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The Radio Career of Rod Serling

Martin Grams, Jr.

Literally, there were thousands of radio programs broadcast throughout the twenties to the fifties that have never been documented in reference guides. Hundreds of radio stations across the country featured regional programming that rarely expanded beyond state lines, and faded from memory as fast as they came. While some programs like *The Whistler* started out as a West Coast program before making the switch to a coast-to-coast basis, others such as *Primer for Parents* and *Psychologically Speaking* never went beyond the local region the program originated from. WENR in Chicago had Jim and Marion Jordan for *The Farmer Rusk Hour* and Wyllis Cooper for *Lights Out!* WMCA in New York had John J. Anthony and *The Goodwill Hour*. And WLW in Ohio had Rod Serling.

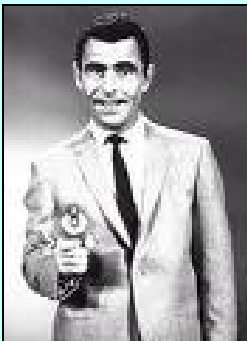
This article will center on Rod Serling's radio career and the many obscure programs he created and scripted for the medium. His switch to television and more importantly, how radio was a major influence on the cult television series, *The Twilight Zone*, will be emphasized. Like much of American history, little has been done to preserve our heritage. As a result, dates in general (1952 rather than Nov. 21, 1952) are listed because the specifics remain elusive. Serling saved much of his radio work in the form of scripts but to date, only one recording is known to exist

-- offering us a brief glimpse of the drama that came from a future Emmy-Award winning playwright. Scripts were donated among other personal items such as letters and contracts to a variety of depositories across the country. The WMCA archive in New York, UCLA in Los Angeles and the Wisconsin Historical Archives. It is from these collections and the author's personal items purchased off eBay over the past decade that form the majority of the information contained herein.

Dr. Christian Meets Rod Serling

While many maintain that *The Twilight Zone* influenced a great number of authors, television producers, scriptwriters and fans in general, the television program was influenced by the standards of the broadcast networks. Rod Serling worked first in radio and then moved on to television in Cincinnati (teaching himself, through actual writing, whatever he learned of playwriting). Wanting to make a profession of writing, he was at the radio's speaker, often favoring good dramas and programs of serious horror and science fiction. Shows such as *Suspense* and *The Mysterious Traveler* may well have been influences for the types of stories of which he grew fond. One of Serling's earliest jobs was as an unsalaried volunteer writer and actor with WNYC, a New York City radio station. Later he worked for stations in Marion and Springfield, Ohio, as well as his native Binghamton, N.Y., and Cincinnati.

"In 1946, I started writing for radio at a New York City station and thereafter did



radio writing at other small stations,” he recalled. “It was experience, but incidental experience. I learned ‘time,’ writing for a medium that is measured in seconds. Radio and its offspring, television, are unique in the stringency of the time factor. Radio and TV stations gave me a look-see at the factory that would produce my product. I got to understand the basic workings of cameras, lights and microphones. I got a sense of the space that could be utilized and the number of people who might be accommodated in that space. This was all to the good.”

The radio programs Serling wrote for, however, were not broadcast nationally on a coast-to-coast hookup. They were not sponsored. In fact, almost all of them were sustained, that is, the production costs were borne by the network rather than a sponsor. Cheap to produce, these programs required no major film stars to pay, and there was no shortage of radio actors willing to work for union scale. For him, this was experience needed for a writer with no credits to his name, to get his foot in the door for programs that paid much more – courtesy of well-heeled sponsors willing to pick up the tab.

The Chesebrough Manufacturing Company, for example, sponsored a long-running radio program titled *Dr. Christian*. The program featured top-quality dramas of a country doctor who applied the Golden Rule approach to life when facing obstacles that required his inner strength for support. In the beginning, the *Dr. Christian* radio program came from various scriptwriters, among them Ruth Adams Knight. In 1942, the producers tried a new approach: a contest in which listeners could submit scripts and be eligible for large cash prizes. This may have been the most significant factor in the program’s long 17-year history. Suddenly, everyone in the country was a scriptwriter. Weekly awards ranged from \$150 to \$500, good money in 1942, and the grand prize won the author \$2,000. It soon became *The Vaseline Program*, “the only show in radio where the audience writes the script.”

Newsweek reported that 7,697 scripts were received in 1947; sometimes that number went as high as 10,000. Many were called, however, but few were chosen. The scripts that made it to the air continued the appeal of traditional values, showing *Dr. Christian* as the symbol of good will, as a philanthropist and an unabashed Cupid. The subject matter would include anything – even fantasy. One show was about a mermaid; on another, a human-

like jalopy named Betsy fell in love with a black Packard owned by a woman chief of police. Only when murder was the theme of a script did listeners complain; they liked the show when it was mellow. The 1947 prize play concerned *Dr. Christian*’s effort to convince an unborn child that Earth was not so bad after all.

At Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, Rod Serling majored in language and literature and began writing scripts for radio. He became manager of the Antioch Broadcasting System’s radio workshop where he wrote, directed and acted in weekly full-scale radio productions broadcast over WJEM, Springfield. With confidence on his shoulder, during the 1948-49 school year, the entire output of the workshop was written by Serling. With the exception of one adaptation, all of the radio scripts were entirely original. Later he would look back and call this work some “pretty bad stuff.”

For the broadcast of May 18, 1949, the eighth annual scriptwriting contest of *Dr. Christian* ended with a special broadcast revealing the year’s winners. Among the guests on that particular program was Rod Serling, who at the time was attending Antioch College. The producers of the radio show even paid him \$76.56 to reimburse his expenses in getting to CBS in New York City to appear on the *Dr. Christian* program. His submission, titled “To Live a Dream,” had won approval of the judges and been accepted by producer Dorothy McCann. Serling’s script helped him place in the radio contest that netted him a \$500 award.

Serling brought along his wife, Carol, to attend the radio broadcast. Among the cast on stage were star Jean Hersholt, Helen Claire as nurse Judy Price, and prizewinners Russell F. Johnson, Maree Dow Gagne, Mrs. Aida Cromwell, Miss Terry McCoog, Earl Hamner, Jr. and Mrs. Halle Truitt Yenni. The program, still sponsored by Chesebrough, was the 546th broadcast of the series. Russell F. Johnson of Thomaston, Connecticut won the \$2,000 first prize for his script titled, “Stolen Glory.” Mrs. Lillian Kerr of Tillamook, Oregon, won \$500 for her script titled, “Angel with a Black Eye.” Earl Hamner, Jr. of Cincinnati, Ohio (the same Hamner who would later write scripts for *The Twilight Zone*), won \$500 for his script titled “All Things Come Home.” This was not Hamner’s first time winning the contest. He had been on the show previous for his award-winning scripts,

“Now That Spring is There” and “Who Would Not Sing for David?”

One by one, the prizewinners were announced and interviewed on stage. Biographical background, professional endeavors and their writing ambitions were discussed. Halfway through the broadcast, Rod Serling came to the microphone.

HERSHOLT: *Hello, Rod . . . and congratulations. I read your winning script, “To Live a Dream,” and I thought it was a fine job of writing.*

SERLING: *Thank you, Mr. Hersholt. You’ve no idea how thrilled I am to know that you and the judges selected my script as one of the winners.*

HERSHOLT: *Now tell us a little about yourself, Rod.*

SERLING: *Well . . . I first saw the light of day in Syracuse, New York, graduated from Binghamton High School, at Binghamton, New York . . . And am now in my third year of college at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.*

HERSHOLT: *You covered an awful lot of years in an awfully few words. What happened during all that time?*

SERLING: *Well . . . before the war I did some staff work at a Binghamton radio station . . . tried to write . . . but never had anything published.*

HERSHOLT: *And during the war?*

SERLING: *I was in the same place as Russell Johnson . . . the Pacific . . . with the Army.*

HERSHOLT: *What did you do in the Army?*

SERLING: *I was a paratrooper.*

HERSHOLT: *Where did you get the idea for this fine story you wrote?*

SERLING: *Well . . . I’ve always been fond of boxing . . . tried my hand in the Golden Gloves. And well . . . since you’ve read my story, you know where it all ties in.*

HERSHOLT: *Indeed I do. And do you intend to follow writing as a profession?*

SERLING: *I’d like to, Mr. Hersholt. In fact, the ambition of my wife and I . . .*

HERSHOLT: *Oh . . . another married man!*

SERLING: *How did Russell Johnson say it? Yes, sir!*

HERSHOLT: *And is your wife sitting out front, too?*

SERLING: *Yes, sir . . . right there.*

HERSHOLT: *Well, let’s have her stand up and take a bow, too . . . Mrs. Rod Serling . . .*

(Applause)

HERSHOLT: *Well, well, you ex-G.I.s certainly specialize in beautiful brides. And now, back to that ambition of yours.*

SERLING: *Well, we want to live in a large house, in the suburb of a large city, raise a family, a lot of dogs . . . and write!*

HERSHOLT: *And I certainly hope you realize such a fine American ambition, Mr. Serling. Maybe this check for five hundred dollars will go toward part of the down payment on that dream! Congratulations . . . and good luck to you!*

SERLING: *Thank you, Mr. Hersholt.*

More Radio Programs

Serling’s success earned him a credit that would gain the attention of other radio producers, when he included a cover letter with a submission. Broadcasting standards during the 1940s were much different from the standards enforced by the late 1950s. The policy of reviewing and accepting unsolicited radio scripts and plot proposals varied from one producer to the next. While many programs had a staff of writers, other programs occasionally purchased submissions from the open market. *Suspense*, a radio anthology specializing in thrilling crime dramas, for example, bought scripts from a deaf mute in Brooklyn, a night watchman from Chicago, a cowhand in Wyoming, and one script from a former inmate of San Quentin.

By the 1950s, however, a few who submitted plot proposals and scripts were seeking vengeance for their rejected submissions. They filed lawsuits against the producers and the networks whenever they heard a program of similar nature, claiming their ideas were “stolen” without due compensation. The networks began enforcing policies, in agreement with radio and television producers, not to review or

accept any outside submissions. For scriptwriters offering their work in the hopes of making a sale it became a bit more complicated.

The success of the *Dr. Christian* radio script led to multiple attempts on Serling's part to submit more proposals to other coast-to-coast radio programs.

"I just kept on," he recalled years later to a newspaper columnist. "I had to earn a living and took a staff writing job on a Cincinnati radio station; but during every spare moment I turned out more free-lance scripts. Finally, I sold three others, but for each play accepted there were at least three or more turned down."

