



# RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION  
COLORADO



Volume 29, Number 10

October, 2004

## THE MAN CALLED X

by  
Dr. Charles Beckett

*“Where ever there’s mystery, intrigue, romance, in all the strange and dangerous places of the world, there you’ll find the man called X.”*

So began each episode of this espionage adventure series starring the suave British actor Herbert Marshall in the role of Ken Thurston, “the man called X.” He was frequently accompanied by an unwelcome -- but sometimes useful-- sidekick, Pegon Zeldschmidt, a weasely man of questionable background, reputation, and ethnic origin. Pegon was played ably by seasoned character actor Leon Belasco.

Initially, the show was produced as an FBI adventure series, but the role of our hero evolved into that of an international intelligence agent. He became “the man who crosses the ocean as readily as you and I cross town. He is the man who travels today as you and I will travel tomorrow. He is the man who fights today’s war in his unique fashion, so

that tomorrow’s peace will make the world a neighborhood for all of us.”

In his assignments, Ken Thurston traveled to many exotic places around the world, frequently becoming involved with women of questionable background, purpose and affiliation. Pegon was occasionally sent with him on assignments by his bureau chief, because of Pegon’s language skills, local contacts, or knowledge of the geographical area of assignment. Other times, the two’s paths crossed accidentally -- or not so accidentally. Pegon had a penchant for three things -- personal financial gain, how he could otherwise benefit from any situation, and maintaining a fine line of staying on the right side of the law.

Thurston’s adventures took him to such faraway and exotic places as Hawaii, Rio, Manila, Alaska, Tahiti, Naples, Macassar, Shalakar, the Alps, Indonesia, Zhenapon, Syria, Japan, India, Gyatil, Monte Carlo, the Amazon, Vienna, Venezuela, the Casbah, Turkey, Italy, Cabal, and Chicago. Yes, Chicago!

In “The Big Lie”, broadcast October 1, 1951, Thurston pursues foreign agents engaged in operating a rumor factory somewhere in Chicago -- “organized to



Herbert Marshall 1890 - 1966

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# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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

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

## Old-Time Radio is Alive and Well in Colorado!

KEZW 1430 AM	"When Radio Was", with Stan Frieberg	Weekdays, 7:00 - 8:00 PM
KFKA 1310 AM	"Radio Memories" (Greeley)	Sunday, 6:00 - 12:00 PM
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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Vice-President:	Dick King	900 W. Quincy Ave. Englewood, CO 80110	(303) 761-4139	<a href="mailto:dickking@earthlink.net">dickking@earthlink.net</a>
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Logs & Scripts:	Fred Hinz	c/o RHAC PO Box 1908	Englewood, CO 80150	
Open Reel Tape:	Maletha King	900 W. Quincy Ave.	Englewood, CO 80110	
Cassette Tape:				
#1 (1-499)	*** TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE ***			
#2 (500-999)	David Gatch	PO Box 70	Glen Haven, CO 80532	(970) 577-0805
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**PLEASE NOTE THAT CASSETTE LIBRARY #1 IS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE AND THE CD LIBRARY HAS A NEW LIBRARIAN**

### Convention Schedules

**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](mailto: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](http://www.sperdvac.org)

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October, 2004

disrupt civilian and military morale and to hamper our defense program." He is successful in capturing or disposing of all the evil doers -- including Ann Rogers, (played innocently by Shirley Mitchell), an unlikely adversary -- a librarian and daughter of a wealthy industrialist.

At the show's climax, Pegon says to Thurston, "I don't get it. If her family's got yachts and stuff, what was she doing mixed up in a racket like this?" Thurston replies, "That's the puzzling thing about people like her. With everything this country gives to them, they still sell themselves on the idea that another country is better. My country realizes that this is the biggest lie of them all."

In addition to starring on *The Man Called X* series, Herbert Marshall had a variety of other radio shows and series to his credit. Some of these included being the master of ceremonies on *Hollywood Hotel*, and starring in other series such as *The Hollywood Playhouse*, *Hollywood Startime*, *NBC University Theater*, *The New Old Gold Show* (Lucille Ball's first radio series), *Skippy Hollywood Theater*, and *Suspense* (in which he played the lead in "The Lodger".) In addition, he occasionally appeared on other programs. He was master of ceremonies on Jack Benny's program (February 2, 1941), when Benny was delayed in New York and couldn't get back to Los Angeles in time for the show. And he was a guest on the next two Benny shows. In addition to his radio career, Marshall enjoyed successful stage and movie careers.

