

RADIO **GRAM**

SPERDVAC

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June 2008

SPERDVAC

GILDERSLEEVE

75 YEARS OF THE LONE RANGER

TOM MIX

SUSPENSE

JACK BENNY

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN HUDSON

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OLD-TIME RADIO
CONVENTION
May 2, 3 & 4, 2008
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RADIOGRAM

Volume 33 • Number 9 • June 2008



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PATRICK LUCANIO

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ESPECIAL THANKS TO WALDEN HUGHES

A Thank You to All Those SPERDVAC Volunteers

BECAUSE of prior commitments I missed this year's convention, and from all indications I missed one of the best OTR tributes of the year. You'll read in the letters section many accolades directed at those responsible for the convention, thanking them for their untiring efforts. But let me convey especial thanks to convention chair Walden Hughes for making ol' ed's job a little easier for this convention. Walden, with some assistance from Gregg Oppenheimer as the deadline neared, was a most conscientious reporter. Walden



The Editor Has His Say

and I were in steady contact as he updated convention information right up to deadline so our April issue would be as comprehensive as possible with regard to the convention guests and events. I send a million thanks to Walden and Gregg for keeping ol' ed happy and relaxed. Thanks so much!

That might not sound like much to readers but to the fellow responsible for getting convention information to the readers—me!—it matters a great deal. Some people have a tendency to kill the messenger, and I remember the first convention I attended as editor. No sooner had I arrived at the hotel than an irate reader proceeded to browbeat ol' ed for being the most incompetent newsletter editor who ever soiled his fingers with printer's ink. This outraged fellow scolded this humble editor quite raucously for failing to publish convention news. After I politely told him to take his halitosis elsewhere I removed my person from the dealers' room so those wishing to take home an OTR souvenir could do so in relative calm. Welcome to SPERDVAC

Last March marked my ninth year as editor. For the sake of nostalgia or masochism, I'm not sure, I grabbed a handful of old copies to see how far I'd come, and to see if I should go the extra year and make it a full decade. I can say that those early issues weren't all bad; there was some good stuff in many of those early issues despite ol' ed's gaffes. But in going through those old issues I realized that having a full time job and serving as a volunteer for SPERDVAC have their moments—both good and bad. Somehow the job always in-

terferes with SPERDVAC projects, and you find yourself three steps behind before you even take a step forward. What Miss Crabtree warned you about in the third grade, that *haste makes waste*, comes true to the point that you wished you could go into witness protection to avoid the scorn of irate readers.

In the September 2000 column, for example, I referred to Howdy Doody as Howdy Dowdy. Smokin' rockets! How could I have written Howdy Dowdy when I know his name was Howdy Doody? It had to be haste because I ain't that iggernut—uh, ignorant. But then maybe I suffered a severe case of brain flatulence. That's the way my students describe such gaffes.

The next error of judgment had nothing to do with haste but with communication. The September 2001 edition published a lengthy obituary for one of OTR's great comedy writers, and shortly after the issue reached your hands ol' ed got a phone call from beyond the grave. Rumors of this fellow's death had been greatly exaggerated. And believe me when I say that, for a comedy writer, he was not amused. Someone at the other end of SPERDVAC was convinced the fellow had died, and SPERDVAC wanted to make certain that we did not ignore the man's death. So trusting without verifying I wrote an obit for someone who was very much alive. I tried to explain the bright side, that not everybody gets a chance to read his own obit, but this annoyed fellow suggested that I take my newsletter and ram it into a certain place of darkness.

And then there were technical glitches—some mine and others the printer's—such as the corrupted cover of the June 2003 edition that left a less than flattering image of one of my favorite people.

I wondered if any other SPERDVAC volunteers suffered angst for their voluntary efforts. But rather than worry I thought I should do something about it. And so I wish to publicly thank all the volunteers who make SPERDVAC what it is, and that includes all the librarians

Continued Page 14



William Froug, producer of 'Twilight Zone'

Script scholar set for June 14 meeting at Mid-Valley library

'Son of Harpo Speaks' is latest tome from BearManor Books

BearManor Media had announced the release of *Son of Harpo Speaks!* by the eldest son of many people's favorite Marx brother. The book gives an inside story of not only Harpo's relationship with his son but also the behind-the-scenes happenings in both men's lives and careers.

Bill Marx writes his book with candor and humor, which makes the book a page turner from its opening words to the credits at the end. Illustrating the text are over 150 photos, ranging from the Marx Brothers' performances spanning many decades to family pictures never before seen by the public. Harpo, Marx writes, had a brilliant and zany wit that permeated every aspect of his life. BearManor promises that if you didn't love Harpo before reading the book you will afterward.

Bill Marx's sparkling wit could eas-

ily have been influenced by Harpo and Susan Marx, but his talent for music composition came from his birth mother, Veronica Klapperich, whose poignant story became known to Bill during his adult years. His first important job was that of prop manager for his father. Music later became his central focus, and he has served as conductor, arranger, and composer. Marx has written the score for such motion pictures as *Murphy's Romance* and *Who's That Girl?*, as well as television series *The Donna Reed Show*, *Love Boat*, and NBC's *Tonight Show*.



