

# SPERDVAC

# RADIOGRAM

Vol. XVI, No. 11 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy NOV - DEC 1990



Los Angeles station KMPC presented "Ducking the Rain," a live comedy/drama Oct. 27. The detective story featured a cast of stage performers, including Newell Alexander, Rosemary Alexander (who scripted the show) and Colby Chester, author of the story and star of the program. See story on Page five.

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### **BULLETIN BOARD**

Pick up convention packets at the registration table.  
DEADLINE to declare for Board of Directors election is January 12, 1991



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O T R - related  
material to  
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**WANTED:** RAILROAD HOUR shows. Contact: Ken Garnier, 15042 Joycedale, La Puente, CA 91744.



## MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

**HELP WANTED:** Richard Glasband, librarian for General Library open reels 501+, will no longer be able to serve in that capacity. In order to keep that important portion of the SPERDVAC library open, we will need the services of a Southern California volunteer. Members able to assist are welcome to call us at (213)947-9800.

**MORE HELP WANTED:** Outside committee commitments have forced Chris Lembesis to curtail his SPERDVAC work and he will be unable to devote the time necessary for his monthly book reviews. We would like to continue with this service to our readers. This is one of the those volunteer jobs which can be performed by members across the nation. Contact your editor for particulars. (We'll supply the review copies!)

SPERDVAC's volunteers go into their annual hibernation in December, so there will be *no meeting and no newsletter until January*. Our best wishes to all of our members, friends and their families for a safe and restful holiday season.

There's more old time radio available in the Los Angeles area. Our long-time friend Gene Ward hosts the **K-WINK Encore Theatre** Saturdays from 10 pm to midnight. KWNK radio (670 AM) can be heard in the Simi, San Fernando and Canejo Valleys.

Farther north, Dave Brennerger's **Old Radio Theatre** celebrated its fifth anniversary Oct. 29. The program airs on KVMR (89.5 FM) in the Grass Valley-Navada City area of Northern California.

**CORRECTION DEPT.:** Last month we accidentally left out half of a sentence from the *Information, Please* column, and it changed the meaning of the entire paragraph. WWJ radio isn't claiming to be the first commercial radio station. They celebrated their 70th anniversary on Aug. 20.

An eleven hour old time radio marathon will air at Christmas time on KPCC-FM, Pasadena, CA. The program begins at 6 pm Christmas Eve and runs until 5 am Christmas Morning. KPCC is at 89.3 FM.

## SPERDVAC DIRECTORY

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### LIBRARIES:

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(for Blind Members only)

**AUDIO SPERDVAC CATALOGS:** Contact Bob Herman, 1329 Garrison St., Port Orchard, WA 98366 (206)876-4809 (for Blind Members only)

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**CATALOG PAGE & LIBRARY ORDER FORMS:** Carolyn Rawski, 7430 Gaviota Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406

## NOVEMBER CONVENTION SALUTES EARLY RADIO

Special guests, panel presentations and radio show recreations are planned for SPERDVAC's annual old time radio convention Nov. 9 and 10.

Writers Ray Bradbury and Norman Corwin, performers Les Tremayne and Jim Hawthorne plus popular female singers of the Big Band era are just part of the festivities slated for our annual salute to radio's golden era.

The convention opens at 2 pm Friday, Nov. 9 with our first panel discussion beginning at 2:30. SuzAnne and Gabor Barabas will host a panel discussion on **Gun-smoke** and at 4 pm Walt Mitchell and Mary Lou Wallace will salute the radio work of Mel Blanc.

A recreation of **Tom Corbett, Space Cadet** will be presented during the Friday evening program. Original stars Frank Thomas and Jan Merlin will perform the story "Doomed Cargo." The cast includes Jack Brown, Parley Baer, Conrad Binyon and Jonathan Hole. Frank "Junior" Coghlan will direct the show and Bob Mott will provide live sound effects.

Sound effects artist Bob Mott returns to our microphones Saturday morning to present a workshop on his craft. Mr. Mott has recently completed a book on his work in radio and copies will be available at our convention.

Actors Jeff Corey and William Lally will participate in a radio performers' panel in the late morning and, following a 90 minute break for lunch, Nelson Olmsted will be on hand with "Readings by Olmsted."

The Big Band era's Kay St. Germain will serve as mistress of ceremonies for a panel presentation, "Lady Singers of the Radio Airwaves." Her guests are Helen Forrest, Bea Wain and Martha Tilton.

Special guests Ray Bradbury and Norman Corwin will be featured following the Saturday night dinner. They will discuss their work writing for - and listening to - radio.

Saturday night's finale will be a recreation of **The Casebook of Gregory Hood**. We are using the script of the Oct. 11, 1948 broadcast. It was written by Ray Bufum and originally starred Elliott Lewis and Howard McNear.

Les Tremayne will star in the recreation. Parley Baer, Lou Krugman, Lawrence Dobkin, Lillian Buyeff, Jean Gillespie, Bill Idleson and Herb Ellis will perform in the program. Mr. Ellis will also serve as our director.

Jim Hawthorne will be SPERDVAC's master of ceremonies on Friday and Saturday nights.

The SPERDVAC convention will be at the Viscount Hotel, 9750 Airport Blvd., Los Angeles. The advance admission price for the entire convention is \$70. At the door the price is \$75. For guests unable to attend the entire convention, the following prices apply: Friday afternoon and evening (includes dinner), \$30; Saturday daytime (9 am to 5 pm), \$10; Saturday evening (banquet dinner and recreation), \$35.