Serling began writing scripts that were dramatized not on a national coast-to-coast hookup, but in the local Ohio listening area. "The Colonel's Coin" was a script in memorandum to Memorial Day. On May 8, 1948, he completed a V-E Day script which was regarded by the station manager as "the first script this year that kept me on the edge." In 1948, Serling scripted *Party Line*, a short-run program sponsored by the Army Recruiting Headquarters. Serling played himself in a number of skits he composed, including the lead role of Cooper. On one episode of this program, the announcer stepped aside from his normal duties to inform the radio audience that Miss Carol Kramer was engaged to Rod Serling, announced by her grandparents and the marriage to be on July 31.

But with success came the eventual edge of defeat. On September 8, 1949, Serling's radio script "Potter's Paradise" was rejected by the advertising agency, Wallace-Ferry-Hanly Company, for the *First Nighter Program*. Ira L. Avery, producer for Armstrong's *Theatre of Today*, rejected his script "The Memory" in October, because "in the handling of familiar plots and themes, selection needs to be placed on a level determined by the volume and quality of submissions. We regret that, in the light of heavy competition, we do not find this story suited to our current needs."

After peddling a football script titled "Cupid at Left Half" to *Curtain Time* and finding that script rejected, he wrote to Myron Golden, script editor of the radio program, to ask why he had failed to sell a single script to *Curtain Time*. On October 10, 1949, he sent the following candid reply:

"This particular script lacks a professional quality. The dialog is spotty, the plot is loose, and the whole thing lacks verisimilitude . . . It appears to be a

standard plot that writers somehow or other manage to pluck out of the public domain." *

On August 10, 1949, producer/director Martin Horrell of *Grand Central Station* rejected Serling's prizefight script titled "Winner Take Nothing." The script was "better than average" Horrell admitted, but the ladies who listened to his program on Saturday afternoons "have told us in no uncertain terms that prize fight stories aren't what they like most." In a letter, Horrell offered him what may have been the best advice given to the young Ohio resident. "I have a feeling that the script would be far better for sight than for sound only, because in any radio presentation, the fights are not seen. Perhaps this is a baby you should try on some of the producers of television shows."

"Those were discouraging, frustrating years," he told a columnist in early 1960. "I wanted to quit many times. But there was something within me that made me go on. I continued writing and submitting scripts without pay and, what is even worse, most of the time, without recognition. Then at last I came up with two plays that were bought by the old *Grand Central Station* series on CBS Radio. I thought that now surely I was in. But I wasn't. Day after day, I continued to pound the typewriter, with no result."

Grand Central Station was a radio anthology consisting of light comedies and fluffy romance. Serling's first sale to the program was "The Local is a Very Slow Train." Broadcast on September 10, 1949, under the new title of "Hop Off the Express and Grab a Local," the story concerned two young men, Joey and Steve, who became involved in a murder case while trying to escape the slums of the city where they live. His second sale for the series was "The Welcome Home," broadcast on December 31, 1949, and concerned the story of Bill Grant, a crusading reporter for the fictional New York *Globe*.

While his first sale was the prize-winning *Dr. Christian* script, the first script to be dramatized nationally on radio was the September 10, 1949 broadcast of *Grand Central Station*. In early

* Two of Serling's earliest attempts to sell scripts to a national radio program are evident in "Look to the Sky," dated July 13, 1947, and "The Most Dangerous Game," dated June 22, 1947. The latter script was adapted from the Richard Connell short story of the same name.

November, his luck hung on long enough for him to receive a letter from Rita Franklin of the *Dr. Christian* program, alerting him that his prize-winning "To Live a Dream," would finally be broadcast on December 7, 1949. Scheduling conflicts pushed the script ahead a week to November 30, 1949, and Rod Serling's name was once again referenced on the *Dr. Christian* radio program. *

Serling began working at radio stations such as WJEL in Springfield, Ohio, and WMRN in Marion, Ohio. Months later, in the spring of 1950, he graduated from college, and his first job was at WLW in Cincinnati, the Crosley Broadcasting Corporation's flagship station. The college radio work had paid \$45 to \$50 a week, but WLW was offering \$75 weekly and the young playwright accepted the job. Members of the program's casts were students of the radio department at the College of Music in Cincinnati, and he often found himself playing a role or two for some of the broadcasts.

It should be noted that among the leaders of the entertainment industry who began their careers at WLW were Rosemary Clooney, Betty Clooney, Red Skelton, Red Barber, Jane Froman, The Mills Brothers, Virginia Payne, Doris Day, Durward Kirby, Eddie Albert, and Janette Davis.**

* *Serling later submitted a second script to the Dr. Christian radio program that was originally titled "The Power of Abner Doubleday" (for reasons unknown the title changed to "The Power of Willie Doubleday") but failed to make the sale.*

** *The Crosley Broadcasting Corporation, founded by radio manufacturing pioneer Powel Crosley, Jr., was an early operator of radio stations in the U.S. During World War II, it operated as many as five shortwave stations, using the call signs WLWK, WLWL, WLWO, WLWR and WLWS. In 1945, the Crosley interests were purchased by the Aviation Corporation. The radio and appliance manufacturing arm changed its name to Avco, but the broadcast operations continued to operate under the Crosley name. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Crosley (or Avco) operated a small television network in which programs were produced at one of its stations and broadcast on the other Crosley stations in the Midwest, and occasionally by non-Crosley stations.*

The Local Programs

Sometime in 1950 or 1951, Serling sold Crosley a number of scripts for dramatization on both radio and television. It is not clear whether the dramas made it to the airwaves, but he did revise the scripts slightly and sold them to various television anthologies. Among the scripts were "Grady Everett for the People," "Law Nine Concerning Christmas," "The Sands of Tom," "The Time Element," "The Carlson Legend," "The Face of Autumn," "The Hill," "A Time for Heroes," "The Keeper of the Chair," "Aftermath" and "The Steel Casket."

Serling also composed a number of radio scripts for a proposed radio series titled *It Happens to You*. Among the scripts for this series were "Mr. Finchley Versus the Bomb" and "You Be the Bad Guy" (both of which were later dramatized on *The Lux Video Theater*); "And Then Came Jones," about the mishaps of Wendell Jones, who had papers claiming ownership to all the area within six and a half miles of Times Square; "The Gallant Breed of Men," about Captain Peter Bruce, an ex-captain in the Merchant Marine with a conscience; and "Law Nine Concerning Christmas," details of which can be found under the episode entry for "The Obsolete Man."

From October 14, 1950 to February 17, 1951, Serling authored a weekly program titled *Adventure Express*, which dramatized the exciting travels of Billy, Betty and their Uncle Jim, who traveled by train across the country seeking high adventure. Each week they stopped at a different town and got involved with the locals. One episode, for example, took place in the wooded countryside of Kansas, and another took place in the state of Florida.

When Serling first proposed this to the station manager, his proposal was titled *Conducted Tour Through America*, described as "a radio fantasy-drama." The initial concept was about a little boy named Stephen Crane and a little girl named Loretta Dijon who join the ethereal express operated by an old man named Abraham Goldschmidt. The kids died from the war, and were now looking across America from the train windows, giving their opinions of human character as witnessed through the eyes of a child.

From July 23, 1951 to August 23, 1951, he wrote a number of scripts for a weekly program titled *Leave it to Kathy*. From September to October of 1951, *Our America* presented historical biographies of

American historical figures such as Jefferson Davis, General Custer and Lewis and Clark. From November 24, 1951 to December 8, 1951, a similar radio program titled *Builders of Destiny* gave him the opportunity to dramatize biographies of Zane Grey and General Philip Sheridan. *

Among the cast of the Cincinnati radio broadcasts was Jay Overholts, who headed a large number of radio scripts penned by Serling. The two became good friends and in 1959, Serling arranged for Overholts to come to California as a stock actor for a number of *Twilight Zone* episodes -- including the pilot episode, "Where is Everybody?"

On November 25, 1949, John Driscoll, story editor for *The Cavalcade of America*, rejected Serling's plot outline titled "Father of the Common School," which he would later rewrite for an episode of the short-run historical dramas broadcast over WLW.

"From a writing point of view, radio ate up ideas that might have put food on the table for weeks at a future freelancing date," he later said. "The minute you tie yourself down to a radio or TV station, you write around the clock. You rip out ideas, many of them irreplaceable. They go on and consequently can never go on again. And you've sold them for \$50 a week. You can't afford to give away ideas -- they're too damn hard to come by. If I had it to do over, I wouldn't staff-write at all. I'd find some other way to support myself while getting a start as a writer."

"No Christmas This Year" was an unproduced radio script (written circa 1949-1951), and told the tale of a civilization that dispenses with Christmas. No one knew exactly why this was so, they just knew it was happening, and the mayor of the town claims someone high up was responsible for the decision. Santa, up at the North Pole, has his own problems. The elves are on strike. The factory no longer manufactures toys -- they produce crying gas, heavy bombs, fire bombs, and atomic bombs. Worse, he's been shot at when he flies over Palestine and China, and one of his elves got hit by shrapnel over Greece.

** Author Note: The dates of broadcast are accurate in this paragraph, but may not necessarily be the exact premiere and concluding airdates. A complete set of scripts was not available during research and it was determined to list the earliest and latest known dates of broadcast for those particular series.*

Another of Serling's unsold scripts included "The Scene of Lilaces," a half-hour play about Jackie Evans who was the victim of a murder.

On August 23, 1950, Rod Serling created a radio serial titled *The Jenkins Clan*, which he proposed to radio station WLW. The series never came to be -- or at least, no documented evidence has been brought to light to verify such a show was broadcast. According to Serling's proposal to the station manager, the series would be designed for either 'cross-the-board, five-day-a-week stint, or possibly three times a week, *The Jenkins Clan* could be fitted for either. In the case of the former, the show would involve a weekly episode - using the five shows to tell one complete story. For a 3-times-a-week stint, a complete episode might be possible for each 15-minute sequence. In either case, *The Jenkins Clan* is primarily a situation comedy using the husband and wife combination (Harry and Alice Jenkins) with occasional inclusion of other characters.

Serling's proposal suggested the minimum use of two actors, keeping the budget low for the network. Beginning with the second season of *The Twilight Zone* and especially during the final season, Serling would be subjected to a number of requests by the CBS Television Network to write scripts requiring fewer actors -- strictly for budgetary purposes.

