Volunteers
needed to assist
with our
convention.
Call Larry
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Vol. 23, No. 8

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

August 1997

Five re-creations set for SPERDVAC Convention

Five radio show re-creations and a workshop focusing on science fiction radio broadcasts are planned for SPERDVAC's old-time radio convention in November.

The convention site is the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Re-creations of **Dimension X**, **The Green Hornet** and **X Minus One** are being prepared. We are also planning to present a comedy program at our Saturday evening banquet.

Actresses Janet Waldo (Meet Corliss Archer) and Louise Erickson (Alan Young Show, Meet Corliss Archer, Second Mrs. Burton, Great Gildersleeve) will participate in our program. Writer George Lefferts and announcers Fred Collins and Bob Warren, all associated with the classic NBC Sci Fi radio shows, will also be SPERDVAC's guests.

The convention opens Friday, Nov. 7 with registration at 4 p.m. and a 4:30 radio program re-creation presented by "Thirty Minutes to Curtain." We will conclude by 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 9 with a brunch and X Minus One recreation.

Pianist Ed Klute will provide much of the music during SPERDVAC's convention.

Aiding in the production of our recreations will be Ray Erlenborn and Bob Mott, two of the sound effects artists who have been popular with the SPERDVAC convention crowd.

There is no lunch planned as part of the convention package. However, we have allotted the 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. slot for lunch on Saturday. SPERDVAC's Saturday evening banquet and show begin at 7 p.m. We plan to conclude our Friday

See convention form on back page.

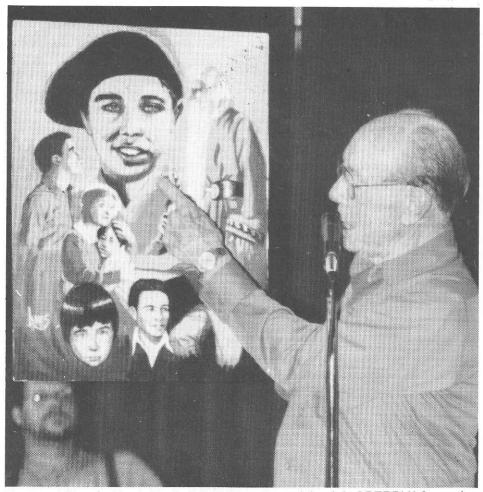
and Saturday night presentations by 10:30 p.m.

During meals and presentations, SPERDVAC will observe the "First Nighter policy" — *smoking in the outer lobby only, please!*

Admission to the complete convention is \$110 for those who preregister. The price increases to \$120 at the door. Because of the popularity of our guests and re-creations, we highly recommend advance reservations.

We cannot guarantee seating availability for those who do not purchase tickets prior to the convention. For the benefit of those unable to attend the entire convention, we are offering rates for specific events, which are indicated on the registration form. Please note the at-the-door fees are higher.

Registration packets will be distributed at the convention. The packets include tickets, which *must* be presented *Concluded on page 7*



Former child actor Frank "Junior" Coughlan showed the July SPERDVAC meeting audience a collage of scenes from his show business career prepared for him by our own resident artist, Bobb Lynes.

SPERDVAC FRIENDS

June Foray (In memory of Hobart Donavan) Millie Morse

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(In memory of Garry Moore & Jimmy Durante)

Norma Ransom Peterson

(In memory of Arthur Peterson)

Kay Amsterdam

(In memory of Morey Amsterdam)

Bob & Virginia Newhart

(In memory of Bill Quinn)

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Joan Tompkins Swenson Stephan Shuttleworth

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

Roosevelt influenced move to pool coverage of speeches

by William J. Ryan

We've all seen pictures of President Franklin Roosevelt preparing to deliver one of his famous Fireside Chats with a cluster of microphones covering his desk. These pictures can be dated as from the early days of his administration. Later pictures show him speaking into only one microphone while his address was carried by several radio networks, plus newsreels. What happened?

The answer was given a few years ago by Bill Smay, a now-deceased audio engineer at ABC-TV in Hollywood.

"In those days, everything was heavy equipment," Smay said. "We carried our own power supplies . . . ND10's, which were monsters powered by a power pack that was as big and heavy as two automobile batteries and always contained in a big oak box, making that power pack weigh about 200 pounds.