Herbert Marshall (known as Bart to his friends), was born May 23, 1890, in London, England. His first job was as an apprentice with a London accounting firm. He became interested in acting while working as business manager for a theatrical impresario. He made his acting debut in 1911 in Brighton, England, and soon began appearing on the London stage. He had lost a leg in World War I, but disguised it so well that the general public was not aware of it. By the 1920s, he was commuting between London and New York, making stage appearances on both sides of the Atlantic. He and his first wife, actress Edna Best, appeared in many stage productions together.

Marshall expanded his acting career in 1927 when he made his first movie, "Mumsie," in England, in 1927. He made several other English films through 1933. His first important screen appearance was "The Letter", opposite English actress Jeanne Engels, in 1929. In 1932, Marshall

moved to Hollywood and concentrated on his career as a film actor. He usually was cast as a mature leading man. But, with advancing age, he evolved seamlessly into a fine character actor and enjoyed a long and successful career in that role. He had a droll sense of humor and occasionally played light comedy parts. In all, he made over 70 movies. Some of his better known American films include *'Til We Meet Again*, *The Letter* (this time opposite Bette Davis), *A Bill of Divorcement*, *The Little Foxes*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, *Andy Hardy's Blond Trouble*, *The Enchanted Cottage*, *Crack Up*, *The Razor's Edge*, *Duel in the Sun*, *The Fly*, *Midnight Lace*, and *The List of Adrian Messenger*.

After his divorce from Edna Best in 1940, Marshall married four more times. He died of a heart attack in 1966, at age 76.

Pegon Zeldschmidt, Ken Thurston's pesky side partner in the series, was played by journeyman character actor Leon Belasco, a very busy, but little known performer. He had careers as an orchestra leader; and as a radio, TV, and movie actor. He was born Leonid Simeonovich Berlinsky in Odessa, Ukraine, Russia on October 11, 1902. Besides being an orchestra leader on the *Morton Downey* and *Phil Baker* shows, and his role in *The Man Called X*, his radio credits are sketchy. However, his TV and film credentials are considerable. He mainly played comic or eccentric Slavs and ethnic types. Some of Belasco's many TV appearances included *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Twilight Zone*. He also appeared in over 60 movies, including *My Sister Eileen*, *Woman of the Year*, *Call me Madam*, *Son of Ali Baba*, *Little Egypt*, *Ma and Pa Kettle go to Town*, *Casablanca*, *Road to Morocco*, *The Mummy's Hand*, and *Topper Takes a Trip* -- to name only a few. Many of his film appearances were minor roles or uncredited walk-ons. He died June 1, 1988, in Orange, California, of complications from a stroke.

John McIntire was the announcer during the initial season of *The Man Called X*. He was followed by several others during the show's eight year run -- including *Wendell Niles* (*The Bob Hope Show*, *Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show*, *Fitch Band Wagon*, *When a Girl Marries* -- a soap opera); and *Hal Gibney* (*Dragnet*, *The Six Shooter*, *Tales of the Texas Rangers*), and others.

McIntire's other announcing stints included the *Tarzan* (1934-36), and *This Is My Best* (1945) series. However, he is better known as a versatile character

actor than as an announcer. He enjoyed a lengthy and successful radio acting career, appearing on programs such as *The Adventures of Bill Lane* (as Bill Lane), *The Adventures of Sam Spade* (Lt. Dundee), *The Cavalcade of America*, *Crime Doctor*, *Glamour Manor* (Hamlet Mantel), *Gunsmoke*, *I Love a Mystery*, *I Love Adventure*, *The Lineup*, *The March of Time*, *Meet Mr. Meek* (as "sour and cynical Mr. Apple"); and *We, the Abbotts* (John Abbott). He also had been a stage actor, and was considered one of television's and film's most durable and capable character actors. Possibly his best remembered TV roles were in *Wagon Train*, *Naked City*, and *The Virginian*. He often appeared in movies with his wife, Jeanette Nolan. Some of his more notable movie credits include *Call Northside 777*, *Down to the Sea in Ships*, *Winchester 73*, *Asphalt Jungle*, *A Lion in the Streets*, *The Spoilers*, *Psycho*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *Rooster Cogburn*. During his movie career, he acted in more than 40 films.

The *Man Called X* series also boasted a stellar supporting cast of Hollywood regulars; including Parley Baer, Joan Banks, Tony Barrett, Harry Bartell, Gloria Blondell, William Conrad, Hans Conreid, Paul Freez, Barbara Fuller, Harry Lang, Peter Leeds, Sheldon Leonard, Howard McNear, Lou Merrill, Gerald Mohr, George Niese, Jeanette Nolan, Dan O'Herlihy, Paul Richards, B.J. Thompson, Peggy Weber, Will Wright, Stanley Waxman, Carlton Young, and others.

