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RADIOGRAM

Vol. 35 • No. 10

October 2010



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RADIOGRAM

Volume 35 • Number 10 • October 2010



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Veteran North Carolina Broadcaster Sees End to 'Theatre of Mind' Radio

Sadly, today's youth cannot picture stories in their minds says Bill Drake, longtime Spartanburg, NC radio personality who spoke at the August meeting of the Western Carolina Classic Radio Club as reported by SPERDVAC member and club emcee Bob Reynolds.

Drake was interviewed at the meeting by Dick Briggs, retired newscaster at WSPA-TV in Spartanburg. Drake's comments were reported by Jeff Byrd in the August 24, 2010 edition of the *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, from which this account has been adapted.

After a long career in radio, Drake became an adjunct professor of communications at Wofford College. One year, he said, he offered a course in "The History of American Broadcasting," and noted that what he called his "old school" style often lost his students but he also noted that it was a "generational phenomenon" since his students thought broadcasting started with the TV series *All in the Family*.

"When I was asked to teach the history of broadcast class I asked the Wofford dean, 'what are my qualifications?'" Drake told the audience of about 40. "The dean said, 'you are the history of American broadcast.'"

Drake then noted that he thought the previous classes had put too much emphasis on television and so he began his course by bringing out tapes of "the incomparable master of radio," Jack Benny.

"I turned off the lights," he said to avoid visual distractions and discovered that such a move was a mistake.

"Seventy-five percent of the students were asleep," he said when he turned on the lights. Undaunted and having faith in the power of radio he continued with episodes of *Burns and Allen*, *Arthur Godfrey*—his mentor, he said—and even *Dragnet* but he got the same reaction.

"With the absence of visuals," he said, "the 'theatre of the mind' does not work for them. We can visualize what radio was. We have the ability to picture things in our minds. Kids don't. If they can't see it, or watch it on their cell phone, they can't do it all."

Drake noted that a portion of his class was African-American and he could not get across the radical significance of the old *Amos and Andy* programs in which all characters were played by "two white guys playing black guys."

He said that the world wasn't always visual and noted that when he went on the air in 1976 on WSPA in Spartanburg there wasn't much competition from television or even other radio stations. AM was king, he said, and WSPA wore the crown. He noted that FM had just 25 percent of the market at the time.

AM is down to just ten percent now, he said.

Drake's interest in radio began at a very young age. He reported that he did play-by-plays as a seven-year-old in Iowa. He said that he created imaginary games, and his high-pitched voice carried through the summertime open windows.

"Neighbors," he said with a smile, "would stay up to see how the game turned out."

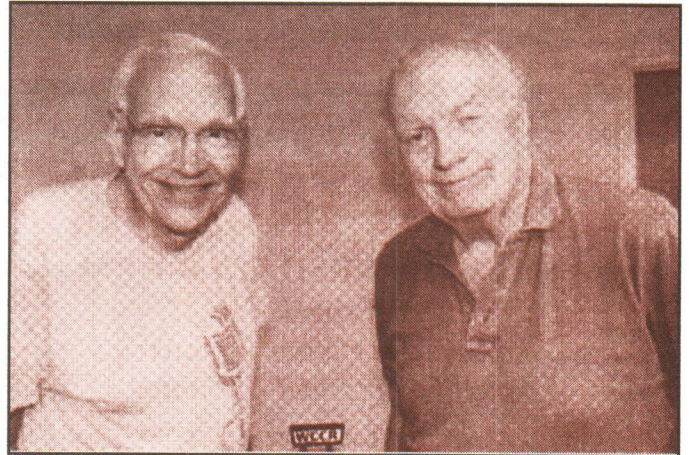
He enrolled in Rippon College only because it had two radio stations, he said, and after college he embarked on a career odyssey that took him from market to market before settling in Spartanburg where he stayed for 34 years.

Drake emphasized that his staying power resulted from his versatility. He said that he did it all, from play-by-play sportscasting through spinning discs and pitching products to news reporting. But his specialty, he said, has always been interviewing.

"There is no one who does what I do anymore," he noted describing his job as "variety broadcasting."

Drake eventually replaced the late Cliff "Farmer" Gray and himself became a morning fixture at WSPA earning Drake the title of "Spartanburg's Goodwill Ambassador."

But radical business changes beginning in 2004 caused Drake to change direction. The new station owners had no interest in keeping Drake on the air but a letter writing campaign by listeners, community leaders and sponsors convinced the owners that Drake still had radio clout. Drake said that he negotiated



North Carolina broadcasting personalities Bill Drake and Dick Briggs at the Western Carolina Radio Club.

Jeff Byrd

with the owners to purchase 35 hours per week to air his variety programs on WOLT-FM.

Drake has added another job to his variety broadcasting and that is entrepreneur. Through his Awake with Drake company he sells his own sponsorships to pay the bills for his programming.

He broadcasts from his same studio at the former WSPA studio that is now part of the Restoration Church property. As such he also broadcasts taped versions of his *Songs of Inspiration* Sunday morning show.

Drake practices in life as well as on the air what he calls "relationship broadcasting." "There is no one who does what I do anymore," he said. "Talking about what I want to talk about. Doing the positive side. There is so much negativity on. There is the negative, but there is still stuff to talk about that is not depressing. It used to be that everyone was doing it."

