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RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 30, Number 11

RHAC 30th Anniversary Year!

November, 2005

The Reluctant Westerner

By Stewart Wright

When fans think about of actors who played OTR Western roles, different names come to mind. Many think of Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, or Hopalong Cassidy. Others think of William Conrad on *Gunsmoke*, Guy Madison on *Wild Bill Hickock*, Jimmy Stewart on *The Six Shooter*, or Howard Culver on *Straight Arrow*.

Perhaps, with a clue, another actor may come to mind. What do these four CBS Radio adult Western series *Gunsmoke*, *Fort Laramie*, *Frontier Gentleman*, and *Have Gun Will Travel* have in common? One actor auditioned for the lead roles in all four series was offered the lead role in the first series, but turned it down and won the starring roles in the latter two series. John Dehner was that actor.

Dehner turned down the role of Matt Dillon in *Gunsmoke* because he thought he might get typecast as an actor who specialized in playing Western roles. Yet John Dehner went on to appear in at least 234 of the 480 *Gunsmoke* episodes; more than any other guest star. One week he might play a villain, the next a law-abiding citizen. He played cowboys, saddle bums, con men, cowards, and killers; he also played judges, Army officers, ranchers, and merchants. So frequent were Dehner's

appearances on *Gunsmoke* that on at least nine episodes in which he appeared he was not even mentioned in the cast credits. On another occasion, the episode "Crack-Up" (which aired on 10/16/1960) his birth name, John Forkum, was used in the cast credits. Dehner also originated the role of the little old man John, who would make a brief appearance and greet Marshal Dillon, often in the most unusual places like in the middle of the prairie.

John Dehner auditioned for the role of Lee Quince on *Fort Laramie*. Even though Raymond Burr wound up playing Capt. Quince, Dehner appeared in 14 episodes of the series. In the episode "Coward," John Dehner gives an exceptionally fine

performance as Lt. Robbie Wendt, a coward who was court-martialled and demoted for failing to come to the aid of his commander's unit.

As the star of *Frontier Gentleman*, and *Have Gun - Will Travel*, Dehner played an itinerant English reporter and a complex hired gun. Both of the starring characters, J.B. Kendall and Paladin respectively, were men who had skill with a gun, but preferred avoid its use whenever possible. These were



John Dehner in his role as Captain Lee Quince on "Fort Laramie"

two of the last Western series on radio. The last of the 41 episodes of *Frontier Gentleman* aired on 11/16/1958; the first *Have Gun - Will Travel* episode aired a week later.

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RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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Pirate Radio 104.7 FM	"Radio Memories" (Greeley)	Sunday, 6:30 - 12:00 PM
	and, Pirate Radio internet streaming at http://www.pirate1047.com	Sunday, 6:30 - 12:00 PM
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KRMA TV Channel 6	Secondary Audio Program (SAP), "Tribute to OTR"	Sunday, 2:00 PM

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Convention Schedules

There are no current convention schedule notices available

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Have Gun continued for another 105 episodes until 11/27/1960.

Out of the 667 combined network episodes in these four CBS radio series, John Dehner either starred or made guest appearances in an incredible 394 episodes. That's nearly 60 percent of the episodes. Dehner also had other Western roles on radio. He had the title role in a classic Western radio drama that was produced twice on the series Escape: "Wild Jack Rhett;" in which he played a ruthless gunman who specialized in taming wild towns. John Dehner also appeared on other radio Westerns including Wild Bill Hickok.

John Dehner also had an active career in television and movie Westerns. He appeared on at least 40 Western television series including The Adventures of Kit Carson, The Alaskans, A Man Called Shenandoah, Bat Masterson, The Big Valley, Black Saddle, Bonanza, Branded, Bronco, Cheyenne, Cimarron City, F Troop, Frontier Justice, Frontier, Have Gun - Will Travel, The High Chaparral, Laramie, Law of the Plainsman, Lawman, Maverick, The Monroes, Rawhide, The Rebel, The Restless Gun, The Rifleman, The Road West, Stagecoach West, Stoney Burke, Tales of Wells Fargo, The Texan, Wagon Train, Wanted: Dead or Alive, Wichita Town, The Wild Wild West, Young Maverick, Zane Grey Theater, and Zorro. On The Westerner, a highly regarded 1960 series created by Sam Peckinpah, Dehner had the featured role of Burgundy Smith. During the 1965-66 season, he played Morgan Starr on The Virginian. Additionally, he played the same role in three episodes of Guns Smoke that aired on radio and television: Nate Springer in "Crack-Up," Nip Cullers in "Tap Day for Kitty," and Wayne Russell in "Daddy-O." Dehner also appeared in many Western motion pictures including Support Your Local Gunfighter, Dirty Dingus Magee, The Cheyenne Social Club, The Hallelujah Trail (as the Narrator), The Left Handed Gun, Trooper Hook, The Fastest Gun Alive, and Apache.

