

# RETURN WITH US

The Radio Historical  
Association of Colorado

# NOW...



Volume 4, Number 11.      MAY, 1979.



MAY MEETING -- The next meeting of the RHAC will be at Majestic Savings & Loan, 2807 So. Colo. Blvd., May 10 at 7:30 p.m. The highlight of the evening will be the appearance of Evadna Hammersley as guest speaker. Ms. Hammersley was on Denver radio in its Golden Age -- at the time of Ger Amole, Starr Yelland, Ray Perkins, Happy Jack Turner and Chuck Collins (Judy's father). We look forward to hearing her recollections.

A reminder that the June meeting will be on June 14. (Being Flag Day, we ought to play "Yankee Doodle Dandy".)

JOHN DUNNING'S SCHEDULE:

- May 6: INNER SANCTUM MYSTERIES, "Death by Scripture" starring Stefan Schnabel (currently starring in the soap opera "Guiding Light"), 10/9/45.  
MY FRIEND IRMA, "Dictation System", starring Marie Wilson and Cathy Lewis, 2/10/52  
SUSPENSE, "The Red-Headed Women", starring Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz (second of five Suspense shows starring famous comedians and comediennes), 11/7/49
- <sup>262</sup> May 13: BIG TOWN, "Underground Paris" starring Edward G. Robinson and Ona Munson, Sept., 1942.  
BURNS AND ALLEN, "George Burns and Jack Benny Go To College" (first of two B & A shows with Jack Benny as guest), 11/29/45.  
SUSPENSE, "The Too-Perfect Alibi" starring Danny Kaye, 1/13/49.  
CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY, Jelly Roll Morton and Dinah Shore, 7/14/40.  
THE RAILROAD HOUR, "Martha" the operetta by von Flotow, starring Gordon MacRae and Lucille Norman, 10/15/51.
- May 20: ON STAGE, "The Bear", based on a one-act play by Anton Chekhov, starring Cathy and Elliot Lewis (first of two shows), 5/7/53.  
BURNS AND ALLEN, "The Mysterious Gypsy Brothers" with Jack Benny, 1/8/48.  
SUSPENSE, "Death On My Hands", starring Phil Harris and Alice Faye, 5/10/51.  
CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY, Dinah Shore and the Lionel Hampton Quartet, 8/19/40.  
THE RAILROAD HOUR, "Carousal" by Rodgers and Hammerstein, starring Gordon MacRae and Nadine Connor, 2/2/53.
- May 27: ON STAGE, "Statement of Fact", with Cathy and Elliot Lewis, 5/14/53.  
SUSPENSE, "Back Seat Drive" starring Jim and Marian Jordan (if you don't know who they are, you're out of the Club as of NOW), 2/3/49.  
HALLS OF IVY, "Professor Barrett's Play", starring Ronald Colman and Benita Hume Colman (first of four shows), 1/3/51.

We are again indebted to Jerry Appleman for not only sending John's regular schedule, but a list of an additional one-hour programming beginning around 3 p.m. on May 13 (I omitted the May 6 list, since this newspaper won't be in your hands by then) and May 20.

COVER AND LABELS -- This month's cover is courtesy of Jim Vaughan, and if you don't know the singer, you're drummed out of the Corps TWICE. Also, Joe Madden reminds me to thank Chuck Barton, who has been supplying address labels for the newsletter. A great timesaver, when it comes to mailing the rag out.

APRIL MEETING -- The last meeting was exceedingly fruitful. After discussion; the dues were raised to \$10 a year for both new and renewals, commencing May 1. This still leaves our club on the low end of the scale, compared with other organizations across the country.

There was a trivia quiz put together by Jack Richards, which was most enjoyable and won by Ernie Jessen. (I must say, however, that the character playing Charlie Chan was the worst I've ever heard. It sounded like an Afghanistanian with hot chestnuts in his mouth.)

Jim Vaughan is organizing a trivia bowl, along the lines of the C.U. effort. Two teams will contend in June, two in July, with the finale in August. We hope the team names will be as creative (usually with an overtone of obscenity) as those employed up at Boulder.

