



# RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COLORADO



Volume 31, Number 10

October, 2006

## **. For Truth, Justice, and Kellogg's Pep! Or, *The Adventures Of Superman Revisited.* by Elizabeth McLeod**

Lois Lane was my childhood role model.

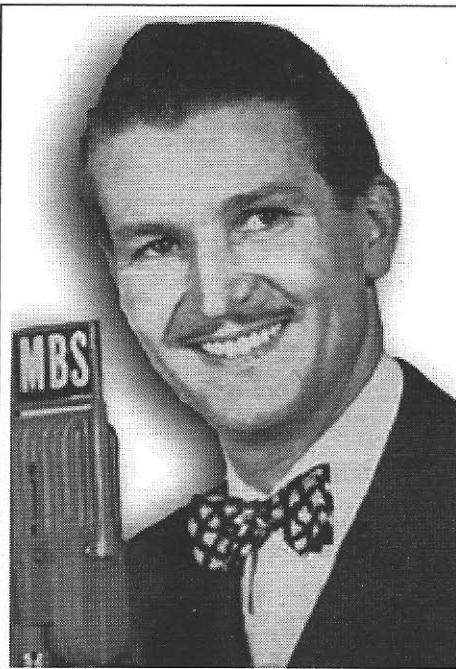
Not the simpering, scheming-to-marry-Superman Lois Lane of the 1960s comics. I'm talking about the gutsy, career-oriented Lois of the earliest episodes of the "Adventures Of Superman" TV series. Every after-school afternoon, I rushed home to watch reruns of the old George Reeves series -- not so much for that guy in the baggy tights, but for the exciting picture it portrayed of life in a newsroom -- a life that I aspired to for myself.

Well, I grew up, and got a job as a reporter. And it wasn't what I expected. But even my disillusionment with real-life-in-the-media didn't dim my deep-down desire to **Be Like Lois**, or my fond memories of "The Adventures of Superman." So, when virtually the entire run of the "Superman" radio series was unearthed in the 1980s, I couldn't wait to hear it. And, I wasn't disappointed.

In general, I'm not a big fan of kids' adventure serials -- the acting and the writing are usually just

too rudimentary to hold my interest. This may have something to do with the fact that I once subjected myself to over a hundred "Jack Armstrong" episodes in sequence over a weekend -- I was simply "jumpin' jiminy gee whizzed" to death. But "Superman" is different -- it's one of the few kids' serials that I think can stand up for an adult audience.

A big part of this is the craftsmanship that went into the show. Producer Robert Maxwell insisted on quality scripts, and writers like George Lowther and Jack Johnstone managed to combine compelling plots with crisp city-room dialogue to give the show a crackle all its own. (And yes, that's the Jack Johnstone who went on to contribute that same sort of crackle to "Yours Truly Johnny Dollar" in the 1950s.) The casting was especially good. Clayton "Bud" Collyer managed to give Clark Kent and his costumed alter-ego distinctively different personalities -- and managed to make Kent by far the more interesting of the two. Joan Alexander brought a crunchy Rosalind Russell quality to Lois, Julian Noa's cigar-throated bluster was perfect for Perry White, and Jackie Kelk was an appropriately feckless Jimmy Olsen. The sound effects and the direction were equally proficient -- and of course, no announcer ever set a dramatic



Clayton "Bud" Collyer

scene better than Jackson Beck.

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# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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#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

## Convention Schedules

**31st Friends of Old-time Radio Convention**, Oct 19 - 22, 2006 at the Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For information contact Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 (203) 248-2887 [JayHick@aol.com](mailto:JayHick@aol.com) or check our web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

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**RETURN WITH US NOW...**

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**October, 2006**

"Superman" started slow. The original syndicated series of the early forties, which was produced at WOR in New York and distributed to a small group of stations under the sponsorship of Hecker's Oats, suffers from glacial pacing. The stories plod along, with the actors seeming quite uncertain in their parts, and overall there's a bit too much "Here I Come To Save The Day" in Superman's manner. The syndications would improve over time, but the series didn't really reach its creative peak until it picked up Kelloggs' Pep as sponsor in January 1943, just four months after moving from syndication to the Mutual network. The Pep era brought Superman and his friends into sharp focus -- and the innovations of that era helped, in turn, to make the characters part of the national mythos. Far more than the comic-book version, the radio Superman is the definitive version of the character. Kryptonite, Jimmy Olsen, Inspector Henderson, "Great Scott!", and the Superman-Batman team -- all came out of the radio program, and have influenced all subsequent versions of the character. This is especially true



Joan Alexander

when you examine the way in which Clark Kent was portrayed -- the original Kent of the 1938-40 comics was derided as "a spineless worm, a weak-livered polecat," and in truth deserved these names. But the radio Kent evolved into a far more dynamic character: a crusading newspaperman who believed passionately in what he was doing, and, one suspects, really didn't \*need\* super powers to be effective. By the mid-forties, the radio Kent could even be found roughing up reluctant sources -- actions which would have appalled the yellow-bellied comic-book Kent of a few years earlier.