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◆

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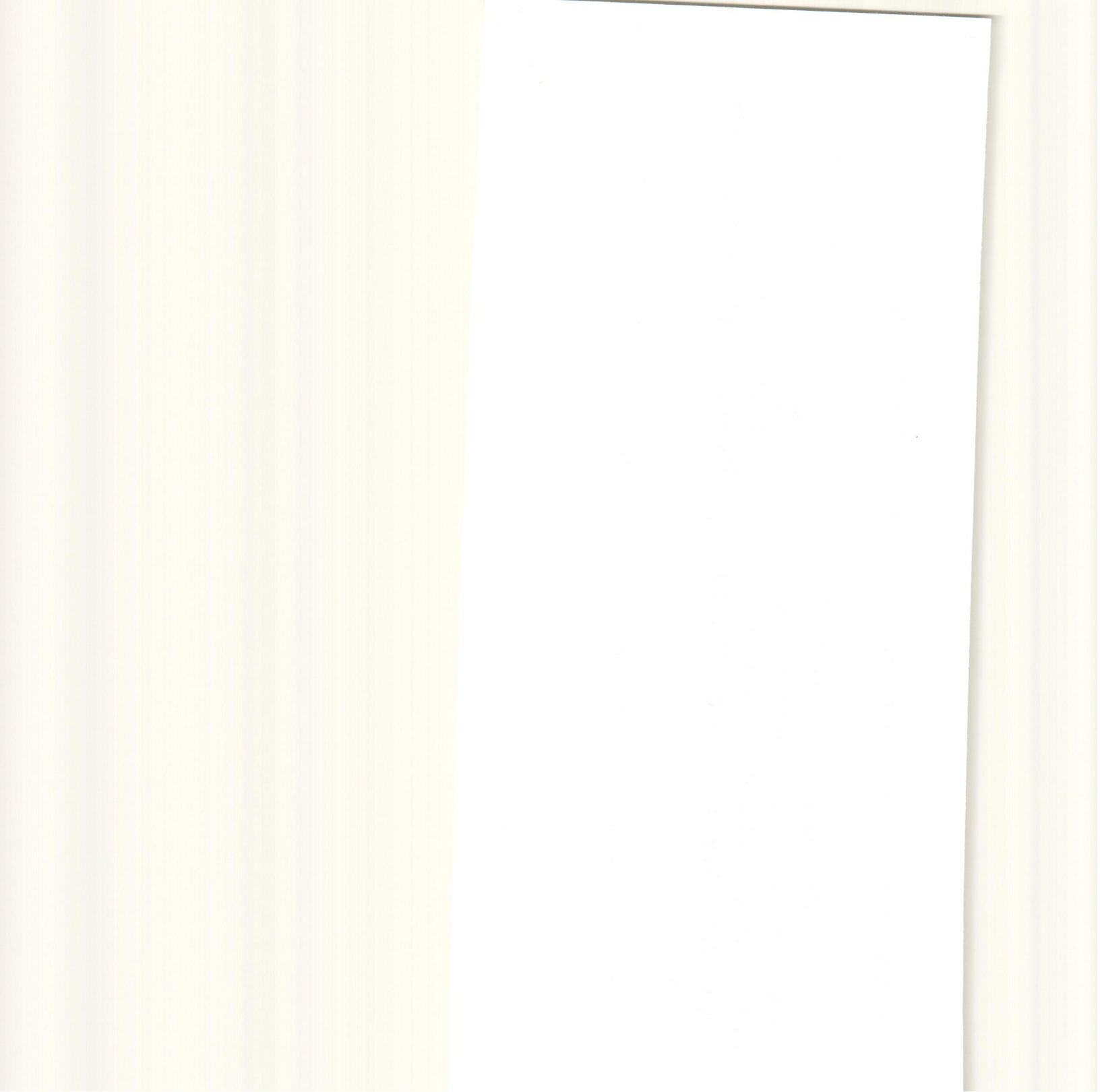
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GARY ONO is a former radio personality and a group of volunteers will travel by shortwave to Japan during World War II. Gary will augment his presentation by showing a film/DVD titled *Calling Tokyo*. Join us and discover this unknown part of our radio history.

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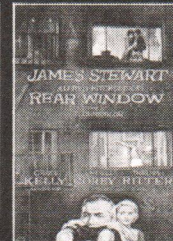
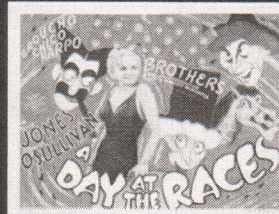
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OLD NEWS IS GOOD NEWS • 61 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH!

Radio in Review

by JOHN CROSBY

Studied Innocence

The newest addition to the somewhat overcrowded ranks of radio commentators is Robert Montgomery, a man ordinarily found either in front of or behind a motion picture.

For the last six weeks the veteran movie actor, director and producer has been belaboring British socialism, Secretary Johnson, Communism and other of his pet aversions over the American Broadcasting Co (10:10 p.m. Thursdays) under sponsorship of Lee Hats, the company that once employed Drew Pearson.

The two commentators, Pearson and Montgomery, are magnificently dissimilar. Montgomery cheerfully admits that he plunged into his new avocation with "terror and humility"—two emotions that never bothered Pearson very much. All the other commentators, the actor says, are experts. Montgomery confesses he's no expert and what's more he wants to stay that way.

"I want to remain on the same level with my listeners—to voice the same questions they are asking themselves, to express the same anxieties."

+

THE FIRST FOUR broadcasts were recorded in England by the BBC (though not broadcast over it) and Montgomery boned up for it, he says, by talking to hundreds of people from cabinet ministers to workingmen. The results were pretty rough on British socialism.

One of them was entitled "Up the Garden Path," an old English expression meaning in plain American: "We've been had." Montgomery implied that 40,000,000 Britons were going to be awfully angry when they discovered what socialism had done to them.

The broadcast ended with the prophecy that Sir Stafford Cripps, in devaluing the pound, "had intoned the funeral dirge of socialism in Britain."

After the broadcast, one BBC engineer told Montgomery: "I say, that was very good!" Another one remarked: "You don't intend to be in England very long, do you?" The Daily Graphic of London, which agrees pretty much with Montgomery on British socialism, ran a double-page spread on the broadcast.

+

MONTGOMERY'S extreme conservatism on the subject of British socialism may seem a little surprising from a man who was once one of President Roosevelt's most ardent supporters and who helped found and was president of the Screen Actors' Guild during the stormy fight for recognition from the motion picture producers.

The actor, however, denies that he has swung to the right. "I don't like concentrations of power," he explains. "I was for Roosevelt only the first two terms. If the Republicans had been in office as long as the Democrats, I'd be voting the straight Democratic ticket."

Montgomery was active in the Dewey campaign, which led to rumors that he was slated for a government post if Dewey were elected. If you ask him about this, he just grins and remarks: "I didn't start the rumors."

+

IN ATTEMPTING to stay on the same level with his listeners, Montgomery has adopted a prose style of such childlike simplicity that it may just irritate them.

"Carpentry, cooking and Communism," he will say. "Which one of those three words hits you? If was the third one, Communism, wasn't it? Why? Could it be because you know what carpentry is, and you know what cooking is?"

"You know what you feel about Communism but do you know what it is? Let's see if we cannot penetrate some of the clouds of confusion about Communism and see what lies behind them."

This opening gambit, which reminded me strongly of my Sunday school teacher trying to explain God, was followed by the information that under Communism you may be wakened by a knock at the door any night; you won't enjoy free speech, the right to strike or freedom of religion—information that can be found in Hearst editorials almost any day of the year

+

MONTGOMERY recently has shifted his fire from British socialism to the armed forces dispute in which he is distinctly pro-navy, as is perhaps natural for an ex-Navy officer with an excellent war record.

Not all the talks are about economics or politics. Occasionally, he tells stories which have a strong Alexander Woollcott flavor concerning people he has met, things he has seen.

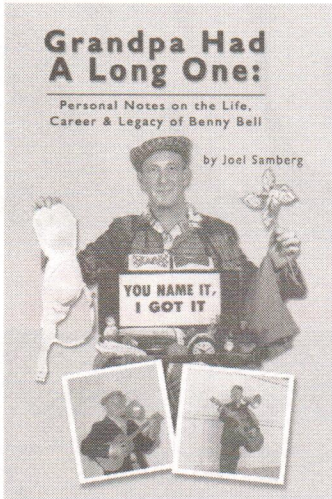
The naivete of his prose is masked extremely well by the extraordinary persuasiveness of his delivery. Montgomery is a very good and very experienced actor; he has taken the curse off much worse lines than his own by sheer skill at inflection.

It's a rather odd and certainly unique mixture—innocence if subject, sophistication of delivery—and I have no idea how the citizenry will take to it. But it's nice to have one commentator around who doesn't claim to know everything.

