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The Consummate Consequential Comedian

Jim Cox

■ Osgood Conklin, principal of Madison High School; nemesis to English teacher Connie Brooks, widely recognized as Our Miss Brooks.

■ Rudolph Atterbury, discerningly inflexible ranking banker over George Cooper, namesake of *My Favorite Husband* — two males often torpedoed by their spouses, Iris Atterbury and Liz Cooper (Lucille Ball), the latter understudying for celebrated machinations to follow.

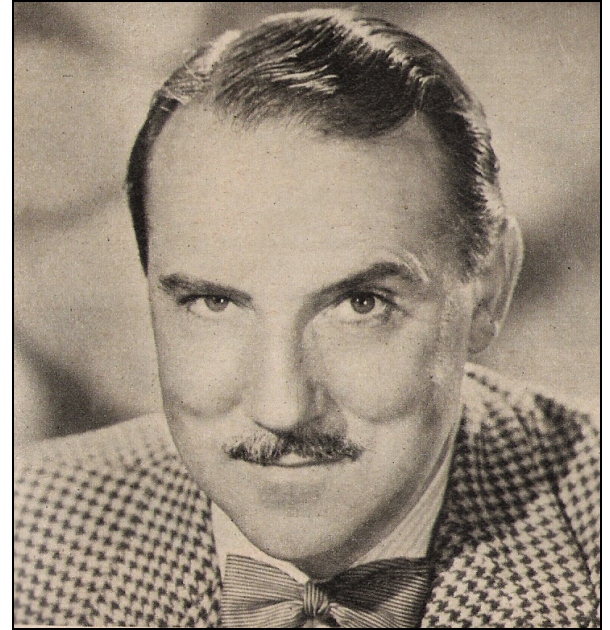
■ Mayor Charles LaTrivia of Wistful Vista, a nerdy windbag with a penchant for contorted metaphors; and F. Ogden (Foggy) Williams, an imprecise “good day . . . probably” weathercaster, sans the foggiest notion of true atmospheric conditions: a couple of depictions on *Fibber McGee & Molly*.

■ Rumson Bullard, abrasive neighbor to Throckmorton P. (The Great) Gildersleeve, both adroitly argumentative and equally practiced at standing their ground on any issue in contention.

■ Harry Morton, another resident of the overbearing and inflexible breed, particularly witnessed in exchanges with his wife Blanche and neighbors George Burns and Gracie Allen.

See a pattern emerging here?

It's obvious that these figures were exhibitions of a strain of classic characterizations surrounding the irascibly domineering, sneering autocratic male who could be certified as an overstuffed shirt. He would also readily spar with anybody tossing cold water on his parade. The point not to be missed is that all of these — and several more



analogous figures — were played to sterling perfection by a single peerless thespian: Gale Gordon, the consummate consequential comedian.

Despite the label, Gordon launched his durably typecast run as a killjoy by playing the arrogant District Attorney Miller on the newspaper crime drama *Big Town* between 1937 and 1942. Although he experienced a few deviations later, *Big Town* was a watershed moment in Gordon's life. There he unmistakably introduced some defining traits that were to brand him for the remainder of his enduring professional career.

Undoubtedly best remembered for his sidesplitting tenacity as the foil on several TV sitcoms starring Lucille Ball, the peerless actor is also recalled by legions of vintage radio enthusiasts for his comedic bombshells aboard a bevy of radio incarnations. Gordon was, in fact, a recurring cast member in no fewer than 28 aural network ventures. Beyond the handful identified already, the following

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Gale Gordon (Continued from page 1)

qualified him as one of the busiest players on the ether: *Tarzan* (as Cecil Clayton); *Parties at Pickfair* (male lead in an anthology opposite star Mary Pickford); *Irene Rich Dramas* (male lead in a myriad of narratives); *Flash Gordon* (namesake role); *Stories of the Black Chamber* (master spy Paradine); *The Cinnamon Bear* (in multiple supporting roles); *The Joe E. Brown Show* (Mr. Bullhammer, Brown's talent agency chief); *The Wonder Show* (in supporting roles, his first working link with Lucille Ball, a duo that prevailed for a half-century); *The Amazing Interplanetary Adventures of Flash Gordon* (again in the title role); *The Shadow of Fu Manchu* (Dr. James Petrie, one of dual heroes opposing the evil one); *Orson Welles Theater* (in various roles); *Treasury Star Parade* (a plethora of parts); *The Whistler* (as narrator); *The Judy Canova Show* (neighbor Mr. Simpson and publicity agent Gordon Mansfield); *The Fabulous Dr. Tweedy* (professor Alexander Potts); *Jonathan Trimble, Esquire* (namesake journalist known as "a pompous gentleman, a tyrant in his own household"); *The Casebook of Gregory Hood* (title role); *Johnny Modero, Pier 23* (Father Leahy, a waterfront priest); *Junior Miss* (Harry Graves, overbearing father of the teen protagonist); *Granby's Green Acres* (John Granby, who traded his city banking job to run a ramshackle farm in the country); *The Penny Singleton Show* (Judge Beshomer Grundell, who schemed to win the affections of a newly-widowed lady); and *Mr. and Mrs. Blandings* (attorney Bill Cole).

Gale Gordon hailed from a thespianic family. His mother and father were veterans of the stage. Later, he also wed an ingénue who turned up in a few of the radio series in which he regularly appeared. For 58 years he was the husband of actress Virginia Curley who played his spouse, Martha Conklin, in *Our Miss Brooks* on radio and television. Furthermore, the couple appeared together in multiple episodes of *Death Valley Days*. Late in life the twosome resided in the same nursing facility and died within a month of each other. His passing, from lung cancer on June 30, 1995 in Escondido, California, followed hers. They had no children.

Born Charles T. Aldrich Jr. in New York City on February 20, 1906, the gifted entertainer came by his talent naturally. His father, Charles Aldrich, was a vaudevillian. His mom was a British theater actress, Gloria Gordon. She, too, was to play on several of the radio series on which her renowned son performed. Although Jack Benny loved it when she played his show in the recurring part of an elderly spinster identified only as Emily, Gloria Gordon may be best evoked as Kathleen

O'Reilly. In the late 1940s and early 1950s that Irish housekeeper was landlady to CBS Radio's ditzy *My Friend Irma* (Peterson) and her roommate, Jane Stacy. The fact is, Charles Aldrich's (Gale Gordon's) parents imbued him with an appetite he never lost for the footlights.

From the ages of one to nine young Gordon lived with his family in England where his parents found work on the stage. He didn't return to New York until he was 17; then went back to England to graduate from Woodbridge School in Suffolk. He was smitten by the greasepaint just like his elders. His initial exposure before a group of paying patrons resulted in taking a small part as an extra in a 1923 Canadian stage play, "The Dancers." It starred Richard Bennett, father of Constance, Joan and Barbara. Bennett taught him plenty, sharing what he knew about makeup, acting and voice training, all of which helped prepare the youth for his life ahead. Gordon moved to Hollywood in 1925 and the following year premiered on the air while strumming a ukulele and singing "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More, No More." He wasn't paid for it and acknowledged later "I nearly killed radio that day." By the way, he was never asked to play an instrument on the ether again.

He performed in theatrical motion pictures — there were 16 on his resume, beginning with an uncredited part at 27 in 1933's *Elmer, the Great*, plus several movies in which he was cast as stuffy military officers culminating in a minor role in 1989's *The 'burbs* when he was 83. Yet overwhelmingly, he was a broadcast "star," the label of a relentless supporting actor notwithstanding. Initially on radio, followed by television, Gale Gordon was acclaimed and admired by legions of dotting fans that figuratively ate from his hand. So proficient was his impeccable timing that he could lead audiences into raucous convulsions even before he delivered a line, fans having observed his long history as a whimsically unyielding by-the-book gasbag.

Over a protracted tenure in show business Gordon won continuing portrayals on about three dozen radio and television features that spanned six decades, from the 1930s to the 1990s. So busy was he that by 1933 he was the highest paid thespian in Hollywood radio. Still he was almost a decade away from the really meaty roles that were to define his career while earning him the big bucks, parts like those of Mayor LaTrivia, "Foggy" Williams, Rumson Bullard, Harry Morton, Osgood Conklin and Rudolph Atterbury. With those in his dossier he was set for life.

Gordon was 35 when he began playing Mayor LaTrivia
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Gale Gordon (Continued from page 2)

on *Fibber McGee & Molly* on October 14, 1941, the first of those persnickety comedic characters. So well received was he in that one that he turned up on the same show not only as weatherman Williams but also in several other parts: among them, Karl Snarl, a finance company manager with an attitude; and as one of Molly's old flames, Otis Cadwallader. The roles readily fit the typecasting already established for Gordon.

During that same interval he picked up the part of Rumson Bullard on *The Great Gildersleeve*, a spinoff sitcom with origins in the McGee show. Bullard was an affluent but abrasive neighbor who resided across the street from Summerfield's water commissioner. Like McGee, Gildy's demeanor exhibited a level of animated jesting. But he could also display a provoked reaction to some denizens he encountered, including Bullard. It was an opening tailor-made for his neighbor. There Gordon accelerated the personality developing about him as he became the cantankerous curmudgeon Gildy loved to rib. "I am never nasty, unless I get paid for it," Gordon told an inquisitor. Counteracting this, a few weeks following his death in 1995 the *We Love Lucy* newsletter maintained: "Off stage, he was one of the sweetest, gentlest men to walk the earth."

As his discerning voice made him easily identified to millions of radio listeners, Gordon was turning up all over the dial several times weekly on manifold networks. And as his star rose, his good fortune increased. In July 1948 he debuted in not one but two CBS Radio situation comedies — *My Favorite Husband* and *Our Miss Brooks*! In the former he again appeared with film actress Lucille Ball as well as with film actor Richard Denning and radio comedienne Bea Benaderet. It was Ball's first series of the type of character that was to make her infamous around the globe.

In reality, Lucy wanted Gordon and Benaderet to appear as Fred and Ethel Mertz in *I Love Lucy*. Desi selected William Frawley as Fred after Frawley allegedly interjected himself into the deliberations. The show's original director, Marc Daniels, picked Vivian Vance for the part of Ethel. Benaderet was already signed by Burns and Allen as TV's Blanche Morton and Gordon had long-term contractual obligations for Osgood Conklin to *Our Miss Brooks* so neither was available anyway.

It was in the latter improvisation that Gordon probably reached his zenith as an aural performer. For nine seasons on radio (1948-57) and another four on television (1952-56) he was the predictably and irascibly beguiling Mr.

Conklin, principal of Madison High School — intimidator par excellence of a certain English instructor. Invariably before his weekly dictates could be fully implemented the tables were turned and "old marblehead" as he was sometimes branded by his minions. Mr. Conklin got his long-anticipated comeuppance to the guffaws of studio audience and legions tuning in. Listeners knew beyond doubt that Humpty Dumpty would suffer a great fall before the end of every installment. The unresolved question until then was: how will he get his? As he did, Gordon delivered the "slow burn" trademark for which he was legendary.

The *Our Miss Brooks* plots were frequently shrouded in minor misunderstandings, mistaken identities or a nefarious or duplicitous undertaking either sanctioned or instigated by Connie Brooks. As the tale wound toward its conclusion, the expected showdown with Conklin occurred at last. Although the audience couldn't guess how the denouement would play out, anticipation lingering from past experiences pointed toward the climactic eruption. Fans knew Conklin would be left with egg on his face — at the hands of a withering Miss Brooks, whose mischief was revealed at last. At that juncture Conklin could slay a dragon after his well-intentioned mission was sunk.

As a master of timing, Gordon could bring down the house as he patiently waited before speaking upon discovering the mayhem Brooks and her cohorts had provoked. Finally, he launched boisterous studio laughter by merely calling the name of his adversary, applying his deepest basal-toned timbre: "Miss Brooks?" Following her acknowledgment of his summons — a soft-spoken, shaky, high-pitched "Yes, Mr. Conklin?" by a subject who knew she'd been had — there was yet another extraordinarily lengthy pause before he went for the jugular. Speaking deliberately, calmly, almost reassuringly, his remarks were measurably doled out, gravitating to a crescendo. When he got there, he lost his temper completely and chastened her foolhardiness, raising his level of modulation to its highest decibel peak. Without fail, the onlookers were in spasms by then while his cornered prey could hardly utter a peep. It was one of the funniest moments in radio and it occurred nearly every week. The scripting was positively brilliant, giving those thespians plenty of inspired material to work with, greatly augmenting those priceless outcomes.

Returning to Lucy, the droll actor developed a rapport with Ball that persisted. Following *I Love Lucy*, Gordon turned up occasionally on *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour* (1957-60) on CBS-TV. Then came three more video

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Gale Gordon (Continued from page 3)

sitcoms with Ball as star and Gordon as her nemesis: CBS's *The Lucy Show* — Gordon joined the cast in 1963 after the show had been running for a year and remained with it to the end of the run in 1968 — once again appearing as a banker, Theodore J. Mooney, with Lucy Carmichael (Ball) as his secretary; CBS's *Here's Lucy* (1968-74), wherein he portrayed Harrison Carter, brother-in-law of Lucille Carter (Ball), with her as his secretary at the employment agency he operated; and ABC's *Life with Lucy*, lasting only eight episodes in the fall of 1986 before being yanked. There Gordon played Curtis McGibbon, business partner of Lucy Barker (Ball). In the latter, McGibbon's son and Barker's daughter were also wed to one another. With that show Gale Gordon turned out to be the only actor to co-star or guest-star in every weekly series — on radio and television — that Lucille Ball had been in dating back to the 1930s.