Did John Dehner wind up being in typecast as a Western actor? No, not really. He had thousands of roles in radio that were of non-Western types. Also, in the majority of the approximately 150 television series and over 125 movies in which he appeared, Dehner did not play Western roles. John Dehner just happened to be a very talented actor who could play a wide variety of roles.

RETURN WITH US NOW...

Thanksgiving Listening

Here are a few Thanksgiving OTR shows available from our Club's Catalog:

THE JACK BENNY SHOW:

- "Thanksgiving Dinner" 11-23-41
Tape 741
"Thanksgiving Dinner at Mary's" 11-26-44
Tape 739
"Shopping for a Thanksgiving Turkey" 11-23-47
Tape 5118
"Jack Has Turkey Dreams" 11-21-43
Tape 5112
"Turkey Dreams" 11-30-47
Tape 025

THE GREAT GILDERSLEEVE:

- "Thanksgiving: The Tom Sawyer Raft" 11-26-47
Tape 721
"Serviceman for Thanksgiving Dinner" 11-16-41
Tape 100

CASEY, CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER:

- "After Turkey, The Bill" 11-27-47
Tape 203

THE LIFE OF RILEY:

- "Turkey Hunt" 11-19-44
Tape 365
"Thanksgiving with the Gillises" 11-29-47
Tape 981

THE ALDRICH FAMILY:

- "The Thanksgiving Turkey" 11-23-52
Tape 5376

THE MEL BLANC SHOW:

- "Thanksgiving Party" 11-26-46
Tape 1018

ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE:

- "The Terrified Turkey Caper" 11-24-50
Tape 5168

And one not-exactly-Thanksgiving show which is nevertheless topical

FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY:

- "Cooking Pheasants from an Old Indian Recipe" 11-23-48 Tape 062

Old Time Radio Moments of the Century (4)

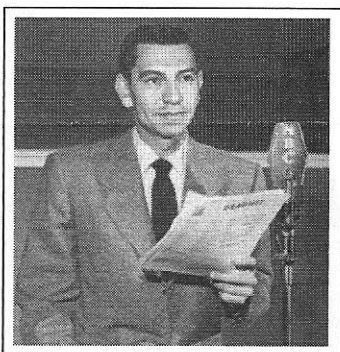
(The following article by broadcast historian Elizabeth McLeod is reproduced here with her permission.)

Ms. McLeod has listed her "top 100" 20th Century Radio Moments. We will be presenting 10 of her selections in RWUN each month for ten months.

70. The London Naval Conference 1/21/30

World leaders gather in the British capital to discuss Naval arms limitations -- and radio allows the world to listen in. NBC listeners follow the conference by BBC shortwave relay in a day-long special broadcast -- the first international news story to be covered in such a manner. It's also the first time American audiences hear a broadcast by a British monarch, as King George V opens the ceremonies.

69. Dragnet - a new era in police drama 1949



Just a cop doing his job, for thirty minutes a week. No wisecracks, no gum-chewing gun molls, no threadbare private eye cliches. Jack Webb created a whole new genre of radio crime drama -- a world of hard-working, down-to-earth law enforcement professionals who always finished their paperwork. His influence is with us yet.

68. Superman Battles Intolerance 1946-47

Juvenile adventure characters had always fought well-defined, simplistic villains: robbers, smugglers, pirates, Nazis. But in the first postwar spring, the mightiest hero of them all tackles a terrifying new enemy-- terrifying because he lives in every child's hometown. Terrifying because he might live right next door. Terrifying because he or she might be your own father or mother. Or, maybe, might even be you yourself. "Superman's" crusade against hate and bigotry is by far the most complex subject matter ever taken on by a children's program -- and over the next year, is a recurring theme in the series: breaking new ground for a genre which is usually concerned with issues no more complicated than selling cereal -- and, hopefully, helping to open the eyes of a generation of kids.

67. Mae West meets Charlie McCarthy 12/12/37

"Why Don't You Come Play In My --- Woodpile," purrs the sultry movie star to a flustered wooden puppet, to the nervous laughter of the studio audience. Earlier in the evening, Mae West had traded mild ribaldries with Don Ameche in the famous "Garden of Eden" sketch as a guest on the Chase and Sanborn Hour -- and it's that sketch that generates all the uproar, thanks to complaints from Catholic religious authorities in New York. But the truly explicit material comes later in the evening in Miss West's innuendo-filled exchange with Charlie McCarthy: possibly the bluest ten minutes the Red Network ever aired.