Meet Nelson Olmsted Saturday.

# SPERDVAC

## Friends



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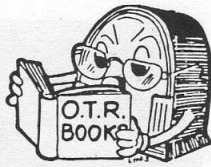
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We are so grateful to the many Friends of SPERDVAC who have contributed \$50 or more to help defray costs of the society. The above members have donated funds during the past year.

# Radio in Review

By Chris  
Lembesis



Welcome once again! We have arrived at our Convention Issue. There are some wonderful announcements to share, so you might want to grab a pad and pencil. But for the moment, will you join me for one last visit to the OTR Bookshelf.

**WILL ROGERS: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY.** By Peter Rollins. 1984. Greenwood Press. Clothbound. \$36.95.

The impact and influence of Will Rogers on American life is still felt to this day, despite his passing more than a half century ago. In this work, the author assesses that success with a careful and complete study of Rogers' print, film and radio work.

The **Good Gulf Show** that Rogers starred in, is well researched and presented. Each show is described and there are details on what programs do survive from disc to day. Fans of this series will be most fortunate in having a check list that can be referred to over and over. Once again, this is a complete look at all areas of Rogers' show business career. An outstanding work. Well recommended.

**ALL MY BEST FRIENDS.** By George Burns with David Fisher. 1989. G.P. Putnam's Sons. Clothbound. \$17.95.

Next to his wife Gracie, George Burns' other lifelong passion was show business. In this wonderful narrative, Burns shares with us some of the anecdotes of his friends and fellow performers. Whether it's Al Jolson, George Jessel, Eddie Cantor, Jimmy Durante, Fanny Brice, or his closest friend, Jack Benny, the stories are there - on stage and off. And the stories Burns shares from behind the mike are many.

Burns on radio . . . "A vaudevillian didn't have to be a genius to figure out that radio was the soundwave of the future. I did. So Gracie and I were perfect for radio. We were on the air for almost twenty years. I think I loved being in radio more than any other part of my career."

Some more Burns observations on radio: "Jack's (Benny) first experience in radio was as a writer for Benny Rubin. No one was better suited for radio than Jack. Radio consisted of sound and silence. That was it. While the rest of us were trying to figure out ways of using sound, Jack was smart enough to figure out how to use the silence. No one ever got more out of nothing than he did." A most enjoyable book to add to your OTR collection.

**DON'T SHOOT, IT'S ONLY ME.** By Bob Hope with Melville Shavelson. 1990. G.P. Putnam's Sons. Clothbound. \$19.95.

For over 50 years, Bob Hope has been called upon, and volunteered to entertain our fighting men in all parts of the world, in times of war and peace. This new book is Bob's look back on those days. Assisted by his longtime writer from radio and TV, Melville Shavelson, Bob takes us back to his beginnings in show business.

In his exceptional book that reached the *New York Times* Top Ten Best Seller List this summer, we find that

his real love was radio, and a good amount of this book reflects on this early era. The story of how Hope adapted to the medium, and how he prepared his programs makes for fascinating reading. Here is Bob telling how he did it:

"We used to preview **Pepsodent Show** on Sunday nights, throwing in every joke we thought might have a chance. The laughs from the studio audience told us which were funny. In those days, we had no laugh machines to create hilarity on cue. All the writers would sit up in a glass-enclosed compartment called the sponsor's booth and check off the laughs according to their volume. The Sunday previews sometimes lasted for two solid hours and were always a riot of ad-libbing and horsing around." Great insight by Hope. Here is a book that's a winner. Thanks to Jennifer James of G.P. Putnam Sons' publicity, and to Bob Hope. Thanks for the Memories!

**FRED ALLEN'S RADIO COMEDY.** By Alan Havig. 1990. Temple University Press. Clothbound. \$29.95.

Many of you may recall a book reviewed last year entitled **Fred Allen: His Life and Wit** by Robert Taylor. This new work, beautifully researched and written by Alan Havig, approaches Fred Allen as a fine study of strictly his radio career, rather than a full biography.

Each book compliments the other, as Havig points out. It involved over 15 years of research and it shows. A complete examination of the Fred Allen Shows, including ALL cast members of all his series, the craft of creating radio comedy, radio censorship, and other areas are explored in detail. A 55 page bibliography concludes this work and in itself is a wonderful research tool.

Mr. Havig's book traces the development of the radio industry, American comedy as created for radio, and how Fred Allen related to it is prevalent throughout. Utilizing published and unpublished sources, including the Fred Allen papers, Havig shows how Allen's style of humor made it, and survived, even though other forms of radio comedy went through constant change or format revision. Good analysis here.

Some interesting revelations are presented. Except for the appearances of George Jessel and Jack Benny in the 1930's, Allen refrained from using other radio or film stars, and instead his **Town Hall Tonight** programs showcased literary figures or people with unusual occupations (remember Capt. Knight and his trained eagle?) With a change in network, sponsor, and format, Allen utilized guest stars more frequently after 1940.

This volume presents many excerpts of Allen's best humor, anecdotes, and excerpts from some of his shows. Fred's thoughts on radio? "On radio you could do subtle writing because you had access to the imagination. . . that was why I liked radio. We had some fun." And you will too. This is an outstanding reference work well recommended. Thanks to Anya Brettenbach, Director of Promotions at Temple University Press.