John Lloyd will have the club bylaws revised by the next meeting, and they will be discussed in June. We also learned that John is beginning the job of copying the vast amount of material on OTR for our library. Jim Vaughan and Ernie Jessen are helping, and the names of additional volunteers will be listed next month.

457-7890

As if this weren't enough, John Lloyd announces the forming of the second group to go in on a purchase of around 15 reels. The ante is \$10, and even a limited command of mathematics tells you this is a helluva good price per reel.

ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S ORGY OF FUN AND GAMES

1. John Lloyd's Quiz

1. Fred Allen 2. Bob Hope Show. 3. Arthur Tracy 4. Lorelei Kilbourne of "The Illustrated Press" 5. Fanny Barbour on "One Man's Family" 6. Columbia Workshop 7. Grand Central Station (crossroad of several private lives) 8. Barber 9. Manhattan Serenade 10. Arbadella.

2. Jim Vaughan's Quiz No. 8

1. "The Outer Limit" 2. "Nightfall" 3. "Mars is Heaven" 4. Fred Weihe and Edward King. 5. Norman Rose. 6. Ernest Kindy 7. Astounding Science Fiction 8. Editor, J. W. Campbell 9. A total of 50. 10. Joe Di Santis, Wendell Holmes, Santos Ortega, Joseph Jolian, Jan Miner, Roger De Koven, John Gibson, Ralph Bell, John Larkin, Les Damon and Mason Adams.

3. You-Know-Who's Crossword Puzzle. (How's this for a tight squeeze?)

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SYRACUSE POST-STANDARD/FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 1979,

## Allen I. Rockford, Radio Show Buff

Allen I. Rockford, 35, of 505 Seeley Road died Thursday at Crouse-Irving Memorial Hospital after a long illness.

Rockford, a life resident of Syracuse, was an authority on old-time radio shows. He was a 1966 graduate of Syracuse University. He was a radio announcer and newscaster for WONO until 1976. He was the featured announcer on the classical music station's morning program.

He also participated in radio broadcasts of old-time radio shows on other Syracuse radio stations. For many years he operated Double-R Radio, a business specializing in tapes and recordings of old-time radio shows, from his home.

Surviving are his father, Max, and several cousins, aunts and uncles.

Services will be 2 p.m. today at the Birnbaum Funeral Chapel, 1909 E. Fayette St. Burial will be in Anshe Sfard Cemetery.

Calling hours will be 1 to 2 p.m. today at the funeral chapel.

Contributions may be made to the Temple Beth El Building Fund.

Syracuse Herald-Journal, Friday, March 30, 1979

## Allen I. Rockford

Services were conducted today at Birnbaum Funeral Chapel for Allen I. Rockford, 35, of 505 Seeley Road, who died yesterday in Crouse-Irving Memorial Hospital after a long illness. He was a radio announcer and newscaster for WONO until 1976. He was the featured announcer on the classical music station's morning program.

Mr. Rockford was an authority on old time radio shows. He participated in radio broadcasts of old time radio shows on other Syracuse stations. For many years he operated Double-R Radio, a business specializing in tapes and recordings of old time radio shows, from his home.

Mr. Rockford was a life resident of Syracuse and a 1966 graduate of Syracuse University.

Mr. Rockford is survived by his father, Max Rockford, and several cousins, aunts and uncles.

Burial was in Anshe Sfard Cemetery. Contributions may be sent to Temple Beth El Building Fund.

Sympathy cards may be addressed: Mr. Max Rockford, 505 Seeley Road, Syracuse, NY 13224. Contributions may also be made to: WRVO-FM / Oswego Public Radio, Public Radio Center, Oswego, New York 13126. Please specify: in memory of Allen Rockford.

NOTE: NOSTALGIA RADIO NEWS will NOT resume publication. Arrangements for pro-rated refunds of subscriptions and advertising contracts will be announced shortly. The radio program, THE SOUNDS OF YESTERDAY, will continue - hosted and produced by Allen Rockford's former partner and co-host, Donald Richardson. All mail related to NRR or SOY should be addressed: PO Box 2214, Syracuse, NY 13220.