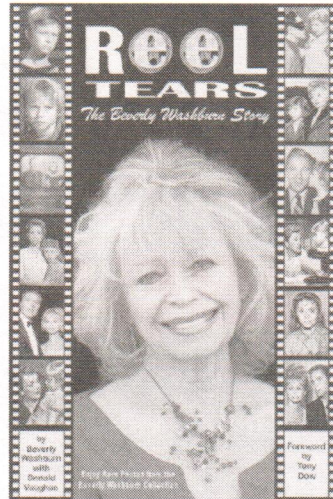


Reprinted from the October 23, 1949, edition of the *Portsmouth (OH) Times*. We go back 61 years this time rather than our usual 60 for a good reason—*television*. Interestingly, for the month of October 1950 John Crosby's Radio in Review column focused on television personalities and programming. In addition, a quick glance of radio sections of various newspapers of the latter part of 1950 shows radio programming becoming less and less newsworthy; in fact, radio at this time becomes nothing more than an after-thought. In this regard, by the last quarter of 1950 television had superceded radio even to the point that a column called Radio in Review spent more ink on television than on its namesake.

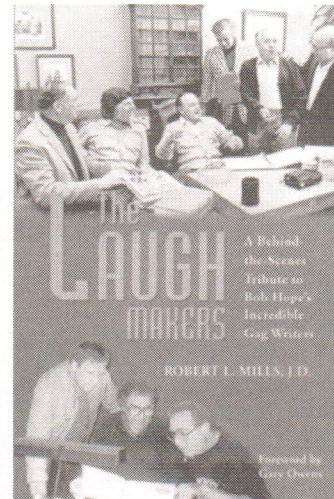
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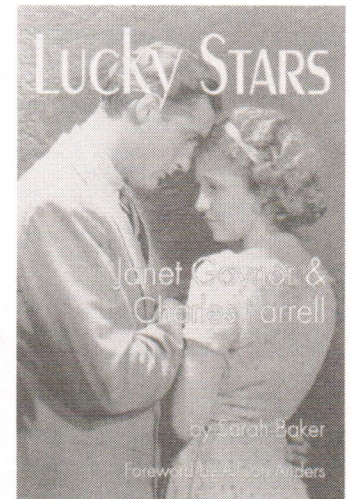
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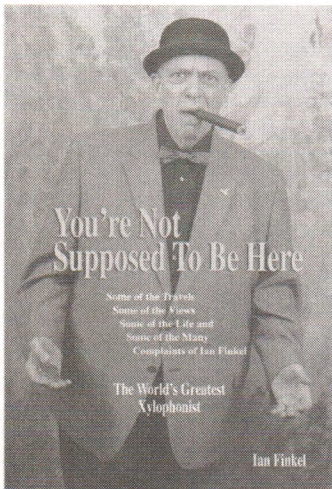
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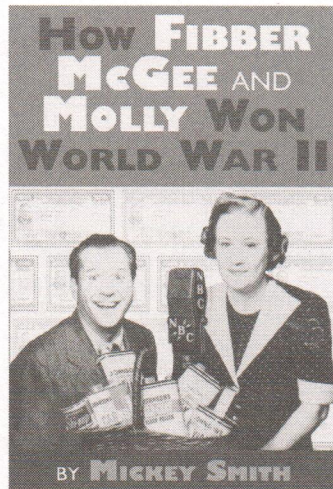
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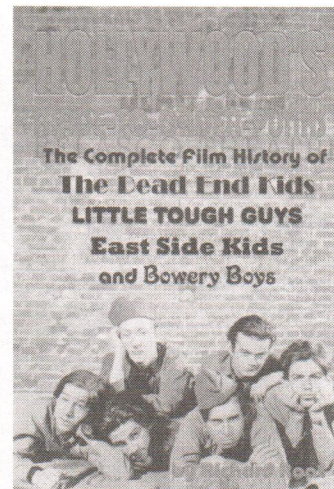
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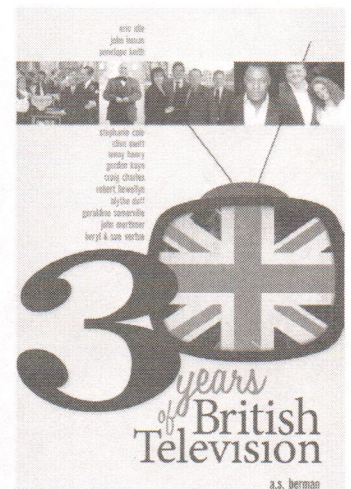
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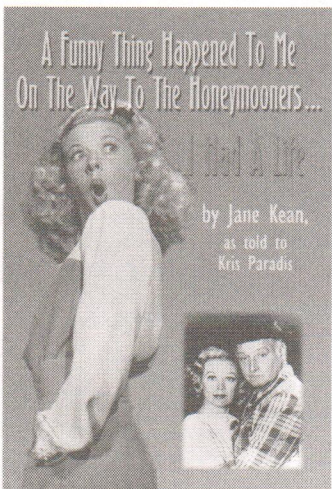
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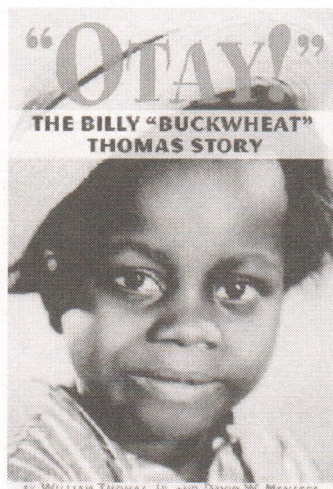
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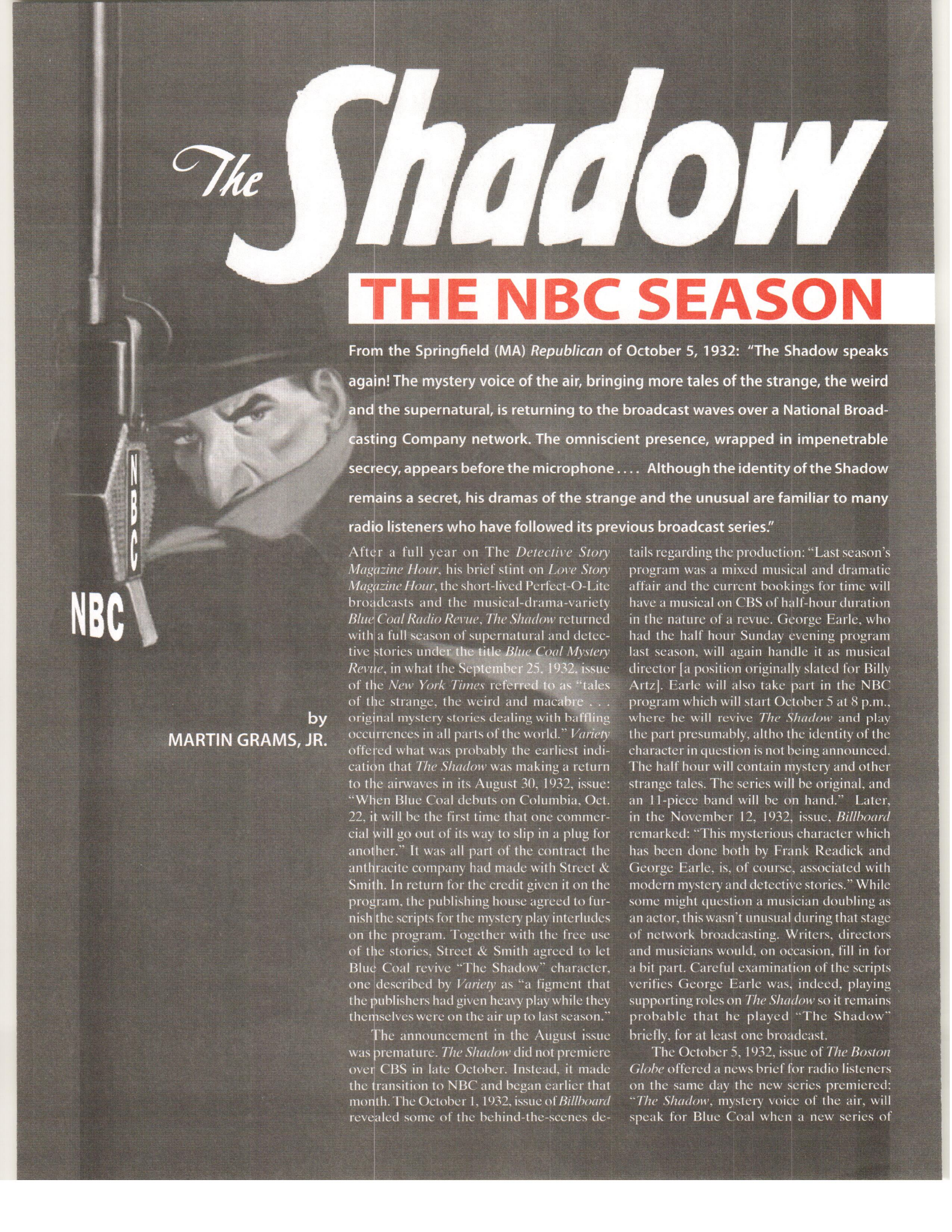
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The Shadow

