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He Designated The Chairman

Jeff Kallman

If you're my age, you grew up in or around New York City, and the radio was one of your parents' frequent companions, [William B. Williams](#) was your daily houseguest.

If you forgave him his wary view of rock and roll, Williams was the one easy listening radio host you could handle in the age of the Beatles. You might even tell yourself it was okay if Mother and Dad had control of the car radio while he was on.

For one thing, he didn't seem to mind playing the Beatles once in awhile. For another thing, he didn't seem to care who thought it was too much to play [Frank Sinatra](#) at least once an hour and maybe more. And, for a third thing, he was the smoothest sound aboard the late WNEW-AM in that time and place. Five minutes in *The Make-Believe Ballroom* was worth five hours anyplace else when it came to taking a break from rock and the blues.

Williams could make you tolerate the sappiest music on earth if it happened to be him playing it next. Patti Page asking how much was that doggie in the window sounded one hell of a lot less insulting upon human intelligence when William B. introduced and backsold it than when anyone else did.

And when he introduced something with meat – say, Count Basie's "April in Paris," or Duke Ellington's "Take The A Train," or Benny Goodman's "Jersey Bounce," or Bunny Berigan's "I Can't Get Started" – he did it with a delivery so pleasant you could practically see him nodding you toward that rather charming and lonely young lady by the rolling bar who'd rather be dancing with you than kissing a glass of wine.

Martin Block merely invented both the disc

jockey and *The Make-Believe Ballroom*, a few years after he got the clever idea of playing records during breaks in coverage of the Lindbergh baby kidnapping. Once Williams was handed the show after Art Ford was dismissed in 1958, he turned it into a necessity. Especially for Frank Sinatra.

When Mitch Miller wasn't jamming barking dogs down Sinatra's ailing throat, Sinatra's voice itself was cracking toward delayed maturity, and Williams was insisting that Sinatra transcended fad and phenomenon. And, since Benny Goodman was the King of Swing, and Messrs. Ellington and Basie had their own regal titles, such a Sinatra required a title in his own right.

And, Williams gave him one. To the day Williams left the air there was no such thing as a show without at least one and at most three or four playings of the Chairman of the Board. Say what you will about Frank Sinatra but loyalty was in his eternal top five. If Williams wanted to name him the Chairman of the Board, you'd better not let Sinatra hear you call Williams a mere disc jockey. Never mind that William B. didn't mind.

Call it opposites attracting. Sinatra, subtle as a trainwreck, and Williams, about as boisterous as a midnight breeze across a ballroom balcony. "On the air at WNEW, he would sometimes stand behind the microphone with his hands in his pockets," the critic David Hinckley has written, "leading some regular listeners to say they could hear him jingling coins in his pocket as he spoke."

My parents would have him on in the afternoon when I was growing up, and at the drop of "April in Paris" I could picture a mellow fellow in an alpaca sweater with a pipe in one hand and the other waving as if conducting the Count and his men.

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This was a man who got fired from WNEW in the 1940s for being, allegedly, too aggressive as a union shop steward, but got himself re-hired in 1953, after station-hopping that is said to have included a comedy show on WOR. "Hello, world!" was his breezy sign-on, and if you could lose count of the kernels of corn bouncing off those three syllables as the years went by you'd have wondered what was wrong if he'd ever surrendered it.

They gave him a gala for his 40th anniversary on the air and Frank Sinatra re-arranged his schedule to host it. Two years later, leukemia compounded by colon cancer [silenced him](#) on this island earth forever. Sinatra couldn't rearrange his schedule to be at his funeral, but about seven hundred others were there – including Tony Bennett, Lena Horne, Woody Herman, Arthur Prysock, and Duke Ellington's sister. But the Chairman sent a letter along to be read. It mentioned Williams's inability to say no to a benefit. Far as the Chairman was concerned, he was the most charitable man he ever knew.

Five years after William B. went to his reward WNEW went into Bloomberg Radio's possession and signed off the air forever, in favour of [WBBR](#), which is all business and don't mean a thing because it ain't got that swing.

They've elected William B. to the Radio Hall of Fame, with [Douglas Edwards](#) (once a signature of CBS News, from his reporting days on the World War II edition of *The World Today* to his longtime anchoring of CBS Radio's *The World Tonight*), Christopher Glenn (Edwards' successor on *The World Tonight* before taking the morning *CBS World News Roundup*), and [Scott Shannon](#) (give him the blame for the morning zoo style).

There were two things missing at the [4 November induction ceremony](#). One was Williams, and two is Sinatra. It would have been worth every record Williams ever introduced on the air, every syllable of patter from smooth to sugary, if both men had been granted to this island earth long enough that the Chairman of the Board could have inducted the chairman of *The Make Believe Ballroom*.

The Old-Time Radio Researchers currently has \$298.16 in the Treasury. We recently made a purchase of \$208.00 from Golden Age Sounds.

Many thanks to everyone who made a monthly contribution in 2006 to the group, and for those who've already started in 2007. They include Dale Beckman, Jim Beshires, Scott Carpenter, Pete Cavallo, John Davies, Lisa Fittinghoff, Allan Foster, Mike Galbreath, Roger Hohenbrink, Archie Hunter, Tony Jaworowski, Dave Johnson, Jim Jones, Ben Kibler, John Liska, Tom Mandeville, Henry Morse, Jess Oliver, David Oxford, Robert Philips, Peter Risbey, Ed Selhorst, David Shipman, Daryl Taylor, Gregg Taylor, Lee Tefertiller, Joe Webb, Gordon Whitman, and William Wood. If anyone has been left off please let us know.

If you are interested in becoming a monthly supporter of the OTRR, please contact the treasurer, Tony Jaworowski at jaworowski@ameritech.net. Monthly supporters receive advance releases of all purchases, either encoded at 128, 64, or WAV.

For the year ending December, 2006, 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 Future of Old Time Radio

Ryan Ellett

I've lately been reading back issues of the Old Time Radio Digest from the mid-80s and it's been very interesting to me to read about the concerns of some of the contributors about the future of old time radio. In a series of articles from 1984 and 1985 George Wagner even went so far as to lay out a plan for old time radio fans to begin operating their own stations, airing both OTR reruns and new drama. Obviously nothing has come of it, but I admire him for putting out such a plan for all to see.

A question that runs through many of these 20-year-old writings, whether explicitly stated or not, is "does OTR have a future?" Two decades later, of course, we see that it did. But does it still? And if so, what might it look like?

While it may be a bit presumptuous for someone like me to make any reasonable predictions (after all, I only discovered OTR about six years ago), I will anyway. I see a couple of changes that I feel must create fundamental changes in the hobby within the next few years. The first is transitioning from a hobby built around individuals involved with OTR in its Golden Age, either as performers or listeners, to those who are familiar with it only as remnants of a historic entertainment medium. The second is the division of the hobby into two distinct groups; those who actively engage in exploring the history of OTR, and those who listen to it solely for its entertainment value.

Initially, the hobby must deal with the eventual passing of the generation that participated in radio's Golden Age, whether as performers or listeners. The "youngest" fans that still have first-hand memories of old time radio are in their late 50s and 60s by now. Even most of the folks that I meet in this age range with memories of old radio remember only isolated programs. Few, if any, remember radio's heyday in the 40s. By the 50s radio was less and less an entertainment focus of most families. My dad (62) remembers the *Cisco Kid* and *Fibber McGee*, and a good friend from church (60) remembers the *Great Gildersleeve*. These are vague childhood memories for them; radio was predominantly top-40 even by their teen years.

Now, I don't mean "passing" necessarily in a morbid way, to be sure. I wish the plus-60 crowd in the hobby nothing but the best health, but how long will most of them continue to actively participate in OTR clubs, online forums, and conventions? And how many club and convention leaders are in this crowd? Sooner rather than later the hobby will need to adjust to a time when the

majority of fans have no first-hand memories of old time radio. Perhaps that time has come already, it's hard to tell.

I believe the FOTR convention has struggled with this as the number of former OTR performers has dwindled. Who replaces them as an attendance draw for fans? Old-time television stars? The descendants of the performers? Impersonators and re-creators? All valid answers, but will OTR fans be satisfied? What happens to the Cincinnati convention when the few stars that Bob can afford to fly in no longer can, or want to, participate? Will it remain a viable convention?

This question has been asked over and over, but maybe it's moot. Compared to the convention guest lists of 20 years ago, would one have thought the current editions of FOTR and Cinci would continue to draw the number of fans they do? Maybe the change will be gradual enough from original performers to the substitutes listed above that fans won't mind. I was thrilled to see the old stars at my first trip to Cinci last year, but I was just as thrilled to get together with other fans whom I've known for so long. Maybe the social draw of these get-togethers will compensate for diminishing star power.

I think the online forums and digests will continue to do well. For the most part, posts and contributions by folks with first-hand memories and experiences with OTR are increasingly few, especially outside of Charlie's Digest. Fortunately, there seem to be enough people interested in doing research on these old shows that these virtual meeting spots continue to provide insightful information, and are more than just spots for social chit-chat. Of course, there's no assurance this will continue. By the mid-80s Anthony Tollin was a highly-respected 30-something authority on the Shadow and had even co-authored a book on the character. While no less regarded today, he is not actively involved in researching old time radio, to my knowledge. Gary Yoggy, as well, was a highly prolific researcher and writer who is quiet these days, again, to my knowledge. Many of the regular writers in the 80's Digests I'm reading are not names I see often anymore. Like any hobby, people float in and out; Folks like Bob Burchette, Jack French, Jay Hickerson and Barbara Watkins who seem to be as active now as they were 20 years ago are the exception rather than the rule. How long will today's most prolific writers, among them Stewart Wright, Jim Cox, Martin Grams, and Jack French, be active? Let's hope for many years to come, but we can't expect it.

The clubs are a big question mark for me, partly because I have no experience with them since none exist in my area. I expect SPERDVAC and the D.C. group will

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Future of OTR (Continued from page 3)

be fine for years to come, what with the number of retired entertainers in the Southern California area and the media presence in D.C. Those groups likely will have enough sources of interest to continue to draw folks to physical meetings for some time. But what of the Colorado group, the New York club, the Tuscon club, etc? How active can we hope they'll be in five years? In ten years? I'd love to hear from members of those groups to give me some insight.

In this area I think Jim Widner was right-on when he talked about the likelihood that clubs would become increasingly web-based (http://www.otr.com/otr_future.html and updated in a previous issue of the *Times*). He predicted the OTR e-zine five years before the birth of the *Times*. Radio Out of the Past already has regular on-line meetings involving old time radio figures. As web-based video becomes more common, meetings and conventions may very well become primarily a stay-at-home experience, while still meeting that need to interact in more than just email or text chat.

As bullish as I am in the belief that the hobby will survive the passing of the generation of those who originally created and listened to the medium, I must say that I think the hobby-base will decrease. That is, I think the number of people interested enough to buy books and attend events concerning OTR will fall in coming years. If not in total number, at least in proportion to the general population.

I have no empirical evidence to support this belief; it is based on purely anecdotal experience. In the six or seven years I've been into OTR I have seen and known many, many individuals discover and fall in love with these classic old programs. However, I can think of only a handful that have stuck with it and become actually hobbyists; most have just as quickly lost interest or have been content simply to become passive listeners to the shows and not delve any further into the history of old time radio. I do not say this negatively. There's nothing wrong with just listening and enjoying OTR for what it is, and never digging into it any further.

This leads to the second major change I see happening within the hobby. I think we are seeing the emergence of two distinct branches of the OTR hobby. The first is comprised of most of you reading this; those who enjoy the shows but enjoy learning about and discussing them just as much. The second branch is those who like listening to these old shows for their entertainment value. Every day more people download shows or find an

Internet station streaming OTR and decide it's a good way to pass time at work or in the car. They have little interest in OTR past this.

Certainly there have always been fans who simply wanted to listen to OTR and not get much more into it. However, I think it was harder in the past to get OTR shows without being exposed to the OTR hobby. Now, one could listen to OTR over the Internet or satellite radio and never really know there's an organized, active fan base.

On one hand this is good. Because OTR is so easily available in digital formats, I don't see that it could ever disappear. Back in the 70s and 80s this probably couldn't have been said with as much certainty. At the same time, since folks can get in and out so quick – fans can get thousands upon thousands of shows in mp3 format in hours or days – there is less of a window in which to “hook” them and convince them the hobby is worth an investment of time and resources beyond just as background amusement. Plus, remember that future listeners won't have the “nostalgia factor” to lure them in. I think this is one of the drawbacks of the mp3 file format, even more so than the quality issues that others have been so vocal about over the years. New listeners don't need to be in touch with clubs and other fans to get material.

So what do I predict the OTR hobby will look like in 20 years? I don't think any of the current conventions will exist in their current, OTR-centric, format. “In-the-flesh” conventions will likely be similar to the nostalgia convention Martin Grams has started, in which OTR is one nostalgia genre among several. I expect OTR-only events to be “virtual;” how long before we can interact with each other in three-dimensional virtual environments over the Internet? I really don't expect the fan-base (those of the first branch mentioned above) to be sufficient enough in any area to support these conventions.

