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Killer Rays & A Diabolical Robot: Fran Striker's Mystery Dramas Exhibiting Science Fiction Themes Karl Schadow © 2021

The writing achievements of Fran Striker were well-known among radio executives and the listening audiences in many markets prior to the proliferation of his most-acclaimed productions at Detroit's station WXYZ, *The Lone Ranger* (1933) and *The Green Hornet* (1936). However, these early series have not been the subject of extensive research.

According to the author's biography, *His Typewriter Grew Spurs* (HTGS, written by son, Fran Jr. in 1983), over three dozen programs were crafted between 1928 and 1933. Many of these that originated from the studios of Buffalo's WEBR (where Striker was an announcer, chief writer and later program director) were also produced by local station casts across the country during the 1930s. Though Striker is renowned for his work regarding the two legendary enterprises noted above, he penned programs that also encompassed diverse genres including sitcoms and musical variety along with at least three serials that promulgated science fiction themes. While they may be customarily classified in the mystery or crime arenas, this trio deserving of special recognition include: *Ultra Violet*, *The Soul of the Robot* and *Infra Red*. It is the purpose of this article to introduce these programs to OTR fans.



Fran Striker (Radio Hall of Fame)

Although *Ultra Violet* is cited in *HTGS* and also in a 1996 series of articles by Jerry Collins in the *Illustrated Press* (Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo), the other two were absent from both of these publications. Moreover, they are not recorded in any of the OTR general reference or science fiction tomes.

ULTRA VIOLET

During the summer of 1930 the Striker family had visited the Thousand Islands area of Upstate New York. It was during this break that Fran was enthralled with the Boldt Island Castle that had only been partially completed. This structure along with a nearby mainland area, became the locale providing the basis of a future thriller, *Ultra Violet*. Though the program was promoted as a probable fall 1930 venture (*Buffalo Courier-Express*, September 21, 1930), it premiered via WEBR at 9:30 p.m., Thursday, January 15, 1931. The reason for the delay is unknown. The inaugural thirty-minute session commenced with a pleasure boat of tourists including the heroine Grace Haskell

enjoying a glimpse of the Thousand Islands. Leading WEBR staff actress Mary Barrett portrayed this role. (She later followed Striker to WXYZ and was featured in several story arcs of *The Lone Ranger*.) Grace and her friend, newspaper reporter Jack Oakley along with the tour guide visualize and also hear a mysterious purple light in, and then near the grounds of the castle. A subsequent investigation reveals that a woman who was believed to have drowned years before, is found deceased in the castle. The entire first script is reprinted in the same format as Striker's original published in the Sherman Paxton Lawton 1932 reference, *Radio Speech* available [here](#) (scroll or search down to page 366).

A key attribute of the script is the introductory passage explaining the discovery and usage of ultra violet (UV) rays. Also of note is the chronological manner in which Striker dictates both the music and sound cues so that cast and crew can quickly identify these integral elements.

Ultra Violet continued on WEBR with seven additional episodes concluding Friday, March 13, 1931. The UV death ray was the star of the program which as noted in the Lawton book (see p 337) required the ingenuity of the station's sound effects artists. At WEBR the duo of Jack McLean and Bill Adams performed this task.

As WEBR program director, Striker was constantly seeking new ideas to add to the station's schedule. Though the exact date is unknown, in 1931 he received a package containing a script of the *Seth Parker* program from Phillips H. Lord offering the availability to purchase scripts for local use. As noted in *HTGS*, the fate of the Lord series on WEBR remains unknown. However, Fran Striker became along with Lord, a pioneer in the syndication of radio script series. Along with a copy of the first episode of *Ultra Violet*, a cover letter was sent to stations with an invitation to peruse and then if satisfied with the initial offering, to acquire the remaining seven scripts. A copy of such a letter which had been mailed to station KMBC (Kansas City, Missouri) resides in the papers (at Iowa State University) of the station's former chief executive, Arthur B. Church. In the summer of 1931, Striker was offering the entire series for \$17.50 (approximately \$283.00 in 2021). Though the program staff at KMBC

adjudged the initial script and thus potential of the series as: "good, with the mystery element as well sustained," it appears that the station did not purchase the full series.

Also included in the introductory letter were selected comments from various station executives who had praise for the program. Locally-produced radio drama escalated during the early 1930s as stations of assorted signal-strengths enlightened listeners in their respective markets. Wisconsin station, WRJN offered the series starting Friday, October 16th at 10 p.m. billed under variant titles including "Mystery of the Ultra Violet Ray" and "Ultra Violet Mystery" (*The Racine Journal-News*, October 16, 1931). The WRJN staff was most satisfied with the initial Striker series that for the following week, December 11, they presented a second venture from the author, *The Falcon*, another mystery series (not related to either the Drexel nor Arlen creations) which had been performed at WEBR the previous spring.

The popularity of *Ultra Violet* on WRJN is evident in that the program garnered an encore performance on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. during the late winter of 1934 by the WRJN Players. Amusingly for this round, it was noted as a melodrama in the Racine newspaper. The cast and crew of both versions are still to be determined. Most deservedly, Fran Striker was acknowledged as the script author in newspaper publicity for both renditions. And what did WRJN present following the 1934 *Ultra Violet* version . . . you guessed it, a repeat of *The Falcon*.

WRJN was one of the few stations that offered a second performance of Striker serials. The discussion of *Ultra Violet* in *HTGS* mentioned that certain broadcast rights were stipulated with the scripts. It is unknown if the author received additional compensation for the second round of broadcasts on WRJN.



Adrian Cooper
(KQV Players)

Another station presenting *Ultra Violet* and which also became a Striker mill was KQV in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Under the direction of Adrian Cooper, The KQV Players thrilled their audience beginning Thursday, October 22, 1931 at 9:30 p.m. The cast included Edna

Louise Conn, Marie Stutzman, Heyward Moore, Barry Laurence and Harry McGlinchney (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 3, 1931). KQV offered a contest encouraging their listeners to solve "The identity of the person who was the purple ray." Of 300 submissions, the *Pittsburgh Press* (December 6) reported that only four had the correct solution. The program concluded on December 10th.

WLW is included in the list of stations (see *Radio Speech* book above) as having beamed *Ultra Violet*. However, the Cincinnati station that ultimately broadcast the chiller was the Covington, Kentucky-based WCKY. Though the *Radio Dial* (local Cincinnati radio newspaper) announced in its September 25, 1931 issue that the series was to commence September 28th, the maiden broadcast was Monday, November 30, 1931, at 8:30 p.m. (*Radio Dial*, December 3, 1931). The station's dramatic director Alice Rowlette was at the helm of the WCKY Players throughout this series.

Noteworthy is that she was one of the few women who held that impressive position at any radio station during the early 1930s.

The most prestigious of the *Ultra Violet* syndicated productions during 1931 originated via the NBC Pacific Coast Network under the altered moniker, *Ultra Lavender*.

Originating at 10 p.m., September 6th from KGO (San Francisco), Earle

Hodgins directed The National Players cast of Helen Musselman (as Grace), Bert Horton, Harold Peary, Henry Shumer, Pearl King Tanner, Fred Thomas and Barton Yarborough. Note that many in this group would later achieve nationwide fame in the industry. This author believes that the title was changed to avoid confusion with a series of previously-sponsored musical programs incorporating a "Violet Ray" banner sponsored by General Petroleum Corporation. KGO fed *Ultra Lavender* to KSL (Salt Lake City) and KOA



Alice Rowlette
(WCKY Players)

(Denver). Thus, the program was not a feature of the full West Coast network on account of a commercial venture, *Richfield News Flashes* that was scheduled on other stations. The KGO performances were well publicized in the San Francisco-based periodical *Broadcast Weekly* which noted cast and provided plot synopses.



Helen Musselman
(KGO National Players)

Additionally, Fran Striker was acknowledged as script author. In his *Ultimate History & Guide*, Jay Hickerson cites *Ultra Lavender* as authored by Carlton E. Morse. This is most understandable as KGO was performing many programs written by the Bay-area resident during the early 1930s.

Not to be excluded from this offering, Southern California listeners were able to dial the Warner Bros. station starting November 9, 1931 to catch the program with its original title. (However, it was often billed without further details as "Mystery Serial" or "Mystery Drama" in area newspapers.) Marilyn Kay starred in the KFWB studios as Grace with Bradley Page (Jack), Lawrence Sterner (George), Gloria Gordon (Nina) and Jimmy Guilfoyle (Hank). Jack Joy was the director. The all-important sound effects were orchestrated by Lewis Teegarden whose efforts were praised by *Illustrated Daily News* (Los Angeles, November 16, 1931) radio columnist Kenneth Frogley as: "... expertly manipulated at the right spots . . . made this program quite effective last week..." Additionally, Zuma Palmer (*Hollywood Citizen-News*, December 21, 1931) noted that the artist: "... is responsible for the very good sound effect of the violet ray, to give credit where credit is due." The KFWB series concluded December 28, 1931.

During 1932, *Ultra Violet* was rendered by at least two additional stations, KFAB (Lincoln, Nebraska) and WXYZ (Detroit). The complete casts and crew for these performances are still to be determined. James Jewell directed the latter station's version which was billed as "Ultra Violet Ray" or "Violet Ray" in Detroit newspapers. KFAB presented the serial Sunday evenings at 10:30 p.m. from February 21st through April 10th. Noteworthy is that WXYZ opted to schedule the program during a single, eleven-day

period commencing Wednesday, June 1st at 10:15



Jack Joy (KFWB)

p.m. (*Detroit Free Press*). The following day's installment was also at this same time, with both the subsequent Friday and Saturday sessions moved to an earlier 8:45 p.m. slot. The remaining four broadcasts were aired at 9 p.m. on June 6th, 8th, 10th and 11th. Pat Dennis (*Detroit Evening Times*, June 8, 1932) suggested

to the readers of his radio column: "Those of you who like mystery with your 'drammer . . . ' Ultra Violet Ray" may be just what you're dialing for. It has gained quite an audience in the few days it has been on WXYZ."