**SUNDAY NIGHTS AT SEVEN: THE JACK BENNY STORY.** By Jack and Joan Benny. With a forward by George Burns. 1990. Warner Books. Clothbound. \$19.95.

Jack Benny has left us with a rich treasury of American humor through his film, TV and radio work. Add to that

## Ducking the Rain

# KMPC Takes Chances with Radio Drama

by Dan Haefele

Radio historians say the era of live dramas died when the tube invaded our living rooms. The networks stopped producing the types of shows that had been the mainstay of radio for a generation and the audio medium switched to recorded music and news formats. Fans pointed their fingers at executives, accusing them of being afraid to take a chance and bring back radio of the forties. Los Angeles station KMPC has changed that.

Last year the station aired "Christmas in El Paso," written by and starring Rosemary and Newell Alexander. Listener response was so positive that station management decided to present several more.

"More people hear these than we expect," Mrs. Alexander told SPERDVAC.

"We're looking for any excuse to do more," KMPC program director Chuck Southcott says.

Their latest "excuse" was Halloween. The station took some chances and invested its resources in a live production, complete with a five piece orchestra and sound effects man. And, almost unheard of in this era of prerecorded productions, even the studio audience was live.

Using a theatre that seats a little over 200 at the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, the station aired "Ducking the Rain" live, much the same way programs were done forty years ago. KMPC has decided to present two performances at the theatre on the weekend prior to a special occasion (one strictly for a studio audience, the other broadcast live with another studio audience) plus a rebroadcast on a holiday or other occasion.

Last year's show was carried live on the Sunday before Christmas and the repeat broadcast aired Christmas Eve.

Their latest venture was rebroadcast Halloween night.

And that was another chance KMPC management was willing to take. Radio fans, hungry for the few morsels of live drama that are occasionally thrown their way, had every right to expect something spooky. There was hardly a creaking door to be heard.

Instead, "Ducking the Rain" is a delightful comedy/detective show written in the spirit of Raymond Chandler. It's filled with wonderful comic lines that rival those of the old **Sam Spade** radio series, giving the listener perhaps the best of both Chandler and Dashiell Hammett.

The program had few hitches. There were times when the music was a bit too loud. And some performers, well trained for the theatre, were still projecting their voices to the back of the room. But it's forgivable that some forgot about the microphones. After all, the performers represent a new generation employing the methods of a by-gone era.

Colby Chester, now a talk show host at KING Radio in Seattle, authored the story. He starred in the radio play as gumshoe Austin Healy. Rosemary Alexander, who portrayed Chanda Lear (get it?), edited the script for radio.

Her editing was another chance KMPC was willing to take. It was difficult to cut the script down for use on an hour-long broadcast. So KMPC management gave her the OK to let it run overtime. It did. . . by 19 minutes. But the script is so good and the performance so well done that it's unlikely many listeners noticed.

"To us, the show is artistically satisfying at this length," Rosemary Alexander explains.

And their program wasn't disrupted by 1990 style commercials, either. Spires Restaurants sponsored the entire broadcast and their commercial inserts, with appropriate background music, were read live by program announcer Scott O'Neil. "It's like 1945 again with a single sponsor on a program," Chuck Southcott points out.

Colby Chester's story evolved from his intrigue with Raymond Chandler's writing and from his work with the Alexanders in an improvisation group, CALTRANS. "Our director said we should improvise a mystery," Rosemary Alexander explained.

So, Colby Chester used audience suggestions to select a crime and the Alexanders with performers Randy Rudy and Charlotte Blunt, became, at the audiences' command, "four characters you might see

Continued on page 7 . . .

RADIOGRAM PAGE FIVE



"Hey, Frank. Let me work him over," pleads Sgt. Tuggle, played by Randy Rudy, left. "He'll sing a confession in soprano." Replies Lt. Frank Lee, portrayed by Newell Alexander (center), "Go Find a phone and call the coroner." Gumshoe Austin Healy's retort: "You really ought to do something about Sgt. Tuggle, Frank. He's the kind of guy that gives prehistory a bad name." Sound man David Krebs is at far right.

## RADIO IN REVIEW CONT.

this wonderful autobiography, previously unpublished and discovered by his daughter Joan in 1984. Here is Jack's only account in his own words.

Joan Benny reminisces about her life as the daughter of a legend. With a rare insight into her dad's personal and professional life, we find that he was sometimes "distant but loving".

Included are humorous anecdotes by his friends, but the real surprise is Jack's own thoughts on his radio series and why it became the long time success it was. Always considerate of those who helped his career along, Jack sometimes takes a back seat and gives credit to his supporting cast and the talents they possessed.

We find out how Sadie Marks became Mary Livingstone, how Rochester joined the cast, why Bing Crosby cussed on the air, and more stories which make for delightful reading and a worthy addition to your OTR library. Included are 32 pages of photographs from the Benny private collection, many never before seen.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jass Records, has issued an interesting album of the **Maxwell House Good News** broadcast of June 29, 1939. For the last program of the season, host Robert Young takes us on a preview of the just released MGM film *The Wizard of Oz*. The guests are Judy Garland, Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr, Frank Morgan, the stars of the film, along with Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg, the composers of the film score. In fact, this broadcast survives because it was taken from a set of six NBC double-sided 12" 78-rpm presentation discs made for Harold Arlen.