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The 313-page softcover is available direct from the publisher at \$24.95 plus \$3 shipping at P. O. Box 71426, Albany, GA 31708 (229-436-4265 • Fax: 814-690-1559) or at BearManor's website: bearmanormedia.com.

William Froug, the Emmy winning writer and producer, will SPERDVAC's guest at its June 14 meeting at the Mid-Valley Branch Library in the San Fernando Valley.

Froug, who was born in Brooklyn and raised in Tulsa, OK, began is the author of numerous teleplays including works for *The Dick Powell Theatre* and *Charlie's Angels*. He also produced the series *The Twilight Zone*, *Gilligan's Island* and *Bewitched*.

A graduate of the journalism school of the University Missouri, Froug founded the writing program at UCLA film school, and finished his teaching career with screenwriting workshops from 1994-1995 at Florida State University's film conservatory, then located in Sarasota. He has written numerous books on screenwriting, including *Screenwriting Tricks of the Trade*, *Zen and the Art of Screenwriting I and II*, *The Screenwriter Looks at The Screenwriter* and *How I Escaped from Gilligan's Island: Adventures of a Hollywood Writer-Producer*, published in 2005 by the University of Wisconsin Press.

The Mid-Valley Library is located at 16244 Nordhoff St., North Hills, in the San Fernando Valley just west of the 405 Freeway. The meeting begins at 12 noon and as always it's free and open to the public.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

A special membership meeting to vote on the removal of four directors and to reform the election rules will be held on Saturday, July 12, at 12 noon at the Westside Pavilion Community Room A. The community room is located on level three of the main mall at the east end behind the food court. The Westside Pavilion is located at 10800 Pico Blvd. at the corner of Westwood and Pico in West Los Angeles.

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Radio Pictures

**New Year's Fantasy
'The New Tenant'**



**Jack Benny Re-creates Radio Show
on 1956 Television Broadcast**



Jack presents radio to the TV audience then introduces his familiar play, "The New Tenant."



Jack says "goodbye '55, hello '46," then corrects himself by ad-libbing, "I'm going back like my age."



Jack's cast takes a bow: Don Wilson, Lois Corbett, Mel Blanc, Charles Herbert and an interloper.



Benny Rubin as a spectator who couldn't find a seat in the audience so he took the seat on the stage.



Jack introduces sound man Gene Twombly, who had been with Jack for over 20 years.



The play begins with Jack as the old man, Lois Corbett as Columbia and Don Wilson as Uncle Sam.



Jack and Lois Corbett, the real-life Mrs. Don Wilson, who made frequent appearances on television.



Jack and announcer Don Wilson, who had been with Jack for 22 years, in familiar radio pose



Jack with frequent guest Mel Blanc, the living sound effect and man of a thousand voices.



Gene Twombly effects the door opening sound effect as the new tenant enters.



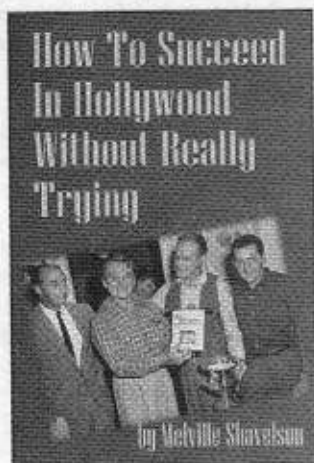
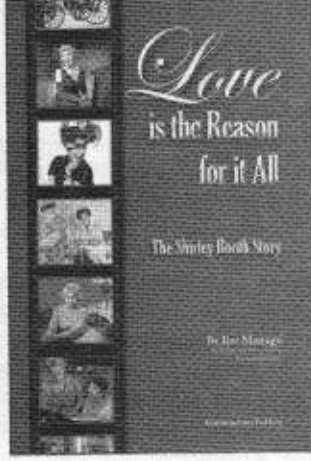
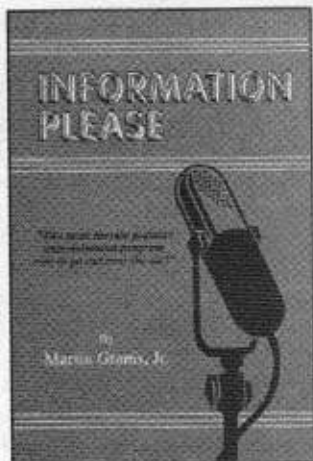
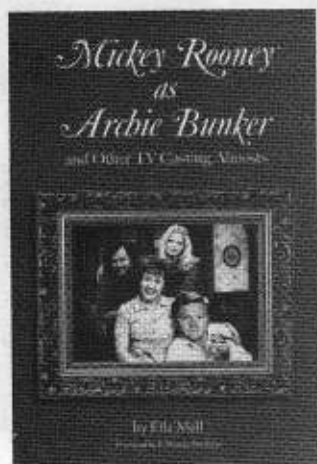
Jack with child actor Charles Herbert as the "new tenant," who will guide us into 1956.