## R.H.A.C. MEMBERSHIP LIST AS OF 4-30-79

ABBOTT, STEVE	3/80	7233 W. ROXBURY	LITTLETON, CO	80123	973-1459
ABEL, RICHARD G	12/79	1817 E. CENTER AVE	DENVER, CO	80219	935-9379
ADAMS, JOHN	10/79	2811 S. VALENTIA	DENVER, CO	80231	755-9185
HRING, WILLIAM D	6/79	3823 S. NELSON CT	DENVER, CO	80235	986-2038
ALBRIGHT, DARRELL	6/79	1745 BURNETT RD	TOPEKA, KS	66604	913-272-3357
ANDERSON, CRAIG O	10/79	12 SHERMAN # 105	DENVER, CO	80203	744-4566
APPLEMAN, JERRY	10/79	BOX 33003	NORTHGLENN, CO	80233	452-7682
BARKER, VERNON	10/79	BOX 593	HUGO, CO	80821	743-2585
BARTON, CHARLES	12/79	2800 ELIOT CIR #101	WESTMINSTER, CO	80030	427-2073
BELL, BARBARA	2/80	346 MILWAUKEE	DENVER, CO	80206	
BENSON, BARRETT E	1/80	5931 ELLIS CRT	ARVADA, CO	80004	422-6442
BERG, MICHAEL	7/79	521 MARSHALL	LAKEWOOD, CO	80226	922-9283
BEVAN, JOHN	10/79	1116 12th ST	GOLDEN, CO	80401	279-2280
BLAIR, GLENN	10/79	2413 S. ONEIDA	DENVER, CO	80224	756-8130
CARRIER, PAUL	10/79	16649 E. TUFTS AVE	AURORA, CO	80015	623-2908
DANBOM, DAN	10/79	2339 SO. OGDEN	DENVER, CO	80210	722-1846
DAUGHERTY, DAN	10/79	1770 S. WALDEN WAY	AURORA, CO	80012	751-5733
de McKISSACK, ELENA	7/79	1910 S. KNOX CRT	DENVER, CO	80219	935-8386
De NIKE, JOHN	9/79	4922 CARTLEN DR	PLACENTIA, CA	92670	714-528-2336
DUTTON, GENE	9/79	4625 E. LOUISIANA #104	DENVER, CO	80222	756-8064
EDISON, FREDERICK M	9/79	4125 CLAY	DENVER, CO	80211	455-2695
ELFSTRAND, ROBERT	1/80	7419 RALEIGH ST	WESTMINSTER, CO	80030	428-3973
FRANKLIN, DONALD E JR	6/79	1705 CLARK ST	AURORA CO	80011	343-4016
FURMAN, F.J. SKIP	4/80	1225 PENNSYLVANIA	DENVER, CO	80203	
GONZALES, ROBERT	9-79	3363 VIVIAN DR	WHEATRIDGE, CO	80033	238-2803
GORE, WILLIAM D	9/79	9443 ANGLERIDGE RD	DALLAS. TEX	75238	214-348-9475
GRECO, PAULINE	2/80	8920 W. 74th AVE	ARVADA, CO	80005	424-6944
GRIFFITHS, DON	3/80	391 MAXIMUS	LITTLETON, CO	80124	770-0819
GRZYMALA, TED	12/79	1910 E. BELVEDERE AVE	BALTIMORE, MD	21239	301-435-4978
HALE, IRVING	10/79	1642 IVANHOE ST	DENVER, CO	80220	333-8414
HANSEN, CHARLES F	10/79	701 S. GRANT ST	DENVER, CO	80209	722-8736
HANSEN, REID G	11/79	P. O. BOX 663	INDIAN HILLS, CO	80454	697-8530
HENRY, DICK	10/79	440 S. PIERCE ST	LAKEWOOD, CO	80226	922-2767
JACOBS, HAROLD	1/80	1850 OCEAN PARKWAY	BROOKLYN, NY	11223	
JARKOW, MICHAEL	9/79	10440 NEWCOMBE ST	WESTMINSTER, CO	80020	469-4559
JESSEN, ERNIE	10/79	2747 S. JOSLIN CRT	DENVER, CO	80227	985-9110
KELLER, KEN	1/80	1976 S. HOOKER	DENVER, CO	80219	935-4122
LANE, ROBERT K	6/79	11635 W. 37th AVE	ARVADA, CO	80005	424-8362
LILLY, JOHN A	3/80	2864 S. READING CT	DENVER, CO	80231	755-8268
LINDBERG, GARY	1/80	4198 KENON ST	WHEATRIDGE, CO	80033	424-2346
LIPPMAN, GEORGE B	11/79	10011 LEWIS ST	WESTMINSTER, CO	80020	469-2205
LLOYD, JOHN	10/79	2667 E 99th AVE	THORNTON, CO	80229	451-7890
MC COY, SCOTT	10/79	1251 S. STABLE	AURORA, CO	80012	755-7585
MC DERMOTT, LARRY	10/79	1152 CEDAR ST	BROOMFIELD, CO	80020	466-8988
MADDEN, JOE	10/79	8356 E. PRINCETON AVE	DENVER, CO	80237	771-2019
MAIER, CARL E	9/79	1500 E. 5th AVE	DENVER, CO	80218	321-7792
MANSFIELD, JACKIE D	10/79	10225 E GIRARD #G203	DENVER, CO	80231	752-2307
MARSHALL, CLAY	10/79	829 DEAN DR	NORTHGLENN, CO	80233	452-0235
MIGRLA, JOHN	2/80	7213 W. ROXBURY PL	LITTLETON, CO	80123	979-9755
MORRIS, STEVE	10/79	1306 HUMBOLDT # 6	DENVER, CO	80218	831-4579
NEUSTRAND, CARL	10/79	12120 E. IOWA DR	AURORA, CO	80012	750-8226
NICHOLSON, JOHN	10/79	3256 S GRAPE	DENVER, CO	80222	753-1496
NORMAND, PHILLIP J	2/80	868 S. EMERSON ST	DENVER, CO	80209	744-7559
PEACOCK, HARRAL	10/79	324 W. 99th AVE	NORTHGLENN, CO	80221	452-2258

