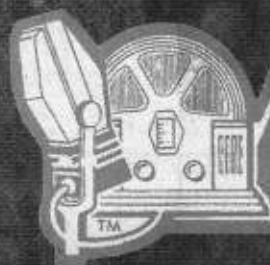


ELECTION RESULTS CHALLENGED • NEW BOOKS • LETTERS TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST



sperdvac

RADIO DREAM

Vol. 33 • No. 8

May 2008

STAIRWAY TO THE SUN





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RADIOGRAM

Volume 33 • Number 8 • May 2008

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Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

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SPERDVAC

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ON-LINE CATALOG

Election Results Challenged; Petition Forces Recall Vote

Condolences go out to the family and loved ones of long-time SPERDVAC member Dennis Crow who passed away suddenly on April 20th at the age of 65. Dennis loved old-time radio but had a special fondness for the Christmastime serial, *The Cinnamon Bear*. I first became aware of Dennis back in the early 1980s when I joined the Cinnamon Bear Brigade. He was the go-to guy for anything related to that series and was always eager to share his knowledge and love for it with all who asked. His name will now be forever linked with that of Paddy O'Cinnamon for future generations.

Because four of the candidates' statements in the recent election for the Board of Directors for SPERDVAC implied that there were four other candidates to wish to move the disc collections of SPERDVAC, many have asked what is going on, why do they want to move them, where would they be moved to, etc. None of the candidates wished to move the discs. Many of the members were misled into believing that by voting for the four who stated they were protecting the collection, they were saving the organization from the dangerous four people who wished to do harm to the collection.

As a result of this deception the four who were maligned came in last in the election. To right this wrong done to these four, a petition was circulated to obtain enough signatures to call for a special membership meeting, pursuant to Section 5510(e) of the California Corporations Code, which states that five percent of the membership can call for a special membership meeting for any purpose. The stated purpose of the meeting is to remove the four who misled the membership, and to revise the election rules so that if any charge of misconduct by any of the candidates is implied, those persons have an opportunity to answer or rebut those charges before the candidates' statements are mailed to the members.

Because several of the members who signed the petitions thought that it might be a little harsh, they were promised that the Board would be given an opportunity to apologize and call for a new election them-

selves before the petitions were presented as a last resort. Each of three of the four flatly refused (one was absent). The petitions were then presented. The Board has been given three months from that date of April 12 to hold the membership meeting, or on Saturday, July 12, if they take the entire three months. You should be receiving your ballots by mid-June.

Calling all volunteers! A project to put all of SPERDVAC's catalogs in electronic form has

begun. You'll probably read about this elsewhere in this issue. I've committed myself to seeing that the Archives catalog gets done. I would like to encourage those of you who use the Archives Library to volunteer

to do ten pages of the Archives catalog, or if you can only do five, that's a start, too. If we can get 10 or 15 people to volunteer, it can be done in no time. If you'd like to help with the Archives pages, please drop me a note and I'll assign some page numbers to you. You don't have to have Word or Works to participate, although that would be preferred. But you do have to have access to a computer. You can simply type the pages into an email and send them if that's all you can do. Every little bit helps! Let's get it done!

Member Nick Nardella writes that he enjoyed the article on Don Quinn and Phil Leslie and thought that the article on Ozzie and Harriet was great, too. Nick responded to my Question of the Month last time regarding whether you are still influenced by the old-time radio commercials. So did Ron Sayles. We'll hear from them next time on this subject since there was so much to cover this column this time. And you can still respond, too.

The Big Band Academy of America will present its 22nd annual luncheon and concert, known as the Big Band Reunion, beginning at 12 Noon on Sunday, June 1st at the Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City. The program will star comedy legend Stan Freberg in a rare, in-person performance, big band vocal group The Modernaires featuring Paula Kelly Jr., and singer and TV personality Peter Marshall, longtime host of *The Hollywood Squares*. All



Barbara J. Watkins

Continued Page 14

Summer Reading

Baseball over the air, school of the air, and bluegrass made for radio

Radio crime writer catches book crook

Rob Lopresti, a crime fiction writer and creator of the private eye Marty Crow whose exploits have been dramatized by the Midnight Mystery Players in Bellingham, WA, caught a rare-book thief who was selling 100-year-old reference books on eBay.



The books, stolen from the Wilson Library of Western Washington University, caught Lopresti's attention when the books were placed for sale in 2006 on eBay. Recognizing the books, Lopresti alerted authorities and arranged for two friends to buy the books and forward them to the Washington Crime Lab.

James L. Brubaker was eventually arrested when 1000 stolen books were found in his home in Great Falls, MT. Further investigation found that Brubaker's eBay account had more than 500 rare articles for sale including rare maps and lithographs taken from various libraries that had never reported them stolen.

Lopresti, who is a librarian at the Wilson library, has had many short stories published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. The exploits of his hardboiled private investigator Mary Crow have been dramatized the Midnight Mystery Players weekly radio program on KMRE-FM 102.3, which is considered "the voice of the American Museum of Radio

Continued Page 14

Three new books take OTR fans from America's national pastime through school to an obscure bluegrass band as summertime promises good reading time. All three books are published by McFarland and Company and add to the steadily growing libraries of old-time radio.

Tony Silvia's *Baseball Over the Air: The National Pastime on the Radio and in the Imagination* covers two imaginative pastimes, radio and baseball, and integrates both historically, sociologically, and culturing using the common themes of imaginative expression. As Silvia writes, "Through the use of our imaginations, we can see the game itself as more than just a game, but a gateway to an imaginative realm beyond the reality of every day life." The paperback costs \$35.



