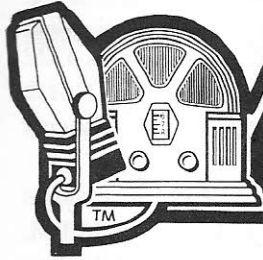


# SPERDVAC

# RADIOGRAM



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to Editor Dan

Vol. 21, No. 7

The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

July 1995



*"Never has anyone so little taken so much from so many," declared a Winston Churchill impersonator when Charlie McCarthy was engaged to Marilyn Monroe in 1952. That "impersonator" is Dave Barry, whose vocal impressions of FDR, Fred Allen, Harry Von Zell, Arthur Godfrey and others were featured on numerous radio comedy shows. Barry will be SPERDVAC's guest at our July 8 meeting. Join us at 12 noon when we gather at the South Pasadena Public Library's community room, 1115 El Centro, in South Pasadena. Our guest promises a parody of radio detectives. The SPERDVAC meeting is open free to the general public, so bring your friends!*

*PS: Charlie couldn't marry Marilyn after all. Writer Dick Mack spared Monroe fans from eternal gloom when Charlie's blood test showed no blood, only sap.*

PHOTO COURTESY NAOMI LEWIS MACK

## We need volunteers right away to help us expand services

SPERDVAC is making an urgent call to all members in the L.A.-Orange-San Bernardino-San Diego-Ventura-Riverside County areas to help us right now.

We're looking for people to help set-

up and take down our sound and recording equipment at our monthly meetings. We need a new volunteer librarian immediately. We will need carpenters and hantymen within the next few months for several important projects.

Please consider joining our happy group

of volunteers! We enjoy each other's company and our mutual interests. We're even making radio history. Join in the fun and volunteer today. Please contact Richard Glasdband at (310) 692-3999.

## MEMOS FOR MEMBERS

Lights! We're looking for help securing use of two overhead lighting trees to aid us during re-creations at our Nov. 3-5 convention. If you can help, contact Larry Gassman at (310) 947-9800.

**Call for manuscripts.** Our recent request for radio-related memories concerning the end of World War II has met with stunning silence.

Next month we'll run one written for us by member Walter Beaupre, but would

gladly run one or two companion stories from others. Got the writing urge? (Your editor will gladly edit/revise as needed.) Also, how many members are teachers who use old-time radio in the classroom? Please share your experiences with us which we may incorporate into an upcoming article.

**The R'Gram is moving.** . . a couple of blocks! Please make a note of editor Dan Haefe's new

address: 13720 Jefferson Ave., Hawthorne, CA 90250-7210.

**Know those faces?** Last month's newsletter tantalized many members with a front cover photo — but no identification of the radio performers. They are Bea Benaderet, Garry Moore, Linda Darnell and Mel Blanc.

**Cartoon fans:** Voice man Gary Owens will be a featured guest during a panel discussion on classic cartoon series July 8. The event is part of a salute to the "Roger Ramjet" cartoon series, at the

Beverly Garland Hotel, 4222 Vineland Ave., North Hollywood, 2-3 p.m. The cost is \$10.

**An OTR marathon** airs July 4 at KPCC-FM, Pasadena. Hosts John and Larry Gassman will present radio classics on their traditional Independence Day program. Tune in 6 p.m. to midnight if you're in the listening area.

Ever ask your local non-commercial station to carry OTR?



# SPERDVAC FRIENDS

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Tippy Conrad  
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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. Tax-deductible donations, payable to SPERDVAC, should be mailed to Carolyn Rawski. (See SPERDVAC Directory.)

# THE HEXAHEDRON

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## Open reel machine meets OTR collectors' needs

by Bob Burnham

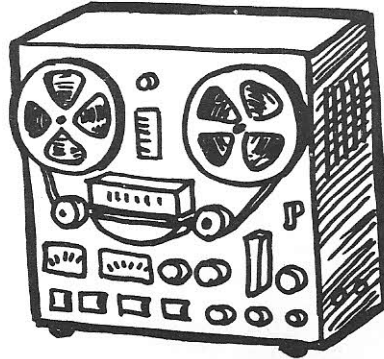
In my brochure of tech tips for old-time radio collectors, I recommend Otari equipment for those collectors who want to stick with the open reel format. Yes, I know Teac still makes a reel deck with 1/4 track heads, but that machine — for what it is — is over-priced and not as well suited for the heavy-use old-time radio show collectors require.

Many open reel collectors are trying to get by, using equipment that hasn't been in production for 10-15 years or more. The parts are difficult to locate for many machines, and in many areas it's even more difficult to find a place to get them serviced.

The worst part is these machines are substandard when it comes to recording quality. Any cassette deck today will record and play audio more accurately, cleaner and quieter than most consumer reel decks manufactured in the 1970s. If you're going to keep your reel collection, and continue recording reels, now's the time to think about purchasing a deck manufactured in this decade!

