

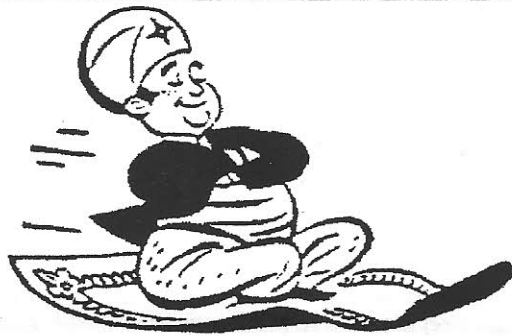


RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 24, Number 6

January, 1999



SURDIN & DARBY: Notes on two Canadians Who Prepared A Weekly Excursion Into Fantasy

By Martin Grams Jr.

Two Canadians, Roy Darby, writer, and Morris Surdin, composer, were the authors of a program entitled - in fairytale fashion - *Once Upon A Tune*. It was one of radio's rare ventures into the realm of fantasy, and as such, probably one of the most unique ethereal successes of the 1947 broadcast season.

The other evening, after making the trip home from the Credit Union (my current place of occupation), I relaxed on the sofa trying to forget the rigors of my writing assignments for a moment, clearing my head, when two specters materialized before me. One was Morris Surdin, minus his jacket, sitting upon the podium, while Darby, whose imaginative and facile pen has created the distinctive

dramatic personae of their offspring, took a few moments to discuss their mutual phobia.

"We have always been afraid that some people would get the impression the program is for children," said Darby. "It's really designed for an adult, mature audience." Surdin and Darby had another fear: that the program would get too smart and sophisticated. They wanted to keep it constantly different and to avoid the pitfalls that many radio programs fall into by getting too standardized. "We don't want it to be coy or cute either," explained Darby, who has turned out, all told, seven hundred scripts for Canadian radio. "We made no attempt to draw a half-hour of belly laughs."

Ever since that day in July of 1946 when Surdin, a top-notch musi-

cal arranger for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, was assigned to score Darby's original script, and they met for the first time, the two have been close friends. Each respects the other, and although they admit they derive just as much pleasure from the program as do their listeners, they take their work seriously.

Although he doesn't like to admit it, and never would have had it not been for his wife Hazel's prompting, Surdin, a native to Toronto, intended to be a pharmacist, mainly because his family thought there was no future in music. Despite this, they gave him violin lessons when he was five, and also taught him harmony, theory, and composition, all of which he promptly forgot.

Continued on Page 3

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 Thursday, February 4, 199 - 7:30 PM At Dick and Maletha King's, 900 W. Quincy Ave, Englewood, CO

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 1430 AM *When Radio Was* weekdays from 7:00 till 8:00 PM
KEZW 1430 AM *Radio Movie Classics* Sundays 5:00 till 6:00 PM
KFKA 1310 AM *Radio Memories* Sundays 6:00 to 12:00 PM
KUVU 89.3 FM *Destination Freedom* 3rd Sunday of the month 7:30 PM

RHAC WEB SITE The RHAC web page and catalog is on the World Wide Web:
<http://www.old-time.com/rhac.html>

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Reference Material:	Bill McCracken, address above	303-986-9863
Logs & Scripts:	Fred Hinz, c/o RHAC, P O Box 1908, Englewood, CO 80150	
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Meeting/Christmas Party

The RHAC Meeting/Christmas Party was held on Saturday, December 12th was attended by 87 people. A really great turnout. Priscilla Licht did a great job greeting our guests.

Our special guest was the very talented Dick Williamson. Dick hosts *Radio Memories* every Sunday evening from 6:00 - 12:00 P.M. on KFKA, 1310 AM, in Greeley, CO. Dick entertained and informed us about Old-Time Radio in general and also about his six-hour weekly *Radio Memories* show.

Is Old-Time Radio still popular on the airwaves? You bet it is! Dick told us a story that demonstrated the popularity of his show.

During the current pro football season, KFKA, the station that originates Dick's show, was required to broadcast the CBS Sunday night football package if they wanted to carry the Denver Broncos playoff games. This reduced Dick's show to a little over two hours each week instead of its normal length of six hours. The station received so many complaints about the reduced hours for *Radio Memories* that station management approached CBS with the problem. CBS gave the station KFKA an exemption from carrying the weekly Sunday night football games and will still allow KFKA to carry the playoff games. *Radio Memories* is back to its normal six hour broadcasts from 6 PM to Midnight on Sunday evenings.