On July 31, 1950, through the advice of friends and rejection letters, Rod Serling wrote to Blanche Gaines in New York -- an agent who specialized in handling about two dozen clients attempting to sell scripts to both radio and television. Blanche was the widow of Charles Gaines, who had died in 1947. He was vice president of the World Broadcasting System, a pioneer in the production of recorded radio series. Among her clients were Frank Gilroy, Jerome Ross, Nelson Bond and Helen Cotton. He included a few scripts ("Vertical Deep," "The Air is Free," and "Look to the Sky"), as samples of his work and a résumé of successful sales to *Dr. Christian* and *Grand Central Station*. Gaines reviewed the material and gave her opinion regarding the plots and the prose, suggesting a variety of programs for which to submit them, most notably television's *Lights Out!* and the radio anthology, *Suspense*. She agreed to handle his material on a 15 percent commission basis. "It is more difficult to work with a writer who is living so far away from New York," she explained, "but I think your stuff has merit and am willing to try and see what I can do with it."

Serling wrote back saying that he was concerned about the 15 percent fee, but Gaines assured him that it was not permanent. After the tenth sale by the same writer, she reduced her commission to 10 percent, explaining that earliest efforts often brought about more rejections, and the 5 percent difference offset the costs involved. In the meantime, she submitted scripts such as "Temptation," "The Air is Free," "Look to the Sky" and "Vertical Deep" to television's *Suspense*, which were all promptly rejected for various reasons. Formerly radio scripts, Serling began adapting the unsold scripts into feasible teleplays.

On April 21, 1951, the radio program *Stars Over Hollywood* featured "Curtain Call for Carol" with Phyllis Thaxter in the title role. When Carol Adams appears in a Broadway show backed by her father, she was unmercifully panned by Bill Grant, temporary drama critic for a large metropolitan newspaper. Her anger was further increased when the same Grant offered to teach her how to act, despite the fact that his real specialty was as a sports writer.

The year 1952 promoted Serling to a level of success that he failed to achieve the previous year. The major reason was Blanche Gaines. For every script he finished, she sent a formal submission to story editors and producers of radio and television programs that were on her lists. Every script that was rejected by one program was resubmitted to a different program. No effort was wasted and sales started growing.

On January 2, 1952, the *Dr. Christian* radio program presented "The Long Black Night," which was a major rewrite of Serling's earlier prize-winning script, "To Live a Dream."

The Keeper of the Chair

While these were some of Serling's earliest attempts at fantasy and science fiction for television, they would not be his last. His love for this kind of stories was evident in a number of early teleplays. In his unsold "The Keeper of the Chair," he told the tale of a condemned man named Paul, who spends his last moments on death row talking to his executioner, George Frank, about how many people Paul had put to death, and how many Paul felt were guilty of murder and deserved to die. However, a murder has occurred, the result of a prank, and when the warden talks to a guard, looking over the dead

body, he questions why Paul shouted out "George Frank" before he died. They had no guard named George Frank. There was a convict by that name executed in 1942, and new evidence presented in 1943 proved his innocence. Paul was the state executioner, whose mind snapped over the years, having been unable to cope with sending a man to the chair for a crime he never committed, and he spent his remaining moments hallucinating – a guilt complex in the form of his own execution.

In late 1949, when Serling was still at Antioch College, he submitted his radio play of the same name to John Meston, the story editor for radio's *Suspense*. On December 1, 1949, Meston returned the script, explaining, "After careful consideration, the Script Committee has decided that the story is not suitable for *Suspense*." On April 27, 1950, John Meston sent another rejection letter to Serling regarding the same script, as he had submitted it for radio's *Escape*. By November of 1950, Rod Serling was living (at 5016 Sidney Road) in Cincinnati, Ohio, and had adapted his radio script into a teleplay, for television's *Lights Out!* program. The script editor sent a rejection stating, "This is not well written and does not sufficiently get around its basic fallacy that the executioner, rather than the jury, is responsible for the death of an innocent man."

Radio Scripts Proposed for *The Twilight Zone*

"The Cold Equations" was first published in *Astounding Magazine* in 1954. Written by Tom Godwin, the short story tells of a starship making the rounds of Earth colonies, delivering much needed medical supplies to a frontier planet. When the pilot discovers a stowaway on board, an 18-year-old named Marilyn, who wants to see her brother at the colony, he realizes a bigger problem ahead for them. The ship only has enough fuel for the pilot and the cargo. Marilyn's weight and mass will prevent the starship from reaching its destination. Marilyn accepts the consequences of her mistake, writes a farewell letter to her parents, talks to her brother by radio, and then enters the airlock – ready to be jettisoned into space.

While this story was never used on the original series, the 1985-89 revival of *The Twilight Zone* featured an adaptation of this short story. On March 24, 1959, Sylvia Hirsch of the William Morris Agency submitted an hour-long teleplay titled "Tomorrow is Here" by Whitfield Cook. On March 25, Fred Engel

proposed “The Black Hound of Bailundu” by Paul I. Wellman. Serling rejected both of these.

On April 7, 1959, the radio play “Return to Dust” was considered for inclusion in the *Twilight Zone* series. Originally broadcast on *Suspense*, the George Bamber story concerned a biologist’s efforts to decrease cancer cells, and through an accident in the lab, found himself slowly shrinking in size. The majority of the drama (making the most effective use for the medium of radio) was the biologist’s effort to leave a recorded message explaining his situation and where his lab associates could find him, should they play back the recording. In the end, however, the scientist is down to the size of a bug and still shrinking, though he never gets to microscopic size because a bird mistakes him for an insect and makes a feast of him.

On June 29, 1959, Jack Stewart & Associates, representatives of William N. Robson, wrote to Rod Serling, in care of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios:

Dear Mr. Serling:

William Robson, who is director-producer and sometime writer for CBS’s *Suspense*, has a backlog of science stories which he owns. You probably know Bill by reputation. He, along with Norman Corwin and Arch Oboler, changed the whole technique of radio with their wonderful shows. Recently Bill won the Mystery Writers of America – Special Award – for “Best *Suspense Series*.” Will you please let me know when it would be convenient for you to talk to him?

Very cordially yours,
Jack Stewart

On July 8, 1959, Rod Serling replied, acknowledging Robson’s reputation and confessed that he was a fan of the producer/director. Unfortunately, at the moment, he had over purchased the number of story materials beyond the actual production commitments. He explained that it would be a waste of time for the two to talk on what would be a very problematical level, but offered a sympathetic and interested ear. “Should our situation change and we are once more in the market for material, I’d consider it a privilege to meet Robson because I recognize it as a fact that he was doing wonderful things when I was just still hoping.”

In mid-late August of 1959, Russell Stoneham at CBS Television forwarded to Bill Self a copy of a

radio script penned by Irving Reis, titled “Man of Tomorrow.” Self liked the story, and passed it on to Serling for review. The script has been performed twice on CBS Radio – the *Escape* broadcast of August 23, 1953, and on *Suspense* on September 1, 1957. Serling rejected the idea and had the script sent back to CBS. The story concerned an Air Force pilot who returns from Korea and agrees to an immoral experiment that ultimately surpasses his five senses, granting him the opportunity of experiencing a sixth sense.

“The Devil and Sam Shay” had been dramatized for *Buckingham Theatre* in 1950, one of the most prestigious coast-to-coast Canadian radio programs. Scripted by Robert Arthur of *The Mysterious Traveler* fame, the short story was originally published as “Satan and Sam Shay,” in the August 1942 issue of *The Elks Magazine*. Arthur sold the rights for his radio script and short story to Cayuga Productions for a possible third season entry on *The Twilight Zone*. The episode never came to be, but when Serling began considering stories for a sixth season, he returned to the short story as a possibility. Since *The Twilight Zone* only ran five seasons, the story was never adapted for the program.

To promote *The Twilight Zone*’s premiere on television, Rod Serling appeared before the radio microphone to promote the television series. On a publicity tour in September of 1959, Serling was a guest on a number of talk shows: Tony Weitzel’s radio program (Weitzel is a columnist for *The Chicago Daily News*); Jack Eigan’s radio program on WMAQ-NBC Radio; eight-minute interview with Don McNeill of *The Breakfast Club* on ABC radio network; and an interview with Jack Remington on WKRC.

Old-Time Radio on *The Twilight Zone*

Serling was a frequent listener of a number of radio programs, especially of the fantasy and horror genre. Arch Oboler and Norman Corwin were among the many playwrights who’s craft Serling admired (he even named the protagonist of “Night of the Meek” after Corwin). Many of Serling’s *Twilight Zone* episodes resembled plots from radio thrillers, of which he was an ardent listener, suggesting yet another link to radio dramas as being an influence for this television series.

In “Escape Clause,” a man signs his soul to the devil in exchange for immortality. After a few weeks, he becomes bored with life. Poison tastes like

lemonade and the thrill of jumping in front of the subway trains only secures him payments from the insurance companies. After going to trial for the murder of his wife, hoping to give the electric chair a whirl, he discovers that his sentence is life imprisonment.

The premise of a man becoming immortal and then being sentenced to life imprisonment was done previous on *Inner Sanctum Mystery*, a radio crime thriller broadcast from 1941 to 1952. On the evening of February 12, 1946, a script by Emile C.

Tepperman titled "Elixir Number Four," was dramatized with Richard Widmark as a young man who murders a brilliant chemist, so he can steal and drink an experimental elixir that grants immortality. His plan goes afoul, however, when the murder is uncovered, and the young man is sentenced to life imprisonment.

In "The Hitch-Hiker," a woman driving cross-country is terrorized by the sight of a little man who continues to appear off the side of the road in front of her. Days without sleep come to a conclusion when she discovers that she is dead -- the result of a blowout on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. And the mysterious figure that continues to haunt her is Death himself.

The original radio script, as chilling as the *Twilight Zone* screen adaptation, was dramatized on three separate occasions with Orson Welles playing the lead for each performance. The first time was on a summer filler called *Suspense*, broadcast on September 2, 1942. The popularity of that particular *Suspense* broadcast demanded a repeat performance, so Welles obliged a month later on *The Philip Morris Playhouse*, on October 15, 1942. Four years later, Orson Welles restaged the same radio play for *The Mercury Summer Theater on the Air* on June 21, 1946.

It is not clear which of the broadcasts exposed Rod Serling to the chilling story, but he certainly remembered it and wanted to adapt it for *The Twilight Zone*. Lucille Fletcher was represented by the William Morris office, so Buck Houghton made arrangements to negotiate the price.

"In view of the prominence of this particular play, I think it unlikely that we will get it for under \$1,000," Houghton wrote. "May I suggest that we start at \$750 and move to \$1,000, if we must."