Music on the show was furnished at various times by Gordon Jenkins (whose other radio credits included *The Al Jolson*, *Bob Burns*, *Dick Haymes*, *Dinah Shore*, *Judy Canova* shows); Claude Sweeten (*Blue Mountain Jamboree*, *Favorite Story*, *The Great Gildersleeve*); Felix Mills (*Burns and Allen*, *Chandu the Magician*, *The Cinnamon Bear*, *Hollywood Premier*, *Lum and Abner*, *The Mickey Mouse Theater of the Air*, *Tommy Riggs* and *Betty Lou*); Johnny Green (*Blondie* and the early *Jell-O Programs* starring *Jack Benny*), and Milton Charles (*Tapestry of Life*, *Dr. Christian*, *The Roy Rogers Show*, *Straight Arrow*).

Directors at various times on the series included William N. Robinson, Jack Johnstone, and Devere (Dee) Englebach. Of the three, Johnstone is probably the best known. He was a writer on the *Adventures of Superman*, and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* series; writer, producer and director on the *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* series; and directed the *Six*

*Shooter western* series, starring James Stewart. Robinson's other directing credits included episodes of *Escape*, *Life with Luigi*, and *the Saint*. Englebach's directorial resume included *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, *Rogue's Gallery*, and this is *Nora Drake* (a soap opera).

The *Man Called X* was written by Milton Merlin (*The Halls of Ivy*) and Sidney Marshall (*Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*), among others.

At the conclusion of "*The Blue Unicorn*", broadcast March 31, 1951, Ken Thurston summed up his philosophy and sense of purpose. "It's the same old story and the same old game -- anything for a buck. It's being played all over the world, too; with no umpire, no rules, by people who aren't worth the powder to.... Well, we just got to keep on winning, that's all. We got to keep on winning!"

The *Man Called X* first aired July 10, 1944, and ran until May 20, 1952, with several continuity breaks in between. During its broadcast history, the show aired alternately between networks -- being broadcast during three different periods of time on CBS and twice on NBC -- with various day and time slot changes on both.

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**LOCKHEED**  
presents  
**HERBERT MARSHALL**  
IN PERSON  
in "**THE MAN CALLED X**"  
the new comedy-mystery series  
DIRECTED BY W.M. N. ROBINSON  
MUSIC BY GORDON JENKINS

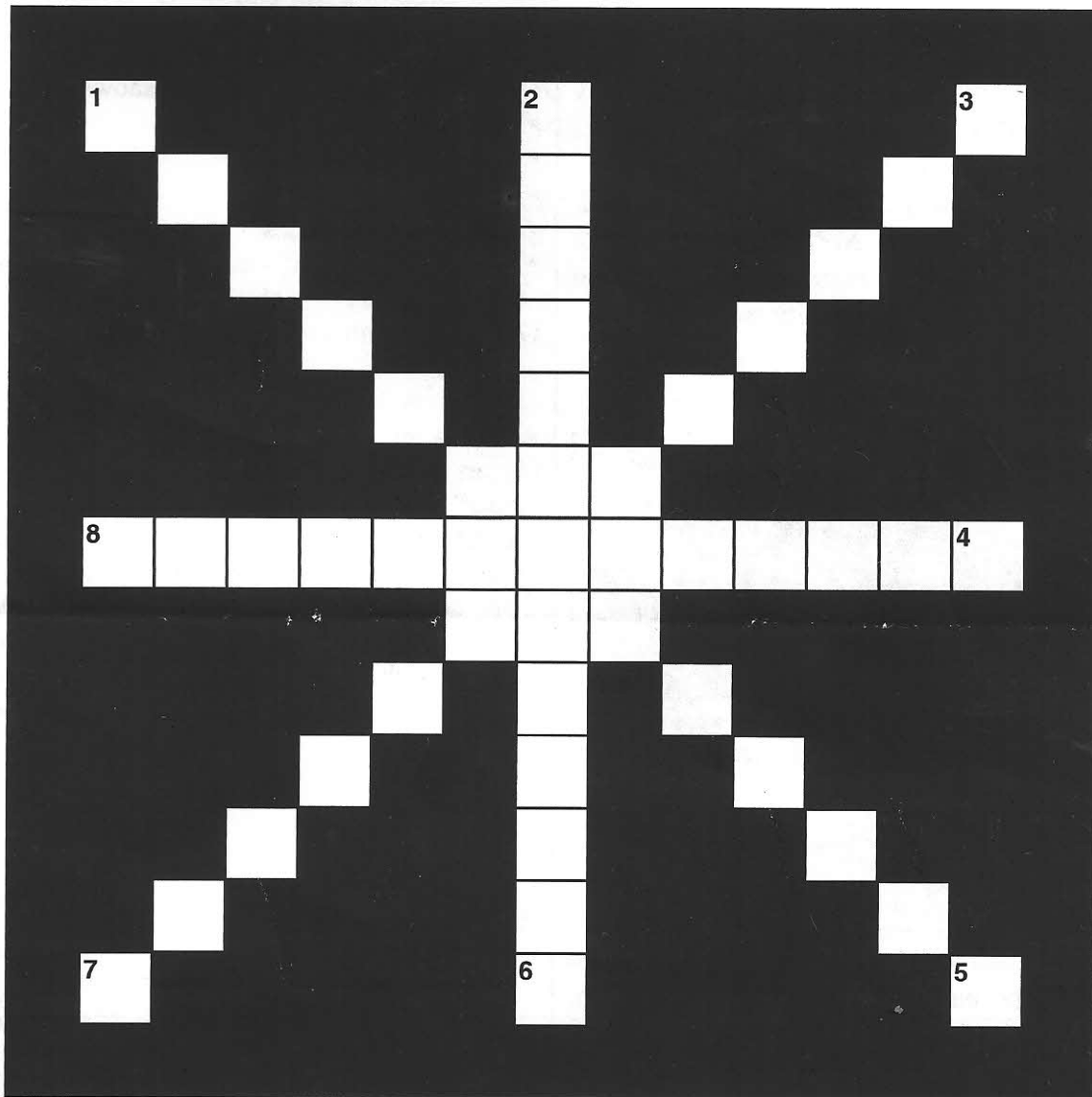
**TONIGHT** AND EVERY MONDAY  
ON C.B.S. NETWORK

