then came the squeak—a high, fingernails-on-the-blackboard skeen at first, evolving eventually into a deep, full-bodied groan suitable to the foulest, dankest catacomb ever to haunt a twelve-year-old's imagination. And then came Raymond, Your Host with his oily, smirking introduction, sounding for all the world like an insurance salesman with a sideline in axe murder. Johnson milked these introductions for all they were worth, and Brown's scriptwriters played along, each week making Raymond's remarks riper and more outrageous. The scripts themselves followed suit—throwing their hapless heroes and heroines into the most outlandish circumstances possible, flinging up the most exaggerated supernatural menaces possible, before whipping it all to a "it was all a fake, it was all a frame-up, and here's how it was done" conclusion. In the world of *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*, those vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and necromancers were usually, under the shroud, just garden-variety con men, cheating hus-

bands or revenge-seeking wives. But, just for a minute, you believed it.

Raymond Edward Johnson spent four years as Your Host—four gore-splattered, mold-encrusted years of increasingly outlandish tales. But military service finally took him, and after a brief trifling with lesser replacements, Brown hit the jackpot with another Broadway character actor, the mellow-voiced Paul

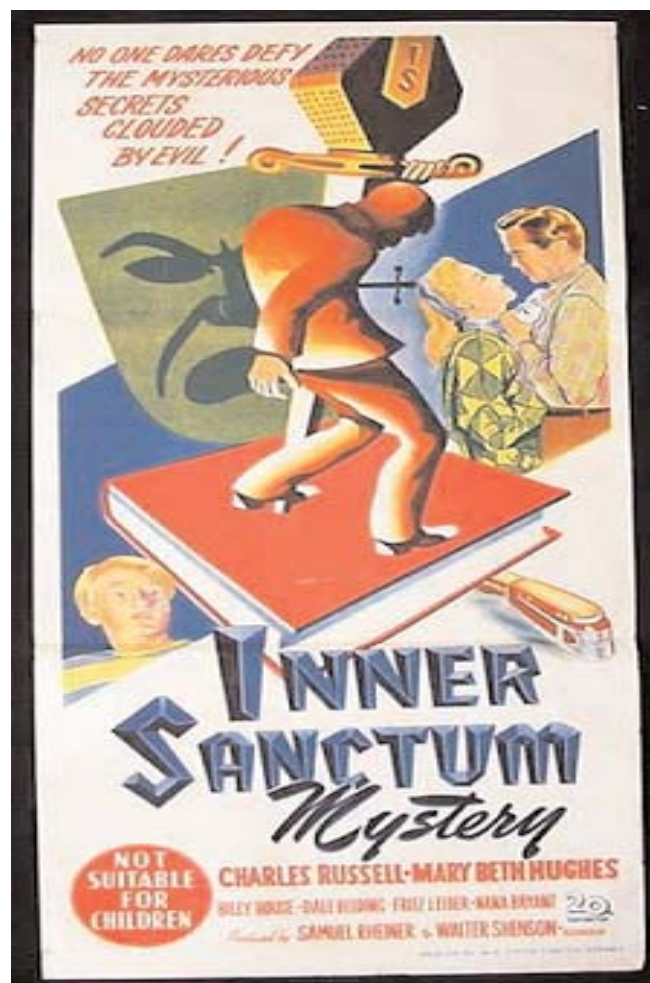


McGrath—who would give Your Host his definitive personality. Where Johnson always gave the impression that he might just climb out of the speaker and slit your throat if you didn't laugh at his jokes, McGrath's host didn't care if you laughed at his jokes or not. Delivering his lines in a rich, fruity baritone that sounded for all the world like Digger O'Dell gone fully to the dark side, McGrath's Host was having too much fun to care what anyone thought—he created his own world of grisly mirth, and if you didn't care to join him, well, you were just like Mary the Lipton Tea Lady, just another boring old party-pooper.

The Lipton commercials of *Inner Sanctum's* prime mid-forties era were among the most hilarious the medium ever produced.

Here, Hi Brown managed to give the back of his hand to the hard-selling, oozingly-genial sales pitches that characterized mainstream radio ... but, did so in such a way that the sponsor couldn't possibly complain. Each week, actress Mary Bennett cooed out her pitch for Lipton products, in her prim middle-class-lady sort of way. And each week, McGrath mocked and jeered at her message in the most gruesome way possible. And then—far from screaming and recoiling in terror—Mary Bennett merely chided the Host for his poor manners, the way a respectable housewife might chide her husband for smoking at the supper table. Listeners could be forgiven for imagining the two as radio's most dysfunctional married couple, a graveyard Dorothy and Dick—but Lipton certainly seemed satisfied, and so was Himan Brown. *Inner Sanctum Mysteries* continued on through the late forties with little change in style. Bromo Seltzer replaced Lipton as sponsor in 1946, and while the Sonovox "talking train" commercials are burned into the collective memory of every American child born just before the War, the show lost something when Mary the Tea Lady went away. No doubt Your Host pined for his lost love by burying himself in his work, piling on more gore and violence than ever before. Until, finally, there just weren't any more victims left.

When *Inner Sanctum* left the air, it wasn't the end for Himan Brown. He continued to push new ideas until there wasn't any radio drama left—and then he spent the next decade trying to bring it back. He succeeded in 1974 with *The CBS Radio Mystery Theatre*, complete with the same squeaking door. But, there was a new master of cere-



monies, the professorial E. G. Marshall, whose greatest eccentricity was his fastidious pronunciation of "Anhoysen Busch." Listeners were glad to have radio drama back and were glad Hi Brown was still alive and well and making it happen, with the same verve and love for the aural medium he'd always shown. And, deep down, no doubt a few of those listeners with long memories were also hoping that somewhere, in a dark and forgotten crypt in an overgrown cemetery, Your Host and his long-suffering tea-sipping wife were happy together at last. ■

Reprinted from the Radio Collectors of America newsletter

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OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES AND UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES

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 May and June 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

Fibber McGee And Molly

55-06-16 The Woodpecker.wav
55-06-19 Counseling The Old Timer.wav
55-06-20 McGee Pawns Molly's Coat.wav
55-06-21 Hit And Run.wav
55-06-22 The Autographed Baseball.wav
55-06-23 McGee Bustles In The Kitchen.wav
55-09-26 The McGeeGas Saver.wav
55-09-27 McGee Gives A Gift To The Elks.wav

Gang Busters

50-06-10 The Case Of The Inside Track.mp3
50-09-30 The Case Of The Temperate Thief.mp3

Green Hornet, The

52-10-01 Political Crossfire.wav
52-10-03 Spy Master.wav
52-10-08 The Changing Alibi.wav
52-10-10 Keys To A Robbery.wav
52-10-15 Election Boomerang.wav
52-10-17 Proof Of Treasure.wav
52-10-22 Jeff Warren's Safe.wav

52-10-24 Unknown Assassin.wav
52-10-29 The Microfilm Of Death.wav
52-10-31 The Hawkrigde Gems.wav
52-11-05 A Friday Night In The Mountains.wav
52-11-07 The Simple Clue.wav
52-11-12 The Triple Cross.wav
52-11-14 Ceiling On Crime.wav
52-11-19 The Cigarette Filters.wav
52-11-21 Shipment For Korea.wav
52-11-26 Gas House Ending.wav
52-11-28 Murder And Espionage.wav
52-12-05 Axford's Romantic Disaster.wav
52-12-03 Pretenders To The Throne.wav

