



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

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The Hindenburg Disaster

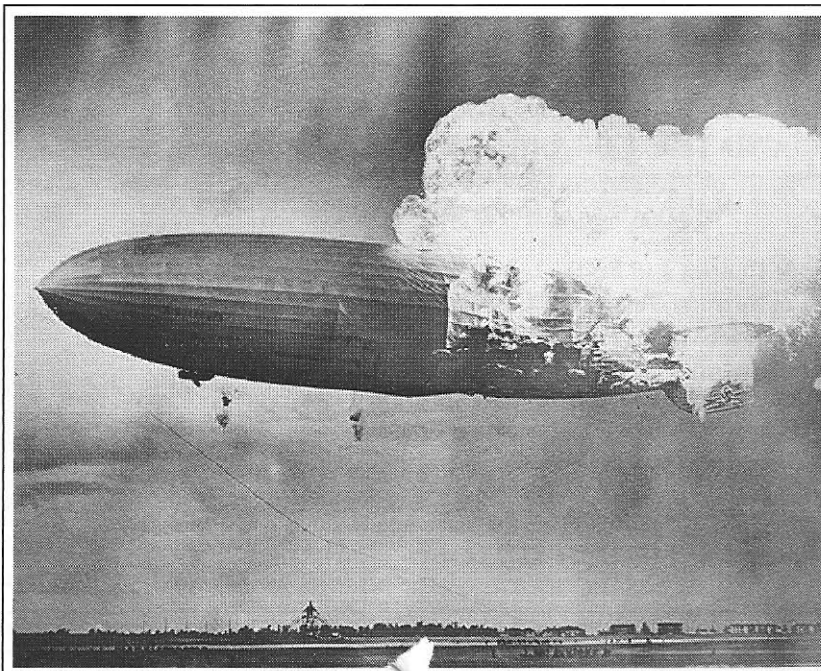
By Jack M. Richards

It was by pure luck that OTR enthusiasts have an audio (and visual) recording of one of the worst air disasters in history. On May 6, 1937 WLS, a Chicago NBC local affiliate, sent a young reporter to the field to cover the landing of the dirigible, The Hindenburg, at Lakehurst, New Jersey. As you know, as the airship was approaching its mooring mast after completing its twenty-first ocean crossing, it burst into flames. Killed in the accident were 13 passengers, 22 crewmen, and one member of the ground crew. As tragic as that was, the good news was that 12 passengers and 37 crewmen survived.

Reporter Herb Morrison and Engineer Charles Nehlsen were describing the near-perfect mooring when all hell broke loose. With a sobbing voice, Morrison describes perhaps the first eye-witnessed breaking news story in radio history.

"It's practically standing still now. They've dropped ropes out of the nose of the ship, and it's been taken hold of down on the field by a number of men. It's starting to rain again; the rain had slacked up a little bit. The back motors of the ship are just holding it, just enough to keep it from ..."

"It burst into flames!... It's afire and it's crashing! It's crashing... terrible! Oh, my! Get out of the way, please! It's burning, bursting into flames and is falling on the mooring mast, and all the folks agree that this is terrible. This is the worst of the worst catastrophes in the world!... There's smoke, and there's flames, now, and the frame is crashing to the ground, not quite to the mooring mast.... Oh, the humanity, and all the passengers screaming around here!"



The Hindenburg was intended to be the first of a fleet of dirigibles build by the Zeppelin Company of Germany. The Hinderburg was designated as LZ-129 and was massive. It still holds the record as the largest aircraft ever flown. Its largest diameter was just over 135 feet or
(Continued on Page 3)

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

PO BOX 1908, Englewood CO 80150 (303) 761-4139

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KNUS 710 AM	"Radio Revisited"	Weekdays, 10:00 - 11:00 PM
KRMA TV Channel 6	Secondary Audio Program (SAP), "Tribute to OTR"	Sunday, 2:00 PM
KUVO 89.3 FM	"Destination Freedom"	9:00 PM

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AND THE CD LIBRARY HAS A NEW LIBRARIAN**

Convention Schedules

28th Old-time Country Music Contest and Festival, Aug 30 - Sep 5, 2004 at Harrison County Fairgrounds in Missouri Valley, Iowa. For information contact Bob Everhart at Box 492, Walnut, IA 51577 (712) 762-4363, bobeverhart@yahoo.com

29th Friends of Old-time Radio Convention, Oct 21 - 24, 2004 at the Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ. For information contact Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 (203) 248-2887, JayHick@aol.com, or check our web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

SPERDVAC Convention, November 12 - 14, 2004 at the Hacienda Hotel at LAX. (airport) Bob Lynes will be the convention chair. 1 (877) 251-5771 or www.sperdvac.org

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RETURN WITH US NOW...

about two city lots wide. This is approximately the length of the blimps that you might see over a football stadium today. Its length was about 804 feet or longer than a city block. That is only 78 feet shorter than the HMS Titanic. The gas bag was separated into 16 cells holding over 7 million cubic feet of hydrogen. The gross lifting power was over 240 tons!



