



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 33, Number 9

September, 2008

Close, but no cigar. I'm talking about getting our revered publisher, Carol Tiffany, back on the job. The healing from her leg surgery has taken a little longer than expected. So, this month we'll once again run some of the more interesting articles from previous issues of RWUN.

Command Performance

From RWUN 12/1991
Reprint from Radio Life 5/17/1942

"So important and expensive that only Uncle Sam is big enough to sponsor it!"



That was the comment Bob Burns made of a special broadcast on which he and a dozen other top-flight Hollywood stars had just appeared.

The drawlin' Arkansan who parlayed a couple of plumbing fixtures into a bazooka and fame and fortune via the airwaves was speaking of "Command Performance, U.S.A" - radio's newest and most pretentious program.

"Command Performance" is little known to U.S. Radio listeners because it is not heard on the regular broadcast band. But to the hundreds of thousands of American fighting men stationed throughout the world "Command Performance" is their radio show.

"Command Performance" is unique in broadcast annals for many reasons. Designed solely to entertain America's armed forces on the far-flung front line of World War II, "Command" not only presents the top-ranking stars of the entertainment world at the specific request of U.S. soldiers, sailors and marines, but it is not at all unusual to tune in the show on one of the short wave stations which rebroadcasts the transcriptions of "Command" to all parts of the world and hear the singing of birds, the barking of a dog, or the sound of the jack-pot on a slot-machine.

The letters from Uncle Sam's men in uniform, requesting their favorite stars, their favorite songs, the sounds that remind them of their homeland, thus become an integral part of "Command Performance" broadcasts.

One of the recent requests answered via "Command Performance" was that of an engine department crew member of an army mine planter somewhere in the south Pacific. He said:

"Before you turn all those slot machines into scrap iron for the war effort, could you get hold of one slot machine, and just let me hear what it

Continued on Page 3

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" Weekdays, 7:00 - 8:00 PM
Pirate Radio 104.7 FM and www.pirate1047.com, "Radio Memories" (Greeley) Sunday, 6:30 - 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

**Hear RHAC on the web, 4th Saturday of every month, at 9:30pm Mountain time at;
<http://www.yesterdayusa.com/saturdaylive.htm>**

**RHAC Web Site - <http://www.rhac.org> RHAC Email - rhac_otr@yahoo.com
RHAC POD-Cast of Internet Shows - www.rhac.libsyn.com - any day, any time!**

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 1st year with \$15.00 for renewal. Each member in good standing has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below. Any mention of a product in **RETURN WITH US NOW...** does not constitute an endorsement by RHAC.

President: Larry Weide
Vice-President: *Open Position*
Secretary: *Open Position*
Treasurer: Maletha King
Newsletter: Carol Tiffany 1394 Golf Vista Court N. E., Palm Bay, FL 32905 (321) 723-7803 ctiffany@worldnet.att.net
Talking Newsletter B.J. George Email - bj39@tds.net Talking Newsletter egroup - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rwun>
Membership: Maletha King PO BOX 1908 Englewood, CO 80150
Tape Donations: Bill McCracken
Herb Duniven
Directors at Large: Herb Duniven

LIBRARIES

Reference Material:	Bill McCracken			
Logs & Scripts:	Fred Hinz			
Open Reel Tape:	Maletha King	900 W. Quincy Ave.	Englewood, CO 80110	
Cassette Tape:				
#1 (1-499)	David Gatch	PO Box 70	Glen Haven, CO 80532	(970) 577-0805
#2 (500-999)	David Gatch	PO Box 70	Glen Haven, CO 80532	(970) 577-0805
#3 (1000-2000)	Dave Logan	5557 S. Sherman Cir.	Littleton, CO 80121	(303) 730-1430
#4 (5001-up)	Mika Rhoden	3950 W. Dartmouth Ave.	Denver, CO 80236	(303) 937-9476
CD Library:	Thomas Woessner	9693 W. Euclid Dr	Littleton CO 80123-3192	(303) 936-4643

2008 Convention Schedules

33rd Friends of Old-time Radio Convention, Oct 23 – 26, 2008 Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For info: Jay Hickerson, 27436 Desert Rose Ct, Leesburg, FL 34748 (352) 727-6731, JayHick@aol.com, web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

CREDIT: This publication may, under license, use objects and/or images from one or more of the following: Lotus Wordpro97 and Corel Gallery. These software packages are protected by the copyright laws of the United States, Canada and elsewhere. This publication is copywrited 2008, with all rights reserved.

sounds like when three bars come up and it rains nickels? I played those machines for 10 years and never hit the jack-pot."