This list (concluded on the following page) is courtesy of Joe Madden. It does not include the supplementary (including honorary) members listed in the February issue. As usual, let us know of any errors or changes.

RHAC MEMBERSHIP LIST AS OF 4-30-79 (Concluded):

PIACENTINE, JERRY	10/79	115 BERYL WAY	BROOMFIELD, CO	80020	466-2234
RAVELO, GEORGE	2/80	8904 LANDER ST	WESTMINSTER, CO	80030	428-6143
RECEN, HENRY F	11/79	3350 INGALLS ST	WHEATRIDGE, CO	80033	238-4726
REEB, JAMES M	11/79	8392 E. INSPIRATION DR	PARKER, CO	80134	841-3993
REEVES, DON	10/79	17326 E. BATES AVE	AURORA, CO	80013	690-1773
RICHARDS, JACK	10/79	7369 S. EUDORA CT	LITTLETON, CO	80122	771-6774
RITTENHOUSE, BRUCE	1/80	327 MARQUETTE DR	ROCHESTER, MICH	48063	313-652-2793
RITTER, GLENN	10/79	PO BOX 20061	DENVER, CO	80220	377-4798
ROE, CAROL	3/80	9900 E. FLORIDA # 19	DENVER, CO	80231	755-4925
RUBIN, MICKEY	10/79	1335 OGDEN	DENVER, CO	80206	
RYAN, HAROLD	7/79	2521 S. RALEIGH	DENVER, CO	80219	936-1063
SCHALLER, NICHOLAS	3/80	1905 DIVISION ST	DENVER, CO	80202	
SCHLEGEL, HERBERT	12/79	24 GARDNER ST	BEVERLY, MASS	01915	
SHUMAKER, STEVE	10/79	1259 YORK ST	DENVER, CO	80206	388-1007
SINGER, DAN	9/79	%BMI 40 W. 37th ST	NEW YORK, NY	10019	
SLY, EDWARD W	11/79	8170 W. 81st PLACE	ARVADA, CO	80004	
SNYDER, DEBBIE	9/79	3631 STUART ST	DENVER, CO	80212	
SNYDER, JAMES	12/79	517 N. HAMILTON ST	SAGINAW, MICH.	48602	
TEDRICK, BILL	10/79	2965 S. ST PAUL ST	DENVER, CO	80210	756-0763
TRUAX, CHARLES T	1/80	686 KITTRIDGE ST	AURORA, CO	80011	343-3482
TYLER, RICHARD	7/79	%FFS P O BOX 119	DENVER, CO	80201	534-7777
JRSHEL, WILLIAM	6/79	P O BOX 841	DENVER, CO	80201	
JTLEY, KNOWLTON	2/80	DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA,	UNIVERSITY OF FARMINGTON, MAINE		
VAUGHN, JAMES	1/80	3631 STUART ST	DENVER, CO	80212	477-8101
WALKER, CHARLES F	6/80	3208 E COURT ST	IOWACITY, IOWA	52240	351-2774
WALLE, ALF F	1/80	% ALICE LLOYD COLLEGE BOX 43	PIPPA PASSES, KY	41844	606-368-2291
WOLGEMUTH, HIRAM	6/79	3048 S. OGDEN	ENGLEWOOD, CO	80110	761-6341
WOODWARD, DAVID L	6/79	1800 W. BELLEMEW AVE	MORRISON, CO	80465	697-9032
ZACEK, FRANCES	6/79	6790 ALBION ST	COMMERCE CITY, CO	80022	287-6816

