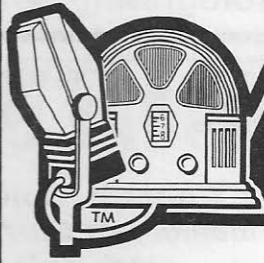


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SPERDVAC OTR
convention.
Flier enclosed.



SPERDVAC

RADIOGRAM

Volume 20, No. 8 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy August 1994



*Veteran radio performers Art Gilmore, Lillian Buyeff and Harry Bartell following their re-creation of a **Voyage of the Scarlet Queen** radio show at SPERDVAC's 1992 convention. See enclosed flier for details on the 1994 convention.*

Under the Cover

**Norman Corwin updates
classic radio story** page 6

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page 8

Stars of the radio play "Life and Liberty" had plenty to be happy about following their July 3 broadcast in Los Angeles. See story on page 3.



SPERDVAC



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SPERDVAC is very grateful to these individuals who have contributed \$50 or more to our organization during the past twelve months. Donations, payable to SPERDVAC, should be mailed to Carolyn Rawski. (See SPERDVAC Directory.)

*New radio drama***'Life and Liberty' plays with our emotions**

by Dan Haefele

Don't talk about politics or religion. They're emotional issues.

Add Civil Rights and slavery to that list. They're emotional issues, too.

"Life and Liberty," the radio play aired by K-LITE radio in Los Angeles on July 3, took on the issue of freedom from slavery for listeners to consider during Independence Day weekend.

In her second radio play, Dawn Comer tinkers with listeners' emotions. She has skillfully blended comedy and tragedy in her presentation of the story of Robert and Polly Holmes and their battle for freedom.

The Holmes Family was born into slavery and traveled with their owners to the Oregon Territory where they expected to be freed. They fought a court battle when their master kept his promise to free the parents but wanted to retain their children.

The radio play is a well crafted piece of historical fiction. The writer drew from actual incidents and historical fact to assemble a meaningful story for the occasion.

With only a partial account of the actual incident available, Comer

searched for accurate details of incidents involving others and "certainly took many liberties" in presenting a radio dramatization of their plight.

"I read about what it was like to be out on the Oregon Trail and I read some diaries that some women had written about their experiences on the Trail," Comer explained.

In the radio show, the slave family's daughter (played by Erin Nichols) testifies in court that she belongs to her masters. The judge dismisses her damaging testimony because Blacks could not legally testify in court proceedings. The idea for that scene sprang from a true situation involving a Black man forced to testify against himself. In that case, the judge did not accept his testimony for the same reason.

Comer gives each character his/her individual personality. Dorthea



The Holmes Family was portrayed by Rif Hutton (widely recognized by viewers of the Kentucky Fried Chicken commercials), Dawn Comer (who wrote the radio production), Theodore Borders and Erin Nichols. It was the first radio acting experience for the four performers.

Continued on next page

'Life and Liberty' conclusion



Anita Jesse played the role of Dortha Holmes, the materialistic, arrogant wife of a slave owner.

Holmes, the story's slave-owning wife, brings both humor and anger to the story through her snobbish, materialistic attitudes and comments. The seriousness of the courtroom scene is balanced with the humor of a stuttering bailiff.

Comer's blending of good and evil personalities and characters' actions adds substance to the story. "Not all of the white characters were the bad guys," she noted. "That was important to get across, too."

Producer Rosemary Alexander gave Comer a hand in casting the radio play. Their selections included Rif Hutton, seen nationally on Kentucky Fried Chicken commercials, and Stuart K. Robinson, who played three roles and was the announcer on one of the

Wells Fargo commercials. Robinson, a young African-American actor, portrayed an older man and — in an ironic twist from the casting practices of the early radio era — played the role of the white judge.

The children were played by 13-year-old Erin Nichols and Theodore Borders, 12. Both are very talented actors, as are their adult counterparts. In one scene, the two young performers even provided the background sounds of chickens.

Dawn Comer, 30, has earned a living as a professional actress.

"Life and Liberty" is her third written work which has been produced.

Earlier this year some National Public Radio stations carried a reading by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee of her adaptation of *Maggie's American Dream: The Life and Times of a Black Family*. The original novel was written by her father and based on her grandmother's life. Penguin Books will release the recording of the radio adaptation as an audio book this Fall.

Currently she is working on a project to adapt a one-act play she wrote last year into a feature film. And she is writing "Mahogany Cowgirl," a radio play about a Black cowgirl tentatively planned for the Wells Fargo Radio Theater next year. The next K-LITE show is Dec. 3.



McGee's Closet is a free service to our members and honorary members. Send your wants in OTR-related material to McGee's Closet, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Please specify desired taping format (cassette or open reel).

