



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

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SUPERMAN

By Paul Barringer

(continued from last month)

In the second episode the opening changes somewhat: Announcer: Presenting Superman!

Man #1: Up in the sky look!

Woman: It's a bird!

Man #2: It's a plane!

Man #3: It's Superman!

As you can see, the sequence in which the men and the woman speak and what they say has been changed. The following is also a change from the first episode opening.

Announcer: And now Superman, eighth wonder of the modern world, visitor from a distant planet, whose strength knows no limits, whose endurance is beyond anything humanity has ever known.

The announcer goes on to tell of the rocket ships long journey to earth, and that during this journey the child has become a man, and that the rocket ship landed in a desert, where Superman steps forth full grown to explore the strange new world in which he has found himself. Once again, the radio program differs from the comic book adaptation. Superman is full grown when he lands on Earth, not a baby as in the comic book, and he lands in a desert, not in a farm field, as in the comic book.

Later in the episode Superman rescues a professor and his young son trapped in a runaway

trolley train. After a safe rescue, and upon landing safely on the ground, Superman asks that the pair say nothing of the incident. The two give Superman their word to say nothing of what happened. Superman in return asks for the pairs' advice, saying: "You know this world, I am a stranger, you know the people in it, and I have still to find them out."

Professor: You want to meet men, is that it?

Superman: Not, meet them professor, observe them, study them at their best and their worst, know which to help, and when help is needed, if you can tell me that....

The young boy interrupts, saying: Dad, can we help him?

Professor: Well, I think so Jimmy, if that's what he wants.

Superman: It would mean a great deal to me professor.

Professor: Well my friend, if we can call you that.....

Boy interrupts: I hope we can.

Superman: My first friends on this earth.

Professor: To mingle with people, to see men at the highest and the lowest, if that's what you want... ah, now, let me think. How about a newspaper, a great metropolitan daily?

Superman: A newspaper. (More in a tone of a statement, rather than a question)

Professor: Yes, join their staff, be a reporter.

At this point in the episode the boy tells Superman he can't do it in the clothes he is wearing, to which Superman replies: If I become as other men, I shall

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Cincinnati's 22nd Old Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention, April 11 – 12, 2008; Cincinnati North Hotel; Contact Bob Burchett, 10280 Gunpowder Rd., Florence, KY 41042 (888-477-9112), haradio@hotmail.com

Memphis Film, Radio and TV Festival, June 5 - 7, 2008; Whispering Woods Hotel, Olive Branch Mississippi; Contact R Nielsen, Box 87, Conway, AR 72033 www.memphisfilmfestival.com; e-mail rnielsen@alltel.net

33rd Friends of Old-time Radio Convention, Oct 23 – 26, 2008 Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For info: Jay Hickerson, 27436 Desert Rose Ct, Leesburg, FL 34748 (352) 727-6731, JayHick@aol.com, web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

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dress as other men. The professor tells Superman that he must assume some kind of a name, and asks what do they call you? Superman says he has no name.

Boy: Well... How about Clark Kent? That sounds all right.

Again we see the difference in the radio program and the comic book, where the name Clark Kent was given to Superman by the Kents after adopting him.

After more dialog with the two, Superman thanks them for the advice and reminds them of their promise and flies off.

Later in the episode Superman, as Clark Kent applies for a job at The Daily Planet.

In subsequent episodes, Superman matches wits with his first foe "The Wolfe". It was in the seventh episode of the program, that Clark Kent would meet the Daily Planet's veteran reporter, the ever inquisitive Lois Lane.

In 1942, Colliers name was identified as the voice of Superman/Clark Kent, in an article in Time Magazine, but his name was not credited on the radio program until 1946. Speculation was that the program wanted to keep his identity secret, much like that of Superman.

Although the program was very popular with the young after-school crowd, (and, I suppose, many adult followers because of the comic book's popularity) it was in 1946, that the radio program really jumped into the spotlight of the nation's media, as it presented its "Unity House" episodes. The story, "The Hate Mongers" would be the first of several story lines that would deal with racism, as Superman would take up the battle against racial and religious intolerance.

The programs sponsors, (Kellogg's and the Mutual Network) were at first a bit reluctant and anxious over what kind of reaction its' listeners and the public would have to the program, but were soon delighted and relieved as the program would soon gain its highest ratings in the show's history.

