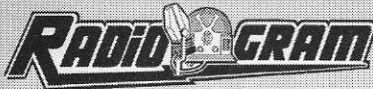




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Volume 34 • Number 3 • February 2009



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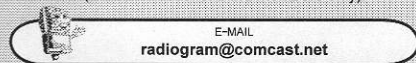
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The Mysterious Traveler



TELL THE TRUTH OR FACE THE CONSEQUENCES:

WHO WAS THE WALKING MAN?

"Bing, bong, bell, it's ten and only one can tell.

The master of the metropolis fits his name quite well."

Several aural clues followed: a man's hollow footsteps, a screeching cat, the tooting of a horn and the sound of a bowling ball striking pins. Millions of Americans sat glued to their radios in the first months of 1948 puzzling over these and other clues in an effort to figure out the identity of the mysterious "walking man," which was the latest contest dreamed up by Ralph Edwards and his *Truth or Consequences* radio staff.

Somewhat of a staple of the unique audience participation show, Edwards had already devised and executed three previous contests: Miss Hush (Martha Graham), Mrs. Hush (Clara Bow) and Mr. Hush (Jack Dempsey). In each case, the contest was presented as a means of raising money for a national charity. The first three contests benefited the March of Dimes, but "the walking man" contest was a promotion on behalf of the American Heart Association.

The rules were simple: participants were asked to complete the sentence "we should all support the American Heart Association" in 25 words or less. Listeners were told they could submit as many entries as they wished, and participants were encouraged but not required to send along a contribution to the American Heart Association. By the end of the contest, "the walking man" was credited with raising \$1.5 for the American Heart Association.

The contest was top heavy with prizes. The lucky winner would walk away with \$22,500 in awards and in 1948 that bought a lot of prizes, including a new Cadillac sedan; a home freezer filled with food; a two-week vacation in Sun Valley; an airplane; a home laundry; a diamond and ruby watch; a gas range; a 14-foot boat; a piano; a 16mm motion picture sound projector and screen and one motion picture delivered to the winner's door every month for a year; a \$1,000 diamond ring; a refrigerator; a radio-tv-phonograph combination; a set of Venetian blinds; a woman's wardrobe for every season; kitchen and bathroom tile; furniture for a living room and two bedrooms; a \$2400 trailer; a fur coat; three men's suits for each male member of the family; a sewing machine; and paint for inside and outside of the house.

Ralph Edwards took credit for inventing all the clues. From the beginning, Edwards

insisted that the identity of "the walking man" was easy to figure out; he told the press that, "almost everyone has seen him walk [and that] he lives in the United States, too."

Each week Edwards made three phone calls during the course of *Truth or Consequences*. Each call was to someone selected by a panel of judges based upon the quality of the participant's entry. For 10 weeks Edwards made his phone calls, and week after week contestants guessed incorrectly, falsely fingering such notables as President Harry Truman, Alvin C. York, Joe Louis, James Pterillo, Richard Dix, J. Edgar Hoover, Herbert Marshall, Henry Kaiser and Bing Crosby and even Bulldog Drummond. Then, on March 6, 1948, Edwards placed a call to Mrs. Florence Hubbard of 40 N. Waller Avenue in Chicago. Mrs. Hubbard made her guess and Edwards relayed her answer to the audience: "What's that? You say, Jack Benny? Mrs. Hubbard, don't faint, Jack Benny is correct and you win the giant jackpot of prizes!" As Ralph Edwards was then free to explain, Benny was "the walking man" because he was too cheap to pay cab fare.

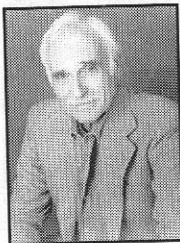
Florence Hubbard proved to be a 68-year-old widow with no children who was employed as a clerk in a Chicago department store. She lived in a three-room apartment. Under the circumstances, a number of the jackpot prizes seemed a bit surreal but Mrs. Hubbard was happily swept up in all the attention. "I think the best part of it has been hearing from a number of friends I haven't seen in fifteen years," she told the press. "They called me up to congratulate me."

The following Saturday, Mrs. Hubbard appeared on *Truth or Consequences* to receive congratulations in person. The next day, Florence made a guest appearance on *The Jack Benny Program*. Benny mentioned the congratulatory calls Mrs. Hubbard had been taking, and when he asked her who the first person to actually call her was Florence replied as part of the gag: "the income tax man." The line got a nice laugh, but as is usual in such cases the government got the last laugh. The chief deputy collector for the Internal Revenue Department in Chicago was quoted in the press as stating that the tax on the jackpot would amount to approximately \$8500.☹

Mallory Lewis, Harold Gould added to performer list for May convention

by JERRY WILLIAMS
CONVENTION CO-CHAIR

Preparations for our 2009 convention at the are coming along just great. Sound effects artist Bob Mott will be joining us to add



Harold Gould

his special touch to our re-creations. We have added *I Love A Mystery* and *Baby Snooks* with Mallory Lewis, daughter of Shari Lewis, and Harold Gould to our list of re-creations and guests along with re-creations of *Burns & Allen*, *The Great Gildersleeve*, *Bobby Benson* and *Lux Radio Theater's Casablanca*.

The panels are being put together with Jack Jones joining Chuck Southcott's Radio's Singers panel with others to be added.

Entertainment that we are working on include a Rudy Vallee Panel with Eleanor Vallee and others, Talk Radio with Ray Briem and guests, the 75th anniversary of *Lux Radio Theater*, and Gregg Oppenheimer's Radio Bloopers. Other panels we are exploring include the 70th anniversary of *I Love A Mystery* and the 60th anniversary of *Dragnet*.

Cynthia Corley set for February 14 meeting in South Pasadena

Actress Cynthia Corley will be SPERDVAC's guest at its February 14 meeting in the South Pasadena community room in South Pasadena.