Similarly, I expect the clubs will be gone, replaced by online groups such as the OTRR, the Cobalt Club, and the Talk 'n Trade forum. I'd be surprised to see any physical newsletters in 2026. Their cost is prohibitive when digital formats are so easy now. I think there will be fewer, too. There are at least five printed newsletters (SPERDVAC, the Puget Sound group, RHAC, Metro Washington, and the OTR Digest) and, of course, the *Times*. Do we really need six (plus any others I'm not aware of)? I say no. All of these publications could be combined into one or two monthly editions, but I don't see that happening until the vitality of the respective clubs diminishes further.

I expect the number of active hobbyists to be smaller (in proportion to the population at large) than today. To

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Future of OTR (Continued from page 3)

the extent radio is increasingly broadcast over the Internet and via satellite, the network radio days will be even more foreign and obscure to future generations. At the same time, however, the number of people who listen to OTR in some manner will be vastly larger, proportionally, than today.

I don't expect the amount of published work on OTR to be any more in a given year than today; after all, the Golden Age of radio was a fairly short period in the timeline of popular culture. Most fans, I think, have accepted that dramatic radio will likely never "come back." With such a huge amount of old material, I don't see how it could ever be profitable to produce new audio drama. I think the closest we'll see is dramatic productions of books, which exist currently within the books-on-tape genre.

Clearly, the traditional role of the dealer as a focal point of program distribution to hobbyists is gone. The digital medium makes fan-to-fan sharing too easy and quick. As general listeners (the second branch discussed above) are increasingly separated from the hobbyists, there will probably remain a demand for sellers such as OTRCat and those on ebay. OTR is certainly easy to find for free but one does have to do a bit of work to find it, whether it's on the Hubs, usenet, ftp sites, or other fans.

The more crucial role of the dealer – that of acquiring new material and putting it into circulation – is still unresolved. While few ever got rich off OTR, in the past it seems there was more certainty that the financial costs of getting new shows could be recouped through sales before they became too widely circulated. This is clearly not the case today, when a show can be disseminated to hundreds and thousands of fans in minutes. Any cost must be recouped before the show is released. "Subscriptions" may work for more popular shows; i.e. getting a number of fans to pay a certain amount (likely enough to at least cover the cost of acquiring said shows) before releasing the new programs. I believe this has been done, but is it feasible for many of the non-marquee series? Are enough fans willing to pony up a subscription fee for the B-grade shows?

I suppose even in twenty years there still may be a version of today's old-boys network which keeps certain shows out of general circulation. But with so much easily available, I don't see how a few scarce shows could have much monetary value. It's entirely possible that fans with reel-to-reel capabilities will be evermore valuable, especially as huge reel collections need to be passed on to other collectors (hopefully, rather than discarded). There

is surely a lot of material still only available on those countless dusty reels waiting to be re-discovered by tomorrow's listeners. As far as completely undiscovered shows on transcription, I can't imagine a significant number are still out there to be found, at least not with episodes of the more popular series. More likely, fans on 2026 will be (re)discovering a new program on decomposing reel tape as opposed to a deteriorating ET.

In summary, I believe the OTR hobby community (again, not including those who only listen to OTR) will be smaller and more tightly connected than today's. At the same time, OTR will be more widespread and enjoyed regularly by far more people than today. Local and regional groups will give way to national and international virtual groups and hobby publications will likely number no more than one or two (probably two as there will always be someone unhappy enough with "the one" that they'll start their own). New research will be published but by then will be entirely document-based in nature (as most new hobby books are even today) since fresh first-hand accounts of the old time era will, of necessity, be impossible by then.

I feel this is the twilight of the OTR hobby's Silver Age (I hope to go into what I believe is the hobby's Golden Age in a future piece). Many of us have had a chance to meet or at least communicate with the classic performers and those individuals who were at the forefront of salvaging many of the shows we have today.

The passing of the Silver Age in the next few years does not mean the passing of the hobby. I've already stated it will still be around in 20 years. But the disappearance of these direct links to the era, which are few and far between even today, will change it. People getting into OTR five to ten years from now not have a chance to know some of the old entertainers or the pioneers of the hobby. Instead, they'll get to know you and me; fans who knew the old entertainers and pioneers. A link to be sure, but each successive link is weaker than its predecessor.

This piece is not an exercise in pessimism. Old time radio is very much alive and vigorous today. Enjoy it and take advantage of all that the hobby offers now. It may not always be the case.

I would welcome your thoughts on this topic. Is my crystal ball cloudy or crystal clear in your opinion?

Captain Midnight: The Premiums

Jim Widner

When looking at the history of premiums on the *Captain Midnight* radio series, one should understand that there were two separate periods determined primarily by sponsor. The first period was under the sponsorship of the Skelly Oil Company from October, 1938 to March, 1940 and the second under Ovaltine (The Wander Company).

The Skelly Years

The type of premiums offered from each period were very different. During the Skelly years, kids could join the Flight Patrol, an exclusive club for those who had the Flight Patrol Membership Card and Membership Medal. Only some premiums were mail-ordered; most could be picked up at a nearby Skelly Gas Station. Because Skelly was an adult sponsor, whose product appealed to adults, the exclusivity concept of the club was mostly ignored - anyone could join at anytime if the premiums were still available at the Skelly stations. You did not have to be a member to sign up for the premium. It was to the sponsor's advantage to get parents into their station. Some items required membership to get, but that was generally relaxed and some Skelly dealers even hated dealing with the premiums and would give them away to anyone who came in.



During the 1938-39 season the following premiums were offered:

Flight Patrol Membership Card

This was a wallet-sized card that indicated the holder was a member in good standing as a "Junior Pilot in the Captain Midnight Flight Patrol." It entitled one to be able to wear the Flight Patrol Badge (see next item). The card contained a sketch of Captain Midnight's plane rounding a clock tower at midnight. There was also a code of honor that read:

As a Junior Pilot of the Captain Midnight Flight Patrol, I pledge myself to be Honest in all things, Fair

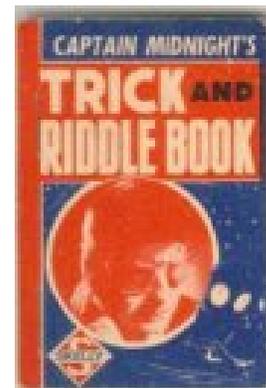
to all others, Brave in the face of danger, Courteous to my superiors and elders and Alert at all time to the fine principles of our Flight Patrol.

Flight Patrol Commander Brass Badge

This was a small solid brass badge that displayed a banner at the top entitled "Flight Patrol Commander" and displayed the Skelly Logo as well as the twin-engine plane of Captain Midnight. When the membership card was picked up, kids could then sign up for the Skelly man to order the badge.



Other premiums offered during this season included a Trick and Riddle Book, The Flight Patrol Reporter (four different editions of a small newspaper which featured information on the cast of characters as well as some clues to secret passwords and so forth), Air Heroes Stamp Album, Happy Landings Photos, Pictures of Chuck and Patsy, and a Treasure Map.



For the 1940 season a new membership card was issued (even current members were exhorted to join the 1940 Flight Patrol) along with a medal of membership. Flight Patrol Membership Card

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Captain Midnight (Continued from page 6)

Similar to the previous year's card but with plane designs along the left edge. The Junior Code was on the back.



Medal of Membership

This was a “burnished bronze medal” with its obverse showing a three-bladed propeller with bas-relief representations of Captain Midnight, Chuck Ramsay, and Patsy Donovan. Its reverse was a clockface showing a time of 12:01, representing midnight. A dimple in the center of the back (making a bump on the front) enabled the medal to be used as a “spinner,” with the clock hands pointing when the rotation stopped, rather like the “Spin the Bottle” game. Note: An authorized replica of this medal was manufactured in the 1970s. It can be differentiated from the original by a tiny “R” inside the bottom of the Skelly logo on the reverse side.



Ringo-Jumpo Game/Jumping Beans

During the “Perada Treasure” episodes the Skelly dealer offered Mexican “jumping beans” along with an 8 X 10 piece of paper with a game that would allow the beans to “jump” and score depending upon where the beans landed.



Mysto-Magic Weather Forecasting Flight Patrol Badge

This was a metal bronze-colored badge shaped like a propeller with the Skelly Logo. Behind the logo would sit a piece of litmus paper that changed color as the weather conditions affected it.



Other premiums during this time included more photos with the Captain, Chuck and Patsy, a Wright Airplane balsa/paper assembly kit and new editions of the Flight Patrol Reporter newspaper.

Some of the premiums were a part of the show: the propeller spinning medal had the secret word “COBRALHOFA” on it. The word was not so secret, however, as it was regularly announced on the series, though never spelled. During the time that Chuck was captured in some 1940 episodes, he would send out messages to the Captain which were coded messages. By taking a message and selecting every tenth word, the messages could be translated. Why ten? Because the COBRALHOFA was equal to ten letters. For example, one message was:

“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...”

The second message was almost the same as the first in that the code words were repeated. Captain Midnight discovered that every tenth word in both messages were the same. He also knew that the coded words corresponded to the last five letters of the secret password, COBRALHOFA and that it was intentional for Chuck to use the word Cobra:

“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...”

Captain Midnight figured that Chuck would send a third message using the first part of the secret password which he alluded to in the earliest message. And a third arrived:

“Hello Captain Midnight. This is your last chance to

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Captain Midnight (Continued from page 7)

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..."

Once all the messages were placed in the order of the secret word, the message gave away Ivan Shark's hiding place:

COBRALHOFA

Come Over Bridge Right At Long Home On Flying Arrow

The Ovaltine Years

In the fall season of 1940, the Wander Company had purchased the Captain Midnight show and took it to a national exposure. The company had been looking for a more commanding and heroic figure to sponsor their product, Ovaltine, as the country seemed to be moving toward World War. Continuing the tradition of their previous series, Radio Orphan Annie, the company began to integrate coded messages and club identification into the episodes. The Flight Patrol was replaced by the Secret Squadron. And Pierre Andre, the spokesman, urged the young (and sometimes older) listeners to join the Squadron in order to help Captain Midnight and the others.



1941

Mystery Dial Code-o-graph and manual

So called because the center of the inner disk (cryptologically, the rotor: it had the cipher alphabet [scrambled letters] on it) was supposed to look like the

dial knob of a radio. Turning the dial proved to be a bit of a chore, particularly with the setting windows being on the backside. The secret messages to decode were always given at the end as a "Secret Squadron Signal Session."



Flight Commander Ring

This premium was only available via the 1941 manual. It was not offered over the airwaves. Inside the ring, on the reverse side of the crown, in raised letters, it says, "Captain Midnight Super Code 3." As explained in the manual, a message might be sent to Flight Commanders (i.e., those who'd earned the rings by recruiting other Squadron members) without a "code" setting. They were to look inside their rings to get the setting for their "special" messages.

Whirlwind Whistling Ring

It was a brass fits-any-finger ring with a miniature siren on its crown. This one was used in the program by Chuck and Joyce to summon help in the drains under Hong Kong while being held prisoner by the Barracuda's Tiger Tong. The siren is very similar to all such, like the one in the Tom Mix Arrowhead. They're not loud.

Aviation Wings

These looked similar to those worn by pilots on their uniforms; it was made of brass. It has nothing to identify it as a Captain Midnight item except for a piece of paper that came with it.

5-Way Detect-O-Scope

A metal-and-cardboard device for sighting objects and estimating their distances.

1942-1944

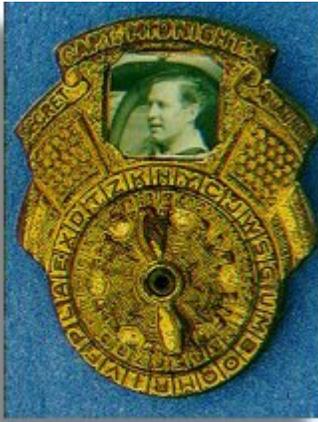
Photomatic Code-O-Graph and manual

So called because the owner was to insert a photo of him- or herself into a small square area at the top of the

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Captain Midnight (Continued from page 8)

badge, replacing the (supplied) photo of a pilot's face. The manual touted it as a personalized identification, like those used in defense plants. Actually, once the user removed the pilot's picture and substituted one of his or her own for it, the user was supposed to use a hammer and nail to fix the picture in permanently. This was shown pictorially, and consisted of pushing down the four metal tabs at the picture corners so that the picture couldn't be removed. There was enough of an overproduction of these so that they were issued throughout the war to new listeners. Flight Commander's Flying Cross and handbook



Flying Cross Medal

This was another item orderable only from the catalog accompanying the Code-O-Graph. It was plated in 24 karat gold. The instructions that came with it told of how the inscription on the (back of the) medal had a secret setting for Flight Commanders. The inscription is: "Awarded for distinguished service," and signed "Capt. Midnight," with the "SS-1" under the signature, and in quotes.