66. Kate Smith's War Bond Marathons 1944



Radio stars are wholehearted in their support for the war effort, but none more so than Kate Smith. Twice, she mounts round-the-clock marathon appeals for War Loan Drives -- appearing every hour on the hour on CBS to urge listeners to support the campaigns. By war's end, Kate Smith is by far the show-business bond-selling champion: personally responsible for raising more than \$600,000,000 for the war effort.

65. Lux Presents Hollywood 6/1/36

He doesn't produce the show. He doesn't direct it. He has nothing to do with casting it or choosing the scripts. He sometimes doesn't even show up for rehearsals. All he does is read lines someone else has written for him. But to listeners, none of that matters. Cecil B. DeMille is Hollywood. And when a two-year-old dramatic anthology moves to the film capital in mid-1936, the J. Walter Thompson Agency makes a brilliant move in tapping him to host. In interviews, he often takes public credit for work he didn't do -- a nod here to the unsung agency men who were the real masterminds of the program: Danny Danker, Tony Stanford, and Frank Woodruff -- but nevertheless DeMille wraps the program in his own mystique: and makes the Lux Radio Theatre a national institution.

64. Flood Tide for Demagogues 1935

Senator Huey P. Long, Father Charles E. Coughlin, The Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, Dr. Francis Townsend. Names that may not mean much today, but to radio listeners in the spring of 1935, they represent the thundering voice of political extremism. Promoting a weird blend of free-silver populism, anti-Semitism, and what can only be described as an Americanized "national socialism," Long, Coughlin, Smith and Townsend are all over the airwaves -- both the mainstream networks, and in Coughlin's case over a coast-to-coast private hookup -- and millions of Depression-weary listeners are paying close attention to what they have to say. The assassination of Long removes the movement's most popular speaker from

the scene -- but his colleagues carry on, sponsoring a third-party presidential candidate in 1936. Pressure from this radio-driven movement has a lasting effect, as the Roosevelt administration defuses one of its most potent weapons -- the Townsend Revolving Old Age Pension Plan -- by promoting an alternative: the Social Security Act. One is left to ponder -- with a shudder -- what might have happened had Long been alive to head the "Union Party" ticket in 1936.

63. Amos' Wedding 12/25/35



Seven years to the night after they became engaged, Amos Jones and Ruby Taylor are wed in a simple, dignified Christmas Night ceremony that caps the golden era of "Amos 'n' Andy," and marks the culmination of one of radio's most memorable love stories -- the tale of an unschooled but earnest young man from the country in love with a well-bred, college-educated young city woman. It was a tender, gentle romance which endured economic hardship, family tragedies, misunderstandings, and a near-fatal illness, all the while helping to establish precedents which would be followed in soap opera and "family drama" for decades to come.

62. Arthur Godfrey Goes National 1945

It isn't the first time he's heard on a network, but when Arthur Godfrey greets his coast-to-coast listeners on the morning of April 30, 1945, he stakes out a claim that would keep him there for twenty-seven years. Along the way, he becomes CBS's greatest moneymaker, and an influence on an entire generation of broadcasting personalities. One can make a convincing case that Godfrey was the greatest simple *communicator* ever to face the mike.

61. WLS National Barn Dance moves to the "Hayloft" 1928

Chicago was the capital of country music during the twenties and early thirties -- and WLS was its headquarters, reaching a vast audience all over the midwest. The primary showcase for the station's impressive roster of musical talent is the Saturday night "National Barn Dance" program --on the air since 1924 -- and when this series moves to Chicago's Eighth Street Theatre, soon to be known as "The Hayloft," it enters its golden era. In 1933, the show goes national: and Lulu Belle and Scotty, the Hoosier Hot Shots, the Vass Family, the Maple City Four, Uncle Ezra, and all the rest find a whole new audience.

**From the Desk of
the Editor
by Carol Tiffany**



As this is written, your editor's part of Florida has just been through yet another blast from Mother Nature. Fortunately, Wilma was a very fast-moving storm, so we had only 4 hours of 78 MPH winds and about 5 inches of rain. However, our just-repaired porch and pool enclosure lost some screens and our trees lost some of their remaining limbs. The good side is that only one month remains in this year's hurricane season.

This month's issue of RWUN continues with Elizabeth McCleod's 100 Greatest OTR moments. We hope that you are enjoying this feature. We also have an interesting article from Stewart Wright about John Dehner. Your editor was unaware of just how versatile and prolific an actor Mr. Dehner was until reading this fine piece.