Ms. Corley appeared in New York radio in the early 1950s while also appearing on stage and in early television series including a couple of episodes of *Fireside Theatre*. She also appeared, according to filmographies, in *Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid* and *The Senator was Indiscreet*, both with William Powell, and in the film version of *Queen for a Day*.

Ms. Corley "will share her 'little bit of radio' memories with us," said SPERDVAC's activities chair Bobb Lynes.

The South Pasadena Community Room is located in the 1000 block of El Centro in South Pasadena. As always, the meeting begins at 12 noon and is free and open to the public.

With the talents of Chuck McCann, Janet Waldo, Shirley Mitchell, Eddie Carroll, Fred Travalea, Gloria McMillan, Ron Cocking, Tommy Cook, Ivan Curry, Gary Owens, Stuffie Singer, Jan Merlin, Dena Dietrich, Frank Bresee, Jim Harmon, Dick Beals and more this should be a memorable weekend.

We look forward to seeing you for another wonderful weekend. A reservation form can be found on page seven that has all the information you need. As reservations are received, dinner table assignments will be given on a first come first served basis. Last year Friday and Saturday were sold out, so get your reservations in early. Optional motels in the area are: Days Inn 12933 Ventura Blvd. Studio City, CA \$81.00 and Comfort Inn 6147 Lankershim Blvd. North Hollywood, CA \$110.00. Any questions please call or e-mail Jerry Williams at 530-990-4231 or mrj1313@sbcglobal.net.

Since the convention is about recognizing our honorary members we would like to make



Mallory Lewis and Lambchop

a special request for drivers to pick up and return any honorary members who need transportation to the convention. If you could help, even if you are not attending the convention, we would sure appreciate it. We will make Google Maps available for any drivers.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Whether or not you plan to attend, if you would like to volunteer a few hours of your time at the 2009 Convention we would love to have you. Below is a list of areas and duties involved:

- **VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR ASSISTANT.** Duties: monitor assigned volunteers.
- **PUBLICITY CHAIR.** Duties: send press releases; get interviews on radio and newspapers, etc.; send convention info to sperdvac website and other websites; OTR newsletters and OTR shows.
- **RAFFLE/SILENT AUCTION COORDINATOR.** Duties: get prizes; set up display tables; get volunteers to sell tickets at banquet and help distribute prizes.
- **DRIVERS.** Duties: pick-up and deliver honorary members at the airport or their homes.
- **RESERVATION/CHECK-IN TABLE.** Duties: hand out reservation packets; check-in non-reservation attendees.
- **DEALERS ROOM COORDINATOR ASSISTANT.** Duties: periodically monitor dealers room.
- **SPERDVAC TABLE IN DEALERS ROOM.** Duties: work the SPERDVAC sale and information table.
- **PANEL ROOM.** Duties: assist engineer; see that guests are seated; see that water is available; adjust guest microphones as needed; control audience microphone; help engineer haul, set up and break down equipment before and at end of panel day as needed.
- **PHOTOGRAPHER.** Duties: take snap shots of guests and room activities during panels and rehearsals.
- **VIDEO CAMERA PHOTOGRAPHERS.** Duties: film panel shows, rehearsals and re-creations.

Please e-mail Jerry & Barbara Williams at mrj1313@sbcglobal.net and let us know what you would be interested in.

February 28 • Sounds Like Yesterday

Rod Serling's Radio Career Set for On-line Program

A three-hour program centering on Rod Serling's pre-*Twilight Zone* radio career at WLW in Cincinnati will be featured on Neal Ellis's *Sounds Like Yesterday* on February 28, 3-6 p.m. on the www.yesterdayusa.com Internet site.

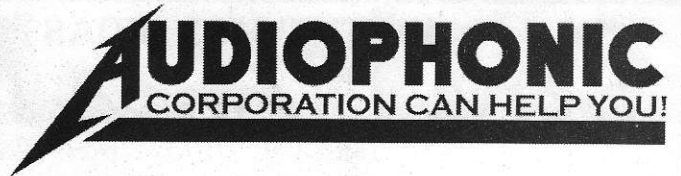


The award and recognition Serling received on the *Dr. Christian* radio program will be highlighted as well as scripts submitted and rejected for other radio programs. Original radio productions that were an influence for the later *Twilight Zone* series will also be discussed.

The 1946 *Mercury Theater* production of "The Hitch-Hiker" starring Orson Welles will be presented as well as the *Suspense* broadcast of "Return to Dust" from 1958, which Serling considered for his anthology series.

Author Martin Grams Jr., whose comprehensive article on Serling's career appears in this issue—adapted from his recent book *The Twilight Zone: Unlocking the Door to a Television Classic*—will be a guest on the program.

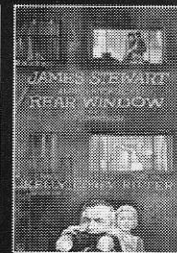
Broadcast coast-to-coast, *Sounds Like Yesterday* can be heard live every Saturday afternoon over the Yesterday USA network on-line.



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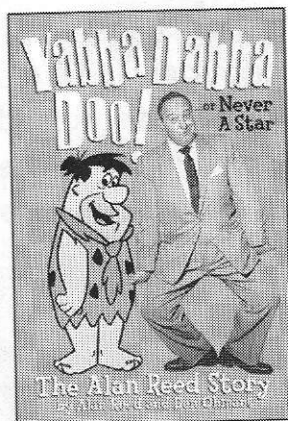