THE NBC SEASON

From the Springfield (MA) *Republican* of October 5, 1932: "The Shadow speaks again! The mystery voice of the air, bringing more tales of the strange, the weird and the supernatural, is returning to the broadcast waves over a National Broadcasting Company network. The omniscient presence, wrapped in impenetrable secrecy, appears before the microphone Although the identity of the Shadow remains a secret, his dramas of the strange and the unusual are familiar to many radio listeners who have followed its previous broadcast series."

by
MARTIN GRAMS, JR.

After a full year on *The Detective Story Magazine Hour*, his brief stint on *Love Story Magazine Hour*, the short-lived *Perfect-O-Lite* broadcasts and the musical-drama-variety *Blue Coal Radio Revue*, *The Shadow* returned with a full season of supernatural and detective stories under the title *Blue Coal Mystery Revue*, in what the September 25, 1932, issue of the *New York Times* referred to as "tales of the strange, the weird and macabre . . . original mystery stories dealing with baffling occurrences in all parts of the world." *Variety* offered what was probably the earliest indication that *The Shadow* was making a return to the airwaves in its August 30, 1932, issue: "When *Blue Coal* debuts on Columbia, Oct. 22, it will be the first time that one commercial will go out of its way to slip in a plug for another." It was all part of the contract the anthracite company had made with Street & Smith. In return for the credit given it on the program, the publishing house agreed to furnish the scripts for the mystery play interludes on the program. Together with the free use of the stories, Street & Smith agreed to let *Blue Coal* revive "The Shadow" character, one described by *Variety* as "a figment that the publishers had given heavy play while they themselves were on the air up to last season."

The announcement in the August issue was premature. *The Shadow* did not premiere over CBS in late October. Instead, it made the transition to NBC and began earlier that month. The October 1, 1932, issue of *Billboard* revealed some of the behind-the-scenes de-

tails regarding the production: "Last season's program was a mixed musical and dramatic affair and the current bookings for time will have a musical on CBS of half-hour duration in the nature of a revue. George Earle, who had the half hour Sunday evening program last season, will again handle it as musical director [a position originally slated for Billy Artz]. Earle will also take part in the NBC program which will start October 5 at 8 p.m., where he will revive *The Shadow* and play the part presumably, altho the identity of the character in question is not being announced. The half hour will contain mystery and other strange tales. The series will be original, and an 11-piece band will be on hand." Later, in the November 12, 1932, issue, *Billboard* remarked: "This mysterious character which has been done both by Frank Readick and George Earle, is, of course, associated with modern mystery and detective stories." While some might question a musician doubling as an actor, this wasn't unusual during that stage of network broadcasting. Writers, directors and musicians would, on occasion, fill in for a bit part. Careful examination of the scripts verifies George Earle was, indeed, playing supporting roles on *The Shadow* so it remains probable that he played "The Shadow" briefly, for at least one broadcast.

The October 5, 1932, issue of *The Boston Globe* offered a news brief for radio listeners on the same day the new series premiered: "*The Shadow*, mystery voice of the air, will speak for *Blue Coal* when a new series of

stories, never before heard on the air, is inaugurated over an NBC-WEEI network tonight at 8 o'clock. Although the identity of The Shadow remains a secret, his dramas of the strange and unusual are familiar to radio listeners." The mystery of the sinister voice was still being publicized, while newspapers across the nation had already divulged the identity. The October 5 issue of the *Akron Times-Press* claimed that the new Shadow was "not Columbia's Frank Readick, and his identity will remain a secret." The October 14 issue of the *Grand Rapid Chronicle* reported the Shadow's return, contradicting the Ohio paper: "He's on the NBC-WAAF net and his name, in case you haven't heard, is Frank Readick. Last year he was just 'The Shadow' and enjoyed hearing remarks about his program, but now he takes his place among the headliners." It should be noted, however, that the newspapers could only work with press releases issued from the network and often contradicted each other, leaving one to wonder whether The Shadow's identity truly remained a secret to anyone other than their readers. The October 2 issue of *Radio Guide* revealed Frank Readick as the former announcer, claiming a press agent revealed the fact and "now everybody knows 'The Shadow.'"

For almost five years (1925-30), the Silver Masked Tenor entertained in the dual role



of delighting and mystifying his radio friends while wearing a real mask supposedly made of silver that covered the top half of his face. It wasn't

until 1930 that his identity became public knowledge after much speculation that the Silver Masked Tenor was a famous celebrity. The tenor was Joe White, who never had a singing career until he donned the mask and premiered on the Goodrich program.

The Goodrich Silvertown Orchestra became one of the most popular aggregations of musicians featured on the radio, partly because of the mystery surrounding the masked tenor. William Sweets knew *The Detective Story Magazine Hour* needed a similar aura to accompany the dramatic productions. While Sweets and Harry Charlot were adapting short stories from the mystery magazine into feasible radio scripts, one of them decided to have the prelude and introduction to the scenes delivered by an anonymous announcer with an ethereal presence who acted like a guilty conscience to the protagonists who could not hear him. It was Charlot who created the

idea and name of "The Shadow." It should be noted that at this point that a few reference guides claim the title of the program switched from *Detective Story Hour* to *Detective Story Program* after the first few broadcasts. This is inaccurate, however. The source of this information may have originated from newspapers, which often failed to report the correct or full title among the radio listings. The correct title was *Detective Story*

Magazine Hour and never changed during the 52 weeks it was on the air. Even though the program ran a half-hour, programs referred to as "Hour" were broadcast on the hour, or on the half-hour; the designation did not indicate the program length. Newspaper listings should never be taken as the gospel, hence what started the confusion in the first place—now carried over into numerous encyclopedias and websites—especially when one considers that the *Washington Post* listed this program as *Tales of Mystery* in their radio listings!

