

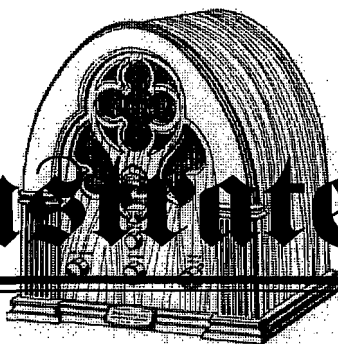
The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

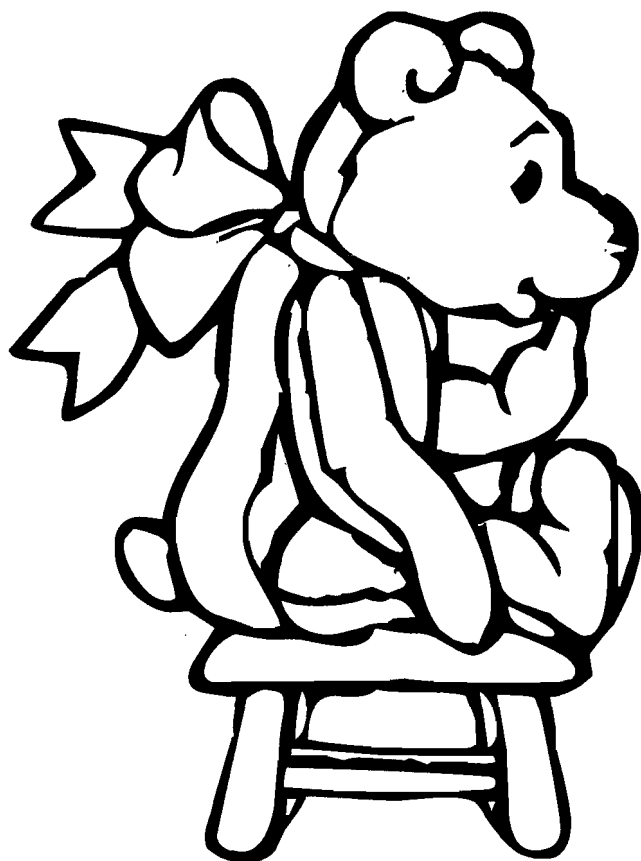
The Illustrated Press

Number 335

December 2005



... Happy Holidays ...



PADDY O'CINNAMON

"The Cinnamon Bear"

The Illustrated Press

Membership Information

Club Membership: \$18.00 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and the monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$18.00; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing newsletter issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 PM during the months of September through June at St. Aloysius School Hall, Cleveland Drive and Century Road, Cheektowaga, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July, and an informal meeting is held in August at the same address.

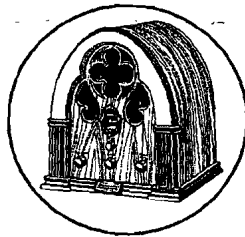
Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with the Old Time Radio Network.

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All Submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

Deadline for *The Illustrated Press* is the 1st of each month prior to publication.

The Illustrated Press is the newsletter of the **Old Time Radio Club**, headquartered in Western New York State. It is published monthly except for the months of July and August. Contents except where noted are copyright © 2005 by the OTRC.

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Library Rates: Audio cassettes are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a **club supplied cassette** which is **retained** by the member; video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; records are \$.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.

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'Cinnamon Bear' of radio is back in all its magic on tape

by TOM SHALES

WASHINGTON—It's the old story: Boy meets bear, boy loses bear, boy finds bear. Or maybe, bear finds boy.

The bear in question is Paddy O'Cinnamon, a mythical teddy with a green ribbon around his neck and a light Irish brogue, eponymous hero of "The Cinnamon Bear," a radio serial that played on local stations throughout the United States in the '40s and '50s.

