


**RETURN WITH US NOW...**

**RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO**



Volume 23, Number 11

June, 1998

# They're Gangbusters!



# 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 **FRIDAY**, June 5, 1998

At Guy Albright's 786 South Quitman St., Denver

Old time radio is alive and well in Denver!

KRMA Channel 6 Secondary Audio Program, RHAC's show "Tribute to OTR" Sunday 2:00 PM

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

KEZW "Radio Movie Classics" Sundays 5:00 till 6:00 PM

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

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The 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 site.  
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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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## LIBRARIES

<b>Reference Material:</b>	Bill McCracken, address above	986-9863
<b>Logs &amp; Scripts:</b>	Fred Hinz, c/o RHAC, P O Box 1908, Englewood CO 80150	
<b>Open Reel Tape Librarian:</b>	Maletha King, 900 W. Quincy Ave., Englewood CO 80110	
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#1 (1-499)	Terry Hamilton, 9393 E Colorado Ave., Denver CO 80231	696-8196
#2 (500-999)	David Gatch, PO Box 70 Glen Haven, CO 80532	970-577-0805
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#4 (5001 up)	Mika Rhoden, 3950W Dartmouth Ave., Denver CO 80236	937-9476

# Better & Better!

## The RHAC Players

The RHAC Players are to be congratulated on their fine production of "The House That Time Forgot" episode of *Murder at Midnight* at the May meeting. It's hard to believe that this was only their second production since their reestablishment!

The story line was very macabre and dealt with a house without tenants. . . except for the dead. A clock that ran backwards in time brought death from out of the past and out of time as the clock struck twelve.

Sound effects included wind and rain machines along with thunder and footsteps that really help set the mood. The cast and crew for this performance included: Dorothy and Larry Weide as Eva & Fred Jordan, Ellen and Les Benoit as Mrs. & Mr. Holloway, Fred Hinz as Mr. Smith, Guy Albright as Gabriel, Jim Hollingsworth as the program announcer, Barry Winograd as the cast and historian announcer, and Dave Clow as the commercial announcer for The Sick Cow Buttermilk Company. Organ music was performed by John Stevenson. Sound technicians were Dick King and Guy Albright. Sound effects were produced by Priscilla and John Licht and Fred Bantin. JoAnn Bantin and Barry Winograd were the co-directors.

We hope to be entertained by many more productions of the RHAC Players in the future.

Don't you miss the next presentation by the RHAC Players!

## John Dunning *On The Air*

At our May meeting John Dunning and John Rayburn discussed Dunning's new book *On The Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio* and other radio-related topics. The following is a portion of their discussion. Hopefully, our readers will gain an appreciation of the trials and tribulations encountered in producing such a large and complex book.

**RAYBURN:** I told you this personally John, after I got my review copy. My God, you did a hell of a job!

**DUNNING:** Well, Thank you. I sure glad it's over. If I had known 6 or 8 years ago, whenever it was, that it was going to be an endurance test, I didn't realize that I had that much endurance left. My agent had an awful time selling it. Ironically, we wound up with the very publisher (Oxford University Press) who should have had it in the first place after 2½ years of marketing it. Everybody in New York turned it down because of the size.

**RAYBURN:** John said the original manuscript in regular pages, not book pages, came up to his knees. That's why they shied away from it.

**DUNNING:** There were no

numbers on it because I was writing it as individual articles and I was moving things in and out. Mostly in. When I got done, I started to number them and I told my wife "My God" if this thing goes over 2,000 pages, I'm lost. They're going to think I'm crazy. When I got to 1500, that was a small stack. Finally, at about 3600, all I could do was put it in a box and ship it to my agent in New York. My agent, when she opened the box, said a prayer, called Oxford, and said "Well the book is in and it's BIG!" Luckily, they didn't just reject it.

I thought it would be interesting to put in a section of personality biographies of a lot of the people who worked in radio. But of course that's going to be for somebody else to do. In fact some of that's already been done.

I gotta tell you, guys, this is my swan song for this stuff. Never again! I'm not even going to read this book, it's done.

