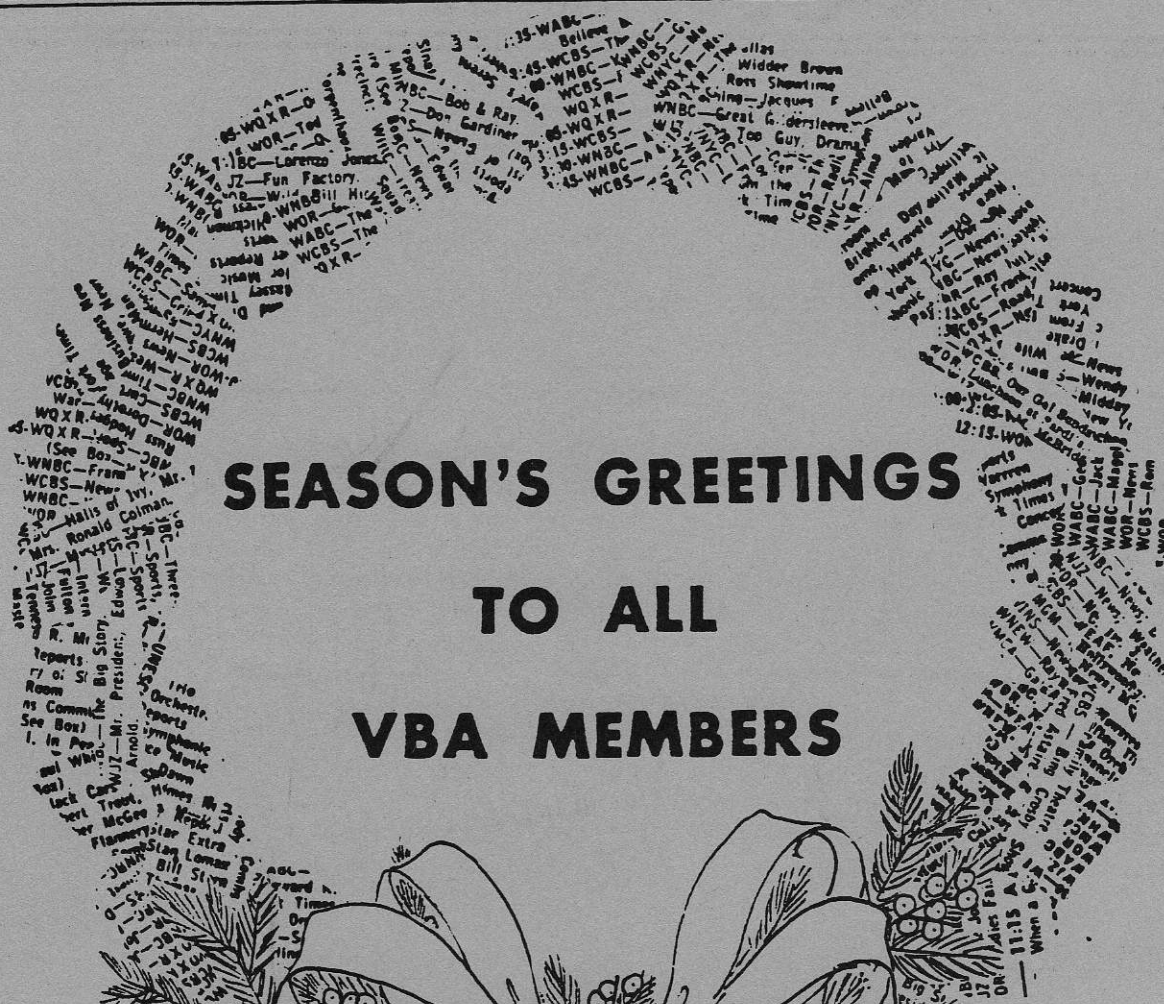


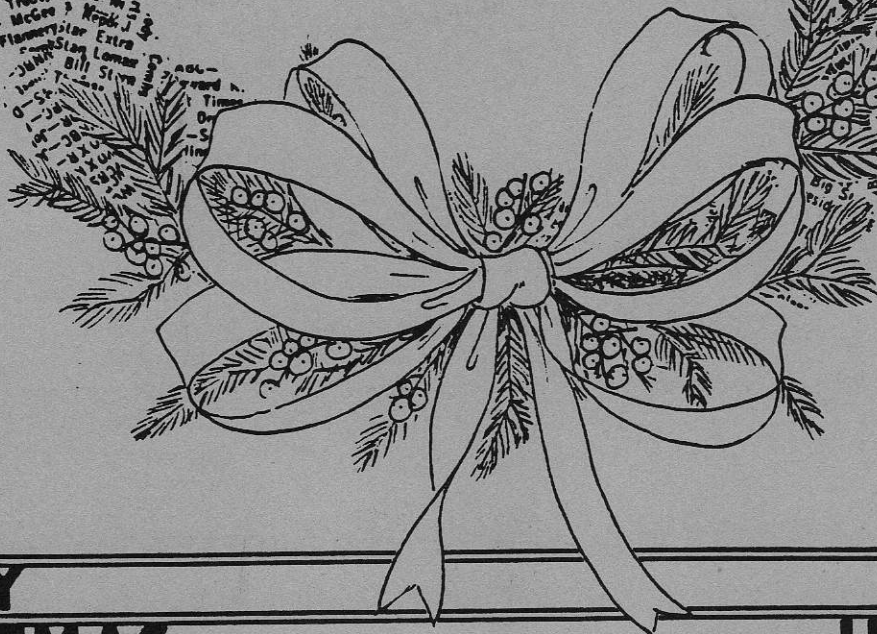


ON THE AIR

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VINTAGE BROADCAST ASSOCIATION



SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL VBA MEMBERS



**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**

**HAPPY
HANUKKAH**

Report From the President



Happy Holidays to all members and their families.

Welcome to our holiday edition of "On-the-Air".

Since our last issue two monumental events have occurred.

1. Our General Membership Meeting of which you will read about later on in this issue, and,
2. The 10th Annual "Friends of Old Time Radio" Convention was held the weekend of October 11th and 12th.

As usual it was a very nostalgic time for all attendees. I met several of our club members who prior to this were merely names on our roster. I also finally had the opportunity to chat with Barbara Watkins and Bobb Lynes from "SPEFDVAC". Barbara is the Editor of the newsletter for "SPEFDVAC", our West Coast sister club. As usual, Barbara was interested in the progress of our club and offered help based on SPEFDVAC's 10 years of trials and tribulations.