One week later, the offer was rejected and Houghton wrote to Rod Serling, asking how between

desperate he wanted the story. "Lucille Fletcher has turned down \$2,000 for 'The Hitch-Hiker,' when Alfred Hitchcock offered it," Houghton explained. "I don't know how much further we would have to go to get the property, but I think it is too high for us to explore." Leo Lefcourt, the attorney for Cayuga Productions, however, was able to secure a firm price for the story through the William Morris Agency, and completed the purchase for *The Twilight Zone*. The price was \$2,000 and a standard W.G.A. percentage rerun pattern based on \$1,100. The story had not been done on television, either live or on film, giving *The Twilight Zone* an exclusive.

The main protagonist of the radio play was a man, but Serling changed the sex to a woman, "because it's pertinent and it's dramatic to make it a woman," he explained. "Nan" was a nickname of one of his daughters, Anne. If a press release from early January 1960 is accurate, Serling wrote the teleplay in under six hours.

When Richard Matheson submitted the story proposal for "The Last Flight," a tale of a WWI fighter pilot who lands on a modern-day airfield and finds himself displaced out of time. When Serling learned of Matheson's proposal, he brought to light a radio anthology titled *Quiet, Please*, scripted by Wyllis Cooper. On November 21, 1948, the program offered a similar story titled "One for the Book," about an Air Force major who hit Mach 12 in an experimental rocket plane in 1957 and found himself as an Air Force sergeant in 1937. Serling remarked that Matheson's story "was down-the-line almost a twin," and the two considered tracking down Wyllis Cooper to purchase the rights and cover their bases, but unable to do so, the teleplay went into production without further consideration.

The fact was the stories were similar, but not exactly the same. But to purchase the rights of Cooper's script was to prevent a possible infringement. No rights were ever purchased and no lawsuit ever came from the broadcast.

In "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street," a mysterious power outage causes the folks of a friendly neighborhood to turn into a murderous frenzy. The cause of the power outage was a scientific experiment conducted by visitors from outer space, studying the effects of human nature and how, after taking away some of the modern conveniences, resort to self-preservation at the destruction of others. The discussion exchanged

the outer space visitors is similar to the conclusion of a 1951 science-fiction radio script Serling wrote titled "The Button Pushers."

Set in a future Earth, 1970. Huge television screens substituted for advertising billboards in Times Square, air-way rocket trains carried commuters overhead, and the fear of rival nations separated by a large ocean covered the front page headlines. A bloodthirsty general urges a brilliant scientist to complete the development of a new weapon, best described as a "doomsday bomb." The enemy overseas, reportedly, has already developed a similar weapon. The general asks the scientist to complete the weapon so that it could be fired with the push of a single button – no secondary protocols required. The scientist, fearing his weapon could start a war that would erase the existence of mankind on the entire planet, contemplated the centuries of progress – ancient civilizations that built the pyramids, the deserted Mayan temples and the skyscrapers of today. After 15 minutes contemplating the beauty and wonder Earth had to offer, he completes the weapon and the Army takes over. Against his warnings, the button is pushed. The enemy does the same, and the countdown for contact begins.

The ending featured a series of explosions on the surface of planet Earth, and two aliens on another planet across the universe start the following discussion:

VOICE 1: *Ah, Verus . . . Have you see the little planet – Earth?*

VOICE 2: *Why no . . . come to think of it, Felovius I haven't seen it . . . In a few hundred light years. Seems to have just disappeared all of a sudden.*

VOICE 1: *Ah . . . Then I win my bet.*

VOICE 2: *Bet?*

VOICE 1: *Yes, I bet the keeper of the North Star that the little Earth would destroy itself before the next billion years had gone by . . . and she has. She seems to have just blown herself up . . . disintegrated. . . she no longer exists. Tch, tch . . . Pity . . . she was a lovely little planet. Wonder what caused it?*

VOICE 2: *That is a question . . .*

VOICE 1: *Oh, what am I thinking of . . . I know what destroyed it. It had human beings on it. I'd forgotten.*

VOICE 2: *Well then, that explains it . . . Those pesky little things can't live side by side very long. Shall we go back and tell the others?*

VOICE 1: *Why take the trouble? As if anyone cared about tiny Earth . . . So unimportant a speck . . . so insignificant a dot in the universe. Who cares?*

VOICE 2: *I guess you're right. (sighs) Nice night . . . So quiet . . . So uneventful.*

In "A Passage for Trumpet," a trumpet player named Joey drowns his sorrows with a bottle, and commits suicide when he fails to get a job playing the trumpet. Soon discovering that he is in limbo, between life and death, it takes a bit of spiritual guidance to intervene and reveal just what Joey has been missing in life. The script was an adaptation of a number of teleplays, which in turn were revisions of a 1949 radio script titled, "The Local is a Very Slow Train." Serling submitted the idea to the producers of the radio anthology, *Grand Central Station*, who purchased the script and re-titled it "Hop Off the Express and Grab a Local." The story concerned two young men of the slums, Joey and Steve, who get involved in a murder. Joey comments not once, but twice, about how depressed he became when he was reminded of the social group in which he grew up, having been raised in the slums of the big city. The episode was broadcast over the CBS Radio Network on September 10, 1949.

In 1950, Serling wrote a radio script titled "The Dust By Any Other Name," concerning a character named Abner Bodner, who attempts to build a chemical plant that would produce a magic dust. When breathed, the dust would make mortal enemies forget their hatred. As a result of his efforts, Bodner has an accident that costs him his life, proving to everyone in town that a man who dies in his belief of peace leaves a larger mark on society. He believed in his dream – not the dust. The radio script was rejected weeks after being submitted to the *Dr. Christian* radio program.

On June 19, 1958, CBS presented an episode of *Playhouse 90*, titled "A Town Has Turned to Dust," scripted by Serling. This version told the story of the lynching of a 19-year-old Mexican boy by a mob spurred on by a young merchant, whose hatred of

the victim stemmed both from his wife accepting the affection of the doomed boy and from a deep-rooted prejudice against Mexicans. It was also the story of the town sheriff, who gives in feebly to the lynching mob, but stands firm when it comes to hanging the victim's brother after he defies the Jim Crow standards of the town. The brother is saved by the sheriff who, after killing the merchant and also is dying from the merchant's bullet, tells of the time, years ago, when he had led a mob in the ugly lawless murder of another man.

In July of 1960, Serling took the *Playhouse 90* script and shortened the length (and the title), making a number of revisions. In combining both the *Dr. Christian* and *Playhouse 90* scripts, he explored the motivation of the mob and eliminated any reference to a prior hanging for an episode of *The Twilight Zone* titled "Dust."

The plot of a man going back in time to 1865 and given the opportunity to prevent the course of events leading to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln has been explored not once – but twice – on radio. The first attempt was on Mutual's *The Mysterious Traveler*. On the evening of February 7, 1950, "The Man Who Tried to Save Lincoln" dramatized the story of a scientist who figures how to transfer a man's thoughts back into time and occupy another man's body. In this version, the time traveler finds himself in the body of John Wilkes Booth. Booth, managing to get the better of the voice in his head, makes a successful effort to assassinate Lincoln. This same script was dramatized again years later for *Suspense*. This same theme was explored on *The Twilight Zone* in the episode, "Back There."

In "Static," Ed Lindsay, one of the tenants at Vinnie's boarding house, longs for the days when radio was a medium of entertainment. He tires of watching everyone else stay fixated to the television programs that insult his intelligence. Digging out the old radio from the basement, Vinnie carries the unit up to his room and plugs it in. He soon discovers that broadcasts of the past are coming through the speakers. Every time he tries to get someone else to listen with him, however, all that comes through the speakers is static. Vinnie, his old flame, believes Ed is getting sentimental for the past, during their romantic days. But 20 years later, they apparently missed their chance. Avoiding the rest of the tenants, Ed retires every day to the radio to listen to *Let's Pretend* and Kay Kyser, but is heartbroken when he

returns from the grocery store one afternoon to find the radio had been sold to a junk dealer. Ed sets out to find the radio and buy it back. He succeeds and, returning the radio to his bedroom and turning it on, finds himself transported back to 1940 where he is 20 years younger – and so is Vinnie.

While not a Serling script, this *Twilight Zone* episode was the brain child of Ocee Ritch and his short story, "Tune in Yesterday." The story certainly appealed to Serling, who was responsible for the final decision regarding story selection, and felt the nostalgic chance to go back to the by-gone days was perfect hunting ground for *The Twilight Zone*. Days before the episode went before the cameras, he wrote to Ed Wynn, explaining they were doing a show called "Static," which involved the use of famous radio programs of the past. "Since 'The Fire Chief' is an integral as well as beloved part of the memorabilia of the time, it is essential that it be included. So in addition to your permission, I wonder if you could give us or tell us where we might obtain records or transcriptions of any of your old radio shows."

Wynn replied by phone, explaining to Serling that while he had no problem of *The Twilight Zone* featuring sound clips from existing recordings, he himself had none in his possession. He recommended Serling contact Texaco, the sponsor of the series. Buck Houghton, upon learning the sad news, explained to Serling that time was of the essence, and instead, used a recording of *The Fred Allen Show* in its place. The F.D.R. address to the nation, heard in the soundtrack of this episode, was a recording from his fireside chat of April 28, 1935. *The Fred Allen Show* segment with Fred and Portland arriving at "Allen's Alley," was a broadcast from January 6, 1946. Radio Station WPDA, heard over the radio from one of the recordings was referencing radio station WPDA in Cedarburg, New Jersey.

For custom recordings for this production, the role of the real estate salesman on the television set is played by Eddie Marr, a veteran of numerous radio broadcasts from the '40s and '50s. According to a production report dated November 18, the voice of the radio disc jockey is that of Bob Crane, who would later play the starring role of television's *Hogan's Heroes*. Though Crane is heard and not seen, this episode technically marks his television debut. Crane was a local morning disc jockey on a Los Angeles

radio station at the time, and he was offered the proposal of supplying the voice needed in the soundtrack.

The episode "The Obsolete Man" explored a future society in which the State regulated the occupations of man and those deemed unworthy of advancement are classified "obsolete" and promptly executed. When a librarian faces off against the Chancellor regarding the usefulness of books (banned by the State as nonsense), he devises a way to reveal to the State just who should the judge - God himself.

This episode of *The Twilight Zone* may just have been Serling's attempt to dramatize the foolishness of a state under dictatorship. The script was a combination of two previously written scripts. His earliest dates back to the early 1950s, when Serling was writing scripts for radio station WLW in Ohio, where he proposed an anthology series titled *It Happens to You*, featuring stories the radio listeners would become engrossed in, whimsical tales not too dissimilar to *The Twilight Zone*. Episode 7 titled "Law Nine Concerning Christmas," explored the notion of a future society in which an unnamed town had a law passed which abolished Christmas, a law against Christ. The church was declared off-limits to the entire village. The mayor, acting much like the chancellor in this *Twilight Zone* episode, tries to explain why such a law has been put into effect. The state did not recognize any such deity, and therefore, neither should the people. Yet, he faced resistance when a crowd gathered at the front door of the church for midnight mass on Christmas Eve. After judging them each for their crimes against the State, he attempts to pass sentence – until a little girl named Pat reminds the mayor that Christ died for a principle, too.