In a departure from conventional design, the hull also contained all accommodations. Only the control bridge was housed in the gondola section underneath the hull. Compared to an ocean liner, accommodations were quite modest but very grand for an aircraft. Passenger cabins were small, 78" by 66", and containing bunk cots (not wide enough to be called beds), a folding wash basin and writing table. The Hindenburg also boasted a dining room seating 50, a cocktail lounge, a library, an on-board shower, a sitting room featuring an aluminum grand piano, and a fireproofed smoking room.

The Hindenburg was originally designed to be filled with helium. As the only supplier of helium, the USA had a distrust of Nazi Germany at that time. Congress quickly passed the Helium Control Act, which made it impossible for the Zeppelin Company to obtain helium. Flammable hydrogen was used instead.



As with any disaster, controversy surrounded the event. Hydrogen is a colorless odorless gas and burns with little visible flame. As with natural gas today, the hydrogen was odorized but nobody

reported any smell prior to the accident. The FBI investigated and could find no evidence of sabotage much to the dissatisfaction of the German government.

As late as 1997, NASA investigated the disaster and concluded the cause was an electrical discharge between the interior structural members and the outer skin. The visible flames were due to the aluminized cellulose acetate butyrate used to dope the fabric covering. Aluminum is no longer in use as a doping compound.

The lighter-than-air craft industry never recovered from this tragic event.

From the Desk of
the Editor
by Carol Tiffany



Greetings from not-so-sunny Florida! We are still digging out from under downed trees and blown debris here. Your editor was among the lucky ones whose home is in an area on the periphery of hurricane Charley's path through central Florida, so our damage was minimal. However, both of my sisters live in the Orlando area and experienced 105 MPH winds and extensive damage to trees and roofs.

Coincidentally, our lead article for this newsletter concerns one of history's most famous disasters, the crash of the dirigible Hindenburg. Jack Richards has written a very interesting and comprehensive article about one of OTR's most famous live reports. Also in this issue is the conclusion of Bill Harris' article on the NBC chimes. An interesting sidelight is the fact the fourth NBC chime was used to alert NBC affiliate stations of the bulletin about the Hindenburg (RWUN Aug. 2004).

Upcoming in the October issue are a fascinating piece about "The Man Called X" and a very challenging (and somewhat sneaky) puzzle called "Ringaround". Until next month, good listening to all.

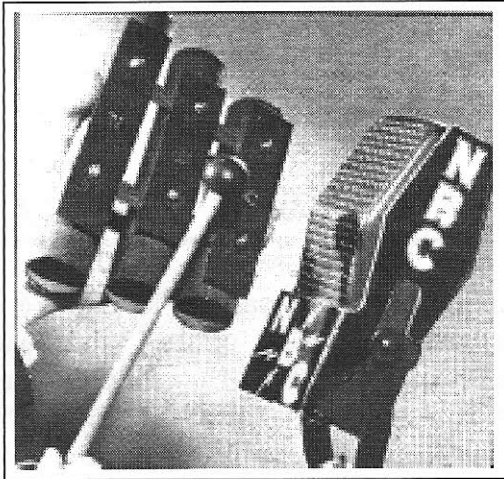
Carol

Three Famous Notes of Broadcasting History - The NBC Chimes (cont.)

by Bill Harris

mailto: nbcblue@hotmail.com

"When you hear the chime, it's NBC time"



"By Choice The Nation's Voice"

NBC Makes the Chimes Official...The First Audible Service Mark

In 1950, NBC filed with the U. S. Patent Office to make the chimes a registered service mark, the first such audible service mark to be filed with that office. The chimes were registered by the New York law firm of Fish and Neave. The following is from the Patent Office register;

Serial Number : 72-349496

Type of Mark: SERVICE MARK

Mark Drawing Code: (6) NO DRAWING

Description of Mark: THE MARK COMPRISES A SEQUENCE OF CHIME-LIKE MUSICAL NOTES WHICH ARE IN THE KEY OF C AND SOUNDED THE NOTES G, E, C, THE "G" BEING THE ONE JUST BELOW MIDDLE C, THE "E" THE ONE JUST ABOVE MIDDLE C, AND THE "C" BEING MIDDLE C, THEREBY TO IDENTIFY APPLICANT'S BROADCAST SERVICE.