Over a period of about 20 years, I have used various types of reel equipment in professional installations made by companies like Ampex, ITC, Studer/Revox. Many years ago, another company that briefly made consumer reel decks entered the professional arena: Otari. Today, Otari equipment of some sort can be found in almost every broadcast facility and professional recording studio.

Unfortunate fact: It is very difficult to locate Otari equipment on the used market, and when you



do, the price is usually high. The reason is simply that no one wants to get rid of these machines, because they ARE so good! My recommendation — if you can afford it — is to purchase a NEW deck. The price may be more than you want to spend, but the high quality and durability of the product easily justifies the price.

With old-time radio show collectors, there are usually two problems with using professional gear to play their old 1/4 track tapes: Speed and Tracking. Professional equipment uses two track or full track format. On these machines, "low" speed is usually 7-1/2 i.p.s. and "high" speed is 15 i.p.s. With the basic Otari model, however, this situation is handled favorably for OTR collectors. You can special order the machine with 1/4 track heads, but it is not necessary. The stock two track model comes with a standard feature, equipped with an extra 1/4 track playback head that is easily switched in. And a small slide switch in the back turns this machine instantly into a 3-3/4 and 7-1/2 i.p.s. machine. With a small modification, you can access four speeds externally: 3-3/4, 7-1/2, 15 and 30 i.p.s.

As reel collectors, many of us have tolerated those totally

WORTHLESS mechanical counters on older decks. The Otari features a real time digital counter that measures seconds, minutes and even hours in five digits. When you rewind or fast forward the tape, the counter moves accordingly, allowing you to accurately track your position on the tape.

If you're technically inclined, the machine has front panel bias and equalization controls to calibrate the machine precisely for the tape used. It even includes two built-in test tone generators to help with this calibration and other adjustments. Yes, if you know how to do it, you can even make used Ampex 641 tape sound very nice, indeed!

Pitch control is another standard feature. Depending on the exact model you get, pitch can be varied by as much as +/- 15%.

What about extra features? One thing I always hated about consumer reel decks is when they tack on features that had minimal use, yet actually contributed to the basic machine problems and maintenance costs. One example is auto reverse. Auto reverse on a reel deck is one feature that gives you double the number of heads to wear out, and/or adds some mechanical nonsense that is a nightmare to service. The Otari machine does NOT have anything even remotely like this. Since it is a professional machine, "one direction" operation is considered the norm. Obviously, you CAN play both sides of a 1/4 track tape simply by reversing the reels.

The Otari also has excellent cueing and editing features. For those of us familiar with the lost art of editing reel tape with a splicing block, the Otari has an edit button, as well as a sturdy cue lever that facilitate these

*Concluded on next page*

*Now's the time to think about purchasing a deck manufactured in this decade.*

*Open reel machine meets OTR collectors' needs conclusion*

functions nicely.

**Overall use**

The control buttons have a positive "feel" to them. They're not exactly feather touch, but rather push buttons that operate microswitches. The transport is extremely durably built and all of the functions are very responsive. The machine is very gentle on the tape when going from fast wind mode to a play mode. One caution, however: When first threading a reel, make sure the tape is thoroughly gripped by the take up reel, before starting the machine. If you thread the tape via the "friction"

mode, thin mil tape (like 1.0 mil 1800' 7" tapes) will stretch at the beginning when the take-up reel finally gets a grip on the tape. There's a lot of torque in Otari motors (like the old Ampex workhorses). Unlike the old pro machines, however, it's "intelligent" torque controlled by modern electronics.

**Servicing**

The machine comes with an excellent owner's manual that also doubles as a service manual. Factory service is available at their headquarters based in California, although this may not be necessary,

as they also maintain an excellent parts department in this same location. Technical support is also available, and any competent local service center should be able to handle the Otari. Since the basic transport and overall design has been in production for over 10 years, and Otari has shown a great track record for long-time support, the chances of total obsolescence are much less than with a consumer deck. That factor, plus the fact that this machine is in such widespread professional use, makes it a wise investment.

Sure, it's not digital, and it WILL cost MORE than a digital audio tape recorder, but if you're like many collectors who hold many hundreds of OTR reels, buying an Otari is a good path to take. Also, for long-term storage, digital tape recording is NOT as dependable and as proven as analog tape recording. Just ask the folks in charge of the archives at the Library of Congress!

**Otari MX-5050MKIII-2 specifications**

Professional grade audio tape recorder/reproducer designed for optimum performance and long life. It accommodates 1/4" tape at 3-3/4, 7-1/2, 15 and 30 i.p.s. speeds.