Schools of the Air: A History of Instructional Programs on Radio in the United States, a \$45 trade paperback, gives the history of 14 "schools of the air," or instructional programs for the classroom that operated at the national, state and local levels and offered enormous resources to students in both rural and urban areas. Author William Bianchi assesses the successes and failures of the school of the air movement, and examines reasons for its demise.



Thomas and Lucy Warlick's *The WBT Briarhoppers: Eight Decades of a Bluegrass Band Made for Radio* chronicles the WBT Briarhoppers, a spur-of-the-moment musical group formed by announcer Charles Crutchfield in order to satisfy a potential sponsor looking for a hillbilly radio program. The group went on to become one of the longest lasting bluegrass/



country groups in the country. The Warlick's analyze the band's history and its connection to the growth of American radio and radio advertising. The \$35 paperback is available at Amazon or from the publisher.

Researchers seek OTR information for books

Two researchers are seeking help with their respective projects.

Mickey Smith, a retired university professor of Pharmacy Administration at the University of Mississippi, is writing a history of the Fibber McGee and Molly broadcasts of World War II. Specifically, Mickey is looking for information on Don Quinn and Phil Leslie and how they incorporated wartime messages while retaining the humor; how the Johnson Wax people decided to participate in the way they did and the same for the ad agencies; and any government involvement.

If anyone can help Mickey with his request, including graphic materials, then contact him at mickandmary@webtv.net or send him a letter at 1411 Lawson Street in Oxford, MS 38655. He can also be reached at 601-234-5335.

SPERDVAC member Jimmie Hicks is writing a book on Raymond Chandler and he is interested in information on Philip Marlowe on radio and television. Jimmie can be reached at 5657 Lexington Avenue in Los Angeles, CA 90038-2205.

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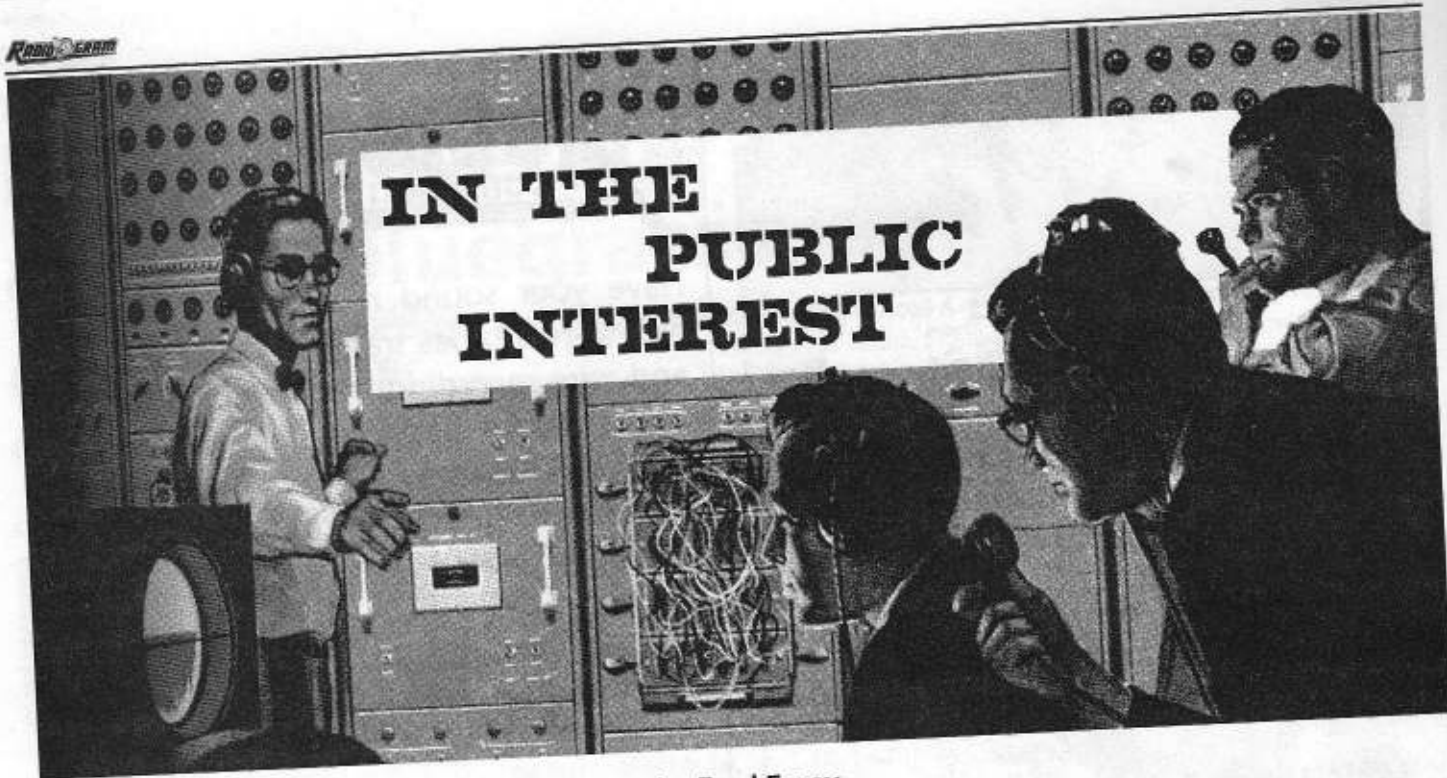


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RADIOGRAM



IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

by Fred Essex

IN THE EARLY YEARS when the Federal Communications Commission defined commercial radio it was stated the stations were obligated to operate in the Public Interest, Convenience or Necessity. This concept was challenged by some early station owners who were on the air primarily to sell radios but was upheld by the Supreme Court, and PICON, as it is known today, became the basic requirement.

