Lever Bath Soap Makes Radio Debut In 5 Minute Ads

Lincoln, Me. (DG)—

During the 1992 Friends Of Old Time Radio

Convention, I had an interesting chat with Irving Krantz of Elmwood Park, New Jersey. He said that he had the recordings of 5 *Lifebuoy Health Soap* commercials that were about 5 minutes in length for each commercial. What was interesting about these commercials Mr. Krantz described was they were originally presented on the air in 1935. Mr. Krantz wondered if I was interested in a cassette tape with the 5 commercials. Since *Lifebuoy Health Soap* is my favorite radio sponsor, I gave an excited "**yes.**" In a short time after the convention, Mr. Krantz sent me the cassette tape as he said he would do. With his gracious gesture of that time, I dedicate this article to Mr. Krantz.



When I heard the 5 *Lifebuoy* commercials for the first time, I was amazed how different they were from the foghorn and "**B.O.**" sound effects from the 1940's commercials I was more accustomed to. Instead of the sinister sound effects, the commercials were dramatizations of men, women, and children who weren't aware they had "**B.O.**"

The commercials were similar in format to the *Lifebuoy* print ads in magazines and newspapers during the mid 1930's. The print ads featured men and women who were wondering why their popularity with other people was hitting rock bottom. Luckily, a friend or relative informed that person that he/she had "B.O." Since "B.O." was mentioned, the "B.O." sufferer immediately bought *Lifebuoy Health Soap*. After the next morning's bath or shower, he/she no longer had that annoying "B.O." problem. In no time at all, the former "B.O." victim was becoming popular once again.

Now you know how the *Lifebuoy* "Mini Stories" in print were presented. Radio announcer Fred Uttal was the narrator in the enclosed commercial and the other *Lifebuoy* Mini Stories mentioned in this article.

The first *Lifebuoy* Mini Story took place in Downeast Maine. It opened with Ethan Whittier* having a spirited conversation with his wife Martha. The difference of opinion between the spouses concerned Ethan's upcoming trip to New York City to see their daughter Louise and her husband Henry. Apparently, there was a problem in the young couple's marriage. Martha thought Ethan was "just plain dumb" to get involved, and she was afraid he would make things worse. Regardless to what Martha thought, Ethan was going to get to the bottom of things.

The scene changes to Henry and Louise's apartment in New York City. It opens with Ethan talking with Henry. Ethan got to the point and asked Henry if he was seeing another woman, to which Henry firmly denied. The conversation abruptly stopped when Louise stepped into the room to inform the 2

men that dinner was ready. Henry quickly excused himself to get ready for dinner. The moment her husband left, Louise broke down crying. Ethan told his daughter to sit on his lap and lay her head on his shoulder. The moment Louise sat on her father's lap, Ethan immediately knew the problem that was ruining the young couple's marriage. Poor Louise had a bad case of "**B.O.**" Ethan gave Louise some sound advice--- to buy plenty of *Lifebuoy Health Soap* and use it for her daily bath. Louise followed her father's advice to the letter. With "**B.O.**" an unpleasant memory, Henry and Louise were very close once again.

Ethan and *Lifebuoy* saved the day with Louise and Henry, but he didn't get very far with Martha. She still thinks her husband is "**just plain dumb.**" With Ethan's sound advice, maybe we should all be that stupid!

The second *Lifebuoy* Mini Story required the services of a detective. The stars in this commercial were Judy Cushing; her younger brother Sammy; and her boyfriend Hugh.

The commercial opened with a conversation between Hugh and Sammy, who was a pint size Sam Spade. Since Sammy thought of himself as a great detective, Hugh hired "**Gumshoe Pete**" (Sammy's detective alias) to do some detective work. The boyfriend was wondering why Judy was giving him the cold shoulder. Figuring it might take time, Hugh was shocked that Sammy immediately knew why Judy acted the way she did. The answer consisted of only 2 letters--- "**B.O.**"

When Judy entered the room, Hugh asked her out to go dancing with him. Judy pretended she didn't feel very well. To her chagrin, Sammy said she was lying through her teeth. With Hugh's "**B.O.**" overwhelming her, Judy ushered him outside in the fresh air to finish their conversation--- now that's big time stink!

Although things looked very bleak, this love story does have a happy ending. With "**B.O.**" in his thoughts, Hugh made sure there was plenty of *Lifebuoy* on hand for his daily bath.

The next scene featured a stink free Hugh asking Judy out on a date. Instead of giving excuses, Judy was happy to go out with him. The conversation Hugh and Judy had with each other centered on *Lifebuoy---* real romantic stuff! When Judy asked what was in the small box, Hugh replied it was for Sammy. At that moment, the great detective showed up to receive his reward, a big league baseball. To Judy's chagrin, her brother was in the room once again. It wasn't exactly a romantic moment for Judy and Hugh, but there would be plenty of time for that kissy stuff later on in the evening.