The sound quality. . .superb! Hats off to Doug Pomeroy for an outstanding job of restoring the original discs for this album. Except for the deleted commercials, the show is complete and very enjoyable. And by the way, it fills a gap in our Hollywood Museum collection of **Good News** shows, as this broadcast is missing from that run. The bad news is that they are SOLD OUT of this album, but Jass Records reports that it can become available again on cassette if enough individual are interested. For more details, write to Jass Records, 611 Broadway #411, New York, NY 10012.

The producer of the above album, Will Friedwald, has written a new book about jazz and popular singers. Titled simply **Jazz Singing**, the author acknowledges radio's role with the singers of that era. Covering performers ranging from Bing Crosby to the Boswell Sisters to Frank Sinatra, this excellent 500 page volume provides a definitive history of jazz's role in popular singing. Available in hardbound for \$29.95. It can be ordered direct from Jass Records, whose address is listed above.

From Greenwood Press, a new bio-bibliography on actress Maureen O'Sullivan has been released. Though primarily a film and stage actress, she DID appear as a guest on some dramatic radio shows such as **Lux Radio Theater**, **Gulf Screen Guild**, **Good News**, and **Silver Theater**. SPERDVAC assisted the author on this work, so it should be good. For more information write to:

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881.

Honorary Member Carroll Carroll, is offering the LAST copies of his autobiographical book **None of Your Business or My Life With J. Walter Thompson - Confessions of a Renegade Radio Writer**. This will become a collector's item soon, so grab your copy. Also by him is **Life Is A Fortune Cookie**, though NOT an OTR title, but a very funny book of witty proverbs. He looks forward to hearing from us, and will sign your copies.

If you wish **None of Your Business** autographed, please send your copy (offered at my table) to Carroll Carroll, Box 29593, Hollywood, CA 90029.

### SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Radio In Review was created in 1987 to present a balanced view of our hobby. Your response of the written word to supplement what you hear has been gratifying. It was a labor of love to review the latest literature in radio history, in such a way to allow the reader to draw their own conclusions as to the merits of the works covered. Because of other commitments, this is my final contribution to this column.

It is my desire that, perhaps, sometime in the future, we can resume this column, time and books permitting. It is time to hang up the pen and close the door to the OTR bookshelf. It has been a pleasure to serve you. And as always, GOOD LUCK AND GOOD READING!

*These authors will be at our convention. Have them autograph copies of their books!*

**NORMAN CORWIN**. We are privileged to have Mr. Corwin join us. He was THE premier writer, producer, director during Radio's Golden Age. His radio works have been published, as well as other subjects of interest. At our Convention will be copies of his **Trivializing America** and **Holes in a Stained Glass Window**, along with his biography **Norman Corwin and Radio** (Clothbound) and the softbound version **On a Note of Triumph**, written by R. LeRoy Bannerman.

**MORGAN McMahon**. For those who are into radio restoration or collecting of old sets, Mr. McMahon is an expert in this field. Over the years he has self published three works that have met with critical and popular approval. He will be bringing with him **Vintage Radio**, **A Flick of the Switch**, and **Radio Collector's Guide**. He has appeared at an earlier SPERDVAC meeting and he looks forward to this return appearance to answer your collecting questions. **ROBERT MOTT**. What would radio be without sound effects? Our guest author will be joining us to give a demonstration of his craft. A former sound effects artist during Radio's Golden Age, he has recently written **Sound Effects: Radio, TV, and Film**, and will be bringing some copies. Recently reviewed here, it is well organized and enjoyable.

**SUZANNE & GABOR BARABAS**. Two years ago this delightful couple was at our convention to put the finishing touches on their book about **Gunsmoke**. This work has been an immediate hit with the hobby and we are pleased they will be able to join us again. This will become a true collector's item.

# KMPC AIRS "Ducking the Rain"

in a forties mystery."

Their improv work of the early eighties and Chester's study of the Chandler technique were combined to create "Ducking the Rain."

"One of our dreams was to do something with this improv story," Newell Alexander told SPERDVAC. "This is a dream come true."

The performers are members of LA MadDogs, a Hollywood "loop group" formed two years ago. Their voices were heard regularly last season on TV series such as *Paradise*, *Hardball*, *Peaceable Kingdom* and *21 Jump Street*. The group employed their talents as background conversationalists in several of the radio play's crowd scenes.

The cast, in addition to the Alexanders and Chester, featured Charlotte Blunt, Peter Renaday (he's the voice of Abe Lincoln at Disneyland), Tawney Moyer, Randy Rudy, Louise Chamis, Sheryl Berstein and Dennis Tufano. Live sound effects (there were only a few recorded ones) were performed by David L. Krebs. Direction was by James Beshears.

The theme and musical bridges were composed by George S. Clinton. His Western Heritage Mystery Orchestra performed all of the program's music live. In addition to Clinton on piano, the orchestra features Joey Rand on vibes, Simeon Pillich on bass, Mark Watters on sax plus percussion by Scott Broadman.

KMPC and the Alexanders have ambitious plans for the next few months. They have scheduled programs to air on Thanksgiving, Christmas and Valentine's Day.

Newell Alexander is completing the script for "Little Creek Crossing," a Civil War era story scheduled for live broadcast Sunday, Nov. 18 and rebroadcast at 7 pm Thanksgiving Night. (See separate story regarding an invitation for SPERDVAC members to join the audience at the Nov. 18 performances.)