The 1942 Sliding Secret Compartment Ring

A brass ring with a crown that slides off and is hollow. Suitable only to conceal a folded postage stamp or microfilm, if the kids could find any.

Mystic Eye Detector Ring

A "look around" ring. This had a tiny stainless steel mirror in the crown, situated so that if the wearer brought his or her fist up to an eye, the viewer could see almost directly behind (actually about 160 degrees). This was not used in the show, and an equivalent ring was offered by Radio Orphan Annie, the Lone Ranger and Tennessee Jed.

MJC-10 Plane Spotter

A wartime premium consisting of a cardboard tube with "slides" (inserts on onionskin paper framed by thin cardstock) with plane silhouettes of Allied and Axis aircraft. It came with an instruction sheet, also printed on onionskin, that could be used to make more slides. A children's equivalent of the "aircraft recognition silhouettes" used by the Civilian Defense plane spotters.



Marine Corps Ring

A ring with the Marine Corps emblem.

Magic Blackout Lite-Ups

The premium was two sheets of paper impregnated with luminous chemicals. The accompanying folder suggested ways it could be used during blackouts, such as gluing a small strip of the material at light switches, on stairsteps, on flashlights, etc. In the program, this was the fallout of Dr. Barbados' portable chemical lab in the Andes when they were investigating the Phantom City. Scraps of the material were used to help people find their way in a labyrinth under the city.

With the two sheets of luminous paper came some suggested uses. Some were extremely practical, such as pasting small bits of the paper on light switches, firefighting pails, and stairsteps. Others were silly, such as eyeglass decoration. One really silly idea suggested using the paper for a bullseye on a dartboard for use in a "Blackout Party."

Insignia Patch

This was the conventional winged-clockface-with-hands-at-twelve Secret Squadron symbol/logo. It was introduced in the story where Chuck was flying an

(Continued on page 10)

Captain Midnight (Continued from page 9)

experimental jet in England and had to land at a military field, without identification (he couldn't show his Code-O-Graph). After he was rescued by the intervention of Sir Allen Brundage, the Squadron decided on a patch ID. Ovaltine offered it as a shoulder patch.



1945

Magni-Magic Code-O-Graph and manual

So called because the center of the rotor was a magnifying glass. This was the first of the dated Code-O-Graphs. The manual had “key messages” scattered throughout that were printed in a typeface so small that the owner needed to use the lens to read them. Brass was still a critical material, and the badge was actually stamped sheet steel, with a “gold” paint atop it.

The lens in the rotor was plastic, of course (indeed, all postwar Code-O-Graphs were at least partially plastic; one was completely plastic), and scratched easily. The manual had short messages printed in very tiny type that required the Code-O-Graph's magnifier to read. These were called “Key Messages,” and were numbered. The Squadron member might pass a note to a friend who was also a Squadron member. The note might say, “KM-3,” meaning “Expect important news soon.”



1946

Mirro-Flash Code-O-Graph and manual

The center of the rotor on this one was a mirror. The manual described the mirror as a “reducing” mirror, so that the user would be able to survey a room unobtrusively. The only weakness this unit had was that

the pin on the back snapped off easily.



Mystic Aztec Sun God Ring

A “souvenir” of a Mexican adventure by the Squadron. It looked pretty good: it had a red-plastic “ruby” that slid off: it was hollow, and thus the ring had a “secret compartment.” The difficulty was that the “ruby” slid off too easily. Most that survive intact today had something crammed into the secret compartment to make it harder for the “ruby” to slip off.



1947

Whistling Code-O-Graph and manual

This was a plastic whistle with the cipher disk on its side. It was the first non-badge Code-O-Graph, and the first (and only) all-plastic one for the radio series. The rotor popped out of this one very easily; and the cipher alphabet was on it. Fortunately, it popped back in easily, too.



(Continued on page 11)

Captain Midnight (Continued from page 10)

Spy Scope

A miniature Galilean telescope. Extended, it was about the size of a mechanical pencil. It was black with red trim at the lenses. It worked pretty well for a Galilean. Regrettably, the red plastic rings holding the lenses was pretty fragile, so many broke.

Orange Shake-Up Mug

This was an 8-ounce plastic container with a blue top that could be used in the manner of a cocktail shaker to mix up Ovaltine drinks. A bas-relief picture of Captain Midnight is on its outside. [This was also offered in 1948 and 1949]



1948

Mirro-Flash Code-O-Graph and manual

It had a removable red plastic back and a “secret compartment.” A largish stainless steel mirror insert was good for heliographic signaling. The Code-o-graph was unbelievably awkward. The cipher rotor and numbers were on two disks that held together for deciphering (only one number and one letter were visible through windows on the front). They were kept together with a ring of dimples to prevent slippage. That often didn't work. Also, the red back usually warped severely, both making it impossible to keep as a back for the unit, and also causing the stainless steel mirror to pop off.



Initial Printing Ring

A “souvenir” of the adventure of the “Jewels of the Queen of Sheba.” The ring had a removable top with an inkpad, with an initial that could be stamped on any notes to “authenticate” them. This one lost its stamp pad easily.

1949

Key-O-Matic Code-O-Graph and manual

Used clutch mechanism and key to change cipher settings. Most people lost the keys quickly. It had no other features than enciphering and deciphering. Some people used a paper clip or some such to set the gears including field stripping them, then snapping it back together.



Extra special thanks to Stephen Kallis Jr. both for some of the premium photos and his help and inspiration on the descriptions.



This article appears on Jim Widner's site Radio Days (<http://www.otr.com/index.shtml>) and is reprinted here by permission of the author.

Radio Premiums

Stephen Kallis, Jr.

Being one of the generation that grew up during the OTR period, my perspective has been colored by fond memories. Although it's been more than half a century, hearing some old shows can actually evoke feelings I had when I first heard them.

However, things change, though subtly. I have seen this most recently in the relative market devaluation of radio premiums. When I was growing up, the whole process of obtaining the latest radio premium was incredibly anticipatory. The best preserved example is in the 1940 Jack Armstrong Sulu Sea adventure, with the buildup to the announcement of the Dragon's Eye Ring. The first chapter finds Jack and his friends discovering that someone has ransacked "Uncle" Jim Fairfield's office. They then alert Fairfield, and go to retrieve a package that's been shipped to him from the Philippines. After they get the package, attempts are made to steal it. Eventually, after some narrow escapes, the package is brought to Fairfield. "Uncle Jim" opens it, and in it is an exotic ring, with two crocodilian figures framing a green stone. The ring, we learn, is to help Fairfield gain the support of natives while trying to recover some lost Uranium 235 (apparently less than 11 kilograms of the stuff). This was an important ring! When, a bit later, listeners learn that for a Wheaties boxtop and a dime, they could get a ring just like that one, the emotion to get one was nearly irresistible.

I didn't listen to Jack Armstrong as I was growing up, but I heard a tape of the adventures in the 1970s for the first time, and I wanted one then! Pretty good psychology on the writers' part.

That aside, I did acquire a number of premiums, all for the modest fee of a proof of purchase, and often with coin, but not always. Half the value for many of them was the emotional investment in checking the mail delivery each day in hopes of finding a small box or manila envelope containing the latest treasure.

Over the years, the premiums disappeared, sometimes with parental help. For this reason, those of us who tried to return to the thrilling days of yesteryear discovered that the market for such items, generally auctions, though occasionally flea markets, had inflated the price, far beyond the modest amount asked by the sponsors. The Jack Armstrong Dragon's Eye Ring could net as much as \$500 in mint condition, and a complete Captain Midnight Aztec Sun God Ring even more. With the later evolution of the Internet and Internet auctions, the prices went even

higher.

But now, the reverse is beginning to happen. Descriptions for radio premiums now many times contain errors. Bidding is often less brisk, and the prices realized are declining. Where one premium five years ago sold for \$1,300, now the identical premium went for \$400 – on two tries!

My suspicion is that the market is shifting to those who see these items as investments, not golden memories. Some of those who have Kix Atom Bomb Rings are unaware that when they were first new, the rings actually put on a great light show of nuclear reactions; now, they're inert. Most of those owning Whirlwing Whistling Rings are unaware that those rings were important in the program in rescuing Chuck and Joyce from forces of The Barracuda, held prisoner below the streets of Hong Kong. A dealer can grade the quality of a premium, but not its heritage.

This is not a revaluation of OTR. I love it as much as I ever did. This is not a complaint that people aren't keeping the spirit of OTR going. One of our contributors [to the Old Time Radio Internet Digest] has edited two books of "new" OTR stories, and has written more than one book on OTR premiums. But it does show a sea change in the perception of OTR items in the outside world.

I wonder: has anyone thought of an OTR museum? Not a Museum of Broadcasting, but perhaps a Museum of OTR artifacts? Not only of premiums, but of associated memorabilia. It might be a way to preserve the heritage.

Stephen Kallis, Jr's reflections on OTR premiums was originally published in the Old Time Radio Internet Digest on January 14, 2007. It is reprinted here with his permission. Mr. Kallis adds in a correspondence with the editor: "A really good way to appreciate the premiums composed of or containing luminous elements is to view them in subdued room light while exposing them to ultraviolet light."

How Groucho and his Brothers Left Their Marx on Network Radio, Pt. 5

Robert Jennings & Wayne Boenig

Groucho was a master of leering double entendre comments, and every pretty girl on the show could count on at least one guarded indecent proposal and several suggestive compliments from him.

One of the most famous purported bloopers in the history of radio came out of *You Bet Your Life*. This incident has been told, retold, edited, changed, denied, confirmed and refuted so many times that it has become a subject for genuine research by such pillars of wisdom as Cecil Adams' "Straight Dope" feature and the "Urban Legends" encyclopedia.

Here is the essence of the story. Groucho was interviewing a woman named Story who had 19 children. At the time she had the largest family in America. She originally bore 22 children but three had died.

Groucho: Why do you have so many children? That's a big responsibility, and a big burden.

Mrs. Story: Well, because I love my children and I think that's our purpose here on Earth, and I love my husband.

Groucho: Well I love my cigar, too, but I take it out of my mouth once in a while.

The audience broke up in hysterical laughter. According to the story, many people remember seeing this on the television show.

The story has the ring of truth because Groucho's entire career, particularly on the *You Bet Your Life* show had been notable for his ability to ad-lib humorous risqué material. This is exactly the kind of comment anyone who had ever heard the show would have expected him to make.

However, logic and research has determined that even if this particular exchange ever took place, it would have been impossible for it to have ever aired. Robert Dwan was one of the co-producers for the entire run of the show. He staged the weekly audience performances, and he supervised the editing of the recorded versions to an acceptable half hour format. He was also the program's censor, and he always double checked to make sure nothing too off-color made it into the weekly shows. In his book about his experiences working on the program he stated that it was entirely probable that the exchange actually took place. He also stated that he was sure Groucho never intended it to be taken in a dirty-joke type

context, rather it would have been intended as a broad burlesque-house style remark for which Groucho was well known. He also stated that he was certain those comments were never broadcasted, and that in addition, the comments were made while the program was still a radio show only. While perhaps two hundred audience members that night might have heard the comment, it was impossible for anyone to have heard it on the air, because he, Dwan, would never have allowed it to go out over the air.

In a 1972 interview with Roger Ebert which ran in *Esquire Magazine* Groucho himself denied ever saying it. Then again, in his book "The Secret Word Is Groucho," which came out in 1976, he claimed that he had made the comment, but also stated that the exchange was never aired, because it was cut out of the final edited show by Robert Dwan, the show's censor.

Steve Stoliar, who worked as a secretary in Groucho's household during the final years of his life also confirmed that the comment was made, but never aired. It turned out that Bernie Smith, the show's head writer and co-producer, kept complete logs of all the people who appeared as contestants on the show, and those logs confirmed that both Mr. and Mrs. Story along with a number of their children were on the radio set in 1947, altho apparently only Mrs. Story made it on stage. The exchange actually took place, but Stoliar also confirms that the comments, apparently spoken at a 1947 taping, never made it to the airwaves.

But you can't keep a good anecdote down. You'll find this story in various edited forms reported in dozens of places both in print and over the internet. In fact, it even ran once as a humor blurb in the *Reader's Digest* in the 1970s, a sure sign that the status of risqué material has changed considerably since 1947.

John Guedel was known in the radio business as something of a cheapskate. His efforts with *You Bet Your Life* became slightly infamous within the industry, particularly as regards the show's music. Originally Guedel had not planned on having a live band for the program at all. He envisioned using an instrumental recording of Groucho's "Hooray For Captain Spalding" from the 1928 *Animal Crackers* musical as the theme. Groucho was instantly identified with the music; a recording would save the cost of a band, and that meant more money for Giedel and Groucho to split.