"Well, Rod and I were residents of Ohio. We both wrote for the *Dr. Christian* program and when I left a job in Cincinnati, he took the position," recalled Earl Hamner. "Years later, I went to Hollywood and Rod introduced me at a party once as the man who gave him his first job. [laughs] That really wasn't how it was, but I let it go at that. He had success with *The Twilight Zone* and I had a problem getting into television," recalled Hamner. "I had written for radio, I had written for live television, and I wrote a few novels. But I could not sell anything for television."

In a 1977 issue of *Writer's Yearbook* with columnist and interviewer Ted Allrich, Hamner

remembered, "I had known Rod Serling slightly in New York. One day I called Rod and said I would like to submit some stories for his *Twilight Zone* series. He said that it was an awfully hard market to crack, but to give it a try. He promised that all the right people would read my ideas. His producer called back a few days after I submitted some, a nice guy named Buck Houghton. Buck had read the stories and liked them. But he also said, 'I understand you don't write film. Would you like to write these up as little plays?'"

"I said, 'No. I'd like to write them up as little television shows.' And I did, and I have not been out of work since."

In the *Twilight Zone* episode "In Praise of Pip," a dying man strikes a deal with God -- to exchange his life for that of his son, who was dying from wounds inflicted at Vietnam. On December 24, 1950, Serling's radio script, "Choose One Gift," was broadcast over radio station WLW in Ohio and explored the same theme later used for "In Praise of Pip." The holiday story concerned a soldier named Rierden, who suffered life-threatening wounds while stationed overseas during the Korean War. The doctors and nurses do not have much hope for the soldier, but their primary concern is the number of wounded that continues to grow every day. Their emotions are stretched to the breaking point, and they pray to God for relief. Towards the end of the drama, it appears a little Divine intervention prevails as the wounded soldier recovers and brings them a most welcome gift for Christmas – the gift of hope.

What the Devil?

On June 11, 1963, Arch Oboler wrote a teleplay for the fifth season of *Twilight Zone* titled, "What the Devil?" Millie and Frank, driving a Jaguar across the desert, witness a hellish hit-and-run that kills the driver of one of the vehicles. In shock, the two start to suspect the fleeing driver may have seen them and now set his sights on the witnesses. Their suspicions are confirmed when, further down the road, the huge truck takes chase. The words "Danger, High Explosives" are on the side of the vehicle, but the driver misses his mark and the couple manages to get away. Frank tells Millie he caught a glimpse of the driver, and she laughs when he tells her it was the Devil. In a game of cat and mouse, they manage to switch vehicles, hoping the driver is looking for the Jaguar and not a station

wagon. Millie, meanwhile, discovers that Frank committed a brutal act before leaving on the trip, and the driver may be a form of conscience. Ultimately, the truck catches up and once again, gives chase, hits-and-runs, this time taking the lives of Millie and Frank, the police arrive on the scene to find the car flattened. One of the officers is puzzled when he points out to his partner the hoof prints burned in the pavement, "like something walked around watching them burn!"

From 1942 to 1943, Oboler scripted a total of 52 episodes for a horror program titled *Lights Out!*, sponsored by Ironized Yeast and broadcast over the CBS. The premiere episode, aired on October 6, 1942, was a radio play titled "What the Devil?" and this *Twilight Zone* teleplay was a faithful adaptation of the radio version. Gloria Blondell and Wally Maher played the leads for the radio version. Serling insisted the script be purchased from Oboler, and Bert Granet went along with Serling's decision. (A letter dated October 2, 1963, from Granet to Serling, suggests that this arrangement was a fiasco, and Granet disliked the idea from the start, keeping silent to please Serling for a decision that ultimately never went before the cameras.)

Assigned a production number on June 11, 1963, the television script was clearly intended to be filmed for the fifth season of *The Twilight Zone*. The attempt was short-lived. An M-G-M work order dated August 13, 1963 announced the cancellation of this production, and most of the copies of the scripts were returned to Oboler. Serling retained at least two copies for his records, and donated one to UCLA. According to tax paperwork and financial records, secretarial and other expenses cost Cayuga Productions a total of \$420.47. No paperwork has been found to verify how much Arch Oboler was paid (if he was paid at all) for his teleplay, which would have been an additional expense to Cayuga.

The Twilight Zone Radio Dramas

On March 4, 1965, a variation of the *Twilight Zone* episode, "A Nice Place to Visit," aired on the radio program, *Theater Five*. "The Land of Milk and Honey" was an almost mirrored copy of the same story, right down to the final surprise ending. In March of 1974, Rod Serling was in Houston, in association with Mutual Broadcasting System, during the National Association of Broadcasters Convention. He was promoting his new radio

program, *Zero Hour*, which he was heavily involved with. This short-run program was Serling's attempt at another anthology program -- and possibly his chance to retain control of his own program without the interference of the network and movie studios.

The December 21, 1960 issue of *The Hollywood Reporter* reported Serling's sale of a radio program to CBS, suggesting the network wanted to broadcast a radio series adapted from television scripts of *The Twilight Zone*. This is not a farfetched notion as some might ponder, because the television series *Have Gun – Will Travel* had been adapted to radio two years previous on the CBS Radio Network. This concept never fleshed into radio dramas until four decades later when producer Carl Amari decided to present new dramatizations based on this classic program. A lifelong fan of old-time radio, Amari decided to revive the series not as a nostalgic recreation of radio as it once was. Instead, Amari commissioned fresh radio adaptations based on the original 156 teleplays along with new story ideas never seen or heard on *The Twilight Zone*. Among the prolific writers responsible for adapting the teleplays into 160 History of *The Twilight Zone* feasible radio scripts are World Fantasy Award-winning writer Dennis Etchison. Recorded in digital stereo, narrated by Stacy Keach and starring a remarkable cast of actors, these exciting productions take the art of audio drama to an audience that may not have seen the *Twilight Zone* productions when they were first telecast from 1959 – 1964.

Among the radio dramas are adaptations of teleplays written by Charles Beaumont and Jerry Sohl that were commissioned but never produced, such as "Free Dirt" and "Who Am I?" The program has been syndicated across the country on XM and Sirius Satellite Radio, as well as a number of local radio stations. They can also be presently heard over the Yesterday USA Network on the internet, and CD box sets are available commercially.

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Martin Grams Jr. is the author and co-author of seventeen books about old-time radio and television. His most recent include *The Twilight Zone: Unlocking the Door to a Television Classic* (OTR Publishing, 2008) and *The Radio Adventures of Sam Spade* (OTR Publishing, 2007).

Sweet Dreams: Noble Visions of a Confectioner Jim Cox

My perception is that all of us are familiar, at least to a limited extent, with some of the basic parameters surrounding the lives of David Sarnoff and William S. Paley. As chairman of the Radio Corporation of America, Sarnoff is recalled as the man who—more than any other individual—for several decades supplied passionate oversight to the development of the National Broadcasting Company. Acting in the same epoch, his equivalent, Paley, performed similar duties as chairman of NBC's foremost rival, the Columbia Broadcasting System. While there was no single individual credited with launching the third transcontinental web, the Mutual Broadcasting System, when NBC was ordered to concentrate its activities into a single chain, the name of Edward J. Noble popped up in the annals of network broadcasting.

Noble is a man about whom we know precious little beyond the fact that he made money as a prosperous confectioner. How much else have you remembered about him? He was a great deal more than a mere opportunist, out to make a fast buck, although the few details we have learned about him could lead us to speculate on purely avaricious ambitions. In the brief span of a decade in which he controlled the fourth major chain, nevertheless, his overriding intent wasn't about money. He possessed some lofty ideals for his network, sensing an obligation to those who benefited by it. He aimed to establish it on a foundation that competitor webs might find worthy of emulating. Noble was a man of some obvious principles and ideals, a fact that most of us may have simply missed.

Before reviewing his life, let's examine the environment that netted an opportunity for his involvement in network radio. In May 1941, the Federal Communications Commission, a Washington watchdog then almost seven years of age, issued a sweeping opinion that stated in part:

"We do not believe ... that any substantial justification can be found for NBC's operation of two stations in New York, Washington, Chicago, or San Francisco. In none of these cities are the better radio facilities so numerous as to make it in the public interest for any one network organization to



Edward J. Noble

control two stations; in each case such dual ownership is bound to obstruct the development of rival networks and the establishment of new networks.... Competition will be greatly strengthened if the best facilities in important cities are not so tied in the hands of a single network organization.... We find, accordingly, that the licensing of two stations in the same area to a single network organization is basically unsound and contrary to the public interest...."

After NBC was ordered to separate stations, transmitters, studios, furnishings, equipment and personnel in 1941, on January 9, 1942, it established the Blue Network Company, Inc. In 1943, NBC's Mark Woods was appointed president. The Blue was put on the block at an asking price of \$8 million, a figure sanctioned by NBC president-CEO David Sarnoff. Woods soon heard rumblings that well connected business tycoon Edward J. Noble, a prominent confectioner who presided over the Life Saver manufacturing enterprise, an ex-bureaucrat and radio station owner, was interested. But the notion faded after Noble signaled that the sum was unreasonable.

An original bid of \$6 million was offered by James H. McGraw Jr., president and chairman of McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, Inc., and Noble. This was soon followed by a bid of \$6.5 million by Thomas P. Durell of 44 Wall Street, which was raised to \$7 million by the McGraw-Noble group. NBC parent

RCA rejected this bid and McGraw-Noble then inquired whether a firm bid of \$7.5 million would be acceptable. They learned that Dillon, Read & Co. interests that had been active in Blue Network sales prospects at the time of the first FCC order were again considering a purchase of the property.

Woods began complex negotiations with the investment house Dillon, Read & Co. They offered \$7,750,000. The details of the transaction were put in writing but Woods had trouble getting David Sarnoff on the telephone. Finally he reached him. Woods later recalled: "I explained to Mr. Sarnoff that my new associates were in my office with me, and I would like to bring them to his office so that he could meet them."

Sarnoff answered, "There must be some mistake, Mark! I have just sold the Blue Network Company to Ed Noble and James McGraw.... They are in my office; I would like you to meet them and we'll close the deal."

When Woods got to Sarnoff's office, he learned that Noble had finally agreed to pay \$8 million for the network. He told Woods he had tried to get it for \$7 million but Sarnoff had been unwilling to budge.