Gordon earned several other TV credits: *The Brothers* (1956-57), a half-hour CBS sitcom co-starring Bob Sweeney in which the siblings operated a San Francisco photography studio, a show that absolutely bombed; NBC's *Sally* (1958) with Gordon playing Bascomb Bleacher Sr., manager of the Banford and Bleacher Department Store employing Sally Truesdale (Joan Caulfield) as a sales clerk; CBS's *Pete and Gladys* (1961-62), a spinoff from *December Bride*, where Gordon was Uncle Paul to Pete Porter (Harry Morgan); and CBS's *Dennis the Menace* (1962-63) in which Gordon played a neighbor, assuming the part of actor Joseph Kearns following his unexpected death. Simply put, Gordon seldom lacked for anything to do.

That wasn't all by any stretch. He appeared in numerous single episodes of a myriad of television series (*Climax!*, *The Real McCoys*, *Playhouse 90*, *Studio One*, *Westinghouse Desilu Playhouse*, *The Danny Thomas Hour*, et al.) and in a few made-for-television films, including 1977's *Lucy Calls the President*. He was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and posthumously named to the Radio Hall of Fame in 1999.

The busy consummate consequential comedian was an impeccable showman who invested his life in making people laugh. Few — if any — did it as often and for as long as he, nor any better. Most of his peers were simply never in the same ball park.

Jim Cox began acquiring vintage radio programming in the 1960s, expanding his library beyond recordings with books, periodicals and memorabilia of several formats. He holds membership in five old time radio clubs and writes prolifically for club newsletters and other nostalgia-oriented publications. He attends OTR conventions annually and frequently contributes to the OTR Digest on the Internet. A preservationist, Jim recently completed his 15th book. Eleven of those pertain to broadcasting; most have been released by McFarland & Co., www.mcfarlandpub.com or 800-253-2187. Titles include: *The Great Radio Soap Operas*; *The Great Radio Audience Participation Shows*; *Say Goodnight, Gracie: The Last Years of Network Radio*; *Radio Crime Fighters: Over 300 Programs from the Golden Age*; *Frank and Anne Hummert's Radio Factory: The Programs and Personalities of Broadcasting's Most Prolific Producers*; *Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons: A Complete History and Episode Log of Radio's Most Durable Detective*; *Music Radio: The Great Performers and Programs of the 1920s through Early 1960s*; *Historical Dictionary of American Radio Soap Operas* (Scarecrow Press, www.scarecrowpress.com, 800-462-6420); and *The Daytime Serials of Television, 1946-1960*. To be released in January and available for ordering from McFarland now: *Radio Speakers: News Junkies, Sports Jockeys, Tattletales, Tipsters, Toastmasters and Coffee Klatch Couples Who Verbalized the Jargon of the Aural Ether from the 1920s to the 1980s – A Biographical Dictionary*. Also coming soon from the same publisher: *The Great Radio Sitcoms*.

A News Editor Jeff Kallman

On television, the longtime anchor of *Douglas Edwards with the News* (the predecessor of *The CBS Evening News*) resembled an overworked businessman taking a break to read the newspaper for the second half of his half-hour dinner break. On radio, the almost-eternal anchor of *The World Tonight* sounded exactly the way he didn't on camera: a solid, no-nonsense, and reliable news editor.

Until he retired in 1988, you had an easy time thinking [Douglas Edwards](#) was born somewhere inside a CBS facility. By retirement time he seemed as much a ghost as a working journalist, but perhaps that was just the memory of his television years at play. He was pleasant looking and lacked the ominous dramatic voice, and he wasn't exactly of the Murrow school as a phrasemaker; it didn't necessarily sound as though the fate of the free world hung in the balance of what he did or didn't say about it.

Edwards did have a rather full schedule even if you didn't factor *Douglas Edwards with the News*. He hosted television's *Masquerade Party* from 1952-58 and [Armstrong Circle Theater](#) from 1957-61; he even kicked off the daily radio soap [Wendy Warren and the News](#) by reading a couple of minutes of news before handing off to the title heroine.

But at least when *Douglas Edwards with the News* signed off every night, you weren't tempted to make fun of him signing off. You saved that for [John Cameron Swayze](#) and his signoff after hopscotching around the world (well, a map) for *Camel News Caravan* headlines: "That's the story, folks—glad we could get together." Eba-dee, eba-dee, eba-dee, eba-that's all, folks!

You can read no few histories of CBS News and conclude that Edwards had all the urgency of a bowl of bland oatmeal. Particularly when those rapsclions [Huntley and Brinkley](#) finally bumped themselves right past Edwards. A jack-of-all-trades who seemed to squeeze in the news can withstand only so long the onslaught of full-time Serious News in a package of wit, Beethoven's ninth, and good night David, good night Chet kisses.

Radio was Edwards's seat and meat. (He even landed a [Peabody Award](#) to prove it, thanks to his impeccable spot report from a small plane overflying the sinking [Andrea Doria](#).) He sounded precisely as he really was, a solid reporter turned news editor knowing just which weight to apply to which stories, and knowing equally when to get the hell out of their way and let them speak for themselves.

Edwards was sober and magnificent at 9 a.m. Eastern War Time, 6 June 1944, signing on for *CBS World News* and striding right into "the last-minute details" of [D-Day](#)'s launch in northern France.

Allied air reconnaissance fliers have returned to the scene of a battle which began on the northern French coastline early this morning to report that several beachheads have now been established. Allied forces are splashing their way inland from these beachheads, according to reconnaissance photos. At the same time, Allied parachute troops dropped behind the enemy lines last month are disrupting enemy defence systems and waiting to join forces with the troops pouring ashore on the beaches.

Prime Minister [Winston] Churchill told [the House of] Commons that more than four thousand ships, together with many thousand smaller craft, are transporting the invasion force across the channel. Churchill declared that the invasion is proceeding, and we quote, according to a plan – and what a plan.

At Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force, it's reported that German destroyers and U-boats are rushing into the operational area off the northern coast of France, and no doubt are being dealt with by the Allies. Incidentally, the initials of these headquarters are SHAEF. And you're going to get mighty familiar with them.

An Allied military commentator at SHAEF declared this morning that H hour for the invasion ranged from six to eight a.m. European time. Another report from that same source revealed that American battleships are supporting the Allied landing, with United States Coast Guard units also participating in the operation.

The British bombing command send more than thirteen hundred of its heaviest bombers roaring across the channel last night, and this morning, for a saturation attack on the invasion area.

And now, here are some last-minute bulletins: Allied troops have landed on the channel islands of Guernsey and Jersey, according to a German broadcast. The same enemy source says Allied tanks have landed midway between Cherbourg and Lahava, but that the greatest concentrations of landing craft have been observed off the two ports themselves. Earlier enemy broadcasts said Cannes was the focal point of the entire attack, and that the drive inland is aimed at the city of Paris.

And, just a few moments ago, this news came from Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces: Casualties among Allied airborne troops on France have been light. We'll repeat that, Supreme

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A News Editor (Continued from page 5)

Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces: Casualties among Allied airborne troops on France have been light.

Edwards then quoted Franklin Roosevelt's comment, four hours before German radio announcements of the invasion, that the fall of Rome to the Allies "came at an opportune time" for D-Day's launch, followed by a brief prayer from the president for the success of the troops making the invasion. After which Dwight Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, hit the air to speak to western European people about what was about to begin, with Edwards quoting Eisenhower's announcement and warning against "preliminary uprisings" before the orders for "great battles ahead" could be given.

From there, Edwards recapped dispatches from pool correspondents [Richard C. Hottelet](#) (from London; a remarkable item from that moment between preparation and launch, and from his flight aboard "a British marauder" as it joined the early rounds of the invasion), Herbert N. Clark (via a Combined American Networks pool, on how the Nazis were likely outguessed as to where the invasion might begin: "The master race has fallen down again"), James Willard (also via CAN, on the thousands of Allied aircraft working the night before "softening up" the invasion coast), Wright Bryan (reporting "scattered, small-arms fire from the field" greeting one early flight of Allied paratroops, as well as an Eisenhower visit to their camp the day before), and Stanley Richardson (an eyewitness, shipboard account of naval action opening the paths to the landings: "It was all too incredibly easy").

After reviewing the bristling overnight newsroom activity (CBS's [Ned Calmer](#) airing an Associated Press dispatch on a German announcement of the invasion's beginning, though emphasising it was an unconfirmed enemy statement), Edwards made room enough for a quiet reminder that, D-Day though it was, there was still business at hand on the flip side of the planet. A young girl in London told CBS's Charles Shaw ("he practically was town crier for the city . . . which was largely unaware in the early morning that the invasion had begun"), "Thank God." Japanese radio in a German language broadcast beamed to Europe expected the landers would be "quickly annihilated by the courageous German army." Australian radio gave invasion news "the right of way . . . but there's not much external excitement."

Here in our own country, reaction from coast to coast was similar. People kept on working overnight shifts in shipyards and other factories, and went to work as usual this morning. But everyone seems to be more serious, and

many stopped in their tasks long enough to offer prayer for the success of the Allied effort.

Perhaps most dramatic of all was the ringing of the [Liberty Bell](#) in Philadelphia's Independence Hall. The ancient bell was struck six times, as Philadelphia's mayor Bernard Samuels read the famous inscription, 'Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.'

And what of reaction in the heart of the Axis?

Well, German propagandists asserted today that, despite the invasion of Western Europe, life continued normal in Berlin, no excitement, no additions, no special radio announcement. But a part of these assertions, obviously, were rather false. From the time of the first landings, a constant stream of broadcasts came from the German transmitters, many of them carrying more than an indication that Hitler's defences along the western coast had been caught napping.

Edwards was no less flappable eight months later, anchoring *CBS World News Today* around a series of reports from Corregidor, Guam, Iwo Jima, and Europe. MacArthur struck toward Manila, Nimitz eyed Tokyo and Yokohama, Montgomery eyed the knockout blow in central Europe, and the First Ukrainian Army had two German cities under its shells.

Then came the handoffs, to [Charles Collingwood](#) from Paris (the U.S. Third Army and the First Canadian Army's remarkable, arduous push to the Siegfried Line), Bill Downs in Belgium (with the U.S. First Army, halted in heavy rain, quoting a coffee-sipping GI, "What are those guys out in the Philippines going to think of us, if this keeps up?" and observing, "Simply standing in a chow line is almost becoming an amphibious operation"—before reporting German replenishment aimed at an anticipated major battle west of Cologne), [Eric Sevareid](#) (following a commercial for Admiral refrigerators; in London, from Parliament, where members were likely to ask after the protocols for an unconditional German surrender and dismantling of the Nazi military and political-economic administration), and Tim Lenhart (from Pearl Harbour, monitoring Pacific dispatches, interviewing an Army Air Force B-29 radio operator on missions over Tokyo and Iwo Jima: "They have learned that our firepower is quite effective, and more than a match for theirs").

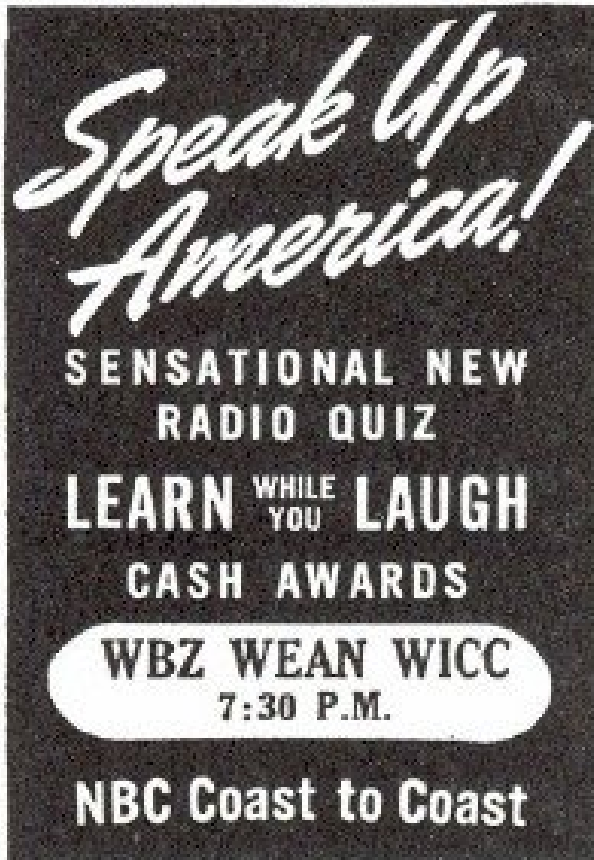
It's probably unfair to compare a latter-day *The World Tonight* with a serving of the 1940s or 1950s. The elder Douglas Edwards didn't have Eric Sevareid, Charles Collingwood, Richard C. Hotlette, Bill Downs, and the others to hand off. But he still had his surety. Fox News

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likes to say of itself, "We report. You decide." Rest assured that those who passed that suggestion had to have heard Edwards on the radio at least once.

If anyone deserves to have the last laugh, Edwards is he. He had to be dragged to television something just short of kicking and screaming, fearing television was destined to be a dead end. He was right only in regard to the high profile of his television life (he spent years doing a five-minute midday television news update).