The sponsors thought otherwise. They insisted that a live band would make the live studio audience more comfortable, help with the pre-show warm-up, and make the entire production more professional. Guedel explained

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Groucho (Continued from page 12)

the live band situation to the show's newly hired music director Billy May, and reportedly asked him "how little will it cost?" "That got us off to a good start right away," May reported many years later. "Needless to say, I didn't last very long."

But he lasted long enough to establish the essential musical format for the entire run of the show. During 1947 he supplied arrangements for the program including the opening show theme, which was a slight variation on the Captain Spalding song, done by a live band. He also wrote and cross-logged internal bridge music, closing themes, sponsor leads and more. Guedel used those exact arrangements for the next four years, until 1951. In 1950 the program was run on both radio and television, and Guedel hired Alexander Lazzio, who specialized in providing low budget canned music for television and movies to create a slightly different theme using the same tune. This ran as a canned introduction for the entire 1950 season.

But again those pesky sponsors and their agents, this time speaking for DeSoto-Plymouth automobiles, demanded that the program use genuine live music, so Jerry Fielding was hired as music director in 1951. Unfortunately Jerry Fielding had problems during the early fifties. He was blacklisted during the McCarthy era and he resigned when it was suggested that his political problems might create difficulty for Groucho, altho how someone directing a TV show band could have inserted any subversive material was never explained.

Jack Meakin, a former NBC music director best known for his work with *The Great Gildersleeve* radio show took over in 1953 and stuck with the program thru the very end. Meakin composed a memorable B theme for saxophones which he called "Groucho and the Wolf" to match the new animated cartoon TV opening which showed Groucho prancing around and jiggling his eyebrows. This music then subtly meshed with the "Hooray For Captain Spalding" theme.

Another notable bit of music used on the show was provided by long time sponsor DeSoto, which had leased the rights to the tune "It's De-Lovely" for use in their television commercials. For most of the television years this also became an integral part of the *You Bet Your Life* program.

DeSoto-Plymouth took over as the sponsor beginning in 1950, signing on for a five year stint. Elgin-American was extremely happy with their association with the show, but they dropped out because by the end of 1949 their factory was running at 100% capacity. It

would have been useless to continue sponsoring a program to drum up more business when they were having a hard time keeping up with the business the show had already generated for them.

The TV show commercials became famous for having Groucho at the end of each program sticking his head thru a DeSoto logo (sometimes from a real car) and telling the audience "when you go to your DeSoto dealer tomorrow, tell 'em Groucho sent you!"

In 1949 *You Bet Your Life* jumped ship from NBC and moved to CBS. But in 1950 it moved back to NBC. One of the perks of the deal for returning to NBC was that beginning with the 1950-51 season the show would be broadcast on both radio and television, the first big name program to enter into such an arrangement. The television program would be a filmed version of the radio show.

This proved to be a very farsighted move on the part of co-owners Groucho and Guedel. Even as radio listenership was declining in the early fifties and television was picking up viewers, their program could be experienced by fans in either format.

The radio and television shows were not broadcast simultaneously. The first year or so there was a one day delay between the radio show which was broadcast first and the television version. Over the years the time gap lengthened and might change from one season to the next, according to some mysterious formula only the executives at NBC understood. By the end of the 1950s the television show was being aired first and then the radio show would follow days later. Many NBC radio shows were killed off over the summer of 1956, but *You Bet Your Life* was not one of them. The radio show continued to be run over the network, for as many stations on the feed as wanted it, until June 10, 1960, when it too was finally axed.

The radio and the television programs were also carried as summer reruns, the first time a quiz show of any kind was ever placed in reruns. In the 1960's the TV shows were packaged and placed into syndication as "The Best of Groucho", also the first time any kind of quiz program had gone into syndication.

Now that he had his own hit radio show, Groucho cut back considerably on his guest appearances, but he still had time to drop by the programs of his old friends occasionally, tho by now those were more often television than radio shows. He also did guest shots on NBC's "The Big Show", and on the November 12, 1950 broadcast he did a spoof of *You Bet Your Life* with Fanny Brice as Baby Snooks, along with Tullulah Bankhead and Hanley Stafford as Daddy.

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Groucho (Continued from page 13)

In their December 31, 1951 issue Time Magazine initiated a brand new irregular department called 'Personalities.' The very first personality covered was Groucho Marx, who was also featured on the cover of the magazine with a facial line drawing that made him look dour and serious, but the article inside soon put that mood to rest with a full coverage of his life story peppered with his famous quips and ad-libs.

On April 9, 1954 he was a guest and the subject of an interview on the TV program *Person To Person* where he shows host Edward R. Murrow around his house and has no trouble at all reducing the normally strait and serious Murrow to hysterical laughter.

On April 3, 1955 he did a hilarious "You Bet Your Life" skit on the *Jack Benny Television Show* in which Jack disguises himself to go on Groucho's program as a contestant, and then becomes fascinated with the idea of getting a hundred bucks just for saying a secret word. The Secret Word was 'telephone,' which Jack inadvertently wins when he says he can "always tell a phony." Jack makes it to the jackpot round, but loses, because the question asks Jack Benny's real age, information his character would never willingly reveal.

This particular episode was out of circulation for decades, although Groucho himself had a filmed copy which he would run for special guests at his home from time to time. It was finally released on a DVD documentary called *The Unknown Marx Brothers* in 1993.

You Bet Your Life made the move to TV easily. Essentially it was a radio show with cameras right up thru the end of its existence, which came in 1961. During its long television tenure it was nominated for five Emmys, but only won once, in 1951.

The peak years for the television show were 1955 thru 1958, when the ratings were at their highest. By that time most network radio was in sharp decline, and most of the families in the country had finally gotten around to buying a television set. Groucho and the entire cast had settled into a solid routine. Groucho had developed into an insightful interviewer able to immediately size up the strengths and weaknesses of the people he met and was also able to exploit both for their maximum entertainment potential. The public knew what the show was all about, but there were always the odd twists and surprises as unique contestants and unusual situations came up during each season's programs.

But times were changing. The attention span of the American public, particularly the television viewing public, is short. It is very rare when any program, either

on radio or television survives more than five years. By 1959 the ratings for *You Bet Your Life* began taking a beating as the competing networks tied to hammer it by placing bright new shows up against its time slot, particularly *The Untouchables* and a revived *Playhouse 90*.

For the 1960 season the program was retitled *The Groucho Show*. The word was put out that this was a response to the quiz show scandal which had swept television the previous few years. The paper-mache duck was replaced by a "secret word girl". Whenever the contestant mentioned the Secret Word, beautiful Marlyn Burtis wearing a very brief costume would drop down on a golden trapeze to present the winner with the cash prize. On the final show of the series brother Harpo in full stage costume dropped down on the swing to the delight of the studio audience. But it wasn't enough. Ratings continued to fall. At the end of 1961 the program went off the air. In addition, Chico died on October 11, 1961 of arteriosclerosis after a decade long battle with heart disease. Before his death he had been asked about his gambling habit, and how much money he thought he might have lost over the course of his lifetime. "Ask Harpo how much he's made, and that's how much I've lost," was his reply.

In January 1962, after being off the air only half a season, Groucho returned with a new show titled *Tell It To Groucho*. It was over at CBS on Thursday nights at 9:00, bumping *The Investigators* out of that time slot. The emphasis on interviews was even stronger than with *You Bet Your Life*. He was joined by two young people he had met while doing *You Bet Your Life*. Contestants could win a top prize of \$500 by identifying a celebrity photo puzzle.

This show only lasted until May 31st. Groucho fans like to blame the quiz show scandal of the late fifties for his decline, but the truth is that the public was tired of the format and tired of Groucho.

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 fifth installment of a six piece series on Groucho Marx.

Radio Premiums – Relive Them Again! Part 3

Charles Sexton (User310378@aol.com)

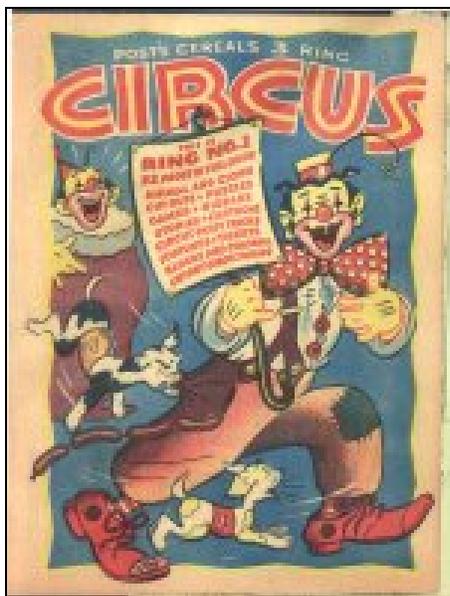
Hop Harrigan

America's "Ace of the Airwaves" was on the air from 1942-1948. Much of the run was sustained by the network, although Post's Grape Nuts Flakes and Cocoa Marsh were major sponsors.

2-19-43 Subject of episode: Hop was in South America investigating Nazi nastiness. He wanted to know how much his listeners knew about aviation and planes, so he announced an Aviation Quiz Contest to find out. Questions would be announced daily over a two week period and ten prizes would be awarded for each one. The prizes were scale or flying model planes, some worth as much as \$5. Only a post card was necessary to enter.

3-11-43 The first ten winners in the Hop Harrigan Aviation Quiz Contest were announced. The first question was, "What is meant by the 'stick' in a plane and what is it used for?"

4-8-46 Title of episode: "The Bentley Circus." Post's Grape Nuts Flakes offered a full color, three-ring, circus. Ring 1 was available at your grocers and came bound between two specially marked packages of Grape Nuts Flakes. Included were boxing kangaroos, clowns, cut outs, magic tricks and riddles, as well as instructions on how to get the other two rings. (You had to send away for them.)



3-7-47 Title of episode: "Atom Bomb Mission." Cocoa Marsh chocolate syrup offered the Hop Harrigan Movie

Scope, a viewing device made of durable plastic. Also included were movie films of Hop's current adventure concerning an atomic bomb.

9-4-47 Title of episode: "The Channel Wing Plane." Hop announced a contest to fly around the world with Bill Odum, world famous flyer. It was open to Boy Scouts only, and to apply the scout had to send a letter to Bill telling why he wanted to fly around the world as well as describing his record in the Scouts. There was no sponsor and no link to Hop Harrigan or any aspect of the show.

9-26-47 More Channel Wing Plane adventures. A Hop Harrigan Magnetic Compass Ring was offered. The ring was used in the body of the program for several weeks and the story line was obviously leading up to such an offer. When it came, however, it was announced on this date only. The cost was 15c and since there was no sponsor, no box tops or labels were required. The ring apparently did not include any Hop Harrigan related markings, so it probably was a generic-type ring which may have been available through other programs or even in stores.

Jack Armstrong

This was one of the longest running children's serials from July 1933 through June 1950. It had one sponsor for the entire run, Wheaties, "Breakfast of Champions."

10-2-40 The second series of Wheaties "Champ Stamps" was announced. The stamps were simply pictures of various champions in different fields on the backs of Wheaties packages, along with a short biography of the individual featured. A total of 39 stamps were available with three different on each box back.



11-18-40 A luminous Dragon's Eye Ring played a significant role in Jack's adventures in the Philippines for many months towards the end of the year, and, of course, (Continued on page 16)

Premiums (Continued from page 15)

it made a natural premium offer. In the daylight the ring looked like old ivory with a green stone set on the top, but after being exposed to light for a short time, it would glow in the dark with a 'green fire.' It was made of plastic and was adjustable to fit any sized finger. This ring is now considered one of radio's 'classic' premiums.



2-4-41 Many different shows offered a pedometer as a premium (*Sgt. Preston* and *The Lone Ranger* among others), but Jack was the first, and he offered a couple of versions over the years. The one advertised on this program was the Jack Armstrong Blue Pedometer. It was all metal with a blue outer rim and a silver inner area where the dials and numbers were located to set the length of the wearer's pace and, ultimately, reveal the distance walked. Jack used this pedometer a great deal while in the Philippines.

10-20-42 Title of episode: "Atomic Engine." This was an offer to join the "Write-a-Fighter Corp" (WAFC) for only a postcard. No boxtop or money was required. Kids were asked to buy war stamps instead. Those joining received stationary and envelopes to write a WW II serviceman as well as six honor bars and stars, a stencil for the stationary and a manual on how to write to servicemen. If the member got five other kids to join, he or she could become a squadron leader.

1-22-43 Title of episode: "The Great Safari." At the end of the program, the announcer gave tips to WAFC members who wanted to send packages to servicemen overseas.