In addition to the previous publication of the initial episode's script, Lawton also heralded the venture selecting Episodes 7 and 8 as the "Ultimate Solution Serial" as headlined in his 1938 reference, [Radio Continuity Types](#). As scripts of three of eight episodes are now available, fans will be able to grasp a good comprehension of the *Ultra Violet* plot. It is unknown if any of the *Ultra Violet* productions were sponsored. Though not promoted nor billed as strictly a science fiction endeavor, does *Ultra Violet* rate as radio's first science fiction program?

THE SOUL OF THE ROBOT

This series originally debuted over WEBR, Sunday, January 24, 1932 at 7 p.m. The tenth and final episode was delivered March 27th. Of interest is that this particular venture is not included in the *HTGS* biography nor are there scripts in the author's collection held by the University at Buffalo. It was discovered after perusing the final episode's script of the *Doctor Dragonette* program. (This series will be profiled in a future article.) To entice stations to subscribe to additional shows, Fran Striker included a preview of a potential series during the concluding chapter of selected thrillers. The teaser for *The Soul of the Robot* exclaimed: "A two-ton mass of vital, living armor plate, that stalked by night

stamping out civilization. The irresistible force that was greater than the combined guns and bombs of gangland, and the powers of the police. The Robot, erected by man, that acquired a soul, apparently, moving with a definite purpose to its unknown objective. The law and the underworld, combined against the common enemy. Two tons of steel, conquered by 110 pounds of womanhood. A steel robot, in love." Segments of this same aural event were incorporated as newspaper publicity for several stations including WRJN which entertained its Southeastern Wisconsin audience from April 22, 1932 through June 24, 1932. WRJN signed the Mehder Dry Goods Company as the sponsor of the weekly, thirty-minute dramas. In similar fashion with its history of scheduling a second dissemination of *Ultra Violet*, WRJN offered an encore presentation of *The Soul of the Robot*, Wednesdays at 8 p.m., commencing June 13, 1934 and concluding on August 15, 1934.

Two additional stations, KQV and KFWB which had previously broadcast *Ultra Violet*, also offered this new chiller. The Western Pennsylvania audience was electrified from April 25, 1932 through June 30, 1932 (the series had switched from Monday to Thursday nights as of May 12th), including radio critic Si Steinhauser who complimented the KQV performances (*Pittsburgh Press*, April 26, 1932): "... which sound as good as most mystery thrillers on the network."

A year later, KFWB commenced its version on Saturday, March 25, 1933 at 8:30 p.m. In addition to his directorial duties, Jack Joy also conducted the music. Publicity in the *Hollywood Citizen-News* (April 1, 1933) stated that the wife and little girl of the creator of the massive machine had been killed by gangsters. Was the robot going to exact revenge on these murderers? Kenneth Frogley (*Illustrated Daily News*, April 15, 1933) also weighed in on this current venture noting its ghastly nature: "Horror programs are shunned mostly on radio, but KFWB's "Soul of the Robot" makes up for anything along this line you've missed." It is unknown if cast were credited during each episode. However, several names were divulged in the



Jeanne Dunn
(KFWB)

Hollywood Citizen-News (May 27, 1933) including Ted Osborn, Grace Cooper, Ken Darby, Howard Russell, Jeanne Dunn and Lyle Clement. Amusingly, the *Los Angeles Times* (June 3, 1933) reported that Jeanne Dunn who voiced the monstrosity had been given the nickname "The Robot" by certain members at the studio.

Details provided by Amarillo, Texas newspapers promoting the local KGNC rendition during its summer 1935 run were limited to program logs showcasing the Tuesday night, 9 o'clock niche (June 25th through August 27th). However, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* revealed the KRQA thespians and the characters they portrayed for the initial saga slated for June 17, 1938. The creator of the robot was Rudolph Holtzberg with Charles Cree filling this role (also doubling as Joseph Riordan). Louise Lem portrayed Lena Holtzberg with Barbara Groff as Gretchen Holtzberg. As both Louise and Barbara were in their mid 20s, one interpreted the juvenile role which does not provide the clue as to identifying the corresponding character name. William Wicker enacted the part of Tony Spilletti (possibly a gangster).

The remaining cast consisted of James Brennan (Fred Bannion), Homer Kerr (Tom Hickey), Joy Yeck (Nellie Riordan) and Jim Fincke as Bob Gaunt. The July 1st issue of the newspaper disclosed additional performers including Mary Edith McDonald, Ella Heflin, Otto Nagel and Milton Davidson. This group, all members of the recently founded Santa Fe Little Theater was under the direction of Mel Marshall, chief announcer at KRQA.

The Soul of the Robot was the second of two weekly radio serials comprising the ambitious etherwave activities of the Santa Fe contingent. (The initial endeavor was the Tuesday evening *Operry House Days* which was both written and directed by Marshall.) Two audience contests were announced during the Friday, 7:30 p.m. broadcasts (*Santa Fe New Mexican*, June 17, 1934). The first was a poll for best actor/actress while the second was the opportunity to solve the mystery. The Santa Fe production is the latest (during the decade) discovered to date indicating that Fran Striker continued his syndicated script business throughout the 1930s.

Despite the numerous productions of both *The Soul of the Robot* and *Ultra Violet*, audio of each of these series continues to elude researchers.

INFRA RED

The third endeavor considered in this survey, *Infra Red*, also lacks both extant scripts and audio. The title was unearthed via a brief blurb for KFWB in *Variety* (February 13, 1934). Investigation of Buffalo-area newspapers revealed that the series premiered on WEBR, Sunday, October 15, 1933 at 9 p.m. The half-hour exploits continued for a total of six episodes. Other than the station program logs, no additional details regarding this venture were located in the dailies.

The version on KFWB commenced Saturday, February 3, 1934 at 8:30 p.m. No clues as to the plot have been discovered. This author is presuming the science fiction motif based upon the titles and plots of the two series profiled above, coupled with the



information supplied by the February 17, 1934 issue of the *Hollywood Citizen-News*. The cast and characters were noted as Barbara Luddy-lead actress (no character), Lawrence Skinner (Prof. Harlow), Howard Russell (Skinner, the cockney), Noreen Gammill (old hag) and Jane Morgan as Mrs. Grange. Jack Joy continued his usual control booth occupa-

tion for this production

Radio programs such as *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon* broadcast during the 1930s were geared toward the juvenile audience. The fact that science fiction endeavors from the pen of Fran Striker were scheduled in the evening and often late at night during that decade suggests that adult fare of the genre had been established as well. It is anticipated that this new information on the Buffalo native will encourage other admirers of the writer to investigate any one of his numerous endeavors.

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The 1965 Revival of Old-Time Radio
Larry Maupin

Most scholars now consider 1962, not 1960, to have been the last year of old-time radio because *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar* and *Suspense* continued until September 30, 1962. According to contributor Michael Hingson, KNX in Los Angeles carried *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar* at 5 p.m. and *Suspense* at 5:30. Bob Pederson adds that "WCBS New York broadcast them on September 30, 1962: *Johnny Dollar* at 6:10 p.m. and *Suspense* at 6:35." A radio log in the San Francisco *Examiner* issue of September 30, 1962 shows that KCBS was scheduled to air *Johnny Dollar* at 6 p.m.

TODAY, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

| | |
|--|---|
| 4:30—WNYC: Chamber Music | 8:40—WCBS: Intermezzo. |
| 4:55—WNYC: News Reports | 8:55—WABC, WNYC: News |
| 5:00—WNBC: Monitor | 9:00—WNBC: Monitor |
| WABC: Fred Hall | WOR: New Testament |
| WCBS: News; Bill Randle | Light |
| ★WNYC: Music for the Connoisseur: With David Randolph | WABC: Hour of Decision |
| WQXR: N. Y. Times News | WCBS: World Tonight |
| 5:05—WQXR: Melodies of Old Vienna | ★WNYC: A.S.C.A.P. Seminar on the musical theatre: Arthur Schwartz, others |
| 5:30—WCBS: News; Bill Randle | WQXR: N. Y. Times News |
| WQXR: Let's Look at Music, with Jascha Zayde. "Fairy Tales in Music" | 9:05—WQXR: Stereo Previews (FM Stereo) |
| 5:55—WNYC: News Reports | 9:10★WCBS: White House conference on narcotics |
| | 9:30—WOR: Music; Dr. David Baker |
| EVENING | WABC: Herald of Truth |
| 6:00—WNBC, WOR: News | 9:55—WABC, WNYC: News |
| WABC: Fred Hall | 10:00—WNBC: Hour of Decision: Rev. Dr. Billy Graham |
| WCBS: News; Jerry Coleman | WOR: That They Might See |
| WNYC: Folksong Festival: Oscar Brand | WABC: Dateline: History: N. Y. U. Series |
| WQXR: N. Y. Times News | WCBS: News; Dance Music |
| 6:05—WNBC: Pocketbook News—Wilma Soss | WNYC: Both Sides of the Record, with Walter Stegman |
| 6:10—WCBS: Johnny Dollar | WQXR: N. Y. Times News |
| 6:15—WNBC: Bob Considine | 10:05—WQXR: Nights in Latin America—Pru Devon comments |
| WOR: Changing Times | 10:25—WABC: Sports News |
| 6:20—WQXR: Dinner Concert | 10:30—WNBC: Back to God |
| 6:25—WABC: Tom Harmon | WOR: Lutheran Vespers |
| 6:30★WNBC: Meet the Press | WABC: Revival Time: |
| WOR: Golf Divots | |
| WABC: Fred Hall | |
| WNYC: Song Classics | |
| 6:35—WCBS: Suspense | |

New York Times September 30, 1962

Television by then reigned supreme as the medium of home entertainment, but many of the shows were so bad that FCC Chairman Newton Minnow famously referred to it as a "vast wasteland." During the years after 1962 some people longed for the intimacy of old-time radio comedy, drama and music. Psychologists have

noted that our emotional response to the human voice is stronger than to almost any other stimuli.

A press release from NANA Radio submitted by Ryan Ellett provides a wealth of information on the content and circumstances of the 1965 old-time radio revival. It is titled "For the Local Station That Moves Fast and First in the Market," and reads as follows (everything is a direct quotation): "NANA Radio, a division of North American Newspaper Alliance, offers you the opportunity to ride the crest of the new wave in radio programming with proven programs, newly recorded for modern radio (some in stereo), plus all-new programming especially designed for today's radio.