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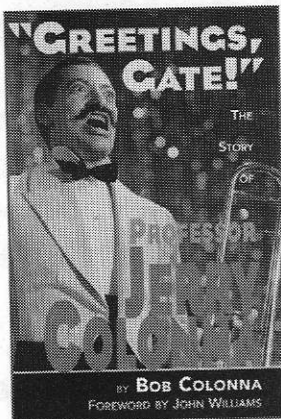
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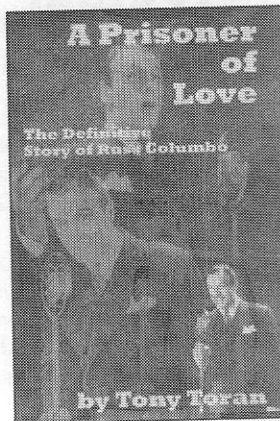
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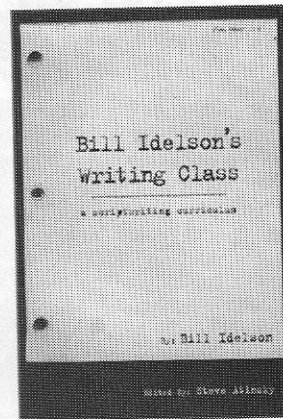
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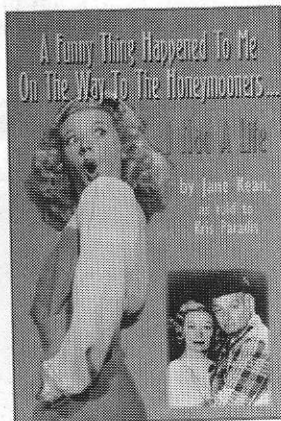
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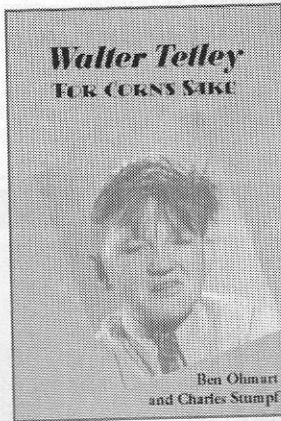
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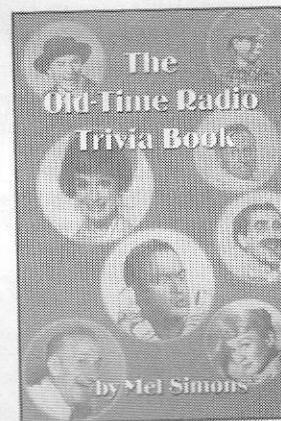
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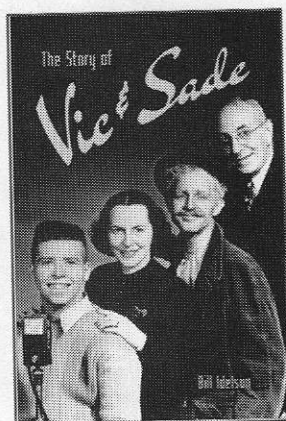
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May 1, 2 and 3, 2009

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4222 Vineland Avenue, North Hollywood, CA 818-980-8000

RESERVATION FORM

Cancellation Deadline is April 22, 2009

Name _____ Non Member Member # _____

Address _____ Email _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Guest name(s) _____

NOTE: If you wish to be seated with your friends, please send reservation forms and fees together. Convention tickets will be held at the Registration Desk. This is not a fundraiser and the full cost of tickets goes to cover costs. Therefore no part of the ticket price is considered a tax deductible contribution.

CONVENTION RATES DEADLINE APRIL 15, 2009. CHECKS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THIS DATE FOR DISCOUNTED PRICE. AFTER APRIL 15, 2009 TOTAL COST: \$175 (DAILY COSTS REMAIN THE SAME)

(Prices are per person; "Member" price applies to a member & guests on the same order form)

1. Discounted Convention Package	\$140 Member / \$150 Non Member	x	_____	=	_____
2. Friday Daytime	\$10 All Attendees	x	_____	=	_____
3. Friday evening dinner & program	\$50 Member / \$ 55 Non Member	x	_____	=	_____
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5. Saturday evening dinner & program	\$50 Member / \$ 55 Non Member	x	_____	=	_____
6. Sunday Brunch & program	\$35 All Attendees	x	_____	=	_____
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TOTAL \$					_____

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BEVERLY GARLAND'S HOLIDAY INN. Reservations: 800-238-3759—mention SPERDVAC \$149 + tax/night. Rates good until April 1, 2009. PARKING - \$13.00 Car Overnight • \$6.00 Car per event.

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radio

ROD

finding a voice

by

MARTIN GRAMS JR.

Part One

Martin Grams Jr. is the author and co-author of more than a dozen books on old-time radio and retro television. This article has been excerpted and edited from his recent publication, *The Twilight Zone: Unlocking the Door to a Television Classic*. Copyrighted by Martin Grams Jr. and reprinted with permission from the publisher. The author expresses special thanks to Terry Salomonson, Earl Hamner, Bill Bragg, Walden Hughes and Carl Amari for their assistance with this article.

ROD SERLING worked first in radio and then moved on to television in Cincinnati (teaching himself, through actual writing, whatever he learned of playwriting). Wanting to make a profession of writing, he was at the radio's speaker, often favoring good dramas and programs of serious horror and science fiction. Shows such as *Suspense* and *The Mysterious Traveler* may well have been influences for the types of stories of which he grew fond. One of Serling's earliest jobs was as an unsalaried volunteer writer and actor with WNYC, a New York City radio station. Later he worked for stations in Marion and Springfield, OH, as well as his native Binghamton, NY, and Cincinnati.

"In 1946, I started writing for radio at a New York City station and thereafter did radio writing at other small stations," he recalled. "It was experience, but incidental experience. I learned 'time,' writing for a medium that is measured in seconds. Radio and its offspring, television, are unique in the stringency of the time factor. Radio and TV stations gave me a look-see at the factory that would produce my product. I got to understand the basic workings of cameras, lights and microphones. I got a sense of the space that could be utilized and the number of people who might be accommodated in that space. This was all to the good."

The radio programs Serling wrote for, however, were not broadcast nationally on a coast-to-coast hookup. They were not sponsored. In fact, almost all of them were sustained, that is, the production costs were borne by the network rather than a sponsor. Cheap to produce, these programs required no major film stars to pay, and there was no shortage of radio actors willing to work for union scale. For him, this was experience needed for a writer with no credits to his name, to get his foot in the door for programs that paid much more—courtesy of well-heeled sponsors willing to pick up the tab.