2-00-45 Subject of episode: Jack battles mutineers and a water spout. This episode featured another classic premium offer, the Jack Armstrong Tru-Flight Model Plane series. In this particular episode, listeners were invited to send in for Tru-Flight Model Planes #s 5 and 6, the Grumman Hellcat and the Jap Kakajima, for only two Wheaties box tops. The announcer noted that 12 different

models would eventually be available. Actually 14 different models were offered by the close of this premium run. Several years ago, color reproductions of these planes were available from Sta-Flite Models, P. O. Box 62, Roseville, MI 48066. I don't know if they are still available. (Lou Genco notes: The Jack Armstrong cereal box premium airplanes has changed. The new address is: Tru-flite Models 3720 Hessen Rd. Casco MI. 48064 . They also have a website: www.wheatieswings.com.)

9-25-45 Title of episode: "The Swindle of G.I. Joe." Wheaties offered their "Library of Sports" booklets to listeners. These small pamphlets, written by coaches and athletes, covered a wide range of sports, and included special volumes for girls as well as boys. There were 14 different titles, all of which were listed on the back of Wheaties packages. Information on how to order the booklets was also provided.

2-4-46 Title of episode: "Man of Ice." Wheaties gave away 1,000 Columbia Streamliner bicycles in the Jack Armstrong "Name Your Bike" Contest. All a listener had to do was submit a name for the bike he or she would like to win. The bikes were fully equipped with coaster breaks and balloon tires and came in red, for boys, and blue, for girls. A Wheaties box top was required for each name submitted. The bicycles were not related to the story line or any aspect of Jack's adventures.

Ken Maynard and Tales from the Diamond K

No date Ken Maynard was another old time cowboy movie star, and in this episode he's in Col. Rockwell's Wild West Show. No sponsor is identified. For \$1, sent to the station to which you were listening, you could receive a record album of Ken's adventures. Included were two, eight inch 78 rpm records in a colorful jacket which Ken personalized to you by mentioning your name at the beginning of the record. For another dollar, you could get a Ken Maynard "K" shirt. It resembled a tee-shirt, according to Ken. It was the color of desert sand and had a picture of Ken and Tarzan and the red Diamond K brand on the front.



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Premiums (Continued from page 16)

Land of the Lost

This program aired from 1944-48. No sponsor is identified for the following show.

4-11-45 Lucky Seven Contest. Prizes were awarded to children who wrote the best letters describing something they lost and wanted returned. They could also send for a Land of the Lost book and receive a Red Lantern Badge.

The Lone Ranger

This was the longest running children's show on radio from 1933 to 1956. Sponsor of the following shows was General Mills (Cheerios, Wheaties and Kix cereals) although few of the shows actually contain the commercials.

1-20-47 The story line concerns a government man who wears a miniature silver bullet ring with a secret compartment. This episode does not contain any commercials, but from the description and use of the ring in the program, it probably was the one offered later as the Atom Bomb Ring. At least there was no other ring, secret compartment or otherwise, offered in this time frame which matches the description. Why the change from silver bullet to atom bomb, and why, is still a mystery. Can anyone out there provide additional information?



3-21-47 Title of episode: "The Last Run." Offer for surplus, whoops, I mean brand new U.S. Army Goggles, available at your favorite grocers. They came with two boxes of Cheerios. They were adjustable and were the same kind worn by GIs in combat. You could use your goggles for playing war, hiking, camping, or even tennis. Tennis?

1-7-48 Sam Colt sent the Lone Ranger a ring with a miniature six-gun on top with symbols around it. The symbols included a bullet, representing the Lone Ranger's silver bullets, an Indian Arrowhead for Tonto's people, a Lone Star for Texas, and a horseshoe for luck or Silver. Again, there are no commercials but this episode is an obvious lead-in for the Lone Ranger Six-Gun Ring offer

2-18-48 Title of episode: "Hidden Mine." Better than a clock and compass, the Lone Ranger Pedometer, was the subject of this episode, although only in the body of the show since there are no commercials. Joe Jolly, one of the residences of Frontier Town, was the key to finding the pedometer.

4-7-48 During the 1948 season, many of the Lone Ranger's adventures took place in and around a western town called Frontier Town. One of the premiums offered in 1948 was this entire town! It was called the "Lone Ranger Frontier Town" and included a map, which came in four sections, and cardboard buildings, bridges, Indian teepees and even the Lone Ranger's secret hideout. The map showed the layout of the town and its buildings, such as the Wells Fargo Express Office and the Powderhorn County Jail, as well as landmarks surrounding the town such as the Enchanted Hills and Sagebrush Hollow. Buildings were added by cutting them from specially marked boxes of Cheerios. The four sections of the map were obtained through the mail for a Cheerios box top and 10c for each section. There were a total of nine different Cheerios packages containing the buildings. When you received the maps, additional buildings made of stiff paper were included, so you had to have the whole bundle for a complete town. The neat thing about this premium was that since most of the Lone Ranger's adventures in 1948



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Premiums (Continued from page 17)

took place in and around the town, you could follow the story step-by-step by laying out the map with all its buildings before each show. I did this a couple of times, but the fragile nature of the maps and cardboard buildings soon made it an impractical chore. Still, it was the king of all radio premiums as far as I was concerned. No shows have been found which include the commercials for Frontier Town, but the programs from around the date noted above include many references to the place names associated with this premium.

11-1-48 Story concerns a lighting/signaling device which the Lone Ranger speculates could be made small enough to fit in a ring. Lead-in to later offer for the Lone Ranger Flashlight Ring.

12-22-54 Offer for Wheaties records of popular songs of the day, including (choke) "Sparrow in the Treetop." They were on 7 inch, 78 rpm records with 8 songs on each. There were 4 different records: Playtime Tunes, Folk Songs, Old Favorites, and Popular Tunes. They were available for 25c and one Wheaties boxtop each.



Part three 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.

Memories of My Life with NBC

1942 - 1964

Bill Roddy

The First Year, 1942

The first job I ever had in San Francisco was as a page boy for the National Broadcasting Company at their radio station KPO. It was 1942 and I was 19 years old. With the exception of World War II, the Korean War, and two years at other stations, I would work for NBC until 1965.

Page boys were considered future executive or talent material by the network and that's why applicants were interviewed by no less a person than the general manager John W. Elwood, an NBC pioneer. I was terrified to meet him, but he was very friendly to the gangly teenager in front of him and he hired me at \$18 a week.

My dream was to be an announcer, but the announcers I would meet at NBC were old . . . all of thirty or thirty-five and they regarded me as the kid.

There were two types of pages. In the first you wore a gray uniform and delivered mail to the offices of KPO, the Red Network and KGO, the Blue Network. NBC owned both. The Blue later became the American Broadcasting Company when NBC was forced to divest one network by the FCC.

Your ambition as a mail room boy was to graduate to Guest Relations. Then you wore a blue uniform with gold epaulets. Guest Relations regarded the mail room boys as peons, and I yearned to be one of them.



Taylor and O'Farrell, San Francisco, circa 1942. The Radio Club was a hangout for NBC people.

Guest Relations

After a few months I was promoted to Guest Relations
(Continued on page 19)

and was fitted out with my blue uniform; a proud day. I had taken the first step up the NBC ladder to success. No longer did I have to deliver mail and only Guest Relations would be considered for more important jobs.

The photo is the lobby of the NBC studios at Taylor and O'Farrell in San Francisco. One of my duties was to sit in the lobby and greet visitors. The lobby was cold and drafty in San Francisco winters, (summers too!) whenever those doors were open and I once got a terrible cold.



The page might be me.

There were many audience shows in Studio A. Then you put up stanchions and herded the people inside, while they waited patiently an hour to climb the stairs to glory.

The crowd was so excited at being at NBC and regarded us with unabashed envy. I have to admit we were pretty supercilious, especially with pretty girls.



This is my friend Phil Ryder who became an engineer. I recently heard from Phil Ryder. He lives in Santa Barbara.

This was the largest studio at NBC San Francisco and the only one for audience shows. It was on the second floor. The chairs did not always remain in place and if the stage could not fill the needs of a program the chairs were removed and stored in the hallways.



The lowest of the two glass enclosures at right was the studio control room. The engineer and producer worked from it. The one above it was for the program's sponsors and invited guests of management. It was carpeted and had comfortable chairs with a loudspeaker to hear the program. You had to take the elevator to the third floor to gain entry.

Some of the shows who used Studio A were the Standard School Broadcast and an occasional Hollywood show. Jack Benny once came up and I remember seeing Eddie Cantor.

This was also the studio where the mystery *Candy Matson* originated. Candy was Natalie Masters and the show was written and produced by her husband, Monty Masters. They were great friends of mine and I'm sorry that both have passed on, as has their announcer, another friend, Dudley Manlove.

The Studio A drama shows needed sound effects. NBC had great sound men.



Jackie Robinson

(Continued on page 20)

Working for NBC (Continued from page 9)

Jackie Robinson started as a page boy with me and later became a sound engineer under chief Lloyd Creekmore, a great name for a sound man. The sound room was filled with gadgets, and lots of crockery to break. Jackie is at the console with playback amplifiers for recorded sound effects.

The console would be rolled into the studio for a broadcast. Jackie later went to Hollywood and became a well known writer. If you listen to *Dragnet* you can hear him credited as "written by John Robinson."

One of the most noted shows to originate from Studio A was *Pat Novak for Hire*. It was the beginning of Jack Webb's distinguished career in broadcasting and written by Dick Breen, who would be associated with Jack for years.

Jack and I were friends, but I'll get to that later. He once lived at my mother's rooming house on Fulton Street and Julie London would fly up to visit him.

The War Years

The summer of 1942 brought many changes to NBC. For the first time the station stayed on the air 24 hours a day. It always had signed off at midnight and returned at six in the morning.

Around the clock operation started because San Francisco now never went to bed; workers were getting off shifts at war plants at midnight and they didn't want to go to bed right away. Many wanted to hear the radio shows they had missed in the evening, so NBC rebroadcast all the prime time shows after midnight.

This meant recording all of the evening shows for playback. This was no easy task as there was no tape, of course, and acetate discs had to be used. The recording room was busy all the time.



This is the recording room on the second floor. An acetate disc could only record 15 minutes of the show, so the engineer had to switch to another machine at the right time. The tubes coming from each recorder sucked up the acetate as it was cut from the disc. A microscope was attached so the engineer could see if the proper cut was being made.

The plate glass window at left allowed the public to watch the operation.

Bill Roddy, *Times* reader and former radio man, wrote about working for NBC for <http://americahurrah.com/SanFrancisco/Memories/sfmemNBC.htm>. His memories are reprinted here with his permission.



OTR in the Blogosphere, Pt. 4

Ryan Ellett

This month we stop in to see Jeff Kallman, OTR blogger and frequent contributor to the *Times*. His blog, *The Easy Ace*, can be found at <http://easyace.blogspot.com/>.

ORT: Explain your introduction to old-time radio.

JK: I was born as the old time radio era was well enough into the home stretch. If you accept (as many do) that the final airing of *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* in 1962 was the end of the era, then I was about to turn seven years old when the show aired, so you can figure it from there. And when I was very little, my parents and I lived in the same apartment building as my maternal grandparents, and Grandma was often as not my babysitter on afternoons my parents needed to run errands or just break away for a couple of hours. They had me for a son, so who can blame them for wanting to break away for a couple of hours?

Anyway, Grandma had a radio on in the kitchen all the time, and I'd sit there listening. And some of the remnant of what we'd now call old time radio were still on the air and alive, if not necessarily well. I have a vague memory that *Pepper Young's Family*, the old radio soap, was still lingering on the air. I used to get that title mixed up with *The Loretta Young Theater*, the old television show on which Loretta Young would host a showing of one or another movie in the afternoon. I remember referring to the show as *The Pepper Young Theater*, except that I probably pronounced it "Peppy." Hey, I was four years old, what did I know? And I may have heard what was left of *Fibber McGee and Molly*, too, on the NBC Monitor block.

Television was really into full swing when I was born. By the time I hit four or five I was a television kid. I saw Jack Benny, Lucille Ball and company, *Father Knows Best*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, and *The Life of Riley* as television creations. I didn't have a clue about their radio roots. I'd see television's version of *The Bell Telephone Hour* with no idea that it was a radio fixture for many years, not until my parents and grandparents told me. I didn't really begin to learn and appreciate old time radio until I was an adult. At four years old, how could I appreciate what was in its terminal state, never mind what it was when it was at its peak as the nation's home entertainment?

And until the Internet, my appreciation came in little phases from scattered sources. I'd read a book about CBS in 1976 and just about half of it covered the network's radio period. It wasn't exactly the best written book you'll ever read, but it made references enough with details

enough to some of the better of the old time radio era. I became a fan of Goodman Ace because of that book, I guess the author was an admirer himself, and this is years before I learned that almost three hundred episodes of *Easy Aces* survived to become a big part of my collection. The author told an anecdote about a relative wiring Ace to send \$10,000 or he'd jump from the fourteenth floor, and Ace wiring back to jump from five because he could only send \$5,000. Right away I knew Ace was my kind of people. (Isn't that awful?)