On New Year's Day 1956 Jack Benny introduced his television audience to radio by re-creating his annual New Year's fantasy "The New Tenant." Included on stage with the cast was Jack's longtime sound effects man Gene Twombly. The program is available on *The Best of Jack Benny*, a 40-episode DVD collection from Mill Creek Entertainment. ♣

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CONVENTION 2008



Convention Review by Tom Nolan

AUTHOR AND BOOK REVIEWER FOR WALL STREET JOURNAL

It seems axiomatic that radio, “the theatre of the mind,” should be heard and not seen. But since almost the dawn of network-broadcasting, some programs—at first comedies, and then various dramas—felt the need for and the benefit of the presence of a live audience.

And in more recent times, SPERDVAC’s onstage, full-length, full-cast recreations of old-time radio shows have been perhaps the most popular feature of this organization’s celebratory conventions.

The five performances presented to a receptive audience at this year’s gathering, throughout the afternoon and evening of Saturday, May 3, in the Empire Room of the Sportsmen’s Lodge in Studio City, CA, were striking examples not only of OTR’s (and NTR’s) variety but of the skills of SPERDVAC’s members, volunteers, and guests.

The 30 Minutes to Curtain players, under the direction of Barbara Watkins, began the afternoon’s offerings with half-hour episodes of two dissimilar shows: the comedy *Easy Aces* and the mystery-drama *The Fat Man*.

Easy Aces, the long-running creation of writer-performer Goodman Ace and his wife, Jane, dealt with the small-to-medium-sized problems of a more or less typical American couple whose female half’s maladroitness of the English language often produced comic effects (sometimes intentionally). Jane Ace’s

malapropisms seemed novel in the 1930s and 1940s, no doubt; their humor has maybe not aged as well as have the character-driven gags of such shows as *Jack Benny* or the more avant-garde wit of the Aces’ contemporaries *Vic and Sade*. But Barbara Watkins won high marks from this audience-member for her believable delivery of Jane Ace’s skewered sentences; and the rest of the cast (Sy Prescott, Bobb Lynes, Stuart Lubin and Debbie Pietraszko) were strong in support, in a comic-saga of the Aces’ matchmaking efforts to get Jane’s widowed mother out of their home.

Crime-drama buffs were sure to be pleased by the troupe’s second offering, an episode of *The Fat Man*, the hard-boiled series inspired by Dashiell Hammett’s early “Continental Op” stories. Sy Prescott was outstanding (to this spectator’s ears and eyes) as Brad Runyon, the part originated on the 1946-1951 ABC series by J. Scott Smart. Mr. Prescott evoked the voice and the dry-witted, melodramatic manner of that actor in a way that was always evocative but never constrained. *The Fat Man* (in which the “30 Minutes” company was joined by guest-players Tommy Cook, Jan Merlin and Esther Geddes McVey) delivered its share of droll humor without ever letting you forget that the story dealt with that most serious subject of “murr-der.”

Tim Knofler took over directing chores for the afternoon’s next offering: a perfor-

mance of Mr. Knofler’s co-scripted *The Adventures of Captain Hudson*, an original NTR serial about the exploits of a pre-World War II air-cargo pilot working out of Crescent Cove, CA. References to historical figures and deeds were laced throughout this thrilling tale of exploration and espionage, in which the tone (maintained by players Ron Smith, as the Captain; Mary Rahmus, as the delightful mechanic, Flaps; Steve Toth, Mitch Nunn, L.A.’s own Tom Hatten, SPERDVAC’s Bobb Lynes and others) was properly cool and low-key, in keeping with the story’s “right-stuff” protagonists. The music and effects were impressively high-tech, taking the theatre of the mind out of a 1940s living-room and into a Dolbyized movie-house, perhaps, or maybe a state-of-the-art home entertainment-center.

After an Empire Room banquet ably emceed by Gary (“Laugh-In”) Owens and Bobb Lynes, the convention’s final two “headliner” re-creations were performed.

The Jack Benny Program of course is one of the best and most fondly-remembered of all OTR shows. This evening’s excellent evocation reminded those present of why and how this series earned its stellar reputation. Chief among the original show’s assets was the great Jack Benny, master of dead-pan delivery, quick ad-libs and superb timing. Chief among

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SPERDVAC

• SUCCESS STORY



A Personal Reflection by Jim Harmon

AUTHOR OF THE GREAT RADIO HEROES AND RADIO MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE

May 2, 3, and 4 was the date for the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy Convention at the Sportsman Lodge, Los Angeles, CA.

There was something for my wife, Barbara Harmon, and me to do the day before, Thursday the first. We were to pick up the guest of honor, *Lone Ranger* cast member Fred Foy and his daughter, Wendy, at the LAX airport. We were pausing at the curb for them to emerge from the United terminal when as usual a traffic enforcer came to our Prius. "You will have to move on, ma'am. But your father can get out to meet your visitors." Old Dad did just that. Right on cue, Fred and Wendy arrived. I got them and their bags into the car.