## SPERDVAC Members Invited to Attend Live Broadcast

KMPC Radio has invited SPERDVAC members to attend the Nov. 18 productions of "Little Creek Crossing" at the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum located by the L.A. Zoo in Griffith Park. The two performances are planned for 3 and 6 pm. The second show will air live on KMPC(710 AM) and will be rebroadcast Thanksgiving night at 7.

The admission fee is being reduced to \$10 for SPERDVAC members and their families. Advance reservations are required and may be made by phoning the museum at (213)667-2000.

The live radio show is at the museum's Wells Fargo Theatre. The Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum is located at 4700 Zoo Drive, Los Angeles.



"I think you're Lyin'," Sgt. Tuggle accuses. "You haven't got enough on me to stuff a canary's kneecap," Austin Healy (Colby Fletcher) snaps back. Seated at far right is Peter Renaday, who played four parts, including Noah Zark, "The agent with two of everything."

Wife Rosemary is scripting the Christmas story, "The Ugliest Ornament." The story combines magic, miracles and Native American animal spirits. "It's the story of a young person going on a vision quest and being lead by an animal spirit guide," the author explained. The show will be performed Sunday, Dec. 16 tentatively planned for 3 and 6 pm presentations, with the second performance being carried live on KMPC. The station will rebroadcast the program at 5 pm Christmas Eve.



Dennis Tufano, as Al Donte, threatens the private eye's ability to continue breathing. Tufano doubled roles on the show, as did several of the performers.

## OTR BOOKS OFFERED AT SPERDVAC CONVENTION

*These books, some of them out of print, are available by mail and at our November convention. When ordering by mail, please add \$2 per book to cover postage. Send orders to SPERDVAC Books, c/o Chris Lembesis, 14450 El Evado #149, Victorville, CA 92392.*

1. **The One Man's Family Album.** \$9. Carlton Morse's look back at this radio favorite. Plenty of copies are available.
2. **Killer at the Wheel.** Carlton Morse's first novel of reckless driving. This will hold your attention from start to finish. \$17.
3. **A Lavish of Sin.** \$15. A Morse novel of murder.
4. **The Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.** By Ken Greenwald. \$8. Adaptations from the wartime series starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce.
5. **Hollywood and Broadcasting.** \$20. The story of how the film industry and radio worked together to create some of the finest programs ever.
6. **Sunday Nights at Seven: The Jack Benny Story.** \$15. Here is Benny's autobiography and each copy is signed by his daughter Joan.
7. **Radio Comedy.** \$20. The definitive book on radio comedy. We are fortunate to have the LAST 10 copies available.
8. **Gunsmoke.** \$40. The outstanding work of this all-time radio and TV favorite. Fans and critics love it.
9. **Faster than a Speeding Bullet.** \$10. This 500 page book will test your knowledge of OTR trivia. These are the last 25 copies.
10. **Norman Corwin and Radio.** \$25. The definitive biography of Norman Corwin and his contributions to radio. Clothbound.
11. **On a Note of Triumph.** \$8. Softbound edition of the above selection.
12. **Holes in a Stained Glass Window.** \$10. NOT and OTR book, but a most interesting commentary. Written by Norman Corwin.
13. **Trivializing America.** \$10. Another non OTR title. This is a fine collection of commentaries on our culture by Corwin.
14. **Children and Radio.** \$20. An excellent overview of all the kids shows heard on radio between 1929 and 1956. Good one.
15. **Pharmacy and Medicine on the Air.** \$20. A complete look at all the radio programs sponsored by pharmaceutical firms.
16. **Destination Freedom.** \$30. An analysis of black writer Richard Durham's series of radio plays. Includes many complete scripts.
17. **Orson Welles: A Bio-bibliography.** \$30. Perhaps THE most complete look at with an analysis of Orson Welles' radio work.
18. **Alice Faye: A Bio-bibliography.** \$30. The first in-depth work of Alice Faye's radio career, including a 1946-1954 log.
19. **A Technical Guide to OTR.** \$7. An interest-

ing guide for beginning collectors. ALL copies are autographed by the author.

20. **Don't Shoot, It's Only Me.** \$10. Bob Hope's recent best seller about entertaining the troops, includes lots of radio.

21. **None of Your Business.** \$25. The LAST copies from writer and SPERDVAC Honorary Member Carroll Carroll about his agency days.

22. **The Agony of Virtue.** \$5. A novel of western Americana by the late Noreen Gamill. All proceeds are donated to SPERDVAC.

*To compete our offerings we, have two OTR fan magazines, three commercial publications featuring OTR subjects and a video. They are:*

1. **The Old Time Radio Digest.** Edited by Bob Burchett. ALL 41 back issues are available. Convention prices are \$1.75 each, for all 41, or \$2 per individual issue.

2. **Listening Guide to OTR.** Issue #3 of this new fan publication is starting to develop a loyal following. Find out why. \$3.

3. The House of White Birches has recently published a special issue titled **Radio in the Good Old Days.** The entire 52 page issue is devoted to this subject. The cost is \$3.

4. **American History Illustrated's** October 1988 issue showcased a unique 50th Anniversary look at the **Mercury Theater's** production of "The War of the Worlds," and another in-depth article reviews the popular shows heard on WXYZ (RANGER, PRESTON, HORNET), Both are well written and neat collector's item. \$3.

5. **American Heritage** published a special article titled "How Fred Allen Made Us Laugh." Long in content. ALL copies are shrinkwrapped. \$4.50.