Inner Sanctum

45-01-09 Desert Death.mp3
45-04-17 The Judas Clock.mp3
45-05-01 The Girl And The Gallows.mp3
45-05-22 Dead To Rights.mp3
45-06-19 Dead Men's Holiday.mp3
46-05-07 You Could Die Laughing.mp3
46-05-21 Detour To Terror.mp3
49-01-10 Murder Comes To Life.mp3
49-01-31 The Devil's Fortune.mp3
49-03-28 Appointment With Death.mp3
49-05-16 The Unburied Dead.mp3
52-08-24.mp3

Jack Benny

1948-11-07 Jack Hears an Echo (The Psychiatrist).mp3
1951-01-21 Jack Goes to Doctor for a Check-up.mp3
1951-03-18 Jack talks about his illness.mp3
1951-05-27 Jack meets Speed Riggs at the Doctors Office.mp3

Jack Benny

- 1952-04-06 Jack goes to the dentist.mp3
- 1952-11-09 Jack goes to doctor for a vitamin shot.mp3
- 1953-09-27 Polly goes to the psychiatrist.mp3
- 1954-11-28 Dennis sees a psychiatrist.mp3

Life of Riley

- 1944-04-16 Proxy Wedding (Part 1).mp3
- 1944-04-23 Proxy Wedding (Part 2).mp3
- 1945-03-18 Riley tries to become a pal to Junior.mp3
- 1945-03-25 Missing five dollars.mp3
- 1946-06-29 Paper route subscription contest to go to camp.mp3
- 1946-11-02 Peg & Riley both run for park supervisor.mp3
- 1947-02-01 Mr X - Riley switched as a baby.mp3
- 1947-11-29 Thanksgiving with the Gillises.mp3
- 1948-04-24 Spring fever.mp3
- 1948-08-27 Riley's night job.mp3
- 1949-02-25 Sneak preview of 'The Life of Riley' movie.mp3
- 1949-11-25 Thanksgiving dinner with the boss.mp3
- 1950-05-19 The electric company and Simon and Babs.mp3
- 1950-05-26 Peg in a beauty contest.mp3
- 1951-05-04 Riley and the marriage certificate.mp3
- 1951-06-01 Riley and the ballet.mp3

Line-Up, The

- 51-01-11 The Mad Bomber Case.mp3
- 51-03-27 The Lapinish Lighter-Upper Case.mp3

Lone Ranger

- 1942-06-08 Lumber for the Railroad (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-10 The Wrong Redskin (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-12 Outlaws in War Paint (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-15 Race to Dry Creek (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-17 Ambush at Bright Rainbow (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-19 Mortgages Paid Off (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-22 Badlands for Badmen (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-24 Clouds Across the Moon (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-26 Quicksand for a Gambler (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-06-29 Trouble at the Canyon (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-07-01 Kidnapped (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-07-03 Surprise at Sunrise (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1942-07-06 End of the Iron Spur (Iron Spur Series).mp3
- 1947-03-03 Runaway Railroad.mp3
- 1947-11-07 The Union Pacific Series - Part One.mp3
- 1947-11-10 The Union Pacific Series - Part Two.mp3
- 1947-11-12 The Union Pacific Series - Part Three.mp3
- 1947-11-14 The Union Pacific Series - Part Four.mp3