The book also had me curious about The Goldbergs, Fred Allen, Jack Benny, and a few others. Its chapter on Edward R. Murrow got me intrigued enough that I went out and bought the album *I Can Hear It Now*. And realizing how much of that album was culled from vintage radio broadcasts, well, there you had the appetite being stirred. From there I found Radiola Records and their wonderful collection of OTR albums. Maybe it isn't much of a collection now compared to the phalanx of surviving shows that are swapping like mad on the Internet, but for its time and place I think Radiola should get the credit for making or securing OTR fans among people who weren't really of the OTR era at its absolute peak. I got my first real meals of *Fred Allen*, *Abbott and Costello*, *Jack Benny*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Suspense*, and *Lux Radio Theater* thanks to Radiola releases. They should put that label in the Radio Hall of Fame, if they haven't done so already.

But I didn't get anywhere even close to building a substantial old time radio library until the Internet. Now I have a library of about two thousand show episodes and growing, though I'm sure there are probably people with equal passion for old time radio and about three times the library I have.

ORT: When did you begin your blog?

JK: July 2006.

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

JK: I was already a professional writer, though I'm not even close to famous or well paid. I've been unemployed as a writer for a good while now. But I was also blogging baseball at the time, I still do, but I wanted something else to keep me fresh. Since I was full blown into OTR as a collector by the time I launched *The Easy Ace*, I thought, well, why not write about classic radio as well?

ORT: What distinguishes your blog from other OTR-themed blogs?

JK: I try to avoid the nostalgia element, though I'm sure
(Continued on page 22)

OTR Blogs (Continued from page 21)

I'm not always as successful as I'd like to be in doing that, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who approaches it that way. But I'm pretty specific about it. It's in the tagline that accompanies my masthead: "Standing athwart nostalgia, yelling 'Art!'"

I might have heard the last gasps of old time radio when it wasn't quite old time just yet, when I was a little boy, and I have some very sweet memories of that part of my life. But OTR when it wasn't OTR wasn't really my era. I wasn't even alive when OTR wasn't OTR. So I didn't and don't listen with any kind of longing for any kind of old days. Because it wasn't my era, I'm free to listen to those radio shows on their own terms, as their own art and craft. And, because I'm free to listen that way, I thought I was free to write about it that way.

ORT: Describe the aim and focus of your blog.

JK: I try to write as though I'm a working critic reviewing material as it comes to me or as I fall upon it. It could be an actual show or an episode of a show. It could be a book tied to OTR or involving someone of the OTR era. A couple of others in the blogosphere have noticed what I'm trying to do; I've gotten some very nice feedback about what I'm doing.

ORT: How frequently do you post new material?

JK: Not as often as I'd like. You can blame that on a work schedule that has my metabolic clock pretty much out of whack. For lack of paying work as a writer I've had to hire on as a security patrol supervisor, and I'm working the graveyard shift, driving all around Orange County, California. And it really has screwed my metabolic pooch for the time being. The last month or so I'm lucky if I get more than a post a week up. My original idea was to write three or four times a week, the way a syndicated columnist might do. If I can get my metabolic pooch un-screwed, I'd go back to that plan.

ORT: What do you enjoy most about blogging?

JK: In professional terms, it's an avenue for keeping my instrument in tune, so to say. A writer has to write and keep fresh to the best extent possible. Whether this does something in terms of finding me new, paying employment as a writer, I don't really know just yet, though I always hope.

In personal terms, it's being able to write what I please. To what extent it pleases my readers (all five of them) is something else, but I hope what I do pleases them. Or, at least, makes them think a little bit.

ORT: What do you enjoy least?

JK: My metabolic clock is so off line that I don't get to sit

down and write as often as I'd like to sit down and write.

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

JK: I've found one or two very genial OTR forums on the Internet, especially OTR-TNT.com, where people swap OTR pretty liberally, usually by way of MediaMax accounts. And we thrive absolutely on plying newcomers with generous helpings of OTR to get them started right. I get a real kick out of meeting someone in a forum like that, someone who says he or she is absolutely new to the hobby and wants to get started right, and then sharing portions of my collection with them. And we get into some very nice conversations about OTR, conversations that probably teach me more than I could possibly teach anyone else about OTR and its art.

And I read other OTR sites and publications as often as I can get my hands on them. *Broadcastellan*, whose author and proprietor you interviewed last month, is a favourite of mine. He's a kind of kindred spirit — he's trying to hoist OTR's ongoing relevance as an art, in his own way, and I like that. So does Ivan Shreve, who writes *Thrilling Days of Yesteryear* [See the November *Times*, ed.] even if he focuses on vintage television a little more than vintage radio. Same with the English fellow who writes *Random Jottings of Gildersleeve*, his focus is British broadcasting and he does a nice job of tying today's issues to yesterday's.

I find them in the first place through the forums or by just surfing and Googling, but once I find a site or publication that's well done, well written, and shows a genuine passion for the material I don't let it get away. I found the OTTER group by a combination of the foregoing. I wish there were more such publications. And some of the fan sites for certain shows are very nicely done, too. Very informative, at their best.

My hope is that those sites and publications help to bring OTR to the point where people begin listening to it the way I do: art, not nostalgia. Theater for the ear and the mind, which is exactly what radio in that period really was, is a genuine art. It deserves to be treated that way and heard that way. So do the people who made it happen. We're a lucky world that still has people like Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Norman Corwin, Wyllis Cooper, Henry Morgan, Edward R. Murrow, Goodman Ace, Paul Rhymer, and Gertrude Berg to pleasure us, to make us laugh or think, because their work did survive and can be heard now with or without nostalgia. Maybe what I'm doing with *The Easy Ace*, even if I'm not always as successful as I'd like, helps a little bit toward keeping that alive.

Tucson Old Time Radio Club

Norm Schickedanz

Do you like *The Shadow*, *Lux Radio Theatre*, *The Lone Ranger*? If so, you're invited to attend meetings of the Tucson, Arizona OTR Club. Primarily, the members listen to radio shows from the golden age of radio, delighting in programs of the '30s, '40s, and '50s. Members also share their interests and experiences related to OTR.

At most meetings, the club will listen to an old radio show such as "War of the Worlds," *Jack Benny*, or *Suspense*. Also, members have performed script readings of *Our Miss Brooks* and *The Whistler*, watched the videos "Radio Days," "Behind Your Radio Dial," and "Good Old Days of Radio," visited two radio studios, and answered trivia quizzes about OTR shows.

Most members had no experience in the radio business but have fond memories of listening to radio years ago.

The club was started in 2002 by Norm Schickedanz, newly retired after living in the Chicago area for most of his life. Though he grew up watching TV, he became interested in OTR in the early 1980s by listening to Chuck Schaden's *Those Were the Days* broadcasts from Chicago, touring the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago, and visiting some of Schaden's local broadcasts. Later, while attending a Cincinnati OTR convention, he got to see Fred Foy, Barney Beck, Peg Lynch, and Parley Baer.

Two club highlights in recent years were a visit by Schaden and a club members' trip to his winter broadcast from Scottsdale.

Everyone is welcome at the meetings, which take place the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 pm. Members come from Tucson and surrounding areas, including one person from Mesa. There are no dues. If you want further information, contact Norm at schick@wbhsi.net or (520) 818-7817.

Broadcasting OTR In The Twenty-first Century

Clyde J. Kell

Mystery Play Internet Radio

www.mystery-otr.net, cjkell@mystery-otr.com

Maybe you've heard this introduction sometime while surfing the internet looking for something to entertain yourself or your family: A creaking, slamming door, haunting music in the background, applause, and "Live from Oklahoma City, its Mystery Play Live, with your host Clyde J. Kell." And a couple of seconds later some funky, old period music starts a live old time radio show.

So you have! Well thank you so much for listening to my show, Mystery Play Live. Six years ago I began broadcasting old time radio over the Internet. It has been a real pleasure each week bringing my listeners these long forgotten, and sometimes rare, old radio plays, inter-mixed with period music.

I have been collecting and sharing OTR for over seven years. It started with a stream on the Live365.com service for a very selfish reason; I was lazy, and didn't want to bother with trying to decide what to listen to. Live 365 would choose for me. Plus, I only had 2,000 shows on hand, and it was easy and simple to upload them and place in random or shuffle rotation. Voila! I was broadcasting on the internet, and could listen to my favorite shows the way I wanted them.

I soon discovered a very interesting phenomenon. People from around the globe were also listening to my material. Within the first week, I noticed at least five listeners every day throughout the day! Next, I began receiving e-mail from these listeners requesting specific programs. Horror and mystery seem to be the most popular genres for my listeners.

Now fast forward six years, with a personal OTR collection of over 50,000 programs, and access to an almost unlimited source of programming. The station has over 30,000 weekly listeners! Through Internet streams and podcasting, broadcasting OTR in the twenty-first century is alive and well.

Welcome to Mystery Play Internet Radio, my little selfish hobby that has turned into a Frankenstein monster.

I say monster, because this though it is a hobby, it has turned into a much bigger operation than I ever envisioned. I try to operate like a business in the sense of keeping statistical records and watching my costs. However, server space rental, power, and computers cost money. But, then again, I know fellers that play golf and

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Internet OTR (Continued from page 17)

spend more on a golf weekend than what I spend on an entire year at broadcasting.

For the past five years, I've done a live show or two every week. Me, talking live to thousands of people on the internet. Yea, right! would have been my response six years ago! During the show you can chat with other listeners on the "otradio" channel on IRC's Starchat channel. This is a 24/7 old time radio chat room where many of the regulars tune in to my live show on Saturday evenings.

With no formal radio training or professional equipment and only a love for playing with audio sound files, Mystery Play Live was launched! I didn't even record the first five or six shows because I was so embarrassed and couldn't stand my voice.

Now I pinch myself everyday to make sure I'm not dreaming when I read the various wonderful e-mails that I receive. My listeners are the best. However, I'm still just an overweight computer geek that loves old time radio. Your editor has always had an open invitation for me to write for The Old Radio Times. This is my first contribution in what I hope to be many more. In the next article, I'll explain, how a no-talent OTR fanatic came to broadcast old time radio on Sirius Satellite Radio.

A list of countries that have tuned into Clyde's station over the past 30 days:

Canada
United Kingdom
Japan
France
Australia
Korea, Republic of
China, People's Republic of
Spain
Germany
Sweden
Netherlands
Mexico
Israel
Puerto Rico
Czech Republic
Switzerland
Qatar
Slovenia
Ireland
El Salvador
Italy

Belgium
Finland
Russia
Costa Rica
Cayman Islands
Bahamas
Venezuela
Saudi Arabia
Singapore
Dominican Republic
Brazil
Virgin Islands (British)
Argentina
Portugal
Trinidad and Tobago
Poland
Hong Kong
Colombia
India
Philippines
United Arab Emirates
Denmark
New Zealand
Taiwan
Chile
Iceland
Algeria
Thailand
Aruba
Turkey
Slovak Republic
Vietnam
Norway
South Africa
Greece
Kazakhstan
Malta
Austria
Malaysia
Guam
Antigua and Barbuda
Afghanistan
Hungary
Jamaica
Jordan
Egypt
Solomon Islands
Senegal
Romania
Peru
Ecuador
Bahrain
Georgia
Indonesia
Estonia
Ukraine
Morocco
Mauritius
Guatemala
Cote d'Ivoire
Bulgaria
Lithuania
Anguilla
Cook Islands
Kuwait
Cyprus
Tanzania
Guadeloupe
Croatia/Hrvatska
Bangladesh
Barbados
Nicaragua
Pakistan
Virgin Islands (USA)
Brunei Darussalam
Northern Mariana Islands
Reunion Island
Madagascar
Bolivia
Luxembourg
Bermuda
Belarus
Nepal
Netherlands Antilles
Monaco
Uruguay
Belize
Lebanon
Uzbekistan
Honduras
Moldova, Republic of
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Haiti

OTRR Joins Forces with SPRINGBOK Radio Preservation Society

The Old Time Radio Researchers Group is proud to announce that the Springbok Radio Preservation Society of South Africa has agreed to work with us in the creation and revision of South African old time radio logs. Several have already been submitted, including *SF68*, *Squad Cars*, and *Beyond Midnight*.

The Springbok Radio Preservation Society of South Africa was formed in 2002 to preserve and archive the programmes etc. of Springbok Radio. The society is based in Johannesburg, South Africa, and probably has the biggest collection of material archived. Through an established network comprising donations within South Africa, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, the archive can preserve and archive this truly South African heritage.

Most of the material within this archive is still on analogue reel to reel tape (15, 7½, 3¾, 1 7/8 & 15/16 ips), audio cassettes (C-60, C-90, C-120), 8 Track Stereo Tape (40/60), studio transcription discs (16, 10, 7 inch) & commercial record (45, 33 1/3, 78rpm).