By contrast, the radio Superman was much closer in spirit to the early comic-book version of the character than to what he had become by the mid-forties. Originally, Superman was a New Deal/Labor sort of hero: squinty-eyed and broad-shouldered, looking for all the world like a WPA mural come to life, the original Siegel-and-Shuster character of the late thirties devoted his attentions not to mad scientists or cosmic supervillians but to greedy industrialists and

corrupt politicians. He was a character who delighted in such socially-provocative actions as stranding a bloated mining executive in one of his own unsafe shafts to give him a taste of what the workers had to deal with -- and while the radio Superman never went quite so far, the social conscience remained in evidence. Even after the comic-book Superman had become firmly identified with the Establishment, his radio counterpart

devoted plenty of his time to battling greed and corruption. The bigoted political boss "Big George Lattimer" was Superman's most persistent enemy during the late forties, constantly proclaiming his contempt for those "of a different color or different faith," and giving Superman and his friends ample opportunity to battle the Forces Of Hatred.

In the end, it's these socially-relevant episodes that are "Superman's" greatest legacy. Perhaps his epic 1945 battle against the Kryptonite-powered super-Nazi "Atom Man" was more exciting -- and, today, more marketable -- but Superman earned true radio immortality fighting a far more menacing, far more realistic evil.

Repeatedly in 1946 and 1947, Superman took stands for human rights, for equality, and against bigotry and racism -- taking the program where no simple kids' show had ever gone before. Whether battling a Ku-Klux-Klan like racist group or fighting for the rights of unemployed veterans, Superman showed his listeners what it really meant to be a hero.

And, even in our own day and age, it's a lesson well worth repeating.

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*Elizabeth McLeod is a journalist, researcher, and freelance writer specializing in radio of the 1930s. She is a regular contributor to "Nostalgia Digest" magazine and the Internet OldRadio Mailing List, maintains a website, Broadcasting History Resources, and is presently researching a book on Depression-era broadcasting. Elizabeth is always looking for 1930s radio recordings in all formats -- uncoated aluminum or lacquer-coated discs, vinyl or shellac pressings, or low-generation tape copies. You can contact her at [lizmcl@midcoast.com](mailto:lizmcl@midcoast.com)*

# Shampoo Promotion Gets Actress' Dander Up

By Danny Godwin

**"I'm Tallulah the Tube of *Prell*  
And I'll make your hair look swell  
It'll shine, it'll glow- so  
dandruff-free  
For radiant hair, get a hold of me!"**  
--- Tallulah the Tube

In 1949, *Procter & Gamble* launched a new advertising promotion for its *Prell Shampoo*. Little did anyone know how this supposedly harmless campaign would stir up some nasty controversy.

With the magic of radio, the listeners heard a new character known as "**Tallulah the Tube**" on the *Prell* radio commercials for (I believe to be) NBC's *LIFE OF RILEY* and *ROSEMARY* on CBS. While other tubes lay prone on a flat surface waiting for someone to squeeze its innards out, Tallulah displayed "**her**" talents as a radio singer (through the musical services of singer Fran Barber). The listeners heard Tallulah sing this classic ditty:

**"I'm Tallulah the Tube of *Prell*  
And I've got something to tell  
Your hair can be radiant and dandruff-free  
All you've got to do is take me home and squeeze me!"**

For the majority of radio listeners, the introduction of Tallulah the Tube was nothing more than a new promotion to sell *Prell Shampoo* -- certainly nothing to get excited about. Unfortunately, there would be one person who would take a definite dislike to it -- actress Tallulah Bankhead. Her dislike would lead to some problems for everyone responsible for the creation of the *Prell* promotion.

Ms. Bankhead believed the *Prell* character was created and designed in her image. She was distressed, humiliated, and exposed to public ridicule and contempt for this outrage. Ms. Bankhead sued *Procter & Gamble*, *Prell's* advertising agency, the CBS Radio Network, and the NBC Radio Network for \$1 million dollars.