The day after it was published I got a call from somebody back East. He said "Do you know you made a mistake on..." I said "Listen, I don't want to hear it and I don't even want to know if there was a mistake in there."

Maybe there is a mistake in there, I'm sure there is. The publisher said that in a book of this size, it's impossible not to have some mistakes. When I was looking up material in the Encyclopedia Britannica, they got the date of Lou Costello's death wrong. I had it wrong for a long time until I read the book that his daughter Chris wrote.

**RAYBURN:** I want to tell you how

completely out-of-date he is. He wrote that whole cotton-picking thing on a typewriter.

**DUNNING:** Twice! We turned in the 3600 page manuscript. Now that a little misleading because a lot of the pages were half page. But still, a 3600 page manuscript is, by any stretch of the imagination, a fairly large piece of work.

It became apparent that Oxford couldn't publish a book of that size in one volume. The publisher said "two volumes is out of the question; there's no way they are going for the expense of that. You have to cut it down."

I don't believe in line editing in terms of taking a manuscript and just cutting. You have to run it through your system again. You have to think about every line in order to maximize what your are saying.

I had a great editor in New York, named India Cooper, who came up with the format that you see in there. She was able to scope all the vital statistics at the front of the articles in such a way so you can find the stuff. By doing that, I was able to save a lot of words. I rewrote that entire 3600 page manuscript through my typewriter again. That took about 2½ years.

There were days when I came up and the world was spinning. I was writing a novel (*Bookman's Wake*) at the same time - I was actually getting paid for that. I had a publisher that was clamoring for this second book in this mystery series that I'm writing. So I had to spend the last three years writing two books

at once.

When we got it done, Joellyn Ausanka, the production editor said "The one thing we can't give you time on is the index. The book has gone to press, the type has been set, and the production is geared so it will be published on May 7<sup>th</sup>. We need the index in three weeks."

It was like a Twilight Zone experience because the two of us (John and his wife Helen) sat at the kitchen table day after day, reading names back and forth. The index has about 9,500 to 9,700 entries in it. On the very last day, I got close to the end of it, I called up Joellyn and said "I need three more days. I can mail it today, but that means I can't double check the last 600 or 700 names." She said "OK, send it in Monday by Federal Express, that will give you the weekend." So we worked the whole weekend on it. On Monday at 4:30 I sent it and kissed it goodbye. It remains kissed goodbye!

**RAYBURN:** All of you avid collectors know that the first book (*Tune In Yesterday*) didn't have anything except text. It was telling you about the shows in marvelous fashion, but a lot up people who want to look things up found the Buxton/Owens book *The Big Broadcast* helpful also. Now that it's there in this book, John tells me that the way he wanted the first one to be and they edited it out.

**DUNNING:** They had an editor at Prentice-Hall. There are some editors that are not happy unless they are editing. That means that

they are physically cutting something, adding to it, messing with it with a pencil, or doing something like that. Originally each article had a little capsule, it wasn't anything as sophisticated as what India did with *On the Air*. Basically, if you looked up the *Jack Benny Program* you could see when it was on, when it went off, what networks it was on, and when there were certain time changes. It was just a nice little capsule so you could put it in perspective. So this fellow took it upon himself to take that apart. He said "we want it chronological" and so they had it chronological. I didn't like it and nobody did either.

**RAYBURN:** Except that it became quite a collector's item, after all, in spite of that.

**DUNNING:** It's a funny world. I don't know what to say, there are certain books that do that.

You know the problem the Buxton and Owens book had was that it had no narrative. You name your poison, if you like a table of casts, then that's what they'll give you. If you want something that captures the flavor of the show or at least tries to, that's what I tried to do.

You don't do this kind of a book for money, especially with a university press. I think Lincoln outlawed slavery back in 1865, but I'll tell you I'm just too old for this kind of stuff...

**RAYBURN:** When he says you don't make money on a book like this, of course he's not going to like he is on his series *Bookman's*

*Wake and Booked To Die* etc. If you get a 5,000 copy first publication with most publishers, that's pretty good. His is coming with 8,000 copies. They kicked it up on advance orders, so that's not too shabby.