Eight weeks after the *Detective Story Magazine Hour* ended in July of 1931, The Shadow supposedly made an appearance on a radio broadcast heard over KMOX, KSD and KWK in St. Louis. Sponsored by the Seventh Annual Southwest National Radio and Allied Products Exposition, the St. Louis radio show was heard twice a day from 4:45 to 5:15 and 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. CST in a week-long special broadcast (Monday through Saturday, September 21-26, 1931) from the Crystal Coliseum. Most of the performances were musical in nature, with the Hawaiian Melodists (Joe and Dick), Eddie Jackson's Crackerjacks, Romeo and Juliet (performed by Robert Betts, tenor, and Grace McGowan, soprano), and Helen Traubel. Not all of the stage performances were broadcast, but on the evening of Friday, September 25, The Shadow was heard over the ether in a rare public appearance. As pictured in this advertisement, the Shadow was scheduled to unmask in front of those in



"After publishing in this column some weeks ago that the real name of 'The Shadow' had never been revealed, we received several confidential letters stating that his name was Frank Readick. We have since verified this information."

Editor's Mailbox
Radio Guide
May 22, 1932

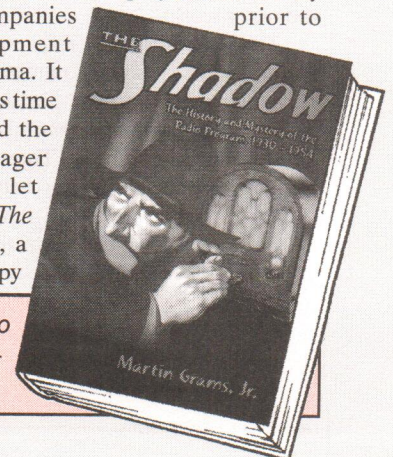
attendance!

According to a number of news items following the unmasking, Frank Readick was the actor on stage portraying the mysterious Shadow. When *The Shadow* later made a return to radio, newspapers reprinted a press release issued by the radio stations that the masked man's identity still remained a mystery, hoping the staged event was forgotten in the minds of radio listeners. A number of columnists who recalled the news item of September 1931 were quick to point out that Frank

Readick's name had been reported as the elusive figure and questioned the validity of the press release. At the time of the unmasking, Street & Smith may have had no intentions to revive *The Shadow* and therefore created the confusion that mounted throughout the months following.

The October 5 issue of *The Washington Evening Star* commented, "the stories in which he is to appear have never before been on the air." This, however, was not entirely correct. Jumping on board with scripter Edith Meiser was Alonzo Deen Cole, a major contributor to the bone-chilling stories. On May 28, 1931, radio station WOR in New York premiered *The Witch's Tale*, one of radio's earliest horror series—tales of ancient curses coming true, severed hands that crawled and mad scientists creating unearthly creatures. The scripts were both original stories and adaptations of classic literature, including *Frankenstein*, "Rapunzini's Daughter" and *Faust*.

Cole started as an actor in St. Paul, his home town, in his late teens and toured in dramatic shows and played extensively in stock companies prior to his development of radio drama. It was about this time he convinced the station manager at WOR to let him put on *The Witch's Tale*, a series of creepy



This article features excerpts from the new book, *The Shadow: The History and Mystery of the Radio Program, 1930-1954* by Martin Grams, due for publication in December. The author gratefully acknowledges assistance from Jack French, Jo Bagwell, David S. Siegel and Bob Cockrum.



ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, the Blue Coal dealers of your city bring you that well-known character of the air... The Shadow! SOUND: Cymbal Crash... Misterioso Music... THE SHADOW: Again The Shadow... ha, ha... Weird, fantastic shape... He is silently watching - life and death - they march under his piercing gaze. What chance has mere man? Ha, ha... The Shadow knows!

plays hosted by an old cackling witch to compete against the ballroom music on rival networks. When an offer opened the door for him to contribute to the *Shadow* broadcasts, some of his scripts were rewrites of previous *Witch's Tale* broadcasts. The program still featured adaptations of short stories that had appeared in Street & Smith magazines, but now original stories were added to the mix with an emphasis of horror and ghosts rather than detectives.

The second broadcast of the series, "The Image" (October 12, 1932), was a tale about a professor of the occult who discovers, to his horror, how to transform into a werewolf. The episode ends on a high note when a police officer shoots and kills the beast only to witness the professor's niece accidentally falling for the same curse and transforming into a werewolf before his very eyes. "The Image" was previously dramatized on *The Witch's Tale* on February 8, 1932. For the rewrite, the character of old Nancy (the host of the program) was replaced with The Shadow's narratives. For the most part the script remained the same, but the names of the characters were changed.

Another early Shadow thriller was "Man Beast" (October 26, 1932), which told the story of a pair of lovebirds named Johanna and Rudolph who stab the local sheriff who longed to make young Johanna his bride. Johanna and Rudolph are apprehended while attempting to flee, and the wounded sheriff accuses Johanna of being the cause of suspected witchcraft in the community. After being sentenced to burn at the stake for being a witch, Johanna discovers Rudolph signed over his soul to the devil, officially becoming a warlock for the purpose of joining her in the other world.

The November 12, 1932, issue of *Billboard* reviewed this episode, commenting that this particular story "is more like a fairy tale for older children, with the general theme different than such stories... The stories should be along the modern detective style or else the title of the half hour period means nothing... Naturally, such a dramatization leaves the good old Shadow in the lurch and hardships him terribly. He really has nothing to do with such a story except act wise and so nullifies the value of the title."

Alonzo Deen Cole not only scripted "Man

Beast" but also played the lead along with his real-life wife, Marie O'Flynn. Composed originally for *The Shadow*, this script would be performed again three years later for *The Witch's Tale* under the same name for the broadcast of June 6, 1935.

The May 1933 issue of *Science Fiction Digest* noted: "*The Witch's Tale*, written by the versatile Alonzo Deen Cole, is rated by radio critics as one of the five leading acts on the air." After a seven-year run, Cole retired old Nancy and struck up a friendship with Phillips H. Lord, writing scripts for his *Seth Parker* and *Gang Busters* programs.

Other cast members playing supporting roles included Paul Huber, future voice of the fictional John Barclay; J. Scott Smart, before his years in the title role of *The Fat Man*; future screen actor Brian Donlevy in two episodes, "Live Bait" (February 15, 1933) and "Framed In" (March 8, 1933); Santos Ortega and Alan Reed (under the name of Teddy Bergman), both future leads for Commissioner Weston; Ted De Corsia and Everett Sloane, who would ultimately play the recurring role of Shreevy the cab driver; and two pre-Margot Lanes with Marjorie Anderson in "Dance Hall Murder" (February 22, 1933) and Agnes Moorehead as the mentally-tortured June Conway in "The Drums of Death" (November 2, 1932).

The format of the series generally depicted a crime being committed and the detective (or protagonist playing the role of a detective) defying the odds in order to solve the mystery, even when the story involved supernatural elements. The city editor of a major newspaper plays detective in an effort to solve the murder of two crime reporters in "Death Warrant" (November 16, 1932). A female detective goes undercover as a replacement dance hall girl in "Dance Hall Murder" (February 22, 1933). A detective on the bottle is fired from his job and, to reclaim his dignity, sets out to solve a crime he believes his nephew did not commit in "Fighting Comeback" (November 30, 1932). The ex-detective learns the witness to the case was a gambler working with a crime kingpin and attempts to force a confession from the guilty man. Having accepted one drink too many, he becomes the intended victim as the murderer laughs and confesses the truth, but the police barge inside, having overheard the confession. Then the ex-

detective reveals a surprise—he was playing drunk to get the confession.