With public interest a primary factor the great creative minds of the day conceived formats still popular today: dramas, serials, quiz, news, musical, variety and presently, reality programs. Yes, the listening audience was treated to entertainment never before available—and right in their homes. How marvelous, almost miraculous, great.

At the same time, the minds in the advertising agencies realized an unheard of opportunity had been given them and they subsequently stated that, as fact, radio is primarily an advertising medium. With that belief they planned methods to subtly reach the subconscious minds of the listeners in order to sell them products while they were being entertained.

In our ad agency we had two soap operas, among many other programs, titled *Big Sister* and *Aunt Jenny*. Women loved them. *Aunt Jenny*, though, was a bit different. The "Aunt" was a fictitious character played by Edith Spencer who set the scenes for a complete five-episode story each week and also offered cooking recipes and tips. Was it just another show? Hardly. Many may remember Crisco, a vegetable shortening which monopolized that

market. But when Lever Brothers developed a new product to compete called Spry, it was at that time the program concept was created of a lovable "Aunt Jenny" who would tell stories and subtly give recipes with Spry. Yes, the new program was introduced to promote Spry and listeners were urged to obtain Aunt Jenny cookbooks. The program, scheduled from 10:45 to 11:00 a.m., Monday through Friday on CBS, lasted 19 years. Indeed, radio was the advertising medium that consistently sold the product over the years.

Our agency had the Jack Benny program when Lucky Strike sponsored the show. Jack's show originated from the West Coast and I was assigned to direct the commercials with the tobacco auctioneers and familiar LS/MFT originating from New York. Weeks before, a memo from the offices of the client was received stating they were pleased to have Jack Benny as a vehicle but clearly stating they considered the program to be 10% of the value of their buy and the commercials were worth 90%.

As a result, one night when the jokes were running long and the clock ticked to the commercial time, the engineer was told to fade out Benny so we could air the commercials in full. Perhaps millions of listeners across the country were upset but we sold the product. Again radio did its job.

Demographics—the composition of the audience in age, tastes, finances—is a primary requirement for radio to move products. When directing the Kostelanetz program, sponsored by Chrysler, I knew we had strong competition since we were against *The Bing*

Crosby Kraft Music Hall. The Hooper ratings indicated at one time that they had a 24+ and we had only an 8+. In numbers we lost, but our demographics were of those who could afford Chrysler products and we sold cars.

In the OTR days, the FCC would not permit more than 10% of airtime for commercials (how things have changed today!). That meant in less than three minutes in a half-hour show the product had to be identified and sold within, usually, a minute at the opening, another midway and another before the close.

The imaginative minds of the ad men maximized the limited time by using sound and identifiable slogans. Thus was born in our agency the sounds of the Lifebuoy Fire Horn enunciating Bee-Oooh, the Rinso White Whistle and its Happy Little Washday jingle and the Bromo-Seltzer train apparently saying Bromo-Seltzer, Bromo-Seltzer. If you are old enough to remember those sounds, the copywriters did their job well with radio.

But radio was more than an advertising medium; it did operate under the direction of PICON and in many other ways served the public interest and necessity.

During WWII, radio gave us the daily reports of the war and then, that great day when "VE" day was declared (Victory in Europe for the younger readers) and on August 14, 1945 when "VJ" day (actually it was August 15th) Asia was proclaimed, radio united America with the news.

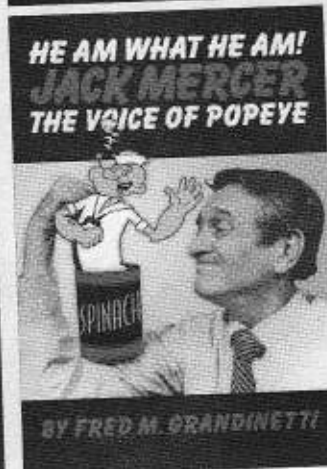
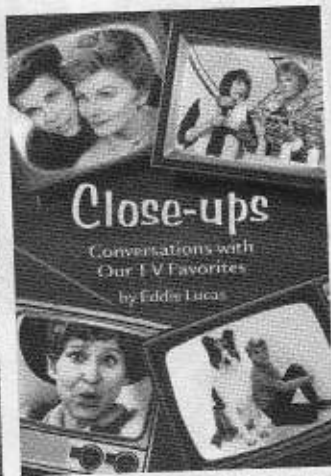
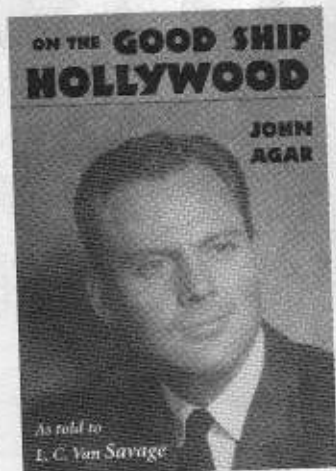
At that time, I was directing *The Wo*

Continued Page

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STAIRWAY TO THE SUN



A LOOK AT ONE OF THE BEST SERIALS EVER BROADCAST ON NETWORK RADIO

by Martin Grams, Jr.