New Member (Included Above)

Furman, F. J. 1225 Pennsylvania St. Denver, CO 80203 4/80

Renewals (Included Above)

Bruce Rittenhouse 2/80. Carol Roe 3/80. George Ravelo 2/80.  
John A. Lilly 3/80.

Address Change (Supplemental to Above)

Daugherty, Dan 11462 Carlile St. Northglenn, CO 80233 451-5110 10/79

ORGY ANSWERS CONCLUDED. 4. John Lloyd's Word Scramble

**ANSWERS:**

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Hobby Lobby          | 11. Great Gildersleeve |
| 2. Cavalcade of America | 12. Front Page Farrell |
| 3. Just Plain Bill      | 13. One Mans Family    |
| 4. Hallmark Playhouse   | 14. Milton Berle Show  |
| 5. Hopalong Cassidy     | 15. Gunsmoke           |
| 6. Dragnet              | 16. Mel Blanc Show     |
| 7. Lorenzo Jones        | 17. Hour of Charm      |
| 8. Straight Arrow       | 18. Six Shooter        |
| 9. Railroad Hour        | 19. Phil Harris Show   |
| 10. Everready Hour      | 20. Richard Diamond    |

BONUS: Radio Historical Association of Colorado

WORD SEARCH by Jim Vaughan

FIND THE NAMES THAT ARE HIDDEN IN THE SENTENCES.

EXAMPLE: FORT LARAMIE.

FOR THOUSANDS OF YOUNGSTERS, THE OLD TIME RADIO SHOWS ARE MORE ENJOYABLE THAT TELEVISION. ANSWER: FORT.

HIDDEN WORDS: ORSON WELLES, BOB HOPE, GENE AUTRY, EDDIE CANTOR,

MEL BLANC, VIC AND SADE, FRED ALLEN, RAY NOBEL,

TOMMY DORSEY, RAYMOND BURR, TOM MIX, ED WYNN.

(Not necessarily in the order they appear in the sentences below.)

1. POPULAR MOVIES OF THE 40'S WERE MUSICALS THAT WENT IN FOR SONG AND DANCE ROUTINES.
2. IT TOOK THE FINDING OF THE CIGARETTE BUTT TO FINIALLY SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE CASE.
3. YOU MUST PASS THROUGH THE HIGH OPENINGS IN THE CAVE TO ESCAPE.
4. IT TOOK GOOD WRITERS TO MAKE THE PROGRAMS A SUCCESS.
5. BING FOUND A RANGE NEAR THE STATION TO PRACTICE HIS GOLF.
6. THE SOUND EFFECTS WERE SO GOOD, YOU COULD HEAR THE MOLES BURROWING UNDER GROUND.
7. THE FIRST MICROPHONE COULD HAVE BEEN A TIN CAN TORN IN HALF.
8. PLEASE DON'T TELL ROSA WHAT I SAID OR SEYMORE MIGHT FIND OUT AND TELL PASQUALE.
9. ALL-BLAN CEREAL IS A PRODUCT THAT SPIKE JONES MIGHT HAVE HAD AS SPONSOR.
10. RED SKELTON'S PANTS KEPT FALLING DOWN BECAUSE HE WORE NO BELT.
11. VICTORY PARADE OF SPOTLIGHT BANDS WAS EXTREMELY POPULAR DURING THE 40'S.
12. THE SERVICEMEN OVERSEAS ALL ENJOYED THE APPEARANCES OF THE MANY BIG STARS.