FOR SALE: One copy of *Tune in Yesterday* by John Dunning. Good condition. \$50 or best offer. Contact: W. F. Edsall, P. O. Box 364, Blairstown, NJ 07825-0364.

WANTED: Anyone who has access to Nostalgia Channel in their area, I'd like tapes of Rocky Jones, Space Ranger, Flash Gordon and any other space shows. I'll supply the tapes, postage and something for your time, too! I'm desperate! Contact: Bill Otto, 510 Downing Court, Bellevue, NE 68005, (402) 291-9269 collect.

Renewal Time?

The final two numbers of your membership number on your address label indicate your membership renewal month

If your number ends with -08 your membership expires this month. . . Look for a renewal notice from Carolyn Rawski!

'Lum and Abner' group holds 10th annual convention

by "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford
National Lum and Abner Society

Shirley Lauck Babcock, daughter of the late Chet Lauck, was the special guest June 25 at the tenth annual National Lum and Abner Society convention. Also present were Ethel Huddleston Ball (daughter of the "real" Dick Huddleston, who was often portrayed on **Lum and Abner**) and "Auntie Helen" Hartzell, widow of Clarence Hartzell, famous for playing Ben Withers on **Lum and Abner** and Uncle Fletcher on **Vic and Sade**.

A video documentary was presented, recounting the first decade of NLAS activities. Featured were video clips of past guests Roz Rogers, Clarence Hartzell, Jerry Hausner, Elmore Vincent, Wendell Niles, Bobs Watson, Les Tremayne, Louise Currie and Willard Waterman.

Mrs. Babcock was the center of a round-table discussion of **Lum and Abner**, focusing on her childhood memories of her father's work, and the family's moves from Mena to Chicago to Dallas/Fort Worth to Cleveland to Chicago again to Hollywood — all to keep up with the radio and motion picture careers of "those two lovable old fellows from the hill country."

She accepted two Lum and Abner Memorial awards. One is for herself and the other is for her brother, Chet Lauck Jr.

The Special Event Pine Ridge postmark was sought by a majority of those in attendance during the weekend, causing more mail to flow through the *real* Pine Ridge Post Office than did through the *fictional* one in the 1935 "Hog Chain Letter" continuity on **Lum and Abner**.

The convention's evening "Movie Premier" included a 16mm film showing of two short subjects. They were the Warner Brothers cartoon "Foney Fables" (featuring the voice of radio announcer Frank Graham, who played the memorable Diogenes Smith on **Lum and Abner**) and a "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood" installment with a segment on Lauck and Goff "at home." The feature film was "Goin' to Town," Lum and Abner's fifth motion picture, which premiered 50 years ago.

As is an NLAS tradition, the convention was concluded with a sing-along of "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree," Lum and Abner's favorite song. SPERDVAC's own Ted Theodore provided guitar accompaniment, while NLAS member Troy Boyd played melody on his handmade fiddle.

To join the 10-year-old National Lum and Abner Society, write to Tim Hollis, Executive Secretary, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062. Dues are \$8 annually. Bi-monthly, NLAS publishes *The Jot 'Em Down Journal*, a professionally-typeset newsletter (with photos on slick paper). An extensive tape library featuring the latest disc discoveries is available to members, as is a special audio newsletter for blind members.

SPERDVAC Directory

All articles and artwork © 1994 by SPERDVAC unless otherwise indicated. Published monthly except December by the **Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy**, a California non-profit public benefit corporation. Membership is open to all U.S. residents. Dues are \$25 for the first year and \$15 for renewals. Annual subscriptions to the **Radiogram** ONLY are \$15 in the U.S., Canada and Mexico and \$20 to other countries.

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RADIOGRAM EDITOR: Dan Haefele, 4366-D 136th St., Hawthorne, CA 90250-7108 (310) 973-5060.

LIBRARIES:

GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1-500: Bob Steinmetz, P. O. Box 669, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-0669.

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AUDIO RADIOGRAM: Send C-90 cassette in returnable mailer to Stuart Lubin, 627 N. Fuller Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90036. (213) 653-2548. (For blind members only.)

AUDIO SPERDVAC CATALOGS: Contact Bob Herman, 1329 Garrison Ave., Port Orchard, WA 98366-3321 (206) 876-5850. (For blind members only.)

MEMBERSHIP BADGES: Send \$5.00 each to Don Keith, Box 5861, Glendale, CA 91221.

ACQUISITIONS: (Discs, tapes & printed materials): John Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603.

(310) 947-9800 for both General and Archives Libraries.
CATALOGS: Ted Theodore, 1175 Brockton St., El Cajon, CA 92020-1706.