I had not seen Fred in 15 years not since he had attended another convention and did the narration for my new production of *I Love a Mystery* for commercial release. He looked a bit different after the long flight from the East, yet the next day, rested and well-dressed, he looked ten years younger.

On the trip to the Sportsman Lodge where they had rooms that first day I prompted him to tell a couple of great stories. He gave me the details of that health expert dying on camera during a taping of *The Dick Cavett Show*. It was not a horror story, but it must have been pretty disturbing to actually have

been there, as Fred was as Cavett's announcer. The second story concerned the producer of *The Lone Ranger* radio series suggesting Fred learn to ride a horse, obviously suggesting he might be replacing Brace Beemer as the Masked Man on microphone and in personal appearances. Fred regularly understudied Brace, reading for him in rehearsals and at least once replacing him on the air. Fred was not a horseman, and he went to a really inept riding stable that offered him no help or advice, just sitting him on a horse and telling him go for a jaunt on the steed. Fortunately, the horse did not do anything dangerous but Fred could not seem to communicate with him as to what speed to go or where to go. Finally, the horse returned to where he got his oats. Obviously, Fred told it more amusingly than this, but I can't come up with his exact language. Beemer was not amused, seeing potential competition, but Fred told him it was not his idea, and he was definitely going to leave horseback riding to him. Fred knew he was accepted as a friend when he was added to list of cast members who each morning received the gift of a dozen fresh eggs from Beemer's Michigan farm.

The next day, May 2, was the big day for Barbara and me, when we rehearsed and then performed my new script for a Tom Mix half hour adventure.

I had thought of having my friend Tony

Clay play Tom. He can do great impressions of people, such as John Wayne and Jack Webb, and I thought he could do Curley Bradley as Tom, even doing the singing on the Ralston theme song. But Tony had health problems of his own, and his father was in critical condition, perhaps causing him to have to return to North Carolina at any time. I went to Tommy Cook, who I actually had considered first. Tommy played Little Beaver on the *Red Ryder* radio show, and in the Don Barry movie serial. As he grew up, he played older and often troubled young men. He was great in giving Tom Mix an authentic Western accent for me. Another "Little Beaver" and a great friend of both Tommy and me, Frank Bresee, played one of Tom's aides, FBI agent Dexter Craven. One of the greatest actresses in radio, Barbara Fuller (once "Claudia" on *One Man's Family*) was another fed, Drusilla Drake.

Gloria McMillian (from *Our Miss Brooks* playing "Harriet") gave a particularly sensitive performance as teenage Jane, Tom's ward. Ivan Cury, who had been one of the young actors to portray Bobby Benson on *The B-Bar-B Riders*, took the important part of the menace in my story. The always necessary "red herring" was Stuart Lubin. Long time participant in many re-creations, Bobb Lynes

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The Foy family, from left: Fred Foy, daughters Nancy and Wendy, and granddaughter Hannah.

this re-creation's merits was the amazing Eddie Carroll, who seemed to inhabit the Benny persona—vocally, spiritually, and even physically—in a manner that went beyond impersonation and into the realm of complete belief. Mr. Carroll was Jack Benny, and none of us doubted it for



Barbara Fuller receives the Byron Kane Award.

a second.

Had there been any doubts, though, they would have been dispelled by "Jack's" spontaneous comment in the midst of the script's parody-version of "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (a re-creation within-the-recreation, if you will). Audible throughout SPERDVAC's banquet and later events was the music from a boisterous gathering in the hall adjacent to the Empire Room. When Benny and his bunch walked into a raucous border-town cantina, Eddie Carroll-as-Jack Benny quipped: "Gee, it sounds just like the party next door—" The laugh he earned was as long and loud as the one the real Benny got for the pause that followed "Your money or your life."



Stan Freberg

Among the other fine players in this Benny-show ensemble were Chuck McCann as Phil Harris, Stuffy Singer (a real Benny-show alumnus) as Dennis Day, and Beverly Washburn (another Benny-show veteran) as

Mary Livingstone. Throwing the cues with genetic authority was director Gregg Oppenheimer, son of the legendary Jess (*I Love Lucy*) Oppenheimer.

That Jack Benny re-creation was a hard act to follow, let alone top—but it was followed and at least matched by the final presentation of the evening: the centerpiece of a convention whose theme and program-book were tied to a celebration of 75 years of *The Lone Ranger*, the perennial favorite first heard over Detroit's WXYZ in 1933.

Return with us then to that thrilling night in May of 2008, when SPERDVAC assembled the greatest troupe of old-time radio veterans and devotees likely ever again to recreate an episode of what John Dunning dubbed "the pinnacle of juvenile western thriller dramas."