6. A recent issue of the Radiogram reviewed a new video titled **An Afternoon With Jack Mullin.** Mr. Mullin is truly a broadcasting pioneer, for it was he who introduced the tape recorder in America after World War II. Available at our convention or by mail, in VHS only. (A video monitor will be set up and it will play continuously throughout the convention.) Here is an excellent hour program that vividly shows, in picture and sound, the history of recorded sound and radio. \$29.95.

### PRICES INCREASING

The price of everything seems to be going up these days, and so have two of the costs associated with our convention. The Los Angeles City Council raised the Bed Tax to 12.5%, so the special convention rate for guests staying at the Viscount is \$66.38 per room per night.

The Viscount's parking rate is \$2.50 per day for tickets validated by SPERDVAC.



## **THE DeFOREST TRIALS**

*By Hugh Anderson*

Major Edwin Howard Armstrong returned to the states in September 1919, from France after World War I to receive his patent in 1920 for his superheterodyne. Lee de Forest was attacking his application for oscillation in Washington, D.C., while almost no one manufacturing receiving sets with regenerative amplification paid royalties to him. Armstrong faced major problems upon returning home.

In 1919, RCA and G.E. cross licensed each other's patents. In 1920, G.E. and A.T. & T., with Western Electric, began negotiating for additional cross licensing of their patents for the audion and vacuum tubes, along with RCA. RCA absorbed the American Marconi Co. which controlled the rights to the Fleming Valve. In July, 1920 an agreement was reached that allowed RCA transoceanic wireless telegraphy and ship-to-shore communication.

A.T. & T. retained exclusive rights to wireless telephony and "all land radio telephony for toll purposes," plus the right to manufacture wireless telephone transmitters. G.E. had rights to amateur apparatus, especially vacuum tube and radio receivers.

The agreement (as it was known) did not include Westinghouse. Not wanting to be left behind, it determined Armstrong held patents for use of the vacuum tube - feedback or regenerative and superheterodyne. An offer was made and Armstrong received \$335,000 payable over the next ten years with another \$200,000 due when his oscillator patent was cleared and issued. The latter debate involved de Forest. To fight de Forest, Armstrong now had the money. With the backing of Westinghouse legal department, he went to trial against De Forest Radio and Telegraph Co., January 1921 before Judge Julius Mayer, U.S. Federal Court, Southern District of New York, to assert the validity of his regenerative patent over de Forest's infringing claims.

At this point, in June 1921, Westinghouse joined the Big Radio Group, bringing with it Armstrong's patents and the opportunity for Armstrong and Sarnoff to meet.

One evening in 1921 while setting up his equipment to demonstrate the next day in court, he stumbled upon a receiving signal volume way beyond what might be expected from regeneration. After weeks of investigation, he found that a second tube began to cut in to suppress the oscillations at 20,000 times a second, allowing amplification to build to 100,000 times the original signal strength . . . superregeneration. Armstrong revived his patent in July 1922, followed by six similar patents.

David Sarnoff felt deeply that RCA could profit from the use of this new development. In June of 1922, Sarnoff offered and Armstrong accepted, \$200,000 and 60,000 shares of RCA stock, making Armstrong the largest single stockholder within RCA.

Meanwhile, the patent trial continued toward the end of 1921 when Judge Mayer ruled in favor of Armstrong. With all the testimony, witnesses, charts, circuit drawings

produced, one piece of paper withstood against the claims of de Forest - Armstrong's notarized circuit drawing of January 31, 1913, suggested by his Uncle Frank.

De Forest could not prove that he had developed feedback or regenerative circuit prior to that date. De Forest appealed. March, 1922, Second Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge Martin T. Manton, in a strong opinion, ruled in favor of Armstrong.

Two years later, de Forest again brought suit against Armstrong and won in the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. Another suit was brought - Armstrong, Langmuir and Meissner against de Forest, who was now backed by A.T.&T. - in the District Court of Delaware. De Forest countered with a suit filed in Philadelphia against Westinghouse to have Armstrong's patent declared null & void.

De Forest won in Delaware and in Philadelphia. Armstrong's original regenerative patent was now void. Armstrong's invention was now accredited to de Forest. Both decisions were appealed to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and de Forest won both. It was 1927 and de Forest was the victor.

All this legal maneuvering was a sham to some extent since both men had long since sold their patents. There was no money for either. But Armstrong could not accept the fact that his first basic patent had been taken away from him.

He decided to carry it to the Supreme Court. He began preparation on Thanksgiving Day 1927, with a young lawyer, Alfred McCormack, and worked continuously for almost a year. The hearing was on October 19, 1928. A.T.&T. was his opponent and they retained as their counsel Charles Evens Hughes, onetime Republican candidate for President. Ten days later the court ruled in favor of A.T.&T.

In 1931 Armstrong found a chance to re-open his case by backing a small Brooklyn Company, Radio Engineering Laboratories, sued by A.T.&T. for infringement on de Forest's patents. Armstrong lost but won on appeal in 1933. De Forest countered with assistance from RCA and A.T.&T. on his appeal to the Supreme Court.

On May 21, 1934, twenty years after the first skirmish between the two and fourteen years after the first suit, the court upheld its previous decision in favor of de Forest. Armstrong had lost and de Forest would now be accredited with the development of the regenerative circuit and the superheterodyne. This would be a crushing blow to most but while all this entanglement went on, Dr. Armstrong was still at work on developing means of static free broadcasting.