My sister and I listened every year—starting on or about Thanksgiving and ending on Christmas Eve—to the bear's adventures with Judy and Jimmy Barton, twins who go looking for the silver star that belongs on their Christmas tree. Searching the attic, they follow the bear through a hole in the wall to Maybe Land, where they meet King Blotto, the Wintergreen Witch and the Crazy Quilt Dragon, the loquacious patchwork creature who stole the star.

Perhaps it sounds like just any goofy children's story, but it was more than that to us. It was an odyssey to be made each year with Christmas at the end of the rainbow.

Times change, kids grow up, and I lost track of the Cinnamon Bear for years until, for some reason, he popped into my head back in the late '80s. I mentioned him in a column, thinking "Cinnamon Bear" had been a TV show I watched as a child. Yet I couldn't really picture the characters.

Readers wrote to say the reason was that I had only heard the show on radio and was completely mistaken about having seen it on TV.

Now, it turns out, I may have been only partly mistaken. Chuck Schaden, an expert on "old-time radio" in the Chicago area, where I grew up, says "Cinnamon Bear" was so popular on radio that a TV version was made with puppets acting out the soundtrack.

Schaden, who operates a nostalgia store called Metro Golden Memories in Chicago, says "Cinnamon Bear" was first produced in Hollywood in 1937, and was distributed to radio stations on huge 16-inch acetate discs, since this was before audio tape.

The TV version is apparently lost forever, but all twenty-six 12-minute chapters of the radio show have been preserved and are available on cassettes or Audio CDs

from various dealers and OTR clubs around the country. Naturally I sent away for the tapes. And on a recent night, I sat down to listen to a story I hadn't heard in more than 30 years.



"Bear" turns out to be the gentlest of yarns, with only a few villainous characters, most of them repentant when given half a chance. The dragon does steal the star but apologizes profusely when caught. "Oh, the shame of it all!" he exclaims. "Oh, the agony!"

He also sings: "Never Say 'Boo' to a Crazy Quilt Dragon." And the title character has his own little tune which begins, "I'm the Cinnamon Bear with the shoe-button eyes, and I'm looking for someone to take by surprise . . ."

Sometimes the most rewarding journeys are those that go full circle. When I played the tapes, I found I wasn't just listening to "The Cinnamon Bear" again. I was back in the living room where I grew up, sitting in front of the old Farnsworth console radio, my sister in her pajamas, my mom baking cookies, my brother making model airplanes in the basement, my dad washing up after a hard day's work. The world seemed peaceful, safe and boundless. Funny where an old bear can take you.

"We hope you'll always remember little Paddy O'Cinnamon," says an announcer at the end of the last chapter. "I can tell you on his behalf, he'll be much obliged to you." After all these years, I do remember, and I'm the one who is much obliged. Every boy, and every girl, should have a bear to call their own.

Schaden, says many of those who first heard "The Cinnamon Bear" decades ago do more than just remember. They buy the tapes and play them for others: "It was a memorable part of their childhood, and has become part of the childhood of their children and grandchildren."

There was some talk over the years of doing a TV cartoon version using the old soundtrack, Schaden says. "But it wouldn't be the same. The beauty of this is, you make up your own Crazy Quilt Dragon in your head. Radio is a participatory sport, and television is a spectator sport."

Among the readers who wrote was a woman in Lufkin, Texas, who shared her own memories of the bear and asked, "I wonder if there are a bunch of you guys out there." I wonder, too. Dozens of us, or hundreds, or thousands, all bound together by one common bear.

FOTR Convention

by DICK OLDAY

The 2005 "Friends of Old Time Radio Convention" was held in Newark, New Jersey from October 20th through 23rd. Jay did another great job bringing in an outstanding list of celebrities and most of all declaring that even though he is moving to Florida, THIS WILL NOT BE HIS LAST CONVENTION!

I would like to thank the following for their generous donations to our OTR library: 1. **Great American Radio** (OTR in MP3) 1010 South St., Mt. Morris, MI 48458, phone/fax: 810-686-5973, e-mail: ga@radio.fm

2. **Leo Gawroniak** (OTR on cassettes) 852 Lakemont Dr., Apt. H, Louisville, TN 37777

3. **Olden Radio (Jerry Randolph)** (OTR & movie serials) PO Box 8, Beach Grove, IN 46107, 317-787-3937 e-mail: jbrandolph@comcast.net

The above dealers have shows in quality sound, so when you order from them, please let them know where you heard about them.