"Each network and each station and each newsreel company would go to the Oval Office or wherever they were going to do a Roosevelt Fireside (Chat) and set up our equipment."

Smay said the equipment would be readied in the afternoon.

"Everything had to be completely set up by the time they were going to bring in the president to give us a (volume)level and make sure everything was OK.

"In those days he was very shy about people seeing him in a wheelchair or on crutches, and he needed both," the engineer explained. "They would wheel him in and he would say, 'Are you ready, gentlemen?' and we would say, 'Yes' and he would give us a speech for a level. They would wheel him back and we were all set then for the broadcast at 6 or 7 o'clock."

Smay said NBC, CBS and Mutual would be there, along with several newsreelservices and many independent stations.

"It was amazing that Roosevelt would know who everybody was, and he made it a point if there was a new person who came in, he would have (Postmaster General) Jim Farley find out if there were any new people so the president would know their name.

Asked if the president remembered his name, Smay said, "He called me by name once when we were covering (an inaugural) parade. It was raining and I took off my hat because I liked the old gentleman. I was standing with NBC reporter Morgan Beatty, and Roosevelt saw me as he was waving to the crowd and said, 'Put on your hat, Bill' real loud. I could have melted."

Smay went to work for NBC in 1943 and the following year joined NBC's Blue Network, which became ABC Radio. He moved to Hollywood about 1950 and got in on the grass roots of ABC west coast television, eventually working audio for "The Lawrence Welk Show," "General Hospital," the Academy Awards broadcasts, Olympic Games telecasts, and other programs.

The idea of a pool broadcast of FDR's speeches came almost by accident, Smay said.

"He had been out on the Potomac and an emergency arose. They called the yacht back to the Navy Yard in southeast Washington. We wanted to do this thing as quickly as possible, so somebody devised a way of rigging up a great big plank with everybody's microphones and all the cables attached that could be lifted and put across the back (doors) of his (open) limousine.

"This great big plank had all the

mike stands and microphones on it, and one person on each end of the plank would lift it up and put it across in front of him (FDR) on the back seat of the limo. It was a forest of microphones you couldn't believe.

"But the president noticed all of the struggle getting this big plank up on the car and the cables. He said, 'Surely with all of our know-how we could do something about this. This is ridiculous.' As a result, the networks started the pool system, with one person doing the feed." Smay said the networks, the newsreels and the independent stations all cooperated, with the networks working on a rotating basis. The White House later installed and supplied equipment for the pool broadcasts.

In describing the equipment used in the 1930s and 1940s, Smay said the pool engineer, when traveling on assignments by plane or train, always kept the mikes and mixers and cords and power supplies at his side. "We would never trust it to a baggage compartment," and would buy an extra seat if necessary.

"When we carried all this equipment we would go into a station like Union Station in Washington and the porters got to know us. They would see all the equipment that had NBC on it in big letters and the porters . . . would run—they wouldn't walk . . . away from us. We were handling all this baggage and it weighed half a ton when you got it together. The Red Caps wouldn't touch it."

Bill Smay retired after a long with ABC and died in 1994 at the age of 74.

SPERDVAC Printed Materials Library Re-opening soon. Watch the *Radiogram* for details!



East and west coasts offer conventions; differences in tape libraries explained in the General Library as compared to the Archives and Hollywood Museum libraries, this is because of the greater costs in producing the latter. A higher quality of mastering topo is used for the direct dataset of the second control of the second con

by Barbara J. Watkins

My goodness! It seems like summer just got started and here we are in August already! There is beginning to be an anticipation of conventions in the air — radio conventions, that is. October is the month for the larges and oldest of the annual get-togethers for fans and radio stars alike. Be sure to mark October 23 through 25 on your calendars for the 23rd Annual Friends of Old-Time Radio convention at the Holiday Inn North at the Newark International Airport. Next month we'll tell you some of the highlights to expect.

SPERDVAC'S 14th annual convention follows two weeks later, Nov. 7 through 9 in Los Angeles. Details are on page one in the *Radiogram*. Make this YOUR year to attend at least one of these weekends. You won't

be sorry!