Owner Name: NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC., THE

Owner Address: 30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA NEW YORK NEW YORK

10112 CORPORATION DELAWARE

NBC discontinued the use of the chimes in 1971. However, in November of 1976 the network began using the chimes once again following all broadcasts in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the network. The NBC radio network was sold to Westwood One in 1987, and today the NBC radio network no longer exists. The chimes haven't been heard on the radio in a number of years and are not likely to be heard there again except perhaps as a part of an old-time radio program broadcast... and so another piece of radio history fades into the past. However, the NBC Television network occasionally uses musical variations of the chimes at the top of the hour and some affiliate stations sound the chimes during local news/weather broadcasts.

The Rangertone Chimes Survive

I received an e-mail from an engineer at NBC in New York City regarding the Rangertone electronic chimes machine. Sometime in 1977, one of the last of the Rangertone chimes machine was found in the trash bin and was rescued by one of the engineers. The machine was restored to working order and is now in the NBC engineering department *model shop*. The unit was designed to be rack mounted and is approximately 15 inches high and 15 inches deep. Another of the chimes machines is in the possession of a private collector.

It seems that today few companies and corporations know or care about their history and how they got to be where they are today. I am glad this engineer at NBC had the foresight to rescue the chimes machine. The chimes were such a familiar part of radio and were, and possibly still are, one of the most recognized sound trademarks in the world. It is good to know that this important part of NBC network history has been reclaimed.

Your Very Own Set of NBC Chimes

In 1938 one could order his very own set of NBC hand chimes. These were sold as a promotional item by RCA /NBC. This was a three bar chime with the note bars G-E-C mounted in that order above sound tubes with N-B-C stamped on the bars and were painted brown. A 1938 issue of the RCA magazine *LISTEN* contained an advertisement for the chimes. The chimes were manufactured by the NuTone Chimes Company of Cincinnati. A picture of these chimes can be seen at the beginning of this article being held up to an NBC microphone. This might suggest that these chimes were used on the NBC

network, however, it is important to note that these chimes were simply promotional items and were never used to sound the chimes over the air. The tone of these chimes is quite "tinny" compared to the Deagan hand chimes or the electronic chimes. The photo was evidently made for promotional purposes only.

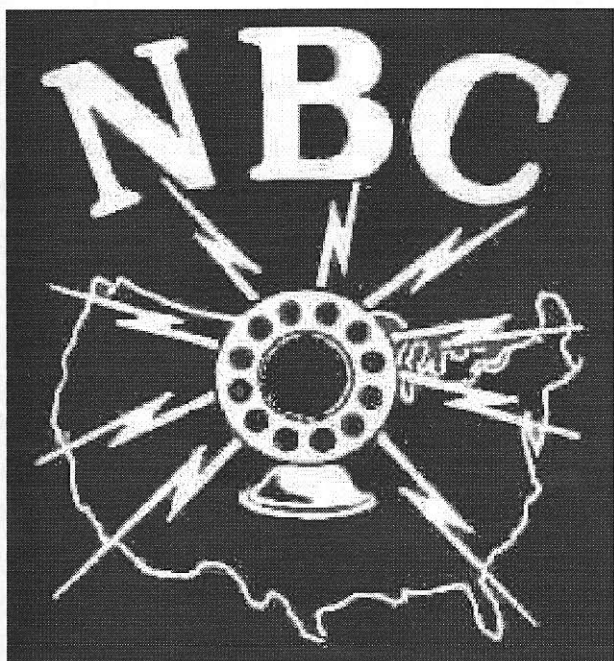
NBC presented sets of these promotional chimes to various railroads to be used as a dinner chime to signal when the dining car was open for service.

The Music Of The Chimes

There have been many songs written about the chimes and even concerts performed around the famous three notes. In 1935 Paul Whitman's band performed *Announcers Blues* that uses the chimes in a jazz arrangement. The tune was written by Frank Trumbauer, the band's saxophonist, and Harold Stokes. Composer Kurt Maier wrote a composition titled "The NBC Polka", around the three notes. The selection was first played on NBC-TV in 1949. For the 25th anniversary of NBC in 1951, a tribute to the chimes was written by Meredith Wilson, *The Three Chimes of Silver*.