Watch for an article on Dick's presentation in an upcoming *Return With Us Now...*

Next, the RHAC Players did a fine job presenting the "The No One Was Murdered Case" episode from the series *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*. Johnnie Redcap (played by Matthew Bantin-Johnson) in his cap & red jacket with his "Call For Phillip Morrrr-ris" opened the show.

Our experience was made more intimate, nostalgic, and home-like by having a modified console radio equipped with a lighted dial and large speaker. This radio will be used for future performances of The Players and the audience will be able to gather around it.

The Cast included:

Guy Albright as Francis, the butler;

Fred Hinz as Big Man, Johnny's enforcer;

John Licht as Otis, police Sargent;

Ed Mehner as Johnny Blackwell, mysterious crime figure and member of high society;

Kristi Olson as Helen Asher, Diamond's girl friend;

Jack Schuster as Walt Levinson, police Captain;

Dorothy Weide as Rita Blackwell, Johnny's attractive and sophisticated wife;

Larry Weide as Richard Diamond, a private detective;

Dick Williamson as Adam Wooster, well-to-do friend of Johnny Blackwell's; and

Ernie Witte as Vladimir, Russian artist.

Nancy Witte was the announcer.

The play was directed by JoAnn Bantin and Barry Winograd. Dave Clow did the audio/sound effects. The technical supervision was done by Fred Bantin. John Stevenson provided the music. Johnny's costume was created by Reva Fuerstenberger.



By JoAnn Bantin
Chairwoman, RHAC Players

The first full year of our recre-

ations of Old Radio Shows has now passed and I believe that it was very successful. All the comments about *Richard Diamond, Private Detective* were very complimentary. The Players will be having a January meeting to get together and discuss what they would like to do in 1999. I will be sending out a letter to all current Players early in December with a return postcard as to preferences about when and where this meeting should be held.

If you do not receive this letter and are interested in the Players, please call me. We need actors, writers, artists, computer people, sound effects people, and people that would just like to help in general.

If I'm not home, you can leave a message in the Denver area at 303-343-7508 or in Greeley at 970-356-8862 and I'll send you the letter about the January meeting.

SURDIN & DARBY:

Continued from Page 1

As Surdin grew older, he decided to play the piano, trombone, and French horn. At thirteen he composed an original ballet for school, and at sixteen he was making pocket money leading his own band. Nevertheless at seventeen he went to work in a drug store and landed, to his chagrin, behind the soda and sandwich counter. "It took me six months to tire of it," he said, "and then I decided in favor of a musical career." He broke in at the tail end of vaudeville, and one of his first jobs was working as a copyist for Ben Bernie.

The other half of the duo, Ray Darby, admitted he couldn't have had any natural talent for writing because it wasn't until he was sixteen that he found out he wanted to write. Born in Edmonton, in Alberta Providence, of mixed United States and Canadian parentage, Darby never finished high school, and worked as an eye glass polisher. He next took a job with an

electric utility firm, and later became the editor of the company magazine and did public relations and publicity work. On the side he studied art, wrote children's books, short stories, and poetry. He kept freelancing and holding down the regular job until 1939, when he concentrated solely on the former.

Darby, the father of three children, had the idea for *Once Upon A Time*, as it was called at first, it made its formal "debut" playing for twelve weeks over CBC. Under the direction of noted Canadian producer, Esse Ljungh, to whom Darby & Surdin give credit for a large measure of their subsequent success, it attracted considerable attention in both Canada and the United States.

In New York City on a vacation during autumn of 1946, with a few studio recordings of their show packed in among their shirts & socks, they visited CBS, "mostly as a gag & wound up with a nine-year contract."

Once Upon A Tune was a series that presented original musical dramas, the majority as a radio cartoon. "Special Delivery," for example, concerned a mailman's last day on the job. "The Sentimental Locomotive" was a cleverly written musical about a locomotive very much in love with a French girl locomotive. Adam and the animals on the very first day were represented in "When the World Was New." The final broadcast presented an interesting look at the things that can happen Father Time takes a vacation.