Lone Ranger

1948-11-01 The Flashlight Ring - Part One.mp3

1948-11-03 The Flashlight Ring - Part Two.mp3

Man From Homicide, The

51-07-09 Don Shelberger Murder.mp3

51-07-16 Old Man Kelso.mp3

Mr And Mr North

53-12-29 The Witness.wav

43-09-22 The Contagious Confession.wav

44-08-05 Pam Keeps Out Of Trouble (Mystery Plhse).wav

50-12-05 Who Killed Mr Stefano.wav

52-02-12 The Premature Corpse.wav

53-12-22 Background For Murder.wav

54-02-23 Winter Honeymoon.wav

xx-xx-xx Murder For Sale.wav

Nick Carter

1943-09-27 Glass Coffin.mp3

1943-10-18 State's Prison Evidence.mp3

1943-11-10 Drug Ring Murder.mp3

1943-11-17 Substitute Bride.mp3

1944-04-01 Professor's Secret.mp3

1946-04-02 Eight Records of Death.mp3

1946-04-09 COT Disappearing Corpse.mp3

1946-05-28 COT Demented Daughter.mp3

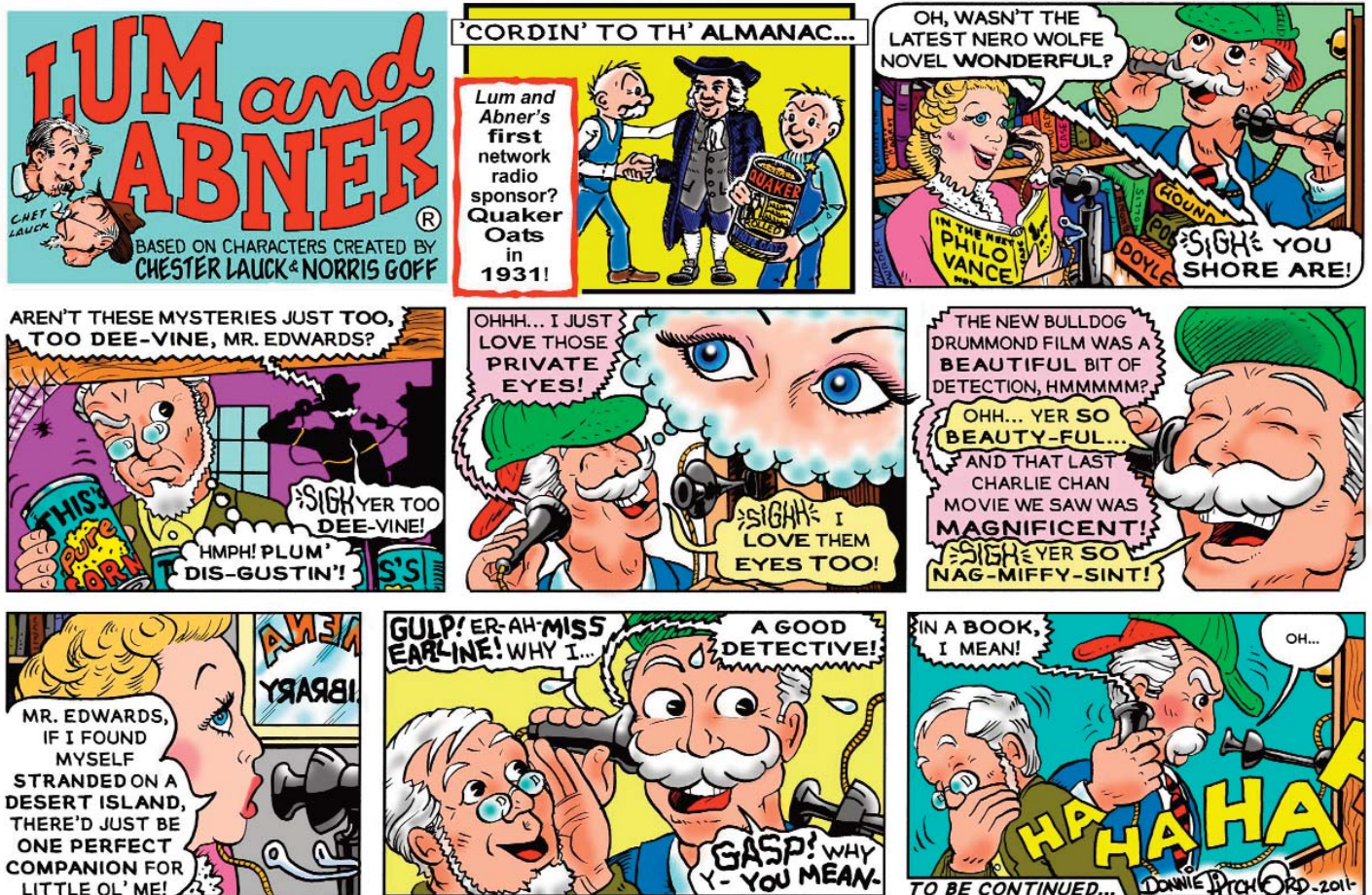
1946-06-04 COT Dictaphone Murder.mp3

1947-12-07 COT Exploded Alibi.mp3

1947-12-28 COT Missing Street.mp3

1948-01-04 COT Devil's Left Eye.mp3

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Nick Carter

1948-03-14 COT Last Old Timer.mp3
1948-03-21 COT Magic Rope.mp3
1948-04-04 COT Star of Evil.mp3
1949-12-25 COT Phantom Shoplifter.mp3

Night Watch

54-05-03 Glass Breaker.mp3
54-07-10 Hammer 211.mp3

Our Land Be Bright

1948 Pgm #10 You and Your Ballot w
Robert Montgomery (C).wav
1948 Pgm #11 Men of Tomorrow w Abbott
and Costello (C).mp3
1948 Pgm #12 Voices in the Dark (C).wav
1948 Pgm #13 Play Ball w Bob Hope
(C).wav
1948 Pgm #2 No Vacancies w Joan
Fontaine.wav
1948 Pgm #3 Program for Peace w Herbert
Marshall (C).wav
1948 Pgm #4 Little Red School House w
Adolph Menjou (C).wav
1948 Pgm #5 Legislative Forum w Brian
Aherne (C).wav
1948 Pgm #6 Win the Peace w Jack Car-
son (C).wav
1948 Pgm #7 Veterans At Work w Jack
Carson (C).wav
1948 Pgm #8 Religion - War and Peace w
Madeleine Carroll (C).wav
1948 Pgm #9 For Those Who Served w
Herbert Marshall (C).wav

Official Detective

56-02-03 Butcher Shop Murder.mp3

Our Miss Brooks

1948-11-21 The Model School Teacher.mp3

1949-02-13 Stretch the Basketball
Star.mp3
1949-05-01 Walter v Stretch Grudge
Match.mp3
1949-05-22 Peanuts, the Great Dane.mp3
1949-05-29 Arguments, Arguments!.mp3
1949-07-10 The Telegram.mp3
1949-07-24 Mrs Davis' Cookies.mp3
1949-08-07 Heat Wave.mp3
1949-09-25 Conklin Causes a Fight.mp3
1949-12-11 Game at Clay City.mp3
1949-12-18 A Letter to Santa.mp3
1950-01-01 Babysitting on New Year's
Eve.mp3
1950-01-22 Professorship at State U.mp3
1950-02-05 Miss Enright's Dinner.mp3
1950-02-19 Valentine's Day Date.mp3
1950-05-07 Boynton's Barbecue.mp3
1950-05-14 Mr Boynton's Parents.mp3
1950-10-01 Measles Diagnosis.mp3
1955-08-21 Who's Going Where.mp3
1955-09-18 Oo-Oo-Me-Me-Tocoludi-Gucci-
Mo-O-Moo.mp3

Phil Harris

1952-04-13 Alice's Easter Dress.mp3
1952-04-20 Alices' Old Boyfriend, George
Henderson.mp3
1952-04-27 Phil is Directed to Fire His
Band.mp3
1952-05-04 Helping Alice with Spring
Cleaning.mp3
1952-05-11 The Harris Kids on TV.mp3
1952-05-18 Julius is Missing.mp3
1952-05-25 Alice's Surprise Party for Mr.
Scott.mp3
1952-10-05 Hotel Harris.mp3

Phil Harris

1952-10-12 The Stolen US Mail.mp3
1952-10-19 Phil the Television Star.mp3
1952-10-26 Baby Alice's First Date.mp3
1952-11-02 Phil Helps Get Out the Vote.mp3
1952-11-09 Surprise Party for Phil.mp3
1952-11-16 Alice Buys a Business.mp3
1952-11-23 The Football Tickets.mp3
1952-11-30 Elliot's Girlfriend's Name is on Phil's Chest.mp3
1952-12-07 Julius is in Jail.mp3
1952-12-14 An Elephant for Mr Scott.mp3
1952-12-21 Women's Club Santa Claus.mp3
1952-12-28 New Year's Eve Party at the Harrises.mp3