Members of the California Artists Radio Theatre in the cast of "My Client Curley." The cast included David Warner, Marvin Kaplin and Norman Lloyd. The show was aired on KPCC-FM, Pasadena.



Writer Norman Corwin congratulates Dick Beals following the performance of "My Client Curley." Behind them are Elliott Reid, Kathleen Freeman and John Astin, who also starred in the production.

Corwin brings back classic radio story

by Dan Haefele

Long-time writer Norman Corwin first introduced radio listeners to "My Client Curley" in 1940. A gathering of radio fans at the famous Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood was treated to an updated version of the story Corwin adapted for CBS listeners.

Based "loosely" on a short story by Lucille Fletcher Herrmann, Corwin retold the story of a caterpillar that dances only to the tune of "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby" last month in performances with Peggy Webber's California Artists Radio Theatre.

In the 1940 production, there were references to Disney and Winchell — big names of the time. Corwin revised the story by bringing in characters of our era.

Instead of Walt Disney raising his financial offers for Curley's services (up to \$100,000), Corwin added a million dollar offer from Steven Spielberg.

And there is the headline from the *National Enquirer*:

Curley First Insect to Arrive From Outer Space

First Lady Hillary Clinton declares to Charles Kuralt, "It's not often that a creature smaller than one's little finger can completely captivate the imagination of millions. Only last night I was telling the president that it has been many years since the country has become so interested in a worm — outside of politics."

But the biggest laugh of the show came when veteran radio performer Elliott Reid donned his Andy Rooney voice and questioned Curley's abilities.

With John Astin as the agent and Dick Beals as Curley's young owner, Norman Corwin has scored another radio victory.



Norman Corwin directed a production of his radio play "The Strange Affliction" in a "double-header" performance with his adaptation of "My Client Curley." At the microphones are announcer John Harlan, Linda Henning and David Warner. Peggy Webber produced the radio plays and cast members of her group of talented performers, the California Artists Radio Theatre.

These tapes are available from the Archives library

Tape 1687 **ABROAD WITH THE LOCKHARTS** Program 13 "Homeward Bound."

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS excerpt KFWB, Los Angeles 12-8-1941.

THE ONTARIO SHOW 5-1-1942 (NBC Blue) *two excerpts*

TONIGHT IN HOLLYWOOD 4-4-1936 KMTR, Los Angeles. Interview with Kathleen Lockhart. (15 min.)

KATE SMITH SHOW excerpt of 12-12-1941. "Virginia Acres"

Tape 1688 **PHILIP MORRIS PLAYHOUSE** "Apology" 4-1-1949.

MAKE BELIEVE TOWN "Hollywood Romance" 8-16-1949.

Tape 1689 **LASSIE** (15 min. each) "His Master's Eyes" 11-5-49; "I Learned Him" 11-12-49; "Reprieve" 11-19-49; "The Chaplain's Dog" 11-26-1949.

Tape 1690 **LASSIE** "Mule Train" 12-17-49; **LORA LAWTON** 6-9-47; 7-28-47 and 9-15-47

Tapes 1691-1696 **JACK PAAR SHOW** (NBC) Summer 1947 replacement for Jack Benny.

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November 9 & 12 — "Oscar" by Richard Erdman. Richard Erdman directs his poetic new play which combines the wit of Oscar Wilde and authentic music of the period. Stars David Warner.

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SPERDVAC

Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

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and cassettes, send a business size SASE to:**Ron Baron****63-09 108th St., Apt. 2P****Forest Hills, NY 11375****(718) 997-6459***Agency man Owen guests Aug. 13*

Radio agency producer Forrest Owen will be SPERDVAC's featured guest at our Aug. 13 meeting.

Formerly an announcer at Detroit's WXYZ, Mr. Owen was the agency producer in Chicago for **Quiz Kids** and **National Barn Dance**. In Hollywood, he was agency producer for shows sponsored by Alka-Seltzer, including **Lum 'n Abner**, **One Man's Family** and the **Alka-Seltzer Time** programs starring Curt Massey and Martha Tilton (see Archives tapes 1620-1624).

SPERDVAC's Aug. 13 meeting begins at 12 noon. We will meet at Farmers and Merchants Bank, 12535 Seal Beach Blvd., Seal Beach. The meeting location is near the area where the 605 and 405 freeways meet at the Long Beach-Seal Beach border. From the 405, take the Seal Beach Blvd. exit and head north. The bank is located near the intersection of Seal Beach Blvd. and St. Cloud Dr. Please park on the side of the building only.

For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the area: our meeting is being held in the northern tip of Seal Beach. The bank is north of Leisure World and the U. S. Naval Weapons Station; it's bordered by Rossmoor on the west and Los Alamitos on the east.

SPERDVAC's meetings are open free to the general public. Guests are welcome to attend.