



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 37, Number 1

SEE IMPORTANT NOTICE - PAGE 8

January/February, 2012

From Gunsmoke to Fort Laramie

by Dr. Charles Beckett

Fort Laramie was late coming to radio. The series premiered on CBS January 22, 1956 and the final episode was broadcast October 28 of that same year. Its creator was producer-director Norman Macdonnell, who also was responsible for the *Gunsmoke* series, which aired on radio from 1952 to 1961. The main similarities between the two series were that - besides both being adult Westerns - they shared the same producer - director, supporting cast, writers and sound effects team.

Gunsmoke took place in and around the frontier town of Dodge City, Kansas in the 1870s. Its main character was Matt Dillon, a weathered U.S. Marshal, who was charged with keeping the peace in town and on the plains around it. The series was described as the "story of the violence that moved west with young America, and the story of a man who moved with it." Dillon's enemies were "the killers and the spoilers," and he was "the first man they look for and the last they want to meet."

Fort Laramie's locale was the plains of the northwest frontier. The stories centered on a battle-wise cavalry officer stationed at a Laramie, Wyoming army post. Each episode was introduced as "the saga of fighting men who rode the rim of empire and the dramatic story of Lee Quince, Captain of Cavalry." Macdonnell described Fort Laramie as "a monument to ordinary men who lived in extraordinary times." Their enemies were "the rugged uncharted country, the heat, the cold, disease, boredom, and perhaps last of all, hostile Indians." Both the actual Dodge City and Fort Laramie made significant contributions to America's history. Each played a major role in the country's movement west during the nineteenth century.



Raymond Burr

Dodge City was founded in 1872 near the Arkansas River. Originally, it was named Buffalo City, but the name was soon changed to Dodge City--after an army post located five miles east of town. Dodge City was a major collection and shipping point for buffalo hides and for the herds of cattle driven up from Texas, which were shipped east on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad - next to which the town

was built. As in the series, there was a Long Branch Saloon on Front Street, although it was owned by Chalk Beeson - not Kitty Russell. Marshal Matt Dillon's character evolved from some actual lawmen of the Dodge City Peace Commission - which included

Continued on Pg. 3

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

PO BOX 1908, Englewood CO 80150

Dedicated to the preservation of old-time radio programs, and to making those programs available to our members

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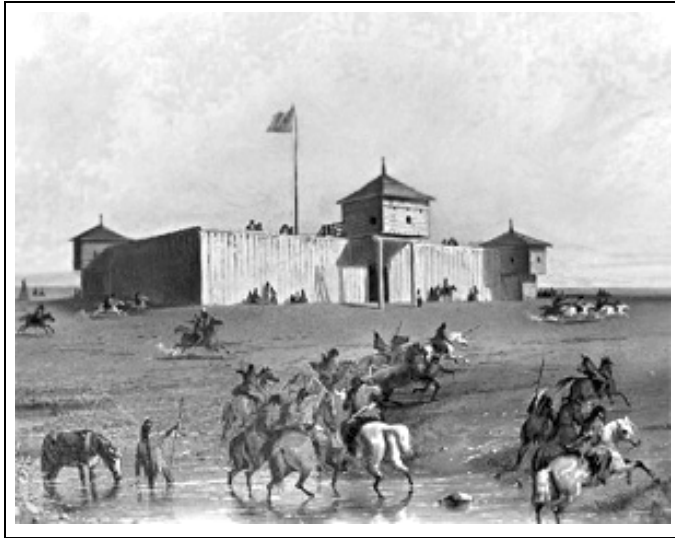
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2012 Convention Schedules

No conventions have been submitted for announcement

Charles Basset, Wyatt Earp and Luke Short, among others. Fort Dodge provided protection to wagon trains heading west over the Santa Fe Trail and for the movement of the U.S. Mail - from hostile Kiowa, Cheyenne and other plains tribes. It also served as a supply base for troops engaged in the Indian Wars.



Fort Laramie, before it became an army post, was an important fur trading center and the most significant economic hub of white commerce in the region. It was located along the lower Laramie River, in the tribal areas of the Arapaho, Cheyenne and Sioux plains Indians. The Army took over the fort in the late 1840s, largely to supply and protect emigrants along the Emigrant Trail during their western trek - from local Indian tribes. During the relatively peaceful 1850s, the fort served primarily as a supply post. By the 1860s, tensions with local tribes increased. Being a primary stopping point on the Oregon Trail, Fort Laramie's major mission was to protect wagon trains from Indian attacks. It also was a way station for the Overland and Pony Express riders, and remained a military supply depot. Many of the Army's military campaigns in the Indian Wars were conducted from the fort. In August 1889, the fort was decommissioned and abandoned and is now part of The Fort Laramie National Historic Site.