Woods saw a chance to do something for the man who was apparently destined to become his boss. Woods reminded Sarnoff that they had discussed an RCA-sponsored series over the projected independent network. Could they settle that now? Woods had specific figures in mind. For the first year time costs should be \$650,000; talent, \$350,000; total \$1 million.

Sarnoff inquired, "Is that what you want, Mark?"
"Yes!"

Sarnoff agreed. Noble, seeing he had recouped a million dollars, was pleased.

The \$8 million figure was the largest sale in broadcasting history. It topped bids of such formidable contenders as fabled Chicago haberdasher Marshall Field, the storied Pittsburgh Mellon financiers and Paramount Pictures. McGraw of McGraw-Hill Publishing Company soon withdrew as joint owner leaving Noble as sole Blue network purchaser. Despite his enormous personal wealth, to complete the transaction, Noble put up \$4 million of his own money; then he borrowed \$1 million from Commercial Bank and Trust Company of New York, and \$1.5 million from each of New York's Bankers Trust Company and Central Hanover Bank and Trust Company. RCA, meanwhile, spent \$1.1 million on

the radio series proffered in the exchange. And Noble did become Woods' boss—Woods was named president of the network while Noble was chairman of the board.

Included in the transaction, furthermore, were three pivotal stations in the Blue's operation: New York's WJZ, the web's flagship outlet; Chicago's WENR; and San Francisco's KGO. Following hearings, the FCC granted approval for the transfer of those stations' licenses. At the same time, Noble's new venture included 143 Blue network affiliates.

RCA publicly announced the sale of the Blue web on July 30, 1943, to Noble's American Broadcasting System, Inc. It was approved by the FCC on October 12, 1943. The network retained most existing staff and signed leases on two theaters plus equipment and studios at NBC. For the present, principally due to wartime shortages, flagship outlet WJZ continued to air from Radio City on a 10-year lease.

Seeking more prestigious nomenclature instead of mere hue, Noble acquired the appellation American Broadcasting Company (ABC) for his enterprise. The changeover involved tricky negotiations with broadcasting czar George B. Storer who owned—and retained—title to a then defunct American Broadcasting System. The Blue chain was officially rebranded on June 15, 1945.

Edward John Noble, the new network's owner, was suitably well-heeled and politically connected. Born in upstate New York at Gouveneur on August 8, 1882, he was educated at Syracuse and Yale universities. In 1913, he and partner J. Roy Allen purchased the Life Saver mint candy business from a Cleveland manufacturer and turned it into a multimillion-dollar enterprise. Investing heavily in the Life Savers Corporation, Noble became its president while his brother, Robert P. Noble, was vice president. By 1937 their titles and responsibilities were respectively upgraded to chairman of the board and executive vice president. Still chairman in 1949, Edward Noble saw his sibling rise to president of the corporation.

On the way to incredible wealth, he formed the Edward J. Noble Company in 1915 in New York City, shepherding it for eight years, capitalizing on manufacturing and distributing advertising devices and novelties. Having also taken up yachting and flying as sideline interests, on July 9, 1938, Ed Noble

was appointed by U. S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt as chairman of the newly created Civil Aeronautics Authority. He resigned April 13, 1939, to become Under Secretary of Commerce, a post occupied from June 1939 to August 1940. He left it to support an unsuccessful presidential bid by Wendell L. Willkie.

In 1941 Noble bought New York's WMCA Radio for \$850,000. When he purchased the Blue web coupled with a trio of influential affiliates in 1943, he allowed that he hoped to make the Blue "a sort of *New York Times* of the industry," adding, "I'd be perfectly happy with meager profits." The Federal Communications Commission rulings prohibited him from continuing to own WMCA while adding WJZ to his portfolio as both stations served the same market. Thus he, too, looked for a buyer. He found one in Nathan Straus, ex-U. S. housing chief, who purchased WMCA for \$1,255,000 in September 1943.

Three months later, Noble sold 12.5 percent of his interest in the Blue Network to *Time*, Inc., headed by chairman Henry R. Luce, and 12.5 percent to advertising executive Chester J. LaRoche. He repurchased all of those shares in October 1945. In addition, in late 1943, he sold small percentages of interest in the Blue Network to the web's president, Mark Woods, and Edgar Kobak, executive vice president. Kobak, incidentally, resigned from the Blue in 1944 to cast his lot with MBS.

It became obvious to many observers quite early that—coupled with the business acumen that made him prosperous—Noble was eager to share his time and talents to benefit millions who weren't as fortunate. While he was deeply involved in numerous nonprofit endeavors, including more than space permits, some examples suffice. The nobleman gave freely to St. Lawrence University at Canton, New York, from which he received an honorary doctor of laws in 1939, and was that institute's trustee chairman. In August 1945, he was appointed chairman of the service division of the New York National War Fund. In October 1946, Noble was named head of the Salvation Army's annual fundraising drive for 1947, a role that was extended to 1948. He was general chairman of the 1953 March for Dimes crusade for Greater New York. For a while Noble was chairman of the board of North Country Hospitals, Inc., operating medical centers in three upstate New York cities.

The American Broadcasting Company's purchase of the King-Trendle Broadcasting Corporation in 1946, including Detroit's WXYZ and Grand Rapids' WOOD (the latter resold a short time afterward), gave Ed Noble an opportunity to diffuse any lingering stability issues in the trade about intentions for his nascent network. Revelations from the Candy Man-turned-broadcaster, while brief, put to rest whatever concerns the industry may have harbored for the short term. His declarations hinted that Noble accorded his responsibility to a high plateau in influencing the national landscape.

"I did not buy the Blue Network as a speculation," he told *The New York Times* in July 1946. "I bought it to acquire an opportunity to build a great radio network. I am not interested in selling the company at any price.... I am not selling and have no intention of selling any of my shares this year or next or any future year so far as one can humanly know. It is my desire and ambition to help develop the still unrealized potentialities of radio as one of our nation's richest assets—bringing entertainment, enlightenment and education to all people."

Some seven years later Noble did relinquish control of ABC as American Broadcasting merged with United Paramount Pictures in 1953, although he remained with the parent firm as a director. He was chairman of the executive committee of the Life Savers Corporation in 1956 when it combined with Beech-Nut Packing Company, a manufacturer of baby foods, chewing gum, peanut butter and coffee. Death overtook him at 76 on December 29, 1958, at his home in Greenwich, Connecticut. Noble possessed the physical assets, abilities and zeal to form ABC at the time they were needed. He secured a foundation for a future media empire that was to gradually rival juggernaut chains exhibiting decades of history, experience, affiliates and acclaim. In an arena in which it convincingly challenged its rivals—while it would take some time—ABC was to compete fairly and to eventually win. Whether those were Noble's objectives or some other, all who labor for ABC today owe him a debt of gratitude. They may be proud of the legacy of Ed Noble, a determined Johnny-Come-Lately who was at the right place at the right time to secure the prospects of legions of workers in the generations that followed.

First 3D Movie Still Leaps from Memory

Bob Cox

In late 1952, my father and I drove to the Tennessee Theatre on West Main Street to experience the city's first 3D movie, "Bwana Devil," starring Robert Stack. The color film promo promised "A Lion in Your Lap - A Lover in Your Arms." Being a young lad of ten, I was more fearful of the mushy lover than a ferocious lion, reasoning that I had a fighting chance with the wild beast. The simplistic plot involved two vicious lions, randomly dining on a crew of British railway workers in Kenya in 1898.

Upon entering the theatre lobby for the evening viewing, we were each handed a pair of cardboard "glasses," containing red and blue lenses. After patronizing the refreshment counter, we chose seats about halfway down the center section, having been warned not to sit too close to the screen lest we be in harm's way. As show time approached, growing tension could be sensed throughout the theatre.

When the movie finally commenced, the 3D effect was impressive without being unduly threatening. Suddenly, a variety of missiles were hurled at our faces, chests, and laps from an array of objects, ranging from ravenous lions to crude spears. Over the next 79 minutes, the audience blinked, ducked, flinched, squirmed, gasped and screamed, occasionally spilling their popcorn and soft drinks. A few hardy patrons kept their glasses on throughout the entire movie, savoring each exciting scene as it unfolded on the screen. The nervous crowd soon learned that closing their eyes or removing their glasses would immediately neutralize the 3D effect.

This unique film genre was being ushered in to combat the loss of income resulting from the intrusion of television into homes. This less than impressive technology had been around since 1915 with modest acceptance by the public. The 5000 participating U.S. theatres utilized two projectors to reproduce two images (left eye and right eye) through polarizers onto a screen, where it could be viewed using a pair of glasses with matching filters. The result was the illusion of depth as perceived by our brains.

These movies were not without problems. Projectionists had to continually monitor the picture quality; people occasionally left the theatre

experiencing headaches and dizziness. By the conclusion of the film, the cardboard glasses had become very uncomfortable. Moviegoers soon became weary of lackluster plots and 3D gimmicks, forcing production crews to focus more on the story lines than on special effects. The 3D fad of yesteryear was coming to a finale, delivering only 46 films between late 1952 and early 1955.

I attended several 3D cinemas during this time, most playing at the Majestic Theatre. My favorites were "House of Wax" (1953 in stereo), "The Maze" (1953), "Hondo" (1953 with John Wayne) and "The Creature from the Black Lagoon" (1954).

As Dad and I exited the theatre and headed for our car in the direction of Fountain Square, I glanced up at the lights emitting from our slumbering tranquil town in all of its three-dimensional glory ... and without the use of projectors, polarized images, or cardboard lenses. I had returned to the real 3D world.

If anyone has additional information about area 3D movies, please let me hear from you.

This article first appeared in the Johnson City (Tenn) Press, on July 11, 2005 boblcox@bcyesteryear.com.



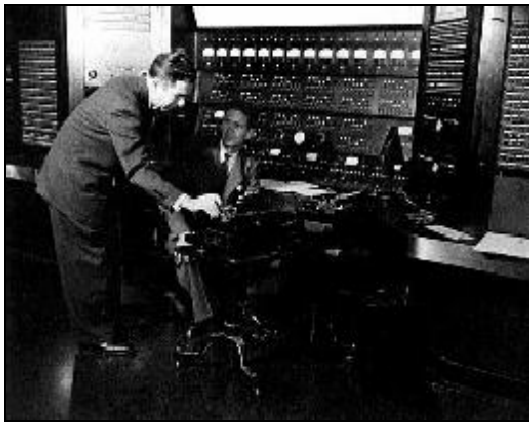
A Backstage Visit to NBC Radio City, San Francisco, in the 1950s, Pt. 2

Fred Krock

Master Control

When visitors got off an elevator into the third floor foyer, master control was visible straight ahead through plate glass windows. Studios H and J were visible through windows on the right. The recording room was visible on the left.