Heralded by the critics as "an original musical/comedy series which defied precise definition," these half-hour shows were heard over CBS at three different time slots. After the first three broadcasts, *Once Upon A Tune* took over the time slot of *The Columbia Radio Workshop*. Originating from New York, the program featured a supporting cast of Parker Fennelly, Arnold Stang, Minerva Pious, Joseph Di Santis, Jack Grimes,

and Sandy Becker. Mae Questel, the voice of Betty Boop, guested in episode fourteen.

Broadcast Log to the Entire CBS Series

Broadcast Sunday afternoons from 2:30 to 3:00 p.m., EST

01. "Tugboat Danny" (01/05/47)
02. "Special Delivery" (01/12/47)
03. "Tortilla Jones" (01/19/47)

Broadcast Saturday evenings from 6:15 to 6:45 p.m., EST

04. "The Natural History of Nonsense" [written by Bergan Evans (01/25/47)
05. "The Sentimental Locomotive" (02/01/47)
06. "One of Our Bongs Is Missing" (02/08/47)
07. "Henry, the Spook" (02/15/47)
08. "Two Bits" (02/22/47)
09. "Atom From the Apple" (03/01/47)
10. "Ferdinand the Bullfrog" (03/08/47)
11. "Tortilla Jones" (03/15/47)
12. "No More Rainy Saturdays" (03/22/47)
13. "The Sentimental Locomotive" (03/29/47)

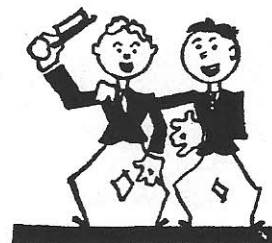
Broadcast Saturday evenings from 8:00 to 8:30 p.m., EST

14. "The Wabbits of Warren" (04/05/47)
15. "Head in the Clouds" (04/12/47)
16. "When the World Was New" (04/19/47)
17. "Time Unlimited" (04/26/47)

Editor's Note:

RHAC member Martin Grams Jr is the author of *Suspense: Twenty Years of Thrills and Chills* and the co-author of the soon-to-be published *CBS Radio Mystery Theater: An Episode Guide and Handbook to Nine Years of Broadcasting*. See the May, 1998 Newsletter for ordering information on the *Suspense* book. For ordering information on the *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* book, call

McFarland and Company Publishers at 1-800-253-2187.



Radio Memories: Local Corn

By Lon McCartt

Pete Symthe was a local Denver radio personality in the 1950's that many of us still remember fondly. His program originated from a mythical store called "Pete Symthe's General Store" from the mythical town of Tincup, Colorado. He had a musical opening that was very familiar at the time, but something that I can't now remember. It was all about opening up the store and "now we're ready for business" etc. He had an old player piano that we heard occasionally and plenty of folksy chatter. Several years after it gained popularity, a small commercial development sprang up in the foothills with the name Tincup. I don't know if it was connected with the program, but I don't think it survived too long.

Joe Flood was another local radio personality that I enjoyed. He had a program called *The Upsy Daisy Show*. During the course of the show, he would bang on the pots and pans and make up all sorts of noise so his listeners would get out of bed and get going. He also had an evening program that played some unusual records. I think they were classified as novelty tunes. At any rate, I loved them at the time.

Chuck Collins, the father of singer Judy Collins, used to play the piano and sing on a local radio program. Our school class went to see him perform in the radio studio once and then he visited our school and

performed in the auditorium. He was blind and was a great example of how a person can overcome a handicap. His motto was: "Every stumbling block can become a stepping stone."

The last person I remember was Don Roberts. He had a morning show which always started with *The Star-Spangled Banner* and the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

There are still plenty of local shows, but I miss the down-home quality and folksy charm of the old programs of my youth.

1998 SPERDVAC Convention

(Society for the Preservation of Radio Drama, Variety & Comedy)

Los Angeles, CA

By Dick and Maletha King

Friday afternoon Nov. 13 through Sunday Morning Nov. 15, 1998

First thing we would like to mention is a job done very well by John and Larry Gassman. The Convention was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, a first-class hotel with a first-class staff. This was the first year that SPERDVAC allowed total cassette sales in the Dealers' rooms.

On Friday afternoon was a WWII War-time radio presentation by RHAC member Howard Blue, author of "Words At War". Howard is writing a book about the role radio played in keeping up the spirits of the American listening audience. He has found that there is so much material that he may have to write additional books on the effects the war propaganda had in both England and Germany.