Next month January is renewal time for approximately 95% of our membership. Prior to that time I would like to see some feed back from members on how we can attract new members, keep existing members and get old members who did not renew back into the fold. It is a most important time in our Club's history.

OTHER GOOD NEWS

The "Golden Age of Radio" (99.5 WBAI-FM) starring Jack Shugg and Max Schmid have the following holiday shows scheduled in addition to their regularly scheduled 9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Saturday slot.

Christmas Day - December 25th -- 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

December 31st -- 10:00 - 11:30 p.m. They will recreate New Year Eve 1945-46, 40 years to the day.

Saturday - January 18th -- Starting 7:00 a.m. and continuing on until 1:00 a.m. January 19th, Jack and Max will celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the "Golden Age of Radio" program.

PLENTY OF SURPRISES!!!!

Feedback

We would like to thank the following members for their kind comments about ON THE AIR:

J. Allison of Hermosa Beach, California. He said, "On the Air is superb! Thank you!"

Jennifer Flagg of Lindenhurst, New York. She wrote, "I appreciate your getting out the issues on time. I enjoyed the "Big Stars Come to Radio article".

John Barber of New Orleans, La. He commented, "A good article about movie stars on the radio".

Charles Platt of Manhattan, New York. He said, "On the Air has improved continually over the past year, and I have especially enjoyed the cover artwork".

Listed below are the names of the club's Board of Directors. If you have any suggestions or information which might be useful to the club, please write to any of the individuals listed.

Lewis Krieger
President
Membership Chairman
3000 Bronx Park East
Bronx, New York 10467

Jack Shugg
Vice President
P.O.Box 81
Bronx, New York 10468

Ron Baron
Treasurer
2475 West 16th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11217

Robert Brunet
Secretary/Editor (ON-THE-AIR)
21 West 74th Street
New York, New York 10023

Brian Hochberg
Librarian
2935 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11235

Paul Trevoy, Art Director

"Radio's Best Girl-Fridays"

by
Charles Platt
and
Robert Brunet

Behind every great man stands a great woman. I'm sure we've all heard that adage, and it was true in radio dramas. Woman in radio entertainment had equal rights as far back as 1930. Serving as nurses, lawyers, secretaries and partners, they frequently offered their support and ideas and almost their lives to help their employers and/or boy-friends.

Who were these pillars of strength? What did they do to support radio's two-fisted heroes? Were they qualified to do the job?

Here, then, are some of these famous Girl-Fridays:

MARGO LANE was Lamont Cranston's constant companion and a very active participant in Lamont's cases. Often, she would volunteer or was volunteered to risk life and limb to help solve a case. This would result in many harrowing encounters for Margo with homicidal maniacs, mad professors and weird murderers. If we had to describe her qualifications, she was spunky, inquisitive, adventurous, and lovely. At first she and Lamont were just friends but in the late forties they became sweethearts. She was certainly the first of the great ladies of radioland (Program title: "The Shadow")

EFFIE was Sam Spade's indispensable Girl-Friday. She took dictation as Sam related his latest caper and quizzed him at the end, giving him the opportunity to be flippant and bombastic. She never became actively involved in his cases, and was always amazed at the solution of the crime, but she was a good sounding board and down-to-earth. If we had to list her qualifications, she was forever concerned about Sam's health, delightedly confused, and perpetually indignant or exhilarated or surprised by Sam's wits and witticisms.

DELLA STREET was Perry Mason's dedicated private secretary. She took notes, asked sensible questions, and ran the office in an efficient and cheerful manner. She never took an active role in Perry's work - since Paul Drake was available - but could be depended upon to obtain any information Perry needed to bring the case to a satisfactory conclusion. She was reliable, well-organized and effective.

PATSY BOWEN was Nick Carter's loyal secretary. She was a talented and intelligent girl, supplying Nick with information, inspiration and a helping hand. She even solved a murder case while Nick was away. She was a fast thinker, and knew what had to be done. Socially concerned, her qualifications were persistence, tenderness and perception.

EDITH MILLER was Paul Garrett's strictly-business secretary. She ran a tight ship, providing the "Chief" or the D.A. with anything he needed to conclude a case. She participated in most meetings with those who needed help or had been victimized and occasionally even helped out, posing as an innocent victim to get the necessary evidence for a conviction. There was no time for laughs or a casual remark. She was knowledgeable, competent, dependable and forthright. (Program Title: "Mr. District Attorney").

MARY WESTLEY was Boston Blackie's girlfriend. She helped him as best she could, but Blackie was always on the run. You could almost say, she was on an equal level with Blackie when it came to brains, but he kept her in the background and in the dark most of the time. She was eager to help and in love with Blackie, but he was too busy with crime to notice. She was a good cook and had a nice sense of humor and a soothing voice.

LENORE CASE, or "Casey", was Britt Reid's hard-working private secretary. She had a secret crush on Britt, liked to work overtime for him and even helped Mike and Lowry cover dangerous stories for the Sentinel. She was good-natured, adventurous, conscientious and made fun of Mike Axford's vain boasting at times. (Program Title: "The Green Hornet")

LORELEI KILBOURNE was Steve Wilson's society editor on the Illustrated Press. She was a tough gal with savvy and common sense. She knew what she and the Illustrated Press should stand for and had no bones in telling Steve. Formerly employed as a social worker, she was blunt, truthful and served as Steve's tenacious conscience. After a while she mellowed, unfortunately - and so did Steve - and their working relationship became dull but effective. (Program Title: "Big Town")

NIKKI PORTER served as Ellery Queen's secretary. Loyal and good-natured, she worked side-by-side and shoulder-to-shoulder with Ellery. She travelled with him, shared his adventures, and was one of the few heroines to cry at the sight of death.

CLARE BROOKS, or "Brooksie", was George Valentine's girl-Friday. Helpful and quick-witted, she worked with George on practically every case, without a moment's concern for her own safety because she was in love with him. Later she became a man hungry Vera Vague without the jokes, chasing George first and the criminals second, but she never made it. Bob Baily had changed identities; he became Johnny Dollar in 1955. (Program Title: "Let George Do It").

Of course, we have covered only a few of radio's foremost female assistants. There were many others who gave their strength, support and service to their bosses. Below is a list of them. Match up their boss's name with theirs.

