



# RETURN WITH US NOW.

RADIO HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COLORADO

Volume 23, Number 7

February, 1998



# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

Dedicated to the preservation of old time radio programs and to making those programs available to our members.

## RHAC BOARD MEETING FEB. 5, 1998 AT THE HOME OF DICK AND MALETHA KING Old time radio is alive and well in Denver!

John Rayburn's "Reminiscing with Rayburn" Saturday evenings 6:00 till 11:00 PM KEZW 1430

KEZW has syndicated OTR weekdays from 7:00 till 8:00 PM 1430 on the dial.

KEZW "Sunday Night Movie", Sundays 5:00 till 6:00 PM

KFKA 1310 AM "Radio Memories" Sundays 6:00 till 12:00 PM

### E MAIL ADDRESSES CHECK HERE FOR NEW E MAIL ADDRESSES

RHAC web page and catalog is on the world wide web. <http://www.old-time.com/rhac.html>

Take a look, there is a lot of information at this sight.

RETURN WITH US NOW... is the official publication of the *Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.*, a nonprofit organization. Cost of membership is \$25.00 for the first year with \$15.00 for renewal. Each member has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below:

Phone numbers are in the (303) area code except where indicated.

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DIRECTORS AT LARGE:	David L Michael, 1999 Broadway, Lowery Suite, Denver CO 80202	
	Herb Dunniven See Above	
	Dick King See Above	

## LIBRARIES

REFERENCE MATERIAL	Bill McCracken, address above	986-9863
LOGS & SCRIPTS	Fred Hinz, c/o RHAC, P 0 Box 1908, Englewood CO 80150	
OPEN REEL TAPE LIBRARIAN:	Maletha King, 900W Quincy Ave, Englewood CO 80110	
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#3(1000-2000 )	Dave Logan, 5557 S Sherman Cir, Littleton CO 80121	730-1430
#4 (5001 up)	Mika Rhoden, 3950W Dartmouth Ave, Denver CO 80236	937-9476

## President's Message:

The January Members Meeting was well attended thanks to many members keeping their New Years Resolution to attend meetings. The phone conversation with Larry and John Gassman was outstanding and all are still marveling at their knowledge of Jack Benny. It was almost unbelievable when Larry was asked about a show and only given the date aired and he came back immediately with the name of the show and the plot. Phone conversations with others are planned for future meetings. Larry Weide's talk and tape about Major Armstrong was very interesting even with its sad ending. I thank Larry for the time and effort he put into this presentation. The RHAC players had their organizational meeting after the main meeting and my wife tells me it was very fruitful. Even the display of crystal sets at the meeting and Larry's early radios using Major Armstrong's inventions seemed to bring back some memories for members.

The March meeting will Highlight the Sherlock Holmes radio show. This is done partly due to the Sherlockians presentations of John Licht's

production of "The Final Problem". This will be presented at 10:00 AM February 21st at the Centura Senior Center, 1601 Lowell Blvd. Members of RHAC are welcome at this presentation. The March meeting will also have a Display of the RCA Nipper dogs. All who have any of these collectibles are encouraged to bring them and share with us. Other plans for the March meeting will be in the March newsletter but the RHAC players have plans and some presentation about care of tape and tape recorders is being planned.

The RHAC Players are having some meetings to practice their productions. Anyone who is interested and has not been contacted please call my wife, JoAnn, at either 303-343-7508 or 970-356-8862. She can give you all the latest details. Players are always needed and it looks like it's going to be a fun group.

As a final note to this Presidents Message, I would personally like to thank our Vice-President, Guy Albright and my wife, JoAnn for all the time and effort that they have spent. Guy for running phone lines in the Church of the Master so that we can do phone patches. JoAnn for jump starting the RHAC players.

## Sherlock Holmes Play - Live

Saturday Feb. 21st  
10:00 A.M.  
Centura Senior Center  
1601 Lowell Blvd W Entrance

Our friends in the Sherlockian club, "Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients" are putting on an original Sherlock Holmes play based on the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle story the "Final Problem." The script is written by our own John Licht. RHAC members are welcome to attend.

As seating is limited, plan to be there by 9:30 A.M. Hope to see you there!