The Chesebrough Manufacturing Company, for example, sponsored a long-running radio program titled *Dr. Christian*. The program featured top-quality dramas of a country doctor who applied the Golden Rule approach to life when facing obstacles that required his inner strength for support. In the beginning, the *Dr. Christian* radio program came from various scriptwriters, among them Ruth Adams Knight. In 1942, the producers tried a new approach: a contest in which listeners could submit scripts and be eligible for large cash prizes. This may have been the most significant factor in the program's long 17-year history. Suddenly, everyone in the country was a scriptwriter. Weekly awards ranged from \$150 to \$500, good money in 1942, and the grand prize won the author \$2,000. It soon became *The Vaseline Program*, "the only show in radio where the audience writes the script."

Newsweek reported that 7,697 scripts were received in 1947; sometimes that number went as high as 10,000. Many were called, however, but few were chosen. The scripts that made it to the air continued the appeal of traditional values, showing Dr. Christian as the symbol of goodwill, as a philanthropist and an unabashed Cupid. The subject matter would include anything—even fantasy. One show was about a mermaid; on another, a human-like jalopy named Betsy fell in love with a black Packard owned by a woman chief of police. Only when murder was the theme of a script did listeners complain; they liked the show when it was mellow. The 1947 prize play concerned Dr. Christian's effort to convince an unborn child that Earth was not so bad after all.

At Antioch College in Yellow Springs, OH Rod Serling majored in language and literature and began writing scripts for radio. He became manager of the Antioch Broadcasting System's radio workshop where he wrote, directed and acted in weekly full-scale radio productions broadcast over WJEM-Springfield. With confidence on his shoulder, during the 1948-49 school year, the entire output of the workshop was written by Serling. With the exception of one adaptation, all of the radio scripts were entirely original. Later he would look back and call this work some "pretty bad stuff."

For the broadcast of May 18, 1949, the eighth annual scriptwriting contest of *Dr. Christian* ended with a special broadcast revealing the year's winners. Among the guests on that particular program was Rod Serling, who at the time was attending Antioch College. The producers of the radio show even paid him \$76.56 to reimburse his expenses in getting to CBS in New York City to appear on the *Dr. Christian* program. His submission, titled "To Live a Dream," had won approval of the judges and been accepted by producer Dorothy McCann. Serling's script helped him place in the radio contest that netted him a \$500 award.

Serling brought along his wife, Carol, to attend the radio broadcast. Among the cast on stage were star Jean Hersholt, Helen Claire

as nurse Judy Price, and prizewinners Russell F. Johnson, Maree Dow Gagne, Mrs. Aida Cromwell, Miss Terry McCoog, Earl Hamner, Jr. and Mrs. Halle Truitt Yenni. The program, still sponsored by Chesebrough, was the 546th broadcast of the series. Russell F. Johnson of Thomaston, CT won the \$2,000 first prize for his script titled, "Stolen Glory." Mrs. Lillian Kerr of Tillamook, OR, won \$500 for her script titled "Angel with a Black Eye." Earl Hamner, Jr. of Cincinnati (the same Hamner who would later write scripts for *The Twilight Zone*) won \$500 for his script titled "All Things Come Home." This was not Hamner's first time winning the contest. He had been on the show previous for his award-winning scripts, "Now That Spring is There" and "Who Would Not Sing for David?"

One by one, the prizewinners were announced and interviewed on stage. Biographical background, professional endeavors and their writing ambitions were discussed. Halfway through the broadcast, Rod Serling came to the microphone.

HERSHOLT: Hello, Rod . . . and congratulations. I read your winning script, "To Live a Dream," and I thought it was a fine job of writing.

SERLING: Thank you, Mr. Hersholt. You've no idea how thrilled I am to know that you and the judges selected my script as one of the winners.

HERSHOLT: Now tell us a little about yourself, Rod.

SERLING: Well . . . I first saw the light of day in Syracuse, New York, graduated from Binghamton High School, at Binghamton, New York . . . And am now in my third year of college at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

HERSHOLT: You covered an awful lot of years in an awfully few words. What happened during all that time?

SERLING: Well . . . before the war I did some staff work at a Binghamton radio station . . . tried to write . . . but never had anything published.

HERSHOLT: And during the war?

SERLING: I was in the same place as Russell Johnson . . . the Pacific . . . with

the Army.

HERSHOLT: What did you do in the Army?

SERLING: I was a paratrooper.

HERSHOLT: Where did you get the idea for this fine story you wrote?

SERLING: Well . . . I've always been fond of boxing . . . tried my hand in the Golden Gloves. And well . . . since you've read my story, you know where it all ties in.

HERSHOLT: Indeed I do. And do you intend to follow writing as a profession?

SERLING: I'd like to, Mr. Hersholt. In fact, the ambition of my wife and I . . .

HERSHOLT: Oh . . . another married man!

SERLING: How did Russell Johnson say it? Yes, sir!

HERSHOLT: And is your wife sitting out front, too?

SERLING: Yes, sir . . . right there.

HERSHOLT: Well, let's have her stand up and take a bow, too . . . Mrs. Rod Serling . . . (Applause) . . . Well, well, you ex-G.I.s certainly specialize in beautiful brides. And now, back to that ambition of yours.

SERLING: Well, we want to live in a large house, in the suburb of a large city, raise a family, a lot of dogs . . . and write!

HERSHOLT: And I certainly hope you realize such a fine American ambition, Mr. Serling. Maybe this check for five hundred dollars will go toward part of the down payment on that dream! Congratulations . . . and good luck to you!

SERLING: Thank you, Mr. Hersholt.