After obtaining his patents for FM broadcasting, giving them freely without payment to the government for use and development during World War II and seeing RCA-NBC use his patents without royalty payments, Dr. Armstrong decided to bring litigation against them.

Armstrong's biographer, Lawrence Lessing, writes: "In 1948, with basic FM patents having only two or more years to run on the seventeen-year grant of exclusive rights to the inventor, Armstrong wearily girded for another and final court battle. In the fifteen years that had

*Continued on page 10 . . .*

**RADIOGRAM PAGE NINE**

### **The DeForest Trials (cont. from page 9)**

passed (since the de Forest trials), he had taken all the original financial and developmental risks in getting his invention into use, and he had earned not so much honor and wealth as incredible opposition, grief and obloquy. If the past was any indication, he could hardly expect much in the way of justice from the government or the courts. But that a powerful corporation should be allowed to go unchallenged in its trampling upon the rights of the individual was a proposition that his stubborn and embattled nature would not admit.

"Through the fall and winter of 1947-48, therefore, Armstrong and his attorneys, led by Alfred McCormack, were again in the thick of preparing a suit for the courts. Armstrong wanted to throw the book at the corporations. After simmering through numerous drafts of the suit to be entered, he was finally persuaded to limit it to more legally manageable proportions. On July 22, 1948, he instituted suit in the Federal District Court of Delaware against the Radio Corporation of America and the National Broadcasting Company, charging them with willfully infringing and inducing others to infringe five of the basic FM patents. This was to be a suit quite unlike his earlier infringement suit against de Forest. In the interim, the procedure in infringement suits had been 'liberalized' to allow both plaintiff and defendant to explore each other's cases in preliminary hearings before the actual court trial. Designed to bring the trial itself more quickly and openly to the issues, this procedure, the case of large suits, was also subject to interminable pretrial delays. And Armstrong's suit was one of the largest of its kind ever brought. Under its terms, he stood to win triple damages on all FM and TV equipment manufactured by R.C.A. and its licensees during the full term of his patents."

Coming in January: "The Sarnoff Trial"

### **BEARRY CHRISTMAS BROADCASTS**

Radio stations wishing to run the **Cinnamon Bear** radio series may obtain recordings of the program for broadcast during the holiday season. The shows are available to commercial and noncommercial stations from Katy Bishop, P.O. Box 93-531, Los Angeles, CA 90093-0531.

Underwriting is also available for non commercial stations.

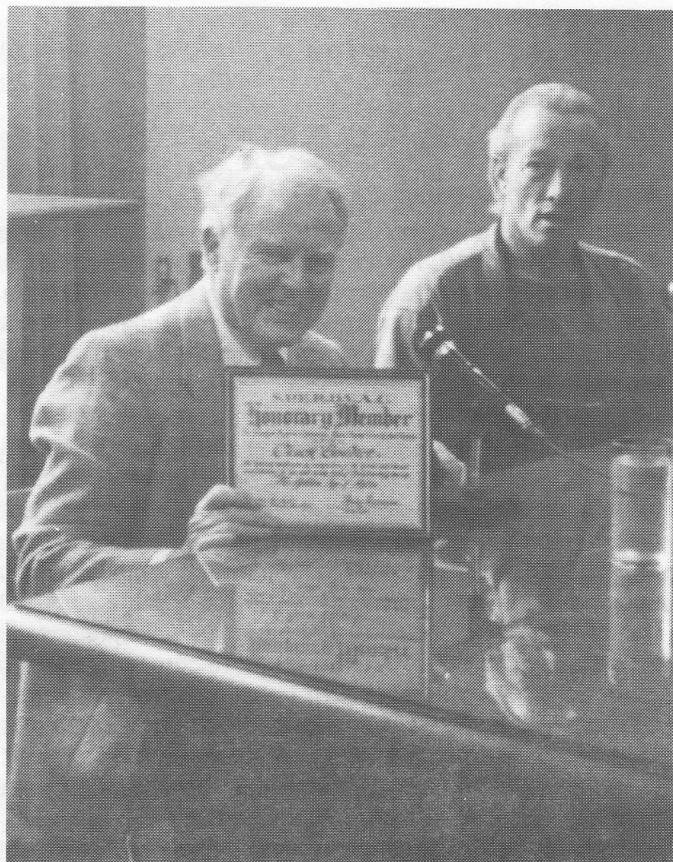
In Southern California the series will air on KPCC-FM, Pasadena. It will be featured as part of *Same Time Same Station* Sundays, 5-7 pm.

### **SPERDVAC IS MOVING !**

**Our New Mailing Address is:**

**P.O. Box 7177**

**Van Nuys, CA 91409-9712**



Radio sportscaster Chuck Benedict was made SPERDVAC's newest Honorary Member by Richard Glasband. Mr. Benedict discussed his work at the Armed Forces Radio Service and the various forms of sports broadcasting he has been involved in during his career. The SPERDVAC audience also learned about recreations of sports events on the air. In January the Radiogram will feature a story on Mr. Benedict's radio work.



Radio writer-director Antony Ellis with Ray Bradbury, working on a 1956 broadcast of *CBS Radio Workshop*. Mr. Bradbury will join us at the SPERDVAC convention following dinner on Nov. 10. (Photo courtesy Jan O'Hare.)