So, in answer to that seaman's "command" a slot-machine co-starred with Fibber McGee and Molly, Red Skelton, Harriet Hilliard, Ozzie Nelson, Gloria Jean, Virginia O'Brien, Billy Mills, Truman Bradley and Tito Guizar on an edition of "Command Performance."



Adolphe Menjou, acting as master of ceremonies for the array of celebrities, dropped a specially made slug into the slot machine and pulled the handle which brought forth a stream of nickels in a perfect jack-pot.

Explained Menjou for the benefit of the seaman listening somewhere in the south Pacific:

"That was a slot machine jack-pot. Those things that just fell out of it were slugs, borrowed from Rochester, who found them in his pay envelope last Saturday. I'd like to mention in passing, S.J.C. (the seaman's initials) that the machine you're playing out there now is a much bigger one than the one we've just demonstrated. We expect you and your buddies to keep right on playing it until three lemons come up. I think you know who those three lemons are!"

Other unusual requests answered via "Command Performance" have included the grease-monkey in far away Trinidad who was lonesome for the birds that used to wake him up on the farm back in Indiana. NBC engineers recorded the singing of

the birds, and Fred Allen played the record during his appearance on one of the "Command" broadcasts produced in New York. Fred thoughtfully added the famous Bronx Bird for up-town New Yorkers who might be lonesome for it. The latter was dedicated in the script to a former paper-hanger in Berlin, initials A.H.

Then there was the sergeant in Northern Ireland who told "Command" in a letter that he was lonesome for the voice of his dog. "Queenie" was brought to the "Command" microphone to bark her prettiest for her master at the behest of Kate Smith.

"Command Performance", the brainchild of tall, energetic Glenn Wheaton of the Radio Branch of the War Department, is produced twice weekly in half-hour packages by the U.S. War Department's newest recruit from the ranks of big-time commercial radio, Vick Knight.

Knight, brainy, dynamic mite (he stands 5-ft. 5-in., weighs 142 lbs.) who during the past decade has produced and directed the shows of Eddie Cantor, Kate Smith, Rudy Vallee and more recently, Fred Allen's Texaco Star Theater, started guiding the destinies of "Command Performance" several months ago in New York while he was handling the Fred Allen Hour.

After putting the first few shows together, Knight became so engrossed in the **patriotic venture that he asked Allen for a release from his contract in order to** join the War Department in a full-time capacity when the origination point of "Command" was moved to Hollywood.

One of radio's highest paid producer-directors (his contract with Allen called for a **weekly paycheck of close to \$1,000**), **Knight receives no compensation for his tireless** efforts in bringing to the "Command" microphone the world's greatest "names" at the request of the boys in uniform. Vick is not even a "dollar-a-year man" as he pays all his expenses out of his own pocket.

"Command Performance" has no budget, and pays no salaries to musicians, arrangers, conductors, copyists, stars, the National Broadcasting Company or CBS, all of whom contribute their efforts and facilities.

Through the cooperation of the Los Angeles Musicians Union, Local 47, musicians of radio's most famous orchestras are able to play without remuneration. Each week Vick Knight, aided by the Hollywood Victory Committee, is able to get top personalities to appear on the show.



Only voice heard regularly on "Command" is that of Paul Douglas, tangy-toned sports commentator, who opens the show and signs it. Douglas was selected to announce the series because his voice has a certain timbre that registers as well on the short wave as the long wave band.

There is no doubt that "Command Performance" is the most expensive radio production ever put on wax. That is, if the talent and facilities were paid for instead of being "on the cuff."

The average talent costs alone per broadcast would amount to \$50,000 and upwards, depending on the calibre of the stars performing. The transcribing of the programs and the short-wave transmission facilities are other items which would run the costs up toward the \$75,000 mark.

So great is the mail streaming into "Command Performance, U.S.A." every week from fighting men all over the globe that the programs have become the most important radio effort of the entertainment industry. Stars leap to appear on the show. It has become a coveted **honor** to say word or sing a song on "Command."

Sammy Kaye's "Command" was the request of Private M.R., stationed at Josey Field, Puerto Rico, in which he said, "I would like to request

Sammy Kaye to sing and play 'Dear Mom' please... for my own dear Mom. Thank you."

"Command Performance" is one radio program with no options. It's booked solid, for the duration.

As announcer Paul Douglas barks it as he signs each edition of "Command Performance."