Phase I: Half-hour programs (in stereo). NANA Radio half hours are modern half-hours-- 25 minutes in length:

- *Arch Oboler's Plays*- Narrated, directed and edited by Mr. Oboler.
- *The Fat Man*- All new scripts starring Tod Avery in the title role.
- *Quarter-hour serial drama*- Five per week:
- *Pepper Young's Family*- Newly edited, newly recorded, newly cast.
- *Big Sister*- Starring Paul McGrath, newly edited, recorded and cast.
- *Five-minute Strips*- Five per week.
- *Dear Dorothea Dix*- Based on the NANA syndicated newspaper feature.
- *Hollywood Talking*- Army Archerd with the biggest names in show business answering letters from listeners.

Program series may be purchased individually or in a block. Special discounts given for a block purchase of Phase I- discounts earned for 26 and 52 weeks. Stations have exclusive right to programs in their SRD market area. More coming.

Phase II: All-new 25-minute programs in stereo, all-new quarter-hour serials, all-new five-minute features. Now in production-- ready for airing March 1 and still more coming. Block purchasers of Phase I will have first right of refusal on all new programs. Available immediately to you, the local stations only. When you buy from NANA Radio you control your own shows, your own rates, your own profit. When you buy from

NANA Radio you buy the 60-year-old reputation, the resources and solidity of North American Newspaper Alliance-- Bell McClure-- one of the world's oldest and largest syndicators in the mass communications field."

Randy Watts has found that *Pepper Young's Family* and *Big Sister* "were recorded and released in early 1965 by a Boston company named Modern Drama Productions. [It] emphasized that these shows were newly recorded, with new scripts using modern, up-to-date situations. No word (he continues) on how successful (or unsuccessful) these revivals were, but there were stations still running them in the late 1960s." Bob Pederson located a newspaper article from 1965 stating that Modern Drama Productions was "syndicating the programs to radio stations around the country."

An article located by Ryan Ellett in the Thursday, January 23, 1964 edition of the St. Louis *Post Dispatch* states that "The North American Newspaper Alliance has set up a radio division to produce and syndicate taped programs, including such old shows as *Pepper Young's Family*, *Big Sister*, *Arch Oboler's Plays* and *The Fat Man*. *The Shadow* and *The Green Hornet* recently returned to KMOX from radio's limbo. *Lux Radio Theater*, a favorite from the late '30s and early '40s, is being considered for revival."

There is ample evidence that the programs produced in 1965 were indeed carried over a substantial number of radio stations. The most extensive list has been submitted by Brian Kavanaugh, and is comprised of the following:

- WSET: Glen Falls, New York
- WKTS: Sheboygan, Wisconsin
- KEZU: Rapid City, South Dakota
- WKAT: Miami, Florida
- WXXW: Troy, New York
- KSMN: Shakopee, Minnesota
- KDOT: Phoenix, Arizona
- CFAC: Calgary, AB Canada
- WWJ: Detroit, Michigan

Other stations include KUI in Walla Walla, Washington and WBEC in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

**Curtain Up
On Drama!**

(ON RADIO)

On 1600 Radio-WXXW

ONLY on WXXW

DIAL 1600 RADIO FOR:

BIG SISTER NOW DAILY
10:16 a.m. Mon. thru Friday

PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY now DAILY
11:16 a.m. Mon. thru Fri.

THE SHADOW
Mondays at 3:30 p.m.

THE LONE RANGER
Wednesdays and Fridays at 3:30 p.m.

HOLLYWOOD THEATER OF THE AIR
Monday Morning at 9:30

DOCTOR'S STORY
Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.

THEATER 16
Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m.

CAPTAIN HORATIO HORNBLOWER
Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

THEATER ROYAL
Fridays at 9:30 a.m.

ARCH OBLER MYSTERY THEATER
Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m.

THE THIRD MAN
Thursdays at 3:30 p.m.

And MANY other wonderful shows and features everyday, so keep tuned to your "Drama Station" — WXXW!


Dramatic radio
WXXW
DIAL 1600

serving the tri-city area first!

Troy (NY) Record January 15, 1965

Newspaper radio logs from 1965 reveal that stations broadcast the two soap operas, *Big Sister* and *Pepper Young's Family*, throughout the day and even, in one instance, during the evening. Randy Watts found that the *Troy (New York) Record* edition of January 1965 listed station WYKW (600 am) as

having aired *Big Sister* at 10:16 a.m. M-F and *Pepper Young's Family* at 11:16 a.m. Brian Kavanaugh located a log in the *Sheboygan* (Wisconsin) *Press* edition of March 18, 1965 which listed KEZU (9:20 a.m.) as broadcasting *Pepper Young's Family* at 9:30 a.m. and *Big Sister* at 9:45 a.m. The Pittsfield-Berkshire *Eagle* edition of February 2, 1965 shows that *Big Sister* was aired at 2 p.m. and *Pepper Young's Family* at 2:15 p.m. on WBEC (ABC) 1420 a.m. Jim Jones has contributed the fact that he has logs from December, 1965 which "indicate that the shows were broadcast for the entire year."

The remainder of this article will focus on twelve episodes of *Big Sister* and twelve of *Pepper Young's Family* that were aired in 1965. A press release contributed by Randy Watts from Modern Drama Productions emphasized "that these shows were newly-recorded using new scripts with modern, up-to-date situations."

I will present a summary of the major story lines developed throughout these twenty-four episodes before concluding.

Two plot threads run throughout the twelve episodes of *Big Sister*. One involves the interference of Frank Wayne in the marriage of Neddie, title character Ruth Wayne's younger brother, and his wife Hope. Ruth makes it clear that she does not like or trust Frank. The other follows the descent of John Wayne, a successful doctor and Ruth's husband, into a state of

depression that costs him his job and his marriage and leaves him impoverished.

Hope is an ambitious young woman, and Neddie even as a grown man still seeks Ruth's advice before making any decisions. Both suffer from inexperience and immaturity. Their marriage is threatened by both Ruth and Frank Wayne, each in a different way. Hope accuses Neddie of always taking sides with Ruth in



ARTHUR HUGHES is "Dr. Carvell" in the "Big Sister" dramatizations: will Miami saloonkeepers be able to survive the soapy onslaught?

any argument they have. One evening she becomes so disgusted with him over his lack of initiative that she threatens to leave him. He calls her bluff and she walks out with a suitcase. The first thing he does after recovering from the shock is to phone Ruth and ask if he can spend the night with her.

Frank's impact on the marriage is more difficult to pin down. He is successful and wealthy, and owns the local newspaper, the *Glen Falls Register*. Hope admires him, and in one episode makes it abundantly clear to Ruth that she thinks he is a better man than his brother and her husband John, who by then is jobless and living in a seedy apartment in New York. Ruth has taken a job as Dr. Carville's assistant in order to support herself and her son Richard because John is no longer doing so. He is quite old now, but still a smoker. One evening as he and Ruth are talking after the day's last patient has come and gone, he lights a cigarette while companionably conversing with her.

The major conflict in the marriage centers on Hope's insistence that she and Neddie purchase a garage in nearby Summerville so he can start a business that will provide them a good income. He does not disagree, but does not share her sense of urgency and points out that they have no money. Then Hope announces one day that she has received \$5,000 owing to the death of a distant uncle and intends to give it to Neddie so he can buy the garage. The money of course came from Frank, and when Neddie fails to act promptly she goes back to Frank, borrows another \$4,000 so she will have the full purchase price, signs a note for it and buys the garage with Frank brokering the transaction. The original \$5,000 may have been an outright gift from Frank, but the \$4,000 is a loan which he expects to be repaid from the proceeds of the garage business.

One unresolved but intriguing issue concerns Frank's motives. Is he in love with Hope? Does he want to destroy the marriage so he can have her for himself?



PLAYING "Big Sister, Ruth Wayne" is Vivian Smolen, who shed her first radio tears on "Our Gal Sunday."

Something causes him to risk losing \$9,000 by giving it to a boy (Neddie's immaturity, dependence on Ruth even when a grown and married man, and congenital indecisiveness justifies that appellation). One day when Ruth and Neddie visit his office at *The Register*, Frank refuses to tell them who the seller was or who holds the note. Later, after Neddie has begun to operate the business he admits to Ruth that he is confused by the financial aspect of running a business. He doesn't even know what to do with the daily sales totals and receipts for the garage.

The storyline involving Dr. John Wayne begins after he has given up his practice in Glen Falls, left his wife and son, and moved to New York. He is suffering from what today would almost surely be diagnosed as depression. He has moved out of the High Tower Hotel into a one-room apartment on Washington Square. An acquaintance of his named Steele drops by and expresses concern for John, who is unemployed and not even trying to find a job. John then asks for a loan of \$200, and Steele readily agrees.



Diane Carville has moved to New York to be with John after Ruth's return from there to Glen Falls. He does not want to have anything to do with her, but she has taken a job at Riverside Hospital, where she also lives. She asks John to have breakfast with her. Fred Davis, a friend of John's, meets Diane and immediately begins trying to date her. She reluctantly accepts his friendship but eventually tells him that she is in love with John and could never care for anyone else.

Then Fred, the former tenant of John's apartment who still holds the lease on it, pays John a visit and tells him that he and Diane had dinner at a French restaurant last night. He wants the apartment back, and accuses John of being responsible for both Diane's and Ruth's unhappiness. Later John reads a letter from Ruth urging him to see Dr. Foster, an analyst, about his depression.

Finally John goes to a large hospital and applies for a job as Night Clerk. Nurse Collins is friendly and tells him there is an opening, but requires references. John refuses to give them but says he will work as an orderly if necessary. She kindly explains that a hospital cannot hire anyone without references, and he leaves.

Near the end of the story line Diane calls her father from New York and says that she has been "seeing John practically every day." Ruth resents Diane for "bothering" John while he is trying to find himself, not realizing that Diane may be giving him something that he can no longer get from Ruth: a sense of self-worth. Early one hot evening Diane enters John's little apartment and finds him lying in bed staring at the ceiling. He tells her to get out, and says "I'm sick of the sight of you." Then he relents and says he will go out with her for a walk or a ferry boat ride. This is the final episode that I have, and it is nice to see that it ends on a hopeful note.

