

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

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.**