Police Blotter

56-xx-xx Homicide By Hurricane.mp3

Somebody Knows

50-08-24 The Black Dahlia.mp3

Squad Room

55-xx-xx Body Found In A Plastic Bag.mp3

Treasury Agent

47-08-11 The Case Of The Faithful WifWife.mp3

Twenty-First Precinct

56-06-28 Abandoned Baby.mp3

Under Arrest

49-05-08 Mrs. Mollison's Handbag.mp3

Unit 88

57-11-01 First Call - Attempted Suicide.mp3

Voice Of The Army

Pgm #231 Red Points (C).wav

Pgm #232 Time Runs Out (C).wav

Pgm #253 Independence Day (C).wav

Pgm #254 They'll Always Remember (C).wav

Pgm #257 Someone to Watch Over Me (C).wav

Pgm #258 The Broken Strands (C).wav

Yours Truly Johnny Dollar

55-10-17 Chesapeake Fraud Matter 1.5.mp3

55-10-18 Chesapeake Fraud Matter 2.5.mp3

55-10-19 Chesapeake Fraud Matter 3.5.mp3

55-10-20 Chesapeake Fraud Matter 4.5.mp3

55-10-21 Chesapeake Fraud Matter 5.5.mp3

55-10-24 The Alvin Summers Matter 1.5.mp3

55-10-25 The Alvin Summers Matter 2.5.mp3

55-10-26 The Alvin Summers Matter 3.5.mp3

55-10-27 The Alvin Summers Matter 4.5.mp3



- 55-10-28 The Alvin Summers Matter 5.5.mp3
- 55-10-31 The Valentine Matter 1.5.mp3
- 55-11-01 The Valentine Matter 2.5.mp3
- 55-11-02 The Valentine Matter 3.5.mp3
- 55-11-03 The Valentine Matter 4.5.mp3
- 55-11-04 The Valentine Matter 5.5.mp3
- 55-11-14 The Broderick Matter 1.5.mp3
- 55-11-15 The Broderick Matter 2.5.mp3
- 55-11-16 The Broderick Matter 3.5.mp3
- 55-11-17 The Broderick Matter 4.5.mp3
- 55-11-18 The Broderick Matter 5.5.mp3
- 56-02-27 The Fathom Five Matter 1.5.mp3
- 56-02-28 The Fathom Five Matter 2.5.mp3
- 56-02-29 The Fathom Five Matter 3.5.mp3
- 56-03-01 The Fathom Five Matter 4.5.mp3
- 56-03-02 The Fathom Five Matter 5.5.mp3
- 56-03-26 The LaMarr Matter 1.5.mp3
- 56-03-27 The LaMarr Matter 2.5.mp3
- 56-03-28 The LaMarr Matter 3.5.mp3
- 56-03-29 The LaMarr Matter 4.5.mp3
- 56-03-30 The LaMarr Matter 5.5.mp3
- 56-07-23 The Open Town Matter 1.5.mp3
- 56-07-24 The Open Town Matter 2.5.mp3
- 56-07-25 The Open Town Matter 3.5.mp3
- 56-07-26 The Open Town Matter 4.5.mp3
- 56-07-27 The Open Town Matter 5.5.mp3
- 56-08-24 The Kranesburg Matter 1.6.mp3
- 56-08-27 The Kranesburg Matter 2.6.mp3
- 56-08-28 The Kranesburg Matter 3.6.mp3
- 56-08-29 The Kranesburg Matter 4.6.mp3
- 56-08-30 The Kranesburg Matter 5.6.mp3
- 56-08-31 The Kranesburg Matter 6.6.mp3
- 56-11-18 The Markham Matter.mp3
- 56-11-25 The Royal Street Matter.mp3
- 56-12-16 The Rasmussen Matter.mp3
- 56-12-20 The Red Mystery Matter.mp3 1M

DID YOU KNOW



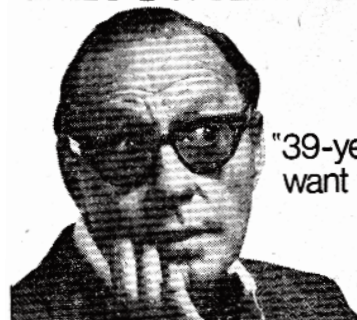
FRED ALLEN

Every Sunday Night

CBS NETWORK Coast to Coast

9-10 EWT	7-8 MWT
8-9 CWT	6-7 PWT

Texaco's new Sky Chief Gasoline is for people like Jack Benny.



"39-year-olds who want to save money?"



METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON OLD TIME RADIO CLUB

A

55

60

70

STANDARD ENDBROADCAST

80

100

120

140

160

A

B

ON THE DIAL AT WWW.MWOTRC.COM

B

Going strong for 30 years, the **Metropolitan Washington Old Time Radio Club** brings people together who have an interest in Old Time Radio (OTR). This is done through monthly meetings consisting of presentations about OTR stars and programs, and recreations of classic OTR shows, plus occasional performances of member-penned scripts produced in the OTR style.

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RADIO RECALL

Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club



Gather 'Round the Radio

e-Newsletter for the Metropolitan Washington Old-Time Radio Club

music reviews, bits of nostalgia, and essays by Club members. Recently the GRTR has morphed into The GRTR Studio Edition which is a fanciful use of the format of old-time radio variety shows, and the popular NPR talk-show "Fresh Air." GRTR brings lively information about entertainment and nostalgia.

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Influencing Radio's Golden Age

by Henry L. Morse

Introduction

This writing is the promised second article on the growth of AM radio in America during the “golden age”, generally considered to be the period from the 1920s into the 1950s.

The first article was devoted to radio technology and appeared in the Jan/ Feb 2013 issue of Radio Times. That article was devoted to the growth of technology of AM radio and its influence on the listening audience.

This second article is the author’s opinion of the most important developments in radio and their effects on the growth of the radio industry. Impact to the listening audience will be discussed as well. All of this is my interpretation of material that surfaced during my research. Of course, there will be many different opinions. In keeping with my desire to limit the size of article I will not touch on every aspect. However, it is my fervent hope that reading this article will encourage readers to delve deeper into this subject, formulate their own opinions, and perhaps communicate them to the readers of Radio Times.

As part of the introduction I will reprise some of the most important technical achievements and their effect on the growth of radio:

- The first item on the list is the crystal radio set. Although it was somewhat difficult to build, only allowed one listener at a time could listen in using headphones, and it could only receive the strongest station; it

did create the first spark of interest in radio listening.



- Following closely behind was the advent of the Tuned Radio Frequency receiver, often called TRF. Tuning in required the use of 3 dials, but it could capture a single station from the many stations that were beginning to populate the airwaves. It did require 3 batteries to operate which created some discord because of the appearance of batteries and wires on the floor of the listening room. It was initially equipped with a horn, not all that dissimilar from what was used on the early phonographs. But it did allow many people to listen to a broadcast together. It was in general use until the mid and late 1920s.
- Later in the 1920s came the electromagnetic loudspeaker. It was less expensive to produce and provided a better quality of sound. The improvement in cost and in sound helped fuel the growth of the still fledgling radio industry.
- A real breakthrough came with the elimination of the 3 batteries. It was now possible to produce a radio receiver that was not only less costly to buy but allowed radio to be delivered in more stylish cabinetry, making it an attractive addition to the living room.



- Probably the most important development was the introduction of the Superheterodyne receiver in the late 1920s. Early on it was closely controlled by the RCA Corporation but became in more general use in the 1930s. This design, although pricey at introduction, gradually decreased in size and cost putting a quality radio in the reach of more of the general public.
- Following closely behind the Superheterodyne was the introduction of smaller radios in Bakelite cabinets. The much respected 5 tube radio could fit in to one of these smaller cabinets. Kitchen radios began to appear and that was especially popular with the ladies listening to soap operas. This drove down the price, was compact, and made radios available to an increased number of the people. The affordable cost was particularly significant as the country was in a depression until the late 1930s.

Programming and Other Developments

Radio was mostly experimental from the early 1900s into the early 1920s. Many radio broadcast events and programs aired in the 1920s signaled the birth of radio as an industry. Many of these events and programs had a significant impact on America. I will discuss

several of these and their impact on the radio industry and the nation. There will be no attempt to rank these in their order of importance.

A point to remember is that the most explosive growth of radio came in the 1930s, a special time in our history. The country was struggling with the great depression. There was a great disparity between those who had things and those who did not. Radio was indispensable to the struggling have-nots. Developments are grouped into segments. In my opinion the most significant segments are technology, special events, public service and entertainment.

Special Events

Commercialization of Radio – Toll Broadcasting

Although WEAf, New York, has been generally recognized as being the father of the radio commercial in 1922, there was prior commercialization even during the experimental years. Prior to 1920 Westinghouse set up a transmitter, located in a tent on a roof top to broadcast 2 hours per day. Commercials were included. In 1920 Westinghouse formally entered the broadcasting business by establishing KDKA Pittsburgh, formerly experimental station 8XK. In addition, portable broadcast outfits were set up at fairs and other gatherings with a particular company selling their products over the air. WEAf is still credited with the “first broadcast commercial” for Queensboro Realty. Interestingly enough, Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, thought commercials should be prohibited. However, the dawn of radio commercials ushered in

practices that carried through radio's golden age and into TV today. This was the beginning of the strong influence that sponsors would ultimately have over programming content.