There is one major story line that runs throughout the episodes of *Pepper Young's Family* from 1965. It involves the engagement of Peggy Young to Carter Trent and the circumstances surrounding it. In the earliest episodes we learn that Sam Young has been forced to close his business and must now find a job. It is later revealed that the owner of the home in Elmwood that the Youngs have rented for thirty years and in which they have raised both Peggy and her brother Pepper is to be sold, and that if they cannot

come up with the money to buy it they will have to move out.

Peggy, still a high school student, falls in love with Carter Trent, the only son of a wealthy Chicago family. The theme of the events that unfold thereafter is the contrast between the values and circumstances of a typical middle-class family like the Youngs and those of the Trents, who are wealthy, own a business and live in a mansion with servants in Winnetka, Illinois.

There is a sense of humor in *Pepper Young's Family* that is not to be found in the more serious *Big Sister*. Both Peggy and her mother Mary are overwhelmed by the prospect of meeting Horace Trent and his wife. When Peggy receives a telephone call from Horace Trent's personal secretary Bruce Taylor announcing that the Trents will be visiting them the next day, someone else answers the phone and she tells her friend Edie that "I'll just about die if I have to talk to Mr. Trent all alone!" Edie replies, "You're the silliest girl I ever knew!"

Before the Trents are scheduled to arrive Mary and Peggy have time to panic over a story written by Pepper for the Elmwood *Free Press* about Peggy's engagement to Carter. Mary tries desperately to have the story killed because Carter has made it clear that his parents, who are aware of the engagement, have expressed in the strongest terms that they want no publicity about it. What Carter does not realize is that his parents intend to take every measure possible to prevent the wedding from ever occurring. When Pepper learns about Mary's frantic efforts to keep the story from being printed, he asks a reasonable question: "Why?" It is legitimate news, he says, and the *Free Press* has every right to print it. In another episode he tells Mary and Peggy that wealthy families like the Trents, rather than being shy of publicity, usually thrive on it. He also says he doesn't care what the Trents think.

When the day arrives for the Trents' expected visit, Mary and Peggy have gone to great lengths to make certain it will be a pleasant one. Mary has sewn a beautiful blue dress for Peggy to wear. They decorate the house with lilacs and tulips. Mary plans to serve tea and cakes. Peggy says she does not want to open the door when they arrive because "I'll just about die if I have to talk

to Mr. Trent all alone!" She agrees to go to school on the day of their arrival because "I'd just about die if I sat around here waiting!" Mary bakes "a big, homemade layer cake," and as the hour draws near Edie helps Peggy dress by pulling her hair back and persuading her to put on hoop earrings and to wear more red lipstick than usual.



Finally the doorbell rings, but the only person who has come from Chicago is Bruce Taylor, Mr. Trent's assistant. He tells the Youngs that Mr. Trent has no intention of coming, refuses a cup of tea saying that he has to take a plane right back, and offers to pay Peggy if she will call off the marriage. The Youngs are shocked, hurt, and deeply offended. Sam is in Chicago at the time, and Pepper as man of the house threatens to throw Taylor out physically if he does not leave at once. Taylor persists, however, telling Peggy that Carter "is one of the richest young men in America" and offering her an unspecified but "handsome" sum of money if she will break off the

engagement. Peggy indignantly refuses the money but promises Taylor that she will call off the marriage.

The misunderstanding between the Youngs and the Trents arises from a difference in values and assumptions between the two families. Horace Trent sees the entire matter as a business proposition. He does not want his son to make what he considers to be the dreadful mistake of marrying a gum-chewing high school girl from a middle class family, and he is willing to make a financial settlement to prevent its happening. The Youngs think it would be shameful and even immoral for Peggy to accept a bribe and allow herself to be "bought off."

The question left unresolved is this: would the Youngs have been better off taking the money and agreeing to break the engagement if the amount received would have allowed them to buy their home outright and avoid eviction, and enabled Sam to reopen his business?

Note: If anyone wishes to obtain the episodes of *Big Sister* and *Pepper Young's Family* from 1965, the only source is and will be Radio Memories for the next year. There are presently 12 episodes of each program, and I think that eventually about 24 will be available. Their audio quality is close to perfect, and they can be purchased on CD-Rom disks which will play in your computer or on a CD Player at a very reasonable price by contacting Ted Davenport at tedotr52@gmail.com.



Wistful Vistas From the Editor's Desk Ryan Ellett

As I write this it is snowing lightly outside and Kansas is in the deep freeze with a straight temperature of -3. It's perfect weather for sitting back with some hot cocoa and turning up the OTR. Unfortunately, I have to work instead.

This issue we're thrilled to bring you a new piece by Karl Schadow profiling some sci-work works of the legendary Fran Striker, much better known for the *Lone Ranger* and *Green Hornet*. These are some of my favorite types of pieces that dig up nuggets of previously unknown series and expand the hobby's scope of radio works even when recordings (and often scripts) aren't known to exist.

Larry Maupin has two entries here. One, his ongoing review of some soap operas that were originally posted to our groups.io page last year. The second is his in-depth look at the 1965 revival efforts of some radio dramas by the North American Newspaper Alliance. While most OTR fans know the medium didn't completely disappear after 1962, Maupin examines one of many examples of its post-Golden Age existence.

Sadly, I don't have any new Maintained Sets to report on; our team has been engaged in other non-OTR activities. Digitizing of the [Joe Hehn library](#) continues apace as does that of the Falk-Kelz library that will be made available in the future to purchasing group members.

There is much work to be done in this area. If you have any interest in diving into the world of digitizing reel-to-reels, Joe Webb would love to hear from you. It's an exciting – but admittedly daunting – next step in the hobby. I just tried it last fall when I was able to borrow a reel deck.

As usual, the *Old Radio Times* is always looking for new content. Book reviews, reminiscences, and historical articles are eagerly accepted. No professional writing experience necessary!

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Purchasing Groups

The Old Time Radio Researchers Purchasing Group:
Contact Jim Wood at OTRPG@Bookfixer.com
Dues: 5\$ per month.

Ted Davenport Purchasing Group:
Contact Ted at tedotr@sbcglobal.net
Dues: 35\$ per month for 18 hours of both circulating and uncirculating material from transcription disc.

Doug Hopkinson Purchasing Group:
Contact Doug at auditorium117@gmail.com
Dues: 25\$ per month for 5 hours of drama/comedy programming; 10\$ per month for 2.5 hours of musical/variety programming; \$30 for all 7.5 hours.

Support the *Old Radio Times*

Since its debut in December 2005, the *Old Radio Times* has been offered free to the old-time radio community. It is the only free group publication in the hobby and it will remain so. However, as a way to help readers show their appreciation for the zine, we've created a Patreon page where you can pledge a regular donation to the upkeep of the zine and the work of the Old Time Radio Researchers in general.

Visit [the Times' Patreon page](#) to become a subscriber, paying \$1 (or \$2) to our dusty coffers each time a new issue is published. We are currently on a bi-monthly schedule so the total annual cost could be as little as \$6.

Visit Our Blog

Another little-known resource for the Old Time Radio Researchers is our blog, found [here](#). It was dormant after the death of Jim Beshires but in recent months we have reactivated it. Please subscribe to be automatically notified of new posts.

A Reminder

The Old Time Radio Researchers online library remains one of the most valuable sources of downloadable OTR programs available freely to the wider public. Many newer members appear unfamiliar with this resource. [Visit here!](#)

2020 Maintained Releases (v. Year Month)

[Counterspy](#) v. 2001
[The Clyde Beatty Show](#) v. 2001
[Rocky Fortune](#) v. 2001
[The Weird Circle](#) v. 2004
[Broadway's My Beat](#) v. 2004
[The Adventures of Philip Marlowe](#) v. 2005
[The Danny Kaye Show](#) v. 2006
[My Friend Irma](#) v. 2006
[Firefighters](#) v. 2007
[Jeff Regan, Investigator](#) v. 2007
[Life with Luigi](#) v. 2008
[Tales of the Texas Rangers](#) v. 2009
[Mr. District Attorney](#) v. 2010
Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons v. 2010
Hopalong Cassidy v. 2011
Family Doctor v. 2012
[Father Knows Best](#) v. 2012

Writing for Radio

Part 5 in a series of articles by Joseph Kessler
Adams

The Drama Begins

For this section, I must thank my collaborators on the original *Writing for Radio* booklet for American Radio Theater spring 1980, Glendale, California - Edwin Duerr and David L. Krebs. My gratitude to my fellow instructors at the Midwest Radio Theater Workshop, KOPN/Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri, summer 1980.

Radio gives you more options than any other form because there are no costs for sets, costumes, make-up, lighting, or special effects. Your audience will do all of that for you.

But you have to give them the skeleton on what they will dress, where they will put the muscles, the face they want, and absolute perfection in what they want for sets and casting. You tell them they are on a star cruiser, they will build your star cruiser. You tell them this is the most beautiful heroine ever seen, or the greatest adventurer ever known, and your audience will cast, costume, light, and pose that character in their mind's eye - to perfection..

Your job is to produce a script that gives them what they need to do their job. You have three tools: the human voice, sound effects, and music. You have to tell a complete and satisfying story with just those. Nothing else. No cheating.

First, before you can tell your story, you have to make the container that will hold your story. The script. The format for the script.

A picture is worth a thousand words, so let me give you few thousand words on your script format.

Radio Script Sample*

THE SCRIPT TITLE

The Name of the Series

by Your Name

1 MUSIC: THEME ESTABLISHES, THEN

CONTINUES UNDER

2 ANN (Remember, ANN stands for ANNouncer.) You have to decide what works best for your show. Name to the left, indented text to follow - called outdenting because the successive lines start under the indented point, making it easier for actors to see their character name standing out on the left. This sample has line spacing is set at 1.5 lines. Font size is 11.

3 MUSIC: DRAMATIC STAB, THEN

CONTINUES UNDER

4 ANN: This is a modification of the original 1940s standard radio script. Then, every line was numbered. Automatic numbering is now an easy option with word processors. This allows the director to be specific on re-takes.