But it's also something of a shame that Edwards went to his reward sixteen years ago. As of 4 November, the evidence of his radio rightness includes Edwards's induction into the [Radio Hall of Fame](#).



Who am I? Last time I looked, my Medicare card says I'm Frank A. McGurn, Jr. Born and lived in Oak Park, Illinois, for 46 years and moved to McHenry County about 30 years ago. I didn't want to be close to Chicago any more, so we moved with 7 of my 8 kids.

I started collecting OTR in 1971 or 72, and have about 9,000 programs. In those days my source of OTR was local radio. I'm sure you know who Chuck Schaden is; He had a four hour program "Those Were the Days" and still does on Saturday afternoon.

I never had access to the Internet until 2001. I had no idea how great it is. I never had any contact with any other OTR collectors. I was in the dark.

The Chicago Tribune has a column called "Action Line." It found answers for questions that readers asked. One day in the column someone wanted to know a source for Abbott & Costello's "Who's On First." Action Line directed the reader to Chuck Schadens radio program. Chuck played an Abbott & Costello show. So I took out my new Magnavox cassette recorder and taped it. I went into a private room so there would be no back ground noise. I had no Patch cord.

My main source of OTR was Chuck's shows. He had three going at a time on different stations. A guy name George Barker had an hour OTR program in Elgin, Ill, called "OTR from The Attic." George broadcast from his attic at 10:00, five nights a week. In about 1978 George died, and a young man just out of college, Carl Amari, took over. The station barely got out of Elgin. As you may know, Carl went on to start Radio Sprits.

I started an index card catalog of programs and when I got 4,000 programs it became hard to look up programs. A daughter suggested putting my collection on computer. Her husband had an old one. I first had to learn how to use it and about a year later I had my collection on the computer. I could find an episode and add new ones. Now I have my collection in a database called Microsoft Works Data Base.

I'm not adding much to my collection due to lack of storage space in our condo. My goal is to listen to OTR and record shows I have. If one is better quality than the one in my collection I re-tape and make a label using a label program on my computer.

Currently I volunteer to teach Seniors Basic Computers for McHenry Township. I have two classes a month on Monday, Wednesdays and Friday for two hours. This keeps me out of my wife's way.

Frank McGurn

McHenry, ILL (50 miles NW of Chicago)

Our New House

Jim Jones

After months of discussions, planning, and working, the Old Time Researchers Group is pleased to announce that we have a new home. Like a growing family we outgrew our old starter house and have moved into a brand new home. We no longer reside at <http://otterprojectonline.info>. That house was torn down and no longer exists.

Our new home is located at <http://www.otrr.org>, and we invite everyone to come over for a visit.

We have been very pleased with all the positive responses to the new look. So far everyone seems very pleased with the updated logo and general layout. It has a more professional appearance and better displays the OTR research efforts done by this the outstanding group.

Our new home is designed to be more user friendly and much easier to navigate. The new buttons and pop-up menus located along the top of the page make it much easier to locate any page within the site. Also, unlike our old site, we have tried to carry the same theme throughout, making it even easier to get from section to section.

Like a new house there is still some touch up painting and landscaping to be done. Within the next few months we will probably be changing the 'Scripts' button to 'OTR Documents.' The OTR Document button will have a pop-up menu with links to a Scripts page and a Magazine page. Many OTR magazines are being scanned into PDF format at this time for inclusion on the site.

Also, the master database, which is accessed from the 'Direct Access' menu, is going to undergo some changes. Presently, if you click on a show title an episode log opens in a separate window. In addition to this feature there will be links to show Synopsis and to First Line Project.

For those of you who enjoy this magazine and would like to review past issues, there is a new link to the Radio Times Archive. Just 'mouse-over' (technical term used by web designers) the Radio Times button and follow the 'Radio Times Archive' link. This will take you to a page where you can easily review or download past issues of the Old Radio Times in a PDF format.

If you have never visited our web site we invite you to do so. We provide many useful features for the OTR enthusiast such as:

OTR Art - Most likely the largest collections of downloadable OTR art and picture galleries on the internet. Also, if you are looking for OTR CD covers, this is the place.

OTR Scripts - Original OTR scripts for review and **How**

download.

OTR Database - Jerry H has one of the most respected OTR sites on the web. His site is famous for his OTR logs. However, our db is LARGER. It contains more titles. Also, because the detailed newspaper research done this group our db is also MORE ACCURATE. If you are looking for show titles and play dates be sure to visit OTR.db/Direct Access.

Guest Map - A fun way to let the world know where you are. Be sure to mark your location as we'd like to know where other OTRer's exist.

OTR WIKI - One of the most popular sites on the net. This is where our 'First Line Of Dialogue' resides, and the folks there are doing a great job. Their recent work on 'Yours Truly Johnny Dollar' is perhaps the most definitive research in existence. We are considering releasing it as a 'stand alone' book.

If you belong to an OTR group or have a link to an OTR site that you would like listed (under Other Groups or OTR Sites) on our site, please contact Jim B (beshiresjim@yahoo.com).

Again we are quite pleased with our new home. Please bookmark our location and visit us often.



Groucho and his Brothers Left Their Marx on Network Radio, Pt. 4

Robert Jennings & Wayne Boenig

Contrary to the wide-held opinions of most OTRadio collectors, the show [*You Bet Your Life*] was not an immediate smash hit. The first few months of the program were done live, and there were problems. Hesitations on the part of both Groucho and the guests were common. Sometimes the results were so bland and banal that even the sound engineers complained of boredom. Meanwhile radio insiders shook their heads and predicted an early demise to the program and the end of Groucho's show business career.

But Guedel persisted. His two biggest hits, *People Are Funny* and *Ozzie and Harriet* had both faced almost unrelenting hostility from radio professionals, right up until they had become big hits. He was convinced he had the right person and the right concept for a successful show.

Finally he came up with a solution. He would use recording tape. Bing Crosby's insistence on using tape to pre-record his program had broken the decades-long network ban on canned shows. Guedel changed the production format, turning the program into an hour show, then used the tape recorder to edit it down to half an hour so only the funniest and most interesting bits from that hour would actually be broadcast.

Guedel was aware that Bob Hope had used a variation of this same formula by doing an hour-long dress rehearsal before a live audience, then editing down and using only the funniest material in his actual half hour live broadcasts. This technique had kept Bob Hope in the top of the ratings for almost a dozen years, and Guedel was sure the same principle would work with *You Bet Your Life*.

He was right. The show's popularity took a huge jump and suddenly Groucho had mastered the final show business frontier, with a quiz show, altho the industry called it a comedy-quiz show, the first time that term could be truly applied to a successful radio program. In one year *You Bet Your Life* moved from an anemic 72nd place in the ratings, to the top ten. In 1949 Groucho won the Peabody Award as radio's outstanding comedian and at age 59 was on top of the world in a show that was uniquely his, directly crafted to his unique talents.

Groucho, who had appeared almost all his professional life with a fake mustache, grew a real one specifically for this production. He had found it very useful over the years to remove the greasepaint mustache and the stage

prop makeup to help protect his privacy off stage. But for the new radio program he declared that he wanted the public to meet the real Groucho, in person, up close and not in makeup, so he grew a genuine mustache.

It took more than pure spontaneity to make this mixture work. Guedel and his staff screened all contestants before allowing them on the air. The staff was looking for interesting people, unique individuals with something that would make them noteworthy. People pushing unusual books or trying to manufacture unusual products were ideal. True characters with bizarre personalities were even better. Groucho could relate to true characters on every level and never looked down on them.

After the right contestants were found, possible topics of conversation were suggested to each individual. Groucho was appraised before each show of who the contestants were and what their unique handle was going to be. Then the contestants met Groucho and the conversations started in front of a live audience with no coaching and no rehearsing.

In its Nov 7, 1949 issue, *Time Magazine* did an article on the program and featured a Groucho quote: "In the old days they almost threw me off the air if I deviated from the script. I had to sign a written pledge that I would read only what was before me. But now, I'm doing what comes naturally. It's like stealing money to get paid for this." At the time he was 'stealing' \$3,000 a week, plus half of the profits the show generated.

Groucho was always up for the show. He made horrible puns, referred to his family members past and present, plugged the sponsors at every opportunity, and somehow managed to make even jittery contestants comfortable throughout the entire barrage. Contestants knew they were going to be in for a series of sly insults, but they also had to have enough nerve to stand up to Groucho and say what was on their mind. "You've got to have people who have something to say and [who] will say it" according to co-producer Bernie Smith. Guedel once commented about his star that: "I figured he'd be great working with people out of an audience. When people were being funny, Groucho could be the perfect straight man; when the people played it straight, Groucho couldn't miss with his own comedy."

Groucho was usually "on" with the staff members as well. Robert Dwan, co-producer of the show, related that often he tried to call Groucho to discuss the program and found himself being treated like a contestant; being consistently interrupted by a flood of puns, deliberate risqué misquotes of his own remarks and assorted corny

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Groucho (Continued from page 9)

jokes. That was when Groucho was in a good mood, which, fortunately, was most of the time. When he was in a bad mood people tried to stay well away from him.

Getting suitable contestants was a problem which developed early, and continued to be a major difficulty throughout the entire run of the show. In the early days contestants were pulled directly from the studio audience, given a short interview to determine possible interests, peculiarities and subjects which might be topics for conversation during the interviews with Groucho, then escorted onstage with no idea of what might happen next.

Sometimes contestants were directly picked from the audience by the audience itself. In one case an audience consisting mainly of professional plumbers was assembled, with several being interviewed in the pre-show warmup. Then the audience itself voted on who would be the contestants that evening.

In 1949 Groucho gave an exclusive interview to *Radio Mirror* which detailed how much a learning experience the early shows actually were. He related that in the early years of the show, for example, in order to get suitable female contestants they asked for volunteers, herded the women, mostly pretty young housewives, to the back of the studio, and whoever talked loudest and longest became contestants.

There was always an effort to secure people with interesting occupations, but early on they also discovered some pitfalls associated with this effort. According to Groucho, by 1949 the show was looking for contestants with interesting jobs: “. . . only if the occupations are familiar to everyone. We’ve discovered a peculiar point: if a contestant’s occupation is too interesting the audience won’t laugh. They become too engrossed in what the contestant has to say. On one broadcast we had a chemist who prattled merrily on about the atomic age. It was fascinating stuff, but nobody laughed. After all, we’re running a comedy show, so we have to get guffaws. We tried a fashion designer and the same thing happened. Nowadays we try to stick with everyday occupations which have a solid basis for potential humor, such as the butcher, the grocer, the insurance man, the home demonstrator, the bank clerk.”

Sometimes famous authors and personalities in the news were deliberately chosen for the show, and in one instance Groucho’s own eleven year old daughter Melinda was a contestant. “She’s not in my tax bracket. We can keep what she makes,” quipped Groucho when asked about the appearance.

Art Linkletter was an early guest star on the show,

presumably because of his connection with John Guedel, but otherwise show business stars were generally not allowed on the show, even if they volunteered to appear for free, an offer which a number of Groucho’s friends made. Groucho felt that regular people from all walks of life on stage and under pressure were better natural comedians than almost any professional. The ideal contestant mix was to have two interesting, articulate people with opposite interests or lifestyles. If the pair was too similar one of them was bound to get lost in the word play that followed.

Eventually the entire staff of thirteen people was pressed into extended service in the perpetual hunt for new contestants. They watched for possibilities in the newspapers, in the letters asking to be on the show, even in their own neighborhoods. Each week about two hundred prospects were turned up. Of that number about twenty were actually interviewed by the staff, and from that group six people were finally chosen.

On the broadcast of May 6th, 1954, God Almighty was even a contestant, teamed with a housewife from Sioux City who had thirteen children. God described himself as “the supreme being, the lord of the universe, the creator of everything that exists — life, the Earth — everything.” Groucho played along and queried God about the limits of his powers and his influence on the human race. The interplay worked so well that God and the housewife were the only guests for that entire program.

The six contestants were not paired up until the actual night of the taping. Each pair was kept off stage and out of hearing while the others met Groucho in front of the audience and played the game. This was to prevent anyone from gaining an advantage in the cash quiz. No one knew who the big winners were till the end of the program.

The quiz part of the program was plain as dirt. As many as three couples were contestants, and each couple was allocated \$20 which they could risk any way they wanted on the four tiers of questions. The money could double with each successive step, so it was possible for a couple to end up with as much as \$320 if they were successful thru all four tiers. It was also possible to go broke on the very first question, a situation which happened far more frequently than the producers wanted. Groucho always cautioned contestants to talk over the questions and come up with only one answer between them, but it was also common for one contestant to jump the gun and give an answer without saying a word to the other half of the team. There were a dozen or so categories from which to choose, and at the end of the

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Groucho (Continued from page 10)

show the couple who had made the most money came back to take a chance on the Jackpot Question.

The prize for this was usually \$500 or \$1000. If the jackpot was not won, another \$500 would be added to the total and next week's winner could get a chance at a much bigger pot.

The final questions were not easy, and they were deliberately tricky. For example, on the program where God was a contestant, the final question was "Is it possible to be in two places at one time?" God immediately blurted out that no, that was impossible. You'd think God would know about those things, but it turned out he was wrong. As Groucho explained it, if you stand at a state line, and place one foot inside the boundaries of one state, and the other foot inside the boundaries of the adjoining state you can actually be in two places at the same time.