From out of the past came the mighty voice and presence of Fred Foy, the *Lone Ranger's* most revered narrator (and, on at least one broadcast, its lead actor). This evening, Fred Foy starred as the Masked Man as well as intoned the program's unforgettable intro (after which John Harlan took over the story's narration), in a re-creation that featured an illustrious company of all-star veterans: Tommy Cook, who began his show-business career as a child-actor in early 1940s radio on such shows as *Blondie* and *The Life of Riley*; Dick Beals, the distinguished trouper who as a youngster in Detroit was heard on the original *Lone Ranger* series; Gil Stratton, a familiar voice and face to L.A. residents for half-a-century as both an actor and sportscaster; Robert Easton, who started as one of

radio's "Quiz Kids" and became an adult master of thespian voices and dialects; Jan Merlin, whose credits stretch from TV-and-radio's Tom Corbett, *Space Cadet* to the films of Woody Allen; Karen Sharpe Kramer, a veteran of *The Lux Radio Theatre* and a Golden Globe-winner for the movie *The High and the Mighty*; long-time performer Ron Cocking; once more, Stuffy Singer; Ivan Curry, the well-known TV-director who as a young radio actor in 1949 played Bobby Benson, leader of the B-Bar-B Riders; the noted performer and author Jim Harmon; the indispensable Bobb Lynes; and the worthy Stuart Lubin—all directed by Frank Bresee, who was first a radio performer (playing "Little Beaver" on *The Adventures of Red Ryder*) and then host of his own long-running, pioneering OTR series, *The Golden Days of Radio*.



Gil Stratton

Was there ever a greater re-creation of old-time radio—in terms of talent, history,



SPERDVAC's Barbara Watkins, director of *30 Minutes to Curtain*, and Casey Kasem

and sentiment—than the extraordinary combination of players and elements that went into this night's performance of *The Lone Ranger*?

This spectator would be hard-pressed to name one.

Will there ever again be a better batch of OTR re-creations than the ones presented at the 2008 SPERDVAC convention?

We'll have to wait and see. And hear. ♣



Tom Hatten, right, with sound effects team Penny Swann and Jerry Williams.



The read-around of the *Tom Mix* recreation. From left: Barbara Harmon, Jim Harmon, Frank Bresee, Stuart Lubin, Bobb Lynes, and in foreground is Ivan Cury.

was Sheriff Mike Shaw, Tom's older sidekick. His younger sidekick, Pecos, was portrayed by yours truly as I have done with Curley Bradley some 20 times over a ten year period.

The announcer was a problem. I had wanted Fred Foy to do it, but he was too busy with other things at the convention. Gary Owens was on a list of those willing to participate and agreed, talking with me on the phone for half an hour about old radio. But the day before rehearsal, he got a paying job to do some sort of presentation involving the state lottery. He phoned his friend, John Harlan, Bob Hope's TV announcer, and he agreed to do the task, and of course, did it with fine style.

Jerry Williams did the sound effects and with an assistant on the recorded music did a flawless job. The rehearsal went well, and the performance never missed a note. No "funny" mistakes to report. With this kind of people they are not many mistakes, ever.

I produced the rehearsal but Barbara directed the "on air" performance. She has been helping out on these radio re-creations since we first got married. The audience was large and receptive. I was glad our daughter, Dawn, got to attend. She had helped with the sound effects on some of our earliest re-creations when just a child.

There were many other re-creations. Barbara Watkins' *Thirty Minutes to Curtin* did both *Easy Aces* and *The Fat Man* with Bobb Lynes doing his usual excellent announcing and Sy Prescott proving he could have been one of the leading performers in the era of radio drama—if he had been born then.

There were a number of fine panels. One of course with Fred Foy, Dick Beals and Casey Kasem on performing in *The Lone Ranger*. Music and comedy panels presented Alan Young, Kay Starr, Margaret O'Brien and

more personalities than I can remember.

Later, I particularly enjoyed *The Great Gildersleeve* with the equally great Shirley



Shirley Mitchell receives Byron Kane Award.

Mitchell in her original role of Southern belle Lila Ransom to Chuck McCann's Gildy. Later the same evening Chuck did the Jimmy Stewart role in a very dramatic *Suspense*, displaying admirable versatility.

The next evening Chuck was back as

Don Wilson on *The Jack Benny Program* with the wonderful Eddie Carrol as Jack. For a time, I thought the loud music from a Mexican

party next door, perhaps anticipating Cinco de Mayo, would ruin everything. But it finally calmed down enough to just be an irritation. Everybody was enjoying the program so much, we seemed to blot out the distraction.

Then it was time for the main event of the convention, Fred Foy in the 75th Anniversary Program of *The Lone Ranger*, produced by Frank Bresee. I had a small part as the marshal the Masked Man turns the crooks over to at the end.

We proceeded with the story, with Dick Beals in his original role as young Dan Reid, and with many other pros in other roles. There were complicated sound effects involving swarming bees, but all went well. I did not come in until the end but I contributed background noise as the sometimes murmuring then laughing then angry crowd. Finally, I delivered my lines. "I'm here to arrest these men for murder, Masked Man!"

Shortly before my big moment, actor Jan Merlin (former Space Cadet) got hopelessly lost in his script and the others ad-libbed humorously as he finally found it. The audience seemed amused by it all.

Afterwards, outside, as I waited for Barbara to bring the car, I was approached by audience members, movie stars Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentiss. They said they just wanted to thank me for providing some "wonderful entertainment." If they had not seen my Tom Mix the day before, I must have made a hell of an impression with my brief moment on *The Lone Ranger*.