5 MUSIC: SLOW SUSPENSEFUL THROB,
THEN UNDER AGAIN

6 ANN: In the Silver Age of Radio Theater, about the start of the debut of *CBS Mystery Theater*, some modern

speech numbered, instead of each line. Space and one half is sufficient for actors to keep their place in long speeches and does not take up excessive space for the announcer.

7 MUSIC: FADE OUT

8 ANN: Music and Sound Effects (SFX) are presented all caps. Then tab over for the sound or mood. In the Golden Age they underlined these production markers, but the same modern producer saw no need for that.

9 JOE: Remember, you only have the human voice (narration and dialogue), music, and sound effects to tell your story.

10 BUDDY: But I have a great idea for something new and wonderful.

11 JOE: NO! Nothing else! Clever actors in the days of our writing workshops gave such helpful directions like "Jakes

producers realized it was easier to work with each and "an alley cat jumps through the open window and wanders across the apartment, looking for food. He has scars and must have been in a terrible fight..."

12 BUDDY: (Mumbles under) Well, crap. Didn't even look at my wonderful idea...

13 JOE: And none of that.

14 SFX: PIG BLADDER

15 BUDDY: What?

16 JOE: Directing from the typewriter. Sneaking stage directions to tell the actor how to read your line, or restrict the director to your interpretation.

17 BUDDY: But I wrote it.

18 JOE: If you want full control, write a novel. Everybody does their job to bring it to life. You don't like actors telling you how to write, so don't tell them how to act.

19 MUSIC: DRAMATIC STING

20 JOE: We'll set up a web page to give you a downloadable

sees the aliens in the mirror while shaving...”

22 JOE: If you want to direct from the keyboard, do it in music and sound effects, where nobody can smell it.

End of Sample

* You can use whatever font your production group has decided to use. This is presented in Courier typeface because it is familiar. Line-spacing is a 1.5 lines. You may want to use double spacing - it allows more room for hand-written notes during rehearsal and production. It has an inset of one inch. This sample only numbers each *speech*. Some directors like each *line* numbered, as was done in starting at 1 at the top of each page. Some directors preferred to only have the *scenes* numbered and only do retakes in whole scenes. Some directors want numbers continuous through the whole script. Make your choices known to the producer and they will share the standard to the team for uniformity and clarity.

This provides you with the detail of setting up your document in the word processor, but if you want to be authentic, get an old typewriter. Beat it out on a manual, not an electric, and pound out your own individual page numbers and underlines, while trying to tell your story.

Then retype whole pages to eliminate one mistake, one type.

There are many ways to tell a story - there are many ways to tell a story wrong. The goal is to get a story that works for you. You have to be satisfied that you have done the best job you can do. You will discover three stories in every script you write - the story you wanted to write, the story you wrote, and then - after a while - the story you should have written.

Make your next one better. It is the nature of getting better. If you ever find a way to make a past story better, please let me know. I'd love to

format in MS Word DOC

format.

21 MUSIC: TRIUMPHANT SWELL

Every writer we spoke with - some you would probably recognize - had the same basic suggestion. If you are going to write a script, tell a story. Know what your story is. Start at the beginning and go through to the end. Different writers have had different suggestions, but these have worked well for every script we've heard, or have written.

Tell Your Story

Make the story important to the characters. Why now? Why are you asking the listener to hear this particular moment in your characters' lives? Why not last Thursday when they went to the gas station to get some gas?

The moment of your story has to mean something - it has to be a moment that changes the life of the character. Your character should change as a result of the events. If they went to the gas station and wound up charged with murder, then you've got a story we want to hear! How did that happen? What did they do? What happened next? Did the story end with them being proven innocent or sitting in the electric chair?

Many writers want to write a "slice of life" story. Usually these are writers who have never had an exciting thought or think that breathing in and out for thirty years is good enough. I don't like listening to slices of life because they are not a slice of my life, which is the most important one. I find their slices of life boring. I have my own boring, I don't need yours, and neither does anybody else.

Make it about finding out a marriage is about to fail because one spouse's significant other went to the gas station and is now charged with murder. Or their wedding ring was torn off their finger when they were mistaken for a Mexican drug lord. Or aliens thought they were making fun of them. Or they were mistaken for a spy from Mozambique and given a rare new 3D printing technology that can print real money - not counterfeit, but *real money*!

Who wouldn't want to listen to that?

Before you start, I suggest you have an interesting opening scene, then know where you want to wind up. The voyage from A to B is the most exciting part of

learn time travel. But until I do, I will have to keep improving and stepping over the bodies of my best-so-far tales.

We take most of our modern theater from the structures they set up for us over two thousand years ago.

Drama is the story of internal conflict: conflicting desires, good vs. evil, or, sometimes, good vs. good. These are the stories where something important is at stake and there are people or forces that prevent the hero from getting what they want. It usually has a happy, or at least understandable, ending. Some authors describe drama as the story of a lie exposed, with the consequences.

Tragedy, in classical terms, is the inevitable decline of the lofty and an inescapable descent to a conclusion that is justified, but sad for all of the participants. The Greeks described this as the failure of man to defy the will of the gods.

Melodrama is the simplified form of the surface conflict with heavy use of stereotypes (to provide predictability and create the illusion of depth). Internal conflict is rarely involved unless it effects the resolution, as in a murder mystery where it is important how the criminal committed the murder. It is usually light, removed from day to day human drama for elevated “at stakes” stories with life, death, murder, treasure, and people making big gestures as characters. It is generally seen as having a lack of subtlety in the way characters are portrayed and the words are spoken.

Comedy is usually overly large – big responses to normal problems or oversized responses to big problems. Another clue to comedy is as “a lie sustained.” Most comedies involve a lie told to cover an understandable desire and how to keep the opposition from thwarting that desire.

Almost all tale begin with a story line. Know your whole story, if not the details, before you write. Have a clear idea of your beginning, your ending and some idea of how you are going to get from one to the other. Our scripts almost always had a firm opening and a firm ending. Getting from point A to point B was where writing was fun. You have to plant all the clues, reveal as much as is needed to advance the story, where characters discover each other and interact, and

writing. You know where you’re going but getting there really is half the fun.

Drama versus Melodrama

The Greeks had a word for it. They had several words for it. Drama, tragedy, melodrama, and comedy. the rules are but break the rules for a special theatrical experience, on stage, on video, or on radio.

Unique Voices

Give your characters a way of speaking so you don’t have to make them repeat each other’s names every few lines. Make one character have a nickname for only one other character (“Say, twinkletoes...”). Or an exclamation when they thought something is creepy, “Great spider-filled donuts!” Or a vocal distinction, like a stutter or an accent.

You don’t do this to be clever, but to let your listener tell the characters apart without having to say the name repeatedly.

You are there as your audience’s advocate - you are on their side, even when you are pulling the wool over their eyes with a complex murder mystery. You don’t want to lose them along the way.

Give them a hook to hang each characters face on. The audience is going to come up with a face that is their ideal of the characters you bring them, so make it easy to let your buddies on the other side of the microphone know who is talking.

Sure, let them name from time to time, in case someone tuned in late, but not every few lines. Let them identify themselves to new characters. Let them mention their significant other if that helps identify them. Let them hand out coupons for discounts on dry cleaning, if that will help the audience know who they are, but don’t make them introduce themselves over and over.

Less is More

Don’t clutter up the stage.

You may have half-hour or an hour to tell your story, if you are using the old-time constricted formats. You may have 42 minutes. No matter how much time you have for the show, you don’t have time to waste with extra characters that do not move your plot forward. A murder-mystery needs more than who-done-it; it needs some who-didn’t-do-it (but not a new character every three minutes for half an hour), the

how everything comes together for the closing you wanted. Some people violate the rules. Some never know what the rules are. Some know exactly what

A suspense script might vary on the number of pages, but usually it doesn't involve who-done-it, because we know. We are worried about if it is going to be done again to our sympathetic lead characters.

If a character doesn't have anything to say that moves your story forward, off with his head. Or her head. Or its head. Clean the floor where they were standing and let someone else stand up to the mike.

Pare Your Dialogue

The time restriction really doesn't matter on radio. Orson Wells ran several days of a Martian invasion into less than an hour in 1938, and took weeks of travel by Dracula from Transylvania to London and back in less than another hour on a different show in the series. You can pack time with good dialogue and moving from scene to scene for as long as it takes for that scene to drive your story forward.

Build Tension

Every scene should pile information about everything that came before. The characters will become more intense in emotion or even the speed with which words are exchanged. Long speeches to the front, shorter and shorter lines as you push to the finale. And then your characters can take their time explaining the exciting finale *after it is happened*. That is when you can do the long detailed account of how the hero solved the problem.

But as you get closer to the end. Short and shorter. Snap. Explode, then take your time explaining it all to the survivors.

Comedy

Comedy is its own animal. The two truths of comedy is a) it is about pain - pain that isn't happening to you - and b) it involves an unexpected violation of your expectations. While it is not quite "set-up" and "punch-line," it has its own formula.

At the core of your comedy is a lie. Comedy is the lie concealed - Charlie's Aunt didn't show up

clever deduction by your detective, and then the revelation of the villain.

A comedy is easier because you don't have to worry about introducing the other characters for distraction - you get to have someone for as long as they are funny, then do away with them for the next laugh-packed exchange. Hopefully. grandpa always got in trouble about lying about what he could do, has done, or will do.

Know the truth the characters are afraid to tell.

Pain and the Violated Expectation

The classic setup for comedy is someone slipping on a banana peel. Have you ever slipped on a banana peel? Broke your coccyx? How funny was that?

Think of your favorite comedy - can you identify the pain? One of my favorite scripts is the play or the screenplay for *A Funny Thing Happened On My Way to the Forum*. It is a long funny comedy about slavery. The central character is a slave who will do *anything* to be free. Not where I go for lots of yuks. It was written by Larry Gelbart, the man who wrote the classic television series *M*A*S*H*, a funny show about the Korean War.

Mel Brooks said, "Tragedy is when I get a paper-cut on my little finger. It hurts *me*. Comedy is when you fall into an open sewer and die."

Our very discomfort reacting to someone's pain may make us laugh, as will feeling fooled when our expectation is violated.