Some of the new guests I had the good fortune to meet and talk with were Ann Meara and Jerry Stiller, Sonny Curtis (one of the Crickets) who also wrote the theme song to the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and Noel Neill (TV's Lois Lane from the 50s) who was on radio way back in 1928 as a child performer.

On Thursday morning, I attended a presentation of Eddie Cantor in cartoons. In February, 1935, Eddie wrote the "Merrie Melodies" theme. Eddie never received recognition for this very recognizable tune. But he did and his family still receives residuals for this. It is the only work he did for which he ever received any residual. Including all of his movies, radio and television shows.

Many re-creations were heard during the 3 day convention. A Lone Ranger "spoof" was heard with the original announcer Fred Foy sounding the same as he did over 50 years ago. *Light Of The World* was next followed by *Tom Corbett* (starring the original Tom, Frankie Thomas) and *Astro* (Al Markim) and also featuring Jon Provost (*Lassie*) and Beverly Washburn.

On Friday, a game show on OTR nostalgia began the day. Also presented were a tribute to Jackson Beck, Jack French on syndicated shows history and a radio comedians panel. These were followed by more re-creations:

A Date With Judy, Mr. & Mrs. North with Christinna Britton Conroy (daughter of Barbara Britton who starred in the radio and television version). *The Adventures of Superman* starring Noel Neill along with Fred Foy and James Lydon (*Henry Aldrich* in the movies) and *The Shadow* featuring Margot Stevenson (Margot Lane on the radio show) along with her daughter, Margot Avery.

Saturday morning started with a 30th Anniversary Panel followed by Jimmy Lydon's presentation on *Fox Movietone Newsreels*. At the same time, Elizabeth McLeod was giving a presentation on *Amos 'n' Andy*. I wish that these two could have been presented separately so I could have seen both.

Other presentations included *Greg Oppenheimer Remembers Lucy, The Joe Franklin Show* with Stiller & Meara and a singer's panel that included Sonny Curtis doing a medley of his hits ("Walk Right Back", "I Fought The Law", *The Mary Tyler Moore Show's* theme song etc.). Re-creations on Saturday included *Frontier Gentleman, Dr. Christian, The Halls of Ivy*, another *Superman* and *The Plot to Overthrow Christmas*.

Sunday morning began with breakfast (buffet) followed by an informal panel of the stars. Soon it was time to pack up all of the "goodies" I acquired and return home to think about next year's FOTR Convention. Thanks Jay for 30 great years of FOTR.



Radio Networks and the Big Band Remotes

By Peter Bellanca

The big dance band era officially began in 1935 at the Palomar Ballroom in Hollywood, California when Benny Goodman brought the house down with his swing band and ended in 1955 when Perez Prado's "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" was the last big band record to chart number one and the rock and roll era began. In reality, the golden age of big dance band music was over in the mid-to-late 1940s. During this period the bands depended on radio remotes from hotels, nightclubs, ballrooms and service camps for exposure, and exposure meant bigger record sales and better club and theater dates.

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These radio remotes also gave the dance bands national publicity that they could never afford to purchase. Once the band was accepted nationally the money began to roll in. During the late 1930s and early 1940s Artie Shaw annually averaged fifty thousand dollars from record sales and one-hundred-fifty-thousand dollars from radio broadcasts and in 1939 made thirty-thousand dollars for one week at the Strand Theater in New York City. In 1939 Fred Waring was netting twenty-thousand dollars per week for five weekly fifteen minute radio programs. Glenn Miller grossed more than a half million dollars from radio and record sales in 1941 while earning over one-hundred-thousand dollars from the Hotel Pennsylvania and one night stands. Gene Krupa in the November 1, 1941 issue of *Down Beat* magazine stated that, "My dance band is a working unit, for sale at a price. Meet the price, and the band is yours." He was asking and getting eight thousand dollars a week with a weekly payroll of two-thousand five hundred dollars. That's a net for Krupa of five-thousand five-hundred dollars per week. Granted, he didn't work fifty-two weeks a year, but that's very good money at a time when the average working person was making less annually than Krupa was making weekly.