**DUNNING:** Oxford was going to start with 4,000 copies, then Radio Spirits took a thousand copies. Advance sales were really good, they went up to 5,000. They shipped all of those. They finally cut off the first run at 8,000.

What they failed to reckon with Old-Time Radio was the participation factor of the fans out there. People who have the tape decks and listen to the stuff. That's what I tried to sell the book on, nobody was listening to it. It's not just archival stuff, it's still with us -- its still here.

Some of it is just incredibly good. It's not just the *Lone Ranger* and *The Shadow*. If you've heard one *Lone Ranger*, you've heard another one. If you've listened to one Cathy and Elliot Lewis program, you haven't necessarily heard all of them. Same thing for *Studio One*, *Suspense*, *Escape*, and some of the really great shows.

I could probably get excited again if I...

#### *Editor's Note:*

John Dunning and John Rayburn also discussed some of their experiences (good and bad) doing interviews with various radio personalities. Look for an article on this intriguing topic in an upcoming issue of *Return With Us Now...*

## ***Gangbusters*** **Fugitive Nabbed** **By Hero** **Listeners**

*Many listened to this radio show in 1947, but these kids actually found the wanted man.*

(Cover photograph: Navarre and Pauline pose beside the Crosley Console where they tune in to the *Gangbusters* series.)

By Jan Holden

"CRIME isn't the way...crime doesn't pay." That was the message of the popular radio program *Gangbusters*, which aired nationally from 1935 to 1957. The show was known for thrilling stories and the weekly "call for help from listeners" to locate a wanted criminal.

Twelve-year-old Pauline Virgin of Gearhart, Oregon and her family were big *Gangbusters* fans. Every Saturday night at 9, they'd huddle around their Crosley console listening to the announcer, "Calling all Americans to war on the underworld" as "authentic case histories" were presented and solved.

At the end of each broadcast, the announcer gave a description of a wanted criminal and asked listeners to help find him. Usually by that time, Pauline yawned and got ready for bed...but on one spring night in 1947, she recognized the fugitive being described!

"I've always noticed details about people," Pauline explains. "And the description given that night made me suspect that the

man they were looking for, John Harvey Bugg, was my riding instructor at the Gearhart Riding Academy...otherwise known as "Cowboy Jim Williams."

According to *Gangbusters*, Bugg had been working in an oil field near Seminole, Oklahoma. Needing money for a car, he wrote a check on his employer's account, then fled in the car across the state line to Missouri. He'd been arrested by a Missouri sheriff but later escaped.

### **It's Cowboy Jim!**

Pauline remembered that Cowboy Jim had a limp like the fugitive described on *Gangbusters*. Also suspicious was the tape on his fingers.

"My girlfriends and I were always curious about that," Pauline recalls, "When we asked Cowboy Jim why he wore tape on his fingers, he'd never tell us." Pauline suspected the tape covered the tattooed letters L O V E on Cowboy Jim's fingers, yet another part of Bugg's description.

Despite all this incriminating evidence, Pauline felt torn and wasn't sure what she should do. "I didn't want to get my friend into trouble," she says. "He really knew horses and had taught me to ride the right way."

The day after the broadcast, Pauline confided in her cousin, Navarre Smith, who was 14. As a Boy Scout, Navarre decided that he must do his duty, even if it meant blowing the whistle on a man who was popular with folks in Gearhart.

After school, Navarre drove his bike to the police station in nearby Seaside, Oregon and told

them he and his cousin knew the whereabouts of the fugitive John Harvey Bugg.

### He "Bugged Out"

Word spread quickly that the police were looking for Bugg. He fled to Hillsboro, Oregon but was captured a few days later at a friend's house. He surrendered without a struggle.

Pauline and Navarre became overnight celebrities. Saluted on *Gangbusters* and interviewed on radio station KEX in Portland, they got fan mail from across the country. "We even got out of school to have our pictures taken and for interviews at KEX," Pauline says.

"I also received about \$500 from various awards, used it to buy a brand-new accordion, she recalls.