<u>Girl Friday</u>	<u>Boss</u>	<u>Program</u>
Fern Collier	Mike Hammer	"The Avenger"
Suzy	Peter Quill	"Box 13"
Ann Williams	Christopher Wells	"Crime Photographer"
Nancy	Brad Ruyon	"The Falcon"
Lila North	Michael Waring	"The Fat Man"
Stacy Mc Gill	Casey	same
Gail Cason	Dan Holliday	same
Zelda	Jim Brandon	"That Hammer Guy"

(The answers can be found on Page 22)

Some of you might accuse these ladies of being stooges, dumb or stupid filling the role of information clerk only, with one-dimensional personalities or totally mindless. I don't think so. If they had been short of brains, they wouldn't have been able to keep their jobs for so long. As you can see, one look at their employment record is quite sufficient to prove their credentials.

Wednesday, October 16, 1985

OBITUARIES

THEODORE H. EPP
LINCOLN, Neb. (AP)—Theodore H. Epp, 78, the founding director of the "Back to the Bible Broadcast," a forerunner of today's TV gospel programs, died Sunday.

The "Back to the Bible Broadcast" was first aired on May 1, 1939, on a Lincoln radio station. The program is still broadcast six days a week from nearly 600 stations around the world.

Sunday, October 27, 1985

OBITUARIES

MORTON DOWNEY
PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP)—Morton Downey, 85, who performed with the Ziegfeld show and preceded Bing Crosby as singer with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra in the 1920s and 1930s, died at his home here Friday after a long illness.

Known as the "Irish Thrush" because of his high tenor voice, Downey began making records around 1916, and went on to write many popular tunes, including "Wabash Moon."

Downey broke into radio singing Irish ballads. He rose to have his own 1940s radio show, called "Songs by Morton Downey."



Morton Downey

<u>Name</u>	<u>Length of Service</u>
Margo Lane	17 years
Effie	5 years
Della Street	12 years
Patsy Bowen	12 years
Edith Miller	14 years
Mary Westley	6 years (estimated)
Lenore Case	16 years
Lorelei Kilbourne	15 years
Nikki Porter	9 years
Clare Brooks	4 years (estimated)

Without a doubt, each of these ladies deserve to be honored and saluted for their service to their bosses and radio entertainment.

EDITOR'S NOTES: There were many radio heroes who did not use the service of a female companion, and still others who availed themselves of a male assistant. This aspect will be covered in a future issue of ON THE AIR.

If any of our members know Effie's last name, let us know.



Orson Welles

POINTS SUBLIME

THE FAMILY HOUR:

What do the holidays mean to you? To some - especially the kids - they mean exchanging gifts? To those who love food, it's enjoying a wonderful Turkey dinner. To the homesick it means a warm, cozy house filled with the cries and laughter of the whole family as it gathers around the tree or at the dinner table.

If you had a chance of selecting your own family from radio personalities, who would you pick as your mom and dad, your brother and sister, your wife or husband, your grandfather and grandma, your aunt and uncle and your two children.

Let us know who your all-time perfect radio family would be. Write their names below or on a separate sheet of paper, tell us briefly why you picked them and send your list to the Editor. The results will be printed in the January-February issue.

FATHER:

MOTHER:

BROTHER:

SISTER:

WIFE

HUSBAND:

GRANDFATHER:

GRANDMA:

AUNT:

UNCLE:

CHILDREN:

A REGRETABLE PASSING

We are sorry to report the loss of Lloyd Nolan on Friday, September 27th. He died of lung cancer at his home in Los Angeles at the age of 83. He played the role of Johnny Strange in the radio comedy-mystery series "Results, Incorporated". The show started in 1944 and co-starred Claire Trevor. In 1951 he replaced William Gargan as "Martin Kane, Private Eye".

A REGRETABLE PASSING CONT'D

We also regret to report the death of Charles Collingwood, the CBS News correspondent, who covered World War II, The Vietnam War and countless other major events that spanned forty years. He died of cancer on Thursday, October 3, 1985, in New York City at the age of 68. He began his career in 1939 as a reporter, but in 1941 he became part of Edward R. Murrow's CBS reporting staff in London. In 1959, he succeeded Mr. Murrow as host of the Person to Person TV series. He retired from CBS in 1982, but will continue to be remembered as a man of integrity and honesty in whatever he accomplished.

Johnny Olson died on Saturday, October 12, 1985 of a brain hemorrhage in Santa Monica, California, at the age of 75. Though he is best remembered for TV's "The Price is Right" and "The Jackie Gleason Show", as the announcer, he also served as emcee on such radio game shows in the 1940's as "Break the Bank", "Get Rich Quick" and "Whiz Quiz". He headed three variety shows: "Ladies Be Seated" in 1944, "Rumpus Room" in 1946 and "Johnny Olson's Luncheon Club" in 1950.

Orson Welles died on Thursday, October 10, 1985, of a heart attack at his home in Los Angeles at the age of 70. His life spanned four careers: directing and acting in Broadway shows and motion pictures, writing radio dramas and a newspaper column, and performing in such radio programs as "The March of Time", "The Shadow", "Mercury Theatre of the Air", "The Orson Welles Theatre", "The Black Museum" and "The Lives of Harry Lime". He made guest appearances on "The Texaco Star Theatre", "The Jack Benny Show", "Suspense" and "The Philco Radio Hall of Fame", during the 1940's.

He was 22 years old when he started as Lamont Cranston, and 26 when he made the movie classic "Citizen Kane". When he died he left behind an impressive list of accomplishments which can only speak of his love for the performing arts. He was difficult to work with, he strived for difference and perfection, he expected too much of himself, because the critics convinced him of that, but he achieved more in 25 years than most performers do in 70 years. We thank him for that difference.

GOOD NEWS:

VBA would like to thank Jay Hickerson for mentioning ON THE AIR'S July-August and September-October issues in HELLO ACAIN'S convention issue.

"The Adventures of Doc Savage", produced and directed by Roger Rittner and starring David Chodos, an actor and dialogue coach who has appeared on such TV shows as "The A-Team", "Hunter" and "Lou Grant", is coming to New York. The 13-week series is scheduled to be broadcast in the tri-state area by WNYC-FM 93.9 on Sunday at 4:30PM, beginning December 1, 1985.

VBA'S GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

The 1985 General Membership meeting was held on Sunday, September 29 at 1:00PM at the Cafe Destinn, located at 70 West 68th Street.

We were happy to meet the following members in person:

John Arabadjis and Donna	Charles Platt
Jim Clair	Arnold Singer
Nancy Coleman	Mario Wistol
Patrick Crea	Jennifer Flag
John Gaughran	

Tom Redmond could not make it due to the horrendous parking problem, but the Directors would like to thank him for the attempt.

The Directors who attended were:

Lew Krieger	Bob Brunet
Paul Trevoy	

Lew opened the meeting by reviewing the progress of the club during the last two years. He asked for suggestions on the direction of the club for 1986. He explained that there were 55 members, that 95% of the membership is due for renewal in January of 1986. He asked for help in keeping the club moving ahead.