As mentioned, the jackpot questions were usually tricky. Sometimes the tricky jackpot questions backfired. In one instance the question involved a question about Shakespeare's plays. The question was "In Shakespeare's Henry IV, Henry V, and the Merry Wives of Windsor, there appears a cowardly braggart whose humor and wit have endeared him to millions of world over...I want you to identify this genial fellow." The contestants conferred a few moments before answering "Pistol." "Wrong," said Groucho, "the correct answer is Falstaff."

After the show the contestants argued the point with Groucho and the entire show staff. The tricky part of the question is that Falstaff had actually not appeared on stage in all three plays. In Henry V he is present in the play, but only as a ghost (Act II, Scene 3), whereas the decidedly minor character of Pistol had actually been a player in all three productions.

Groucho and Guedel instantly realized the potential for lots of free publicity from the controversy. Publically Groucho announced that he was going to submit the question to five famous authorities on Shakespeare and accept whatever answer they came up with. The experts were Laurence Olivier, Walter Hampden, Charles Laughton, and critics Brooks Atkinson and Richard Watts.

Time Magazine for Nov 17, 1952 reported the answers. Richard Watts probably summed up the consensus of the experts by declaring that altho Falstaff was technically correct, and that there was considerably doubt that millions over the world would ever find Pistol endearing, he was physically present on stage in all three plays, and he did display "good humor, and some wit" and he was certainly a cowardly braggart, so the young contestants should get the prize. Three out of five agreed

with him, and all five suggested that some or all the prize money should go to the contestants for even remembering such a minor character as Pistol in the first place.

Groucho declared the couple would get the full prize amount, \$1,000, and relied on one of Shakespeare's own lines to sum up the situation: "I am a man whom fortune hath cruelly scratched."

Often some minor circumstances turned into the comedy highpoint of the show. In the 1949 Radio Mirror interview Groucho mentioned his most unusual experience on the show up to that time involved a young man who was a contestant on the show who was extremely nervous because his wife was at a hospital expecting a baby at any moment.

"I was going to ask if he'd like to win a new refrigerator, a new car, and a new home. He was supposed, if course, to say 'yes'. Then I was supposed to say 'All right, just answer one question correctly and you will win all these prizes.' Whereupon I was going to inquire 'who is the President of the United States.' When he answered 'Truman,' I was going to be very funny and say 'That's right. Now here is the question: what is his social security number.

'At that, the audience was supposed to go into gales of laughter.

'Well, here's what happened: the young fellow, sweating profusely, said 'Yes, I'd like to win all those prizes.'

'Just one question,' I began 'and you get them all. Who's the President of the United States?'

'At this point the boy's mind went completely blank. He stammered and fidgeted and wiped his forehead and laughed nervously and gibbered. But for the life of him, he couldn't recall the name of the President of the U.S.'

The audience was alternately amazed, horrified, embarrassed and laughing. They were laughing so loud and so long that only heavy post program tape editing kept the tape from running overtime.

If a couple went bust there was always a final giveaway gag question with a \$25 prize. "Nobody leaves here empty handed," Groucho would say. The favorite question for couples that went bust was "Who is buried in Grant's tomb?" Losers always got a big sympathetic round of applause from the audience.

Adding more interest for the audience, if not necessarily for the contestants themselves, was the "secret word". Any contestant who mentioned the secret word would get an immediate prize of \$50 (later raised to \$100). The band would break out into a fanfare, then go into a raucous rendition of "Be Kind to Your Web Footed

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Groucho (Continued from page 11)

Friends” as a paper-mache duck featuring a Groucho mustache, horn-rimmed glasses and bushy eyebrows would drop from the ceiling.

Groucho would cheerfully provide helpful hints about the Secret Word before talking with each team of contestants: “It’s a common word, something you find around the house” or even more vague: “It’s something you see every day”. Contestants who said the secret word, (almost always inadvertently), were paid on the spot, in cash. This money came directly from Gruedel and Groucho out of their own pockets. The rest of the prizes came out of the sponsor’s budget.

The announcer for the show was George Fenneman who immediately became an essential part of the show’s successful mix. He was the perfect straight-man for Groucho, but often displayed a keen sense of humor as well. Groucho bullied him relentlessly, but Fenneman refused to be ruffled. He introduced the contestants to Groucho on air and provided a bit of background about each person. His was the voice heard at the beginning of each program telling the audience in the studio and at home what the “secret word” was that week. He introduced the star every week with the words “and now here he is, the one, the only...” and the audience would roar out “GROUCHO!”

It was also his job to keep track of the money that was bet. This could be difficult in the days before pocket calculators if a contestant should decide to wager some odd amount. George Fenneman stayed with the program from the beginning right up till the very end in 1961. He did other announcing and voice-overs during the sixties and seventies. During the 1990s he was a paid spokesman for Radio Spirits promoting the old “You Bet Your Life” tapes and the rest of their catalog on their late night radio promotions, and was a guest at a number of old time radio conventions. He passed away in 1997.

This piece by Mr. Jennings and Mr. Boenig was originally presented to a small, private group. It has been revised by the authors. It is the fourth installment of a six piece series on Groucho Marx.



The Secrets of Scotland Yard

Paul W. Urbahns

In an earlier time, just prior to and following the Second World War, the general public was fascinated by the subject of crime. Numerous magazines of "True Crime Stories" filled the newsstands. Radio also helped fill the need with fictional heroes such as Johnny Dollar and The Saint. Few true crime dramas, other than *Gangbusters* or *Dragnet*, sustained long term success on radio.

The Secrets of Scotland Yard was a successful crime drama series, initially airing internationally between 1949 and 1951. Selected episodes finally came to a US radio network for a brief run much later in 1957 over the Mutual Broadcasting System.

8.30 "SECRETS OF SCOTLAND YARD":— With Clive Brook. This week "The case of The Green Eyed Monster".

Radio program guide listing showing Secrets of Scotland Yard appearing on Monday evening, May 29, 1950 for Lourenco Marques radio in Johannesburg, South Africa. Image provided by Chris Turner of the <http://www.lmradio.org> web site.

The series boasted well over 100 episodes, one of which, "The Bone From A Voice Box," apparently served as the prototype for another well remembered Towers Of London dramatic series, *The Black Museum*. In both series, well known actors were employed as host / narrator, Orson Welles in the *Black Museum* and Clive Brook here. In fact, the shows were so similar that some of the same actual *Scotland Yard* cases were dramatized (with totally different scripts, and casts) for both series.

The Secrets of Scotland Yard was an independent production of the Towers of London syndicate in England for world wide distribution. Each week an audience of anxious radio-listeners tuned in to hear these true crime stories of the London Metropolitan Police unfold, as the detectives at the Yard investigated some of England's most famous criminals. Their trials have become legendary.

Stories presented in the series include the theft of the British crown jewels by Colonel Thomas Blood; the story of a man who finds an armless and legless body wrapped in ribbons and lace, or the strange story of two close brothers who love one another enough to contemplate the murder of a brother's affluent, yet unsightly and ignorant

wife.

Murders, forgery, and robberies all get a through review on the program. Each time, Scotland Yard detectives are afoot to solve the crime mystery!

The Secrets of Scotland Yard was initially hosted by Clive Brook, probably for the first year or so. To add to the air of authenticity, Brook sometimes discusses matters with Percy Hoskins, a 1950s crime expert and reporter for the London Daily Express. Hoskins knew every nook and cranny in London's seedier districts and personally reported on many of the major crimes of the day. A student of crime, Hoskins was also one of the founders of the Saints and Sinners Club of London, an educational organization dedicated to true crime investigation methods and results.

Brook had his own Scotland Yard experience previously when he played retired naval commander Stevenson in the 1936 film, *Scotland Yard Commands*. American audiences will, however, probably be more familiar with Brooks' portrayal of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes in the 1932 film of the same name. Brook was eventually replaced by an actor portraying the character Superintendent X of Scotland Yard.

The music cues used in the series were probably licensed from the MUTEL ("Music For Television") Music Service, created by David Chudnow, a former music editor for Republic and Monogram Pictures. It is probable that many of the cues in MUTEL originated in "stock tracking libraries" Chudnow had assembled for B-pictures for film studios like Monogram and Hal Roach. If you are a fan of the *Superman* television shows, you will probably recognize *The Secrets Of Scotland Yard* theme as background music appearing in numerous episodes. One example is in the episode titled, "Beware The Wrecker" when Lois, Jimmy, Clark and Inspector Henderson are hiding behind some bushes waiting on the Wrecker to pick up a bundle of money left on a tree stump in the park.

The producer Harry Alan Towers, was born in London on October 19, 1920, though some biographies claim he was an American. Today, Towers holds dual citizenship of Britain and Canada but lives in the Bahamas and jets around the world for business appointments. He first set up a production company in 1946 after serving in the Second World War with the RAF. This British based company, Towers of London, produced and syndicated , in addition to *Secrets of Scotland Yard*, these other radio series popular with old time radio fans today, *The Black Museum* hosted by Orson Welles; *The Adventures of Harry Lime* (aka *The Third Man*) again with Orson Welles; *Theater Royale* with Sir Laurence Olivier and Sir

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Secrets of Scotland Yard (Continued from page 13)

Ralph Richardson as hosts and narrators; *The Scarlet Pimpernel*; *Horatio Hornblower*; and the 1950s *Sherlock Holmes* series featuring Sir John Gielgud and Sir Ralph Richardson portraying Holmes and Watson. All of the Towers of London radio series named here remained in syndication within the United States up in to the 1970s. It's really unfortunate that better sounding copies of these shows have not been found.

As a bonus on this distribution the first lines summary page includes web links so you can read about and see photographs of many of the criminals whose cases were dramatized.

To sample two episodes from this series go to the following links:

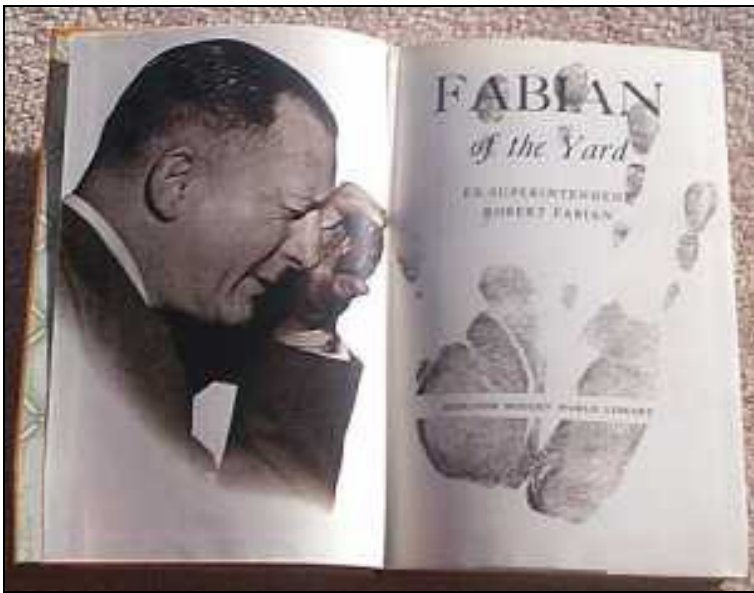
“Bone from a Voice Box”

[http://www.otr-cat.com/otr5/secrets_of_scotland_yard_57_bone_from_a_voice_box\(otrcat.com\).mp3](http://www.otr-cat.com/otr5/secrets_of_scotland_yard_57_bone_from_a_voice_box(otrcat.com).mp3)

“Buckets Of Blood”

<http://www.podcastirectory.com/podshows/913471>

Fabian Of The Yard

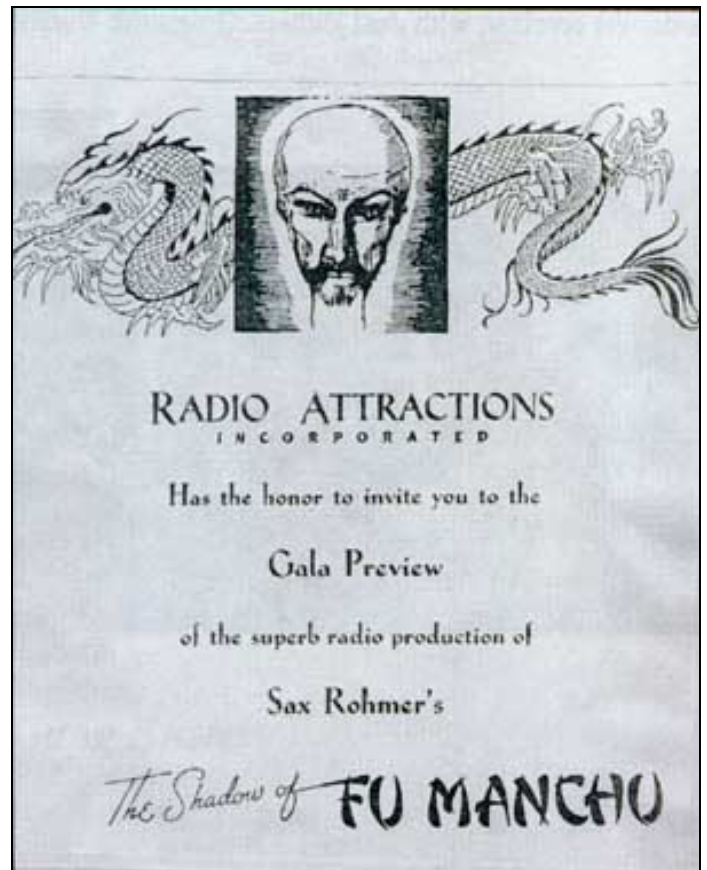


Scotland Yard's Ex-Superintendent Robert Fabian chronicled some of his most famous cases in a hardcover book, published in 1950 which went through numerous reprintings over the years.