Of the four main characters on radio's *Gunsmoke* series, William Conrad (Matt Dillon), Parley Baer (Chester Proudfoot), Georgia Ellis (Kitty Russell), and Howard McNear (Doctor Charles Adams), only McNear and Baer made a transition to the *Fort Laramie* series. McNear had an occasional recurring role as Pliny, the fort's storekeeper in five episodes, and Baer appeared in seven episodes, playing various characters.

Although the first episode of *Fort Laramie* was not broadcast until January of 1956, John Dehner (a *Gunsmoke* regular) starred in the July 25, 1955 pilot program. Supposedly, he had once turned down the lead in *Gunsmoke* for fear he would be typecast in Western roles. He later went on to star in two popular Western radio series - *Frontier Gentleman* and *Have Gun Will Travel*. Ironically, one of the 98 films he appeared in was *Revolt at Fort Laramie* (1957).



Howard McNear, William Conrad, Georgia Ellis, Parley Baer

Macdonnell wanted a new face for his new series, and selected 39 year old Canadian born Raymond Burr to play the leading role of Captain Lee Quince. Recurring supporting roles were played by veteran *Gunsmoke* actors from "Hollywood's Radio Row". Vic Perrin played laid-back cavalry Sergeant Ken Gorce, and Jack Moyles was "by-the-book" Major Daggett, the fort's commanding officer. Another recurring character was added in episode seven (*The Shave Tail*, March 4, 1956). He was Lieutenant Richard Sieberts, fresh out of West Point - and yet to be battle tested under the watchful eye of Captain Quince. Sieberts was ably portrayed by Harry Bartell, who was 42 years old at the time. Initially, Bartell questioned his ability to play the inexperienced young officer - but proved to be convincing in the part.

Besides Bartell, Perrin, Moyles and McNear, other veteran *Gunsmoke* supporting actors who performed various roles in *Fort Laramie* included Dick Beals, John Dehner, Lawrence Dobkin, Sam Edwards, Virginia Gregg, Lou Krugman, Jack Kruschen, Jeanette Nolan, Barney Phillips, Ben

Wright, and several others. Many of these seasoned performers continued to work on *Gunsmoke* during the same period they were doing *Fort Laramie*.

Fort Laramie's scripts also were written by *Gunsmoke* veterans John Meston, John Dunkel, Kathleen Hite and Les Crutchfield. Hite holds the record, having scripted 27 of the programs - followed by Dunkel (5), Meston (4) and Crutchfield (2). The remaining programs were penned by Gil Doud, E. Jack Newman and William Robson (one each). (Hite also scripted "Little Girl," - which was not used - but instead became a *Gunsmoke* episode (July 3, 1960). Macdonnell was a stickler for historical accuracy, so the writers were meticulous in tailoring their scripts to ensure that they accurately reflected military life at the original Fort Laramie.

The series also had the sound effects team from *Gunsmoke* - Ray Kemper, Bill James and Tom Hanley, who continued to maintain the same high standard of excellence they had set on that series. In the words of Old Time Radio historian Jack French, "Every crack of a rifle, creak of the McClellan saddle, and footsteps going across the dirt parade ground, over the gravel path, and up the wooden steps, were done with authentic precision." Cast member Vic Perrin described the sound effects in somewhat simpler terms, "You could hear the prairie."



Norman McDonnell (l) and William Conrad

Norman McDonnell served in the military during World War II. After the war, he went to work for CBS radio, where he produced and directed the *Escape* adventure series. He also produced and directed *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe*, a detective drama, which reportedly attracted the biggest radio audience in America in 1949. In April 1952, he produced and directed *Gunsmoke*, radio's first adult Western. In 1955, the series added a television version - which continued to be broadcast

for two decades. In 1956, Macdonnell joined the television version as a producer, where for four years it was rated television's number one program. (Some of the radio scripts were modified and reused in the TV series). Some of his other director/producer series include the sitcom *Honest Harold*, the *Homemaker*, a light drama (director); *Rogers of the Gazette*, a dramatic anthology (producer); *The Sears Radio Theater* (writer, with others); *Suspense*, a crime drama (director); *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar*, a detective drama (director). His television credits include *The Virginian*, (executive producer); *The Savage Land* (producer); and an episode of *Playhouse 90 - The Dungeon* (producer). In 1967, Macdonnell produced a movie, *The Ballad of Josie*, starring Doris Day.