Member Walt Hart suggests that I explain why SPERDVAC has three different tape libraries: General, Archives and Hollywood Museum. SPERDVAC began with the General Library, which consists of shows from various sources, many donated by members. Most are of unknown generation — that is, they could be a dub from a transcription disc, of a dub of a dub, etc.

The Archives Library was established to provide the finest sound quality possible to members, dubs directly from discs, which the average collector normally doesn't have access to. These transcription discs are usually donated by the actors, directors, engineers and others originally involved in the shows or by members who have acquired them in some manner. Sometimes SPERDVAC must purchase the discs, from a special disc fund set up from library fees.

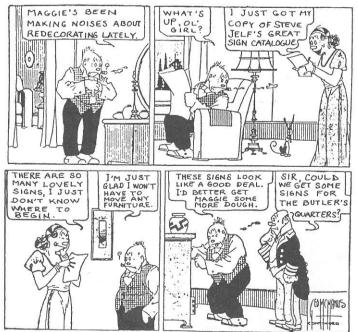
The Hollywood Museum was named for the source of the discs loaned to SPERDVAC from a collection of transcription discs originally intended to be part of an actual Hollywood Museum. The plans for the museum somehow never saw fruition and many of the discs had to be returned before we had an opportunity to dub them. That is why there have been no more tapes added to this library.

As for the difference in the fees for borrowing tapes

in the General Library as compared to the Archives and Hollywood Museum libraries, this is because of the greater costs in producing the latter. A higher quality of mastering tape is used for the direct dubs of the transcriptions, and more tape is required because of the difference in recording speeds, 3-3/4 inches per second for the General and 7-1/2 ips for the Archives and Hollywood Museum tapes. This, in a nutshell, is the explanation.

We are grateful to honorary member Van Alexander for bringing us up to date on some of his activities. All in one year Van Alexander was the recipient of the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters Diamond Circle Award for many distinguished years in radio and TV, then last March was inducted into the Golden Bandstand by the Big Band Academy of America, and on Sept. 14 he will receive the arranger/composer award from the L. A. Jazz Society. Well done!

Send your news, questions and comments for this column to Information Pleazse, Barbara J. Watkins, P. O. Box 628, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Til next time, spaceman's luck! (And boy, they need it on Mir!)



IN ADDITION TO DOZENS OF AUTOMOTIVE AND GAS & OIL SIGNS, WE ALSO OFFER COLORFUL REMINDERS OF RADIO'S GOLDEN AGE. OUR SIGNS ARE OVER TWO FEET WIDE, MADE OF BAKED ENAMEL ON 18-GAUGE STEEL.

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SPERDVAC INFORMATION AND OFFICIAL BUSI-NESS: P. O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7177. (562) 947-9800 and (310) 219-0053. SPERDVAC WEB SITE:

http://www.pe.net/~rnovak/sperdvac.htm MEMBERSHIP, ADDRESS CHANGES AND RA-DIOGRAM SUBSCRIPTIONS: Carrolyn Rawski, P. O. Box 2236, Chino Valley, AZ 86323-2236. (520) 636-2997 RADIOGRAM EDITOR: Dan Haefele, 13720 Jefferson Ave., Hawthome, CA 90250-7210 (310) 973-5060 LIBRARIES:

GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1-500: Bob Steinmetz, P. O. Box 669, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-0669 GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 501-1000: Peggy DeShazo, 967 Baird Ave., Santa Clara, CA 95054 GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1001-1500: Bob Steinmetz. P. O. Box 669, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-0669 GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1501+: George Lovas, P. O. Box 3757, Crestline, CA 92325-3757 GENERAL LIBRARY - Open reels 1-500: CLOSED GENERAL LIBRARY - Open reels 501 - 1500: Robert Meeker, 2861 Main Way Dr., Rossmoor, CA 90720

GENERAL LIBRARY - Open reels 1501+: Richard Novak, P.O. Box 33048, Riverside, CA 92519-0048 E-Mail address: rnovak@pe.net

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 1-500: Vahan Ouzoonian, 1565 E. Highland Ave., Redlands, CA 92374
ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Cassettes 501-1000: Barbara

Watkins, Box 628, S. Pasadena, CA 91031-0628.