The program soon jumped into the number one spot of juvenile radio. Although the series would garner dozens of endorsements from many organizations, it would also produce abundant hate mail. At one point during the series, Collyer would proudly step into the media spotlight and promote the story lines. This series was quite possibly the most intricate and involved subject to be presented in the history of juvenile radio programming.

Another such story involved the producers collaborating with Mr. Stetson Kennedy, a human

rights activist, to present a series of episodes titled "The Clan of the Fiery Cross", where Superman would do battle with the Ku Klux Klan. Again the program hit the big time, and garnered more listeners. This program came from the fact that Kennedy had infiltrated the ranks of the Klan where he was able to gain important information about the organization, including rituals of the Klan and secret passwords, which were passed on to the programs producers. As the show was presented on the air, the Klan denounced the show and wanted a boycott from the people against the show's producer (Kellogg's), but the food giant stood behind the producers and the program itself. This series of episodes had a big negative impact on the Klan's membership and recruitment.

Another story along these lines was "Knights of the White Carnation", in which Clark Kent and Jimmy Olsen encounter a racist group that would resort to murder in order to provide an end to their agenda.

A following story in the series, "The Skin Game", would result in Jimmy Olsen being shot by a racist, who was aiming at a young black youth, one of the Unity House's track team members.

So, as you can see, the program's producers had the Superman character fighting villains, smugglers, and robbers around the world with his amazing feats, but he also was instilling into the minds, and opening the eyes, of young kids the facts of acceptance and toleration, for their futures and their generation's future.

Quite a feat for a man from another planet, who would not have made it to earth, had it not been for two young men and their love of science fiction, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

Additional thoughts and insights on the radio program and the Superman character:

Although Collyer's voice was not heard as Superman on the first episode, his voice was one of those in the background during the story of Krypton's doom.

Among Collyer's other accomplishments and roles on radio, included a variety of soap operas including "Just Plain Bill" and "Young Wider Brown", announcing "Ripley's Believe It Or Not", announcing on "The Cavalcade Of Sports" and "The March Of Time", where he would do impersonations of various world leaders. Some of you might even remember him on "Abbie's Irish Rose", where he

played the part of Abbie.

As well as doing the voices of Clark Kent and Superman in the first seventeen cartoons for Fleischer Studios, Collyer also voiced Superman in the late 60's cartoon series "The New Adventures of Superman".

The 1943 introduction of the green element, "Kryptonite" was presented on the program to allow Collyer to take a few days off, and create an excuse or reason for Superman to be too weak to speak. So, too, were the characters of Batman and Robin used for the same reason, appearing on the program by themselves to allow Collyer time off from the weekly chore of broadcasting, because this was before the transcription of radio programs was introduced.

As stated before, the comic book would eventually adopt the Kryptonite element into its pages where it would become part of the Superman legend.

Collyer would always be available to do public service announcements and messages for many charitable organizations, including the March Of Dimes and similar drives for disease research... Collyer would also write two books, "With The Whole Heart" and "Thou Shalt Not Fear" Clayton "Bud" Collyer died September 8, 1969 from a circulatory ailment.

Helen Choate, who played Lois Lane early in the series, was also the voice of Patsy Bowen, secretary for Nick Carter in the radio presentation of "Nick Carter Detective".

Joan Alexander, Lois Lane later in the program, also played the secretary on "Philo Vance". She did the voice of Lois Lane in "The Adventures Of Superman" in the 60's cartoon series, and was the voice of Lois Lane in the Fleischer cartoons.

In the 1945 radio broadcast, Superman pits his strength against "The Atom Man", wherein Mason Adams played the fiendish character in the 38 episodes. Batman and Robin would also appear in this program to help Superman do battle with The Atom Man. This story line is said by some to be the best serial in the history of the program.

Batman and Robin would appear with Superman in a total of thirteen episodes. Batman was first played by Stacy Harris, and then Matt Crowley would assume the role of the caped crusader in mid-stream of the second Superman-Batman serial

episodes. Gary Merrill is also listed as being the voice of Batman on the show. The part of Robin would be portrayed by Ron Liss in all of the Superman-Batman shows.