## Sherlock Holmes

*From Tune In Yesterday.*

*Sherlock Holmes*, the story of the world's most famous detective, came to the radio October 20, 1930, as a Monday-night NBC thriller for George Washington Coffee. The remarkable hero of Sir

Arthur Conan Doyle's classics of deduction was well-suited to radio drama, and no character enjoyed greater exposure at the hands of more artists. It seemed that almost everyone wanted to try Holmes; many got the chance. Holmes had the distinction of being the most revived major character of the airwaves. The character was good for several revivals on several networks, with many characters playing the lead. A breakdown:

**1930-31** Holmes: William Gillette, later Clive Brooks.  
Watson: Leigh Lovell (through 1935)...

**1931-35** Holmes: Richard Gordon...

**1935-36** Holmes: Louis Hector.  
Watson: Harold West...

**1936** Holmes: Richard Gordon.  
Watson: Harold West...

**1939-46** Holmes: Basil Rathbone.  
Watson: Nigel Bruce...

**1946-47** Holmes: Tom Conway.  
Watson: Nigel Bruce...

**1947-49** Holmes: John Stanley.  
Watson: Alfred Shirley, Ian Martin, George Stelden...

**1949-50** Holmes: Ben Wright.  
Watson: Eric Snowden...

**1955** This one was produced for the BBC in London; it starred Sir John Gielgud as Holmes and Ralph Richardson as Watson. Orson Welles played Moriarty, Holmes' arch-enemy.

The wheels for a *Sherlock Holmes* of the air began turning in 1929. Edith Meiser, a young actress turned radio writer, was doggedly trying to sell the networks on a series built around Conan Doyle's forty-year-old mastermind, but radio drama was then in its earliest development and no one would try it. In 1930, she finally persuaded NBC to take the series she had adapted from the original stories. From then on until the final days of network radio, Holmes was never off the air for more than three consecutive years.

Although the shows varied greatly in casting and production, the format didn't stray far from that suggested so well by the Conan Doyle writings and established by Miss Meiser in that first run. Holmes' trusted assistant, Dr. Watson, always told the stories, answering questions put to him by staff announcers before and after the drama. In the early shows, Watson invited announcer Joseph Bell in to his study, where there was usually

"a blazing fire and a cup of George Washington Coffee" to ward off the cold. Watson (Leigh Lovell) then joined Bell in plugging the product with zesty "aaaahhhs," frequently challenging Bell to find a better cup of coffee anywhere. Miss Meiser's scripts, especially the early ones, followed Conan Doyle carefully. She wrote at home, accompanied only by her Scotch Terrier Doctor Watson, beginning with the short stories, then expanding into multi-part offerings of the novels. When the series outlasted the original material, she wrote new stories, using some incident from the master as a jumping-off point.

She wrote for *Holmes* through the late 1940's, tying together the isolated early runs with the consistency of her scripting. Many of her early scripts were redone in later runs. By the time announcer Knox Manning was interviewing a new Watson in 1939, the commercial plugs were gone from the story line, though the cheerful blaze was still crackling on the hearth.

The new Watson was of course Nigel Bruce, whose success with Basil Rathbone in the Sherlock Holmes films had prompted the return to the air. Rathbone, probably the best Holmes, is certainly best identified with the role. He was delightful as he reconstructed entire scenes with tiny scraps of

detail, perused Watson's bewilderment with quiet mirth and stated quite calmly, "Elementary, old chap, elementary!"

As in the movies, Watson was somewhat of a disappointment.

In the mass media he never approached Conan Doyle's intent - a man of high intelligence whose brain only seemed small in comparison to Holmes' deductive genius. The significance of the fragmentary clues were rightly overlooked by Watson and listeners alike. And when some listeners started complaining that the clues were *too* obscure, the producers had a problem. The try-to-guess-it crowd wanted an even chance with Holmes at solving the crime, and that would never have happened without reducing Watson (and the series) to Mike Clancy status.

But the films were hot, and the radio rating through the Rathbone-Bruce years hovered around 10. In 1943, with Owen Babbe doing the announcing, Edith Meiser was assisted in scripting by Leslie Charteris, author of *The Saint*, who did his *Holmes* work under the name of Bruce Taylor. By 1945, Harry Bartell was interviewing Watson, and the bulk of the writing was done by the team of Denis Green and Anthony Boucher.

Rathbone left the show in 1946 for an ill-advised fling at a silly series called *Tales of Fatima*, and new actors and writers worked in the new *Holmes* runs. Max Erlich, Howard Merrill, and Leonard Lee wrote the later shows.

Louis Hector, who enjoyed a brief run as Holmes in 1935, played arch-rival Moriarty through most of the run. Orson Welles had that part in the BBC-produced series that ran on NBC in 1955. In the radio shows, far more in the books, Moriarty became the all-evil enemy, the super-villain whose death clash with Holmes at Reichenbach Falls still fascinates Holmes buffs. But even after seventy years, the character of Holmes is what really turns the trick. He was truly a hero of the mind, a man who had no truck with invaders of unrefined concentration, including women. In the end, that was what pushed those weekly visits to fog-shrouded Baker Street among the high points of radio.