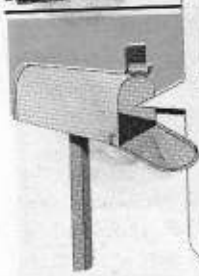
It wasn't until Tuesday that we returned Fred Foy and Wendy to the airport. He said he was delighted with everything, and that he thought this was the best radio convention he had ever attended.

As he disappeared into the terminal, I knew who that Masked Man was. ♦



Music panel, from left: Lina Romay, Bea Wain, Ray Briem, Marilyn King, Kay Starr, Chuck Southcott, and Ray Charles.

RadioGram



In The Mail

Stairway redux

Martin Grams's article in the May 2008 *Radiogram* reminded me of several things from eleven years ago.

First, the cover of the May issue of *Radiogram* 1997 also showed a Pterodactyl. Perhaps other members remember the issue, but if not here is a scan of the cover. Martin, the title in 1997 issue didn't use a *the* either, just "Stairway to the Sun." The cover was by SPERDVAC member Geoffrey Brittingham of Nashville, TN, and Dan Haeefe was editor.

The printed materials library features this story in scripts 21-50.

Last, the article reminded me of listening to the "Stairway" episode on my used \$5 car radio that I had installed in my new Chevrolet. Home from KMA transmitter duty, I sat at the curb, in the car to hear the last of this program.

Finally, I briefly and quite proudly worked under Carlton E Morse's direction at KFI-TV. LA CH9.

Newcomb Weisenberger
e-mail

Wow and again wow!

Two thumbs up to the organizers and volunteers who put on the 2008 SPERDVAC convention. We just showed up and enjoyed it.

Wow! Seeing and hearing in person four indisputable heroes of radio: Fred Foy, Stan Freberg, Norman Corwin, and Jack Benny (who for some reason people kept calling Eddie Carroll). Plus many other radio personalities. Plus interesting panel discussions. Plus truly enjoyable radio re-creations. Again, wow!! Thanks to all of you, and we're looking forward to next year.

Dan & Carol Gillespie
Castaic, CA

Please, another convention

Bobb Lynes asked everyone present at the Norman Corwin brunch to send their impressions of the convention at Sportsman's Lodge. I shall forthwith give mine.

I have been a SPERDVAC member almost from the beginning in the mid 1970s, recruited like most in those days by Jerry Haendiges in either one of his programs in the Los Angeles area or as in my case, *Don't Touch That Dial* on the NPR station in San Diego.

In the first conventions at the Viscount and other LAX area hotels the difference then was that many of our OTR friends were

The Readers Have Their Say . . .

still alive. Now they are in their 80s and 90s and many are gone. That is not to say that such conventions are now almost impossible to put on. This year's get together proves that it can still be done effectively. We all heard Norman Corwin (the radio father of us all) ask us with all the passion he could muster in those sparkling 98 year-old eyes to please continue to organize such conventions. I sincerely hope we can do so.

Stan Claussen
e-mail

'I'll not soon forget'

Just a note to thank SPERDVAC for a fabulous convention! Walden Hughes and his dad as well as the legion of radio pros who helped make it so memorable deserve our thanks. As a first time participant, I was welcomed warmly by what turned out to be the most appreciative and responsive audience I've ever had during ten years of delivering talks on Bob Hope. The celebrity panels I was able to attend were great as well as those dead-on program re-creations. Capped by a touching birthday tribute to Norman Corwin, the entire weekend is one I'll not soon forget. Well done, SPERDVAC!

Bob Mills
e-mail

Where was the president?

I had the good fortune to attend SPERDVAC's convention on Saturday. I need to commend Bobb Lynes and others for all their hard work in putting this convention together. It's a lot of work, plus Bobb was in almost every re-creation that was presented.

I have one question, and I know this will stir up a bunch of negative comments. Here is my question: Where was our president?

I was told that Mr. Steinmetz was at the convention on Friday for a few minutes, but as president of any organization the president should lead by example, and not let everyone else do all the work while he takes all the "glory."

I keep reading, at election time, on how hard he works and SPERDVAC can't run without him etc., etc., etc. Yet he does not show up. Why? Doesn't he care? Is his attitude "leave it up to Bobb, Barbara and the others?" He can't say he did not have enough time to plan, we all had months and months.

As one of the founding members of SPERDVAC, I admit that I have 99% dropped out of SPERDVAC. Unfortunately, my life and career went down other paths and I was unable to continue. But even when I was on the board, I was in attendance every meeting; I spent years at KCSN promoting SPERDVAC. And no, I am not patting myself on the back. In now way

did I even imagine this "OTR club," that was a dream of Jim Coontz, even last as long as it has, or get as big as it is. For this I applaud each and every one of the members.

It is my opinion, and others may disagree, that when you are president of anything you need to go beyond the call of duty. I have only attended three or four SPERDVAC functions since moving back to Southern California, and Mr. Steinmetz has not been at any of them. And who has had to run the meetings etc.? Bobb Lynes.