As an added bonus on *The Secrets Of Scotland Yard* disk, we are also including the only extant episode of *Fabian Of The Yard*. This may have been a short lived BBC series produced at the same time as “Secrets”, in the

same manner NBC attempted to gain success with *Whitehall 1212*. The episode included was dubbed to digital from a deteriorating reel to reel tape by OTRRG member Rod Gowan. The existing episode summarizes the events in Fabian's most famous case, the Alec de Antiquis murder in 1947, when he traced the killers through a ticket sewn in the lining of a filthy raincoat. Fabians book also inspired a couple of movies and a British television series.

Many thanks to those have put in hours of effort to make this distro possible.



Radio Premiums – Relive Them Again! Part 2

Charles Sexton (User310378@aol.com)

Captain Midnight

One of the most popular children's programs, *Captain Midnight*, was sponsored during the 1939-40 season by the Skelly Oil Company and for the remainder of its run by Ovaltine. All of the following premiums were offered by Skelly Gasoline.

2-6-39 Kids were invited to join Captain Midnight's Flight Patrol. If they could get their dads to gas up at the local Skelly Service Station, the Skelly man would sign them up and send for their free Captain Midnight Mysto Magic Weather Forecasting Badges. This was a small metal badge containing a piece of litmus paper which changed color as weather conditions affected it. Members could predict weather changes before they occurred and mystify their friends.

2-24-39 The Skelly man had two free autographed photos of Captain Midnight and Chuck for Flight Patrol members. Captain Midnight was wearing a ring in his picture, and the ring revealed a secret symbol which was a clue to the next adventure. Additional prizes would also be available in the near future. Unfortunately, the follow-on episodes are not available to reveal the meaning of the secret symbol or to fill us in on the prizes. We do know that Captain Midnight offered a fairly large number of premiums to 1939 Flight Patrol members, including the Captain Midnight Flight Commander Pin, a treasure map, a trick and riddle book and a Stamp Album of Air Heroes. We are unable to tell, though, if any of these were tied to the symbol on Captain Midnight's ring. The radio announcer also noted that if you were not already a member of the Flight Patrol, you could sign up at the Skelly station where you would receive the pictures and a membership card, and the Skelly man would send in for your weather forecasting badge.

10-17-39 Subject of episode, 'Parada Comes Home.' The 1940 Captain Midnight Flight Patrol was seeking members, and if you joined you would be eligible for free gifts and prizes. You could join at your Skelly station where you received an official Junior Pilot's Membership Card. The Skelly man would then send for your second gift, a burnished bronze Medal of Membership. This medal contained a mysterious secret password that only Flight Patrol members would understand. The medal was about the size of a half-dollar and had pictures of Captain

Midnight, Chuck and Patsy on one side and a clock on the other. One side had a 'bump' in the middle so the medal could be used as a spinner. This was handy for determining such critical issues of the day as who would be captain of the team or who would go to the store for mother.

11-16-39 Subject of episode, 'The Chart.' Flight Patrol members witnessed a 'strange curiosity of nature' if they stopped at their Skelly dealers and picked up their free bag of Mexican jumping beans. They also received a new game called Ringo Jumbo. The game consisted of a sheet of paper with a 'bulls-eye' target printed on it. Members put their beans in the middle to see which one reached the outer ring of the target first.

12-4-39 Subject of episode, 'Disaster.' This was a special offer for dad (and mom). If he purchased a new Skelgas kitchen range, mom would receive a free 57 piece colored dinnerware set in the gay, Barcelona pattern! A real value since this set was available in leading stores for \$14.95. Skelgas kitchen ranges were just right "for those beyond the gas line".

12-7-39 Subject of episode, 'Pinky and Slim are Missing.' Flight Patrol members could pick up the December issue of the Flight Patrol Reporter newspaper from their Skelly dealer. This edition included a map of the area of Mexico where the current adventures were taking place, and listeners could follow along as they listened to the story. It also revealed the true meaning of the secret password, 'Cobralhofa', printed on the medal of membership.

12-14-39 Subject of episode, 'Fiendish Plan.' Skelly dealers were now carrying a new kind of bicycle tire. They were called Captain Midnight bicycle tires and had the words, "Captain Midnight", printed in big, raised letters on the side of each tire. They came in two styles, a big, all black clincher balloon tire and a single tube type with white side-walls. Flight Patrolers had been receiving free gifts all season long from their Skelly man, but these items were not free. The clincher model sold for \$2 and the white side-wall for \$1.65.

1-24-40 An autographed photo of Captain Midnight, Chuck and Patsy standing in front of Captain Midnight's monoplane was available, free, at your Skelly dealer.

2-28-40 Skelly dealers had a free, colored map of America's major airlines for Flight Patrol members. It was a big 11 x 17 inch wall map and was mailed flat, without any folds, so it could be framed and placed on the wall

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Premiums (Continued from page 15)

above a desk or bed. It showed the routes of and cities served by all major US airlines, and along the edges were pictures of many of the planes being used in air transportation. Every air-minded boy and girl would surely want one, so they needed to get their dads to drive them to the Skelly station soon before they were all gone!

3-27-40 Flight Patrolers could build their own model airport and planes from plans available in the March issue of Captain Midnight's Flight Patrol Reporter, free at Skelly dealers. Included were instructions on how to get plans for Captain Midnight's own Spartan Bomber. Also included was a complete set of war plane markings of all the major air forces in the world.

In March 1940, Chuck was captured by Ivan Shark, Captain Midnight's arch enemy. He was forced to broadcast three separate messages to prove he was Shark's prisoner. During these broadcasts, Chuck incorporated secret messages to help Captain Midnight find the location of his prison. The messages were as follows:



3-13-40 1st message: "Hello, Captain Midnight and everybody. It sure seems a long time since I have seen you and the old home at Black Gulch. I am feeling fine. This is on my word of honor. Do as Ivan Shark asks, flying to any point he says as swiftly as an arrow. Ivan Shark is a snake, a Cobra but I . . .".

3-18-40 2nd message: "Hello, Captain Midnight and everybody. Please do not delay long. Fly where Ivan Shark says. I will not be home again if you refuse. To do

all these things on my account is a lot, I know. Remember that flying to Ivan Shark's direction as straight as an arrow is essential . . .".

After receiving this second message, Captain Midnight noted that every tenth word in both messages was the same and the first letter of each of those words corresponded to the last five letters of the Flight Patrol's secret password, Cobralhofa. He knew this was not a coincidence because Chuck's use of the word 'Cobra' in the first message meant he was trying to communicate through the secret password. He anticipated that any further messages from Chuck would include words beginning with the first five letters of the password. Talk about a complicated secret code system! Wow!

3-22-40 3rd message: "Hello, Captain Midnight. This is your last chance to come to an agreement with Ivan Shark. Please think it over. If you do not agree, this will be the bridge that will separate us forever. You should do the right thing. The thing that will surely bring us together at last . . .".

Captain Midnight was right. This time Chuck's secret message, determined by counting every tenth word, did use the first five letters of Cobralhofa. The entire message then read: "Come over bridge, right at long home on flying arrow". "Flying arrow" referred to a landmark which could be seen from the air. The key to reading any secret message apparently came from the fact that 'Cobralhofa' contained ten letters, hence, messages were deciphered by counting every tenth word. At least that's my guess. We never do find out what a Cobralhofa is, and, unfortunately, the available recordings terminate before we find out if Captain Midnight was able to locate Shark's hideout and rescue Chuck from his evil clutches. My bet is he did!

The remaining shows and offers were courtesy of Ovaltine.

6-9-41 Subject of episode: Investigating a foreign submarine. There was a Secret Squadron Signal Session at the end of the show using the 1941 Mystery Dial Code-O-Graph. The message read: 'Explore Mystery Island.'

10-24-41 Subject of episode: Chuck and Joyce are trapped in Tiger Tong's car. Although captured, Chuck tells Joyce not to lose hope because the Secret Squadron has a new signaling device, and Captain Midnight may be able to use it to communicate with them. This is an obvious build-up for a future offer, probably the Whirlwind Whistling Ring.

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Premiums (Continued from page 16)

2-16-42 Title of episode: "Trapped By the Nazis". Another Secret Squadron Signal Session ended this episode, using the 1942 Photo-Matic Code-O-Graph. The message read: 'Stand Off Nazi Attack'



11-20-42 In the body of this show, Chuck used the Captain Midnight Plane Detector to identify incoming aircraft.

11-24-42 Title of episode: "Fighting With the Commandos". A Secret Squadron Signal Session message, using the 1942 Code-O-Graph, read: 'Outwit Von Karp'

00-00-47 Title of episode: "The Stolen Star". You could enjoy your very own Captain Midnight Shake-Ups with the Captain's own Orange and Blue, two-piece Shake-Up-Mug. The two pieces fit together to serve as a shaker, but, when taken apart, the bottom half served as a drinking glass. And that wasn't all. An embossed picture of Captain Midnight's head was on the side of the mug and the Secret Squadron Pledge was on the top. Talk about a diabolical way to get kids to sample the sponsor's product! Of course, Orphan Annie had used the same ploy ten years earlier when she, too, was sponsored by Ovaltine. Things were also starting to get more expensive. The Shake-Up Mug cost 15c, in coin, as well as the traditional label from the jar of Ovaltine.

00-00-47 Title of episode: "The Man With The Missing Finger". The episode included a Secret Squadron Signal Session using the 1947 Whistling Code-O-Graph. The message read 'Death Has Four Fingers'. Interestingly the Master Code designation of C-3, provided by the announcer was in error. The correct Master Code was critical for listeners at home to decipher the secret messages since there were over 600 possible code settings. I discovered the error in trying to decode the message for this article. After some fooling around with various codes, the correct one was found to be C-7 rather than C-3 .

There were probably some frustrated Secret Squadron members listening at home the night this message was sent. In addition, the message itself sounded like it should have been sent the day before as the content of the program dealt with a murderer with a missing finger. It's interesting to speculate why announcer Tom Moore gave the wrong Master Code. Perhaps Ivan Shark was responsible!

00-00-47 Title of episode: "The Slave Smugglers" A Secret Squadron Signal Session uses the 1947 Whistling Code-O-Graph. The message read 'Rescue On The Cliff'. Announcer Tom Moore also reminded listeners to submit their entries in the many contests listed in the 1947 Secret Squadron Manual. Although not a part of the broadcast, we can still identify what those prizes were by referring to page 14 of the manual. They included crisp \$1 bills or silver dollars and, in a couple of cases, \$5 bills! A special contest asked members to draw pictures of Ivan Shark and his daughter, Fury. Two winners would be selected and each would receive a fine 6-tube, AC-DC Zenith portable radio. Each member who entered received a special gift from Captain Midnight, whether they won or not. These gifts included left-over premiums from past years including a Secret Squadron Sleeve Insignia (1943), a Secret Squadron Distinguished Service Ribbon Bar (1944), an official Secret Squadron Ring (1946), or some other Secret Squadron memento. I recall entering the contests and getting the ring, a Mystic Sun God ring no less, as my consolation prize. I was lucky; I could have won the dollar bill instead!

2-4-49 Title of episode: 'The Devil on Ice'. This episode announced it was the last chance to join the 1949 Secret Squadron. You only needed to send one label from a jar of Ovaltine to receive the 1949 Key-O-Matic Code-O-Graph and the official Secret Squadron handbook. The handbook contained eight pages of pictures, signs, and signals as well as instructions on how to use the Code-O-Graph. The secret to the 1949 Code-O-Graph was a tiny key necessary to set the Master Codes. (Hint: I lost the key a couple of days after receiving the Code-O-Graph but found one of my mother's old bobby pins worked just as well! I hoped Ivan Shark wouldn't discover how easy it was to thwart the Secret Squadron's most secret of all decoders!) As an aside, the above examples of secret codes we kids received from Captain Midnight (and Orphan Annie as well) clearly illustrate that Secret Squadron members were privy to some real advanced info. A common perception today is that these coded messages were nothing more

(Continued on page 18)

Premiums (Continued from page 17)

than an additional pitch for the sponsor's product. No, indeed! We were all official members of an organization dedicated to stamping out crime and injustice, and the messages we received were the real thing. We were alert for that special message meant for our ears alone. You never could tell when we might be called upon to lend assistance to the Captain and his troops.



Chandu, The Magician

Chandu appeared during two different radio listening eras, with various sponsors, the first from 1932-36 and the second from 1948-50. The show listed below was sponsored by White King Soap Flakes.

9-24-48 You could start your collection of Chandu's magic tricks with the Asseryan Money Changer for only one White King box top and 25c. The money changer turned pennies into dimes!

Dick Tracy

This program was on the air at various times between the years 1935 and 1948 with different sponsors. The following shows offering premiums were sponsored by Quaker Puffed Wheat and Rice cereals. All concerned Dick Tracy's adventure with the Black Pearl of Osiris.