The band musicians also enjoyed the remotes because they were not tied to the approximately three minute limit of studio recording and they could feed off the live audience. There was considerable competition for these remotes and many bands accepted low wages or even lost money just to hopefully gain national recognition. The networks also liked the remotes because they were cheap, easy to produce and filled many hours of their broadcast schedule. The bands, hotels and ballrooms liked them for the publicity they generated.

Some of the choice remotes originated from Frank Daley's Meadowbrook on the Newark-Pompton Turnpike, the Cotton Club and the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, the Glen Island Casino in New Rochelle, the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, the Blackhawk Restaurant and Congress Hotel in Chicago, the Hollywood Palladium, the Blue Room in the Hotel Lincoln, the Cafe Rouge and Manhattan Room in the Hotel Pennsylvania and the Roseland Ballroom in New York. Most big band remotes took place on weekday nights from approximately 11 o'clock to 1 o'clock in the morning. The weekends had a hodgepodge of broadcasts throughout the forty-eight hour period and the bands could be heard morning, noon and night.

The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and National Broadcasting Company (NBC) fought over the most famous bands while the Mutual Broadcasting System, the poorest of the national networks was left for the most part with the lesser named bands. In 1939 NBC

announced that their Red and Blue Networks would carry forty-nine bands including Charlie Barnet, Count Basie, Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, Woody Herman, Gene Krupa, Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw. CBS countered with Cab Calloway, Benny Goodman, Sammy Kaye, Hal Kemp, Ozzie Nelson and Paul Whiteman.

While the networks were competing for the name bands the music publishers wanted to make sure that their songs were being played by the bands and disk jockeys. The music publishers hired song pluggers, officially known as publisher's representatives, to make sure their songs were played over the airwaves. Competition between song pluggers was intense, they had to produce or lose their jobs. Liquor, clothes, jewelry and vacations were among enticements given to disk jockeys and band leaders by the pluggers to play certain songs. This was called payola, the payment in return for the promotion of a product, in this case the playing of songs over the air. This was a problem in the 1950s when it was illegal, but in the 1930s and 1940s it was legal. There were plug weeks for special songs and the pluggers had to get their songs played enough times to rank high on the charts. Every time a song was played during a specified seven day period it was tabulated and if it ranked high on the charts it would be included in the Hit Parade survey. This of course meant more money for the publishers and exposure for the bands. It was not a very scientific tabulation since only the songs played on NBC and CBS counted. Mutual with more stations and broadcast hours was not counted. Both the publishers and the bands knew the value of radio's disk jockeys and remotes to promote their agendas, but problems arose.

Disk jockeys like Martin Block on WNEW in New York City and Al Jarvis on KFWB in Los Angeles with their *Make Believe Ballroom* programs had developed huge audiences by re-creating the ambience of the live broadcast remotes. The band sponsors argued that while they were paying for the live remotes the disk jockeys were emulating the remote broadcasts for free by using phonograph records. The networks and some bands did not want to antagonize the sponsors but also wanted the revenue source and notoriety generated by Block and Jarvis. Some bands took steps to help their sponsors. Paul Whiteman and Fred Waring did very little studio recording and Hal Kemp refused to record his theme song, thereby depriving the disk jockeys of their music. Other bands just let the good times roll, while the networks tried to placate both sides.