Jack Benny had one of his funniest moments on radio when faced with an armed robber, Jack was supposed to be the cheapest man in Hollywood. "You're money or your life," said the robber. Pause. "I said your money or your life." "I'm thinking, I'm thinking," came Jack's reply.

In comedy people rally around the hero to keep a secret from being exposed or to protect them from finding out the truth.

My favorite radio comedy writer was Paul Rhymer of *Vic & Sade*. It was a light comedy about a quiet Midwestern couple and their son (and sometimes, their confused uncle) where they were always misunderstanding things, sometimes at the expense of the people around them. Sade would misunderstand something and people didn't want to hurt her feelings by telling her the truth. "I wish they'd take those darned old Hawaiian Islands and stick them out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean." Uncle Fletcher was

and is played by a man. Pseudolus wants to stop being a slave – to be free. In the *Real McCoys*

On television, Lucy was always afraid to tell Ricky about how much she wanted to be in the show, or something she bought, or something she did.

My favorite AIDS joke - in fact the only AIDS joke that made me laugh against the politically incorrect sentiment while friends around me were dying - "What's the worst part of having AIDS?" "Convincing your parents you're Haitian."

Comedy is where you are led to expect something and at the last moment, it is suddenly off in an unexpected direction. You are surprised and the stress of relieving that tension is to realize that you were fooled and you make a sound - the same open mouth, teeth showing, repetitive chattering that is made by every frightened monkey in the wild - when they are terrified.

In comedy the only rule is "Was it funny?" Did it make you laugh? And if you didn't make them laugh, it wasn't funny.

Comedy is far more difficult to write than drama because the rules are not as firm. There are times the very fact you have violated the rules makes it laughable - suggesting you need to learn the rules to violate them. If you get a laugh but don't know if you broke a new rule, maybe your audience isn't laughing at the joke. They're laughing at you.

And who wants that?

The Second Draft

When you have reached the end of your story, stop. Do not rework the script over and over on your own. This is your completed first draft. You can be stuck in polish-mode for months, and if you are doing a series of plays, you have more to write and the teamwork of producing your play begins.

Give it to your producer for a first response. If you already know who is to direct it, give it to the director for a conditional review. Do not become married to your first draft. You will have given your characters life, made them dance, experienced life, found - and lost - romance or their very sanity.

But there is a limit to what you can do by yourself with a keyboard. The producer, directors,

always surprised that people didn't know the people he thought were world famous. "You never heard of Sicishgan Vishigan from Fishigin, Michigan? Married a women 23 years old from Seattle, Iowa, and went into the dead or alive powdered rabbit business? And later died?"

opponent will be your own pride. Try to set your ego aside to hear suggestions they have to improve the script, improvements based on their own knowledge of theater and life.

Your producer or director may want a speech reduced or removed. They may want the order of the scenes changed to improve the build of the play. Try to hold back from being immediately wounded because they are damaging your perfect piece of drama, try to see what they are saying. Does it make your story stronger? Does it improve the pacing?

You can then go back to a second draft without a sense of defeat, but being supported that they see the building blocks you have created can be shifted into a better presentation for the world. It is still your story, your characters, your dialogue, they want - and they are with you to improve the show.

If you are lucky enough to have a team that you can deal with on a larger structure, such as a series or an anthology where you become familiar with each others' strengths and no longer have to deal with strangers. You will trust them with suggested changes and agree to them when you do not really see the need.

You will find truth in an old adage – "great works are not written. They are re-written."

I have one caveat to working on your second script. When an actor wants you to change the script and make their part bigger, it will be necessary to view that suggestion with suspicion. They may just want more lines to make the play more about me, Me, ME! But they may want to make their part bigger to become the star of the piece. They might actually identify a moment where you did not explain something the audience needs to know.

If an actor asks you to cut a few lines or a few words, pay attention. It goes against the core nature of a performer to want less to do. Listen to them and consider their words carefully.

Robert Heinlein, a classic science fiction author whose works went from pulp magazines to radio to the big screen in Hollywood, gave certain suggestions for new writers. First, he said the best story is always

and actors will each have contributions to build your play into a final form to reach your audience. They are not your opponents - your biggest be produced, immediately start working on your next script.”

Radio is just another way to write and your words will benefit by reading (go beyond your comfortable, familiar styles), by studying what writers say about writing (there are great guides from Stephen King, Ray Bradbury, Elmore Leonard, and others - seek them out), and by making mistakes. Learn the rules before you try to break them. Take chances. And learn from every success and every failure. Keep going.

Take Risks

Come up with dangerous ideas. Be afraid to show anyone the weird thing you just wrote, but show them anyway. Share what you write with other writers, your producers, and actors. Your production crew will be the first audience and may help you polish your scripts before they reach the main audience - the listeners.

Remember, you only have the human voice (actors, announcers, or the character speaking the words of their thoughts for the audience’s benefit), sound effects, and music to tell the story. No directing from the keyboard. Have a beginning, middle, and end. Keep the final draft lean – cut out anything that doesn’t advance your story or how your characters relate to moving that story forward. “Tell ‘em what you’re going to tell ‘em, tell ‘em, then tell ‘em what you told them.”

Next time: Directing for Radio. I hope you’ll tune in.

about “the man who learned better.” He also said to writers, finish what you write. Only re-write under the direction of an editor, and start immediately on the next thing you will write.

For radio it would be changed to say “Write, finish your first draft, and if you don’t have an editor (or producer) giving you changes needed for the show to



Father Knows Best
Ryan Ellett

In early 1949 General Foods, represented by Young & Rubicam and Benton & Bowles, dropped its sponsorship of the Burns & Allen radio program which advertised its Maxwell House Coffee. Executives blamed the cancellation on the program’s weekly \$17,500 price tag which they claimed had become too expensive for radio in a time of growing television power. Not ready to entirely abandon radio, General Foods (still through Benton & Bowles) committed \$7,500 per week – less than half their budget for Burns & Allen – to a new domestic comedy, *Father Knows Best*.

The show was created by Ed James – who also scripted it initially – and developed by Rodney-Young Productions. Rodney-Young was a partnership formed years before between Eugene B. Rodney and Robert Young, the latter a Hollywood actor who would be cast as the series lead, the Anderson family patriarch Jim Anderson. Harold “Scrappy” Lambert, a former

television, most notably as the voice of Wilma Flintstone. The eldest child, Betty, was played by Rhoda Williams, the middle child, Bud, by Ted Donaldson, and the youngest, Kathy, primarily by Norma Jean Nilsson.

At the beginning of its second season, director Kenneth M. Burton, head of West Coast radio production for the Burton & Bowles agency, died of a heart attack at age 51 in August 1950. He was replaced by Fran van Hartesveldt. *Father Knows Best* did not miss a beat and amassed its highest season rating of 13.4. During 1951 the program was sponsored over 39 stations of Canada's Dominion Network after appearing on the Trans-Canada Network. The series proved to be one of NBC's most popular programs in 1951 and it found large audiences in Canada as well.

Near the end of 1951 Ed James handed over writing duties to Paul West who "desquabbled" it according to radio historian Jim Cox, and he set the tone of the program that would endure into its television run. Beginning January 10, 1952, the Crosley Division of Cincinnati's Avco Manufacturing took over sponsorship from Maxwell House; however, they did not renew after the initial 13-week contract and General Foods resumed sponsorship. During this time lead actor and co-producer Robert Young was awarded the National Safety Council's Award of Merit for a highway safety campaign in which he participated.

In mid-1952 it was announced that *Father Knows Best* would be adapted to television, a project that came to fruition two years later in 1954. During the radio program's fourth season, 1952-1953, the producers decided to tape the program, allowing the cast – especially Robert Young – the opportunity to more easily do other projects as well. Even video taping created some logistical challenges, especially when Robert Young embarked on a 40-week theatrical tour with the show *Country Girl*. To accommodate his schedule the entire cast of *Father Knows Best* had to be periodically flown to whatever city in which Young was performing and subsequently tape as many episodes as possible. This included 13 recorded in Chicago.

band vocalist who got into radio in the 1930s - packaged the entire deal.

Father Knows Best debuted on August 25, 1949 over NBC. In addition to Robert Young – a contract studio actor who earned over 100 film credits in 20 years on the big screen – *Father Knows Best* featured Jean Vander Pyl as mother Margaret Anderson for almost the entire run. Pyl's biggest fame came later in Robert Young was the only member of the radio cast to go. After a rough beginning, *Father Knows Best* ran on the small screen until 1962. Young announced in 1960 that he'd grown tired of the role of Jim Anderson and wanted to step down. The show continued in reruns on primetime for a further two years and can still regularly be found on cable to this day.

Often used by contemporary writers (most of whom have little to no personal knowledge of the show) as a shorthand reference to an unrealistic and narrow vision of mid-20th century America, this author finds *Father Knows Best* has held up remarkably well. While it does not include the laugh-out-loud humor of such top comedies as the *Jack Benny Show* and *Fibber McGee & Molly*, that was never the intent of its creators. While it certainly avoided the hard issues of its era, so do many family-oriented sitcoms even to the present. It also lacks the racial and ethnic jokes and impersonations that have made some of its peer radio programs more cringe-worthy today.

Widely overlooked by old-time radio enthusiasts and remembered by the wider culture as a television relic, hopefully this Old-Time Radio Researchers release will rekindle interest in this homage to an idyllic America that maybe never really existed but is a place many would like to know.

With listenership declining, *Father Knows Best* transitioned to television for the 1954-55 season.

"FATHER KNOWS BEST"
starring
Robert Young
Premiere!
TONIGHT AT 8:30



Father does know best - after he learns the answers from mother! At point some fathers may be prepared to dispute! Here's a bright, delightful new comedy series starring screen star Robert Young. The characters are drawn from people in real life. Hear the premiere of this fine new program tonight at 8:30!