But the story doesn't end there. John Harvey Bugg was eventually released from prison, returned to Gearhart and went back to work at the stables.

"One day I was riding my bike home from school and saw him outside the stables," Pauline says. "He waved and called to me, but I was afraid to stop."

That night, Bugg visited Pauline's family and the young informant discovered her fears were unfounded. "He only wanted to thank me," she explains. "He had been tired of hiding and just wanted to forget the past."

Bugg had lived in fear of capture for 5 years. He'd given a career on the rodeo circuit because he was afraid of being recognized.

The citizens of Gearhart were ready to welcome the man they

knew as Cowboy Jim back into the community. They believed in his basic goodness. "And," Pauline adds, "he became one of my dad's closest friends!"

*Editor's Note:* Several episodes of *Gangbusters* are available from the RHAC tape libraries. See the Tape Library Index

## New In The Tape Library

By Maletha & Dick King

This month's entries into the libraries are all from *NBC University Theater*. These are dramatic portrayals of many of the great books of American and English authors. Many of the titles may not be of great intrigue to some of you, but you only have to listen to the roles presented by great artists such as Adolf Monjou, George Montgomery, Boris Karloff, Brian Ahern, Van Heflin, and more.

What could have been rather dull reading, becomes fascinating listening and will either make you want to read the original book or will cause you to reflect on the works as presented by the great actors and enjoy the great works of the authors who shaped our literature and laid the foundation for most of our English writing. We urge you not to turn away from these great works just because you think you are only interested in mystery or adventure stories, as you will find adventure, comedy, suspense, and intrigue in these stories. Once you start, you will be hooked!

We are pleased to note that

the Canadian shows (Tapes 5401-07) entered in April are moving well and bringing pleasure to our members. They vary from *Tales of the Red Men* as presented on CBC on through some of the great shows presented in 1963 by *Radio-Canada Playhouse*. We enjoyed the *Sunshine Sketches of A Little Town*, the Canadian version of *Vic and Sade*, but moved to the town of Mariposa and the politics of that small town. Since we have only one circulating copy of each reel or set of cassettes, it may take awhile before we are able to get the shows out to all of you.

*Editor's Note:* I also urge you to listen to the *NBC University Theater* tapes. When I was in high school in the 1960's, one of my English teachers played a tape from this series, "The Red Badge of Courage." She wanted to show her students that an adaptation of great literature could be exciting and entertaining. The response from her classes was so positive that she decided to play a tape from *NBC University Theater* each month for the rest of the school year.

If tapes from *NBC University Theater* can get teenagers interested in radio adaptations of great novels, think how enjoyable they will be for our discerning members. By the way, because of listening to this tape I bought and read "The Red Badge of Courage."

## Radio Quiz

Member David Michael has submitted several quizzes on old-

time radio. Each month a quiz will appear in the Newsletter.

### Summertime Replacement Shows

- 1 Jack Parr replaced?
- 2 Alec Templeton replaced?
- 3 Tommy Riggs replaced?
- 4 Eddie Cantor was replaced by?
- 5 Jack Benny was replaced by? (Hint, there were several shows)
- 6 Bob Burns was replaced by?
- 7 Edgar Bergen was replaced by?
- 8 *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe* replaced?

### May's Answers

#### Part 2 - Who resided at or in, or what program was set in, or what was at?

- 1 Three Rivers  
*The Brighter Day*
- 2 Niagara  
*Buck Rogers*
- 3 Blair Hospital  
*Dr. Kildare*
- 4 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. In New York  
*Archie's Tavern*
- 5 Sandy Harbor  
*Ethel & Albert*
- 6 Sea Cliff  
*One Man's Family*
- 7 Hudson High  
*Jack Armstrong*
- 8 Ivy, USA  
Dr. & Mrs. William  
Todhunter Hall (Halls of  
Ivy)
- 9 Hartville  
*Just Plain Bill*
- 10 24 St. Anne's Place  
*Mr. & Mrs. North*

Tune in next month for the answers to June's quiz.