The episode "When Wolf Meets Wolf" (January 18, 1933) was adapted from the short story of the same name by Frank Richardson Pierce, originally published not in an issue of *Detective Story Magazine* but in the June 20, 1931, issue of *Western Story Magazine*, proving that while adaptations were from Street & Smith periodicals they were not necessarily from the most likely one. One noticeable difference between the NBC series and the former *Detective Story Magazine Hour* was the announcer did not close each broadcast with a sales pitch for the magazine that corresponded with the evening's thriller, but rather a pitch for the radio host's appearance: "The Shadow appears on this program through the courtesy of the publishers of *The Shadow* magazine." This same promotion no doubt began with the five-episode Perfect-O-Lite series titled *The Shadow* in January and February 1932.

According to a press release, each story was to have an appropriate musical background. The music for the broadcasts, by George Earle and his orchestra, did not suggest any original composition but rather a selection of previously composed music scores to bridge scenes and add emphasis for selected scenes. The theme song for these early Shadow broadcasts was not "Omphale's Spinning Wheel" from *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, Opus 31, by Saint-Saens which was used during the continuity series. As revealed in music sheets accompanying scripts from the 1932-33 season, the theme was "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" by Paul Dukas (Durand). Radio historians Reginald M. Jones and Terry Salomonson have revealed that in March and April of 1938, *The Lone Ranger* radio program began using "Omphale's Spinning Wheel" as part of the midpoint music between the first and second acts of the program. This lasted only a few weeks and was used only for selected episodes.

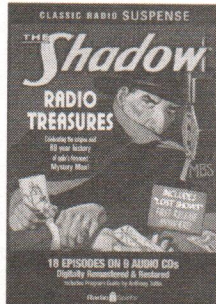
No longer competing against the popular Sherlock Holmes dramas (also scripted by Edith Meiser) which aired an hour later on a rival network, the October 11, 1932, issue of *Variety* reviewed: "Through a tie-in with Street & Smith, publisher of *Shadow* magazine, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Coal Company has the basso pipes with the sinister chuckle back on the airplanes along the east coast only, to help scare the kids around the bedtime hour. It's the same old 'the Shadow knows!' folderol, but backed up this time, judging from the debut script, by a weak collection of mystery stories.

"It is assumed that Blue Coal in starting off the series picked out the best of the scripts it had available. First plot dealt neither with crime, crooks or gangsters, but, apparently

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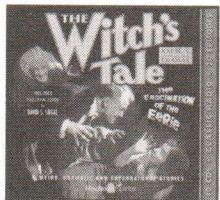
THE SHADOW: Radio Treasures

Radio listeners first heard the sinister laugh of The Shadow on July 31, 1930. This 80th anniversary treasury includes two never-before-released shows starring Orson Welles and Margot Stevenson - "Revenge on the Shadow" and "The Hospital Murders"- from previously lost transcription records.

This 9-Hour digitally remastered collection also includes the premiere broadcast of the 1937 radio revival, Agnes Moorehead's final network appearance as Margot Lane, and performances by Bill Johnstone, Bret Morrison, Marjorie Anderson, Grace Matthews, Lesley Woods, Frank Readick, James LaCurto, and more.

Includes **Program Guide** by Anthony Tollin with photographs and background information about the series.

EPISODES INCLUDE: The Death House Rescue 09-26-37, The Phantom Voice 02-06-38, The Bride of Death 03-06-38, The White Legion 03-20-38, Revenge on the Shadow 07-31-38, The Hospital Murders 08-14-38, The Man Who Murdered Time 01-01-39 (Broadcast 08-20-39), Prelude to Terror 01-29-39, Can the Dead Talk? 03-19-39, The Shadow Returns 11-19-39, The Sandhog Murders 11-26-39, The Stockings Were Hung 12-24-39, Death in a Minor Key 09-29-40, The Shadow Challenged 01-19-41, Etched with Acid 03-17-46, Murders on the Main Stem 12-15-46, Spider Boy 06-01-47, The Comic Strip Killer 11-23-47



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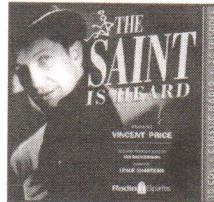
THE WITCH'S TALE

Alonzo Deen Cole, creator of The Witch's Tale, once said, "People like to be scared, just as they like to eat candy." From the depths of his imagination he conjured Old Nancy and her black cat, Satan. Listen to the "Witch of Salem" as she urges listeners to "draw up to the fire and gaze in to the embers" and sit back and enjoy the "fascination of the eerie!"

Cole himself plays the lead male roles (and the cat) and his wife, Marie O'Flynn joins as a leading lady in these 20 radio programs.

Includes a **Program Guide** by David S. Siegel featuring photographs and information about the series.

EPISODES INCLUDE: The Boa Goddess, The Bronze Venus, The Devil Mask, The Devil's Doctor, The Devil's Number, The Flying Dutchman, Four Fingers and a Thumb, Frankenstein, The Graveyard Mansion, The Gypsy's Hand, The Hairy Monster, The Haunted Crossroads, The Knife of Sacrifice, The Physician of the Dead, The Puzzle, Rats in a Trap, The Spirits of the Lake, The Statue of Thor, The Suicide, The Wedding Gift, Bonus: 1934 Syndication Promo



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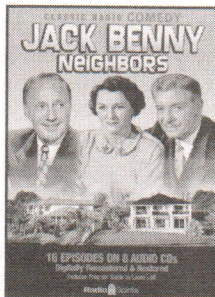
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Includes a **Program Guide** written by Ian Dickerson, featuring photographs and a series history.

EPISODES INCLUDE: The Saint Goes Underground 07-31-49, Greed Causes Murder 08-14-49, A Schizophrenic Psychiatrist (a.k.a. The Colorblind Killer) 09-18-49, The Sinister Sneeze 06-11-50, The Problem of the Peculiar Payoff 07-09-50, Follow the Leader 07-16-50, The Frightened Author 07-23-50, The Case of the Previewed Crime 07-30-50, The Corpse Said Ouch 08-06-50, Cupid and the Corpse 08-27-50, Baseball Murder 09-03-50, The Horrible Hamburger 09-10-50, The Ghost That Giggled 09-17-50, Dossier on a Doggone Dog 09-24-50, It's Snow Use 10-29-50, Miss Godby's School for Girls 11-05-50, The Dame on the Doorstep 11-12-50, No Hiding Place 11-19-50, The Terrible Tintype 11-26-50, Martin Hickerson, Private Eye 12-03-50



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Includes a **Program Guide** by Laura Leff, featuring photographs and background information.