"This week and every week, 'till it's over, over there!"

Did You Know Department "Command Performance" Highlights

On Christmas eve, 1942, a "Command Performance" was played in the United States, on all four networks.

In 1945, an all-star cast assembled for an off-the-cuff piece of insanity called "Dick Tracy In B-Flat," or "For Goodness Sakes, Isn't He Ever Going To Marry Tess Trueheart?" The cast included:

Dick Tracy:	Bing Crosby
Tess Trueheart:	Dinah Shore
Old Judge Hooper:	Harry Von Zell
Chief of Police:	Jerry Colonna
Flat Top:	Bob Hope
Gravel Gertie:	Cass Daley
Vitamin Flintheart:	Frank Morgan
The Mole:	Jimmy Durante
Snowflake:	Judy Garland
Shaky:	Frank Sinatra
The Summer Sisters:	The Andrews Sisters

We'll never hear the likes of that again!

Tape Recipe: Heat and Serve

RWUN 1/1992

Reprint from Radio World 12/11/1991

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. Sound archivists at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNCCH) recently cooked up a scheme to save valuable recordings.

Faced with rapidly deteriorating sound recordings of some of North Carolina's most distinguished folk musicians and storytellers, they baked 50 tapes for four hours at 122° Fahrenheit.

The oven technique was used on 1970s' and 1980s' vintage reel-to-reel tapes, enabling the archivists to preserve one-of-a-kind recordings documenting historical vocalists and the rich African-American traditions of Coastal and Piedmont North Carolina.

Among the recordings preserved were those by popular singers Shirley Ceasar and Elizabeth Cotten. Field recordings of Southern folklore, in particular the rhymed stories passed on through generations of African-Americans, also were preserved by the baking technique.

Advanced deterioration

"We realized that we had a body of important material, including some really fine performances, that was showing advanced *forms of* deterioration," said Mike Casey, sound and image librarian at UNCCH library's Manuscripts Department. "We had to find some way of saving it for future generations"

Funded by a grant, the University's manuscript department, which archives more than 40,000 recordings and some 10 million manuscripts, began seeking methods to restore the recordings long enough to re-record them onto long-term storage media.

Challenging the groups efforts was a problem common of mastering-quality tapes made in the 1970s and 1980s. As Casey explained, "The binding system breaks down. When you try to play the tapes, the lubricant material migrates to the surface. And sometimes, the binder material comes to the surface."

This shedding of binding material - the chemical agents that "glue" layers of tape material together - significantly hinders tape performance.

Says Casey, "Tape-to-head contact becomes very poor and the recording you make is not going to be

very good. Sometimes the tape doesn't even play because it is shedding so bad " Or worse, he adds, "they squeal."

Several remedies were tried to get the tapes to at least make one pass through for re-recording, including coating them with a silicone lubricant. Unfortunately, Casey noted, "We could never get (the silicone) to hold onto a tape for full a pass'

The archivists also tried re-recording cuts onto various tape machines, finding some success with those that had fewer tape guides and parts in contact with the tape. "That helped some ' Casey said, "but it wasn't a foolproof method and we didn't exactly have a whole run' of machines to work with"

After repeated attempts at these more conventional methods, the archivists decided to try the unorthodox approach of baking the tapes. The technique promised success by melting the tapes' bindings slowly at a low temperature so that, when cooled, tape bindings would reformulate.

We were aware ...

"We were aware that the technique was used by some tape manufacturers. I had heard talk of it at various conferences," Casey said.

Gathering as much information as possible on the technique, the archivists constructed a small baking "oven" made out of cardboard. For the heating element, they purchased a hair dryer from a professional salon "with the largest number of settings as possible because we didn't know what we would need:'

Initial experiments were carried out on throwaway tapes in the same binding condition, which were donated by WUNC, the University's FM station.

With these tapes, the group quickly discovered an effective temperature range. "If you get into the 130 degrees and above range, then there's the danger of melting the (tape) plastic. Lower temperatures won't do it" Casey said.

In the final experiment, archivists spaced tapes in individual hubs to circulate heat uniformly on all sides. With the exception of two tapes that had to be re-cooked for an as-yet unexplained reason, the baking technique proved to be effective for all 50 one-of-a-kind tapes. "We were 100 percent effective," Casey said.

He is not sure how long the technique can preserve tapes for replay, however experiments on the tapes donated by WUNC-FM show that transfer should occur within a month. Taking no chances, the group re-recorded the 50 tapes onto current-generation master tape for long-term storage.