## Needed: Articles From Our Members

As you can see from the last few issues of the *Newsletter*, we are beginning to receive articles from the membership. This is a good start, but articles from our members are needed each month. An article can be on almost anything relating to Old-Time Radio. Share your interests and knowledge with your fellow members.

## From Our Members

From member Bob Hart.

I've been a member for a few years from here in Milwaukee. I think that this club's quality of material is the best!!! Thanks for many hours of listening. I'm 35 and a biz owner and I give out free tapes to customers and the response from them has been overwhelming. Have you ever heard of the *CBS Radio Western Theater* hosted by Lorne Greene? I think it was made by the same people that did the *Mystery Theater*.

## Special Event

### Lucy's First Sitcom: *My Favorite Husband*

A 50th Anniversary Reunion  
Sunday, July 12, 1998 - 3:30 pm  
Burbank Airport Hilton  
2500 Hollywood Way  
Los Angeles, CA

For information, call *Loving Lucy*  
'98 Convention Hotline at

818-981-9758.

Lucy's first sitcom, *My Favorite Husband*, debuted on CBS Radio in July, 1948, staying on the network until 1951, when its producer-director-head writer, Jess Oppenheimer, created *I Love Lucy*. "Lucy's First Sitcom: A 50th Anniversary Reunion" is produced and directed by Jess's son, Gregg Oppenheimer.

A benefit performance celebrating Lucille Ball's debut in sitcom. All proceeds go to the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. The event marks the first-ever on-stage reunion of original supporting actors from Lucille Ball's radio and TV shows, in an authentic recreation of the radio series *My Favorite Husband* that inspired the megahit *I Love Lucy*. The benefit is the closing event of *Loving Lucy '98* the 3rd annual convention of Lucy fans.

The benefit will feature the largest number of original *I Love Lucy* actors ever assembled on one stage, including regulars Doris Singleton (Lucy's nearsighted nemesis, "Carolyn Appleby"), and Shirley Mitchell (Lucy's girlfriend "Marion Strong"). The creators of other classic *I Love Lucy* characters will also be there, such as "Peggy Dawson," the bobby-soxer with a crush on Ricky, "Teensy & Weensy," the twins who auditioned for the Ricardos in a Tennessee jailhouse, the "Parisian Tout," whose phony francs landed Lucy in a French prison cell, and many others. Actress/impersonator Suzanne LaRusch, renown for her impeccable Lucy impersonation, will play the legendary redhead.

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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.



## FIRST CLASS MAIL

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P O BOX 1908 ENGLEWOOD, CO 80150

## Upcoming Conventions

Watch this column for the latest information on Old-Time Radio Conventions and special events. Listings will be updated as information is received.

The convention season has begun. If you are going to one of them, please share your convention experiences with our members with an article in the *Newsletter*

### RadioActivity 98 Mid-Atlantic Antique Radio Festival

06/11-13/98

Location: Laurel, MD

Scheduled events: Three-session radio repair class, Seminar "50 Years of FM Radio," old equip-

ment contest, flea market, and auction.

Contact: Brian Belanger  
(301) 258-0708 or  
e-mail [BCBelanger@aol.com](mailto:BCBelanger@aol.com)

### Radio Showcase VI

06/19-20/98

Sponsored by Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound

Location: Seattle, WA

Contact: (425) 488-9518 or  
e-mail [HRRMikes@aol.com](mailto:HRRMikes@aol.com)

See the March Newsletter for particulars.

### 14th Annual Lum and Abner Society Convention

06/26-27/98

Mena, Arkansas

Contact: Tim Hollis

81 Sharon Blvd.

Dora, AL 35062

(205) 648-6110

### 23rd Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention

10/22-24/98

Holiday Inn-North

Newark, NJ

Contact: Jay Hickerson

Box 4321

Hamden, CT 06514

(203) 248-2887

[JayHick@aol.com](mailto:JayHick@aol.com)

### 15th Annual SPERDVAC Convention

11/13-15/98

Crowne Plaza Hotel,

Los Angeles, CA

Contact: Larry Gassman

(562) 947-9800

Please note: In the future order forms for the tape libraries will appear at least every other month.