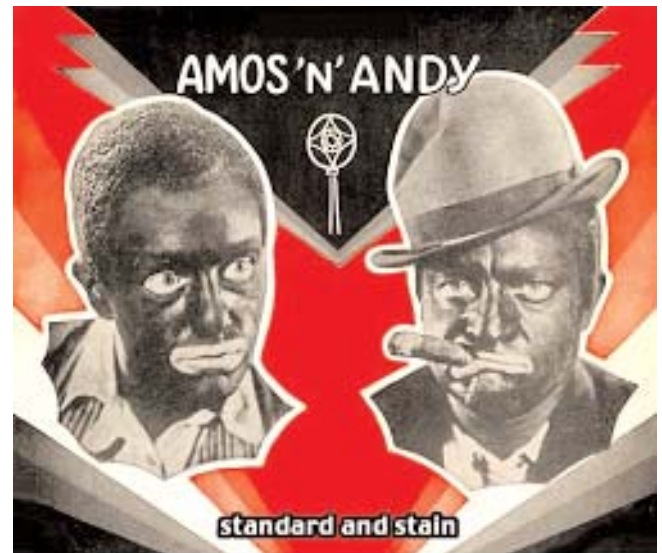
The Biltmore Agreement

With the success of radio came a decline in the sale of newspapers – not unlike what is happening today with the popularity of the Internet versus brick and mortar stores. Initially there was collaboration between newspapers and radio stations but newspapers soon realized that radio could get news to the public faster than newspapers. By the time the morning paper arrived on the doorstep, radio listeners had heard the news on their radios. Compounding the distress for newspapers was a trend for advertisers to look to radio to help sell their products. Internet anyone! In 1933 the Press-Radio agreement was hammered out. Newspapers would continue to publish program guides while radio was not allowed to broadcast any news before 9:30AM for morning news and before 9:30PM for evening news. Imagine an agreement like that happening today! Some of posited that radio feared the power of the newspaper industry. The agreement ultimately broke down within a few years as the newspaper publishers learned just how profitable it was to own radio stations. What makes this so important is that the agreement helped shape both the radio and newspaper industry.

Syndication

Syndication means that programs can be pre-recorded and sold or distributed for listening or broadcasting. This concept began with Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll

of *Amos N Andy* fame. They were on the air as *Sam N Henry* starting in 1925 aired out of Chicago. They wanted the station to allow them to record their programs



and sell them. Station management refused so at the end of their contract in 1928 they left for a station across town and began the tremendously popular *Amos N Andy*. More on them later! Although the pair were unable to patent this concept they went on to be the highest paid radio personalities at that time. This concept allowed many radio programs from the 1930s and 1940s to live well into the 1950s by airing what we today call "reruns. For example, *The Lone Ranger's* final new episode was in 1954 but with syndication continuation until mid-1956. This simple idea by the creators of *Amos N Andy* is allowing TV viewers to still view such TV programs as *I Love Lucy* and *the Honeymooners* - even to this day.

Bing Crosby and the growth of Pre-recorded Programming

In 1936 Bing Crosby became the host of



the *Kraft Music Hall*. By 1945 he was becoming very disenchanted with the demands to do his weekly program live. He approached NBC executives asking them to permit him to pre-record his show. They turned him down forcing him to finish the 1945-46 season live. At that time NBC and others demanded that all shows be done live. Hearing of Crosby's dilemma and looking to improve their ratings, he was offered the opportunity of doing a pre-recorded show with ABC. Their one proviso was that the sound quality had to be as good as a live airing. Realizing that the current system of recording to disk was inferior, and understanding that editing disks was cumbersome at best, he began investigating other technology. An engineer brought the German technology of magnetic tape to Crosby. Crosby asked this engineer to do a test recording for the 1947-48 season. The sound quality was immediately accepted and editing was far superior using the new magnetic tape. Because of this success of pre-recording the networks gradually less-

ened the requirement that all programming be live. As an aside, Crosby was convinced to invest in the fledgling Ampex Company, that not only produced tape equipment for radio but moved into TV recording in the 1950s. There is much more to this story that can be found at <http://www.todaysengineer.org/2012/Nov/hi-story.asp>. This was a real game changer.

Radio Gains Star Power

Early in the great depression live theater was severely impacted leaving many big name theatrical personalities out of work and driven into radio broadcasting. Up until this point radio stations and networks used radio actors and actresses that they developed themselves and sponsors had to go along because there was not much other talent available. Having these theatrical personalities delighted advertising agencies who were out to acquire the most star power for the dollars they spent with the networks in order to better sell products for their clients. Some of these notable celebrities were Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny, and Burns and Allen. The result of this change was to bring many famous and talented entertainers onto the airwaves - a boon for listeners.

Of course, there are many other examples. An excellent guide to important events can be found in the writings of radio historian and author Elizabeth McLeod. Her compilation of major events can be found at: <http://www.midcoast.com/~lizmcl/moments.html>.

We will explore many genres in radio programming but cannot possibly cover all of them in a writing of this scope. Programs

chosen for this article include:

1. News and Public Service
2. Children's Programming
3. Detective Stories
4. Drama
5. Comedy
6. Soap Operas

News and other public service

The first group to be discussed is called public service. This includes news coverage, public announcements, and major speeches

- On November 2, 1920 Pittsburg radio station 8MK became KDHK, and remains even today. The Westinghouse publicity department claimed a number of "firsts" for KDHK but they were not all true. Although KDHK claimed they were the first to broadcast election returns – they were not. KDHK claimed to be the first station with a regular broadcast schedule – they were not. Experimental radio stations were broadcasting on regular schedules since before the start of WWI. Lee De Forest aired returns for the 1916 election in New York over station 2XG, and unfortunately, got them wrong. The important event here was the KDHK coverage of the 1920 presidential election. The impact was to make radio listeners more conscious of the power of radio as a source of nationwide breaking news.

- On March 1, 1932, John the 20 month old son of Charles Lindbergh, was kidnapped from his New Jersey home. News bulletins over the radio began almost immediately with many listeners intently following the story. NBC announcer Ben Grauer even broadcast a message from the baby's

mother providing the recipe for the special formula needed by the baby. Amid continuous radio news coverage the child was found murdered on May 12th. Two years later the "Trial of the Century" began with Bruno Hauptmann at the center. Radio news was in the thick of it and it quickly became a media circus, just like the ones that permeate news coverage today. The trial was broadcast live over WNEW which gained much recognition when the disc jockey Martin Block played records during breaks in the action. Gabriel Heatter, a WOR commentator, gained fame with his nightly summations of each day's events. Gabriel reported from outside the Trenton, New Jersey state prison on April, 3 1936 as people chanted in support of Hauptmann's death in the electric chair. Hauptmann insisted he was innocent to the very end. This was the one of the earliest examples of complete radio coverage of an event from beginning to end that set the stage for more of the same type of coverage – even today.