There were many positive comments and offers of help from everyone. Arnold Singer and Nancy Coleman offered to be guest speakers at future meetings. Mario offered open-house at his home, Patrick's comments stimulated the idea of pooling all of the members collections into one central lending library. John G., John A., Jennifer and Jim's remarks were very helpful, and with everyone's firm backing the club can move ahead.

During the brunch, the following issues and resolutions were brought up by the members:

<u>ISSUE</u>	<u>RESOLUTION</u>
1) <u>VBA needs more exposure.</u> VBA should advertise more often to attract old-time radio fans throughout the United States.	-Ads have been placed in December issues of Good Old Days and West Magazines. The editor will look into the cost of placing ads in Stereo Review. High Fidelity rates were determined to be expensive. -Jack Shugg should plug the club more often on his radio program.

ISSUES

- 2) Members should trade and share information amongst themselves.
- 3) The Lending Library must be improved and upgraded in order to attract new members.
- 4) An attempt should be made to convince the previous members of the club into renewing.
- 5) There should be organized meetings and events on a quarterly basis, which would include the appearance of a guest speaker. There could be open-house meetings at some of the members houses.
- 6) Immediate attention should be focused on building the membership. This was felt to be a priority.
- 7) Increasing the cost of the membership so that the club can offer more events and better incentives to its current and new members.
- 8) Improving the newsletter. The letter is the first contact between the member and the club.

RESOLUTIONS

The names and addresses of the members can be found in this issue.

All members should pool their collections, supervised by the Librarian. Mr. Krieger will be working out details on this proposal.

The newsletter should be sent to them, reporting the results of the membership meeting and the club's continued improvement.

Several names were mentioned who would be willing to speak. They were: Arnold Singer, Nancy Coleman, Joan Barber. Other names which were brought up and who might be willing to address the club were Jan Miner, Gary Stevens, Arnold Moss and Jackson Beck.

A committee was established to determine methods by which VBA's membership could be increased, while at the same time retaining its original members. The committee will comprise of: Lou Kreiger, Arnold Singer, John Gaughran, Nancy Coleman and Bob Brunet.

The increase would help improve the newsletter, putting it on the word processor, obtaining clearer pictures and giving the issue a glossy finish and a professional look.

Several means were mentioned. (See above) Also, the newsletter should avail itself of free-lance writers. The editor will be contacting the two names mentioned at the meeting for their written contributions.

ISSUES

9) The Trading Post section of the Newsletter should be tailored to attract the members.

10) Prizes of money should be offered to the winner of the Trivia Quiz.

RESOLUTIONS

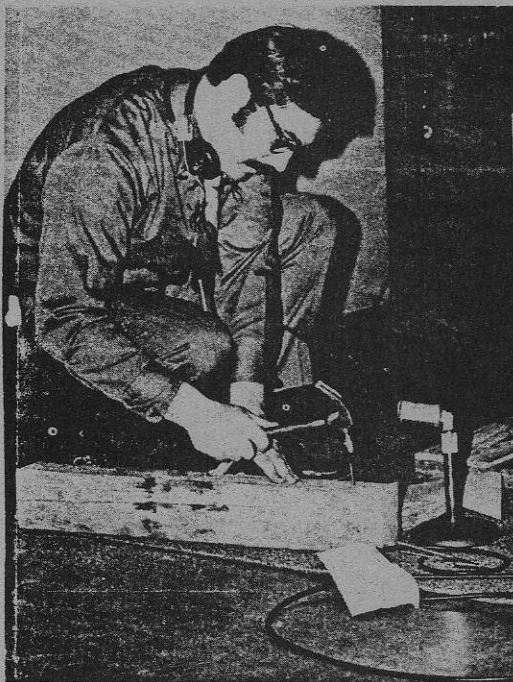
Dealers and collectors names and addresses will be included in future issues, along with any radio equipment they may wish to buy or sell.

A trivia quiz, suggested by Nancy Coleman, appears in this issue.

These were some of the issues and decisions made at the 3-hour meeting. We are very hopeful for the club, and we think this meeting and this Holiday issue reflects it. True, the pictures can be clearer, the finish better, the production improved, but we are working our way toward that goal. Let's hear from you. What do you think?

In conclusion, we want to thank two members, in particular, for relating their experiences on radio: Arnold Singer who appeared on Horn and Hardart's "Children's Hour" and Nancy Coleman, who starred in "King's Row", the movie, as Louise Gordon, and on many radio shows, such as: "Hawthorne Hall", "Suspense" and "Ave Maria Hour".

We look forward to their continued interest and help from each member in the months ahead. Until then, a Happy Holiday and a prosperous New Year to you all.



"UNSHACKLED!" INVOLVES WORK OF TALENTED PERSONNEL. Above, left, Donald Wojtel, sound effects man, provides sounds to make an "Unshackled!" drama come alive for listeners. / Right, Lucille (Becker) Ingebretsen, at the organ, and actor Harry Elders go over a section of a story script during a rehearsal. (All of this can be seen, and heard, Saturday afternoons at 4:30 at Pacific Garden Mission. Come alone, or bring a group. Write the Mission for details.)

"The 1929 Crosley"

by
Jennifer Flagg

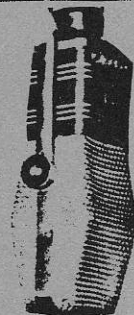
At a recent collectible show, I bought the "shell" of a 1929 Crosley. I've wanted an old radio for a long time, so this was a dream come true. The intricate design-work is a thing to behold! Unfortunately the old tubes inside had been replaced from a Philco set of a more recent vintage. As soon as I got it home, I plugged it in, and the tubes began to glow. I turned the tuning knob and heard the end of an Ella Fitzgerald song. Then the announcer came on and said, "And now from 1939, the Dorsey Brothers!!!" It turned out to be one of those "memory" programs, not a tap to the old Airwaves, much to my regret. But it was fun to imagine so, even for a few minutes.



Fr. Alcuin F. Egan, S. A.

Executive Producer

"Ave Maria Hour," Sundays, 8:30 P.M.,
WMCA



(above) Father J. Leon Katsko, S. A. Director of St. Christopher's Inn, (middle) Brother Bernard Gorman, S. A. Executive Producer, and (bottom) Mr. Richard Janaver, Director of Dramatics of the Ave Maria Radio Hour.