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

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

ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Open reels 1-1200: CLOSED ARCHIVES LIBRARY - Open reels 1201 & up: Barbara

Watkins, Box 628, S. Pasadena, CA 91031-0628. HOLLYWOOD MUSEUM LIBRARY - Cassettes only: Glenda Kelly, 2323 Ralston Ln., Redondo Beach, CA 90278-5219. PRINTED MATERIALS LIBRARY: CLOSED

VIDEO LIBRARY- Jerry Williams, 381 Table Mountain, Oroville, CA 95965.

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

AUDIO SPÉRDVAC CATALOGS: Bob Herman, 1329 Garrison Ave., Port Orchard, WA 98366-3321 (Blind only) ACQUISITIONS: (Discs, tapes & printed materials): John Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603. (562) 947-9800 for both General and Archives Libraries.

CATALOGS: Ted Theodore, 1175 Brockton St., El Cajon, CA 92020-1706.

These programs have been added to the General Library

Tape 2049 LET GEORGE DO IT (Mutual-Don Lee)

- a. "Come and Get Me" 5-16-1949.
- b. "Stranger Than Fiction" 5-23-1949.
- c. "Death in Blue Jeans" 5-30-1949.
- d. "A Matter of Doubt" 6-6-1949.
- e. "Serenade to a Southern Star" 6-13-1949.
- f. "Next to Last Guest" 6-20-1949.

Tape 2050 LET GEORGE DO IT (Mutual-Don Lee)

- a. "Laura's House" 7-25-1949
- b. "Perfect Alibi" 8-2-1949
- c. "One Chance at the World" 8-8-1949
- d. "The Problem with Joe Martin" 8-15-1949
- e. "Empress of Fishfalls" 8-22-1949
- f. "End of Summer" 8-29-1949

Tape 2051 LET GEORGE DO IT (Mutual-Don Lee)

- a. "Everything is Nice" 9-5-1949
- b. "Valley Sunset" 9-12-1949
- c. "The Coward" 9-19-1949
- d. "The Man Under the Elm Trees" 9-26-1949
- "Double Death" 10-17-1949
- "The Rose Petal Staircase" 10-24-1949

Tape 2052 LET GEORGE DO IT (Mutual-Don Lee)

- a. "Every Shot Counts" 10-31-1949
- "The Dark Chain" 11-7-1949
 "Run Until Dead" 11-14-1949
- d. "Sweet Poison" 11-21-1949
- "No Riders" 11-28-1949
- "Too Near the Sky" 12-5-1949

Tape 2053 LET GEORGE DO IT (Mutual-Don Lee)

- a. "Partner in Panama" 12-12-1949. Virginia Gregg now appears as Brooksie.
- b. "Follow That Train" 12-19-1949. Scratchy in portion of
- c. "Snowblind" 12-26-1949. Scratchy in portion of show.
- "Needle in the Haystack" 1-2-1950
- "The Silent Waterfall" 1-9-1950
- "Juniper Lane" 1-16-1950

Tape 2054 LET GEORGE DO IT (Mutual-Don Lee)

- a. "The Floaters" 1-23-1950. End clipped.
- b. "The Ugly Duckling" 1-30-1950
- "The Old Style" 2-6-1950
- d. "Jump in the Lake" 2-13-1950
- e. "The Years of Sorrow" 3-27-1950
- "The Brothers MacIntosh" 4-3-1950

Tape 2055 LET GEORGE DO IT (Mutual-Don Lee)

- a. "Portrait by Pricilla" 4-10-1950
- b. "Mix-up in La Cruza" 4-17-1950
- c. "Death Begins at Forty-Five" 4-24-1950
- d. "The Chair of Humanities" 5-1-1950
- e. "Picture with a Black Frame" 5-8-1950
- "The Ant Hill" 5-15-1950

Pinkie: I frow mud!"

by Chester Matthews

Obviously there is no relation between the onus of responsibility and the weight of years. At the age of four, Richard Harold Svihus, radio's latest juvenile discovery, finds the cares of his dramatic tasks unfitting him for the boring routine of interviews and these devastating guest appearances which are imposed upon an artist and simply cannot be ignored if one is to appear interested in his public.