Raymond Burr, the star of *Fort Laramie*, had earlier been considered for the role of Matt Dillon on *Gunsmoke*, the role going instead to William Conrad. Within a year after the *Fort Laramie* series ended, Burr went on to play Perry Mason for eight years in the television series of the same name. After *Perry Mason*, he did another TV series, *Ironside*, as a detective confined to a wheelchair. During his extensive career, he also appeared in 46 movies, often playing villains. Possibly one of his best remembered film roles was as the villain in the 1954 film *Rear Window* with James Stewart and Grace Kelly. He also appeared in the 1951 Academy Award winning movie, *A Place in the Sun*, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift - playing an "over-the-top" district attorney. Some of his other radio work includes *Favorite Story* (dramatic anthology), *The Lineup* (police drama), and *The Silent Men* (a short lived dramatic anthology). In addition, he shared radio credits with Jack Webb in *Dr. Kildare*, *Dragnet*; and, *Pat Novak, for Hire*.

Jack French may have best summarized the passing of Old Time Radio and the *Fort Laramie* series. "The Golden Age of Radio ended, not with a whimper, but with a robust bang. Many of the best network and syndicated shows began in the 1950s, even though the public interest and advertising dollars were switching to television. *Fort Laramie* was certainly one of the finest radio series, and were it not for *Gunsmoke*, it could be termed the best adult Western program ever aired.

Everyone Takes Part With Radio Commercials

By Danny Godwin

"Get some *Golden Fluffo* .. real soon." -- *Red Barber*

When network radio began, the networks didn't have the luxury of having people who specialized in only specific speaking jobs and nothing else. In other words, if a person spoke in front of a microphone, he/she was expected to either present the news, host a program, or the subject of this article--- doing radio commercials (when direct selling on the air was allowed). This article will focus on some famous people who were better known for other roles on the radio than presenting radio commercials.



Gabriel Heatter was one of the most popular news commentators of radio's golden age. On his newscasts, Heatter wasn't bashful in changing the subject from a major news event to selling *Kreml Hair Tonic*. Instead of an overwhelming direct sell, Heatter casually talked about *Kreml* and the good things it did for men's hair. When he was about to finish, Heatter asked the housewives to make sure there was a bottle of *Kreml* where hubby could easily reach it--- and thanked them for their trouble.

Heatter didn't just sell products on his newscast. He was also the commercial spokesman for *Peter Paul* candy bars. Unlike the *Kreml* commercials, Heatter used a different advertising tactic. Instead of the casual, easy going manner I mentioned earlier, Heatter put the power of resistance to an extreme test. He made *Mounds* and *Almond Joy* sound so irresistible, the radio listeners were easily persuaded to go to their favorite store and buy a *Mounds* and/or *Almond Joy* candy bar at that moment.



Sportscaster Red Barber made a name for himself as the legendary voice of the Brooklyn Dodgers and later the New York Yankees. When he wasn't doing play-by-play, Barber was selling *Old Gold Cigarettes* on different programs for CBS during the 1940's. Using his country boy technique that made him famous to baseball fans, Barber informed the listeners of the pleasant taste and cool smoking *Old Gold* provided. He also talked about "Apple Honey," *Old Gold's* natural ingredient to preserve the freshness of the tobacco leaves before they were manufactured.

As an announcer, Barber was remembered best as the commercial spokesman for *Old Gold Cigarettes*--- but his ability to sell on the air didn't stop there. Barber was also the commercial spokesman for an unlikely product--- *Golden Fluffo Shortening*. If you are not familiar with *Fluffo*, it was the modern shortening of the 1950's created by *Procter and Gamble*©.

Getting back to the commercial, its format had Barber interviewing housewives who won blue ribbons for their cooking and baking creations. Of course, the housewives used *Fluffo* in their creations. Like he did with *Old Gold*, Barber used his familiar country boy approach in his commercial presentation for Fluffo.

Before he became the voice of the New York Yankees and goodwill ambassador for Major League Baseball, Mel Allen started his radio career as an announcer. During the late 1930's and early 1940's, Allen was selling *Ivory Soap* and *Crisco* on different daytime serials the 2 products sponsored. On a particular broadcast*, Allen also displayed his singing ability in an *Ivory Soap* musical commercial with Ralph Edwards--- **HOW ABOUT THAT!** (*-I **think** the commercial was presented on **TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES**, but it's inconclusive).