On January 1, 1941 everything changed in the radio music world. The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), which collected the money from the networks and redistributed it to their

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members, wanted a change in their contract with the networks. ASCAP wanted more money, an increase from five percent to ten percent for licensing its music and the networks refused to increase the rate. The networks had anticipated that ASCAP would ask for an increase in licensing fees when their contract ran out, so they formed their own collection agency, Broadcast Music, Inc. in 1939. Both groups were well endowed with a great deal of money and the disagreement lasted for a year. The networks banned all ASCAP songs from being played over the air. This now meant that there were very few songs available for the disk jockeys to play or for band remotes. BMI offered higher payments to new composers and to any composer who would defect from ASCAP. BMI had nowhere near the list of well known composers and songs that ASCAP controlled and this affected the big bands. In order to keep their remotes on the air they had to play songs that the copyrights had run out on or were not controlled by ASCAP. Now you had swing/dance versions of classical items such as the *Sabre Dance*, the *Nutcracker Suite* and *Bolero* along with old chestnuts like *Comin' Through The Rye* and *I Dream of Jeanie With The Light Brown Hair*. The remotes were also affected by the networks position on solos ad-libbed by the musicians. The networks were so afraid that some part of an ASCAP controlled song would be ad-libbed that they required that all ad-libs be written out and submitted to them before each broadcast. The result was that the remotes lost their spark and originality. The bands could not even air their theme songs during this period and that led to many bands having two themes. ASCAP and Mutual settled early in 1941 and CBS and NBC settled their disagreement in late 1941 with the networks raising the amount paid to ASCAP by two and seventy-five hundredths of a percent.

A year after the ASCAP problem was solved a new one hit the networks. James Caesar Petrillo, president of the American Federation of Musicians objected to the free use of recorded music on the air. His organization was not sharing in the monies generated by the networks and ASCAP and therefore to his way of thinking the music was being given away at no charge. He felt that this was costing the studio musicians their jobs and wanted the money to help unemployed and aging musicians. Petrillo wanted the record companies to devise a system so that his musicians would be paid for the use of their recordings on the radio and in jukeboxes. If the record companies could not come up with a solution to this problem then there would be a ban on the recording of instrumental music. His solution to the problem was that the record companies pay a royalty on every record released. The companies refused and Petrillo called a strike on August 1, 1942 against the record companies. The only exception to the strike was that musicians were permitted to record V-Disks for the troops overseas.

The bands could still air their remotes but were barred from making any instrumental records until the strike ended in September of 1943 when Decca records signed a new contract with the AFM. Capitol records signed a month later but Columbia (owned by CBS) and RCA Victor (owned by NBC) fought the AFM for another year



before signing in November of 1944. During this period the remotes continued to swing on the air but there were no instrumental records available to buy. Singers on the other hand were not considered musicians by the AFM, and were free to record.

When the recording ban was lifted the bands found that the public had turned their attention to solo singers and vocal groups. The ASCAP problem and the recording ban had an extremely negative impact on big dance bands. The big dance band era was beginning to decline. Petrillo called another recording ban in 1948 and that was the death knell of the big dance bands.

It should also be noted that World War Two also hastened the end of the big dance band era and the network remotes. Many leaders including Ray McKinley, Bob Crosby, Claude Thornhill, Larry Clinton, Alvino Rey and Artie Shaw joined the armed services. Glenn Miller was missing over the English Channel. The draft limited the availability of good musicians. Many of the lesser named bands were playing music that was not of the caliber the public was used to. Although some of the top bands continued to play the service camps for the USO, numerous bands disbanded or reorganized with smaller groups. Travel restrictions, gasoline and tire rationing made large traveling bands unfeasible and difficult for fans to travel to see their favorite bands. The government levied a twenty percent amusement tax and a midnight curfew, called a brownout, which made it difficult for ballrooms and casinos to attract bands and fans. A number of the big dance band sites closed including the Glen Island Casino and Frank Daley's Meadowbrook.

The public began to listen, rather than dance to music. Bop and other forms of music were taking hold and vocalists like Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Frankie Laine, Peggy Lee, Jo Stafford and others were topping the best seller lists. The big dance bands along with their remotes began their slide into history.