"STAIRWAY TO THE SUN" is considered by many *I Love A Mystery* fans as one of the best adventures of the series. With the exception of "Temple of Vampires," most of the adventures Morse presented on *Mystery* were straightforward situations set along the California Coast, tropical islands and desert locales. But with this adventure, Morse gave the detectives a larger task: to venture through an unexplored country, rumored to be a myth, and save the lives of an expedition.

Doc Long and Jack Packard are hired to pilot and service an expedition into the South American jungle, headed by Dr. Karl Haugemann, a scientist, and his two daughters, Frieda and Gretchen. The initial object of the adventure was a safe landing atop the great 400-square mile prehistoric plateau rising straight up out of the Venezuela jungle a mile high. After making a successful landing with the first load of food and equipment, Jack learns that Dr. Haugemann is not capable of leading such an expedition. With the plane undamaged, the crew could fly out of the jungles if it were not for the fact there is no room for a successful take off.

Forced to trek back to civilization by hacking their way through the savage tangle of jungle and floating down the river, the expedition encounters numerous obstacles including a mile-high waterfall, deep caverns and underground chambers.

GRETCHEN: It's too bad we can't see more too because this must be a really tremendous cavern.

FRIEDA: That is obvious by the manner in which our footsteps and voices echo . . .

DOC: Yeah, listen to this fer instance . . . (back off) . . . Yoooweeeeee . . . Ride 'em cowboy . . .

JACK: Heeey, Doc, cut that out . . .

Most important is the discovery of a stairway cut out of the living rock that climbs higher and higher until it vanishes in the haze and clouds above. Doc takes one look and dubs it the "Stairway to the Sun." It served undoubtedly as one way to reach the great plateau above. The continual drag upward (while not beyond the endurance of the two girls) creates a pull on muscles and delicate organs, which leaves them in an agony of stitches and cramps after every twenty or thirty steps. After

the long climb upwards, which takes two days and one night (a total of four episodes), the party reaches the top to discover evidence of natives whose intelligence is limited to pagan taboos and poison darts and blow guns; it is a virtual city of cliff dwellers. Prehistoric monkey men invade the cliff dwellers and jungle natives in search of the men and two girls. Jack arranges for the shortwave set in working order and contacts the Venezuela government station and the Caracas police. Shortly after, a mass of apemen start to invade and Jack shoots over their heads with a machine gun. This only makes them angry and more ready for a fight. Dr. Haugemann insists on staying behind to explore the lost civilization, shooting his daughter Gretchen when she won't agree to stay behind. The rescue plane arrives. The expedition members are picked up and dropped off at the Caracas municipal airport. Gretchen's wounds are given a thorough examination and she is given the promise of quick recovery.

"Stairway to the Sun" was the second-longest serial in the *I Love A Mystery* series, lasting a whole 30 chapters, twice the normal length of the serials Morse wrote for the program. The idea for the "Stairway to the Sun" originated in Morse's second NBC *Mystery* Serial in 1930, "The Dragon in the Sun," which also makes a brief appearance in episode 44 of the *Adventures By Morse* serial titled "Land of the Living Dead". As a small footnote here just for nit-pickers: This serial was entitled "Stairway to the Sun," not "The Stairway to the Sun" like some reference books have claimed over the last few decades. My source are the covers of the original scripts.

No doubt originating from one of Morse's encyclopedias, "Stairway to the Sun" was based on real Mayan history. The Egyptian

kings maintained the cult of the sun over the centuries. Building pyramids (symbols of the stairway to the sun or angled rays of the sun) and later solar temples in honor of the sun gods, the Egyptians believed these stairways also led to the afterlife. When a king or pharaoh died, his actions were judged in the after world by Osiris, a form of sun god and ruler of the underworld. If they were considered "just" during their lifetime, the king would be transformed into a form of the sun god. In Palenque, Mexico, at one of the most beautiful of the Classical Mayan sites, are large stone steps described as the "Stairway to the Sun." The civilization became prominent in perhaps A.D. 700 and flourished for a few hundred years. This large area of ruins lies in the Chiapas state of Mexico near the Guatemala border.

"I had on my shelf a British Great Encyclopedia," recalled Morse, "and I used it in every *I Love A Mystery* story that took place out of the country. I used that Encyclopedia to find out what kind of forest they had, what kind of people they had, and it was all written reasonably and responsibly. For example, 'The Twenty Traitors of Timbuktu' was laid in Africa way back there when Africa was a different place than it is now. I couldn't possibly do that show today unless I said it happened back in the 1930s. I even found out how big the little towns were, whether they had a railway through there, and what kind of trains they had. In great detail and it was in the Great Encyclopedia, letting the dialog take up the action."

With "Stairway to the Sun" being as descriptive as it was, there can be no doubt that Morse used entries from the Encyclopedia for the foundation of his serial. As described by the announcer: "As they watch Jack and Haugemann approach the falls, they see the

Martin Grams, Jr. is the author of *The I Love a Mystery Companion* as well as author or co-author of a dozen books about old-time radio and old-time television.

Road

flash of lightning and hear the crash and roll of thunder caused by the friction of the great body of falling water! The falls is completely surrounded by ring after ring of rainbows until it looks like a highly decorated may-pole reaching up into the clouds, and every few minutes the electrified air in the vicinity of the water explodes with the flash and crack of canon fire."