2-8-38 "Join the Dick Tracy Secret Service Patrol and receive a code book, pledge and badge for two Quaker Puffed Wheat and/or Rice box tops". Junior Tracy also broadcast a secret message at the end of the show, but you needed the code book to decipher the message. The message read 'Watch for Secret Ring.'

2-9-38 Pat Patton sent a secret message to Dick in the body of the show. The message was repeated by Junior during the Secret Service Patrol meeting at the end of the show. The message was 'Come Quick'. In addition, Junior broadcast an additional message for Patrol members. It read 'Secret Ring Brings Luck.'

2-10-38 At the Patrol meeting in this episode, Junior sent another message. It read 'Secret Ring From Egypt'. The Quaker Man announcer also reminded listeners to form a local Dick Tracy Secret Service Patrol unit in their neighborhood and receive a Patrol Leader badge to go along with the regular one they received when they first joined. The code book explained how. He also asked if any members had yet been promoted to Sergeant or Lieutenant. "Do it soon and show Dick Tracy the stuff you're made of", he challenged.

While not covered in this broadcast, we can see what was necessary to achieve these high honors by looking through the 1938 edition of the code book. Additional ranks included Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain and Inspector-General, and each level sported a fancier and gaudier badge to note the new office. To progress, members needed to write Dick and tell him of any good deeds since their last promotion and, by the way, include additional box tops for each level. Sergeant required 5 box tops, Lieutenant 7, Captain 10 and Inspector-General a whopping 15 box tops. If a member decided to form his own patrol and apply for the Patrol Leader badge, he needed to recruit 5 new members, at 2 box tops each, plus another 2 for himself, for a total of 12 box tops in all. That's a total of 41 box tops to achieve all the ranks and honors, not counting the 10 additional box tops friends should have contributed to join the local patrol. When the announcer said Dick wanted members tell him the stuff they were made of, the answer should have been obvious.

2-11-38 Another secret message which read "Clue To Secret Ring Monday".

2-17-38 Pat sent Dick another message in the body of the show telling him where to meet him. It read "Clay St".

2-21-38 Guess what? Dick Tracy and the Quaker company decided to offer a free Egyptian ring to Patrol members just like the one featured in the story. What a surprise. It had a secret compartment with a likeness of Dick on the top. Dick found a jeweler to make the rings which were gold plated and adjustable to fit any finger. He took Tess Trueheart with him to the jewelers and she fell in love with a gold-platted bangle bracelet and wanted to make one available for girls (the assumption, apparently, was that girls weren't interested in secret compartment rings). It had three charms featuring Dick, Junior and a lucky 4-leaf clover. Either item was free for only 5 box tops (is that an oxymoron or what?) or 10 for both items.

Part two of Charles' article on OTR premiums originally appeared on Lou Genco's site (<http://www.old-time.com/>). It is reprinted here by permission of the author.

OTR in the Blogosphere, Pt. 3

Ryan Ellett

Our tour of the old time radio blogs continues this month with an up-close-and-personal with Harry Heuser. His *Broadcastellan* can be read here, <http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/>, with new entries nearly every day.

ORT: Explain your introduction to old-time radio.

HH: Through Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s. When I read in a biography of Claudette Colbert (my favorite screen actress) that she appeared in radio versions of her movies, I became intrigued. Growing up in Germany, I rarely got to hear American actors, since their voices are dubbed into German. So, there was a double incentive for me to investigate the field of old-time radio: to catch actors in performances I had never seen (because the movies are not commercially available) and to hear them as they actually spoke.

After moving to NYC in the early 1990s, I finally experienced old-time radio. For a broadcasting course, I wrote a college essay on the relationship between movies and the *Lux Radio Theater*. This was in 1994, a few years before I caught up with the internet, so I went to the Museum of Television and Radio to listen to a few shows.

Then I heard Max Schmid's radio show "The Golden Age of Radio" on WBAI, New York. I listened regularly and began taping the program and build a small collection of shows.

After finishing my masters (English Lit), I decided to make old-time radio the topic of my PhD. I went to an OTR convention in New Jersey and attended recreations of radio programs at the Museum of Television and Radio, of which I became a member, and at a New York bookstore called Partners and Crime.

ORT: When did you begin your blog?

HH: In May 2005. Since then, I have posted nearly 300 short essays on radio (and film, theater, mostly from a radio angle). My first entry: http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/2005_05_01_broadcastellan_archive.html.

ORT: What inspired you to start a blog focused wholly or in part on old-time radio?

HH: I had finished my PhD dissertation on old-time radio (praised by Norman Corwin in a letter to me) and moved from the US to the UK. Writing a dissertation and listening to radio are solitary experiences; I wanted to share what I love with others online and to continue my

studies in a casual, non-academic manner by thinking and writing regularly about so-called old-time radio.

There are many movie and TV blogs. I sense and resent that audio theater does not get the respect or attention lavished on the visual arts.

I have always been fascinated and inspired by sounds. As a child I made my own sound-only plays with a tape recorder, the use of natural sounds, and recorded sound effects; many of those unscripted comedy thrillers told the adventures of Inspector Bullauge (bull's eye), a character I created and played (none of those recordings survive, but I remember him fondly). In high school, I wrote one radio play. For many years I kept an audio diary, recording the sounds around me, family members and friends.

In addition to the blog, I keep a podcast site (podcastellan) in which my voice mingles with the voices and sounds of old-time radio in a series of sound collages. <http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/2006/07/broadcastellan-today-letter-to-make.html>

My podcast site:

<http://web.mac.com/mauberley/iWeb/broadcastellan/Podcast/Podcast.html>.

ORT: Describe the aim and focus of your blog.

HH: It is a personal, non-commercial (if self-promotional) journal. I try to explain why old-time radio matters and how it can be relevant by relating the supposedly out-of-date to my own life and to current news. I am not into nostalgia or trivia.

I have a few columns that help me focus my writing and also allow for some variations on the theme:

-In "On This Day" I explore what Americans listened to in the 1930s and 1940s, often pointing out the historical relevance of radio plays:

<http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/2006/04/on-this-day-in-1943-arthur-miller-asks.html>

-In "What Those Who Remembered Forgot" I add a radio footnote to the obituary of a recently deceased writer, actor, or director (like Robert Altman) who have a connection to radio, however obscure or minor:

<http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/2006/11/what-those-who-remembered-forgot.html>

-In my Norman Corwin inspired "Old-time Radio Primer", I am playing around with words (or concept) that are important in radio:

<http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/2006/06/old-time-radio-primer-e-stands-for.html>

-In "Now on the Air" I point out what's currently available online, new radio drama or documentaries relating to old-time radio:

(Continued on page 20)

<http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/2006/10/now-on-air-down-wires.html>.

ORT: How frequently do you post new material?

HH: Monday through Friday, five a week (unless I am on vacation and have no internet access).

ORT: What do you enjoy most about blogging?

HH: Being able to self-publish. The freedom of sharing whatever I want and the challenge of keeping it focused on old-time radio. I enjoy getting feedback.

ORT: What do you enjoy least?

HH: That, even though it is available online, my writing has remained relatively obscure. I once did a series of fifteen posts on a sequence from *I Love a Mystery*. There was practically no response, despite the popularity of this cult show. That was a bit sobering.

<http://broadcastellan.blogspot.com/2005/10/listening-to-thing-that-cries-in-night.html>.

ORT: Are you active in other areas of the old-time radio hobby?

IS: I do read some of the other blogs on radio/TV/film. I did join a few Yahoo clubs, but found that people are more interested in getting their ears on rare recordings than on talking about them. There is a lot of OTR on the web, but too little is being done with it.



Claudette Colbert

Treasury Report

The Old-Time Radio Researchers currently has \$521.40 in the Treasury. We recently made a purchase of \$329.00 from Golden Age Sounds, and one of \$275.00 from Doug's Old Time Radio.

Thanks to the following people for their monthly contributions - Patrick Belanger, Jim Beshires, Dale Beckman, Robert Booze, Anita Boyd, De DeTevis, Pete Calvallo, Scott Erickson, Lisa Fittinghoff, Alan Foster, Allan George, Archie Hunter, Mike Hamm, Doug Hopkinson, Steve Cottle, Clyde Kell, Sean Boyd, Chris Antonacci, Robert Johnson, Charlie Henson, Roger Hohenbrink, Tony Jaworowski, Dave Johnson, Jim Jones, Tom Mandeville, Ryan E: Tasseau Martillo, Mark McClure, Jim McGee, Henry Morse, Stephen Myers, David Oxford, Robert Philips, Ron Shalow, Ed Sehlhorst, Gary Stanley, Clorinda Thompson, Jerry Young, Michael Galbreath, Kenneth Lynes, Greg Cloakley, David Shipman, Daryl Taylor, Scott Carpenter, Peter Risbey, Joseph Webb, John Davies, Stephen Miles, Vernon Tefertiller and Gordon Whitman.

The following people have recently made one time contributions - Keith Mayes, Harold Waters, Johnathan Lytle, James Farst, Paul Kemp, Ed Alterson, AJ Feldridge, John Affayroux, Del Ahistedt, Daniel McGovern, Michael Opela, John Baker, Stephen Franklin, Lisa Fittinghoff, Robert Phillips, David Oxford, Ron Speegle, John Buxbaum, Robert Graham, Henry Morse, Dee DeTevis, John Burns, Michael Galbreath, Ken Towson, Daryl Taylor, Diane Hull, Harry Keller, Ed Selhlorst, Mark Herskovitz, Park Lawrence, Jim O'Roark, Elisabeth Van Der Voort, and John Liska.

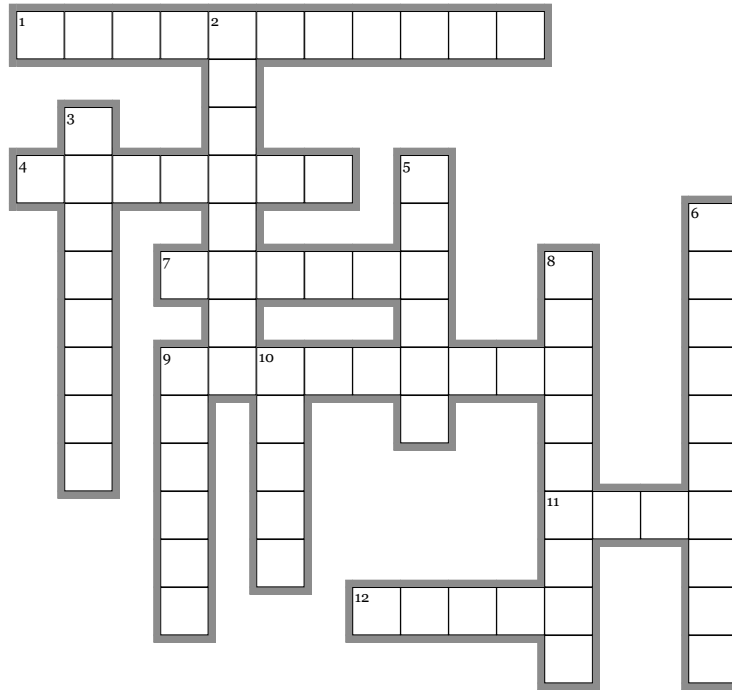
These contributions are much appreciated and really help the group's financial standing. Everything the group purchases will be shared freely with the entire OTR community through planned releases. Monthly supporters receive advance releases of all purchases, either encoded at 128, 64, or WAV.

So far this year the OTRR has purchased/rented over \$5,270.00 in new or better sounding materials. If you would like to assist in bringing new series and better encodes to the OTR community, or otherwise support the work of the Old-Time Radio Researchers, please mail any amount to:

Tony Jaworowski
15520 Fairlane Drive
Livonia, MI 48154
or send via Paypal to
jaworowski@ameritech.net

The Cisco Kid

By
Fred Bertelsen



Created with EclipseCrossword – www.eclipsecrossword.com

Across

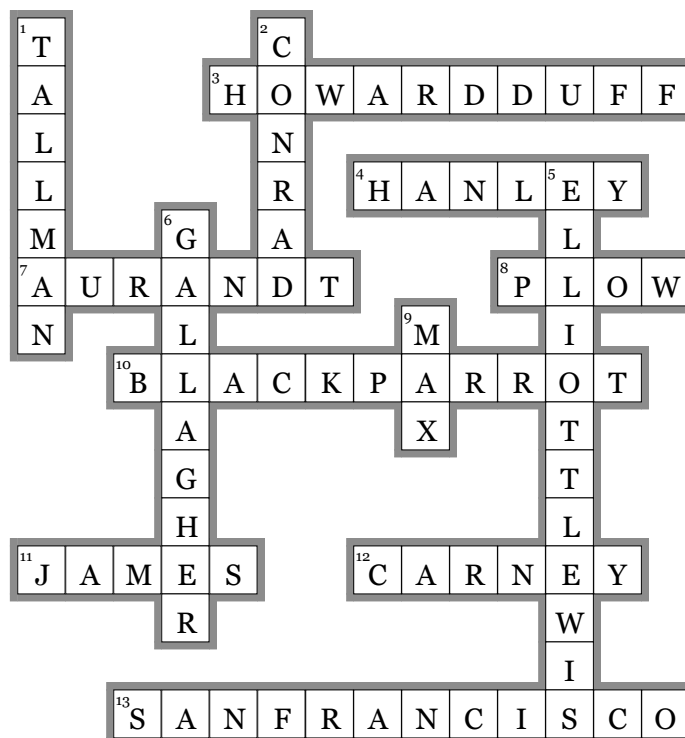
1. Radio's first Cisco Kid was _____ (2 words)
4. Originally, The Cisco Kid originated from _____ (2 words).
7. _____ was the name of Cisco's horse.
9. Jock _____ was the director of the early shows.
11. The name of Poncho's horse was _____.
12. The Cisco Kid was called the _____ Hood of the west.