In its March 28, 1949 issue, *Life Magazine* featured the article *Tallulah the Actress vs. Tallulah the Tube*, which detailed the controversy. In the article, Ms. Bankhead maintained her first name was

unique, and she resented being identified with a singing tube of shampoo. She also bristled at the thought of someone taking her home and squeezing her.

As for her name being unique, the article would dispute her claim. The magazine had pictures of other women, fire engines, dogs, temperamental cats, a Cherokee Native American, a river, and a gorge all named "**Tallulah**." As for the *Prell* character being designed in her image, the enclosed magazine ad would dispute that claim. Tallulah the Tube was nothing more than a face on a yellow *Prell* tube with arms, legs, and feet. There was nothing visually that connected with Ms. Bankhead's appearance.

**"Your Hair can be Radiant and Dandruff-free"**  
— all you've got to do is take me home and squeeze me! —

Doctors' examinations prove Prell Shampoo removes dandruff in as little as 3 minutes!

Light-moist rich foam Prell makes your hair more radiant!

THERE'S NO OTHER SHAMPOO LIKE EMERALD D O S CLEAR PRELL!

Wonderful, emerald color Prell — with its exclusive formula and patented cleansing ingredients — removes embarrassing dandruff fast! And Prell makes hair generally radiant! More radiant than any soap shampoo... more radiant — in hard water — than foaming cream shampoos. Prell is economical too — gives fatherly love any other shampoo because it's more concentrated. But soft, smooth, radiant hair — starts shampooing with Prell and Prell!

PRELL SHAMPOO  
CREATED BY PROCTER & GAMBLE

As for the people who created the advertising promotion, when Tallulah the Tube was created, they weren't even close of thinking about Ms. Bankhead--- in fact, "Tallulah" wasn't the first name they came up with. In order to fit with the jingle, the name "Ruby" was used. While the sound went along with the jingle, the name didn't fit because Ruby was a red colored jewel and *Prell's* shampoo color was emerald green. The name "Tessie" was also considered, but that too was cast aside. Finally, the *Prell* character was named "Tallulah" based from the song *I'll Take Tallulah* from the 1941 MGM movie *Ship Ahoy*. The creation of Tallulah the Tube would pass muster with the advertising agency, *Procter & Gamble*, *CBS*, and *NBC*.

What did the people think of this situation? Letters to *Life Magazine* concerning the article were a clear indication. The general opinion was nothing more than a publicity stunt to boost Ms. Bankhead into the spotlight. When they heard the radio commercials, the people didn't associate Tallulah the Tube with Ms. Bankhead--- until Ms. Bankhead hammered the whole idea into their heads. One writer to the magazine said Ms. Bankhead's tirades sold more shampoo than Tallulah the Tube ever could -- and that *Procter & Gamble* should pay her the \$1 million for free advertising.

Even Ms. Bankhead took time to write a letter to the magazine. She acknowledged her name was associated with other people, animals, and things -- but she was the only "Tallulah" millions of men, women, and children in this continent, Europe, and Asia has heard about.

Ms. Bankhead's lawsuit was instituted on February 24, 1949, but with the help of *Woman's Home Companion* magazine, Tallulah the Tube was still selling *Prell* until 1950.

*-Update (thanks to Tony Grillo): The controversy with P&G resulted in a \$5,000 out of court settlement with Ms. Bankhead, as well as having the offending commercial yanked from publication and broadcast.-*

## From the Desk of the Editor by Carol Tiffany



Every October we make it a tradition to listen to some of our all-time favorite Halloween offerings from our OTR collection on Halloween eve and Halloween night. If we are fortunate, we will have some thunder and lightening to provide some additional atmosphere. Hopefully, you, too, will be listening to some programs from *The Hall of Fantasy*, *Lights Out*, *The Witch's Tale* and all the others during the next few weeks. This is why I started collecting OTR shows to begin with; so I could listen to them whenever I wanted to, especially at the season when they were originally broadcast.

This month's RWUN has an interesting article from Elizabeth McLeod about radio's *Superman* which reveals a unique insight into Ms McLeod's inspiration for her career in journalism. Danny Goodwin provides a humorous piece about how an ad for *Prell* shampoo produced a controversy which far outstripped the original advertising promotion. Finally, we salute the season with our trivia quiz about "scary" shows.

Next month we will continue Stewart Wright's "Radio Personalities" series with an article about Jeanette Nolan. We also have another challenging crossword from Jack Richards.