During another time the announcer also got descriptive, before the approach of flying reptiles: "They look down on giant rocky prominence and cliffs of unbelievable proportions and of every color and hue; all the colors of the painted desert are splashed over the age-old peaks and declivities. The greens of emerald; the lustrous sheen and shine of exposed ledges of gold; the orange and browns of sandstone and the purples of amethyst . . . A whole glittering peak of amethyst banked by ledge shining with unlimited out-crossings of gold, so that it shone in the tropical brilliance like a captive sun. And then into the blistering sky swarmed a flock of creatures with wings; creatures as ancient as creation itself; great monsters with teeth, bat-like wings and with snouts and jaws like alligators . . . Doc called them Flying Crocodiles at first and then he called them a lot of other things as they turned toward the airplane intent on destruction:"

DOC: (excited) They're a comin' Jack . . . four, six, seven nine of 'em and they ain't foolin' . . .

JACK: Well get up here in front along side of me. Gretchen, you'd better go back in the cabin with your father . . . You got both of those automatic rifles?

DOC: I got 'em, Jack . . . 'Scues me Baby . . .

GRETCHEN: I'm pretty good with a rifle . . . If I can be any help . . .

JACK: You can use an automatic rifle?

GRETCHEN: Yes, I've never shot from an airplane.

DOC: Well, we've never shot crocodiles from an airplane either, sister . . . Here, take this rifle and git over there on the other side of Jack . . .

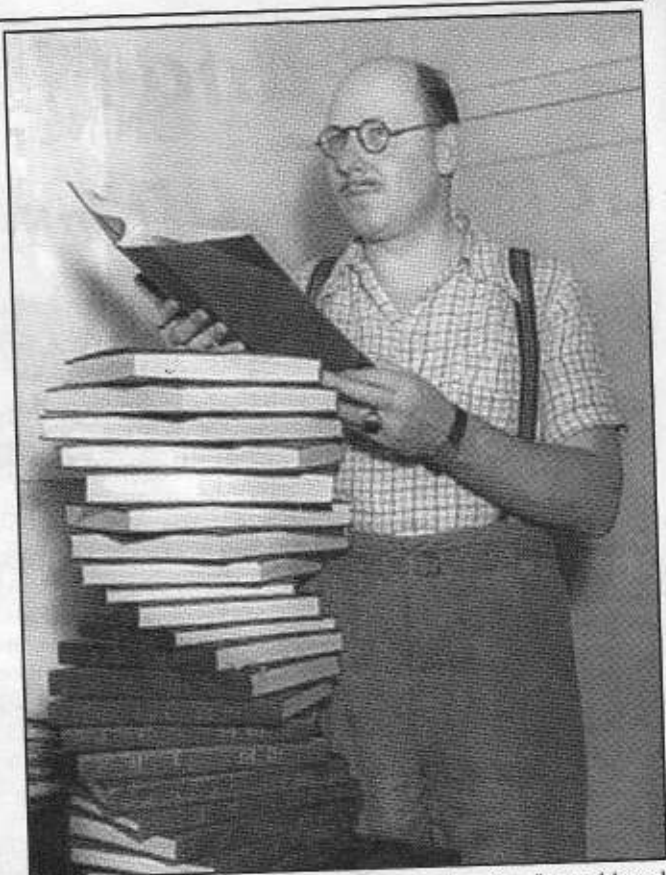
It might also be noted that Venezuela, the vast setting for this serial, was the inspiration for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912). It actually contains the world's

highest waterfall, flooded plains, and Andean peaks. Known as Angel Falls, the highest waterfall in the world plunges down from the western flank of a gorge in the middle of the Auyan-tepui. With a total height of 3212 feet and a free fall of 2648 feet, the water that leaves the summit takes 14 seconds to reach the bottom although in the dry season much of that water is blown away in a fine mist.

This also marked the first serial in which Morse began incorporating Christianity among the pages of scripts. Many references, descriptions and dialogue began to filter through the *I Love A Mystery* serials, hoping to remind the audience that horror was only fiction and not something to take seriously, especially in cult fashion. The Stairway was described as a veritable "Jacob's Ladder to Heaven." Later in the serial, the Island in the Sky was described as a "Garden of Eden" when the descriptions of the flora and fauna still left in half-finished stages were represented. Another footnote here: During the spring of 1930, NBC was broadcasting a series of Biblical dramas scripted by Carlton E. Morse titled *Bible Stories*. George Rand was the producer and director. Paul Carson supplied the music. The hour-long dramas were broadcast on Sunday mornings from 11 to 12 noon on the West Coast.

The initial working title of "Stairway to the Sun" was "The Island in the Sky," but Morse changed the title before he completed the serial. Also of interest is that the character of Dr. Karl Haugemann was described as a German scientist. At the time this serial was being broadcast, the United States was still at war with Japan and their allies including Ger-

many. So why have a German scientist leading an expedition? (If nit-pickers really wanted, they could ask themselves how the opening gong in each



Carlton E. Morse, writer of "Stairway to the Sun," considered one of the best serials ever broadcast over network radio, and certainly one of the best of the *I Love a Mystery* thrillers.

broadcast setting the time of events came into the picture. Are there any hidden natives with a gong at every corner?) Due to the popularity of the favorable fan mail, Morse would write a sequel to this thriller five serials later titled "The Hermit of San Felipe Atabapo."