"Religious Drama on Radio"

by
Robert Brunet

With Christmas and Hanukkah appearing on the winter horizon, I believe the time is now appropriate to briefly review some of the religious dramas which were broadcast on radio during its bustling heydays.

Like the Bible, radio broadcasting became an intergral and vital part of proclaiming the word of God. From the very beginning, many stations were established, operated and owned by individual churches or religious organizations. Their programs of sober sermons and sacred music could be heard on a daily basis. (Years later they would be reserved for Sunday mornings and afternoons only).

Some of the first religious broadcasts were:

- "The National Radio Pulpit," featuring the Reverend S. Parkes Cadman, and presented over NBC in 1926.

- "The National Vespers," presided over by Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick and presented by NBC in 1927.

- "The Mormon Tabernacle Choir," broadcast in 1929.

- "The Catholic Hour," presented over NBC, also in 1929.

- "The Back Home Hour," with Billy Sunday, presented over CBS, also in 1929.

As the radio medium grew in popularity, radio stations devoted time to religious groups or time was purchased by them. A preacher broadcasting his 30-minute sermon in a closed studio was often able to reach more people than if he had visited a thousand communities for a whole week.

By the 1930's, these programs were springing up throughout the country like a bountiful harvest. One of the famous preachers was Billy Sunday; he urged repentance and salvation. One of the more infamous ones was Father Coughlin; he advocated distribution of America's wealth to the poor through revolution, if necessary. His program was broadcast over CBS, starting in 1930. Others that came along were:

- "CBS Church of the Air" (CBS, 1931).

- "Religion in the News," conducted by Walter Kirk (NBC, 1933).

- "Message of Israel" (NBC, 1934).

- "The Old-fashioned Revival Hour" (Mutual).

It wasn't until the mid-thirties that religious drama programs were broadcast. They came in 15 and 30 minute packages. There were many, some broadcast locally, some nationally. Only a few will be covered in this article; those which made a lasting impression on listeners due to their remarkable quality and longevity.

One of the earliest religious dramas was "The Ave Maria Hour". Presented by the Graymoor Friars, it was first broadcast over Mutual on Sunday, April 28, 1935, at 4:30 in the afternoon. It featured the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt.

The program was an idea conceived by Father Anselm. As director of St. Christopher's Inn, he was looking for a way to help provide financial support for the ever-increasing number of men seeking shelter at the Inn. He thought a radio series, dramatizing the stories of the saints, would do it. He approached one station and was turned down, but when a sudden spring shower forced him into a nearby building, he found himself at WOR. He decided to see the program director, and the "Ave Maria Hour" was born.

On that fateful afternoon, while the organ softly played Gounod's "Ave Maria," the announcer began: "In all the history of mankind, one bright thread has run through the gray and tangled web of human life. It is a touch of the spiritual world beyond this material world - a revelation of a love surpassing human love, of wisdom and strength surpassing that of man. In almost every age and in every land, there have been noble souls who sensed its presence. Such were the Saints. Their story constitutes the story of man's age-long search for God... The greatest of all romances, the noblest of all tales of adventure."

The premiere broadcast was so popular that more than a thousand grateful letters were received by the Graymoors. By the second week four more stations carried the program, and 21 years later the show was heard on nearly 400 stations. Until September of 1955, the show dealt only with the lives of the saints. Then, in October, it presented a 44-week series of broadcasts on the Life of Christ with Norman Rose. It was the result of more than a year's work of research and writing by Joseph Cochran and director Carlo de Angelo. The Executive producer was Father Alcuin Egan, S.A.

By 1960, the show had also presented in dramatic form The Fourteen Stations of the Cross, The Seven Sacraments and the Christian Virtues. Once the show was taped, the original tape was sent to Pitman, New Jersey, where a master record was prepared and from this 300 sets of recordings were made. These were then returned to Graymoor, where they were packed and forwarded to the various stations in the United States and abroad in a series of six half-hour programs. Some of the performers were Bret Morrison and our own Nancy Coleman.

The show finally left the WMCA airwaves in New York in 1961.

"Life of the World" was not in the true sense of the work a religious program. It is mentioned here for its close proximity to religion.

It was a soap opera heard over NBC in 1940. With the voice of Bret Morrison opening the program and organ music in the background, it presented dramatized stories from the Bible, presenting the characters in modern terms using modern language with the typical crises and heartbreaks of usual soap operas of the time.

The creator-producer was Don Becker and the music was provided by Doc Whipple. The show was so popular it ran for 10 years, ending in 1950.

Another well-known religious program was "The Eternal Light." Produced by the Jewish Theological Seminary in cooperation with NBC, it made its radio debut on October 8, 1944, and offered dramas based on Jewish Literature, the Bible, history, biographies and other sources. At the end of each show a guest speaker would briefly discuss the ethical and/or moral issue the show touched on. Some of Hollywood's top performers starred on the show. The list includes Joan Crawford, Melvyn Douglas, Ruby Dee, John Garfield, Sam Paul Muni, Edward G. Robinson, Maureen Stapleton, Franchot Tone, and Cicer Tyson. The show was also a training grounds for writers and directors. Some of the writers who contributed to the success of the show were Ernest King, Tad Mosel, Reginald Rose, Virginia Mazer, Shimon Winelberg and Morton Wishengrad. Milton Katimas was the conductor and Milton Krents served as executive producer. Some of the directors were Frank Papp and Anton M. Le

The program can still be heard over NBC, Sunday, at 7:30 AM, but its primary function now is that of a talk show. Topical issues or concerns as they relate to Jewish theology, are discussed by a guest speaker or speakers.



Mel Ferrer and Juano Hernandez in one of the early dramas on "The Eternal Light."



"... Man's age-long search for God..."
"Ave Maria" staff checks script of
"Life of Christ" series with Fr. Egan.

One of the most endearing and excellently produced shows in this category was "The Greatest Story Ever Told." Based on Fulton Oursler's best-selling novel, the series presented the Life of Christ, from his birth to his death and resurrection. It starred Warren Parker as Jesus, and was first heard in 1947 on Sunday at 6:30PM. Though it had a sponsor, no commercials were given until at the end of the show when the announcer said simply, "The Greatest Story Ever Told" has been brought to you by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. The highly-esteemed, award-winning series ran for one year, but it was repeated frequently, and is still remembered with deep reverence. Norman Rose served as the announcer, he would later play the role of Jesus in another religious series mentioned earlier in this article. The writer of the series was Henry Denker, the directors Marx Leob and Henry Denker, and the music was provided by Jacques Belasco.