In closing, I hope everyone remembers the hard work that Bobb Lynes has spent the last 30 plus years devoting his time to OTR and SPERDVAC. Thanks to all the Archivists, planners and organizers who helped Bobb in setting up the convention.

Thanks for taking the time to read this and thanks to everyone for keeping SPERDVAC alive. Unfortunately, I have lost contact with Jim Coontz, but I am sure he's as proud as anyone. Thanks to Jerry Haendiges, Jerry Williams, Bobb Lynes Jim Coontz and others who started sperdvac.

Kevin Stern
e-mail

Keep 'encouraging'

I just wanted to tell you how wonderful the convention was this year. We have been to several in the past and this was the best ever.

It had been such a disappointment when the conventions stopped for several years. We felt really let down. Now, following this year's event, we are looking forward to more of the same.

There is no question about SPERDVAC's great work in collecting and "preserving" OTR, but I think some members have forgotten or disregarded the "encouraging" part of the name of our great organization. Putting on the wonderful re-creations that we saw this year draws in new, younger actors and directors who are able to mix with the older, experienced people and learn from them and these experiences.

Thanks to Gregg Oppenheimer for his part in these re-creations and certainly thanks to Walden Hughes and all the Board for their hard, very much appreciated work for the membership.

George Aust
e-mail

Don't let him down

I thought the recent convention was very enjoyable and, in my opinion, well-planned and well-produced, and very well-attended.

I have been a SPERDVAC booster for many years and was happy that SPERDVAC decided to

sperdvac

have a convention again.

I understand from overheard comments that this decision was controversial and somewhat divisive, though I am not sure why. (I would assume it's a "money" issue since just about every controversy is).

Assuming that it will not break the bank for SPERDVAC, I hope that there will be a convention next year. There are heartbreakingly few veterans of the Golden Age of radio left, but the ones who attended the convention seemed to enjoy it at least as much as we fans. I was delighted to hear Lina Romay and Bea Wain talk about their careers. I wish that panel would have gone on for hours. The recreations were a lot of fun; it was a treat to see Fred Foy, Dick Beals, and (my favorite) June Foray. The extra guests, like Stan Freberg, were a real bonus.

Norman Corwin, at his Sunday morning birthday party, said that the prospect of this being the last SPERDVAC convention was "like having an artery opened."

You folks can't let Mr. Corwin down, can you?

Jim Jensvold
e-mail

The answer is more confabs

Having been a board member for many years, I know the way the wind blows on the board. I know the personalities and the conflicts that exist.

I know that the current board doesn't want to have conventions. I've got to say, however, that this past convention was a great success. The programs, the location, the SPERDVAC volunteers who ran the affair—all superb. Thanks to Walden Hughes, Bobb Lynes, Don Aston, Frank Bresee, Jerry Williams, and Barbara Watkins.

I ask the board to approve further conventions and allow those talented and willing volunteers who wish to run it do all the work.

The board will benefit in many ways, not the least of which is financially. And the members of SPERDVAC will delight in the most important SPERDVAC tradition. These types of activities will revitalize SPERDVAC and slow the decline in membership we are experiencing.

Richard Glasband
Van Nuys, CA

In defense of 2007 directors

I am attempting to respond to Bruce Miller's letter in the May 2008 *Radiogram*. Bruce writes about the newly elected board members as "hard-working volunteers" having been attacked by "those who are childishly rabble-raising against these board members..." No one denies that three of the four members under attack have been dedicated, hard working volunteers, as is Bruce himself. I personally feel that Bruce was the best librarian that SPERDVAC ever had, and I thank him and all the

others for their service. The ones who have questioned the honesty of the last election are also hard working volunteers, but that is a red herring and not the real issue. Bruce writes that newly re-elected members are "attempting to carry out the mandate of the SPERDVAC charter, which is preserving and protecting" the collections we have in our storage facility. This implies that our collections were in jeopardy and needed protection. Protection from whom? Protection from what? None of this would be significant, except that, in the 2008 election statements of the candidates, four of them stated that they needed to be elected in order to save these collections from being moved from the storage facility. Four candidates got together, colluded, and conspired to frighten the voters into thinking that other candidates, board members of the 2007 board, were planning to move the collections to another location. This was clearly done to make SPERDVAC members fearful, thus keeping the previous members from being re-elected.

Bruce continues that some who were already on the board had ulterior motives because they are in the business and "are dependent on having access to the audios, videos or performers for personal or financial gain." So, here we have accusations and implications, but absolutely no proof. In addition to the untrue candidates' statements about moving the collections, some candidates implied in their statements, just as Bruce has, that being a dealer would bring harm to SPERDVAC's collections. The fact of the matter is that only one candidate, Don Aston, is in the business. Don was part of the 2007 board, and instead of ever taking anything from SPERDVAC he made donations to SPERDVAC. If he had ulterior motives and wanted to take advantage of his board position, he would have attempted that while he was on the board for an entire year. No such attempt was ever made. This was just a smear campaign to get people off the board who were elected to the board in 2007 because those now defeated board members were in favor of having SPERDVAC conventions. That is why those four ran in 2007: for the main purpose of having a convention. They are Don Aston, Frank Bresee, Walden Hughes, and Jim Harmon. They worked on that convention, and they pulled it off beautifully in May 2008.