Storrs Haynes of Compton, the Agency representing the sponsor, wrote to Morse on July 23, 1943, days after "Stairway to the Sun" ended: "What the hell happened to 'Stairway to the Sun?'" Haynes expressed his opinion that the story started nicely then fizzled. He wondered if Morse was having trouble with CBS. The loose ends of the story worried Haynes, and he wondered if Morse shouldn't work these stories out more completely before starting to write them. "They have to add up as a whole . . . this would also protect you from Columbia."

On August 16, 1943, Morse wrote to Haynes: "CBS did not give me trouble . . ." and continued to explain his thinking on "Stairway" by basically defending the story. Morse said he hadn't received any negative feedback, and he also mentioned that he recently received a letter from John Gordon about a Street and Smith *I Love A Mystery* comic book, but Morse was very opposed to

U.S. Copyright Registration

"Stairway to the Sun" (Reg. # PA-582-677). *I Love a Mystery* series; story no. 34, episodes no. 1-30. Published December 31, 1986, registered December 30, 1991. Claimant: Richard A. Ferguson, trustee, Morse Family Trust. Author on © Application: Carlton E. Morse.

Continued Page 14

Charlie and Fields at War Again at REPS Convention June 27-28

If SPERDVAC members are still in need of OTR fun and frolic there is always the Radio Enthusiasts of Spokane (REPS) and their Showcase XVI set for June 27 and 28 at the Coast hotel in Bellevue, WA.



Chuck McCann will appear as W.C. Fields in re-creation.

The gala affair, which has become a tradition in the Puget Sound area, will feature Chuck McCann in the role of W. C. Fields in combat with Charlie McCarthy during a re-creation of *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* with Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

"Experience the hilarity as part of this year's program," REPS publicity states, adding "we would be remiss if we failed to mention that Mortimer Snerd will also make an appearance."

Also on the program is a re-creation of an episode of *The Great Gildersleeve* with Jim French as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve and Shirley Mitchell reprising her role as Leila Ransom. Others from the original case are Louise Erickson, Dick Beals and Gil Stratton.

A re-creation of *Lights Out!* promises to scare the yell out of everyone in attendance. A REPS rep says, "We warn you calmly but sincerely if you are frightened by such dramatizations to turn off your radio now!"

Local actors will promise "good health to all from Rexall" during a re-creation of *The Phil Harris and Alice Faye Show*, one of the all-time great comedy shows with clever writing and great characters. And all the great characters—Remley, Julius, Mr. Scott and the others—will make appearances.

REPS undertakes a novelty in otr conventions when it presents its "Cartoon Theatre." Many radio performers were also the voices of favorite cartoons, and Showcase will take a classic cartoon with no sound and re-create the sound with live actors, live music, and live sound effects. "Strap yourself to your chair," publicity assures otr fans, "for this fabulous joy ride full of belly laughs."

George Burns and Gracie Allen will introduce *Arsenic and Old Lace* in a re-creation that features new neighbors moving next door to George and Gracie, and Gracie begins to think that something odd is going on.

Other presentations throughout the

weekend are: *The Bickersons*, *Vic and Sade*, *Sam Spade*, *Radio Ladies from Hollywood*, *My Friend Irma*, *Meet Corliss Archer*, *Gunsmoke* and *Allen's Alley*.

Appearing at Showcase XVI are Dick Van Patten, Bob Hastings, Rosemary Rice, Gloria McMillan, Ron Cocking, Shirley Mitchell, Janet Waldo, Louise Erickson, Gil Stratton, Tommy Cook, Dick Beals, Stuffy Singer, Chuck McCann, Grant Goodeve, Jim French, Pat French, Larry Albert, Paul Herlinger, Ilona Herlinger, Ester Geddes McVey, Jan Merlin and Frank Buxton.

The cost for the entire convention before May 25 is \$110 per person, and after May 25 \$118 per person. There is a convention discount of 10% on airfare through Alaska Airlines. The convention code is ECCMR9860.

Hotel information is available at www.coasthotels.com or by calling 800-663-1144 or 425-455-9444.

The Coast Hotel is located at 625 116th Avenue NE in Bellevue.

Complete details are available on the group's website at www.repsonline.org, including pricing information and reservation forms, or by calling 206-542-6231 or 545-0318. REPS

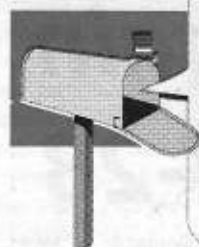
can also be reached at REPS SHOWCASE at 17334 Densmore Avenue N, Shoreline, WA 98133.

"For those fortunate to have attended the 2007 event," a REPS rep says, "you know what great times await you. Spend the weekend with special people who appeared in so many of those favorite programs. They will be joined by talented performers to present episodes from the all time great shows."

"FROM COMEDY TO CREEPY AS WE STEP BACK IN TIME FOR A SPINE-TINGLING STORY ORIGINALLY PRESENTED DURING THE MIDNIGHT HOUR ON RADIO'S LIGHTS OUT! WE WARN YOU CALMLY. BUT SINCERELY, IF YOU ARE FRIGHTENED BY SUCH DRAMATIZATIONS TURN OFF YOUR RADIO—NOW!"



"Come, my little whispering pine, I'll take you for a ride on my buzz saw!" W.C. Fields wants to know what makes Charlie tick as a frantic Edgar Bergen watches in this news photo highlighting the famous feud between the "long-nosed anteater" Fields and the "woodpecker's friend" Charlie McCarthy. A re-creation of that feud will highlight the Showcase XVI in Washington state.