New in the Tape and CD Libraries

by Maletha King

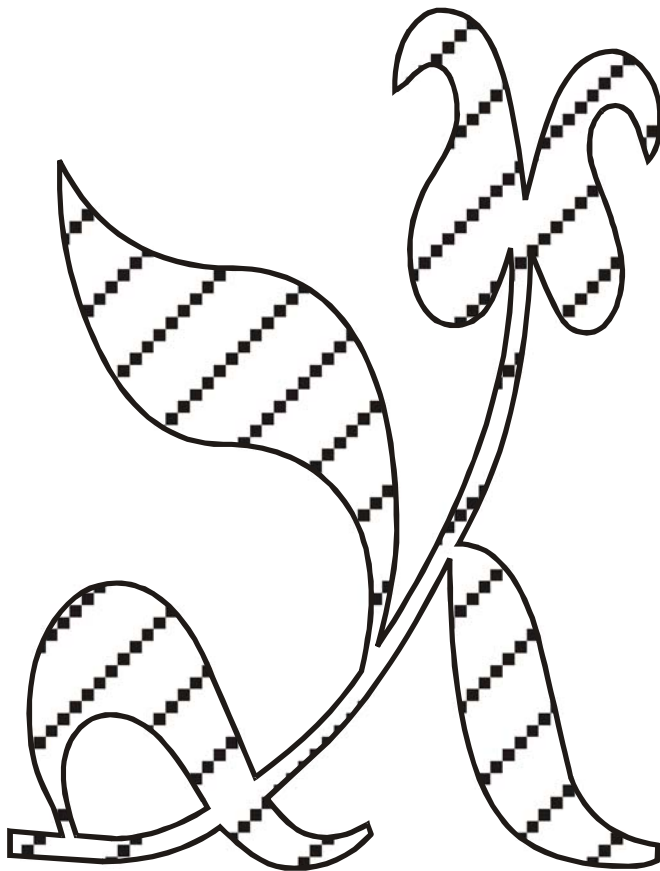
This month your cassette and reel-to-reel libraries are offering over six reels of “Cavalcade of America” plus some other shows that we feel you are sure to enjoy.

A number of you have been asking about this: We now can offer a new and up to date set of catalogs for those of you that need them. Although they cost more to produce now, we can still offer them for the price of \$25.00 each. Please remit your order, with a check made out to “RHAC”, to the address at the top of page 2.

Although it has been hot in the Denver area, time sure does pass quickly with listening to some of these great shows.

I often remember a neighbor that used to say that it may be the fourth of July, but tomorrow it snows.

How true.



RETURN WITH US NOW...

Meet the Librarian This Month Maletha King

By Larry Weide, Pres. RHAC



This little column is not going to do justice in telling you about all the years of hard work and devotion that Maletha King has contributed to this organization. What I can tell you is that managing the open reel library, as well as she does, is only one of her many RHAC hats. Are you aware that for many years she’s also been our Treasurer and our manager of membership records? When we have local events Maletha manages the schedules, logistics and the out of town guests. When the tape libraries need replenishing of the traveling copies Maletha is the one who does all of that work.

You all know Maletha through her monthly column, keeping us informed about upcoming entries in all the RHAC libraries. Of course that means she also keeps the records of all the catalogs for monthly updating and arranges for their printing and distribution.

We owe a great deal to this exceptional lady for keeping RHAC alive and very well over all of these years.

Thanks Maletha for a truly wonderful job!

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION of COLORADO

ORDER BLANK FOR CASSETTE LIBRARY #2 500 - 999

Librarian - David Gatch

P.O. Box 70, Glen Haven CO 80532

(970) 577-0805

**** Make Check Payable to "RHAC" ****

Enclosed is my check or money order for the sum of \$_____ to cover the ONE MONTHS Rental charge of \$2.50 per set for the cassettes ordered. You are allowed to order 5 cassette sets at one time although you may only have 5 cassette sets from this library at one time.

Minimum order is \$7.50

Cassette number:

Title:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

Alternates:

1 _____ 4 _____ 7 _____ 10 _____

2 _____ 5 _____ 8 _____ 11 _____

3 _____ 6 _____ 9 _____ 12 _____

Ship To: _____ Date _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

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 tape on time.*

SIGNATURE

PHONE NUMBER

**RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION of COLO.
PO BOX 1908 ENGLEWOOD, CO 80150**

FIRST CLASS MAIL