Down

2. Usually at the end of the program Cisco would kiss the beautiful _____.
3. When the actor who was playing Poncho died in 1954, he was replaced by _____ (2 words).
5. During the opening, Poncho would say, "Ceesco! The Shereef, he ees getting _____!"
6. Cisco's first sidekick was _____ (2 words).
8. Cisco's fat comic sidekick was played by _____ (2 words).
9. The Cisco Kid was carried by the _____ network.
10. _____ was played by Jack Mather

Last Month's Answers

Voyage of the Scarlet Queen



Created with EclipseCrossword – www.eclipsecrossword.com

Wistful Vistas

Ryan Ellett

I can't think of a better way to kick off our second year of publication than by featuring an original article by the incomparable Jim Cox. It's impossible to begin reading about old-time radio without coming across a piece of Jim's writing, whether in the numerous OTR fanzines or his ever-growing list of books.

Old-time radio may be a small hobby, but it is blessed to have a good number of prolific and engaging writers; unfortunately, these two traits are not always common in history texts. Jim Cox is unquestionably one of these authors who will both inform you about old-time radio but will entertain while doing so. Enjoy his contribution and be sure to check out his books listed in the accompanying author bio.

Relative new-comer to OTR writing Jeff Kallman brings us a look at newsman Douglas Edwards. I was glad to learn more about Edwards, of whom I knew nothing before. I hope you learn a bit, too.

This month's contribution by Danny Goodwin departs a bit from his normal fare. Instead of focusing primarily on an advertiser from the OTR era, he sheds light on the much-hyped but dismal failure *The Gibson Family* (while including information about the show's sponsor, Proctor

& Gamble.

You'll find the latest installments of our ongoing features about Groucho Marx, old-time radio blogs, and old-time radio premiums. Surely something among this diverse group will spark your interest.

We welcome your feedback; that's what helps us focus our efforts to bring features every month that you want to read. At the same time, we can only publish what we receive. Please don't hesitate to suggest an idea or even submit a contribution; it's almost guaranteed to find space in a future issue. And with approximately 2,000 readers a month it's almost guaranteed to interest someone.

Until next month chums, keep on keeping OTR alive and well.

Major Sponsor, Heavy Publicity Equals Big Bust

Danny Goodwin

“My doctor recommended Ivory.” -- “Sally Gibson”

The advantage of network radio during the 1930's was the ability to come up with programming the major networks hoped would be popular with the radio listeners. Some ideas worked on the air; others didn't. This article is going to focus on a major “didn't.”

On Saturday, September 15, 1934 at 9:30 PM, *The Gibson Family* was to air its first broadcast over the stations of NBC's Red Network. This program was a combination musical, romantic comedy, and serial program within a 1-hour format. On paper, it was supposed to be the blockbuster program of the 1934-1935 radio season – but a funny thing happened on the way to the season's most popular radio program.

The program was about a typical American family named Gibson, which was a good thing because of the program's name! Seriously, the typical American family consisted of Ma and Pa Gibson and their children Sally and Bobby. Although the Gibsons weren't any different from other typical American families, there was a twist here. Sally and Bobby had exceptional singing voices and were known for breaking out in song when the situation called for it. The main focus of the program was the romance between Sally Gibson and Jack Hamilton, another character with an excellent singing voice. The musical background of Sally, Bobby, Jack, and other major characters was to give the radio listeners a feeling they were listening to a Broadway musical.

In order to put a program of this magnitude on the air, it required a lot of money. In other words, *The Gibson Family* needed a sponsor with big pockets. The program got a good one in Procter & Gamble on behalf of Ivory Soap and Ivory Flakes, two of the company's largest selling and best known products.

Before the program aired its first broadcast, there was heavy publicity of its debut. Of course, NBC was doing its part in getting the word out over the airwaves. Since Procter & Gamble was shelling out the green stuff, the company also mentioned the program on the printed ads for Ivory Soap and Ivory Flakes. These ads introduced the characters to the readers and would-be listeners.

In the enclosed ad, Sally Gibson revealed her secret on why her complexion was so lovely. She used Ivory Soap and nothing else for her daily facials. Sally informed the readers that her skin was sensitive. Her doctor

The **GIBSON FAMILY**

Every Sally Gibson is getting a hand.
"Your eyes, your skin—golly, you're a beautician," breathes Ted.
"Oh, really?" blanches Sally. "You know the other girls won't believe that I just use Ivory Soap, but as Doctor MacLure says, a sensitive skin needs a pure soap."
"Yes, doctors like their patients to use Ivory. They have no use for the exaggerated promises of many soaps. Doctors say: "Use a pure soap." Don't let impure soaps dry out your skin."
PROTECT your complexion. Pure Ivory Soap will help you.

"THESE SOCIETY LADIES' give a hint. None Tippi smiles. "Do, show a lot for your skin, young folks," says Jackkin.
more good to use pure IVORY SOAP!

TRUMP! TRUMP! TRUMP! . . . Pam Chase's living heart pounds like mad every time he takes a cup from Julia's smooth hands. And when his hand touches hers by accident, we want to give all pink to the wall!
As for Julia—she always thanks Mrs. Gibson for using "Yes, Julia, use Ivory for everything. It will keep your hands looking nice when you serve the table!"
IVORY FOR SOCIETY KEEPS HANDS NICE

"GO ON, GUN, Sally Gibson!" says Jane. "I washes washes stockings. And I know half of them have runs!"
"If my stockings were right with Ivory Flakes," answers Sally, "your stockings would not run-out, run-out so much."
"That's what the sergeant at Boston's said," says Jane. "She gave me a lecture on Ivory's purity, she did. So don't touch as me, Sally. From today I'm using Ivory Flakes!"
FINE STOCKS ADVISE IVORY FLAKES

recommended washing with a mild, pure soap. Since Ivory Soap was pure – 99 44/100% to be exact, Sally used it for her facials. The result was a complexion that was softer, smoother, and lovely to look at.

Not only was Sally an attractive young lady, she was also a smart one. In the same ad, the readers found out she used Ivory Flakes to wash her stockings. In talking with a friend, Sally gave a brief “I told you so” type of speech to her friend who washed her stockings with the infamous “Other Soap.” Unfortunately, the friend's stockings had disgusting holes and runs. Sally never had that problem with her stockings, because she washed them every night in Ivory Flakes – after she took them off, of course. Not only was there a complete lack of holes and runs, nightly washing in Ivory Flakes also helped to prolong the life of the stockings. It was the best of all worlds for Sally. She continued to wear the same stockings she washed in Ivory Flakes, and the money she saved from buying new ones was used for other purposes (including buying more Ivory Flakes).

Even on *The Gibson Family* program, Sally wasn't the least bit bashful in giving Ivory a plug. Between acts, there was a brief intermission on the program – a fancy name for the commercial. Announcer Jimmy Wallington took the listeners behind the scenes to the dressing

(Continued on page 24)

The Gibson Family (Continued from page 23)

room where Sally was hurriedly getting ready for the next act. Helping her was her maid Hilda. It was an exciting moment for Sally, but Hilda didn't share in her happiness. The maid was depressed, because her boyfriend Henry acted distant to her. When Hilda mentioned her face had unsightly red blotches, Sally immediately knew the answer to the maid's problems. Sally asked what soap Hilda used, and the maid replied it was a beauty soap that guaranteed radiant beauty. Sally stated that although Hilda's soap was classified as a beauty soap, it also contained fats and alkali that actually did more harm than good. Instead of the beauty soap, Sally advised Hilda to use pure, mild Ivory. When Sally hurried off for the next act, Wallington informed the listeners Sally's advice may or may not help Hilda attract Henry's attention, but Ivory was guaranteed to help the maid have a younger looking, smoother complexion.

Despite Sally doing very well as an Ivory spokeswoman, there was a major concern from everyone involved with putting The Gibson Family on the air. The program got off to a good start (it had the 17th highest C.A.B. (Co-Operative Analysis of Broadcasting) rating of the 1934-1935 season), but its C.A.B. rating was on a sharp downhill spiral since then. Since considerable money was spent, some major changes were needed. To do this, the program went off the air for about a month; then returned to the air.

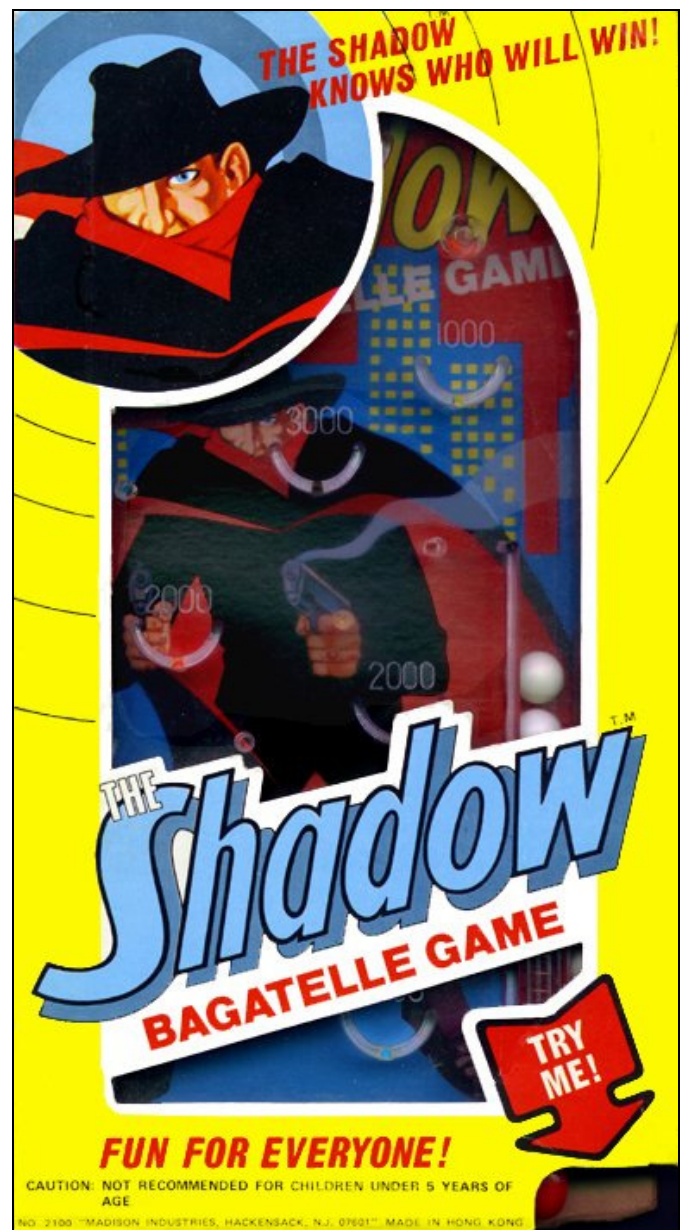
The Gibson Family returned to the air on Sunday, March 31, 1935 at 10:00 PM. This version was different from the original format. The romance between Sally and Jack wasn't even mentioned in the storyline. Their romance may have continued, but the listeners didn't know about it. To pour more salt on the wound, Sally's role on the program was diminished. The program's main focus was a traveling carnival setting up shop in the Gibsons' hometown. The only consistency from the original format – Ivory Soap and Ivory Flakes were still the sponsors.

Despite the changes, the second format didn't do any better than the first one. It stayed on the air for about two months. With two strikes and you're out, it was decided to pull the plug on the program completely.

What was supposed to be the most talked about radio program of the 1934-1935 season, *The Gibson Family* went off the air quietly before the 1934-1935 season officially ended. Although Sally Gibson did her best Arthur Godfrey imitation in selling Ivory Soap and Ivory Flakes, Procter & Gamble paid an expensive price for a program that was on the air for less than a year.

Despite the failure of THE GIBSON FAMILY, the idea of a Broadway play for radio didn't die with it. On Tuesday, October 29, 1935, there was another attempt to make this idea work. It was heard on NBC's Red Network, but it was a new play and with a new sponsor. How well did this new program do? The answer to this very important question will be in the article "Fire Chief Out, Elephant In" on my website (www.dg125.com).

This article was originally published on Lou Genco's OTR site <http://www.oldtime.us/commercials/>. It has been reprinted here by permission of the author.



News 'n Notes

* We are looking at producing a bound volume of the Old Radio Times' first year. A paper version is often better for quick reference and casual reading. We hope to keep the cost under 25\$. In order to gauge interest in this project please contact the editor if you might be interested in such a volume.

* If you're interested in old pulps make sure to visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/goldenperils/> if you haven't already. You'll find very knowledgeable and friendly folks. At it's sister site, <http://www.howardhopkins.com/page4.htm>, you can download the latest issue of Golden Perils, a wonderful ezine dedicated to old pulp magazines. Back issues are available on disc.