In The Mail

Politics and Nonsense

There have been scurrilous attacks, in the *Radiogram* and elsewhere, against certain members of the recently elected Board. The people being castigated are hard-working volunteers attempting to carry out the mandate of the SPERDVAC charter, which is preserving and protecting the precious collection we have of early radio audio, scripts and video (particularly video of early radio performers, many of whom have since died). Those who are childishy rabble-raising against these Board members include people whose businesses and/or egos are dependent on having access to the audios, videos or performers for personal or financial gain.

First, the club had to start sending ballots individually rather than in the *Radiogram*. There was a faction who felt there was some sort of plot against them to "steal" elections, and somehow their candidates were losing because of some evil "ballot stuffing." This separate mailing (now standard) costs money and, if this year was typical, isn't allowing each member the one vote they should have. I never got my mailing of a ballot, so wasn't even allowed to add my vote to the resounding consensus vote for the hard workers who were elected! The expensive safeguards put in place to make sure the elections are fair resulted, this year, in the returning of some good people whose dedication to preserving and protecting the materials and purpose of the club should be applauded. The membership spoke. These people won fair and square (though perhaps they were a few votes shy since others who appreciate their efforts, like me, may also have had their ballots mysteriously not arrive).

The politics and nonsense that is taking time and space in the *Radiogram* could better be devoted to something constructive that would benefit the hundreds of members who support the libraries and the club.

Thank you to Bob Steinmetz, Dan Haelele, Glenda Kelly, Dave Struthers, Chester Allen (non-elected, but our hard-working Treasurer), as well as Ken Greenwald, Rex Quinn and our hard-working editor and chairmen, for their many years of volunteer time, and for continuing to be willing to give their time—particularly in the face of the personal attacks directed toward them—to keep the club financially strong and mindful of our

purposes. Without their excellent management, we'd still be in a rented building without proper facilities to protect our "assets" (the transcription disks, tapes, videos, scripts, etc.). Further, they have made certain that we are not violating the agreement terms under which we acquired these assets.

Thank you for a job well done!

Bruce Miller
Past Librarian
Past Board Member
e-mail

How Old Are the Members?

The February issue of *Radiogram* ("The Ultimate Sacrifice") made it sound like no one under 50 listens to the radio shows. Have you guys ever taken an actual survey to see how old the members are? I'm only in my 30s and I remember listening to *The KNX Drama Hour* when they still had it in Los Angeles.

I may not be willing to drive to northern Los Angeles county for the meetings, but that doesn't mean there is not a younger set within your ranks.

Mel Guzman
Lakewood, CA

STORIES THAT ARE



OF
THIS
WORLD

MINUS ONE

"ALMOST HUMAN" • "COURTESY"
"COLD EQUATIONS" • "SHANGHAIED"
"MARTIAN DEATH MARCH" • "THE CASTAWAYS"
1955

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**JACK
WEBB**
AS PETE KELLY
IN
**PETE
KELLY'S
BLUES**

BROADCAST OF AUGUST 29, 1951
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BOOKMARKS

New Broadcast History Parallels Author's Life

by Jim Cox

John Rayburn has an enchanting way of telling a story, even tales that are familiar because you've heard or read them on many previous occasions. There is munificence in his disposition that carries over to his storytelling, so much so that one can find himself smiling—inwardly, at least—while contemplating the descriptive encounters this author shares.

Heretofore, for Rayburn, that has been almost altogether with listening audiences as he appeared in sundry settings before charmed crowds. But now he has put his best yarns on paper, wrapping them in a softcover tome tagged *Cat Whiskers and Talking Furniture: A Memoir of Radio and Television Broadcasting*. The handle results from a fine-pointed wire contacting a crystal in radio's embryonic epoch to tune in a station, dubbed a "cat's whisker" by some applicants, and the fact that when comic Fred Allen inquired of Allen's Alley denizen Titus Moody what he thought of radio, the reply came: "I don't hold with furniture that talks."

A gregarious, durable ex-radio-TV announcer-sportscaster-newscaster-anchorman in the nation's hinterlands, Rayburn interweaves his personal biographical pilgrimage into his recollections. There he often intersects with numerous luminaries of the ether as well as stage and screen—large and small. Using his life's story to recollect some of the highlights, he cites manifold intersects in a profoundly intriguing ethereal

pilgrimage. While many of his subjects might have remained in obscurity except for the persistent coaxing of an intrepid interviewer,

other names he chatted with are better known, among them: Durward Kirby, Lurene Tuttle, Johnny Unitas, Joe Garagiola, Leo Carrillo, Jimmy Carter, Milton Berle, Bill Stern, Burl Ives and more among a cadre from entertainment, political and sports venues. Rayburn furnishes lots of photos to back up his descriptive narratives, too, in which he is often pictured—microphone in hand—with some of his stellar subjects. Occasionally he temporarily brushes against network exposure while performing his job in the nation's midsection.

Although the volume is largely anecdotal, it's a historical guide through American broadcasting in the 20th century. Therefore it reflects some of the challenges (such as TV) that radically impacted the aural medium. That one, for example, turned a number of audio personalities into video "stars," including Rayburn, who for some years was a news anchorman at a Denver television outlet.