- On May 8, 1937 WLW announcer Herbert Morrison broadcast an emotional account of what was supposed to be a routine landing of the German dirigible Hindenburg at Lakehurst, New Jersey. What made this coverage pioneering was that a record cutting machine was brought to the scene. This machine is heavy and cumbersome. It takes the sound from a microphone and translates it to the little wiggles that populate the grooves of a coated aluminum disk. During the event the shock wave from the explosion caused the cutting stylus to jump. Luckily the stylus was not damaged and was gently lowered to the disk so that the recording could be completed. At that time sound was not captured by newsreel cameras as it was the practice to dub in voices and sound effects later. Herbert's description was the only audio record of the event, making it a classic. Also NBC allowed the recording to be broadcast multiple times. This was the first time an audio recording of a news event was ever broadcast. Some link this live

audio recording as a contributor to the panic that ensued from the Orson Welles airing of *War of the Worlds* in 1938. This recording is of great historical value and is still widely circulated. It has given listeners access to that recording even to this day.

- There are many other important events that shaped the manner in which news and public information was broadcast over the airways. Briefly here are just a few:
 - FDR's first nationwide broadcast to Americans on March 12, 1933 on the subject of the economy. This was the first radio communication by the newly elected president. In a low key presentation he said "My friends, I want to tell you what has been done in the last few days and what the next steps are going to be". He spoke as if he was simply talking to his neighbors. CBS coined the phrase "fireside chat" to describe the presidential delivery style.
 - FDR's first inaugural address on March 4, 1933. In it he uttered "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself" while talking about the great depression.
 - Coverage of the European war scare. In real time news coverage described negotiations with Hitler, Neville Chamberlain's famous "peace in our time" speech, to the declaration of war announcement on September 3, 1939. Radio news provided a steady stream of updates, in spite of the 1933 Press-Radio Agreement (Biltmore), limiting all radio news coverage. Commentators like Ed Murrow and H. V. Kaltenborn became household names. It is said that radio listeners became so used to hearing news bulletins reported on the crisis, that

they were more easily duped by the Orson Welles 1938 broadcast of “*War of the Worlds*”.



- Radio coverage of the attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941. News interrupted a lazy Sunday afternoon of music, drama, and other fare. At 2:22 PM a one line bulletin flashed over the Associated Press wire announcing the attack. Within minutes all four radio networks were covering the story. A staff announcer in NBC’s Honolulu station said “this is no joke – this is war. What made this radio coverage so impactful was the debate between the isolationists and interventionists abruptly ceased and Americans became united in a single cause.

There were many other important stories covered on radio during the golden age – far too many for an article of this scope. Some of these include The D Day Landings, the end of the wars in Japan and Germany, Coronation of King George VI, the 1936 Olympics and many more. All of these cemented radio in the listener’s minds as the place to go for news and other public serv-

ice announcements.

The Rise of Children’s Programming

Children’s program did exist prior to the 1930s but it was generally in the form used by Don Carney who told stories aimed at preschoolers to the lower grade school set. He was aired on WOR from 1928 to 1947. There is a bit of folklore attributed to him. It seems that after singing his familiar sign-off ditty and as the station was going to commercial however the microphone was still open He is said to have uttered, “There, that ought to hold the little Bas&@#ds” He was then said to have been fired, never to broadcast again, and his dying an impoverished drunk. As it turns out a Baltimore columnist made the whole thing up one dull afternoon dissing Uncle Don because Don did not appear on any a Baltimore station. This was debunked in the New York World Telegram on March 2, 1935.

Going back to the mid 1800s children’s books and other entertainment deemed “good for children” was sold directly to adults to be given to children. The adults were the consumers and the children were quite passive as advertising was aimed at adults. In 1930 the manufacturer of Ovaltine had the idea to aim their advertising directly at children with the idea that the children hearing the advertisement would encourage their parents to purchase this relatively inexpensive product.

- **Little Orphan Annie**, 1931-1942, was one of the earliest children’s program. As mentioned above, Ovaltine was the first use radio programs to use a strategy of having children encourage their parents to pur-

chase a product. Ordinarily, that would be enough to qualify this program as a game changer. There are a couple of other facts that make this program worthy of special recognition:

- Annie was the first young girl who was a problem solver and crime fighter. Before Annie, heroes, problem solvers, and crime fighters were generally boys. As a ten year old Annie dodged bullets, fought against NAZI submarines, and even chased ghosts.
- The other notable was the show's early entrance into using a radio program for merchandising. There was a decoder ring that provided a simple substitution cypher to be used by listeners to decode Annie's secret message of the day. Listeners would sign up for Annie's Secret Society. A ring and hand-book would appear a few weeks later. There is an urban legend, immortalized in the movie *A Christmas Story*. Ralphie, the boy who desperately wanted a Daisy Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas, used his decoder ring to decode the disappointing message "Be sure to drink your Ovaltine".

Sadly, there are only a few episodes in circulation today.

- ***The Lone Ranger***, 1933 – 1956, including syndication, was the knight of the old west and probably the pinnacle of programming for young boys. When Chicago's George Trendle developed the program he aimed it at children because they would be less critical, but he wanted to attract an adult audience as well. My dad and I listened in 3 days a week and we were both entertained. Trendle chose a western theme because in spite of the audience attraction to crime sto-

ries, he believed that a western theme would be easier to keep wholesome.



There were a couple of aspects to the show that made it notable as a great moment in radio.

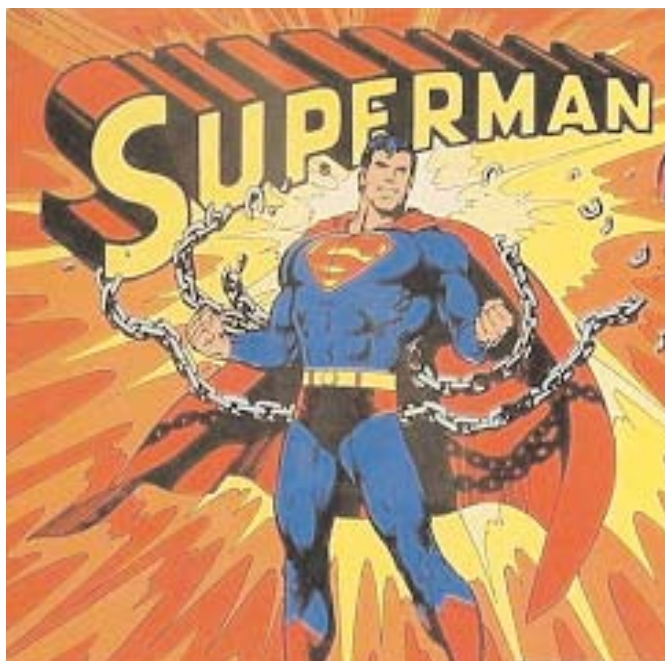
This show was developed with a designed character having attributes important for children to look up to. Considering the great depression children need hero figures. *The Lone Ranger* would be:

- A Robin Hood like figure helping the oppressed and weak.
- Strong enough to fight against overwhelming odds but would be compassionate enough to help an injured animal.
- An advocate defending the idea that anyone could worship GOD in his/her own way.
- Patriotic, and would never drink, smoke, gamble, or womanize.
- Well spoken – perfect grammar at all times.
- Never kill anyone – shooting to wound only.