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"The Western"

By TOM CHERRE

A few years ago the Statler Brothers came out with a recording called "Whatever happened to Randolph Scott". It depicts the cowboys of long ago. Names like Roy and Rex, Gene and Tex, and even Lash LaRue too. Since that song has come out I've become somewhat of an "oater" collector. I now have over a hundred movies of all the above plus the Duke, Tim Holt, Bob Steele, Johnny Mack Brown and others you're all familiar with.

I was always a big western fan including *Gunsmoke* and William Conrad. *Gunsmoke* was a terrific show extremely well written. The sound effects were great and the music theme and sound track were second to none. The only thing missing were cowboy songs. On the *Gene Autry* or *Roy Rogers* shows we were always treated to the soft vocals of Autry or a yodel from Roy Rogers. Autry and Rogers were somewhat rivals, both starring for Republic Studios. Later on they both had their own radio and TV shows. Their movies shown on Saturday afternoons filled the theaters with kid's dimes and made both of them millionaires many times over. Their movies and radio shows may have been a little corny or hokey or whatever you want to call it, but they were entertaining and very family orientated.

The *Lone Ranger*, on the other hand was possibly the straightest arrow of the bunch. He had a deep baritone voice and impeccable diction. He lacked the vices of wine, women, and song. Even when he became angry, he was still able to control his temper. All the other cowboys were sweet on the ladies, and their sidekicks would always provide for some comic relief. Unlike Tonto, Gabby Hayes and Smiley Burnette were there for a few chuckles.

With Gene, Hoppy, and Roy villains were mean and ornery. Those varmints would shoot some poor hombre in the back. Some sidewinder was always swindling someone's neice out of the farm or stealing the family business from someone's helpless daughter. Those critters were nothing but lowdown polecats. Hmmmm? I wonder what a polecat is? And of course they had all the western dialog too.

Gunsmoke, *The Lone Ranger*, and *Have Gun Will Travel* dealt with tales of the old west. They occasionally injected names like Wild Bill Hickcock, Billy the Kid, Samuel Colt, and others in the script to make the stories seem more authentic. Roy and Gene were portrayed in more modern times, cars and radio were more visible. Even Trigger and Champion, the mounts of Roy and Gene played heroes in many of the shows. Of course we can't forget the greatest horse of all, Silver.

I've listened to over a hundred *Gunsmoke* episodes. *Gunsmoke* was probably a little ahead of its time. The stories were more complex. It wasn't just getting that mangy snake that robbed the bank and made off with the payroll. The stories made you think about the outcome. In most other shows you knew Silver would come to the Lone Ranger's rescue, Gene or Roy would save the day. In those shows the killing was down to a trifle few.

The variety of the radio westerns were truly unique. *Gunsmoke*, *Have Gun Will Travel* had a dramatic theme with a western background. Roy, Gene, and Hoppy were easy going shows with a song or two and a few laughs. There were renegades, robbers and rustlers, no one got killed and always a happy ending. The *Lone Ranger* had more heart warming stories along with the greatest array of classical music scores you've ever heard. The masked fellow was sincere and cordial to all he met. He was like a saviour to the hopeless. He had a relationship with his great horse Silver like no other cowboy.

These were the kind of characters I looked up to as a kid. Back in the '50s they were my heroes, my knights in shining armour. Those were the good old days.

Actually one of the biggest thrills of my life was when my mother took me downtown to AM&A's department store and I got to shake hands with Guy Madison and Andy Devine (Wild Bill Hickcock and Jingles). I didn't want to wash my hands for awhile. It's safe to assume those halycon days of old will never return I therefore regress back to "Whatever Happened to Randolph Scott". Is he still riding across the range? Weep not. We still have old time radio westerns to enjoy where our heroes will live forever in our hearts and minds. "Hi Oh Silver Away"!

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BITS 'N' PIECES

What can we do?

Renewals and new membership have dropped from what it was years ago. Rentals are also down. What are the reasons? It's hard to put a finger on it. Our clubs are made up of mostly elderly members. The younger generation, (a lot of them), don't seem to be interested in OTR. They are into X-box, video games and music.