**9:30-10:00 P.M. WCAU**

# RINGAROUND

By Jack M. Richards

Using the given clues, build the words from outside to the center. The outer ring of letters will spell an OTR show which was first heard on the air in 1940.



### Clues:

1. The way into or out of
2. To pound sense into a kid's head
3. To go out of control
4. Very, very big
5. Agree with
6. Give loving care
7. OTR village, Point \_\_\_\_\_
8. Cousin to a banjo (Hawaii)

From the Desk of  
the Editor  
by Carol Tiffany



Greetings from Hurricane Central! Fortunately, we are still here, bowed but unbroken. Sunny Florida has had quite a siege, and most of us have suffered damage of some sort ranging from relatively minor (trees down or missing limbs) to major (trees through roof, porch blown off, flooding, etc.). Almost all the folks in our part of Florida (Brevard County) have had power and/or water out for many days. Today, 17 days after Frances went through, your editor still has spotty phone service at best.

We had approximately 35 hours of sustained 75 MPH winds here, with 100+ MPH gusts. Shingles, porches, and trees were the main casualties. While many trees snapped off, the majority were uprooted. (please see picture of my neighbor's house on the corner)



However, as bad as it has seemed, Ivan has done much worse in the panhandle of Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. I think Colorado is a much better (and SAFER) place to be living.

I hope to be spending October cleaning up and listening to all my Halloween OTR tapes. Enjoy this issue of RWUN (esp. the challenging Ringaround Puzzle from Jack Richards) and look forward to an interesting issue in November.

Good Listening to All...



**New in the Tape  
Library**

by Dick and Maletha King

Due to scheduling, and other matters beyond our control, we were not able to report last month's new library entries in the newsletter. However, the insert in the September newsletter does correctly indicate all the new shows. Just so that everyone is up to date, here are the September entries;

- "Lux Radio Theater" - forty shows
- "World in Review"
- "Best Plays"
- "The Clock"
- "So the Story Goes"
- "Lum and Abner" - one reel, continuing from #1400

On to this month's news ...

Fall is here, and as we make plans for indoor activities, we should think about turning on our cassette players and listening to this month's entries of "Lum and Abner". These are shows that reflect a simpler way of life, although we doubt that it was ever *really* as simple as these shows might suggest. For those of you who want more action, this is probably not the show for you. However, it would do you well to settle down and listen to some of the simple, home spun philosophy of L & N. They have a way of growing on you. That's why they were on the air for so many years.

The ring word is **Superman**  
(I never said it started at number one)

1. Passage
2. Educate
3. Rampage
4. Massive
5. Approve
6. Nurture
7. Sublime
8. Ukulele

Ringaround Puzzle Answers