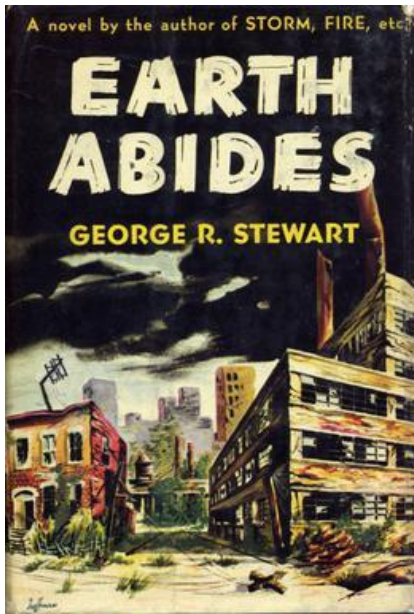
★ **TONIGHT YOU'LL ALSO ENJOY:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 7:15 Morgan Beatty With News of the World, assisted by NBC newsmen overseas with last-minute reports. | 10:30 Dragnet True stories of the Los Angeles police! |
| 9:00 Kraft Music Hall Starring Nelson Eddy and Dorothy Kirsten. |  Rochester's No. 1 Station |
| 10:00 Fred Waring Show | |

Father Knows Best Maintained 2012 was released in December amongst the holiday busyness. If you missed it, the set is available [here](#).

EARTH ABIDES: An Escape Into the 1950 CBS Radio Drama Martin Grams

With general consensus among fans of old-time radio that the two-part adaptation of George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* is among the best presentations on *Escape* (CBS, sustaining, 1947-1954), motivation to read the post-apocalypse novel provided an opportunity for comparison. Stephen King confessed *Earth Abides* was the inspiration to write his own post-apocalypse novel (*The Stand*). Jimi Hendrix claimed that "Earth Abides" was his favorite book and his song "Third



Stone from the Sun," was inspired by the novel.

Published in 1949, *Earth Abides* offers sober examination of not only human integrity, but also the questions of what makes civilization work. When a plague of unprecedented

virulence sweeps the globe, the human race is all but wiped out. In the aftermath, as the great machine of civilization slowly and inexorably breaks down, only a few shattered survivors remain to struggle against the slide into barbarism . . . or extinction. The story follows one survivor, Isherwood "Ish" Williams, an intellectual loner who embraces the grim duty of bearing witness to what may be humanity's final days. But then he finds Em (short for Emma), a wise and courageous woman who coaxes his stunned heart back to life and teaches him to hope again, he chose to start life anew. Together, they faced unimaginable challenges as they sowed the seeds for a new beginning.

The structure of the novel was different from contemporary novels. The first half of the book centered on Ish as he set out on a cross-country tour from San Francisco, California, to New York City, and back again. During his travels he found small pockets of survivors but he had doubts about humanity's ability to survive the loss of civilization. One survivor who took to the bottle provided little hope and only after Ish later realized that the drunk was human and deserved an attempt at sobriety and a future, returned the day after to find the drunk dead from alcohol poisoning.

Like the lead protagonist in H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* and John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, Ish wanders the remains of what was once a thriving human empire only to cynically observe the worst in human nature. From religion to military, peace camps to new-formed government, the problem of surviving in a post-apocalyptic world is people – not the crisis. Through Ish's travels, The Secondary Kill was at work. Once he saw a woman whose mind had failed. The clothes indicated she was scarcely able to care for herself and could certainly not last through a winter. Several survivors told him of others who had committed suicide.

Wandering the streets of Manhattan, including the Wall Street that built the city, Ish observed Buffalo grazing, unfinished construction projects that would remain unfinished, and on Fifth Avenue the end of a verse: "Now all your victories are in vain." There he met Milt Abrams, who escorted Ish to a pleasant apartment on the second floor. There, Milt introduced a blond-haired woman, of about forty. "Meet – the Mrs.," said Milt Abrams, and from the way he hesitated, Ish knew that the Mrs. merely covered up his embarrassment. (This scene was downplayed on the radio broadcast where he was referred to as Mr. Carson, not Milt Abrams, to avoid the suggestion, and Ish's cross-country travels to New York City was never dramatized, only referenced. His encounter with Milt Abrams was in San Francisco.)

And yet, though sometimes he wondered, Ish himself was conscious of no great strain either of shock or of loneliness. He attributed this to his maintenance of interest in the whole progress of events, and to his own peculiar temperament. He thought many times of his qualifications for the new life, as he had once listed them. It was then that Ish

realized that our human control is often an illusion, and we are all merely a speck of dust in the blink of the universe. At the conclusion of the first half of the book, titled “World Without End,” Ish met Emma and experienced a newfound spark for continuing existence. (In the radio version, Ish observed the lights on in her house and investigated. In the book Ish had a pet dog named Princess - never featured in the radio drama - who ran into the house and both Em and Ish laughed at the dog’s impetus.) After an hour of conversation and introduction, they went to bed. (For radio, Ish and Em swore allegiance to each other with a Bible, to simulate a marriage between the two, no doubt to appease the censors at CBS.) Em was, at least partially, African-American in the novel. The radio drama made no reference to her race.

The second half of the book is titled “The Last American,” which took place 22 years later. A brief summary of the events in between was featured in the novel, bridging the two scenarios, which was incorporated into the radio drama with narration describing “Year One,” “Year Two,” and so on. For the most part, with the exclusion of the dog named Princess and the cross-country trip to New York City and back, the first half of the *Escape* presentation was fairly accurate. The second half, however, eliminated much needed material and fails to go in depth with Ish struggling to guide the nascent society that he believes is not effective. His insistence to grow crops and dig wells for water was founded only after having to scrounge for food and the water pipes ceased flowing, creating momentary confusion among the colony.

Among the most notable contributions that was excised from the radio adaptation was Ish functioning as a school teacher to help guide the younger generation into a new world – including fixing an automobile and providing a map for the older boys to explore cross-country as Ish had done decades prior. After educating the boys on the engineering of fixing a car, he left them to their own devices and months later they returned with a summary of their findings. They were only able to reach as far east as Chicago, with roads and bridges crumbling from the forces of nature. The boys brought back with them a derelict named Charlie, who brought with him pestilence in the

Switch to Escape!

Several million people know that a good way to get away from it all is to flip a radio switch and listen to "Escape."

For "Escape" is a one-way ticket away from the humdrum. It's high adventure in far places, as told by the world's best tellers—in the tradition of Kipling, Conrad, Bierce, Stevenson, Poe.

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Very good for a sponsor who likes to get away from it all—*at a profit.*

**A CBS
PACKAGE
PROGRAM**

form of lust: Charlie longed for the affections of Evie, a mentally challenged girl, who Ish and the others agreed should not have the right to reproduce. While the entire community lived without law and order, nor any form of established government, a vote on murdering Charlie for the betterment of the community was cast anonymously on paper.

On the radio version, adapted by David Ellis, reference to the boys as they were educated on mechanics was not extant. Ish worked on a farm with Emma assisting him, for the purpose of local transportation into town, and Charlie was a derelict who found himself wandering on foot into the community. Charlie provided trouble by shooting someone dead with his gun, eliminating any reference to the mentally challenged girl, and with Ish referring to himself as elected to leadership in the town. The vote to murder Charlie was decided verbally, not on paper.

As the two-part broadcast aired over the CBS Network on the evenings of November 5 and 12, 1950,

the suggestion of a community not belonging to or affiliated with any government (or elected officials) might have been scrutinized heavily in an era where Communist infiltration was suspected from all fronts. (The two-part drama was rebroadcast on a few radio stations across the country, including Elmira, New York, on the evening of November 25 and December 3, 1950, by popular request.)

At the end of the novel, as Ish continued to age, having seen everyone from the old world pass on – including his beloved Em – the new generation considered him “The Last American,” though it was apparent that few understood what an American was. Society had reverted to using the bow and arrow, relics of the past crumbled away due to lack of use, and Ish himself questioned whether the human race would manage to survive without the conveniences of the past – or the motivation to explore what could help advance society. Man reverted backwards two centuries and the world was, as Ish eventually rationalized, better. Radios would never broadcast Charlie McCarthy, ice boxes would never operate without electricity, cars would rust away underneath the thick overgrowth of weeds and vines. But the human race continued to thrive in due course, regardless of lack of skillset or trade. It was at the very end that Ish’s lasting impacts were subtly revealed.

Throughout the novel, Ish carried with him a hammer. Used to smash open doors, protect himself against wolves, repair and construct, and to annually carve the years into rock. The hammer was depicted in the radio drama as a symbol of the old world, which Ish hoped would return over time, but emphasized in depth amongst the 300+ pages of prose.

Summed up, the first half of the novel was adapted fairly well for *Escape* in 1950. The second half was abridged with numerous changes. For the sake of dramatic appeal, *Escape* accomplished the task of the events as they unfolded, utilizing Ish’s narrative observations for radio narrative (aptly handled by actor Larry Dobkin). Often above-average radio dramas inspire folks to seek out the original source material to read and enjoy. The question of whether the novel offers much more



Larry Dobkin

material than presented through the adaptation of David Ellis can be answered in one sentence: If you want to dig deeper into the story, with more detail and narrative, and gather further insight into the novelist’s intention, the novel recommended.

"Men go and come, but Earth abides."
Ecclesiastes 1:14



Maupin's Musings

Larry Maupin

OTRR member Larry Maupin has been listening to many new episodes as they're added to our library. He especially likes soap operas so was delighted when we got the generous donation of rare and upgraded content from Michael Psarakis. Maupin has methodically gone through each episode and published his thoughts on the OTRR .io group. He's graciously given us permission to reprint them here.

19. Program *Judy and Jane* (Audition)

Broadcast Date: The OTRR Library contains this episode, and gives the date as March 25, 1943.

Episode Title: The library listing does not say "Audition," but titles it "Dope Cigarettes."

Sponsor: Folger's Coffee according to John Dunning in *On the Air* (p.377), but the Audition has no commercials.

Introduction: Piano music. The author of the program, whose name sounds like Irving Vendig, is introduced to explain "What's happened and what's going to happen on 'Judy and Jane.'" He says that the story is concerned with "the marijuana cigarette," "the reefer," in Jane's home town of Honeycrest.

Summary: The episode is almost entirely about a man named Nick Rodin and his accomplices who are selling marijuana to the students at Honeycrest High School. There is some thuggery, as might be expected. The high school janitor, who was selling the cigarettes for three dollars, is arrested and agrees to testify against Nick but is murdered before he can do so. Then Jane's husband Donald North, who is prosecuting the case, is kidnapped and Jane (who has conveniently obtained a law degree) takes over. A brave high school girl turns out to be the star witness.