The Friday evening program started with *Amos 'n' Andy* episode titled "French Bullion" RHAC member John Rayburn as ANDY and Dave Warren as AMOS and it was Great! John and Dave have been able to bring back the true spirit and sound of *Amos 'n' Andy*. It was followed by the *Escape* story, "Train From

Oebisfelde," another well-done recreation.

Saturday morning started out with a writers' panel. There are many books being written about yesterday's radio stars. Most of them are being written by those that knew them best, their family members.

Then there was a "cold read" of a script (when actors see their script for the first time), that didn't cause the pro's any problems.

The session on Saturday afternoon featured several re-creations. The first was "30 minutes to Curtain." This was a re-creation of the *Suspense* play, "The Whole Town's Sleeping." and an episode of *The Romance of Helen Trent*. Then a *Superman* episode, "The Adventure of the Deadly Double-Cross" was presented. SPERDVAC was able to gather a group of experienced actors that were able to pick up any script and make a good show of the reading after only one or two read-throughs.

A panel on Radio Singers hosted by John Rayburn and Larry Stevens was focused on Larry's time with Jack Benny. Larry got a great start on his career from Jack Benny. He has been singing ever since although he had to get other jobs at times to keep the groceries coming. He was able to really belt out a couple of songs and has certainly kept himself in good condition so that his singing is strong. He has now made a CD, *The Years of My Youth*, that was being offered in the Dealers' room. Yes, we picked one up. Great voice for a young man, and certainly great for a man of 84.

The afternoon session wound up with a Tribute to Hans Conried. Reminiscences of Hans were provided by Peggy Webber, Larry Dobkins, and others.

Saturday evening started out with another great *Amos 'n' Andy* followed by *Sweet and Sassy Gal*. They were followed by the hit of the evening, a *My Favorite Husband* re-creation - "Trying to Marry Off Peggy Martin"

with Suzanne LaRusch as Liz Cooper character created by Lucille Ball. Suzanne looks like Lucy, talks like Lucy, and acts like Lucy. The great cast also included: Sandra Gould, Larry Dobkin, and Alice Backes. There was also a group called "Pitch In Time" with Johnny Fulco, John Gassman, Larry Gassman, and Ed Ehrnman going the vocal commercials and they were very well done.

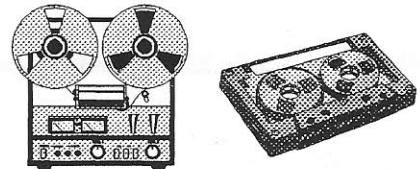
A Sunday morning brunch and discussion by Larry Stevens and John Rayburn concluded the Convention activities. Larry sang some songs of the great days of music. The whole convention was well worth the time and money spent to attend.

Editor's Notes: Larry Stevens CD is available for \$15.00 from:

L and N Productions

Box 399

Santa Maria, CA 93456



New in The Tape Library

By Maletha & Dick King

1999 will start off with another offering of the *NBC Short Stories*. The balance of this month's new entries into the library will be episodes of the outstanding series *Cavalcade of America*, which we personally feel was one of the greatest shows ever presented. It is almost impossible to pick out a single show to write about since they are all so informative and bring out little things about the subject that we so briefly covered in our school days and many that we never even knew about. I think that the show on "The Raven," Sam Houston's nickname is very informative, but so are the rest of them. A good friend of ours sent us an

article about "Traveler," Robert E. Lee's great horse, and it just fit in with the show about Lee. It is all a part of this country's fascinating past and the foreground of the present. We certainly urge all of you to take the time to listen to the shows offered. They will give you a good feeling.

These shows can be used by teachers and schools since they are based on fact. They are a great way to get your history and an insight into the people who were responsible for this great country.

Cavalcade has long been a favorite in our house, and we get to hear all of them as Dick makes the cassettes. We are not history buffs, but when history is presented in such a way, it is really a pleasure to listen to.

We have so many great shows coming the new year and a few "also-rans," but that is just a part of life on the radio. Even if there is a minor sound fault, they are great to listen to and to share with your friends.

Editor's Note: A book on *Cavalcade of America* will be published this year. Watch for more information on this book in an upcoming issue of *Return With Us Now...*

Thanks to Our Librarians

We need to thank our various librarians for their efforts to serve our members. We want to remind you all that they are volunteers that need a note of thanks once in a while. They are also subject to problems with illness and families, but they are so very good about helping out, that we need to let them know we all appreciate their work.