*Good Listening to All...*



## New in the Tape and CD Libraries

by Maletha King

This month we continue with "Dangerous Assignment" starring Brian Donlevy. We can categorize this as an adult adventure show that takes our main character, Steve Mitchell, all over the world on "dangerous assignments" to stop nefarious forces from working against their own and other governments.

These shows may not be the thrillers that many of the juvenile shows were of that day, but they certainly have plenty of intrigue. Remember, these shows were produced not very long after WWII, and various references are occasionally made to the Nazis and others. These shows will remind our members of how our government is always working on our behalf.

## The Trivial Matter of Openings for OTR's Scariest Shows

By Carol Tiffany

*Match the opening lines/sound effects with the show title. Fill in the name of the show in the blank space indicated or after the description.*

- 1) "I am \_\_\_\_\_ and I know many things, for I walk by night."
- 2) "This is Orson Welles, speaking from London."  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3) "And Now \_\_\_\_\_, (drums, footsteps)  
Welcome to the series of radio dramas dedicated to the supernatural, the unusual, and the unknown."
- 4) (cackling laughter) "Once again, the keeper of the book.." \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) "This is Bela Lugosi, welcoming you to \_\_\_\_\_".
- 6) "We bring you \_\_\_\_\_ written and produced by Alonzo Dean Cole. And now, let us join old Nancy, Witch of Salem, and Satan, her wise black cat."
- 7) "Adventures in time and space, told in *future* tense ..." \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) (tolling bell) "This is the man in black, here to introduce..." \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) "Tired of the everyday grind? Do you dream of a life of romantic adventure? Wanna get away from it all? We offer you \_\_\_\_\_!"
- 10) "Who knows what evil LURKS in the hearts of men? \_\_\_\_\_ knows."
- 11) "\_\_\_\_\_ for (*episode name*). It... is... later... than... you... think."
- 12) (Train whistle, footsteps, train passing) "This is \_\_\_\_\_ inviting you to join me on another journey into the realm of the strange and the terrifying..."

- 13) (swelling organ music) "Lipton tea and Lipton soup present \_\_\_\_\_ (long squeak) Good evening, friends, this is your horror host at the squeaking door ..."

- A) THE SEALED BOOK
- B) THE WITCH'S TALE
- C) THE HALL OF FANTASY
- D) MYSTERY HOUSE
- E) DIMENSION X
- F) THE WHISTLER
- G) THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER
- H) INNER SANCTUM MYSTERIES
- I) THE SHADOW
- J) THE BLACK MUSEUM
- K) LIGHTS OUT
- L) ESCAPE
- M) SUSPENSE

Answers to the Trivia Questions - don't peek!

- 1) "I am **F** and I know many things, for I walk by night."
  - 2) "This is Orson Welles, speaking from London."  
\_\_\_\_\_ **J**
  - 3) "And Now **C**, (drums, footsteps) Welcome to the series of radio dramas dedicated to the supernatural, the unusual, and the unknown."  
\_\_\_\_\_ **M**
  - 4) (cackling laughter) "Once again, the keeper of the book.." **A**
  - 5) "This is Bela Lugosi, welcoming you to \_\_\_\_\_".  
\_\_\_\_\_ **D**
  - 6) "We bring you \_\_\_\_\_ written and produced by Alonzo Dean Cole. And now, let us join old Nancy, Witch of Salem, and Satan, her wise black cat."  
\_\_\_\_\_ **B**
  - 7) "Adventures in time and space, told in *future* tense ..." \_\_\_\_\_ **E**
  - 8) (tolling bell) "This is the man in black, here to introduce..." **M**
  - 9) "Tired of the everyday grind? Do you dream of a life of romantic adventure? Wanna get away from it all? We offer you \_\_\_\_\_!"  
\_\_\_\_\_ **L**
  - 10) "Who knows what evil LURKS in the hearts of men? \_\_\_\_\_ knows."  
\_\_\_\_\_ **I**
  - 11) "\_\_\_\_\_ for (*episode name*). It... is... later... than... you... think."  
\_\_\_\_\_ **K**
  - 12) (Train whistle, footsteps, train passing) "This is \_\_\_\_\_ inviting you to join me on another journey into the realm of the strange and the terrifying..."  
\_\_\_\_\_ **G**
  - 13) (swelling organ music) "Lipton tea and Lipton soup present \_\_\_\_\_ (long squeak) Good evening, friends, this is your horror host at the squeaking door..."  
\_\_\_\_\_ **H**