Conclusion: Piano Music. Then the announcer says "I'm sure you see in it [the Audition show] the universal appeal that keeps 'Judy and Jane' always in the very first group of America's favorite radio programs."

Notes: (1) The audio quality is generally good, but some of the names are fuzzed over and I had to guess a little (Nick might have been Mick, and I

first thought Vendig was Bendig); (2) Dunning (p.377) has a nice summation of the serial: "'Judy and Jane' was one of radio's first soap operas, becoming a great favorite in the Central time zone where the sponsor's coffee was sold. Long after its network run it was distributed by transcription. It was still heard for its original sponsor as late as 1947."

20. Program: *Just Plain Bill*

Broadcast Date: Not specified.

Sponsor: Anacin

Suggested Episode Title: An Interfering Mother

Opening: "Polly Wolly Doodle" played energetically on the harmonica, then "Now, 'Just Plain Bill'."

Summary: "Jennifer Westfield, Bill's good friend, sincerely believes that her only son Wayne will ruin his life if he marries Veronica Cunningham, a vivid, clever, much talked about girl in Hartville." Jennifer wants Wayne to marry Sally Dearborn, and feels so strongly about the matter that she has "changed her will, leaving all her money to her worthless husband. After which she makes Bill and his daughter Nancy secret custodians of a mysterious sealed envelope." Wayne knows that Sally loves him but is not as certain about Veronica's feelings even though he loves her and has every intention of marrying her despite the consequences. He is disturbed, however, because he knows that a secret meeting has occurred between Veronica and his father Jackson Westfield.

Conclusion: "What has Sally found out that gives her courage to fight 'the loud, confident girl [Veronica] who told her 'You're no competition for me'? And what is Jackson Westfield up to? Has he some secret understanding with Veronica Cunningham? Who should Wayne Westfield marry? And will he marry the right girl? Be sure to hear the story of 'Just Plain Bill' tomorrow."

Then a commercial for Anacin followed by a rousing sendoff of "Polly Wolly Doodle."

Notes: (1) Audio quality is very good throughout; (2) An outstanding episode without any of the gratuitous violence that mars so many OTR soap opera broadcasts, including many of "Just Plain Bill." This one belongs with some of the great episodes of shows like *Bachelor's Children*,

Road of Life, and *Against the Storm* which are heavy on the soap and light on the opera-- "soap" meaning matters of the home and hearth, and "operatic" meaning "histrionic or implausible in a way considered characteristic of grand opera."

21. Program: *Just Plain Bill*

Broadcast Date: 1933 (day and month unspecified)

Suggested Episode Title: No Place Like Home

Opening: "And now 'Just Plain Bill'. Bill and Nancy on their way to new adventure. [They] are to visit a palatial mansion on Long Island as guests of Florence Archer.

Summary: Bill, Nancy and Florence are being driven to Florence's home by Roger, the family chauffeur. Nancy, who has been ill, mostly sleeps while Bill and Florence discuss the contrast between Bill's humble home in Hartville (just a few rooms behind his barber shop) and Florence's home where there are "boats, horses, dogs and gardens." Florence is sweet and good, but feels very lonely. Her parents are too busy to pay much attention to her and always have been. They stop along the way so she can phone ahead to let them know she is coming, but the only person there that she can talk to is her mother's social secretary.

Notes: (1) The audio quality is good throughout; (2) Another very good episode without any violence, and interesting because the characters are all likeable and we sympathize with them and want them to be happy; (3) With commercials and almost all the music deleted, the episode is only 9:47 in length).

22. Program: *Just Plain Bill*

Broadcast Date: 1933 (day and month unspecified)

Sponsor: Kolynos Dental Cream and Kolynos Toothpaste

Suggested Episode Title: Florence Archer Plans a Surprise

Opening: "And now 'Just Plain Bill'. Nancy and Kerry are going to be married." Then a commercial for Kolynos Dental Cream.

Summary: The scene is at Bill's barber shop/home in Hartville after business hours. Nancy and Kerry are planning a June wedding. As Bill and Kerry discuss the matter, Kerry suggests that Nancy go visit Florence at her home on Long Island to help

speed Nancy's recovery from her most recent brush with death. Florence returns from the telegraph office and tells Kerry that she has a surprise for Bill and Nancy and can't wait to tell them about it.

Conclusion: "Happiness after so much worry and terror and danger. And Now Florence Archer plans a surprise for Bill, for Nancy. What will it be? Listen to Bill and Nancy tomorrow." Then a commercial for Kolynos Toothpaste.

Notes: (1) A very fast few notes of "Polly Wolly Doodle" at the beginning and end; (2) The sound quality is excellent throughout; (3) Another episode of quiet domestic reflection with only an allusion to suffering and violence. This is the third straight episode of "Just Plain Bill" on the disk I received containing recent acquisitions of shows published in the January/February issue of "Old Radio Times" that embodies radio soap opera at its best.

23. Program: *Just Plain Bill*

Broadcast Date: 1933 (day and month unspecified)

Sponsor: Kolynos Toothpaste

Suggested Title: Bill Among the Titled English

Opening: Program announced, then "Polly Wolly Doodle" on the harmonica. Then a commercial for Kolynos Toothpaste. Bill and Nancy are guests of the Archers at their mansion on Long Island. They have met "the handsome son of an English Earl, and will meet millionaire society leaders who may not be much impressed by a barber from Hartville." Summary: This is a hilarious episode in which The English guests, speaking among themselves, ridicule Bill as a mere "baw-ber," deplore the American Midwest in general (which a couple of them have visited), and find Nancy beautiful but "gauche." Anyone with a sense of humor will love hearing this jewel of a show.

Conclusion: "The shallow snobs laugh at Bill, but Brian Morley, young son of an English Earl, realizes Bill's mellow, simple wisdom and suddenly begins his statement with the startling statement that he has no money"

Then a commercial for Kolynos Toothpaste.

Note: Audio quality is good throughout most of the episode, and every word can be heard with careful listening.

Radio 100 Years Ago

Enjoy a look back at what was going on in the world of broadcasting 100 years ago.



Mme. Luisa Tetrzzini, Operatic Soprano, Singing by Radiophone to Sailors of the American Navy Aboard Ship

Tetrzzini Gives Concert by Radiophone

MME. LUISA TETRAZZINI, with the aid of the radio telephone, recently gave a musical evening for hundreds on board naval ships at sea and in port within a radius of 400 miles of New York City. The prima donna sang four songs into a specially equipped telephone, tuned to transpose her voice to the telephonic receiving sets with which nearly all of the navy vessels are now equipped.

Amplifiers on board the vessels had been rigged to project Tetrzzini's voice on shipboard. The crews were assembled at 9.30 in the evening, the hour set for the concert, and telephonic radio stations were ordered to suspend traffic for thirty minutes.

When the prima donna's manager received word from the radio staff in the Whitehall Building that everything was set, Mme. Tetrzzini, with three musicians, grouped themselves near the transmitter.

"We have a treat for Mme. Tetrzzini," came a voice from somewhere. "Private Fred Bennett of Fort Wood, Staten Island, is going to sing 'A Tumble Down Shack in Athlone' for her."

The soldier's voice came clearly over the wire to Mme. Tetrzzini's room, and, although there was no amplifier, the prima donna and her friends could hear it very plainly. A chorus of "bravos" from those in the McAlpin followed the song.

Then Mme. Tetrzzini sang the "Polonaise" from "Mignon," "Rondo" from "La Sonnambula," in which she sent her high F sharp far out to sea, "Somewhere a Voice Is Calling" and "I Milioni d'Arlecchino."

After the songs Tetrzzini talked with some of the men in the Whitehall Building and on the Pennsylvania, in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

"Fine," was the comment from the Pennsylvania.

Naval officers said that the experiment in long distance entertainment for the men on shipboard was successful, although definite reports from the ships, which would give the range of the entertainment, were not received.

Wireless Age February 1921

Wireless to Broadcast Harding Inaugural Address

SPECIAL wireless telephone apparatus will transmit President-elect Harding's inaugural address to every army post, to every battleship and to halls in various cities where "inaugural parties" will be held, Edward B. McLean, chairman of the inaugural committee, has announced.

A committee on inaugural radio news has obtained the co-operation of the army and navy radio services to carry out the plans, it was said. In addition megaphones will be placed in the reviewing stand in front of the White House and will be connected by special wires to the amplifying device at the Capitol, permitting crowds unable to be at the Capitol to hear the speech.

Wireless Age February 1921

CHURCH'S SPOOK MUSIC IS BOY'S RADIO PLANT Phonograph and Wireless Set Make Phantom Choir.

CHAMPAIGN, Ill., Jan. 2.—The mystery of an invisible choir which stirred the congregation of a Paxton, Ill., Lutheran Church was solved to-day when it became known that Clarence Lundeen, a sixteen-year-old student, had been experimenting with a wireless telephone.

Lundeen connected a phonograph with a wireless sending set in his workshop. Then he transmitted the music produced to a large horn connected with an amplifier concealed in a tree just outside the church.

The church was in direct line with the sound from the horn, making the music appear to come from directly above the congregation. For several days the "phantom music" was heard.

New York Herald January 3, 1921

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- *Long-time supporter of most OTR conventions and clubs*
 - *Founded and managed by Bob Burnham, Detroit based broadcast engineer, and host-producer of "Radio Vault" on WHFR.FM 89.3*
-



Created in 1984, the Metro Washington Old-Time Radio Club is the second largest old-time radio club in the United States. Club members enjoy monthly club meetings, an annual luncheon, and a bi-monthly newsletter. You do not have to live in or near Washington, D.C., to become a member. The newsletter, RADIO RECALL, is mailed to members from all over the country and loaded with fascinating articles, news of what is happening in the hobby, recently-discovered "lost" programs and more. Why not join the hundreds who enjoy the newsletter, which can be sent via email in PDF format, or be mailed to you through the post office?



You can sign up to become a member on the club website.

www.mwotrc.com

Old-Time Radio Researchers Acquisitions:
New Episodes and Upgraded Sound Encodes

Please note that our distributions are available to OTRR
Purchasing Group members first, and then made
available to the public after about six months.

No new acquisitions to report at this time.