The third *Lifebuoy* Mini Story concerned a young couple; the art of going home to mother; and a dog that found the answer by chewing up a newspaper.

The scene opened with Bob Brewster in a very good mood as he came home from work. Armed with a bouquet of flowers, he wanted to celebrate the 3-month anniversary with his wife Jean. While Bob was in a good mood, Jean was in no mood to celebrate. She was preparing to go home to mother. Puzzled as to why Jean was leaving him, a stunned Bob let her go.

The following morning, Bob was eating breakfast.

While he was trying to figure out why Jean left him, Major Duff, the young couple's dog, was having fun chewing on the morning's newspaper. With Major Duff barking excitedly, Bob saw what the dog was doing and rescued the newspaper from Major Duff's teeth. He read an ad the dog partially tore up. When he put the ad together, Bob saw it was a print ad for *Lifebuoy Health Soap*. The subject of the ad concerned a wife who went home to mother for no apparent reason, and how "**B.O.**" was ruining

the couple's marriage. Like a bolt of lightning, Bob quickly figured out "**B.O.**" was doing some serious home wrecking in his marriage with Jean. He made sure there was some *Lifebuoy Health Soap* for the next day's shower.

The next morning, Bob was making a musical racket in the shower while eliminating every trace of "**B.O.**" with *Lifebuoy.* Out of the blue, there was a familiar voice yelling for him from outside the bathroom door. Since dogs don't talk English, Bob knew it wasn't Major Duff. That familiar voice belonged to Jean who returned home. In an excited manner, Bob got into his bathrobe, opened the bathroom door, and hugged his wife.

At first, Jean was tense. She was determined to tell her husband point blank that he had "**B.O.**" She immediately lightened up when Bob already knew of the problem and corrected it. Thanks to Major Duff, a ripped up ad, and of course, *Lifebuoy*, the happy couple was happy once again.

The next *Lifebuoy* Mini Story is something else--- and possibly one that may be a little hard to believe from a radio listener viewpoint.

Fred Uttal opened the commercial in the middle of a live show at a theater. With the jokes from the performers flying all over the place, Uttal pointed out there was a small disturbance in the audience. When he approached the disturbance, Uttal informed the listeners that a woman fainted. With the ushers coming to her assistance, the woman quickly regained consciousness. She was OK, but the woman had to leave the theater.



The scene changed to outside the theater where the woman who fainted and her friend were talking. The listeners found out about "**B.O.**" in a completely new dimension. Instead of an annoying odor---"**B.O.**" had real knock out power! The woman said the reason why she fainted was the man seated next to her had an exceptionally bad case of "**B.O.**" Luckily, *Lifebuoy* was powerful enough to take on the most powerful "**B.O.**" any regulation human could encounter--- even the kind that can make people faint.

If you think "**B.O.**" won't affect children, the final *Lifebuoy* Mini Story may surprise you. The subject of this commercial concerned a ceremony to initiate a new member into a secret boy's club.

The scene opens with a sobering ceremony taking place at (supposedly) a campground. Chester Arthur Harrison, the new member that was initiated, was blindfolded and had his legs tied together. When the somber ceremony was complete, the other members left. While removing the blindfold, the head of the club informed Chester that he had to stay by himself in the campground for an hour. When he left, Chester noticed something wasn't what it was supposed to be. Terrified, Chester quickly noticed that he wasn't in a campground, but in the middle of a cemetery. Since it was dark, this was a scary experience for the boy. What made matters worse, there were ghostly sounds made by the other club members who didn't leave after all. They were all dressed in white sheets as ghosts. Unable to move, Chester was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. When he smelled something unpleasant in the air, Chester's fear turned to laughter. Unfortunately, one of the club members had a problem with "**B.O.**" To make matters worse, Chester knew who it was and said so.

There is a moral to this story--- when a new club member had to go through an initiation, make sure every member of the club took a bath or shower with *Lifebuoy Health Soap* before the initiation ceremony was to take place.

Although the stories in the 5 commercials were different, there was a common ground they all had.

With hot weather and the stress of everyday life, Uttal made it clear that it was imperative for every man, woman, and child to bathe daily with *Lifebuoy*.

Of course, the sinister sound effects were in the future, but the *Lifebuoy* Mini Story commercials definitely got its message across to the radio listeners. Like the printed ads, "B.O." was something for the radio listeners to take seriously. More importantly, anyone who was considered a human being wasn't immune to it--- unless *Lifebuoy* was used!

*- Editor's Note: It's inconclusive, but it sounds like the role of Ethan Whittier was played by Parker Fennelly, who was a Maine native.