Serling's success earned him a credit that would gain the attention of other radio producers when he included a cover letter with a submission. Broadcasting standards

By the 1950s, however, a few who submitted plot proposals and scripts were seeking vengeance for their rejected submissions. They filed lawsuits against the producers and the networks whenever they heard a program of similar nature, claiming their ideas were "stolen" without due compensation.

during the 1940s were much different from the standards enforced by the late 1950s. The policy of reviewing and accepting unsolicited radio scripts and plot proposals varied from one producer to the next. While many programs had a staff of writers, other programs

occasionally purchased submissions from the open market. *Suspense*, a radio anthology specializing in thrilling crime dramas, for example, bought scripts from a deaf mute in Brooklyn, a night watchman from Chicago, a cowhand in Wyoming, and one script from a former inmate of San Quentin.

By the 1950s, however, a few who submitted plot proposals and scripts were seeking vengeance for their rejected submissions. They filed lawsuits against the producers and the networks whenever they heard a program of similar nature, claiming their ideas were "stolen" without due compensation. The networks began enforcing policies, in agreement with radio and television producers, not to review or accept any outside submissions. For scriptwriters offering their work in the hopes of making a sale it became a bit more complicated.

The success of the *Dr. Christian* radio script led to multiple attempts on Serling's part to submit more proposals to other coast-to-coast radio programs.

"I just kept on," he recalled years later to a newspaper columnist. "I had to earn a living and took a staff writing job on a Cincinnati radio station; but during every spare moment I turned out more free-lance scripts. Finally, I sold three others, but for each play accepted there were at least three or more turned down."

Serling began writing scripts that were dramatized not on a national coast-to-coast hookup, but in the local Ohio listening area. "The Colonel's Coin" was a script . . . to Memorial Day. On May 8, 1948, he completed a V-E Day script which was regarded by the station manager as "the first script this year that kept me on the edge." In 1948, Serling scripted *Party Line*, a short-run program sponsored by the Army Recruiting Headquarters. Serling played himself in a number of skits he composed, including the lead role of Cooper.

On one episode of this program, the announcer stepped aside from his normal duties to inform the radio audience that Miss Carol Kramer was engaged to Rod Serling, announced by her grandparents and the marriage to be on July 31.

But with success came the eventual edge of defeat. On September 8, 1949, Serling's radio

script "Potter's Paradise" was rejected by the advertising agency, Wallace-Ferry-Hanly Company, for the *First Nighter* Program. Ira L. Avery, producer for *Armstrong's Theatre of Today*, rejected his script "The Memory" in October because "in the handling of familiar

plots and themes, selection needs to be placed on a level determined by the volume and quality of submissions. We regret that, in the light of heavy competition, we do not find this story suited to our current needs."

After peddling a football script titled "Cupid at Left Half" to *Curtain Time* and finding that script rejected, he wrote to Myron Golden, script editor of the radio program, to ask why he had failed to sell a single script to *Curtain Time*. On October 10, 1949, he sent the following candid reply:

"This particular script lacks a professional quality. The dialog is spotty, the plot is loose, and the whole thing lacks verisimilitude . . . It appears to be a standard plot that writers somehow or other manage to pluck out of the public domain." As a footnoted, two of Serling's earliest attempts to sell scripts to a national radio program are evident in "Look to the Sky," dated July 13, 1947, and "The Most Dangerous Game," dated June 22, 1947. The latter script was adapted from the Richard Connell short story of the same name.

On August 10, 1949, producer/director Martin Horrell of *Grand Central Station* rejected Serling's prizefight script titled "Winner Take Nothing." The script was "better than average" Horrell admitted, but the ladies who listened to his program on Saturday afternoons "have told us in no uncertain terms that prize fight stories aren't what they like most." In a letter, Horrell offered him what may have been the best advice given to the young Ohio resident. "I have a feeling that the script would be far better for sight than for sound only, because in any radio presentation, the fights are not seen. Perhaps this is a baby you should try on some of the producers of television shows."

"Those were discouraging, frustrating years," he told a columnist in early 1960. "I wanted to quit many times. But there was something within me that made me go on. I continued writing and submitting scripts without pay and, what is even worse, most of the time, without recognition. Then at last I came up with two plays that were bought by the old *Grand Central Station* series on CBS Radio. I thought that now surely I was in. But I wasn't. Day after day, I continued to pound the typewriter, with no result."

Grand Central Station was a radio anthology consisting of light comedies and fluffy romance. Serling's first sale to the program was "The Local is a Very Slow Train." Broadcast on September 10, 1949, under the new title of "Hop Off the Express and Grab a Local." The story concerned two young men, Joey and Steve, who became involved in a murder case while trying to escape the slums of the city where they live. His second sale for the series was "The Welcome Home," broadcast on December 31, 1949, and concerned the

story of Bill Grant, a crusading reporter for the fictional New York Globe.

While his first sale was the prize-winning *Dr. Christian* script, the first script to be dramatized nationally on radio was the September 10, 1949 broadcast of *Grand Central Station*. In early November, his luck hung on long enough for him to receive a letter from Rita Franklin of the *Dr. Christian* program, alerting him that his prize-winning "To Live a Dream," would finally be broadcast on December 7, 1949. Scheduling conflicts pushed the script ahead a week to November 30, 1949, and Rod Serling's name was once again referenced on the *Dr. Christian* radio program. It should be noted that Serling later submitted a second script to the *Dr. Christian* radio program that was originally titled "The Power of Abner Doubleday" (for reasons unknown the title changed to "The Power of Willie Doubleday") but failed to make the sale.

Serling began working at radio stations such as WJEL in Springfield, OH, and WMRN in Marion, OH. Months later, in the spring of 1950, he graduated from college, and his first job was at WLW in Cincinnati, the Crosley Broadcasting Corporation's flagship station. The college radio work had paid \$45 to \$50 a week, but WLW was offering \$75 weekly and the young playwright accepted the job. Members of the program's casts were students of the radio department at the College of Music in Cincinnati, and he often found himself playing a role or two for some of the broadcasts.