Richard already has developed a defense mechanism against these intrusions on his private life. It is a Garbolike silence. But the San Francisco star differs from his contemporary further down the California coast in that home is the last place he wants to go.

Richard's is quite a technique in spite of his immaturity. He baffles all interviewers with a stock answer to any and all questions, a line cribbed from a radio script. He sagely smiles and replies, "I frow mud."

"I frow mud" is the very first line Richard ever uttered into a microphone, and the portrayer of Pinkie in One Man's Family knows a gag when he has one handed to him. He believes in getting the last full measure of enjoyment out of it, and for weeks his family, fellow actors and friends have heard it. It never fails to bring a laugh from Richard himself, even if his mother is getting a bit jaded. However, it still goes over big with his brother Ronald, aged thirteen months.

To give the Svihus fireside a rest, playwright Morse has promised to write another line which Richard will like as well just as soon as he can think one up. Meantime he believes the young man's obsession is just one of those idiosyncrasies which mark the artist. As long as Richard continues to read the right lines on the air at the right moment, he's welcome to all the eccentricities he desires away from the microphone.

For Richard, in Morse's estimation, meets a long-felt want in radio. The writer of One Man's Family wished to introduce one or both of Henry Barbour's twin grandsons in the serial before now.

Condensed from Radio Guide, August 24, 1935.



Richard Svihus (pronounced Swiss) was, at age 4, radio's youngest actor on a sponsored program. He portrayed Pinkie on One Man's Family beginning in 1935.

But the twins are just a shade over three years old, and it was impossible to find a child anywhere close to that age who could read lines.

From the very inception of his serial of American family life Morse had insisted that every player have some kinship with the role he or she plays, and he refused to consider using a child impersonator.

Mrs. Morse, who looks like a child herself beside her big husband, Carleton, recently began studying the psychology of children to aid her in the social service work she has been doing in San Francisco. From one of her instructors she learned that in Little Oxford, one of the private schools near that city, was a four-year-old youngster who was showing such an

PHOTO COURTESY JERRY WILLIAMS interest in books and letters that his teachers were wondering if reading lessons could not be substituted for some of his kindergarten work.

"Tell her to teach him to read," she exclaimed. "My husband needs him!"

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Svihus, Richard's parents, were reached. To them, as to so many other young couples, One Man's Family is more than just a radio program. It is a family friend. When it was suggested that Richard might actually participate in the program they gladly gave their consent. Richard's teacher set to work, and in less that two months after his first lesson, he was reading at sight

Continued on next page

Convention conclusion

in order to receive meals. Your canceled check will serve as your receipt.

The Crowne Plaza Hotel (formerly the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel) has accommodations available for those who wish to stay overnight. The special SPERDVAC convention rate is \$75 per room per night, plus 14% bed tax for one or two persons. To take advantage of these rates contact the hotel directly and specify you are attending the SPERDVAC convention.

Shuttle service from Los Angeles International Airport is available free by phoning the Crowne Plaza Hotel from the airport. Their number is (310) 642-7500. The hotel has a gift shop and Budget Renta-Car counter in the lobby.

Next month SPERDVAC plans to announce additional guests and presentations. Because some of our planned guests are attempting to work around prior commitments, we are not announcing planned activities until guests' schedules are confirmed.

Radio's youngest actor conclusion bigger and harder words than many primer before seven. Toys of a med

class children can.

Exactly two months after Mrs. Morse first heard of him, Morse arranged an audition for the youngster. He wrote an entire scene in which Pinkie talked to Hazel, his mother, and Paul Barbour, his uncle. The lad read it at sight without an error, and with such comprehension of the lines that he was signed on the spot.

He made his debut on July 20 on the Sunday night presentation of One Man's **Family**, which is heard in the West only. When the episode was repeated the Wednesday following for transcontinental audience, Richard was the subject of scores of queries by mail, telephone and telegraph. A new radio star had risen on the Western horizon.

Some of the poise he evidences before the microphone is explained by the fact that before he was two years old I. C. Beringer, a San Francisco photographer, had discovered him and was using him occasionally for advertising work.