Master control was the switching center of Radio City. It was the hub of the operation. In the early 1950s, it fed KNBC, KNBC-FM, KGO, KGO-FM, and could feed the two radio networks, NBC and ABC. Every audio line in and out of the building went through master control. It also had a Morse code circuit to communicate with engineers at the KNBC Belmont transmitter.



In most radio stations, the mixing consoles were self contained devices -- all amplifiers needed for operation were inside the console, or in an adjoining equipment rack. But this was not the case in Radio City.

Almost all the amplifiers used in the building were located in an equipment room behind master control on the third floor. Mixing consoles in individual control rooms were nothing but passive mixers. This required a lot of wire, one million feet according to NBC.

For example, a microphone in a studio was connected to an amplifier in the equipment room. The signal was amplified and then sent to the mixing console in the control room for that studio. There it

was mixed with other sounds and sent back to the equipment room where it was amplified and sent back to the control room again to go through a master gain control. Then it went back to the equipment room to be amplified one final time. Another circuit connected a VU (volume) meter in the console with the final amplifier in the equipment room.



Signals went through patch panels in master control and in the control room at every step in the process. If an amplifier failed, a spare could be patched into the circuit very quickly. Broadcast equipment in the building had not been installed by NBC engineers. It was wired under contract by a crew of IBEW electricians.

Power for all the amplifiers came from very large power supplies with storage batteries floating on their outputs. This provided an early day UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply). I heard several different estimates of how long the batteries by themselves could power the equipment. Probably they were good for several days. One of the souvenirs in the shop was what was left of a screwdriver which accidentally had shorted out one of the battery banks.

The NBC Chime Machines

Master control also had the main and backup chime machines. All the studios had sets of chimes which could be played manually with a mallet in an emergency, but most of the time those familiar NBC trademark chimes came from a machine. Chime machines were developed so that the duration and volume of the chimes would be constant. NBC had problems with volume levels as

different announcers played chimes on or off microphone and in different tempos. The chimes were a system cue telling affiliate stations that the network feed had ended. They had to be loud, clear, and precisely on time.

Chime machines went into service on NBC starting in 1930. The chime sounds were generated by a mechanism similar to a music box. An electric motor turned a revolving drum with properly spaced pins striking against a series of metal reeds tuned to the chime pitches. These vibrations were detected magnetically and amplified to create the familiar three note NBC chimes.

The chime machine usually operated automatically. Two seconds before the program was scheduled to end, the chime machine would interrupt whatever was coming from a studio and connect directly to the network or to the transmitter. KNBC used the chimes as a trademark at the end of a number of local programs which were not fed to the network.

Sets of manual NBC chimes are available on the collector's market today. NBC would give souvenir chimes to sponsors or other VIP's as favors or as Christmas presents, thus the large supply.



The Announcer's Delight

An unusual feature of the NBC operation nationwide was that the announcers, not the engineers, had jurisdiction over all program switching. At most radio stations, an announcer would give a cue to the engineer who would throw a switch and turn up a fader. This was not the way it was done at NBC. Consoles had no switching capability.

Announcers controlled switching with a device called the Announcer's Delight. There was one in every studio. In large studios, like Studios A, B, and C, they were in cabinets on wheels so they could be located where convenient, depending on the studio setup.

The front panel of an Announcer's Delight contained indicator lights, push buttons, and switches to control program routing. Relays which actually did the switching were located in master control. When Radio City, opened the announcer could:

Turn microphones on and off or use a microphone to talk to the control room.

Turn transcriptions on and off.

Join or drop either the Red or the Blue Network.*

Turn a remote line on or off.

Feed the program to either KGO or KPO.*

Feed the program to either the Red or Blue Network.*

Monitor either radio station or either network.*

Trigger the chime machine.*

Enable or disable automatic operation of the chime machine.*

Select what was monitored in the studio.

Adjust headphone and studio monitor speaker volume.

The Announcer's Delight also allowed an announcer to disable automatic chime operation and to trigger chimes manually for programs with soft end times like live sports broadcasts. This switching flexibility led to the notorious incident when two announcers simultaneously fed the wrong tag to the wrong station. A speech by the Pope was on KPO. *Al Pearce and his Gang* was on KGO. Both programs ended at the same time. The Pope's speech was tagged with, "Join us again tomorrow for more fun and nonsense from Al Pearce and his Gang." Al Pearce's show was tagged with, "You have just heard an address by His Holiness, Pope Pius." This story was told by John Grover, long time NBC announcer and collector of bloopers. Engineers were happy to let announcers have switching jurisdiction. Contracts with sponsors called

(* These functions were restricted to only one station or network after KGO and the Blue Network were sold in 1943. This prevented playing the NBC chimes on the Blue Network, or feeding the wrong network to KPO or KGO by mistake.)

for large financial penalties for errors. Typically, if a program were joined more than nineteen seconds late, the sponsor got the air time free for the whole program. A five second error called for something like a fifty percent discount on the air time. Engineers were perfectly happy not to share the blame when mistakes occurred.

Usually, engineers opened faders before a switch occurred. The only usual exception was when an announcer pushed the transcription button. The engineers faded up records and transcriptions as they started. On rare occasions, when a network program was joined in progress, the engineer would fade up under a live local voice-over.

In Chicago, the home of the musicians' union, musicians had jurisdiction over playing recorded music at the NBC owned station. Two men were in the control room, a musician and an engineer. The musician played recorded music on a separate set of turntables. The engineer adjusted volume levels, played transcriptions, and did everything else.

Problems with Turntables

Seventy-eight RPM phonograph records played on KNBC had a characteristic sound. When the record first started, the speed went slightly above seventy-eight RPM, then settled down to the correct speed. This caused a very subtle change of pitch. The RCA turntables used by KNBC were responsible.



RCA turntables were gear driven. The platter which revolved was fairly heavy, about ten to fifteen pounds, to provide stability. Soft rubber blocks provided isolation between the turntable shaft and

the gear box. The engineer would start the turntable revolving before he received the cue to start playing a record. He would hold the record stationary while the turntable revolved underneath, to keep it from playing until he received his cue. This technique was called slip starting. The friction of the stationary record on top of the revolving turntable would compress the rubber isolation blocks. When the record was released to start playing, energy stored in the compressed rubber blocks caused the turntable to over-speed slightly. This effect was heard only on 78 RPM phonograph records. Thirty-three and one-third RPM transcriptions were not affected.



Older model RCA turntables had another delightful feature. The lever which selected speed, either 33 1/3 or 78 RPM, was located underneath the record. If an engineer started playing a record or transcription at the wrong speed, he had to turn off the turntable, move the pickup aside, remove the record, change the speed, put the record back on the turntable, put the pickup back on the record, and restart the turntable. This took as long as it sounds. Did I personally ever get caught by an RCA turntable? Why do you think I remember this?

RCA's first turntable was even worse. It required sticking a special tool into a slot under the record to change speed. Later models of RCA turntables had the speed control on the rim of the platter so speed could be changed without having to remove anything.

The front of an RCA turntable cabinet opened. Frequently engineers would store things inside. Unlike most turntables which had the motor at the top, RCA turntables had the motor, gear box, and

At fourteen minutes into the program, the engineer would start cutting silence on the second disc. When all was well and the chip was collecting properly, the engineer would turn on the sound and at the same time spiral the first recording to create a visible track one minute long. The playback engineer had one minute to synchronize the two discs and then cross fade. This technique was needed only when music played continuously through the cross fade time. Usually the engineer would listen to the beginning of the second disc, note a good cross fade point, like the end of a sentence, cue to that point, and make a regular slip-start of the second disc.

During World War II aluminum was needed for war production more than it was needed for recording blanks. Very thin glass was used as a substitute base for recording discs. These discs were called glassies. They were extremely fragile. A hard look was almost enough to break one. You could break a glassie by bumping it too hard on the center spindle when putting it on a turntable.

The recording room was very busy during the war. Everything broadcast by KPO was recorded for review by government censors. KPO could be heard clearly at night all over the eastern half of the North Pacific Ocean. The government wanted to be sure that no spies were sending secret messages to the enemy. Weather reports and forecasts were prohibited.

Since everything was recorded and all network programs were live, some spectacular bloopers were preserved. Whenever they caught something particularly good, the engineers would dub a copy for John Grover who collected bloopers. One from Grover's collection had a moral about watching where you put a page break in a script. The Superman program was wrapping up. The cast rarely rehearsed these programs. Actors were expected to be able to perform reading the script cold. Once again, Superman had vanquished evil. Reporter Clark Kent had scored a great success with his story. He was being congratulated by editor Perry White with these words: "Well, Clark, what do you want me to do? Kiss your (pause to turn page) foot?" The entire cast broke up. They laughed their way up to the closing commercial without finishing the script. The announcer couldn't make it through the closing commercial. A different voice didn't have much better luck with the Blue Network system cue.

Studios H, J and K

Windows on the right side of the third floor foyer allowed visitors to see into Studio H and Studio J. The letter I was not used, to prevent confusion with the numeral 1 in documentation. Each studio had its own control room. These two studios were used for routine station breaks and for recorded music programs.

A typical program on KNBC would be *The Burgie Music Box*." On KGO it would be *Lucky Lager Dance Time*." Studio J, closer to Master Control, was used by KNBC. Studio H was used by KGO. By the 1950's almost all local program content on both stations originated here. Very few programs originated in the second floor studios.

After KGO moved out in 1954, Studio H occasionally was used for separate programs on KNBC-FM. At different times, NBC briefly tried a classical music format and an all-news format on KNBC-FM.

Programs from Studio J had an unusual sound for many years. Turning on the microphone caused a slight click on the air. Perhaps the Announcer's Delight was so close to the microphone that transients from control wiring were picked up by a transformer in the microphone. RCA ribbon microphones had a transformer inside. Or perhaps some other cross-talk was in the wiring.

After KGO was sold, it used the old newsroom on the second floor. A new newsroom for NBC was on the fourth floor about where the program department office had been. A small studio and control room were built next to the newsroom, probably after the war ended. This was Studio K. The control room had a stock RCA console. It was the only control room which did not use amplifiers in the equipment room on the third floor. KNBC broadcast several fifteen minute newscasts and a farm report every day. They originated in Studio K.

The Engineers' Schedule

Master Control had two engineers assigned twenty-four hours a day. Even when KNBC was off the air between 2 and 5 AM, they might be busy reversing the network for a news feed from the Pacific Rim or the West Coast for use in an early morning newscast on the East Coast. NBC service to the east began at 3 AM Pacific Time.