**CBS Radio  
Mystery Theater**

**On The Air**

by CLARK SECRET

4/16/79

These programs are recommended by The National Education Association.

1	May 5	"The Lodger" (Jack the Ripper)	Marie Belloc Lowndes
	6	"The Assassination" (Julius Caesar)	William Shakespeare
	12	The Cask of Amantillado	Edgar Allan Poe
	13	The Picture of Dorian Gray	Oscar Wilde
	19	The Horla	Guy deMaupassant
	20	The Phantom of the Opera	Gaston Leroux
	26	Dracula	Bram Stoker
	27	The Fall of the House of Usher	Edgar Allan Poe
	June 2	The House of Seven Gables	Nathaniel Hawthorne
	3	The Golem	Folk Story

THE "MASTERPIECE Radio Theatre" will make its bow on Denver's KCFR-FM (90.1) and 219 other National Public Radio stations on May 5. KCFR will carry the one-hour dramas Sundays at 7 p.m. on a 52-week basis.

The initial offering will be the three-episode "Anna Karenina" starring Sarah Badel. Julie Harris will host the Mobil-

PERRY MASON . . . by Janet Chapman

Have you ever read a mystery story only to discover that the last chapter has been torn out? Or worse still, picked up a book with a missing first chapter, puzzled your way through the book until you've got the gist of what's going on, and then discovered the last chapter missing? It's not very pleasant, let me tell you. Not even if you're forewarned.

I was told before listening to the PERRY MASON radio shows that there was no start nor stop to the one series in circulation. No start didn't bother me much--a few episodes gave me a general idea about the case and it's characters. But no ending! A Perry Mason story without the thrill of hearing the famous lawyer wrap up his case with a final courtroom trick? And the worst part of all was my inability to believe it. As I listened, each new episode gave me hope--maybe the person had been lying, maybe there was an ending, maybe. . .

Nope.

But, oh well. The series is a good one anyway.

The PERRY MASON show came on CBS for Proctor & Gamble on October 18, 1943, 11 years after Erle Stanley Gardner had produced his first Perry Mason book, and 20 years after he began his writing career, so the radio audience was well acquainted with the incredible lawyer, his secretary Della Street, the private eye Paul Drake, and homicide cop Lt. Tragg. The series ran during prime time in the afternoon, soap-opera style--15 minute episodes Monday through Friday. Gardner originally wrote the scripts, but later handed them over to Ruth Bordon and Irving Vendig.

Gardner himself was a lawyer before becoming an author of mystery books which accounts for the preoccupation with courts and legal hassles in his stories. Hunting, oddly enough, was behind Gardner's switch in careers. It seems that Gardner considered the courtroom schedule too rigid, and decided that writing would offer a more flexible one and thus allow him more time to hunt. So write he did.

However, Gardner's knowledge of the law from his many years of practice was invaluable to him as background material. Though Gardner never detailed a court case directly into a novel, his experience in the courts and his own ingenious manner of handling cases show through in the books. In fact, some people, notably his early law partners, regretted that Gardner didn't stick with the law. He would have made a top-notch lawyer, they said, probably the best in the country. One of Gardner's earlier cases illustrates why they felt this way.

The case, which Gardner took while practicing in Oxnard, California in 1913, involved twenty Chinese men who were accused of selling lottery tickets. At the time, many people in California lumped the Chinese together--who could tell them apart, they said. Gardner made use of that prejudice to win his case. The evening before the police were to arrest the twenty men, Gardner counseled his clients to follow a plan he had devised. The plan involved having each of the men take over one of the other's business. So, the next morning, when the police arrived to arrest the butcher, they were really arresting the baker, and so on down the line. Their mistake wasn't brought out until after the men had been charged, so the judge was forced to throw all the cases out of court on the basis of mistaken identities!