"The Family Theatre" became a mutual feature and favorite in 1949. Presented by Father Patrick Peyton of the Holy Cross Fathers, the program's only commercial was a message: to bring to everyone's attention a practice that must become an important part in our lives if we are to win peace for ourselves, peace for our families and peace for the world. Family Theatre urged everyone listening to pray, pray together as a family.

Then a transcribed story was presented, featuring some of Broadway and Hollywood's top movie stars. The list included Bing Crosby, Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer, Ethel Barrymore, Gary Cooper, Gregory Peck, William Holden and Loretta Young.

The stories did not preach or moralize; they were straight-forward and positive, stressing the importance of family love and prayer. Many may not consider the Family Theatre a religious show in the true sense of the word, because brutality was used when it advanced the plot, but it is mentioned here because of its purpose in being - family prayer.

The closing signature was one of the most effective on religious radio shows. Father Peyton, in his sincere, Irish, fatherly voice would come on at the end and tell everyone that family prayer should be a daily practice in every home. He hoped that everyone's fervent prayers would speed the day when millions of families would understand the truth of these words: "The family that prays together stays together and a world at prayer will be a world at peace."

Tony La Prato and Carl Princely were the announcers. Some of the directors were Sabine Del Valle, John Kelly and Joseph Mansfield. In the 1950s, the music was composed by Henry Mancini. The show lasted ten years, until 1957.

"The Heartbeat Theatre" was conceived by the Salvation Army. In the 1940's C.P. Mc Gregor was the host. The show started with a distant wailing siren and the hope filled words:

"This is a sound of trouble. It will strike relentlessly with unerring accuracy at all men, everywhere in the world, some time in their life. To meet this challenge, wherever it strikes, whatever its nature, an ever-vigilant corp of men and women stand ready to do battle: the soldiers of the Salvation Army, with heart to God and hand to Man."

The music went up, and C.P. Mc Gregor took over as host and narrator.

By the 1980's, the lengthy introduction had been shortened to a brief lead-in scene from the show and the host and narrator's words:

"From Studio House in Hollywood, the Salvation Army presents "Heartbeat Theatre"... stories of the wide-spread and vital works of the dedicated men and women of the Salvation Army, enriching the lives of individuals and their communities, world-wide.

Mac Donald Carey had now assumed the role of host and narrator. The stories were upbeat, dealing with drug dealings, juvenile delinquency and prostitution.

It can still be heard over local radio stations. In the New York area, it can be heard over WPAT-FM 93.1 at 5:30AM and again on WPAT-AM at 6:30AM every Sunday morning.



Father Peyton is seen here with two of his many friends, Charles Boyer and Ethel Barrymore.



Loretta Young was a firm supporter of Father Peyton's family show. The motion-picture star is seen above with Father Peyton himself.

"The Family Theatre" was so popular and successful, a sequel was demanded, and so in 1950 "The Marian Theatre" was born. Also directed and presented by Father Patrick Peyton, of the Congressional of Holy Cross, it had an urgent message:

"The God we worship is a Living God. Our redeemer is alive today as when he walked the earth two thousand years ago and taught us the lessons of salvation. He did more than teach those lessons; he lived them, and in so doing showed us that life itself can be a prayer. In the mysteries of the most holy rosary, we commemorate his life, death and Resurrection. For in the cycle of his time as man, Jesus Christ by action and example showed us what we as men must do to merit salvation. "The Marian Theatre" brings you dramas of faith, love and courage, dedicated to the families of the world, with the hope that they will beg their immaculate mother for the riches of her divine son through the prayers of the most holy rosary."

The stories were full of hope and promise. They taught the listener to believe in miracles, to have faith in the face of despair, to trust in God's ways.

At the conclusion of each show, the Ave Maria was sung and Father Payton urged families to devote themselves to pray for peace and love. His voice was perfect for radio, it sounded so torn with pain and pathos. The show was announced by Tony La Frano, and music was provided by Harry Zimmerman.



Actors tape an "Unshackled!" radio show

"Unshackled", a truly remarkable Christian program, started on September 23, 1950, in the studios of WGN in Chicago, recreating the life and conversion of Billy Sunday.

It still is being broadcast today over 300 radio stations in the United States alone. Every Saturday at 4:30PM, at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago, the radio drama is recorded. Rehearsals of Unshackled's true stories of people who are transformed by God are held around a table. Tour groups are invited to watch the recordings.

Produced by PGM, a Christian organization, which offers homeless people food, clothing, medical and spiritual comfort. "Unshackled" was the creation of Harry Saulnier. In 1945, radio station WAIT gave the mission a 15-minute program on which Saulnier presented the Gospel and related stories of changed lives at the Mission. For three months everything went well, until WAIT changed its policy and dropped all religious broadcasting.

Several years later a conversation with an advertising man gave Harry a new idea: dramatizing stories of Mission converts. The board of trustees voted to move ahead, and Saulnier hired John Gillies, an experienced radio-man formerly with WMBI to prepare a 15-minute pilot program. This was shown at the Mission in July of 1950, and Gillies was given authorization to begin a weekly half-hour series.

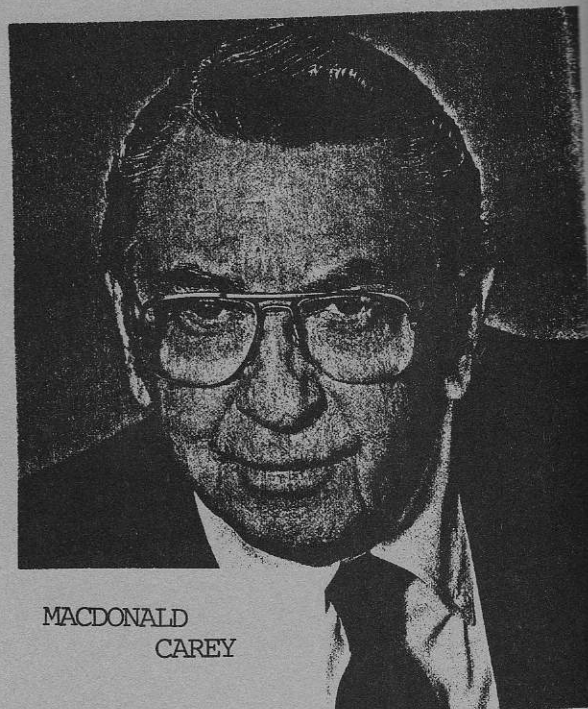
With John Camp in charge of the account and John Gillies directing and Lucille Becker at the organ, a cast of professional actors and actresses gathered at 11:00PM on Saturday at WGN and went on the air.