We are also continuing our three-part "Recommended Listening" feature with suggestions for your Thanksgiving OTR listening. If you have any favorite holiday programs, please let us know and we will include them in the Christmas issue or in next year's Halloween and Thanksgiving suggestions.

Good listening to all...



**New in the Tape
and CD Libraries**

by Maletha King

This month the catalog page insert will be devoted an index of the CD library. We will continue with new library entries in the next issue of the newsletter.

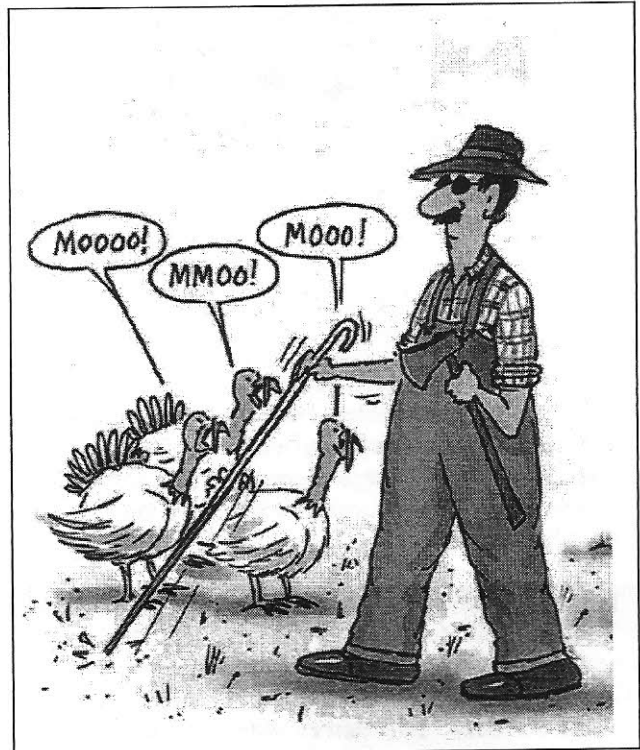
In the mean time, the officers of RHAC and the staff of "Return With Us Now" would like to wish everyone a very happy Thanksgiving with your family and friends.

The Trivial Matter of More OTR Trivia

This quiz deals with general OTR knowledge. Some answers are easy, some definitely aren't! Good Luck, everyone!

- 1) On One Man's Family, what were Claudia's husbands' names?
- 2) What was the name of the WWII espionage series starring Ilona Massey?
- 3) What were Fat Man Brad Runyon's weight and fortune?
- 4) The Lone Ranger always departed with the cry, "Hi Yo Silver"; what phrase did Tonto say to get his horse moving?
- 5) On Chandu, the Magician, Frank Chandler's arch-foe had what pallindromic name?
- 6) On Father Knows Best, what was Jim Anderson's job?
- 7) The Lux Radio Theater was hosted by big-name Hollywood director....
- 8) Jon Arthur's 1950s kid show Big Jon and Sparkie aka No School Today is best remembered for it's distinctive theme music. What was the name of the song?
- 9) Actor Tony Randall's least-favorite radio role was...
- 10) Who played Polly, Jack Benny's parrot?
- 11) Life with Luigi always opened with three little words...
- 12) What was the name of private detective Richard Diamond's long-suffering and very patient girlfriend?
- 13) Who played "George" on My Favorite Husband?
- 14) Who is being described in the following lead-in: "the story that asks the question, can this girl from a mining town in the West find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and titled Englishman?"

- 15) What was Throckmorton Gildersleeve's business in Wistful Vista before he moved to Summerfield and became Water Commissioner?
- 16) James Stewart starred as Britt Ponset in this OTR Western series.
- 17) What were Nero Wolfe's two greatest passions?



Answers to the OTR Trivia Matter Quiz

- 1) Johnny Roberts and Nicholas Lacey
- 2) Top Secret
- 3) Weight - 237 lbs. Fortune - danger!
- 4) "Get-um-up, Scout!"
- 5) Roxor
- 6) Insurance Agent
- 7) Cecil B. DeMille
- 8) The Teddy Bears' Picnic
- 9) Reggie Yorke on I Love a Mystery
- 10) Mel Blanc
- 11) "Dear Mama Mia..."
- 12) Helen Asher
- 13) Richard Denning
- 14) Our Gal Sunday
- 15) He owned/operated the Gildersleeve Girdle Works
- 16) The Six Shooter
- 17) Gourmet food and orchids

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