## SPERDVAC 1990 OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION

Friday, Nov. 9 and Saturday, Nov. 10, 1990  
Viscount Hotel, 9750 Airport Blvd., Los Angeles

### Friday, Nov. 9

#### 2:00pm

Opening Registration  
Dealers' Room opens. Located in the Sidney Rome Room. Come in and browse around at the radio-related items available. Open until 6:00 pm.

#### 2:30pm

"A Return to Gunsmoke" California Ballroom.  
SuzAnne and Gabor Barabas are your guides through the streets of Dodge City.

#### 4:00pm

"The Radio Life of Mel Blanc" California Ballroom  
Mary Lou Wallace and Walt Mitchell host a review of the work of the popular radio voice man.

#### 5:00pm

Rest, relax, meet other OTR fans from across the nation! Visit the dealers' tables in the Sidney Rome Room.

#### 6:30pm

No host bar opens in the California Ballroom.

#### 7:30pm

Evening banquet. California Ballroom.  
Enjoy the chicken marengo (boneless breast of chicken) main course, plus spring vegetable soup, rice, fresh vegetables and a dessert of apple pie.

#### 8:30pm

SPERDVAC Presents. Our host for the evening is Jim Hawthorne. **Tom Corbett, Space Cadet "Doomed Cargo"** (aired Feb. 7, 1952) Stars Frank Thomas and Jan Merlin with Parley Baer, Conrad Binyon, Jonathan Hole and Jack Brown. Directed by Frank "Junior" Coghlan. Sound by Bob Mott and engineering by Shelley Herman. *(Please, no recordings or flash photography during this recreation.)* We expect our evening program to conclude at about 10:30 pm.

### Saturday, Nov. 10

#### 8:30am

Registration table reopens.

#### 9:00am

Dealer's Room reopens. Sidney Rome Room. (Open until 6:00 pm)  
"It Sounded Like This. . ." Sound effects expert Bob Mott demonstrates his craft for the SPERDVAC audience. California Ballroom.

#### 10:30am

"Acting on the Radio" Veteran radio performers Jeff Corey and William Lally talk about life on the actors' side of the microphone.

#### 11:30am

Break for lunch. Meals are available at the Viscount and at the numerous eateries in the neighborhood.

#### 1:00pm

"Readings by Olmsted" California Ballroom.  
Radio storyteller Nelson Olmsted shares a tale, poetry and memories.

#### 2:30pm

"Attention: Royal Order of the Hoganites!" California Ballroom. Share some laughs with long-time radio personality, Jim Hawthorne.

#### 4:00pm

"Lady Singers of the Radio Airwaves"  
California Ballroom.  
Kay St. Germain recalls life as a radio vocalist with Helen Forrest, Bea Wain and Martha Tilton.

#### 5:00pm

Time to rest, relax and meet more of the nation's OTR fans! Visit the dealer's tables in the Sidney Rome Room.

#### 6:30pm

No host bar opens. California Ballroom.

#### 7:30pm

Evening Banquet begins in the California Ballroom. Join SPERDVAC and many of our honorary members for a prime rib dinner. Includes garden salad, fresh vegetables, rice pilaf and Black Forest cake.

#### 8:30pm

Special guests: Norman Corwin and Ray Bradbury discuss radio. Jim Hawthorne returns as SPERDVAC's Master of Ceremonies. SPERDVAC Presents a recreation of **Casebook of Gregory Hood**. Watch a cast of radio's pros perform the broadcast of October 11, 1948. Stars Les Tremayne with Parley Baer, Lou Krugman, Larry Dobkin, Lillian Buyeff, Jean Gillespie and Bill Idelson. Herb Ellis directs. Sound by Ray Erlenborn. Music scored and performed by Ivan Ditmars. Shelley Herman engineers.

*(Please no recordings or flash photography during the recreation.)*

### CONVENTION GUESTS

In addition to the performers and panelists scheduled, these radio pioneers will attend our Old Time Radio Convention. Our guests will include:

Eddy King, Bob Maxwell, Mel Morehouse, William Alland, Boris Aplon, André Baruch, Richard Beals, Ray Briem, Frank Bresee, Howard Caine, Richard Chandlee, Phil Cohan, Clint Comerford, Dresser Dahlstead, Rosemary De Camp, June Foray, Barbara Fuller, Art Gilmore, Sandra Gould, Marty Halperin, Art Hannes, Gladys Holland, Bernard Katz, Jack Kelk, Truda Marson, Charles Michelson, Cliff Norton, Jay Ranellucci, Mary Lee Robb, Lina Romay, Roy Rowan, Bob Shannon, Martha Tilton, Veola Vonn, Pat Walsh, Richard Wilson and Bill Zuckert.

# SPERDVAC

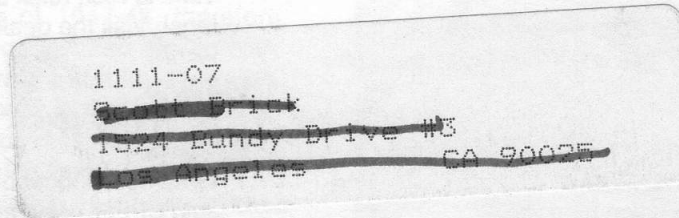


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## Norman Corwin Honored



Last month radio writer Norman Corwin was honored at the Friends of Old Time Radio Convention in Newark. Pictured above, Anthony Tollin presents Mr. Corwin with an award. Corwin and Ray Bradbury will guest at the SPERDVAC convention Saturday, Nov. 10.

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