From October 1950 to 1956, Eugenia Price directed the series, then Jack O'Dell began writing and directing the shows. Now, at age 70, Jack is still at it. His remembrances can be found on Page 28.

"Unshackled", after 35 years on the air is the longest-running and one of the last of the old-time radio dramas.



Superintendent Harry G. Saulnier participating on a broadcast.



MACDONALD
CAREY

"The Greatest of These" was a syndicated series broadcast over Mutual in the early fifties. It was not sponsored by a religious organization, but all of the elements of religion were present: sweet, reverent music, an inspiring introduction "This is a program of kindness tolerance and good will," and the show's hero, Harvey Desmond, an unusual man whose deep conviction was that one should believe in and practice the spirit rather than the letter of the law.

It starred Tom Collins as an attorney who had founded a philanthropic trust with a million dollars left to him by an eccentric client to help persons who had met adversity. Aided by Betty Crane, his fiance, in the administration of the helping hand trust, they believed with the apostle Paul, "and now abided faith, hope and charity' these three, but the Greatest of these is Charity." Each story strengthened the listener's faith and belief in his fellow man. The announcer was Gan Whitman, and the show was produced and directed by Edward Soanman.

"Big Jon and Sparky" was a children's show which originated from Cincinnati in 1948 and ran for ten years. It disappeared for about twelve years and returned as a children's religious program in 1970. The Adventures of General Comet of the Universe Patrol, Inspection Time, and Gil Hickey and His Leprechaun Marching Band were gone, replaced by the Kid's Bible Chorus, a serialized biblical story, a bible quiz and a brief sermon by Big Jon.

Jon Arthur, son of a Pennsylvania minister, was the voice of Sparky, the little elf from the land of make-believe who wants more than anything else in the world to be a real boy. After a bout with alcoholism in the 1960s, he returned to Family Radio, an affiliation of Christian radio stations, with a religious version of "No School Today". The show always ended with the theme of the "Teddy Bears' Picnic."

As radio drama declined in popularity in the fifties, so did religious radio dramas. But religious talk shows kept coming. The shows included:

- "The Gospel Hour,"	Mutual 1936
- "The Lutheran Hour,"	Mutual 1938
- "Back to the Bible Broadcast,"	Lincoln, Nebraska 1939
- "Radio Bible Class,"	Mutual 1940
- "Voice of Prophecy,"	Mutual 1941
- "St. Anthony's Hour,"	WHN, New York, 1941
- "Hour of Faith,"	ABC, 1942
- "Back to God Hour,"	Mutual, 1948
- "Hour of Decision,"	ABC, 1950
- "Thy Kingdom Come,"	NBC, 1953
- "Life Worth Living,"	WFME, New York, 1960's

These were all well-constructed shows featuring biblical quotations, topical sermons and sacred music.

Holiday drama specials were often presented by Jewish, Catholic and Protestant groups. One of the most recent specials was "For This Hour," produced by the American Lutheran Church. The program entitled "The Passion of Christ" starred George Petrie and Mason Adams and broadcast on April 10, 1971 over WFUV-FM in New York City.

Many non-secular radio series dramatized religious stories which became annual events for years after. They included:

- "The Son of Man," presented on the CBS Radio Workshops.
- "The Lord's Prayer," presented on the "Amos and Andy Show."
- "The Little Town of Bethlehem," presented on the "First Nighter Program."
- "A Child is Born," presented on "Calvacade of America."

Today, we still honor the greatest of holy days, but only two half-hour series continue to produce new episodes. They are "Unshackled" and "Heartbeat Theatre:". Perhaps the last of the old-time radio dramas may become the firsts of the new...

Editor's note: There were many other dramatic religious series which have not been mentioned in this article. If you recall any let us know, (i.e., their title, contents, the actors and actresses who starred in them, when and where they were broadcast and who wrote and directed them) and we'll print the information in the Feedback column.

ANSWERS TO THE ARTICLE "RADIO'S BEST GIRL-FRIDAYS"

BOSS'S NAME

Jim Brandon
Dan Holliday
Casey
Michael Waring
Brad Runyon
Christopher Wells
Peter Quill
Mike Hammer

GIRL FRIDAY

Fern Collier
Suzy
Ann Williams
Nancy
Lila North
Stacy McGill
Gail Cason
Zelda

SHOW'S NAME

"THE AVENGER"
"BOX 13"
"CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER"
"THE FALCON"
"THE FAT MAN"
"CHRISTOPHER WELLS"
"PETER QUILL"
"THAT HAMMER GUY"

***** WESTERN TRIVIA QUIZ *****
Suggested by Nancy Coleman

(A prize will be awarded to one winner, so get in your answers as soon as possible).

1. What was the name of Hopalong Cassidy's white horse?

ANSWER:

2. Raymond Burr played many villainous roles in the movies and on radio. However, in 1956, he played a hero in a western series. What was the name of the show?

ANSWER:

3. What was the longest-running western series on radio?
A) LONE RANGER
B) DEATH VALLEY DAYS or
C) GUNSMOKE

ANSWER:

4. What animal had its own western series, and what was his name?

ANSWER:

5. "Gunfire" was a juvenile western show, syndicated in 1937 and starring Buck Jones. On the show, what was the name of Buck's horse?

ANSWER:

6. What western series was broadcast on television first and then adapted for radio, and who was the lead in the radio version?

ANSWER:

7. John Todd played the part of Tonto on the Lone Ranger series. What role did he often perform on "Challenge of the Yukon"?

ANSWER:

8. Hawk Larabee was broadcast over CBS in 1946. Between the scenes and/or acts the stories were bridged by singing. The lyrics were done to the tune of a very popular western song? What was the name of that song?

ANSWER:

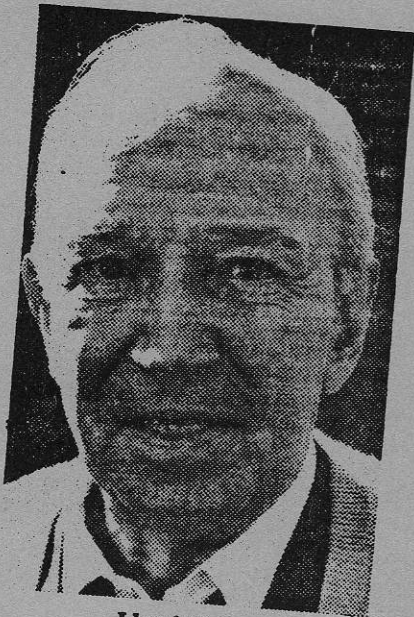
9. William N. Robson, better known for SUSPENSE and ESCAPE, directed a western series in 1958 for CBS. What series did he direct?