Under the leadership of Bob Steinmetz, Dan Haefele, Dave Struthers and others, prior to 2007, SPERDVAC managed not to have a convention in 2002, 2005, and 2006. President Steinmetz said that the reason was that he could find no volunteer to chair the convention, but I know no one who ever was asked by him, except Bobb Lynes, who had told him that he would get back to him. One hour later, the board voted to have no



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convention because the majority of that 2005 board was opposed to conventions. That is the real issue here. For this great organization, the parent of other OTR organizations, centered in the entertainment capital of the U.S., not to have a convention for three years, is a major disgrace. The only reason we had one in 2008 is that the pro-convention board members formed the majority. They ran and got elected in 2007 for the main purpose of having a convention, as SPERDVAC members deserve.

Now you know why four of the present board colluded with fear tactics to get the pro-convention members unseated. And now, Bruce Miller is continuing those same fear tactics and false innuendo in his letter of last month. No one ever suggested moving any collections!

Stuart Lubin
e-mail

The Readers Have Their Say . . .

Election Ethics

I've just become aware of the unpleasant situation concerning the Board of Directors and the recent election. I voted for a group of candidates who clearly implied that other candidates wished to move SPERDVAC materials from their current secure location, perhaps for purposes of financial gain. Now I am told that no one ever proposed such actions. What is the typical club member supposed to make of all this?

Here is what I'm going to do. Any future candidate who wants my vote must adhere to the following:

- You will provide explanation and/or evidence for your negative claims about other candidates. If this cannot be part of your statement in the election mailing, it should be referenced as posted online somewhere, or otherwise supplied to the membership.

- You will disclose any commercial association or activity involving the OTR hobby which might result in personal financial gain. If such undisclosed activity is discovered later, you will be removed from the Board.

The list of candidates for the last election included people who have given countless hours of work in support of SPERDVAC. I know that we all are thankful and appreciative of this work. But some candidates owe the membership an explanation of what they said or implied about others. Good works count for a lot, but so does character.

Jim Garrett
e-mail

This attendee says thanks!

The 2008 SPERDVAC convention exceeded my expectations! When I passed Stan Freberg in the hall I thought I was seeing things! The presentation by Bob Hope's former writer Bob Mills was so thoughtfully put together and had so many personal anecdotes, I was sorry to see it end. My mother was thrilled to see Margaret O'Brien and Anne Jeffreys. The Big Band Singers panel and (my personal favorite) Peter Ford, the son of Glenn Ford and Eleanor Powell, were especially entertaining. And seeing attendees Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentiss was an added bonus. I will attend next year, God willing.

All the hard work put into this convention was most gratefully appreciated by this attendee!

See you in 2009 at SPERDVAC.

Joan Leya, M.D.
e-mail

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The Editor Has His Say

and behind-the-scenes shakers and movers. But I wish to personally send a great big thank you to the following: Barry Opliger, our membership chair, who keeps the ever changing enrollment rosters up-to-date, and for keeping me abreast of who needs a copy of *Radiogram*; Chester Allen, our treasurer, who settles accounts and leaves ol' ed free to edit a newsletter; Dan Haefele, Bob Steinmetz, Dave Struthers and Glenda Kelly, who always have a kind word for my efforts and are always asking if there is anything they can do to make my job easier; Frank Bresee, newly elected board member, for his recent correspondences of kind thoughts and support; Catherine Passarelli, former elections chair, for always reminding me to include the "election rules" in the November/December *Radiogram*; Rex Quinn, new members director, for taking those extra hundred copies and really making my job easier.

And I wish to extend hearty thanks to all the fantastic contributors who have made *Radiogram* a rather decent OTR publication.

So I say to all, thank you and thank you and again thank you.

...

Finally, Richard Fry passed along a short book review by Joanne Collings from the May 17 edition of *The Examiner* (Washington D.C.) of Roxanne Orgill's *Dream Lucky: When FDR was in the White House, Count Basie was on the Radio, and Everyone wore a Hat . . .* (Smithsonian/Collins 2008). This book sounds like the kind of book that is needed in these politically nutty times—both nationally and locally. As Collings writes, radio is one of the ways Orgill's book "filters the very different world of America from 1936 to 1938, a hopeful time between the Great Depression and World War II," and she quotes Orgill's example of how young Buzz Roosevelt Dall, having a choice between a bedtime story by his grandmother Eleanor or listening to *The Lone Ranger* always chose the man on the white horse. Oh, had we the choice today. All we can do is turn backward to those thrilling days of yesteryear to escape the vicissitudes of life since there is nothing in today's media that can assure us that life is worth living let alone life has meaning.

So long until tomorrow.☘

WRITER - PRODUCER

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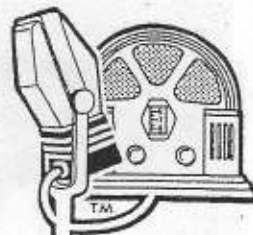
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