* Ted Davenport, one of the last remaining big-time tape dealers, is closing down his business as of December 31. OTRR has gotten many quality shows from Ted in the past. If you've been planning on putting in an order with him, now's the time to do it.



Researchers Release *Theater Five*

Theater Five was ABC's attempt to revive radio drama during the early 60's. It got its name from its time slot - 5:00 pm, with the first broadcast on August 3, 1964, and it ran Monday thru Friday. It was an anthology of short stories, each about 20 minutes long. News programs and commercials filled out the other 10 minutes.

Theater Five aired week days for 52 weeks with a total of 260 shows. Of that number all are in circulation except for four.

Some of the journeymen actors of old time radio took part, as well as some who had apparently never acted before the microphone. It was and is a wonderful tribute to those who had contributed so much to the early days of radio.

There was a good bit of science fiction. For example, there was one episode about a stranded astronaut called "Incident At Apogee." Some of the plots seemed to have been taken from the newspapers of the time, such as "Jump! Jump!," about a suicidal man on a ledge being egged on by the crowd below. If one listens to any of the episodes today, they are as fresh and enjoyable as they were almost forty years ago.

Fred Foy of *The Long Ranger* fame was an ABC staff announcer in the early 60s and was one of the actors who did *Theater Five*.

The last episode aired July 30, 1965.

Some of the material for this article was provided by Dick Judge. OTRR thanks Doug Hopkinson, the compiler of this series. Doug also encoded most of the episodes from reel-to-reels or cassettes and spent many long hours cleaning up the sound. Clorinda Thompson was the second listener, and Brian Allen did the CD Artwork.

We are extremely proud to announce the release of this certified archival set to the OTR community. Look for it to be distroed in a group near you very soon!



Librarian's Shelf

New Release

The Secrets of Scotland Yard
Complete Ver. 1

OTRR Certified Sets

50 Years of Radio on NBC
Complete Ver. 1

Absolute Power
Complete Ver. 1

Academy Award Theater
Complete Ver. 1

Adventures By Morse
Complete Ver. 1

Adventures of the Poll Parrot

Accurate Ver. 1

Alka Seltzer Time
Complete Ver. 1

An Evening with Groucho
Complete Ver. 1

Big Show
Accurate Ver. 2

Black Museum
Accurate Ver. 2

Blair of the Mounties
Accurate Ver. 1

Blue Beetle
Complete Ver. 1

Box 13
Complete Ver. 1

Bright Star
Accurate Ver. 1

Candy Matson, Yukon 28209

Accurate Ver. 1

Case Dismissed
Accurate Ver. 1

Chet Chetter's Tales from the Morgue
Complete Ver. 1

Cinnamon Bear, The
Complete Ver. 1

Claybourne
Complete Ver. 1

Cloak and Dagger
Accurate Ver. 1

Crime Classics
Accurate Ver. 3

Cruise of the Poll Parrot
Complete Ver. 1

Dark Fantasy
Accurate Ver. 1

Day of the Triffid
Complete Ver. 1

The Devil and Mr. O
Complete Ver. 1

Dimension X
Complete Ver. 1

Dr. Kildare
Accurate Ver. 2

Family Doctor
Complete Ver. 1

Fort Laramie
Complete Ver. 1

Frontier Gentleman
Complete Ver. 2

Gunsmoke
Accurate Ver. 1

In the Name of the Law
Complete Ver. 1

Incredible, but True
Complete Ver. 1

It Sticks Out Half a Mile
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Accurate Ver. 2

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Complete Ver. 1

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Complete Ver. 4

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Victor Borge Collection
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World Adventurer's Club
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Accurate Ver. 1

Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar
Accurate Ver. 1

Complete – Set includes complete series.

Accurate – Set includes all known episodes in existence.

These series are available on compact disc, via Streamload online delivery, and on our very own Internet Hub. Contact Alan Foster at (allanpqz@gmail.com) for more details.



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Your ad here. A free service to all readers.

Just printed the November issue and as usual find it very interesting, but I have a question. The “Sushi Bar” I don't understand what it's all about. I know that it's program log (s). What is the purpose of printing these logs and what does it mean to me since I'm not a member of the Old-Time Radio Researchers Organization? What does it mean to a member OTRR?

Frank

Frank, the Sushi Bar (we've dropped that name starting this issue) is simply a place for us to include information that may not be of interest to general readers but that we consider of importance to some group members. If we were a print newsletter this would not be included because of the space involved. We like to include the group's purchases so everyone can see where their contributions are going; it also provides a sneak peek to shows that

eventually will be included in group releases. Our database updates are likely of interest only to those who actively use it as a resource. In both cases their publication is an effort to make public information that otherwise can be difficult for average members to access.

I love this e-zine. I look forward to it and enjoy reading the various articles. I always learn lots of new information about OTR. This is a great hobby. Thanks to everyone that works so hard.

Janet

It's very good. I look forward to reading it every month. Thank You.

Rip

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Old Time Radio Researchers

OTR Project

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New Acquisitions By the Old-Time Radio Researchers

Blue Coal Minstrels 31-xx-xx (1) First Song - Moan You Moaners.mp3

Blue Coal Minstrels 31-xx-xx (2) First Song - A Good Man Is Hard To Find.mp3

Continental Trio 2x-xx-xx First Song - Bye Bye Blues (no close).mp3

Continental Trio 2x-xx-xx First Song - Confession (no close).mp3

Doorway To Life 46-11-16 Story Of Estelle, Aged 6.mp3

Doorway To Life 47-11-23 Story Of Ruth, Aged 17.mp3

Eleventh Hour xx-xx-xx (11) Double.mp3

Eleventh Hour xx-xx-xx (12) Let The Play Begin.mp3

Grand Central Station 45-05-24 Moon Blind.mp3

Grand Central Station 46-01-06 Man I'll Never See.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - I Can't Get You Off My Mind.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - I'm A Long Gone Daddy.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - Mansion On The Hill.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - Mind Your Own Business.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - Pan American.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - The Lost Highway.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - Wedding Bells.mp3

Health And Happiness Show xx-xx-xx First Song - You Gotta Change.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (1006) First Song - Tonight.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (341) First Song - Mr Callahan.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (342) First Song - Indian Love Call.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (371) First Song - I Didn't Want To Love You.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (375) First Song - Delicado.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (376) First Song - Thunderbird.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (479) First Song - The

Breeze That Brings My Baby Back To Me.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (480) First Song - The Fiddlin' Bullfighter.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (537) First Song - When You Wish Upon A Star.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (538) First Song - When The White Lilacs bloom Again.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (561) First Song - Plymouth Rock.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (562) First Song - Timber Train.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (625) First Song - Yellow Rose Of Texas.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (690) First Song - You Made Me Love You.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (691) First Song - Lazy Mary.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (692) First Song - The Wang-Wang Blues.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (693) First Song - Swinging On A Star.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (694) First Song - Stardust Cha Cha.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (695) First Song - The Hep Cats Summer Talk.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (696) First Song - Ain't She Sweet.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (697) An Evening With Lerner And Lowe.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (698) First Song - Look, Look.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (699) First Song - Before I Reach The Town-O.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (700) First Song - You Gotta Look Up.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (701) First Song - Yours Is My Heart Alone.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (702) First Song - Hawaaii Calls.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (708) First Song - The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (709) First Song - Seven League Boots.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (727) First Song - Mexican Jumping Bean.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (732) First Song - Guenzite Polka.mp3

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (738) First Song - Opus In Chartruse.mp3

(Continued on page 31)

New Acquisitions (Continued from page 30)

Here's To Veterans xx-xx-xx (774) First Song - Bernie's Theme.mp3

Kollege Of Musical Knowledge 45-09-19 (152) (AFRS).mp3

Kollege Of Musical Knowledge 45-10-11 (156) (AFRS).mp3

Lone Ranger 47-06-20 New Home.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-06-23 Adventure On The Mississippi.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-06-30 The False Legacy.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-07-02- Corn Planter.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-07-07 Rampage.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-07-09 Gun Runners Boy.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-10 Doc Drummonds Strange Case.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-12 Masquarade For A Killer.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-15 Blood Brother.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-17 Barnaby Boggs Dilemma.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-19 Double Cross.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-22 Law Girl.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-24 Fiasco.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-26 Old Hickory.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-09-29 The Big Mouth.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-10-01 Revenue Isn't Everything.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-10-03 City Of Masks.mp3

Lone Ranger 47-10-06 The Emperor Of California.mp3

One Night Stand 44-08-24 (836) First Song - You Gave Me The Runaround.mp3

One Night Stand 44-09-14 (737) First Song - Hurry Home.mp3

One Night Stand 44-12-20 (58) First Song - Amore.mp3

One Night Stand 45-02-10 (813) First Song - Don't Fence Me In.mp3

One Night Stand 45-02-24 (610) First Song - On The Sunny Side Of The Street.mp3

One Night Stand 45-05-22 (812) First Song - Temptation.mp3

One Night Stand 45-07-31 (788) First Song - The Nine-Twenty Special.mp3

One Night Stand 45-08-28 (803) First Song - My Pet Brunette.mp3

One Night Stand 45-10-06 First Song - Talking To Myself About You.mp3

Saturday At The Shamrock 50-02-18 Guests - Chico, Harpo Marx.mp3

Stagedoor Canteen 43-08-13 Guest - Jack Smith, Mary

Martin.mp3

Secrets Of Scotland Yard xx-xx-xx Accurate Spelling Is Essential (no op).mp3

Secrets Of Scotland Yard xx-xx-xx Poisoner (No op or cl).mp3

The Biggest Heart 51-01-10 Bill Mitchell Story.mp3

The Biggest Heart 51-03-02 The Marie Wichert Story.mp3

The Biggest Heart 51-03-09 The Robert Barnett Story.mp3

The Biggest Heart 51-03-23 Good Friday Play.mp3

The Biggest Heart 51-03-30 The Father Jim Monahan Story.mp3

The Biggest Heart 51-04-06 The Judge Philip B Gilliam Story.mp3

The Biggest Heart 51-04-13 Last Show.mp3

This Is Jazz 47-04-26 (12) First Song - When The Saints Go Marchin' In.mp3

Tommy Dorsey Show 46-08-25 Guest - Duke Ellington.mp3

Victory Parade Of Spotlight Bands x-xx-xx (781) First Song - You're Driving Me Crazy.mp3

Database Updates

November 27, 2006

NEW LOGS -
American West

LOG TITLE CHANGES -
Edgar Bergen to the Charley McCarthy Show
The Jack Benny Show to the Jack Benny Program
The Three Sons to the Three Suns

SPELLING -
Captains Of Industry
Roy Roger Show
Rocky Jordan
Casebook Of Gregory Hood
Calling All Cars
Bob Hope Show - Bob Hope Show 39-55

REVISED LOG -
Baby Snooks
FBI In War And Peace
Mr and Mrs North

(Continued on page 32)

Database Updates (Continued from page 31)

DELETED LOG -
Honeymooners

OTHER -
Information Please - Episode Corrections
Big Jon & Sparkie - episode Title Correction
Crime Letter of Dan Dodge - Episode Available
Amos and Andy - Deleted Bad Entries
Happy Hank - Add'l Episode Available
Popeye The Sailor - Delete Bad Entries
Walter Winchell - Corrected Entries
A Life In Your Hands - Delete Bad Entries
Hop Harrigan - Delete Bad Entries

December 4, 2006

NEW LOGS -
My Sainted Aunt
Ten Million Wheels
The Standard Hour
Adventures Of Nero Wolfe

REVISED LOGS -
Mail Call

ADDED ADD'L EPISODES -
Great Plays
The Biggest Heart
Casey, Crime Photographer

SPELLING -
Radio Hall Of Fame
Information Please
Big Jon & Sparkie
Captains Of Industry
Kraft Music Hall- Al Jolson
Roy Rogers Show
Five Minute Mysteries

OTHER -
Lum & Abner - Episode Title Change
Shadow - Corrected Bad Entry
Quiz Kids - Deleted Bad Date
Jack Benny Program - Episodes Not Available
Charlie McCarthy - Delete Bad Episode
Hawk Larabee - Renumbered Log
Story Behind The Song - Episode Corrections
On Stage - Delete Bad Entry
Mercury Theater, Lady Esther Presents - Episodes Not

Available
Chicago Theater - Added Episode Numbers

SERIES TITLE CHANGE -
Favorite Sports Stories Of Grantland Rice

December 13, 2006

NEW LOGS -
The Shuttleworths
Bob Crosbys Music Shop
Thanks To The Yanks
What We Are Fighting For

ADDING ADD'L EPISODES -
Absolute Power
Hello Cheeky
Parsley Sidings
One Night Stand
Judy Canova Show
Bulldog Drummond
Straight Arrow

SPELLING -
Riding High
Bing Crosby - Kraft Music Hall - 35-46
Adv of Horatio Hornblower
Jubliee
Eddie Cantor - It's Time To Smile
Gene Autrys' Melody Ranch
Fighting AAF
Columbia Workshop
Mr & Mrs Blandings

DELETING BAD ENTRIES -
Kraft Music Hall - 40-46 - Bing Crosby
Singles and Doubles Collection
Mystery Is My Hobby
Lone Ranger

OTHER -
Pinto Pete - Date Corrections
Guest Star - Episode Corrections
Favorite Stories Of Grantland Rice - Renumbered Log
Night Cap Yarns - Renamed Log
Benny Good - Camel Caravan - Revised Log