ANSWER:

10. Hopalong Cassidy came to radio in January of 1950. His side-kick was old California Carlson. Who was the actor who played California Carlson?

ANSWER:

(Please mail your answers to the Editor immediately, so that we can announce the winner in the January-February issue).



Lloyd Nolan



CBS News

Charles Collingwood



Johnny Olson

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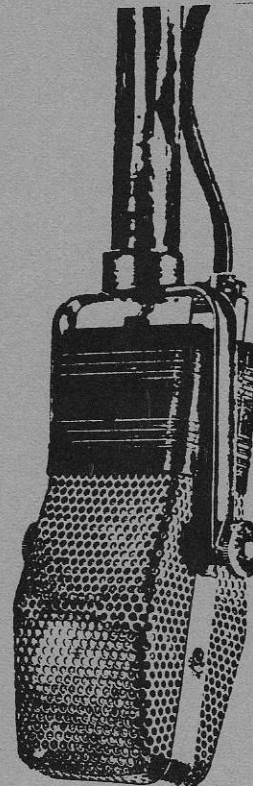
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THE AVE MARIA RADIO HOUR



“UNSHACKLED!”

30 Years — and Counting

by Jack Odell

(REPRINTED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION)

On a summer evening in 1951 I had dinner in the home of Christian friends. As soon as the table was cleared, the radio was turned on. “This is a new dramatic program,” my friends said, “and we never miss it.”

I had no choice. “Unshackled!” came on the air and listen I must. It proved to be an ordeal. The story was about a man whose life had almost been destroyed by alcohol, but who had been given a new life when he put his trust in Christ as his Savior. My friends, who had often witnessed to me, were setting me up. I wanted to be angry, but knew their intentions were good.

Then I began recognizing the voices. The actors were people I knew, since I had been active in broadcasting for many years. At the end of the program Bill Oliver, the announcer, said, “If your life is empty, it can be filled to overflowing.”

I squirmed and told myself that my life wasn't empty, but I knew the things that filled it were trash.

Fifteen months later, after sitting in on an “Unshackled!” production, I was saved. “If your life is empty . . .”

The first “Unshackled!” program was broadcast over WGN in Chicago at 11:30 in the evening on the third Saturday of September 1950. It was the fulfillment of a dream long held by Harry Saulnier.

It was also a daring financial plunge by the Board of Trustees of Pacific Garden Mission. The price tag was between \$500 and \$1,000 per broadcast, a sum that could provide the mission kitchen with a great deal of soup. Today the cost is more than four times as great.

The first program dramatized the story of PGM's most famous convert, the evangelist Billy Sunday. Writer/Director John Gillies had a good script and cast of professional actors, but until a few days before the premiere, the program was still untitled.

Then, during a rehearsal, a station engineer said, "When I was in the Navy we used to begin a communications hookup by saying, 'Shackled!' at the end we would signal, 'Unshackled!'" At that moment Harry and I knew they had found their niche.

After the first broadcast, the responsibility for writing and directing was given to Eugene Stone, a former writer of network dramatic serial dramas, who had received *Unshackled!* a year earlier.

During the months that followed, two unexpected things happened. First, other radio stations began asking if they could broadcast the program. Arrangements were made to supply them with tapes. Then the management of WGN discovered that *"Unshackled!"* was attracting a growing audience and offered a time slot at 7:30 Saturday evening, immediately following the popular national broadcast, "Twenty Questions."

"Unshackled!" was on its way up.

In May of 1953 Bill Oliver left Chicago. A new announcer was needed and Gene Stone asked me to take the job.

Meanwhile, she had built into the program some features that are still in use. "The program that makes you face yourself and think" is one. Another is "If your life is empty, it can be filled to overflowing." She also established the principle that *"Unshackled!"* must meet and compete with commercial radio drama.

In those early days most of the stories were taken from the files of Pacific Garden Mission. Inevitably, many of them dealt with men shackled by alcohol. Before Gene left the program at the end of 1953 and the Mission asked me to take over writing and direction, a gradual change in the stories was taking place.

Some came from outside Pacific Garden Mission. Of these, many dealt with manifestations of an other than alcohol. This trend brought in the testimonies of "up-and-comers," the respectably hellbound. It was high time. Too many listeners were thinking, "I'm not a drunkard, a drug addict, a criminal or a wife-beater. I belong to a church. So, I must be a Christian."

For many years now, *"Unshackled!"* has refuted that kind of thinking by telling of people shackled by pride, greed, lust, drugs, lying, self-righteousness and other fruits of sin. We still have stories of criminals, of course, and alcohol pops up

often. After all, it remains the "drug of choice" in our society. But the scope of the stories continues to broaden.

In recent years we've dealt with subjects that might have shocked the listeners of 30 years ago; such things as revolutionary activism, prostitution, adultery, drug dealing, abortion and child abuse. Most recently we've brought homosexuality out of the closet and into the light of Scripture. While we dislike the permissiveness that has brought once-tabooed subjects into everyday conversation, we are now able to show that no sinner is beyond the reach of God's grace. This presents problems of propriety, but our listeners don't seem to feel we have violated the rules of good taste.

Today more than 450 stations broadcast *"Unshackled!"*. While many are Christian stations, we're especially happy that more than half of them are engaged in commercial broadcasting. Christians are not our real target audience. *"Unshackled!"* is part of Pacific Garden Mission's evangelistic outreach and we want to reach the unsaved.

When a commercial broadcaster reports that because we draw young people we have been scheduled in the middle of a four-hour block of rock music, we rejoice. We rejoice again when a teen-ager reports having received Christ after hearing the program.

"Unshackled!" can be heard throughout the Americas, in Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia and "down under." It has gone on closed circuit to inmates of hospitals and prisons and to men of the Navy aboard ships at sea. A specially produced version in Arabic is broadcast throughout the Middle East. Because many Christian stations re-run past programs as many as 14 times a week, it is probable that *"Unshackled!"* is on the air somewhere at almost any hour of the 24.

To us it seems miraculous that while radio drama was going into a decline and almost disappearing, God gave the increase, "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38).



During its 30 years of broadcasting, many "Unshackled!" listeners have written to tell what "the program that makes you face yourself and think" means to them. Included on page 5 are letters from a few of those listeners.



Odell may be seen in action on Saturdays from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., as he directs the "Unshackled!" cast in dramatizing stories of Mission converts and others. Each week, up to 100 people, including church groups from distant points, watch the production of the program. Afterward, many stay for a tour and tasty dinner at the Mission before the Saturday evening testimony meeting.

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