Rayburn writes in compelling fashion and most readers of radio books will enjoy the trip down memory lane, even if they've heard some of his stories already. The tome is available from McFarland and Company at \$35 plus s/h and may be ordered from www.mcfarlandpub.com or 800-253-2187 or fax 336-246-4403. ☛



THE 2008 SPERDVAC MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

ALL DATES ARE CONFIRMED

- June 14
Mid-Valley Library
North Hills
- September 13
South Pasadena Community Room
- October 11
Mid-Valley Library
North Hills
- November 8
TO BE ANNOUNCED

FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION AND DETAILS ON OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS PLEASE CALL OUR TOLL FREE NUMBER

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Art Linkletter's HOUSE PARTY



Bob Sample of the Better Business Bureau is Art's guest in this October 6, 1949 ABC broadcast. Jack Slattery is the announcer.

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with "The Amazing Mr. Malone"

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DID YOU MISS THE CONVENTION?

Find out what you missed in next month's edition of



SPECIAL CONVENTION ISSUE



THE ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN DETECTIVE

"THE ADVENTURE OF ONE DIAMOND"
60 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH
MAY 6, 1948
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Information Please

will be backed by the 18-piece Blue Ribbon Big Band, under the direction of Pat Longo. And for good measure, the band will play for dancing after the program.

A single admission price of \$75 includes both the meal and the concert. Information on purchasing tickets is available by sending an e-mail to bigbandacademy@yahoo.com or calling (818) 301-2378.

The Big Band Reunion is one of the largest annual gatherings of its kind in the United States and draws luminaries from the golden age of big bands, as well as leaders of today's top orchestras. Guests of honor through the years have included Steve Allen, Tex Beneke, Les Brown, Billy May, Louie Bellson, Chuck Cecil, Patty Andrews, Helen Forrest, Herb Jeffries, Peggy Lee, Anita O'Day and, just last year, Jo Stafford, Horace Heidt Jr. and Gordon Goodwin.

'Til next time, spaceman's luck!♣

Send your news, comments or questions for this column to *Information Please*, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 628, South Pasadena, CA 91031, or preferably by email to kinseyfan@hotmail.com

Book Crook Capture

and Electricity" in Bellingham.

Lopresi also got a lot of action on the Midnight Mystery Players website the day following the front page story on his exploits. *The Bellingham Herald* reported in its March 29 edition that "a gigabyte of listeners downloaded the two shows on March 30. The web guru says each show represents about 20 MB. Members of the troupe and the Museum brass speculated on whether Rob might write-up the story for Marty Crow, P.I. Rob, however, says he has probably spent too much time on crime fiction already, and in addition, library crimes don't make very good P.I. stories."

—Stan Claussen

Stairway to the Sun

this, saying that "it's cheap and childish, and it would harm the program."

On September 13, 1943, Haynes wrote back to Morse: "OK, you win, it seems listeners don't agree with me on 'Stairway.'" This just goes to show that the radio listeners still have the final say regarding the quality of an audio performance. Fans of *I Love A Mystery* to this day still consider "Stairway to the Sun" one of the best serials ever broadcast on network radio.♣

VINCENT PRICE
in
"THE LODGER"
HOLLYWOOD STAR TIME • MAY 19, 1946
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In the Public Interest

King Show out of Chicago and living on Lake Shore Drive. Suddenly, one day the sound of tens and tens of auto horns could be heard honking below on the Drive. Looking down I saw two couples who had been walking along the shore of Lake Michigan jump into the water fully clothed as a result of radio performing its basic function. As a public service, radio was announcing to the world the end of hostilities. It was a day never to forget.

Perhaps radio was a stepping stone to television but PICON applies to that medium, too. All will remember when programming was interrupted the morning of September 11, 2001, as we watched, unbelieving, as a second plane was flown into the World Trade Center. Then, the sight was horrifying of the high rolling billowing smoke and debris cascading down the street, with people running before it hoping to avoid being engulfed as the buildings behind them collapsed. That day TV, as did radio, responsibly served the public interest and necessity.

But let us think of the pleasant hours of entertainment offered by both of the media even though we know we are the target for their ads. Don't like what's on? We do have the right to exercise the "off" switch.

Then again, there's the alternative known as PBS. With its diverse and educational programs, PBS offers a special bonus. 'Tis true, from PBS we can add to our knowledge of the world around us as we learn of new things in addition to being creatively entertained.

Besides, PBS does share one thing in common with all commercial stations, the FCC directive to operate in the Public Interest Convenience Or Necessity for our benefit. Issued 74 years ago and for the most part, it is still upheld.

PICON lives!♣

The Shadow
RE-CREATION • NOVEMBER 8, 1986
"The Man who Dreamed Too Much" features John Archer as Lamont Cranston, Dwight Weist as Commissioner Weston, Lesley Woods as Margo Lane. Also featured in the cast are Bill Zuckert, Amzie Strickland, Alice Frost and Les Tremayne. Announcer is André Baruch, sound effects by Ray Erlenborn. The production is directed and moderated by Anthony Tollin. Music was specially recorded for SPERDVAC by Rosa Rio. Engineering by Ron Streicher and Dan Haefele.
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McGee's Closet is a free service to our members and honorary members. Send your wants in OTR-related material to kinseyfan@hotmail.com (the preferred method) or write to McGee's Closet, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 628, South Pasadena, California 91031. Please specify desired taping format (cassette, open reel, recordable CD, or DAT). Also, please include your membership number with your advertisement.

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Wild Bill & Jingles
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