Please — Sign Those Order Forms

We are running into more people who do not sign their tape order forms. If your orders are not signed that you pledge not to use the tapes commercially, we will not be able to send them to you. Although we have

not been as strict about this as we should have been, it is a very important thing if you want us to be able to offer the shows for your enjoyment. We are not worried about you sharing them with a friend, just don't use them for broadcast or for sale.



Radio Quiz

Member David Michael has submitted quizzes on Old-Time Radio. A quiz appears in the Newsletter each month.

Part 2 - Supply the last name of these men whose first (and some times, middle) names are shown. Each were announcers, or so started their career.

- 11 David Cunningham
- 12 Alois
- 13 Clem
- 14 Egbert Roscoe (new first name)
- 15 Bert
- 16 Teddy Bergman (complete new name)
- 17 Lowell
- 18 Westbrook
- 19 Myron Leon (complete new name)
- 20 Harlow

Answers to this quiz will appear in the February Newsletter.

Answers to December, 1998 Quiz.

Supply the last name of these men whose first (and some times, middle) names are shown. Each were announcers, or so started their career.

- 1 Melvin Israel (new last name)
Mel Allen
- 2 Pierre
Pierre Andre
- 3 Lester Kroll (complete new name)
John J. Anthony
- 4 Walter
Red Barber

- 5 Andre
Andre Baruch
- 6 Brace
Brace Beemer
- 7 Truman
Truman Bradley
- 8 Foster
Foster Brooks
- 9 Milton
Milton Cross
- 10 Ford
Ford Frick



Needed: Articles

Here's your chance to make a New Year's Resolution: *Write an article for RETURN WITH US NOW...!*

To keep the monthly RHAC newsletter interesting, articles from our members are needed on a regular basis. You don't have to be a professional writer to submit an article. Your article can be on any topic related to Old-Time Radio or New-Time Radio.

Send your articles to Stewart Wright, Editor, at either of his addresses, regular or E-Mail, which is listed on page 2 of the Newsletter.

Distaff Detectives

Editor's Note: The radio detective world was not a totally male domain; there were women in this field. Jack French, the editor of *Radio Recall*, the newsletter of the Metro Washington OTR Club has written this series of short, Copyrighted articles on women radio detectives. These articles can also be found on Kevin's Smith's *Thrilling Detective* Web site. Kevin's site is located at:

<http://www.colba.net/~kvnsmith/thrillingdetective/>

Continued on back page.

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Continued from Page 6

Ann Scotland

© By Jack French

An Old-Time Radio drama, featuring Arlene Francis as California P. I. *Ann Scotland*. Popular stage, film, and television star Arlene Francis had the lead in the ABC radio show *The Affairs of Ann Scotland*, produced in Hollywood under the sponsorship of the Hudnut Corporation. It ran from October 1946 to January 1947. Ken Niles was the announcer, Helen Mack directed, and Del Castillo provided organ music interludes.

Since no episodes of this program have survived and no scripts have surfaced, we shall have to rely on Francis' memories of this lady PI series. In her 1978 autobiography, published by Simon & Schuster, she recalls: "I was playing a sexy girl detective, sort of a private eyelash...who trapped her quarry with guile and feminine wiles." While doing this show, Francis was pregnant so "....I could hardly get close to the microphone. I could have been called Scotland Yard because that's how wide I was. But my voice still dripped

with the breathy nuance of 'Come up and see me sometime.' My friend, Claire Trevor, listening to the show in New York, sent me a wire saying, 'You don't sound the least bit pregnant, but you do sound as though you might be at any moment!'"

The Affairs of Ann Scotland
(1946-47, ABC)

Director: Helen Mack

Music: Del Castillo

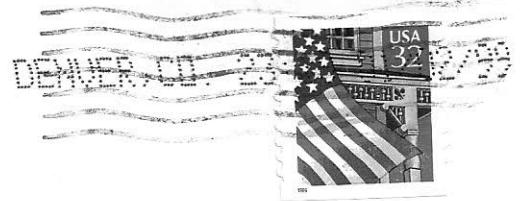
Sponsor: Hudnut Corporation

Announcer: Ken Niles

Starring Arlene Francis as *Ann Scotland*.

Radio Historical Association of Colorado
P.O. Box 1908 Englewood, CO 80150

FIRST CLASS MAIL



09/01/1999

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