Mason's legal high jinks are similar to that kind of legal maneuvering in both the books and radio scripts. Gardner kept a complete library of law books to consult when writing the Mason stories, and though Mason's acts occasionally seem questionable, the books have been noted by many lawyers as authentic in terms of the legalities Mason uses to extricate his clients. In 1941, one lawyer, Darrell R. Parker



of Phoenix, Arizona, even used a legal device he found while reading a Perry Mason story to win a case for his client. He has said that Gardner's books were "always plausible, even to a lawyer. . .and I have yet to detect any situation in which his protagonist has taken a position in the course of a criminal proceeding which would be untenable to the average lawyer. . ." Gardner increased his verity by never allowing Mason to take a case out of California. Gardner was well versed in California law, and he didn't want to run the risk of stumbling upon some obscure law in another state.

The Perry Mason mysteries, from which the radio characters were drawn, are no literary gems, but they're darned enjoyable! Unlike the vivid characterizations of Raymond Chandler, Gardner's contemporary and fellow mystery writer, Gardner used stereotypes freely and paid little or no attention to the background scene. Instead the legal hassles provide the focus for excitement. Not only must Mason come up with a surprise solution at the conclusion of each case, but it has to be brought out by his cross-examination of witnesses in the courtroom. In the meantime, it also seems essential that Mason, in his unparalleled services to his clients, get himself in dire peril of being arrested as an accessory after the fact, and thus hauled before the grievance committee of the Bar Association.

If the radio series now in circulation is sadly lacking in the final courtroom scene, it makes up for it by episode after exciting episode of Perry and Della trying to solve the case and escape being hauled off by the police at the same time. In one chapter--after Mason leads the court to believe his client is pregnant in order to get an extension of her case, and then has her kidnapped to prevent the opposition from finding out the truth--Mason escapes from the police by hiding in a box! Sound corny? It is, in a way, but you'll be hooked all the same. Throughout the series Mason works himself into corners, only to free himself in the next episode (by ingenious and unpredictable methods) and then work himself right back into another corner. It's soap opera all right--and it works! Time and time again I found myself deciding to listen to "just one more," relieved that I didn't have to wait until "tomorrow" for the episode's solution. I'm paying for it now, I suppose, since it seems I'll never know what did happen in that nursing home!

Bartlett Robinson played Mason when the series opened, followed by Santos Ortega, Donald Briggs, and John Larkin; Gertrude Warner, Jan Miner and Joan Alexander played Della Street. Matt Crowley was Drake and Manuel Kramer performed as Lt. Tragg.

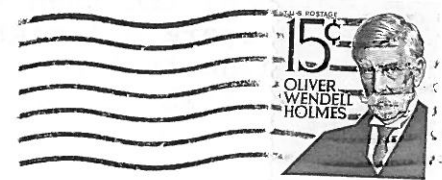
After the multitude of books produced by Gardner, his characterizations of these basic four were very strong and, to my mind, neither the radio shows nor television series deviated much from the books. Mason did strike me as slightly more authoritative on radio, and Street as a little more whiney than usual, but the interaction between the basic four runs as smoothly (or not so smoothly) as ever. But I'll admit that I became acquainted with the characters backwards. I was hooked on the TV series long before I ever read Gardner's books or listened to the radio shows. To me, Mason will always look, sound and act like Raymond Burr, the star of the long-running TV series. (I've heard that the final courtroom scene became so tedious for Burr that he forced himself to think up various ways to approach the witness stand just to keep himself occupied--at least the radio players were spared that!)

If you like mystery, soap opera or intricate legal tangles, you'll truly enjoy the PERRY MASON series. Only, won't someone tell me how it ends?

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IRVING HALE  
1642 IVANHOE ST.  
DENVER, CO 80220

DENVER, CO  
MAY 8  
PM  
1979



Barrett E. Benson  
5931 Ellis Court  
Arvada, CO 80004