Editor's Note:

*Sherlock Holmes* also appeared on a recurring basis on BBC Radio from 1952 -1969. The earliest shows were presented for a young audience; later shows were aimed at an adult audience. Carleton Hobbs played Holmes and Norman Shelly played Watson.

## BOOK REVIEW

*THE GREAT AMERICAN BROADCAST - A Celebration of Radio's Golden Age* by Leonard Maltin.  
Dutton - Penguin Putnam Inc.,  
New York: 1997. \$36.95.

This slim volume (about 300 pages) is not a comprehensive history of Old-Time Radio, but rather anecdotal one. Leonard Maltin, a self-confessed OTR nut, started this project in 1985 and interviewed hundreds of actors, writers, announcers, sound effects people, sponsors, directors, and producers. Maltin also had access to interviews conducted by others.

These interviews form the heart of the book, and warm and vibrant heart it is. The reader finds out what it was like to be a member of a radio show cast, how the sound effects people worked their magic, how writers collaborated, and how directors put it all together.

The interview material and more than 100 photographs and illustrations make this book a celebration of radio that is informative and entertaining. *The Great American Broadcast* is a fine addition to anyone's OTR library.

Stewart Wright



## THE KINGS ROOST

Let's start out this month with advising that member Robert Hoban, 602 Canterbury trail, Mt. Juliet, TN Phone 615-758-5193 has had tapes from all the cassette libraries since last November. He has promised to return them on the January 13th, but none of them have been received by any of the libraries (OTHER CLUBS TAKE NOTE OF THIS GUY). Maybe if some members in that area would give him a call it would help him to remember the promise he made to return the tapes so other members could enjoy them.

We never received the tapes back from Chris Turner, a CNN employee, last address west 2675 Indian Lake Drive., Marietta, GA 30062. Phone 770-321-9899. We have several members that work for CNN, maybe one of them can persuade him to return club

tapes to us as he promised the last time we talked to him. (ED note if people continue this practice you will have to look at increased rental costs)

We are very fortunate that we do not have many such members that would keep club tapes and not allow the rest of our members enjoy them. Why do people do such things? It wouldn't take many members like that to destroy our club's libraries and stop the pleasure that our good members enjoy from the old shows.

Now on to cheerier things. This month's entries into the library start out with a reel of mostly "Beulah" that includes many delightful shows about Beulah and her boy-friend Bill and how they handle the various problems of the day.. That reel, #1304 is finished by a Walter Winchell and one track of Edward R. Morrow about the Cold War and Korea. Very fitting, his was followed by "People under Communism" produced by the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. After we recover from a good dose of propaganda, we are able to enjoy shows like "Bold Venture", "Count of Monte Cristo", and two delightful reels of "The Adventurers Club". This is a good mix all in one month, and should help remind us of just how

fortunate we are in this country and give us some entertaining adventure stories, given a grain of imagination to start you off. That's all it takes to make a good story of any day to day happening, imagination! I bet a lot of our members could set down and write a great story, if they only took the time to do it.

We are very pleased with the work our new newsletter editor, Stewart Wright, has done on this month's edition. It certainly takes a load off of Dick, and gives him more time to work on cassettes. If any of you have items of interest for the newsletter, please send them to Stewart so he can use them whenever they are needed. We really do not handle buy and sell ads, but will be glad to receive news items that our members can enjoy.

Meanwhile back at the farm, we have two new horses to keep us busy, and hope to have them quieted down and ready for spring trail rides. Our winter weather usually allows us to ride whenever we want, but this year has been too wet and icy to go out, so we just ride in the indoor arena and use the time for schooling. Maletha will sell her Missouri Foxtrotter and settle for using one of the new guys. They're nothing special, just ranch horses.

# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION of COLORADO

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**Please help in the preservation of old time radio by supporting legitimate organizations who strive to preserve and restore the programs and related information.**

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I do hereby agree to abide by the RHAC rules and agree not to sell or use library materials for monetary gain and *I will return the tapes on time.*

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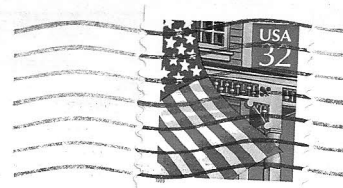
# SHERLOCK HOLMES

WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF THE MARCH MEETING  
THE REGULAR MEETING WILL BE AT 7:30 PM. THE PLACE IS AS USUAL THE  
CHURCH OF THE MASTER. EAST 17TH AVE AT FILBERT COURT, ENTER AT THE  
FILBERT COURT DOOR.

FILBERT COURT IS BETWEEN COLORADO BLVD. AND MONACO

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