The other important aspect was that of merchandising. *The Lone Ranger* even surpassed *Little Orphan Annie* in the plethora of promotions they offered. Small change and a box top brought an anxious child all sorts

of desired items. Among them were the infamous Atomic Bomb Ring, Pedometer, and a Six Shooter Ring -costing pennies then with some worth hundreds today. 1935 brought *The Lone Ranger* Safety Club. Those wishing to apply could pick up their application at any retailer featuring sponsor's products. Children filled out the application, swore to abide by certain safety rules, and had their parents sign. Additional credits would go to a member signing up more customers. By 1939 there were 2 million children enrolled. Again parents were encouraged by children to purchase sponsors products. *The Lone Ranger* program was the best and most successful of this sort of merchandising leading the way for other shows to follow.

The unbridled success of *The Lone Ranger* spawned a number of children's western shows such as *Red Ryder*, *Roy Rogers*, and *Gene Autry* that led to a large body of broadcast works.



- **Superman**, 1940-1951, was a great adventure show for children. Imagine a superhero that could leap tall buildings in a single bound, be faster than a speeding bullet, and to be able to fly as well. This was readily accepted by children of all ages. But *Superman* had a serious side. Despite the programs desire to hide his identity as *Superman*, Clayton Bud Collyer, gave an interview to Time Magazine in 1946 to announce a Superman campaign against racial and religious intolerance. This was years before America actually tackled these issues during the civil rights era.

- During 1946 *Superman* exposed organizations devoted to hatred in the 25 episode series "The Hate Mongers Organization", aired starting in April of 1946. Briefly, there was a plan to create a Unity House where children of all ethnic and racial backgrounds could play and interact. A hate organization was trying to thwart the plan. Superman chose to expose and defeat the hate organization's plans. Readers can get more information at: <http://www.supermanhomepage.com/radio/radio.php?topic=radio-reviews/052046-hate-mongers>

Shortly after the hatemonger series a follow up story line aired as the 16 episode story, "Clan of the Fiery Cross". The clan was similar to the KKK, with participants wearing white robes with a scorpion symbol. An Asian boy on the Unity House baseball team was threatened with he and his family warned to leave Metropolis. Of course, *Superman* saved the day. More information at: <http://www.supermanhomepage.com/radio/radio.php?topic=radio-reviews/070146-fierycross>

What is important here is not only that *Superman* was a hero figure in fighting crime and other insults to society but a real voice against intolerance – all of this – in 1946 - way before civil rights were being seriously debated. Again, a game changer!

Detective Stories



- ***The Shadow*** is my hands down winner in any comparison of detective story programs on radio. *The Shadow* took advantage of the nation's fascination with crime stories – fueled by the notoriety of such figures such as Bonnie and Clyde and Al Capone. I have to admit that *The Shadow*, being true melodrama, probably, did not have a believable plot in the entire series. There was one exception that comes to mind, “*Joey's Christmas Story*” aired December 22, 1940!

Another aspect of *The Shadow* was the WWII patriotic sponsor Blue Coal messages urging everyone to conserve and not hoard coal.

The real impact of *The Shadow* on the radio industry was the spawning of a large body of many fine detective programs including, *Sam Spade*, *The Fat Man*, *Nick*

Carter, and too many more to list here. To learn more about *The Shadow*, please refer to the following website: <http://www.radio-horrorhosts.com/shadow.html>

Further information can be found in the March 2007 issue of *Radio Times*.

Drama

- ***War of the Worlds*** has long been considered one of radio's triumphs. Orson Welles wanted to tell the story immortalized in H. G Wells novel. Howard Koch was chosen to write the script. Orson reviewed it and found it dull and uninspired and chose to change direction to make it into a news broadcast, inspired by another program, *Air Raid* that aired on the *Columbia Workshop* program. Koch re-wrote the script and Orson starred in and directed the broadcast on *The Mercury Theater*. The night of Halloween Eve was overcast, it was mischief night, the East Coast had recently been devastated by a severe Hurricane, and the airwaves had been full of “we interrupt this broadcast” to bring listeners news of the war scare in Europe. While *Mercury Theater* was not the most popular program in the 8 PM timeslot on a Sunday evening, a glitch in the *Chase and Sanborn hour* had listeners searching the dial for something else. Many found the *Mercury Theater* 12 minutes old and at a point in the story where the Martian war machine had just landed. Many people got hooked and then many were said to have panicked. Newspapers reported on various effects of the broadcast including a fleeing public, sightings of Martian war machines, and observations of clouds of poison gas (black

smoke) concentrated mainly on the East Coast. Of course, Orson stepped out of character at the end of the broadcast telling the listening audience that the entire story was meant as a prank, but by then it was too late to prevent panic by some listeners.

This whole affair had a profound effect on the radio industry and helped audiences understand the power of radio in bringing up to the minute news to the public as well as demonstrating the effect of a radio program that was well written and well performed.



A recent PBS American Experience aired, October 29, 2013, posits that the panic response was not nearly as reported by the newspapers. An article basically outlining the PBS broadcast can be found at the following link:

http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/history/2013/10/orson_welles_war_of_the_worlds_panic_myth_the_infamous_radio_broadcast_did.html

During the 1930s there were drama shows but many of these were devoted to recreations of literature and movies in a one

hour format. There were many fine movies including classics such as *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street*. Literature included Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* featuring Orson Welles which became a yearly offering. However, with the advent of WWII, audiences were clamoring for more intense original offerings to help take their minds off the horrors and uncertainty of the war.

There were excellent shows including *Suspense* and *Escape*. In the case of *Suspense* there are more than 800 episodes in circulation today, each one truly keeping the listener in suspense until the very end.

- My selection for the best of the intense genre is the May 25, 1943 airing of Lucille Fletcher's *Sorry Wrong Number*. This was a story about a bed ridden woman who, because of a crossed pair of telephone calls, overheard two men plotting a murder. The story depicted her frustration in being unable to get anyone to investigate. Agnes Moorehead was more than convincing in bringing the listeners into the story. I won't reveal the ending but will say there was a blooper at the end of the East Coast broadcast corrected in the West Coast broadcast. This story was broadcast six more times with Ms. Moorehead starring each time. The last was aired February 14, 1960.

My reason for my selection as best drama is that it is one of the finest examples of radio's exploitation of the "theater of the mind" that I have ever heard. I was completely immersed in the story.

Comedy

There was plenty of comedy around, even before the advent of radio. There was Bur-

lesque and Vaudeville. Many stars of these two comedy genres moved to radio because the introduction of sound to moving pictures made vaudeville less popular. In the mid 1920s Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll created *Sam and Henry*, which later morphed into *Amos N Andy*. By the early 1930s comedy on radio was well on its way with such personalities such as Milton Berle, Bob Hope, Bert Lahr, Red Skelton, George Burns, and Mae West were regulars on the fast growing medium of radio. George Burns, a great standup comedian in his own right, became a willing foil for the comedic talent of Gracie Allen. Red Skelton led the way in his creation of characters such as Junior the Mean Little Kid, Willie Lump Lump, and Freddie The Freeloader. Not only did Skelton take some of his radio characters into the land of television, but inspired Jackie Gleason to create characters of his own in his early 1950s television show. The reader may recall Reginald Von Gleason III, The Poor Soul, and Rudy The Repairman as three of Jackie Gleason's characters.