The shows great announcer, Jackson Beck, whose golden voice echoed across the airways with the programs famous words "It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman", was also the voice of "Bluto" in some 300 Popeye cartoons, and he did many character voices in numerous television commercials. Just by coincidence, Beck was the best man at George Reeves' wedding.

The United Kingdom also produced a radio program titled "Superman; Doomsday and Beyond" which was inspired by the original program. The part of Superman was played by Stuart Milligan.

The great sound effect of rushing and whining wind was created by the program's sound effects team, by combining a recording of an artillery shell shot through the air and a separate sound track of a wind tunnel played backwards. By slowing down by hand the recording, the team was able to make the sound of Superman swooping down from above. And by bringing the turntable to a stop they were able to create the impression that Superman had dropped to the ground.

There were two Superman big screen serials, the first in 1948, which was just plainly called "Superman", the second in 1950, titled "Atom Man Vs Superman", reportedly inspired by the

radio series "The Atom Man". Both of these serials were fifteen chapters long and Superman was played by Kirk Alyn, Lois Lane was played by Noel Neill, who also played the second Lois Lane on television's Superman with George Reeves.

In both of these serials on the big screen, the parts where Superman would leap into the air and fly were animated figures. Very disappointing to the viewer. This technique used was called "Rotoscoping" where actual live film and animation are combined on screen.

Jimmy Olsen was played by Tommy Bond. In the serial, Bond was not well recognized, but those of us that remember the "Our Gang" and "Little Rascals" movies, remember him as the bully "Butch", that was Alfalfa's constant antagonist and nemesis on screen.

The year following the exit of Superman from radio, the Man Of Steel would make his debut on



Noel Neill & George Reeves

television, with George Reeves. Reeves also made the Superman movie, "Superman And The Mole Men" with Phyllis Coates, who was also the first television Lois Lane. Christopher Reeve would revive the role of Superman on the big screen in four movies.

In the first radio episode of Superman, Lara was played by the multi-talented Agnes Moorehead (Margo Lane on radios The Shadow), Jor-El was voiced by Ned Weaver (Bulldog Drummond) and Mr. District Attorney's, Jay Joston appeared in the role of Rozan.

On television, The Superman character would appear in various cartoon shows.

"Lois and Clark, The New Adventures of Superman" would premiere on television in 1993. "Smallville", the story of Clark Kent's boyhood would also run on television, with Tom Welling as Clark Kent. The recent release of "Superman Returns" starring Brandon Roth would bring the Man Of Steel's legend back to the public on the big screen. In 1989 there was a Superboy television show which was on for four seasons.

In 1966 Superman appeared on the Broadway stage in the musical "It's A Bird... It's A Plane... It's Superman, starring Bob Holiday.

Nicolas Cage, the actor, and his wife named their new-born son, "Kal-El" after, you guessed it, the Superman character.

Jerry Seinfeld, the comedian, is reported to be a big Superman fan. On his television shows there is a figure of Superman in his apartment.

During the run of Superman on radio, the shows sponsor (Kellogg's), offered many radio premiums in their cereal boxes including model planes, 30 hot iron patches, and a series of 86 different color comic strip buttons, which featured a host of comic strip characters that included Dick Tracy, Orphan Annie, Moon Mullins, Andy Gump, Harold Teen, and, of course, our hero, Superman. The cereal giant also offered a cardboard walkie talkie, but to receive this offer you had to send in two box tops and ten cents.

The character of Superman and those who played him have had a lot of controversy involved in the history of the Man Of Steel. We all know about the death of George Reeves and the mystery surrounding his death. Then there was Christopher Reeve, his tragic accident, and his untimely death. Even Superman, in the 1993 comic book, "The Death Of Superman" would die..... he would be resurrected later the same year.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

A Brief AFTRA History and the Stars who were its President

by Jack French

In 2007, **AFTRA** celebrated its 70th birthday, having been born in the fall of 1937, starting with 400 charter members in union local chapters in New York City and Los Angeles. Chicago, the "soap opera" center, quickly formed its own local and by December 1937, this new organization, the American Federation of Radio Artists (AFRA) had 2,000 members which covered about 90% of all radio performers in the major broadcasting cities.