As many collectors and archives will know it is difficult to find decent reel to reel recorders in today's modern times, especially finding them in South Africa. We were very fortunate to have received donations in this regard and we can say a big thanks to John Gregg of Radio Today 1485am for donating a very rare Philips recorder that can play the old 15/16 format. A word of thanks to Ernie Westbrook of Westfords Cine Equipment in Johannesburg that serviced and repaired it at no charge. We also have 2 x Studer Revox B77 machines and a Sony T-166. One of the Revox machines was donated by a retired Springbok Radio Sound Engineer who asked to remain anonymous.

Decent turntables also have become a rare item. We use 1 x BSF, 1 x Gerard and a Lenco turntable to do our transfers from analogue to digital. The Gerard in particular is a gem because it enables us to transfer the big 16 inch transcription discs. A special word of thanks to John Ferreira of Radio Today 1485am who donated the Swiss made Lenco turntable.

Cassette recorders, although still available, are not of the same quality as a couple of years ago. We use 1 x Eiki 5090, 1 x Pioneer C66 and a Sanyo M4430 to do our transfers.

We use two audio restoration computer software programmes. One programme was specifically designed

for sound archiving in Germany. We also found that the Magix Audio Cleaning Lab to be a very good programme especially when restoring tape hiss and crackles. Thanks to MaryAnne from Pumamouse for the Magix Cleaning Lab.

Once transferred the restored material is distributed as follows:

- 1 x Copy of the unrestored & 1 Copy of restored programme and the original source material is kept within the archive of the Springbok Radio Preservation Society of South Africa.

- 1 x Copy of the restored programme is sent to a reserve archive within the United States.

- 1 x Copy of the restored programme is sent to the SABC Sound Archive in Johannesburg.

At this stage no material can be made available to the general public from this society. Copyright of all broadcast Springbok Radio material is under control of the SABC. All queries regarding obtaining material for private use or rebroadcasting should be forwarded to the SABC in Johannesburg. Any material issued from this society must be cleared by the SABC first.

Great care is taken in handling the original source material, especially the reel-to-reel tapes and transcription discs from the 1950's. Many of the reels from that era were kindly donated by the family of the late Ken Hoskin. Ken was a part time presenter on Springbok Radio during the 1950's and was also a producer during the 1960's and early 1970's. Programmes included on these reels included a very rare Eric Egan Breakfast session segment and a special Springbok Radio "Much Binding in The Marsh" programme, done by the BBC for the opening of Springbok Radio in 1950. A copy of this rare treasure will be donated to the BBC Sound Archive. There are many of the Ken Hoskin reels that have still to be catalogued. What makes these reels so special is that they all date from the 1950's. The oldest surviving Springbok Radio programme that has been archived dates from 3 May 1950 and is a complete episode of "Grandpa Says / Oupa Vertel," another rare recording from 4 May 1950 is a commercial for "Voko Parafin" in both Afrikaans & English. So far known that is the earliest South African radio commercial which has survived.

A question that many people have asked is what has happened to almost 300,000 programme episodes broadcast over Springbok Radio between 1950 and 1985. The answer is a sad and complicated one. Our research shows that 99 percent of the material broadcast was either dumped or in the era when reel to reel tape was used these tapes were reused by the private production

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Springbok Radio (Continued from page 25)

houses. Reel to reel tape was expensive and like many other international radio stations these tapes were reused on a rotating system. Once broadcast the tape was sent back to the production house who then rerecorded a new programme over the old and so on. Only one production house saved some of it's material. The Olympia Recording Studio in Durban, under the control of Henry Diffenthal did save mostly episodes of "High Adventure," "Playhouse 90," and "Lux Radio Theatre." The material saved by Olympia was donated to both the SABC Sound Archives and the Springbok Radio Preservation Society Archives.

Many transcription discs were unceremoniously dumped by the SABC Archives back in 1975 just prior to the move from old Broadcast House in Commissioner Street to the new building in Auckland Park. The reason for this was that it was not deemed important enough to preserve commercial radio. However our research shows that storage space was a major problem in the decision made by the SABC. The old sound archive was housed in the basement of old Broadcast House with lots of space. The new premises did not have the desired space, so the sad decision was made.

Beyond Midnight

Starring: Denis Smith, Hal Orlandini, Michael McCabe, Marjorie Gordon, and others.

Writer: Various International & South African Writers.
Stories adapted by Michael McCabe.

Producer: Michael McCabe

Total Episodes: Broadcast: 78

Archived: 71

First Episode B/C: 01/11/1968

Last Episode B/C: 24/04/1970

Radio Station: SABC - Springbok Radio

Synopsis: This series became the replacement series for *SF'68*. Most of the cast were the same in both series, although *Beyond Midnight* gave producer Michael McCabe the opportunity to also include ghost and horror stories. At a later stage he was also allowed to try his hand with stories of mystery and suspense in the series *Suspense* and later *Hitchcock's Half Hour*.

Many sources in the old time radio community list 45 to 46 episodes of this series in their catalogues. The major problem with this series is the episode titles. Collectors tended to give their own episode titles to this series. With the exception of seven episodes, which might still be found, we can now list the original episode titles and broadcast dates for this series.

It would appear that the majority of the episodes in circulation worldwide originated from the South African collector John Wright, who sent these recorded reel to reel tapes to a friend in the United States. The SABC Transcription Service released three episodes for broadcast on International radio stations. In 2006, Neil Gesson, an avid Springbok Radio fan, donated several hundred reel to reel tapes of Springbok Radio programmes that he recorded since about 1955 to this society. In this collection of reels a total of 71 episodes of *Beyond Midnight* episodes were recorded and also logged by him.

For many months his logs were compared to the official Springbok Radio logs and Neil's log was spot on. Neil sadly passed away in 2006, but left behind many recorded programmes from Springbok Radio, that in most cases are programmes that would have been lost forever. This society and South Africa owe him hugely for his efforts. This series has been scheduled for digital restoration and upon completion, a set will be donated to the SABC Sound Archive in Johannesburg for National Preservation.

We have tried various ways in trying to match the known episode titles with the official episode titles, but after many moons and many hours we decided to make available the logs to collectors and interested parties. In brackets are the episode titles given by collectors.

If any other collectors match up any of the titles we could not, please be so kind as to contact us so that we can keep this log [See OTRR's database] updated.

SF68

Starring: Michael McCabe, Denis Smith, Tony Jay, Marjorie Gordon, Hal Orlandini, Annabel Linder, and others.

Writer: Various International Science Fiction writers. Stories adapted by Michael McCabe.

Producer: Michael McCabe

Total Episodes: Broadcast: 33

Archived: 33

First Episode B/C: 01/03/1968

Last Episode B/C: 19/10/1968

Radio Station: SABC – Springbok Radio

Synopsis: For many years a total of 17 episodes were doing the rounds with old time radio collectors worldwide. The belief is that these episodes were originally recorded on reel to reel tape by a South African, John Wright, who sent the recordings to a friend in the United States. These reels were copied and recopied by collectors causing extremely bad sounding quality recordings to do the rounds.

The advent of MP3 technology made matters even worse. The original John Wright reels have, over time, gotten lost. A total of four of the episodes were released by the SABC International Transcription Service on record for broadcast by International radio stations in 1969. This society has two of them, “The Sound of Thunder” and “Grenville’s Planet,” on record. The other two episodes in this series are as yet unknown. The SABC Sound Archive only has the 17 episodes that came originally from the John Wright reels.

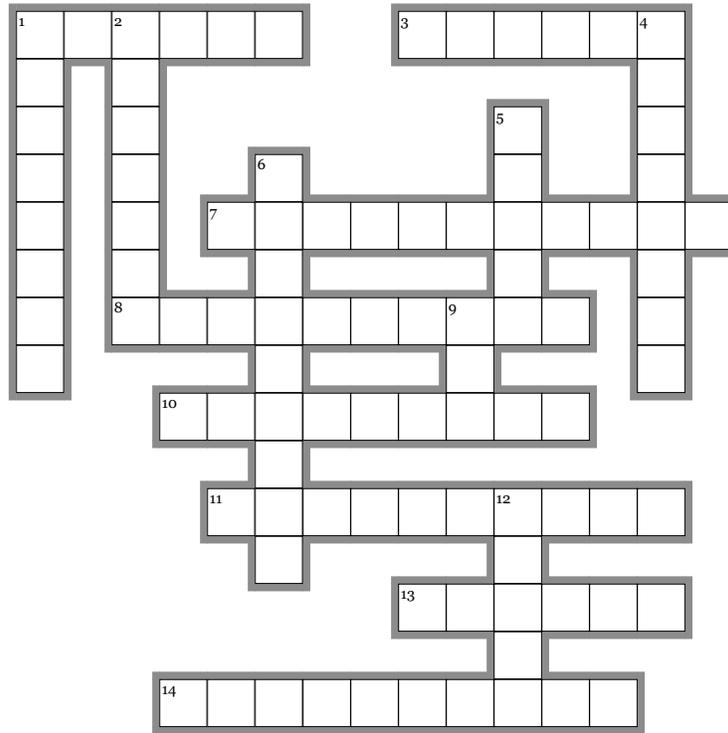
In 2005 all 33 episodes were donated to this society on reel to reel tape by Neil Gesson who was a loyal Springbok Radio listener. The quality of these recordings is exceptional. Most of the episodes were recorded on 3 ¾ and 1 7/8 speed and are first generation recordings. These recordings are scheduled to be transferred to a digital format and restored. Once completed a full set will be donated to the SABC Sound Archive in Johannesburg for National preservation. Neil sadly passed away in 2006, but left a great amount of programmes that can be preserved for future generations.



Bill Thompson, many voices on *Fibber McGee and Molly*

The Shadow

By
Fred Bertelsen



Created with EclipseCrossword – www.eclipsecrossword.com

Across

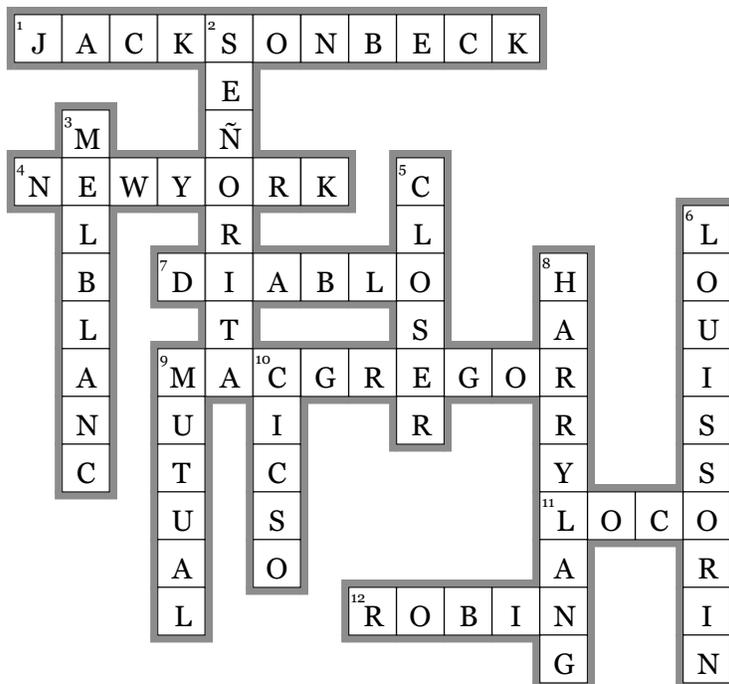
1. Andre _____ was the announcer from 1947-49.
3. Walter B _____ is generally credited with creating The Shadow
7. _____ (2 words) Blue Coal's heating expert, was impersonated by Tim Frawley first, then Paul Huber.
8. Announcer _____ (2 words) joined the series in 1931
10. Bill _____ replaced Orson Wells as The Shadow
11. The theme music for The Shadow is taken from LeRoute d'Omphale by Camille _____ - '____'. (Fr.)
13. Gertrude _____ was the last Margot Lane.
14. The first Shadow, as most of us remember him, was played by (2 words)

Down

1. In the east, The Shadow was sponsored by _____ . (2 words)
2. Orson Wells laugh was considered wrong for the signatures so Frank _____'s laugh was heard throughout the Wells era.
4. James La Curto was The Shadow while The Shadow was only a _____.
5. Morrison played The Shadow for a short time from 1943-1944 before taking over in 1945 until the end of the run.
6. Agnes _____ was the first Margot Lane.
9. Rosa _____ was the organist who preformed the music for The Shadow.
12. The first issue of The Shadow Magazine was published in _____ 1931.

Last Month's Answers

The Cisco Kid



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Wistful Vistas

Ryan Ellett

I hope all your holidays were memorable and your new year is off to a smashing start. Santa was good to me; I picked up a subscription to the Antique Radio Classified and some cash for the Cincinnati convention.

Our feature this month is by Jeff Kallman, who, as usual, sheds light on a little-known figure in radio history. We also begin a series of recollections by Bill Roddy about his time in radio during the medium's Golden Age. We're pleased to spotlight his first-hand memories and experiences, of which there are fewer and fewer with every passing year.