It should be noted that among the leaders of the entertainment industry who began their careers at WLW were Rosemary Clooney, Betty Clooney, Red Skelton, Red Barber, Jane Froman, The Mills Brothers, Virginia Payne, Doris Day, Durward Kirby, Eddie Albert, and Janette Davis.

The Crosley Broadcasting Corporation, founded by radio manufacturing pioneer Powel Crosley, Jr., was an early operator of radio stations in the U.S. During World War II, it operated as many as five shortwave stations, using the call signs WLWK, WLWL, WLWO, WLWR and WLWS. In 1945, the Crosley interests were purchased by the Aviation Corporation. The radio and appliance manufacturing arm changed its name to Avco, but the broadcast operations continued to operate under the Crosley name. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Crosley (or Avco) operated a small television network in which programs were produced at one of its stations and broadcast on the other Crosley stations in the Midwest, and occasionally by non-Crosley stations.

Sometime in 1950 or 1951, Serling sold Crosley a number of scripts for dramatization on both radio and television. It is not clear whether the dramas made it to the airwaves,

but he did revise the scripts slightly and sold them to various television anthologies. Among the scripts were "Grady Everett for the People," "Law Nine Concerning Christmas," "The Sands of Tom," "The Time Element," "The Carlson Legend," "The Face of Autumn," "The Hill," "A Time for Heroes," "The Keeper of the Chair," "Aftermath" and "The Steel Casket."

Serling also composed a number of radio scripts for a proposed radio series titled *It Happens to You*. Among the scripts for this series were "Mr. Finchley Versus the Bomb" and "You Be the Bad Guy" (both of which were later dramatized on *The Lux Video Theater*); "And Then Came Jones," about the mishaps of Wendell Jones, who had papers claiming ownership to all the area within six and a half miles of Times Square; "The Gallant Breed of Men," about Captain Peter Bruce, an ex-captain in the Merchant Marine with a conscience; and "Law Nine Concerning Christmas," details of which can be found under the episode entry for "The Obsolete Man."

From October 14, 1950 to February 17, 1951, Serling authored a weekly program titled *Adventure Express*, which dramatized the exciting travels of Billy, Betty and their Uncle Jim, who traveled by train across the country seeking high adventure. Each week they stopped at a different town and got involved with the locals. One episode, for example, took place in the wooded countryside of Kansas, and another took place in the state of Florida.

When Serling first proposed this to the station manager, his proposal was titled *Conducted Tour Through America*, described as "a radio fantasy-drama." The initial concept was about a little boy named Stephen Crane and a little girl named Loretta Dijon who join the ethereal express operated by an old man named Abraham Goldschmidt. The kids died from the war, and were now looking across America from the train windows, giving their opinions of human character as witnessed through the eyes of a child.

From July 23, 1951 to August 23, 1951, he wrote a number of scripts for a weekly program titled *Leave it to Kathy*. From September to October of 1951, *Our America* presented historical biographies of American historical figures such as Jefferson Davis, General Custer and Lewis and Clark. From November 24, 1951 to December 8, 1951, a similar radio program titled *Builders of Destiny* gave him the opportunity to dramatize biographies of Zane

Grey and General Philip Sheridan (Author Note: The dates of broadcast are accurate

"No Christmas This Year" was an unproduced radio script (written circa 1949-1951), and told the tale of a civilization that dispenses with Christmas. No one knew exactly why this was so, they just knew it was happening, and the mayor of the town claims someone high up was responsible for the decision.

in this paragraph, but may not necessarily be the exact premiere and concluding airdates. A complete set of scripts was not available during research and it was determined to list the earliest and latest known dates of broadcast for those particular series).

Among the cast of the Cincinnati radio broadcasts was Jay Overholts, who headed a large number of radio scripts penned by Serling. The two became good friends and in 1959, Serling arranged for Overholts to come to California as a stock actor for a number of *Twilight Zone* episodes—including the pilot episode, "Where is Everybody?"

On November 25, 1949, John Driscoll, story editor for *The Cavalcade of America*, rejected Serling's plot outline titled "Father of the Common School," which he would later rewrite for an episode of the short-run historical dramas broadcast over WLW.

"From a writing point of view, radio ate up ideas that might have put food on the table for weeks at a future freelancing date," he later said. "The minute you tie yourself down to a radio or TV station, you write around the clock. You rip out ideas, many of them irreplaceable. They go on and consequently can never go on again. And you've sold them for \$50 a week. You can't afford to give away ideas—they're too damn hard to come by. If I had it to do over, I wouldn't staff-write at all. I'd find some other way to support myself while getting a start as a writer."

"No Christmas This Year" was an unproduced radio script (written circa 1949-1951), and told the tale of a civilization that dispenses with Christmas. No one knew exactly why this was so, they just knew it was happening, and the mayor of the town claims someone high up was responsible for the decision. Santa, up at the North Pole, has his own problems. The elves are on strike. The factory no longer manufactures toys—they produce crying gas, heavy bombs, fire bombs, and atomic bombs. Worse, he's been shot at when he flies over Palestine and China, and one of his elves got hit by shrapnel over Greece.

Another of Serling's unsold scripts in-

cluded "The Scene of Lilaces," a half-hour play about Jackie Evans who was the victim of a murder.

On August 23, 1950, Rod Serling created a radio serial titled *The Jenkins Clan*, which he proposed to radio station WLW. The series never came to be—or at least, no documented evidence has been brought to light to verify such a show was broadcast. According to Serling's proposal to the station manager, the series would be designed for either 'cross-the-board, five-day-a-week stint, or possibly three times a week, *The Jenkins Clan* could be fitted for either. In the case of the former, the show would involve a weekly episode—using the five shows to tell one complete story.

Serling's proposal suggested the minimum use of two actors, keeping the budget low for the network. Beginning with the second season of *The Twilight Zone* and especially during the final season, Serling would be subjected to a number of request by the CBS Television Network to write scripts requiring less actors—strictly for budgetary purposes.