A few of the features: motion sensing, edit and cueing controls, a built-in two frequency oscillator, a computerized elapsed time indicator with digital display, front adjustable bias, EQ and level controls, active balanced inputs and outputs into XLR connectors, standard reference output level switch, output level attenuators, playback EQ pots for each speed, memory stop for automatically searching the zero tape time location, ceramic tape guides, large plug-in head stack housing. Also includes a function for overdubbing which permits the use of one or more tracks of the record head to be used for playback.

Heads: 1 - 2 track erase, 1 - 2 track record, 1 - 2 track play, 1 - 4 track play.

Frequency response:

3-3/4 i.p.s. 20-10KHz +/- 2 dB

7-1/2 i.p.s. 20-18KHz +/- 2 dB

15 i.p.s. 20-20KHz +/- 2 dB

30 i.p.s. (not provided)

Signal to noise ratio — weighted (overall) with NAB equalization:

3-3/4 i.p.s. 66 dBs

7-1/2 i.p.s. 68 dBs

15 i.p.s. 66 dBs

30 i.p.s. (not provided)

Wow & flutter (overall): less than .06%

Distortion: Less than 0.5% at 1KHz

Test oscillators: normal 1 KHz and 10 KHz

**Afterthoughts**

By the way, if you want a copy of the technical brochure for OTR collectors mentioned, send me a self-addressed stamped envelope. Otari equipment is available through many professional outlets/broadcast equipment vendors. If you need help locating one of these suppliers, let me know: Bob Burnham, P.O. Box 2645, Livonia, MI 48151-0645.

*Editor's note: Bob Burnham tells us he purchased his first Otari deck two years ago and was so happy with it he bought another one six months ago. New decks run about \$3600 and can be ordered from Otari, 2 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002. Fax: (415) 592-8311. Harris Allied Used Equipment Exchange in Richmond, IN sometimes has used models available for approximately \$1800.*



*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, open reel or DAT).*

**WANTED:** Working "On-the-Air" sign, microphone with station call letters. Contact: Ruthie Marks, 11400 Sulphur Mountain Road, Ojai, CA 93023.

**WANTED:** I would like to obtain a cassette tape copy of the **Fred Allen Show** of Nov. 23, 1947. I would also like to contact collectors of "World" radio transcription discs. Contact: Wallis Antuck, 3815 Waverly Hills Road, Lansing, MI 48917; (517) 484-8607.

**WANTED:** Early country music broadcasts on radio. National, regional or local broadcasts. Am looking for both the shows and any information about them, such as notices in newspapers, etc. Am particularly interested in any information on Vernon Delhart, who was on the air in the late 20's. Buy or trade, cassette or open reel. Contact: Jack Palmer, 145 North 21st Street, Battle Creek, MI 49015; (616) 962-8807.

**WANTED:** Any Xerox or actual pictures of the CBS studio where the **Mercury Theatre, on the Air** was produced. Also, any specifics on the studio (size, etc.) Contact: Randy George, 6020 E. 32 St., Tulsa, OK 74135; (918) 627-5427.

**WANTED:** Old-time radio trading partners who are advanced collectors or who have lots of lesser known/lesser heard shows. Let's swap cassettes 10-20 hours a trade, 4 or 5 times a year, decent sound quality for decent sound quality. My collection is over 7000 hours of material, much of it between 1927 and 1957, very diverse. If interested, send a catalog of your shows and your want list. Contact: Larry Suskind, 3725 131st Ave. N.E., Bellevue, WA 98005.

**WANTED:** Looking for big band collectors to purchase or trade remote band broadcasts, especially from the 1930's. Also looking to purchase 16" transcription discs of big band remote broadcasts. All inquiries will be answered promptly. Contact: Steve Mallon, 3419 N. Nottingham, Chicago, IL 60634; (312) 283-3294. (No phone calls after 10 p.m. CDT, please.)

**WANTED:** News of what is happening in your part of the country or what you are doing in radio-related activities. This is your newsletter. Share your news! Contact: Information, Please, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031.

## SPERDVAC Directory

All articles and artwork © 1995 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.

**SPERDVAC INFORMATION AND OFFICIAL BUSINESS:** P. O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7177. (310) 947-9800.

**MEMBERSHIP AND RADIOGRAM SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Carrolyn Rawski, 7430 Gaviota Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406-3041

**RADIOGRAM EDITOR:** Dan Haefele, 13720 Jefferson Ave., Hawthorne, CA 90250-7210 (310) 973-5060

### LIBRARIES:

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

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**GENERAL LIBRARY - Open reels 501 - 1500:**

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**GENERAL LIBRARY - Open reels 1501+:** Richard Novak, P.O. Box 33048, Riverside, CA 92519-3048

**ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 1-500:** Vahan Ouzoonian, 1565 E. Highland Ave., Redlands, CA 92374

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**ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 1001-1483:** Dan Lippiatt, P.O. Box 3514, Simi Valley, CA 93093-3514

**ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 1484+:** Bruce Miller, 1616 Harper Ave., Redondo Beach, CA 90278-2725.

**ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Open reels 1-1000:** CLOSED

**ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Open reels 1001+:** Barbara Watkins, Box 628, S. Pasadena, CA 91031-0628.

**HOLLYWOOD MUSEUM LIBRARY - Cassettes only:** Glenda Kelly, 2323 Ralston Ln., Redondo Beach, CA 90278-5219.

**PRINTED MATERIALS LIBRARY:** Tom Brown, 1402 S. Kahuna Dr., Spokane, WA 99212.

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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:** Bob Herman, 1329 Garrison Ave., Port Orchard, WA 98366-3321

**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.

# Register now for SPERDVAC's 1995 convention!

## SPERDVAC 1995 Old-Time Radio Convention Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  Non-member  Member # \_\_\_\_\_

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Special diet requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: If you wish to be seated with your friends, please send all reservations in together.**

**Convention rates: (Prices are for members, spouses, member's guests)**

- 1. Complete convention package (Friday-Sunday) \$110/\$125 preregistered non-members... \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Friday dinner & program \$35/ \$40 preregistered non-members ..... \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Saturday daytime activities (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) \$15/ \$20 preregistered non-members. .... \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Saturday evening banquet & program \$50/ \$55 preregistered non-members ..... \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Sunday brunch & program (9 to 11:30 a.m.) ..... \_\_\_\_\_

(There is no charge for the Friday afternoon activities.) TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you were a professional in early radio.

Send checks or money orders, made payable to SPERDVAC, to: SPERDVAC Convention, c/o Chester Allen, 13415 Egbert St., Sylmar, CA 91342. **For additional details or to volunteer convention assistance, call Larry Gassman at (310) 947-9800.**

Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt. Requests for refunds will be honored until Oct. 30, 1995. Convention rates will increase to \$145 for the entire convention package for members and non-members who arrive without prior registration. Walk-up rates for individual convention events will be \$5 above the non-member rates indicated above. Walk-up rates apply to members and non-members

## Radio director Robert Novak dies

by Jim Shean

Robert Novak, 77, whose directing career spanned the "golden ages" of radio and television, died June 18.

Novak began his career as a concert pianist with a scholarship from Julliard. This led him into the early days of radio at WHN, New York City and eventually to a job as a radio director for the Young and Rubican advertising agency.

During his career, Novak directed many notable radio programs, including **The March of Time, Manhattan at Midnight, The Kate Smith Hour, Meet the Press, Great Moments in Music, Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-B Riders, True Confessions and the Gabby Hayes Show.**

Later, Novak joined Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. as assistant program manager for KPIX, San Francisco. He was also program manager at KGO, San Francisco and at KDKA, Pittsburgh.

Novak also participated in numerous civil activities. During World War II he produced a multitude of shows, entertaining service men at various military bases and hospitals throughout the eastern U.S.

An avid magician, Novak was a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, authored several books on magic, and even produced and directed a magic show on television, "Magic in the Air."

While in Pittsburgh, Novak also served as general manager of the famed Pittsburgh Playhouse.

During his later years in San Francisco, Novak also launched Bing Crosby's "San Francisco Experience," acting as producer and director of the unique show.



**Robert Novak**

**SPERDVAC**

Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM

c/o Dan Haeefe

13720 Jefferson Avenue

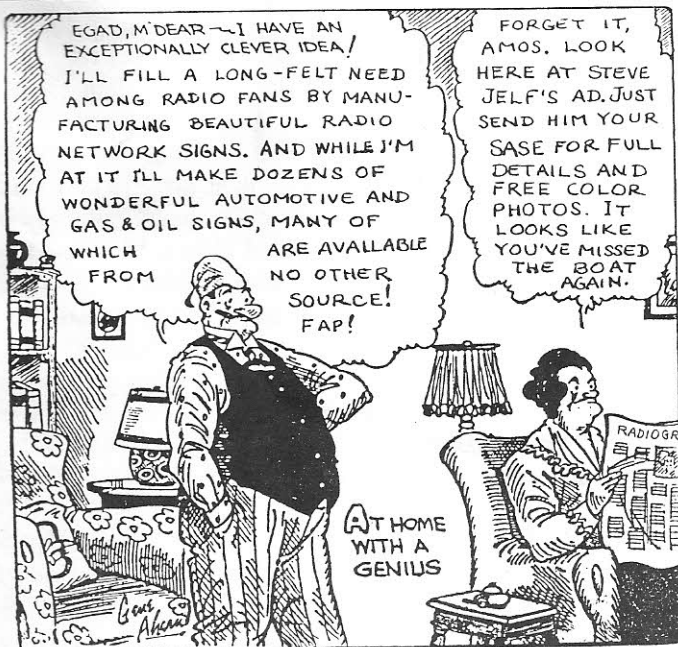
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