When he wasn't doing **NBC Radio's** play-by-play of the weekly college football game, Fort Pearson worked during the week as a radio announcer. On a historical note, Pearson was one of the first of a long list of announcers for **THE GUIDING LIGHT**. He was heard selling **P&G Naphtha Soap**, the program's first sponsor. In later years, Pearson sold *Kicks* on **BEAT THE BAND** and *Alka-Seltzer* on **QUEEN FOR A DAY**. Pearson had a convincing style of speaking voice that when he said *P&G Naphtha Soap* washed clothes "**really white**," there was no doubt whatsoever.

Edwin C. Hill was another distinguished radio journalist. His talents on the air expanded to program **M.C.** --- and commercial spokesman. During a 1939 newscast, Hill easily changed the subject from the somber news of that moment to an upbeat commercial for *Amoco's Orange American Gas*.

Although *Amoco Gas* was better known of *Amoco's* two gasoline grades, Hill informed the listeners that *Orange American Gas* was also a quality gasoline to use. For those people who preferred regular gasoline, Hill assured them that *Orange American Gas* was a "**pure, sweet product**" that was 100% petroleum--- and 0% impurities and gunk that hampered an engine's performance. At the end of the commercial, Hill asked the listeners to stop at the *Orange American Pump* and give *Orange American Gasoline* a tryout.

Presenting commercials on the air wasn't reserved for famous journalists, announcers, and sportscasters--- or even men for that matter! In

addition to the various character roles she played in the 1930's, actress Bess Johnson was also one of the few female announcers of network radio of that era. On the **WAYNE KING'S ORCHESTRA** program, Ms. Johnson presented the commercials for *Lady Esther Cosmetics* in the role of Lady Esther. According to an article in the May 28, 1938 issue of **Radio Guide** magazine, Ms. Johnson's portrayal of Lady Esther stirred up some controversy. Some people believed that **all** radio commercials should be done by men. To focus into this controversy, **Radio Guide** featured the article, "**should radio use women announcers?**" To answer the question the best way as possible, the article took an equal view of both sides with 12 people (six from each side) who either worked on radio or were radio listeners. In an interesting turn of events, of the six people who favored female announcers, four were men--- and of the six who didn't favor them, three were women. From a personal viewpoint, Ms. Johnson had an outstanding speaking voice, and she could present radio commercials as good as any announcer, male or female. Besides, can you picture Lady Esther on the air with a man's voice??!!

Regardless what the people thought of her as Lady Esther, it didn't discourage Ms. Johnson from presenting radio commercials. When **PALMOLIVE'S HILLTOP HOUSE** made its debut on the Columbia Network, Ms. Johnson played the lead role (who happened to be named Bess Johnson), the manager of the Hilltop House Orphanage. Frank Gallop was the program's announcer, but it was Ms. Johnson who presented the commercials for Palmolive Soap. Ms. Johnson's announcing duties didn't hamper the popularity of **PALMOLIVE'S HILLTOP HOUSE**. During its time on the air, the program was among the most popular daytime serials of the late 1930's.

This is only a short list of some big names in radio doing their part in selling the product to the radio listeners. It also demonstrated the "**team effort**" of the people to make network radio successful--- and considering the golden age lasted as long as it did, they succeeded.

Sound Effects Saved Life of Radio Actor

Reprinted with the permission of editor Jack French from the February 2002 issue of RADIO RECALL, Journal of the Metropolitan Washington Old Time Radio Club

One of the more fascinating stories from the Golden Age of Radio is recounted by Joe Julian, a radio actor and writer. He was on many drama shows and soap operas, but is probably most famous for being in the title roll of "Mr. District Attorney".

In his 1975 book, "This Was Radio", Julian tells how a radio sound effects man was directly responsible for saving the life of a radio actor, who did not even know that he was ill. Here's what happened.

Radio Readers' Digest was a prime-time evening show on NBC, airing from 1942 to 1948. Every week it presented a realistic dramatization of a true-life story that had previously appeared in the pages of *Readers Digest* magazine.

One week when Julian was in the cast of that program, the story line included a scene from a hospital operating room. In order to highlight the beating of the patient's heart, which was central to the action of the plot, the director and the sound effects man agreed that a real stethoscope would be pressed on the chest of the radio actor who was portraying the patient. The listening ends of the stethoscope were then placed next to the microphone.