Our older members, like the OTR actors, are slowly fading away. As for rentals on a per cassette basis, you can pick-up shows loaded with dozens of broadcasts on MP-3s for a few dollars. Long time members and collectors of OTR probably have huge inventories of shows. They search for the ones they don't have. We have to go after the younger people and the ones who are just beginning to show an interest in OTR and get them to join the clubs.

What more can we do? I don't know. Try advertising more when ever we can? Offer specials on rentals? Hold contests with free shows as gifts? Let's face it these are hard times for clubs, dealers and conventions. Perhaps members can write and tell us what they would like the clubs to offer. What do you (the members) like to see happen? We need your input—don't forget, it's your club! Help keep OTR alive. . . . *Dom Parisi*

Nice People Department

Special thanks to member Marjorie Gallard of San Pedro, CA for her donation of a boxed set of Burns and Allen records.

At Festivals, Fans of Radio and Silent Film Pine for Old-Timers

As Early Legends Pass Away, Groups Invite Offspring: Special Guest: Lois Lane

By **JEFFREY ZASLOW**

Eleven actors helped Orson Welles stage his legendary *War of the Worlds* radio drama on Oct. 30, 1938. Just one of them is alive today: 89-year-old William Herz Jr.

Mr. Herz considers himself unworthy of acclaim. After all, he was a bit, player in that broadcast; he portrayed a ham-radio operator and had just one line of dialogue. But this weekend, he'll be honored at the Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention in Newark, N.J. As he sees

it, convention organizers turned to him because they can't "bring up corpses." He agreed to attend as a favor to fans. "I'm the only thing left," he says, "so I'll be Exhibit A."

Festivals and conventions celebrating early and mid-20th-century entertainment—vaudeville, silent movies, radio, swing bands—are popular across America. Fans come to relive memories, find treasures at memorabilia booths and shake hands with heroes. The problem is that it's getting harder to find performers from those eras to show up and be applauded.

When Stephen Salmons, co-founder of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, talks about the good old days, he's not referring to just the 1920s. He's also longing for the 1990s, when there were still top-name actors alive who had appeared in silent films. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Fay Wray attended festivals well into their old age. (He died in 2000 at age 90; she died in 2004 at 96.) Now, with only about a half-dozen silent actors alive who had any kind of billing, event organizers are inviting the offspring of dead stars or hiring young impersonators.

At the Old-Time Radio Convention, which expects 600 attendees this weekend, leaders have begun inviting-television stars over the objections of purists who argue that only radio performers should be welcome. "If it becomes 'Friends of Old-Time Television,' I'm out of there," says Arthur Anderson, 83, a member of the convention's organizing committee. Mr. Anderson began his long radio career as a child actor in 1935, on the children's show *Let's Pretend*.

There are tense discussions at planning meetings, admits the convention's spokesman, Sean Dougherty "But there are people of goodwill on both sides," he says.

The purists say diluting the guest list with TV stars deflects attention from the uniqueness of radio's golden age. Americans set the standard for artistry and sound effects in radio drama, says Anthony Tollin, a radio historian who directs recreations of old shows at the convention. "We perfected the theater of the mind, and then we turned our backs on it."

Noel Neill played Lois Lane on TV's *The Adventures of Superman* in the 1950s, and has no radio credits. Still, she's a special guest at this year's radio convention. The board agreed to invite her because Lois Lane was on radio before TV. "It'll be a stretch for me," says Ms. Neill, 85. "I don't know how they'll react to me because I wasn't on radio." She'll bring memories as a listener, however. "We had a radio. Yes, we did." (Like the 40 other invited guests, she's being paid only for expenses.)

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When the radio convention started 30 years ago, staged recreations of old scripts would usually feature about 70% of a show's original actors. Now, only about 5% of the actors are originals, and some aren't too healthy. Raymond E. Johnson was the ghoulish host of the radio show *Inner Sanctum* in the 1940s. At several conventions in the late 1990s, Mr. Johnson, weakened by multiple sclerosis, performed from a wheeled-in hospital bed. He died at age 90 in 2001.