During these early days comedy was what I would describe "self-deprecating" meaning that laughs were derived from a comic poking fun at one's own self. Gracie Allen was a great example of self-deprecation. Early television comedy offered much of the same fare. A fine example of this was Lucille Ball's character in *"I Love Lucy"*. Unfortunately today's comedy does not have the same outlook. Laughter is often sought at the expense of another person rather than self. A bright light here are the BBC comedy offerings shown on PBS. A good

example is Hyacinth on the show "Keeping Up Appearances".

Actually, I have three choices as my picks for having the greatest impact on radio and later television. These are:



- ***The Chase and Sanborn Hour*** with Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy is one of the best. What more can one say about a program that was tops in a Sunday evening radio time slot featuring a fair to middling ventriloquist and a wooden dummy named Charlie. Who could have ever imagined a ventriloquist could enthrall an audience much less just keep them interested with no visual reinforcement. It was a good thing that they were on radio because Edgar Bergen's lips flapped like bed sheets on a clothes line as he created the voice of his alter ego. Charlie was able to hold his own interacting with such notables as W. C. Fields and could say outrageous things that Edgar could never have said.

One of the most controversial comedic events of the era was the Mae West and Don Ameche recreation the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden as

a skit on the show. Although censorship was brutal in the late 1930s, the censors just had no idea of how Mae West could deliver such benign lines in the script with so much sexuality. In fact she was banned from radio for a time as a result of this skit after many letters and telephone calls to the radio station.



- **Amos N Andy** is another choice as best in comedy. In 1925 the Chicago Tribune radio Station, WGN offered two, Caucasian gentlemen, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll who created a dialect comedy featuring two gentlemen of color, Sam and Henry. Their stories surrounded the Fresh Air Taxi Company and their adventures created with the entire dialog voiced by Freeman and Charles. When WGN refused them the right to syndicate the creators jumped to Chicago's WMAQ ushering in *Amos N Andy* with the new show was first aired March 19, 1928. The show was so popular the NBC hired them away for one hundred thousand per year – a large number considering the depression. The 15 minute show was the most popular comedy show in the early to

mid-thirties. Legend has it that some movie theaters interrupted the currently playing movie to broadcast an episode of *Amos N Andy*. Later the show became a half hour show and ultimately migrated to CBS television in the 1950s.

Choosing *Amos N Andy* is an easy. It came at a time early in the depression when radio listeners desperately needed comic diversion. It was the most popular comedy show during the early 1930s

Soap Operas

In the early 1930s many women found themselves trapped in the home – a definite step backward from the gains they made during the feminist movement of the 1920s. Few worked outside the home but not in good jobs. There was no union support for women believing that working women would be taking jobs from men trying to support their families. Women were relegated to the kitchen and caring for their children. Kitchens were small featuring “step saver” architecture not the cavernous kitchens of today. Washboards, heavy irons, clothes lines, and coal stoves were the order of the day for many except that in the cities electrical appliances began appearing. There were feelings of despair by being trapped in the home, with nothing to do, and with limited financial resources.

There was a mutual need! Women needed some diversion and some hope. Makers of household products needed an advertising platform for their products. The soap opera targeted women from 18 to 49. These were 15 minute programs that ran from late morning until midafternoon. They

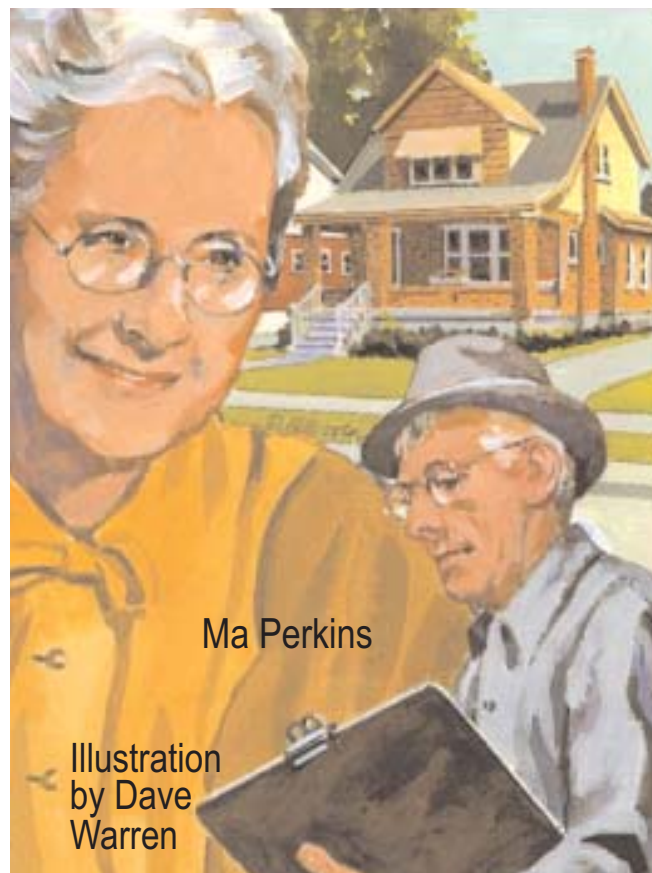
were serials that had no end – characters were born and died. Many had romantic overtones. The censors had full control so that none of the scripts would be deemed unsuitable according to the cultural mores of the times.

- One of the most popular was *The Romance of Helen Trent* – sometimes called the queen of the soaps. Helen Trent was broadcast from 1933 to 1960 with over 7000 episodes with as many as 8 million listeners daily. The premise of the show was, “Can a woman find romance after 35”. The story was about a 35 year old woman who never aged during the entire run of the show. She had 28 suitors over the years with varying tragic results. She jilted, was jilted, left at the altar, and had fiancés that died. Ratings were in double digits by 1950 and she ultimately was inducted into the radio hall of fame.

- Taking another direction was *Ma Perkins* aired from 1933 to 1960. The story was about a seemingly ageless widow about 60 years old and set in a small town where she and her partner ran a lumber yard. At one point she was heard on 2 networks at the same time. At her peak she was heard in Hawaii, Canada, and in Europe over Radio Luxemburg.

I cannot really choose any soap opera as being a game changer for radio broadcasting. I choose the entire genre because of the contribution toward radio’s increasing influence on women’s lives during the time they were on the air. The concepts were durable enough to easily migrate to television where a few still exist as daytime dramas.

Today’s programs are often “steamy”, some have violence, and many have characters with malevolent intent.



Ma Perkins

Illustration
by Dave
Warren

In Conclusion

Henry is a serious radio hobbyist, collector of old time radio programs, and a member of the Old Time Radio Research Group. I have frequently used old time radio to entertain seniors at assisted living facilities and nursing homes. In addition have lectured at libraries, senior centers, retirement centers, and retirement associations in New Jersey. I also have used old time radio programs to entertain veterans at the NJ Veterans Home at Menlo Park, New Jersey. Henry can be reached at otrman@optonline.net ■