That name would remain until September 1952 when AFRA merged with a sister union, the Television Authority, to become the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (**AFTRA**) which it is today. Over the years, many working radio actors were elected to the presidency of this union, several of whom are well known to OTR fans today.

Eddie Cantor, star of stage, screen, and radio was AFRA's first president, serving from 1937 to 1939. One of radio's favorite announcers, Ken Carpenter, was the president from 1946 to 1947. Clayton "Bud" Collyer, who played Superman and also appeared on many soaps, served as president of both AFRA (1948 to 1950) and later AFTRA (1957 to 1959). By the latter term, he was primarily a television star, including hosting "Beat the Clock."

Between Collyer's two terms, other popular radio stars were elected president. Knox Manning, the announcer of the "Sherlock Holmes" series, led AFRA from 1950 to 1952. His successor, who took over the merged union of **AFTRA**, was the co-lead in "Ethel and Albert," the talented Alan Bunce, who played the role with Peg Lynch on both radio and TV. Frank Nelson, who delighted audiences with his "Yeeeesss" on the Jack Benny show, took over the reins of **AFTRA** in 1954 and led the union until 1957.

AFTRA's first woman president was Virginia Payne and her term of office was 1959 to 1961. Her fellow performers had dubbed her the "Iron Woman" of radio since she had played "Ma Perkins" five days a week for 27 years (1933 to 1960) without missing a single performance. Popular narrator and announcer, Art Gilmore, was elected president in 1961 and served two terms. In 1965, veteran radio actor Tyler McVey became the **AFTRA** president and led the union until 1967

The Trivial Matter of OTR's Favorite Couples

By Carol Tiffany

Match the hero/heroine with his/her chief heartthrob or significant other. Usually these relationships were boyfriend/girlfriend, but occasionally the couple were engaged or even married.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| __ Richard Diamond | A. Maggie |
| __ Connie Brooks | B. Rusty |
| __ Throckmorton | C. Kitty |
| __ Gildersleeve | |
| __ Nick Charles | D. Ray |
| __ Jack Benny | E. Margo |
| __ Luigi Basco | F. Lois |
| __ Frank Chandler (Chandu) | G. Inza |
| __ Helen Trent | H. Mollie |
| __ Jerry North | I. Nora |
| __ Lamont Cranston | J. Helen |
| __ Matt Dillon | K. Nadji |
| __ Slate Shannon | L. Man |
| __ Sam Spade | M. Gil |
| __ Will Rogers | N. Phillip |
| __ Frank Merriwell | O. Sailor Duval |
| __ Fibber McGee | P. Rosa |
| __ Candy Matson | Q. Effie |
| __ Dr. Dan Danfield | R. Mary |
| __ Clark Kent | S. Leila |



New in the Tape and CD Libraries

by Maletha King

This month we have the chance to offer and enjoy many shows of "Best Plays" that are some of the classics and really worth the time to listen to and enjoy. We continue with a fine selection of musical programs including the "Nehi Program" and "The Les Paul and Marry Ford Show". I had forgotten how great these shows were, and I'm sure you'll enjoy them as much as I did.

We then move on to the start of a series of shows for the Si-Fi members in the first installments of a series called "Journey Into Space". These will continue next month and can really start your imagination going.

From all the staff of "Return With Us Now", and the officers of RHAC, we wish all mother's everywhere a very ...



Answers to Favorite Couples Quiz

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| A. Maggie | J. Richard Diamond |
| B. Rusty | N. Connie Brooks |
| C. Kitty | S. Throckmorton Gildersleeve |
| D. Ray | I. Nick Charles |
| E. Margo | R. Jack Benny |
| F. Lois | P. Luigi Basco |
| G. Inza | K. Frank Chandler (Chandu) |
| H. Mollie | M. Helen Trent |
| I. Nora | L. Jerry North |
| J. Helen | E. Lamont Cranston |
| K. Nadji | C. Matt Dillon |
| L. Man | O. Slate Shannon |
| M. Gil | Q. Sam Spade |
| N. Phillip | A. Will Rogers |
| O. Sailor Duval | G. Frank Merriwell |
| P. Rosa | H. Fibber McGee |
| Q. Effie | D. Candy Matson |
| R. Mary | B. Dr. Dan Danfield |
| S. Leila | F. Clark Kent |

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