Other nostalgia circuits face similar predicaments. There are 15 to 20 big-name "ghost bands" on tour, playing the music of swing-era stars such as Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller. The bands are mostly young players fronted by old bandleaders who knew or played with the namesakes.

Silent-film groups have resorted to showcasing children and grandchildren of legendary performers. The San Francisco festival, which drew 9,000 film buffs to its three-day event in July has hosted Charlie Chaplin's 79-year-old son, Sydney. It's a coup when festivals can find someone who actually made a silent film. Lately many have turned to Diana Serra Cary. In the 1920s, as a child actress dubbed "Baby Peggy," she made more than 125 silent films, and \$4 million

Ms. Cary, 86 was honored last week at a film festival in Italy, where she told her story. Cast aside by Hollywood as she got older, with all her money spent by her parents and others, she watched her films' plot lines get recycled into Shirley Temple talkies. She blames radio for leading audiences to demand movies with sound. "People had this itching ear and they wanted to hear," she says.

Another American art form that petered out around the same time is vaudeville, traveling variety shows with songs, comedy and dancing. While some have revived vaudeville in recent years, it's tough to track down living old-time vaudevillians.

One famed vaudeville dancer and comic, Rudy Horn, is now a frail 96. This week, in his Chicago apartment, his eyes barely open, he offered memories of working as a performer at Al Capone's club, twice dancing at Franklin Roosevelt's. White House, and learning rubber-legged dancing from his pal, Ray Bolger, the scarecrow in "The Wizard of Oz." Until a stroke three years ago, he made public-speaking appearances once a month.

Estelle Rooney, 89, still speaks occasionally about growing up in her father's traveling vaudeville show. Her late husband was Pat Rooney III, whose family vaudeville dynasty dates back to 1867. Ms. Rooney has appeared before groups, to talk about her father's blackface rou-

tines, and the act she staged with trained dogs and doves. She also explains when she realized that vaudeville was dying: In the 1930s, "we couldn't start our show until after Amos and Andy were finished on the radio," she says.

Many vaudevillians, unable to make the jump to radio and film, eventually moved to Las Vegas, becoming small time performers, makeup artists or dance instructors, Frank Cullen, founder of the Boston-based American Vaudeville Museum, suspects some of them, now in their 90s, still live there. "But a lot of folks don't want to hobble out for their last bow," he says. "They want to be remembered as they were. Or, they're realistic enough to know they've been forgotten."

At the old-time radio convention, one committee member who supports opening up the guest list to more-recent performers is Brian Gari, whose late grandfather, Eddie Cantor, was one of the biggest names in radio. Mr. Gari, 53, believes familiar TV veterans bring in younger attendees, who then learn about radio's heyday.

"Do you want people to show up or not?" Mr. Gari asks. "In 2015, maybe we should have Howard Stern. By then he'll be an old-time radio guy."

Fred Foy, 83, was the announcer on radio's *The Lone Ranger* from 1948 to 1954. He'll be at this weekend's convention, signing autographs with the words "Hi-Yo Sliver!" He assumes that when he's gone, people like him will be replaced at the convention by TV sitcom stars. He accepts that. "The convention has to evolve," he says.

Until that time, however, he plans to come back each year to treat convention attendees to his trademark dramatic voice. As the "William Tell Overture" plays in the background, he'll deliver what is considered the most recognized opening from radio's golden age "Return with us now to the thrilling days of yesteryear . . ."

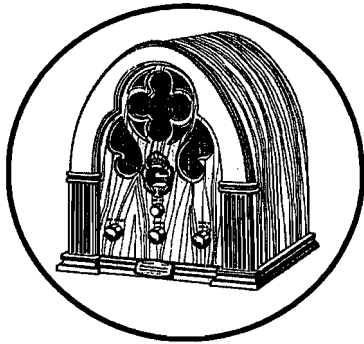
(Published October 21, 2005)



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