I finally put finger to keyboard and contributed my thoughts about the future of the old time radio hobby. These are thoughts and reflections that have been rattling around in my cranium for some time that I think are worth sharing. If nothing else, perhaps they'll open some discussion about what today's fans can do to strengthen the hobby for tomorrow's fans.

Our series on OTR bloggers concludes this month with the spotlight on our very own Jeff Kallman. We hope these interviews have introduced you to some great folks and exposed you to some new sources for old time radio news.

the man behind one of the premier OTR streaming radio stations. I've known Clyde for several years and am pleased my prodding and nagging finally resulted in the first of what, hopefully, may be a string of pieces on this method of sharing our great hobby.

If you're interested in radio premiums, this is your lucky day. We have twice the coverage, with Jim Widner's insightful piece on Captain Midnight premiums in addition to the latest installment in Charles' Sexton's series.

Arizona fans take note of the Tuscon club information. Finally, take a minute and learn about Springbok radio and some of South Africa's radio drama heritage.

Get your new year off right and listen to your favorite OTR right now!

News 'n Notes

* We are still considering producing a bound volume of the Old Radio Times' first year. A prototype has been completed but the cost was much more than originally anticipated, ticking in at 33\$, not including shipping. We're disappointed at this final cost and may continue to investigate other options. If you're still interested at this higher price, feel free to contact Ryan Ellett or Jim Beshires (see emails on page 34).

This issue you'll find the writing debut of Clyde Kell,

(Continued on page 31)



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Old Time Radio is alive and well in the pages of The **OLD TIME RADIO DIGEST**. Our recipe is to have a nice mix of current articles by collectors with material from old radio publications of the past. We are in our 20th year. Oldest OTR publication without a club association.

**METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON
OLD TIME
RADIO CLUB**

on the web at: www.mwotrc.com

News 'n Notes (Continued from page 26)

* 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 its 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.

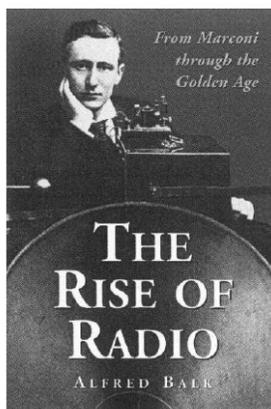
* This year's old time radio convention in Cincinnati is scheduled for April 20-21. The OTRR had a nice presence last year and we hope to do so again this year. Contact Bob Burchett (haradio@hotmail.com) for more specific information.

* The centennial celebration of singer Jane Froman's birth is scheduled for November 9-11, 2007 in Columbia, MO. Look for more information on this event in coming months.

* If you haven't visited Radio Out of the Past's Thursday night online gathering, you're really missing out. It's a great bunch of knowledgeable fans who gather and casually share memories and information about old time radio. To fully participate you'll need a microphone, but you can still post text messages and listen to the conversation without one. Visit <http://www.radiooutofthepast.org> and click "Enter our conference room" near the bottom. You will have to download a piece of software to get in the room but that's not a big deal.

"A Fabulous Book...the Research Is Stunning.."

--Mike Wallace



"...will live long in the literature of radio..."
--Norman Corwin

"...fascinating history of this amazing medium..."
--Chicago Life

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--The Illustrated Press

"...ambitious research...entertaining account..."
--Columbia Journalism Review

"...excellent..."
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Softcover \$35. Sixty photos. Details online: www.mcfariandpub.com. Sold directly at Museum of Television and Radio lobby shops in New York City, Beverly Hills. Or order through bookstores or amazon.com

**CINCINNATI'S
21st ANNUAL**

**SPECIAL
GUESTS**

Bob Hastings

Archie Andrews,
McHale's Navy

**Rosemary
Rice**

Archie Andrews
I Remember Mama

Hal Stone

Jughead on Archie

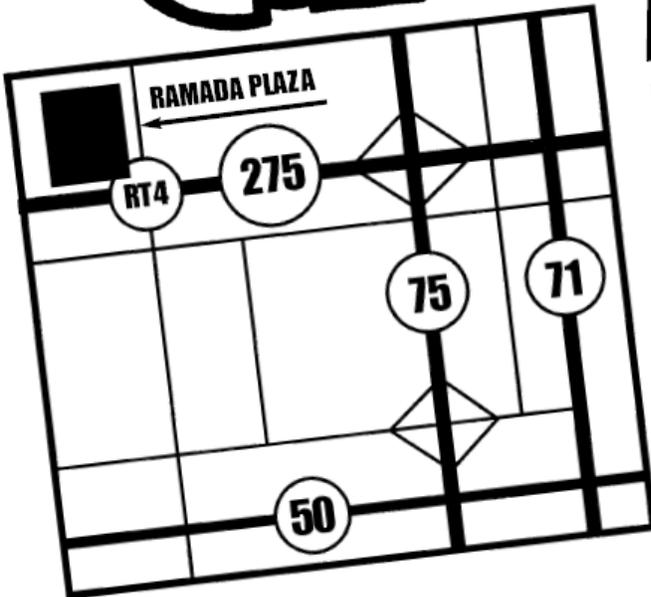
**Esther
Geddes**

Talk of The Town

RUTH LAST

Many old
radio shows.

**OLD TIME
RADIO
&
NOSTALGIA
CONVENTION**

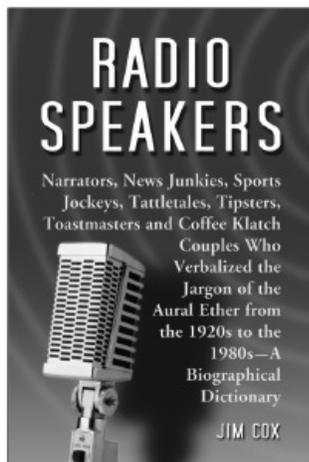


APRIL 20-21, 2007

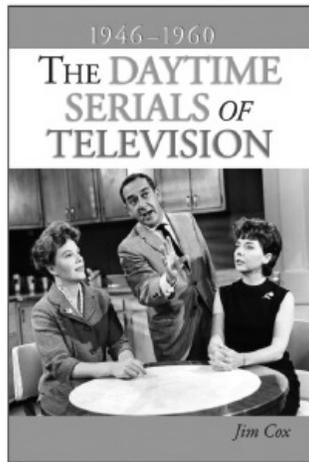
**HOURS: FRIDAY 9AM-9PM
SATURDAY 9AM-4PM**

RAMADA PLAZA

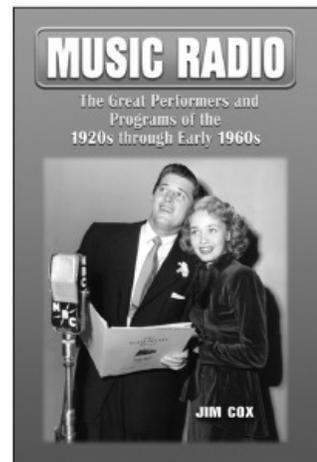
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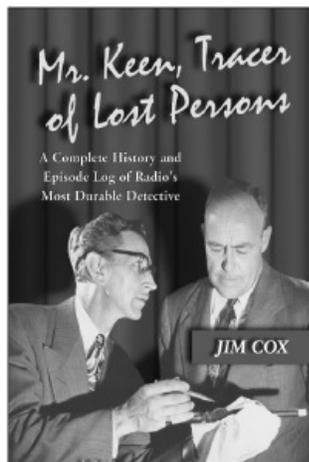
Jim Cox. 2007, \$55 hardcover (7 × 10), appendix, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-0-7864-2780-2.



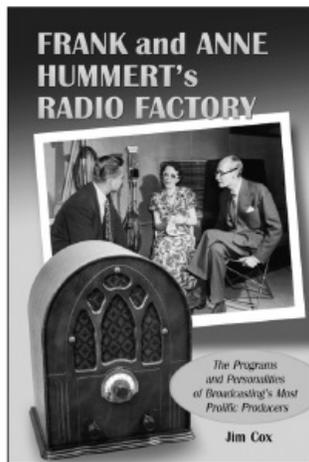
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Jim Cox. 2005, \$55 hardcover (7 × 10), photos, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-0-7864-2047-6.



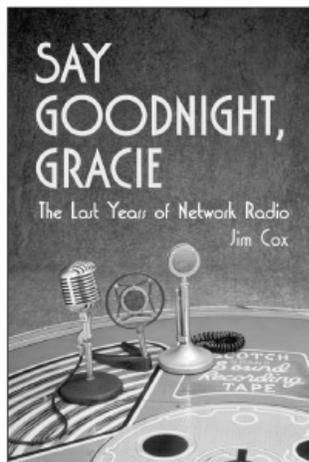
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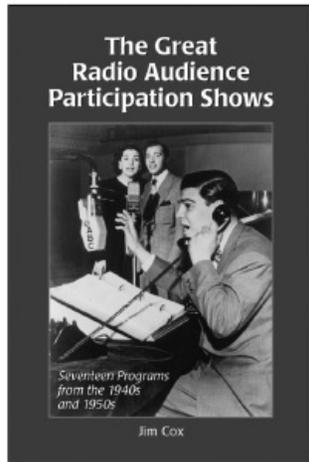
Jim Cox. 2003, \$35 softcover, photos, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-0-7864-1631-8.



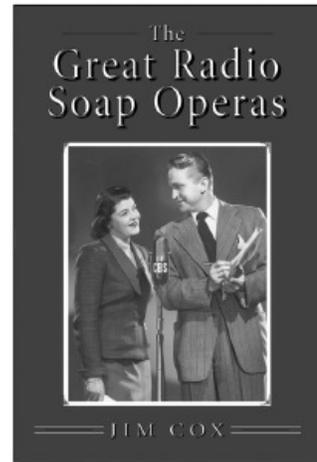
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Anyone interested in trading raw ET .wav dubs please contact Cliff at cliff_marsland@yahoo.com.

Wanted: Silvertone 6050 and RCA 100 chassis for my orphaned cases. Email Ryan at OldRadioTimes@yahoo.com.

Your ad here. A free service to all readers.

Ryan, I appreciate receiving the magazine each month. I usually skim it, and just read the articles that interest me, saving the others for later perusal.

In the future I would enjoy seeing articles about Fred Allen and/or Duffy's Tavern.

Thanks for all the hard work that goes into this endeavor!

Mike

Thanks for your kind words, Mike. We expect most readers probably don't read the entire issue, but hopefully there's something of interest for everyone.

Just wanted to let you know that I enjoy the magazine very much and look forward to each new edition. As a former newspaper editor, I realize how much hard work goes into turning out such a quality publication, and your efforts are appreciated.

Wayne

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Singin' Sam Coke Show xx-xx-xx (765) First Song - Why Do I Love You.mp3
Singin' Sam Coke Show xx-xx-xx(766) First Song - When Kentucky Bids The World.mp3
Singin' Sam Coke Time xx-xx-xx (755) First Song - Emalina Lee.mp3

Singin' Sam Coke Time xx-xx-xx (756) First Song - Way Down South For Heaven.mp3
Singin' Sam Coke Time xx-xx-xx (757) First Song - Where In The World Is The Moon.mp3
Singin' Sam Coke Time xx-xx-xx (758) First Song - May I.mp3
Stagedoor Canteen 43-08-13 Guest - Jack Smith, Mary Martin.mp3

Database Updates

December 24, 2006

REVISED LOG -
Grand Ole Opry
Great Plays
True Adv Of Junior G-Men
Forecast
One Man's Family
The Line-Up
Little Old Hollywood
Mandrake The Magician
The Danny Kaye Show
SF 68

EPISODE CORRECTIONS -

Fighting AFF
The Little Things In Life
Radio Readers Digest
Make Believe Ballroom
Man Behind The Gun

SPELLING -

Let George Do It
Inheritance
Adv Of horatio Hornblower
Kraft Music Hall 40-46-Bing Crosby
Right To Happiness
Eddie Cantor - It's Time To Smile
Ed & Zeb
Information Please
Philip Marlowe

OTHER -

Pepper Youngs Family - add'l episode available
Ma Perkins - add'l episode available
The Charlie McCarthy Show - episode corrections
Lets Go To Town -add'l episode available
Little Orpah Annie - date corrections

(Continued on page 38)

Database Updates (Continued from page 32)

Abbott & Costello - added episode titles

Shirley Temple - added episode title

NEW LOGS -

It's A Crime Mr Collins - Aus

It's A Crime Mr Collins - US

DELETE -

It's A Crime Mr Collins

January 9, 2007

NEW LOG -

Your Radio Theater

SPELLING -

Hallmark Playhouse

Hank williams-Mothers Best Flower Show

Kay Kyser

We Can This Way

Proudly We Hail

Let George Do It

EPISODE CORRECTIONS

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True Adv Of Junior G-Men

Your Hit Parade

NBC Radio Theater

REVISED LOGS -

Frank Muir

Squad Cars

LOG CHANGE -

Fighting AFF to Your AFF