EPISODES INCLUDE: Jack Is Invited to the Colman's for Dinner 12-09-45, The English Butler 12-23-45, Contest Winners Names Announced 02-03-46, Violin Practice Interrupts Ronald Colman's Rehearsal 04-14-46, Guests Leo Durocher, Ronald and Bonita Colman 11-17-46, Jack's Birthday Party 02-16-47, Leaving for Chicago 04-27-47, Corner Drug Store 11-09-47, Jack and Mary See Colman's Movie 02-01-48, Jack Is Robbed of Ronald Colman's Oscar 03-28-48, Charlie's Aunt 04-25-48, Ronald Colman's Oscar Is Returned 05-09-48, The Colman's Have Dinner at Jack's 10-24-48, A Day at the Races 03-06-49, How Jack Met the Colmans 10-29-50, The IRS Visits Jack Because He Spent Seventeen Dollars on Entertainment 04-15-51

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to be original, picked on a shabbily and loosely written war story, in which the Shadow's menacing intrusions no more fitted than the introduction of a Rasch ballet into a 'What Price Glory' trench scene. This initial program had an ear-tickling cast of players but the aimless, poorly paced and punchless story must have left them wondering what it was all about.

"For the use of 'The Shadow' character, mention of Street & Smith and their mag by that title is given in the credit copy.

One 'John Barclay,' described as the 'Blue Coal heating engineer,' shoulders the plug assignment with a none too lengthy spiel on the proper way of caring for the furnace that gently leads up to the suggestion of how the best results to that end can be obtained. Same commercial is supporting a Sunday afternoon musical show on a CBS eastern hookup."

For the NBC season, the role of John Barclay was played by actor Tim Frawley, who was usually listed on the scripts as T. Daniel Frawley. He made his Broadway debut in 1887, and later organized the internationally acclaimed Frawley Stock Company which toured America and the Far East. After retiring from the stage, he turned to radio where he was best known as the voice of the Old Ranger, the weekly narrator of the *Death Valley Days* program, and was a regular on the adventure serial *East of Cairo* (February 5 to October 8, 1930). Because Frawley was a staff member at the NBC studios, and because *The Shadow* made a transition to there, it comes as no surprise that Frawley received the all-important task of making the sponsor look good.

A review of the radio scripts from the 1932-33 season reveals the earliest impression of the creepy dramas. Like many early radio dramatizations of the early thirties, the scripts applied the technique of the stage, including lots of dialogue and very little action. Music was used to bridge scenes but rarely used to heighten the emotional



A Problem with Live Radio

Like many live radio programs of the era, *The Shadow* program

would on occasion run overtime. The broadcast of December 21, 1932, ran over 15 seconds, delaying synchronization. It worked the other way around when, on January 25, 1933, *The Royal Gelatin Program* ran over 15 seconds, delaying synchronization and the start of *The Shadow* presentation.

same Wednesday evening scripts in consecutive order on Thursday evenings. Sponsored by area Blue Coal distributor H.H. Babcock Company, Jack Lee directed these repeat productions with a completely different cast, marking his only contribution to the series. Lee was a talented thespian who worked on the New York stage, including playing the role of a corpse in Martha Madison and Eva Kay Flint's murder mystery, *Subway Express*. Charles Siverson supplied the music which was also his only contribution. Each script was performed two weeks behind the New York City productions, but an episode was skipped shortly before Christmas and the Rochester broadcasts were only one week behind after the holiday. Only 29 of the 30 episodes were broadcast during this repeat run on Thursday evenings from October 20, 1932, to May 4, 1933.

Radio Guide described the spooky broadcasts in dramatic fashion: "Rain laden wind moans about the turrets of an isolated castle, a forlorn dog howls at the eerie, cloud-shuttered moon. Tense whispers disturb the oppressive silence of vaulted corridors. The Shadow, that awesome specter of the radio, glances apprehensively at a chronometer, crunches the glow from a cigarette and tensely awaits a white shirted youth's permission to strike terror to the hearts of his followers. Weird music—climactic chords in minor keys—solemnly calculated to provide mysterious atmosphere in the absence of the motion picture industry's

impact of a particular scene. Drama was created through a representational illusion of the setting and characters, often taking a while for the momentum to pick up. The same could be said for many early talkies in cinema. The microphone was mobile so actors were not limited to standing in the same spot exchanging their lines, but they often stood in place for the camera. Action sequences, in turn, bore little or no dialogue.

About two weeks after the premiere of the 1932-33 season, station WHAM in Rochester began broadcasting the



James La Curto as the mysterious narrator known as "the shadow" in the original CBS series, *The Detective Story Hour* sponsored by Street & Smith's *Detective Story Magazine*.

flitting bats and flickering neon tubes."

In the same manner as Rochester, Street & Smith expanded the *Detective Story Magazine Hour* program in Houston. According to newspaper archives, the KXYZ Players were the real stars of the program. New and original radio scripts were created for the Houston broadcasts. For the premiere broadcast of September 16, 1932, for example, the story was titled "The Kid's Last Chance." For October 28, the drama was titled simply "The Kid." This leads one to suspect the scripts dramatized were not the same ones featured across the rest of the country. Street and Smith's name was clearly promoted in newspapers dated September 16 and October 14. One local newspaper described the evening's scheduled presentation as "KXYZ Players Burlesque, a detective story." There has been nothing to verify whether The Shadow was the horror host. The broadcast schedule was as follows: September 16, 1932—Friday, 10 to 10:15 p.m.; September 23, 1932—Friday, 10:15 to 10:45 p.m.; September 30, 1932—no broadcast; October 7, 1932—Friday, 10:15 to 10:45 p.m.; October 14 and 21, 1932—Friday, 7:30 to 8 p.m.; October 28, 1932 to March 5, 1933—Friday, 9 to 9:30 p.m.; March 12 to July 2, 1933—Sunday, 8:30 to 9 p.m.

On April 17, 1933, Ormond Gerald Smith, president of Street & Smith and founder of



Because Frawley was a staff member at the NBC studios, and because *The Shadow* made a transition to there, it comes as no surprise that Frawley received the all-important task of making the sponsor look good.

many popular magazines of the time, died of a stroke at his East 78th Street residence. A review of the script for the broadcast of April 19 shows no mention by the announcer regarding the death, but this doesn't rule out such a special statement being made at the start or end of the broadcast and separate from the script. George C. Smith, vice president and treasurer of the company, died of pneumonia at his Park Avenue residence, surviving his brother by only 11 days. A friend of the two brothers told reporters the work and responsibility of directing the large publishing business was evenly divided between the two. Both names were featured at the bottom of the table of contents pages along with the edition notice, publishing information, copyright column of each issue of *Detective Story Magazine*. The final episode of *The Shadow* concluded on April 26, so a mention of George C. Smith's passing would not have been heard on the program. WHAM in Rochester, which was behind a week, with the final broadcast on May 4, and a mention over those airwaves remains possible.

The Blue Coal Mystery Revue was broadcast on a network of 10 stations across the East Coast via hookup on Wednesday evenings from 8 to 8:30 p.m., EST. WFBR Baltimore; WCSH Portland, OR; WEEI Boston; WJAR, Providence, RI; WTIC Hartford, CT; WGY Schenectady, NY; WEAJ New York City; WRC Washington; WLIT Philadelphia; WTAG Worcester, MA.

The popularity of *The Shadow* reached as far as the Midwest. In December 1933, the Knox Company of St. Louis approached Street & Smith seeking broadcast rights for *The Shadow*, unaware that NBC was airing the program as the *Blue Coal Mystery Revue* along the East Coast. Street & Smith replied favorably with a counter-offer to sponsor a series of radio dramas based on another of their successful pulp magazines, *Doc Savage*. A series of 26 scripts had been produced for syndication, broadcast on various local radio stations as early as spring of 1934. In New York City, the series was heard beginning November 1934.