During rehearsal, the engineer was able to integrate the sound of the heart's "thump-thump" into the dialogue and the director was very pleased with the overall effect. That evening the show was done live and the same fine results ensued.

However, before the show "signed off", the telephone lines at the NBC studios in New York started ringing. Most of the calls, a total of twenty-one, were from different doctors throughout the country. All of them had heard the broadcast and all had detected the same cardiac malfunction. They urged that whoever had had the stethoscope on his chest should immediately be taken to the nearest hospital.

The actor, of course, took their advice. At the hospital, an electrocardiogram confirmed his heart condition, something that he had never suspected before. Appropriate medical action was taken and the radio actor lived on for many more productive years thanks to radio's sound effects.

OTR Characters' New Year's Resolutions

"**I resolve** to consult my parents before I get too involved in complicated situations this year." - *Henry Aldrich*

"**I resolve** to prevent Richard from playing the piano and singing at all hours out if consideration for my neighbors." - *Ms. Helen Archer, NYC*

"**I resolve** to make a firm commitment and propose to Leila this year." - *Mr. Throckmorton Gildersleeve, Summerfield*

"**I resolve** to be more meticulous in preparing my expense account statements and to itemize more carefully." - *Johnny Dollar, Hartford, Ct.*

"**I resolve** to make an effort to include my mother in my life and introduce her to my friends." - *Mrs. Laurel Grovesner, Beacon Hill*

"**I resolve** that this year **I** will clean out the hall closet." - *Mrs. Mollie McGee, 79 Wistful Vista*

"**I resolve** to get Matt to propose this year." - *Miss Kitty Russell, The Long Branch, Dodge City, Ks.*

"**I resolve** to capture the Octopus this year." - *Speed Gibson, ISP*

"**I resolve** to find out why Clark spends so much time in phone booths, but never seems to CALL anyone." - *Ms. Lois Lane, Metropolis*

"**I resolve** to spend more time at the tavern this year, and to give Archie some time off." - *Duffy, Duffy's Tavern*

"**I resolve** to try my best neither accidentally nor deliberately to injure, annoy, or provoke my principal, Osgood Conklin, this year." - *Miss Constance Brooks, Madison High School*

"**I resolve** that this year I really WILL clean out that hall closet." - *Mr. Fibber McGee, 79 Wistful Vista*

"**I resolve** to find out what he means by "Kemo Sabe" - *Mr. Lone Ranger, the Southwestern United States*

"**I resolve** to find happiness." - *Mrs. Sunday Brinthrop, Blackswan Hall*

An Important Notice of Major Change for RHAC Members

By Larry Weide, President

Once again I'm writing to you about the changes, that are now in affect, for how we process RHAC membership dues. As I have mentioned in the last couple of newsletter issues, these changes have become necessary because of limited administrative resources.

The bottom line is, we are in the process of converting to a system where the dues for all members will be due at the same time. This will be at the beginning of January - the start of our fiscal year.

2012 is a transition year to insure that during changeover no member will pay any more in dues than they would have during the old system. During 2012 you will continue to receive a dues due notice that will clearly spell out what your dues will be for 2012. In 2013, when all dues will be due in January, your dues due notice will be sent with the Jan/Feb issue of the newsletter. So, please read the following to become familiar with the change over to our new system.

- ♦ **All dues, payable in 2011, are to be submitted as usual.**
- ♦ **When your 2011 dues payment elapses in 2012, your 2012 dues will be for only the unpaid months remaining in 2012.**
- ♦ **Beginning January of 2013 everyone's yearly membership dues will be due at the start of the month and for each January of all years thereafter.**

When your dues become due in 2012 you will receive the usual dues reminder. In it will be the amount to pay for your prorated part of 2012. To illustrate the payment schedule, here is a chart to show you the amount of dues you will be paying during 2012.