On days he does not work at the studio he gets up at six, eats breakfast at seven, takes a napevery afternoon and has finished his dinner and is sound asleep before seven. Toys of a mechanical nature, particularly trains, are his delight at present. He has several trains with tracks, engines, switches and other fascinating details, and he spends hours dispatching them from one point of the living room to another. Grown-ups may have decided that he is to be a radio star but Richard knows better. He's going to be a "great big electric train." engineer."

Before the microphone Richard shows an amazing perception of what Morse wants him to do. He realized from the beginning that he was to read only those lines indicated by his own name, and that he must wait until the intervening lines had been read by the other actors. Morse showed him the script and explained what he wanted, and Richard seldom makes a mistake, even at rehearsals. He has just enough difficulty saying "th" to make his accent enchantingly babyish without any consciousness that it is so.

The only effect that becoming a radio actor has had upon him so far is to turn him into an irrepressible wit — witness the "I frow mud." There's a sinister touch of Fred Allen in him which the microphone is bringing to the surface.



McGee's Closet is a free service to our members and honorary members. Send your wants in OTR-related material to McGee's Closet, c/o Barbara J. Watkins, P. O. Box 628, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Please specify desired taping format (cassette, open reel or DAT).

WANTED: I pretty desperately need two rubber spool holders (used to hold 7 inch open reel tapes on upright reel to reel players). Does anyone have any for sale? Contact: Guy MacMillin, 305 Stage Raod, Chesterfield, NH 03443-4202, (grm@sover.net).

FOR SALE: CD and booklet — Lt. Jim Europe's

369th "Hell Fighters" band — 1919 Pathe discs played once, \$16 includes mailing. Contact: Dennis Kray, Box 16545, San Francisco, CA 94116.

WANTED: I need to find several sources of big band remotes from the 30s-50s. Contact: Dennis Kray, Box 16545, San Francisco, CA 94116.

WANTED: Generation X (20's-30's) OTR collectors and related. I'm looking for others who appreciate the medium, but don't remember when Kennedy was shot. Hoping you're in SoCal, so we can get together and talk, but interested in hearing from anyone. Contact: Roland Thompson, 2420 Riverside Place, Los Angeles, CA 90039.

FOR SALE: 16 inch transcription discs, little or no OTR value, suitable for display. Two for \$4 postpaid. Contact: Al Lingly, 90 Hopkins Ave., E. Greenwich, RI 02818, e-mail af417@osfn.org or phone (401) 886-7219. **WANTED:** Any information or tapes of a radio series on Mutual called The Adventures of Jerry Steele. It is supposed to have been sponsored for part of its run by Wonder Bread and part by Roller Derby. Contact: Michael Giorgio, 2933 S. 134th Ave., #3, Omaha, NE 68144.

SPERDVAC

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DEADLINE September 1997 issue August 23, 1997

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1997 SPERDVAC Old-Time Radio Convention

Name			[] Non-member [] Member #	
Address				
		Day phone		
0-1	1	ents:		
			lease send all reservations in together.	
		Prices are for members, spouses		
1. Comple	ete convention	package (Friday-Sunday) \$110/\$125 p	reregistered non-members	
2. Friday	dinner & prog	gram \$35/\$40 preregistered non-meml	bers	
3. Saturda	ay daytime act	ivities (9 a.m5:30 p.m.) \$15/ \$20 pre-	registered non-members	
4. Saturda	ay evening bar	nquet & program \$50/ \$55 preregistere	d non-members	
5. Sunday	brunch & pr	ogram (9 to 11:30 a.m.) \$15/ \$20 prere	egistered non-members	
(There is	no charge for	the Friday afternoon activities.)	TOTAL:	
[] Chack	here if you we	are a professional in early radio		

Cancellation deadline is November 4, 1997

Send checks or money orders, made payable to SPERDVAC, to: SPERDVAC Convention, c/o Chester Allen, 13415 Egbert St., Sylmar, CA 91342. For additional details or to volunteer convention assistance, call Larry Gassman at (562) 947-9800. Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt. Requests for refunds will be honored until Nov. 4, 1997. Convention rates will increase to \$145 for the entire convention package for members and non-members who arrive without prior registration. Walk-uprates for individual convention events will be \$5 above the non-member rates indicated above. Walk-up rates apply to members and non-members.