For a three-times-a-week stint, a complete episode might be possible for each 15-minute sequence. In either case, *The Jenkins Clan* is primarily a situation comedy using the husband and wife combination (Harry and Alice Jenkins) with occasional inclusion of other characters.

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On July 31, 1950, through the advice of friends and rejection letters, Rod Serling wrote to Blanche Gaines in New York—an agent who specialized in handling about two dozen clients attempting to sell scripts to both radio and television. Blanche was the widow of Charles Gaines, who had died in 1947. He was vice president of the World Broadcasting System, a pioneer in the production of recorded radio series. Among her clients were Frank Gilroy, Jerome Ross, Nelson Bond and Helen Cotton. He included a few scripts ("Vertical Deep," "The Air is Free," and "Look to the Sky"), as samples of his work and a résumé of successful sales to *Dr. Christian* and *Grand Central Station*. Gaines reviewed the material and gave her opinion regarding the plots and the prose, suggesting a

variety of programs for which to submit them, most notably television's *Lights Out!* and the radio anthology, *Suspense*. She agreed to handle his material on a 15 percent commission basis. "It is more difficult to work with a writer who is living so far away from New York," she explained, "but I think your stuff has merit and am willing to try and see what I can do with it."

Serling wrote back saying that he was concerned about the 15 percent fee, but Gaines assured him that it was not permanent. After the tenth sale by the same writer, she reduced her commission to 10 percent, explaining that earliest efforts often brought about more rejections, and the 5 percent difference offset the costs involved. In the meantime, she submitted scripts such as "Temptation," "The Air is Free," "Look to the Sky" and "Vertical Deep" to television's *Suspense*, which were all promptly rejected for various reasons. Formerly radio scripts, Serling began adapting the unsold scripts into feasible teleplays.

On April 21, 1951, the radio program *Stars Over Hollywood* featured "Curtain Call for Carol" with Phyllis Thaxter in the title role. When Carol Adams appears in a Broadway show backed by her father, she was unmercifully panned by Bill Grant, temporary drama critic for a large metropolitan newspaper. Her anger was further increased when the same Grant offered to teach her how to act, despite the fact that his real specialty was as a sports writer.

The year 1952 promoted Serling to a level of success that he failed to achieve the previous year. The major reason was Blanche Gaines. For every script he finished, she sent a formal submission to story editors and producers of radio and television programs that were on her lists. Every script that was rejected by one program was resubmitted to a different program. No effort was wasted and sales started growing.


On January 2, 1952, the *Dr. Christian* radio program presented "The Long Black Night," which was a major rewrite of Serling's earlier prize-winning script, "To Live a Dream."

While these were some of Serling's earliest attempts at fantasy and science fiction for television, they would not be his last. His love for this kind of stories was evident in a number of early teleplays. In his unsold "The Keeper of the Chair," he told the tale of a condemned man named Paul, who spends his last moments on death row talking to his executioner, George Frank, about how many

people Paul had put to death, and how many Paul felt were guilty of murder and deserved to die. However, a murder has occurred, the result of a prank, and when the warden talks to a guard, looking over the dead body, he questions why Paul shouted out "George Frank" before he died. They had no guard named George Frank. There was a convict by that name executed in 1942, and new evidence presented in 1943 proved his innocence. Paul was the state executioner, whose mind snapped over the years, having been unable to cope with sending a man to the chair for a crime he never committed, and he spent his remaining moments hallucinating—a guilt complex in the form of his own execution.

In late 1949, when Serling was still at Antioch College, he submitted his radio play of the same name to John Meston, the story editor for radio's *Suspense*. On December 1, 1949, Meston returned the script, explaining, "After careful consideration, the Script Committee has decided that the story is not suitable for *Suspense*." On April 27, 1950, John Meston sent another rejection letter to Serling regarding the same script, as he had submitted it for radio's *Escape*. By November of 1950, Rod Serling was living (at 5016 Sidney Road) in Cincinnati and had adapted his radio script into a teleplay, for television's *Lights Out!* program. The script editor sent a rejection stating, "This is not well written and does not sufficiently get around its basic fallacy that the executioner, rather than the jury, is responsible for the death of an innocent man."¶

In part two, Martin Grams Jr. examines Rod Serling's old-time radio influences including a look at the proposed radio scripts for *The Twilight Zone*. And for a similar examination of Rod Serling's radio work see "The Radio Zone of Rod Serling" by Christopher Conlon and Tony Albarella in the November-December 2002 issue of *Radiogram*.



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At home with Pam and Jerry

A Quick Glance at Radio's Most Enduring Husband/Wife Detective Team

by Jack French



Barbara Britton and Richard Denning as Pam and Jerry North, i.e., radio and television's *Mr. and Mrs. North*.

IN THE EARLY 1930s, Richard Lockridge created *Mr. and Mrs. North* (named for the mildly inept "North" in the bridge columns in major dailies) as an amusing couple. They had no first names and they did not solve mysteries. They were merely befuddled and entertaining in a continuing series of comedic sketches in the *New York Times*. It would be years later before Lockridge bestowed first names on the pair.

Lockridge's wife, Frances, eventually inserted the Norths into her first detective short story, primarily because of the name recognition to the reading public. Not until 1940 did the Lockridges publish their first mystery novel, *The Norths Meet Murder*, starring Pam and Jerry. A decade later, they confessed they began writing murder mysteries when they found out the sizable income Rex Stout generated with his crime novels. But Richard was no stranger to this venue since he began as a newspaper man in Manhattan assigned to the crime beat. Over the next 23 years, the Lockridges wrote 25 more mystery novels featuring this husband and wife crime-solving team.

A Broadway play based on that first novel opened in January 1941 with Peggy Conklin and Albert Hackett portraying the Norths. It was a modest success, closing in May after 163 performances. Richard Lockridge thought Conklin was perfect in her role so he cast her in the 1941 audition for the radio series. However when the NBC series was launched in 1942, another woman won the role of Pam.