Acknowledgment:

The original version of this article appeared in *The Reproducer*, the quarterly journal of the Vintage Radio & Phonograph Society, Inc., Irving, Texas <http://www.gbronline.com/radioguy/vrpsinfo.htm>, and in *Radio World* for December 25, 1996.



The Trivial Matter of OTR's Great Soap Opera Characters

Continuing dramas on the radio were the daytime entertainment staple during the Golden Age of Radio. Because many of these programs were sponsored by soap/detergent companies they became known as "Soap Operas". Housewives, who comprised the majority of soap opera listeners, became quite involved in their convoluted storylines and very knowledgeable about the characters and their relationships.

Almost everyone remembers some of the best-known soap characters such as "Ma" Perkins, Helen Trent, and Lorenzo Jones. However, can you identify the shows which featured the following lesser-known characters? (Extra credit if you can define their roles and/or their relationship to the main characters)

- 1) Nicholas Lacey
- 2) Carol Evans Martin Brent
- 3) Gil Whitney
- 4) Dr. Anthony Loring
- 5) Teddy Barbour Giddings
- 6) Lord Henry Brinthrope
- 7) Alfred Drake
- 8) Larry Noble
- 9) Papa David Solomon
- 10) Hope Winslow
- 11) Shuffle Shober
- 12) Joan Field Davis



“Why Old Time Radio is Important to Me”

by **Jacquie Welsh (age 14) Greeley, Co.**

About two years ago, a week before Christmas, I was putting up the Christmas decorations in my room and decided to listen to the radio. A little tired with the music on the FM band, I switched it over to AM. After twiddling around with the dial, I came upon KFKA and heard somebody yell out with what seemed like anger, "LEROY!" Which was followed by a little kid's voice angelically answering, "Yeah, Unc?" And so I was then wrapped up into the world of *The Great Gildersleeve*. So wrapped up that I forgot about my Christmas decorations.

Every week I tuned in to hear *The Great Gildersleeve*, *The Shadow*, *Musical Memories* and many others. I am also in the historical snippets that you have. My father is a history teacher at the university and it's really cool to hear those variations of major events. The shows also give me an idea of how life was in the 30s, 40s, and early 50s. I am interested in that period of time, and so I see that radio played a major role in people's lives. It gave them news, weather, and entertainment.

It has given me memories now, such as sitting on a cold Sunday night, bundled up in my room listening to *The Shadow*, or hearing about an old baseball game in the summer. This program gives me a feeling of relaxation that I can forget everything for the time being and listen to the actors as they make a story come alive in my head. I look forward to it every week and will for years to come.

KFKA “RADIO MEMORIES” in *Greeley Colorado held an essay contest a few years ago. Some of the winning essays were printed in RWUN in the spring of 2001 with the permission of Dick Williamson of Radio Memories. This entry in particular was interesting because it gives us the viewpoint of a 21st century teenager. Look especially for a 14 year-old's version of "The Theater of the Mind".*

Answers to the Great Soap Opera Character puzzle

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 12) | Joan Field Davis - heroine and title character of <i>When a Girl Marries</i> |
| 11) | Shuffle Shober - 27-year friend, confidant, and lumberyard Business partner of <i>Ma Perkins</i> |
| 10) | Hope Winslow - fictional host/narrator of <i>Whispering Streets</i> |
| 9) | Papa David Solomon - Kindly old bookseller who adopted heroine Carol "Chichi" Conrad on <i>Life Can be Beautiful</i> |
| 8) | Larry Noble - Matinee idol husband of heroine Mary Noble on <i>Backstage Wife</i> |
| 7) | Alfred Drake - Nora's long-lost father on <i>This is Nora Drake</i> |
| 6) | Lord Henry Brinthrope - the "wealthy and titled Englishman" who married <i>Our Gal Sunday</i> |
| 5) | Teddy Barbour Giddings - adopted daughter of Paul Barbour on <i>One Man's Family</i> |
| 4) | Dr. Anthony Loring - true love of Ellen Brown in <i>Young Wilder Brown</i> who was involved in one of the most tortuous and convoluted courtships in radio history |
| 3) | Gil Whitney - long-time (18 years) suitor of Helen Trent on <i>The Romance of Helen Trent</i> |
| 2) | Carol Evans Martin Brent - married Dr. Jim Brent on <i>The Road of Life</i> |
| 1) | Nicholas Lacey - Claudia Barbour's second husband on <i>One Man's Family</i> |