2012 Dues Payment Schedule

Current Dues Due Month	Payable Months in 2012	\$ Amount due in 2012
January	12	\$15.00
February	11	\$13.75
March	10	\$12.50
April	9	\$11.25
May	8	\$10.00
June	7	\$8.75
July	6	\$7.50
August	5	\$6.25
September	4	\$5.00
October	3	\$3.75
November	2	\$2.50
December	1	\$1.25

If you have any questions or problems concerning this schedule, please write or email me at;

Address:

Radio Historical Association of Colorado
PO BOX 1908, Englewood CO 80150

Email:

info@rhac.org
or
rhac_otr@yahoo.com

With my regards and best wishes for the new year,

Larry Weide - Pres. RHAC

TAPE 1926 GOOD NEWS OF 1939

1200'

- 1L 10-06-38 PGM #41: GUESTS: Wallace Beery, Mickey Rooney, Joe E. Brown
- 2L 10-13-38 PGM #42: GUESTS: Lionel Barrymore, Lew Ayres, Eleanor Powell
- 1R 10-20-38 PGM #43: GUESTS: Joan Crawford, Billie Burke, Judy Garland
- 2R 10-27-38 PGM #44: GUESTS: Clark Gable, Lionel Barrymore, Rita Johnson

TAPE 1927 GOOD NEWS OF 1939

1200'

- 1L 11-03-38 PGM #45: GUESTS: Betty Jaynes, Ruth Hussey
- 2L 11-10-38 PGM #46: GUESTS: Lionel Barrymore, Lew Ayres, George Murphy
- 1R 11-17-38 PGM #47: GUESTS: Joan Crawford, Margaret Sullivan, Melvin Douglas
- 2R 11-24-38 PGM #48: GUESTS: Tony Martin, Mickey Rooney, Lewis Stone, Fay Holden

TAPE 1928 MISCELLANEOUS BUDDY CLARK SHOWS

1200'

- 1L No Date HERE'S TO VETERANS: 1st: Without You
05-10-43 TREASURE STAR PARADE: 1st: What's The Good Word, Mr. Bluebird?
09-29-49 CLUB FIFTEEN: 1st: Make Believe When You're Sorry
06-02-49 GUEST STAR: With Every Breath I Take
- 2L 1939 REXALL ONE CENT SALE: Pgm #1: Franklyn D. Roosevelt Jones
1939 REXALL ONE CENT SALE: Pgm #2: Girl Friend Of The Whirling Dervish
1939 REXALL ONE CENT SALE: Pgm #3: School Days
1939 REXALL ONE CENT SALE: Pgm #4: Balboa
- 1R 07-06-42 SING BEFORE BREAKFAST: Audition Show
07-05-44 JOHNSON'S WAX PROGRAM: 1st: Clancy
No Date HERE'S TO VETERANS: 1st: Temptation
- 2R 1949 50th ANNIVERSARY OF CARNATION COMPANY: 1st: Good News
1946-47 CARNATION CONTENTED HOUR EXCERPTS: 1st: Why Do I Adore You?

TAPE 1929 THE CHASE

1200'

- 1L 04-27-52 Tales
05-04-52 The Rock
- 2L 05-11-52 Countess Trieana
05-18-52 Elliott Preston Framed For Murder
- 1R 05-25-52 Newspaper Reporter After Germans
06-01-52 Easy Riches, Sudden Death
- 2R 06-08-52 Hard Luck Ethel
06-15-52 Terminate Professor Kolcheck

TAPE 1930 THE CHASE

1200'

1L	06-22-52	Bald Artie Bender
	06-29-52	Stephen, Monica, And \$1,000,000
2L	07-10-52	Doug Burton And A Mysterious Letter
	07-17-52	Joey
1R	07-24-52	The Apprentice
	08-07-52	The Painting
2R	08-14-52	The Amusement Park
	08-21-52	The Promotion

TAPE 1931 THE CHASE

1200'

1L	09-21-52	Tattoo Charlie
	09-28-52	The Arrangement
2L	10-05-52	Flight From Istanbul
	10-12-52	The Cat's Meow
1R	10-19-52	Man Hunt
	10-26-52	Iron Curtain Express
2R	11-02-52	Long Distance
	11-09-52	Career Girl

TAPE 1932 THE CHASE

1200'

1L	11-16-52	My Love Is A Ghost
	11-23-52	Blackout
2L	11-30-52	The Most Dangerous Game
	12-07-52	Dangerous Journey
1R	12-14-52	The Murder
	12-28-52	No Contact
2R	01-11-53	Professor Calvin And The Voice
	01-18-53	Killer At Large

TAPE 1933 THE CHASE

1200'

1L	01-25-53	The Creeper
	02-01-53	Corpus Delicti
2L	02-08-53	The Greedy Crockeys
	02-15-53	The Will
1R	02-22-53	The Jail Break
	03-01-53	A Frame For Murder
2R	03-08-53	Special Delivery
	03-15-53	The Lady Is A Corpse

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