In mid-1941 MGM, perhaps hoping to replicate the box-office success of its *Thin Man* movie series, released *Mr. and Mrs. North*. In this film, William Post, Jr. was Jerry

have been right; movie audiences appeared unimpressed seeing Gracie without George Burns.

Despite the limited appeal of both the stage play and the motion picture, NBC went forward with a radio version of the Norths, possibly counting on the popularity of each succeeding mystery novel. This network series debuted on December 30, 1942 with Alice Frost and Joseph Curtin in the leads.

Frost, the daughter of a Minnesota minister, started in radio with small roles in comedies, including *Stoopnagle and Budd*. Her microphone talent soon won her recurring roles in soap operas as well as major anthologies, i.e. *Columbia Workshop*. Curtin, a native son of Cambridge, MA, was a child actor on the regional stage. He dropped out of Yale University, one year shy of graduation, to pursue a career in theatre. Eventually Curtin was supplementing his Broadway salary with radio jobs, including roles on *Roses and Drums*. When his income from radio acting exceeded his theatrical earnings, he gave up the stage for the microphone.

Radio's Norths had some marked differences from their counterparts in the mystery novels. Their consumption of alcohol and blatant sexiness virtually disappeared, as did their crime-sniffing household felines. The investigative contributions of their police allies were also significantly reduced so that more light would shine on the Norths' deductive accomplishments.

The series lasted over a dozen years and its mild comedy tone was seldom overshadowed by deadly seriousness. Richard Lockridge explained that because the pair were well established as light-minded, they could not change to heroic or contentious on their radio adventures.

Therefore their network mysteries had to be somewhat amusing.

Although the Lockridges received royalty payments on each episode aired, they did not write every script. Their efforts were supplemented by different writers over the

years: Hector Chevigny, Louis Vittes, Jerome Epstein, and others.

The Jergens Company sponsored the

NBC series for the first five years, extolling its beauty products, so the show's theme song was "The Way You Look Tonight." But when the program moved to CBS in 1947, Colgate-Palmolive became the new sponsor and they changed the theme to the music of their Halo Shampoo commercial.

Throughout their long run on network radio, Jerry's employment as a publisher and Pam's sole responsibility as his wife remained constant even though the couple spent all their time solving crimes and bringing evildoers to justice. In one episode, a victim of a jewelry theft addresses the Norths as "the famous detectives" and the Norths accept the designation without correcting her. By the late 40s, the series gradually moved away from homicide cases to recovery of stolen property.

In 1952, with the radio version still enjoying solid ratings, CBS decided to launch a television series of the Norths, with a slightly younger pair in the leads: Richard Denning and Barbara Britton. So that fall fans of the Norths could listen to their radio show (with Frost and Curtin) on Tuesday nights and then watch Denning and Britton on CBS-TV on Friday evenings. This duality continued for about one year; CBS canceled the television show in September 1953. NBC-TV acquired the rights and hired Denning and Britton to portray the Norths again, however this run was even shorter airing only from January to July in 1954.

A few months later, CBS radio reformat- ted the series, changing it from a weekly half hour program to a daily 15 minute one. CBS also dropped Curtin and Frost and replaced them with Denning and Britton. It's likely the Lockridges had some influence in the decision to switch the performers. They thought Britton was the ideal "Pam" as they knew the character. They even paid this actress a magnificent compliment in their 1955 short story mystery of the Norths, "Pattern for Murder," giving Pam the maiden name of "Britton."

The 15 minute format did not have the

They thought Britton was the ideal "Pam" as they knew the character. They even paid this actress a magnificent compliment in their 1955 short story mystery of the Norths, "Pattern for Murder," giving Pam the maiden name of "Britton."

while Pam was portrayed by Gracie Allen. Lockridge disliked her performance and termed it "a triumph of miscasting." He may

Mr. and Mrs. North

results CBS hoped for and after a month, they went back to the half-hour weekly version on November 29, 1954. Denning and Britton found themselves reading scripts that were devoid of humor and laced with gritty realism in tone and subject matter. The crime were more vicious, their perpetrators more cruel, and the overall story lines very unlike what listeners had enjoyed for years. In one of these episodes, a desperate girl used her wheelchair to escape electrocution.

Mr. and Mrs. North finally left the airwaves on April 18, 1955. It had been a very successful run, by most radio standards. It had long-term sponsor loyalty, sustained high listenership ratings, and it outlasted every other married couple crime show. When the radio series ended, the Lockridges continued writing the Norths' mystery novels; the books ceased only with the 1963 death of Frances.

The four leads in the Norths broadcasts stayed in show business. Britton, who was in two dozen movies from 1941 to 1956, retired from the screen but did some stage and TV work and became familiar as the spokesperson for Revlon Cosmetics. Curtin and Frost stayed fairly active in television for the next two decades but did not match the success

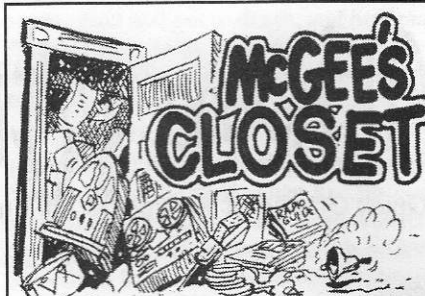
of Denning. He won the role of the governor in *Hawaii Five-O* which aired in prime-time for 12 years, making it one of most durable police dramas on television.

Although there were over 600 *Mr. & Mrs. North* programs aired, very few were transcribed so a comparatively few audio copies have survived. Of those approximately thirty surviving copies, most are from disks produced by the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) in the late 40s and early 50s.♣

This article was written specifically for the program guide to *Mr. & Mrs. North: Bet on Death*, a boxed set of 12 digitally remastered episodes on 4 compact discs by Radio Spirits. It is reprinted here with the permission of Mark Tepper of Radio Spirits and the author. © 2008 Jack French.



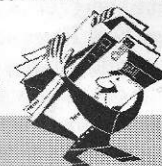
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