Weeks after the 1932-33 *Blue Coal Mystery Revue* concluded, *The Shadow* made a return to the airwaves this time in the form of a satire. Comedian Jack Benny evolved slowly from his vaudeville roots to become a weekly comedy addition on variety programs featuring rousing orchestras and clever vocals. When the *Canada Dry Ginger Ale Program* dropped sponsorship in January 1933, Benny was hired as the weekly comedian on *The Chevrolet Program* in March. Frank Black and his orchestra, tenor James Melton and singer Grace Hayes supplied the musical entertainment while Benny and his cast supplied the comedy. A four-part comedy skit called "Who Killed

Mr. X?" spoofed radio mystery thrillers and premiered on the evening of May 26, 1933, and concluded June 16. Throughout the installments, Benny questioned those in the courtroom, Sherlock Holmes (played by Benny) is brought into the case, King Kong gets involved, and The Shadow (played by Ralph Ashe) appears as the sinister voice who laughs, informing the audience that Benny has the wrong suspect. The Shadow does not make an appearance in the first installment, but plays the role of the spooky narrator for the remaining three broadcasts. Ashe was able to mimic Frank Readick's Shadow laugh almost to perfection and radio audiences might have thought it was Readick playing the role.

The "Who Killed Mr. X?" skit was dramatized previously on the *Canada Dry Ginger Ale* program of October 24, 1932. The courtroom murder mystery about a headless victim was not broadcast in installments, and Fran Frey played the role of a phantom. It was common for skits to be recycled throughout the early Jack Benny broadcasts.

Less than a year after the mystery spoof reached the airwaves, the musical segments had blended into comedic format, but the fully developed comedy skits were not agreeable to an executive at Chevrolet, who rewarded Benny with a pink slip and replaced him with an all-music series featuring the Victor Young orchestra. Spoofing the Shadow character alongside such nationwide characters as King Kong and Sherlock Holmes was not unusual. The character of the horror host also was nationally known, thanks to the six film shorts, mystery magazine, and prior *Shadow* radio broadcasts in Oregon, Utah, Texas, Kansas and Louisiana. None of the *Blue Coal Mystery Revue* broadcasts are known to exist in recorded form, but a couple of these early Jack Benny broadcasts do, offering us a glimpse of what the Shadow sounded like. A sound clip of Frank Readick's rendition as the Shadow from one of Universal's film shorts is also available on a number of websites. The opening tag line for the later Orson Welles broadcasts was recited by Readick, and in the episode "The Shadow Challenged" (January 19, 1941), the villain masquerading as the fake Shadow was Frank Readick, a brilliant stroke of casting.

One year later, from June 22 to August



Frank Readick looking more like the clutching claw in character before the NBC microphone as the mysterious storyteller known as the shadow.



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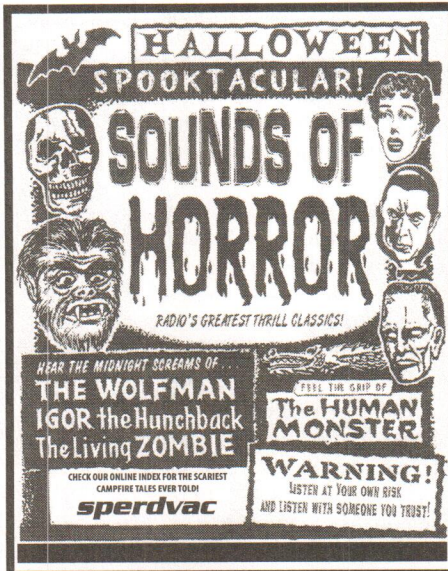
3, 1934, *The General Tire Program* featured a reprise of the apparently successful mystery skit. In a comedy bit titled "Who Killed Mr. Stooze?" (also known as "The Stooze Murder Case" on the scripts), The Shadow made a return appearance as played by character actor Joe Franz. This was no doubt because the Jack Benny program had moved from the East Coast to the California, which afforded an entirely different selection of supporting actors. The character of the Shadow, however, lasted a mere two broadcasts. With the broadcast of July 6, Franz was mimicking a character known as "The Phantom" in the same capacity as that of the Shadow, which lasted four consecutive broadcasts. Had Street & Smith objected to the unauthorized use of the Shadow character in the comedy skits? Quite possibly, considering the Shadow character was never featured in any future Jack Benny programs even though a number of other horror and mystery hosts were, including the Whistler. ♣

RADIO BROADCAST LOG FOR BLUE COAL MYSTERY REVUE

- #1 "SPECIAL ORDERS" October 5, 1932
- #2 "THE IMAGE" October 12, 1932
- #3 [TITLE UNKNOWN] October 19, 1932
- #4 "MAN BEAST" October 26, 1932
- #5 "THE DRUMS OF DEATH" November 2, 1932
- #6 "THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN" November 9, 1932
- #7 "DEATH WARRANT" November 16, 1932
- #8 "JADE" November 23, 1932
- #9 "FIGHTING COMEBACK" November 30, 1932
- #10 "MURDER BY ACCIDENT" December 7, 1932
- #11 "THE MISSING COBRA" December 14, 1932
- #12 "THE YELLOW FINGER" December 21, 1932
- #13 "DEATH AT LONELY POINT" December 28, 1932
- #14 "THE GUILLOTINE" January 4, 1933
- #15 "THE ACE OF SPADES" January 11, 1933
- #16 "WHEN WOLF MEETS WOLF" January 18, 1933
- #17 "BEGGAR'S RANSOM" January 25, 1933
- #18 "CROONING FOR CRIME" February 1, 1933
- #19 "BOOMERANG" February 8, 1933
- #20 "LIVE BAIT" February 15, 1933
- #21 "DANCE HALL MURDER" February 22, 1933
- #22 "SKYSCRAPER RACKET" March 1, 1933
- #23 "FRAMED IN" March 8, 1933
- #24 "BLASTED ALIBI" March 15, 1933
- #25 "OVER BURNING WIRES" March 22, 1933
- #26 "FANGS" March 29, 1933
- #27 "BLIND" April 5, 1933
- #28 "HARBOR RAT" April 12, 1933
- #29 "NIGHT CLUB RACKET" April 19, 1933
- #30 "HANDS IN THE DARK" April 26, 1933

FOR THE RECORD

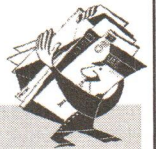
In last month's issue regarding the September 11 appearance of Conrad Binyon at the the monthly meeting, Conrad's Air National Guard unit was activated for Korea, but his posting to Korea was cancelled since the Korean conflict's armistice was signed prior to his completion of training. His later service activity was in the DaNang area of Vietnam in the early 1960s.



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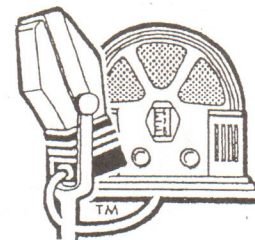
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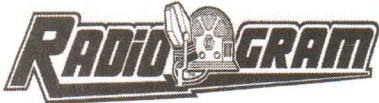
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