The second engineer was used to provide relief breaks for the first master control engineer and

occasionally for other engineers. The union contract called for two breaks and a lunch hour each day for studio engineers. Breaks and the lunch hour were sacrosanct.



RCA Victor Records used the NBC network line to record the San Francisco Symphony when it was not being used for broadcasts. The orchestra played in the Opera House starting at midnight. A line installed for *Standard Hour* broadcasts took the sound to Radio City. It was fed on the NBC network line to Hollywood where the record masters were cut in the RCA recording studio. At that time NBC still used 8 kHz telephone circuits for the network. Some programs for the West Coast originated at KNBC until the NBC Pacific Network closed in 1952. Most were designed to provide network service to the Pacific Time Zone on Sunday afternoons starting at 4 PM when East Coast prime time programs began. I remember some truly awful drama shows.

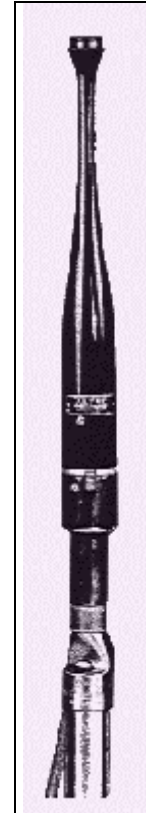
Sound Effects

The engineers union, NABET, had jurisdiction over sound effects at NBC. This made a certain amount of sense because many sounds came from phonograph records. Variable speed turntables on the sound effects cart had two tone arms. This allowed producing a continuous sound, such as an automobile running, from a single record. While one tone arm was playing, the other could be moved back to the beginning of the cut. Turntable speed could be changed to simulate the car slowing or speeding up. NBC had two sound effect carts at Radio City.

All programs used the same Major, Valentino, or Standard sound effect records. Technically, they sounded pretty bad. A lot of recorded sounds originally came from the movies. You could hear the

same recorded sound effects on all four radio networks.

Many other sounds were made manually. An inflated balloon full of poppy seeds could make the sound of surf or of rain falling. Crinkling cellophane made the sounds of a crackling fire. The sound of breaking glass was made by dropping small, thin steel plates on the floor. The sound effects cart had a lot of miniature doors with various types of latches and locks. Many other sounds, for example filling a glass with liquid, were made by the real thing.



Sound effects men were allowed to use their voices to produce sounds without having to belong to the announcer's union as long as they did not say words. One KNBC engineer, a very dignified middle-aged man wearing a bow tie, could imitate perfectly the sound of a crying baby.

Microphone Wars

NBC had a rule that all equipment used by the network must be made by RCA. The KNBC transmitter in Belmont had been converted from a General Electric to an RCA by repainting it and installing an RCA name plate to comply.

This all-RCA equipment rule led to an interesting squabble with a major sponsor, The Standard Oil Company of California (known today as Chevron). For many years, Standard had sponsored *The Standard Hour*, a live one-hour program of concert music every Sunday evening at eight featuring performances by outstanding West Coast orchestras, such as the San Francisco Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. It was broadcast on the NBC Pacific network throughout the area where Standard products were sold. Standard also sponsored other programs on NBC and KNBC.



About 1950, Altec introduced the 21 series condenser microphones. These were the first modern small-diaphragm condenser microphones. They produced a vast improvement in sound quality over the RCA ribbon microphones used by NBC. The *Standard Hour* producers wanted to use Altec microphones for their broadcasts. NBC said no way, we use only RCA microphones.

Standard threatened to take its entire advertising budget, rumored to be two million dollars a year, from NBC and go to CBS where good microphones were appreciated. NBC officials then decided that they could make an exception to the all-RCA equipment rule for their good friends at Standard. That was how *The Standard Hour* got to use Altec microphones.

Listeners of old time radio programs occasionally would hear comedians making fun of the network censors. KNBC had its own censor, euphemistically called "Continuity Acceptance Department". As an example of the local censor in action, Jimmy Lyons in the 1950's had a late night program of jazz records which originated at the Club Hangover in San Francisco. (Lyons later went on to found the Monterey Jazz Festival.) "Hangover" was a dirty word to the local censor. As a result, the program was always identified on the air as originating at the Club Hannover.

The Dress Code

NBC had a dress code for employees at Radio

City. All men wore conservative business suits, white shirts, and neckties. A few men wore bow ties. Men were allowed to remove their jackets and work in shirt sleeves. Transmitter operators could wear slacks and shirts without neckties. Women wore suits or skirt and sweater combinations. They were not allowed to wear slacks. Short skirts, revealing necklines, gaudy jewelry, or garish colors were frowned upon.

Old time announcers said that, until about 1938, NBC required them to wear tuxedos at all times when working even when they were not visible to the public. At one time, NBC required announcers to have college degrees. Any old degree would do. This led to a large variety of disciplines being represented.

Announcer Bud Heyde was a music major. He planned to make a career as a theater organist. By the time he graduated from college, talking pictures had replaced most theater organists, so Heyde became a radio announcer instead.

A lot of gray hair was seen at KNBC. In part this was because network owned stations were at the top of the food chain in broadcasting. Employees had to work their way up through the business to get hired. New hires were older than at most stations. Pay was good. Very few staff members left.

San Francisco was the end of line for many broadcast careers in those days. The only career step up was to Hollywood or New York. Who would want to work in those shark-infested waters or live in either city?

Engineers had no incentive to leave. They worked under a nation-wide union contract. Engineers at KNBC were paid exactly the same salary as at WNBC in New York.

At the beginning of 1950 NABET union scale for a Group 2 engineer at NBC was \$121.38 per week. Basic studio and transmitter engineers were classified as Group 2. Group 6 working supervisors earned \$144.23 per week. These were very good wages at the time.

A minimum wage job paid \$20 per week. Most office secretarial or clerical jobs paid \$30 to \$40 per week. Blue collar jobs typically paid from \$60 to \$80 per week. An announcer who worked at KSFO remembers being paid \$89 per week - AFTRA scale at about this same time.

Announcers at KNBC were paid the highest staff announcer union scale in San Francisco. In addition

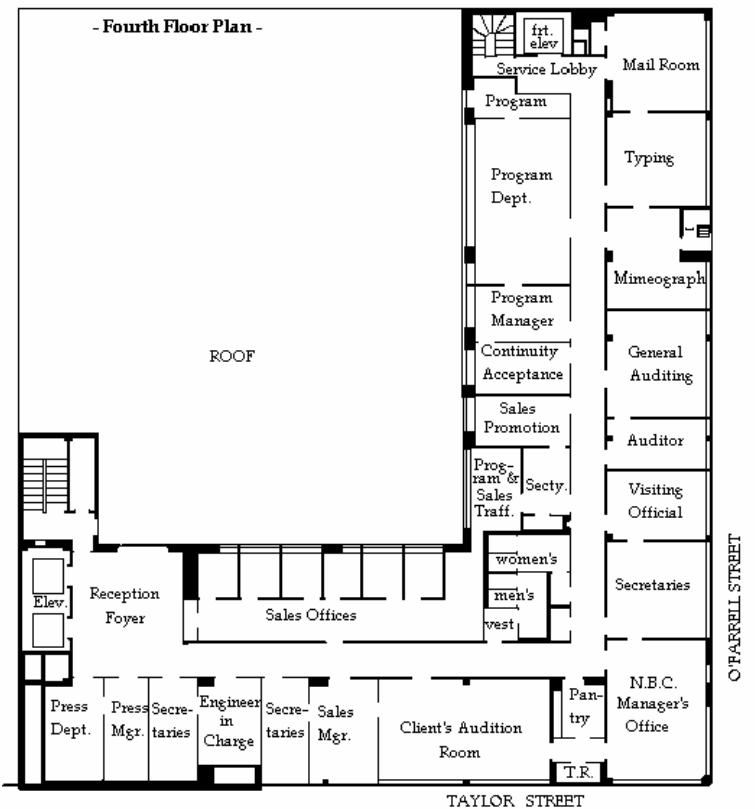
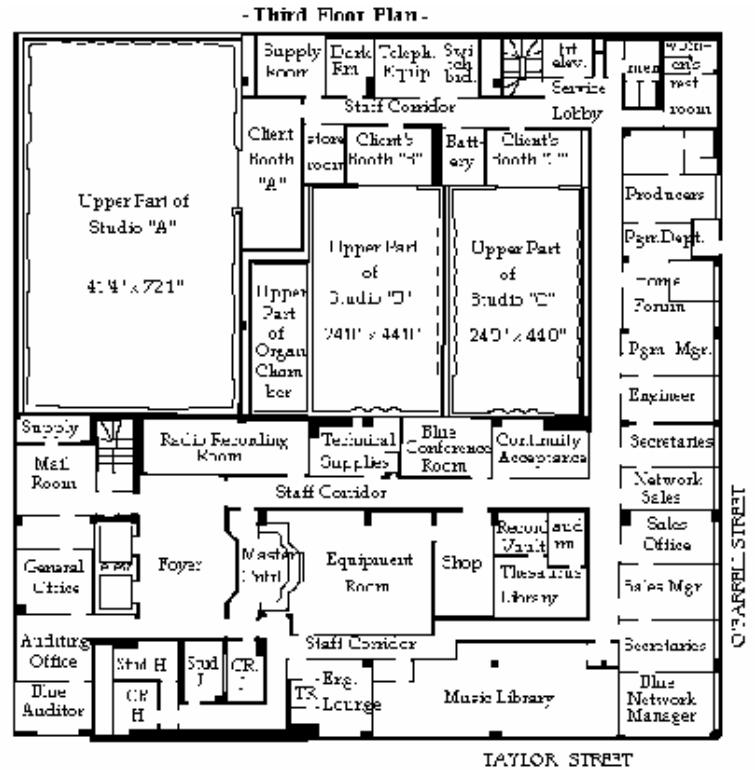
they got board fees. Every time they read a commercial, they received a talent fee. Network feeds also brought extra pay. They were happy to remain at KNBC. Most had been there for a long time.

Announcers at KNBC probably took home about twice what the engineers were paid. Base pay was similar to engineers. Several announcers told me that they made more money from board fees than from base pay. This starts to get into the region of show biz salaries where publicized figures need to be multiplied by a correction factor of .1 to .5 to get the actual number.

To put these salaries into perspective, in 1950 a streetcar fare in San Francisco was ten cents, a fast food hamburger cost nineteen cents, a new Chevrolet cost around \$2,000, and if you wanted to make a statement with your automobile you could drive home in a new Cadillac for about \$3,500. Several subdivisions on the San Francisco Peninsula advertised new three bedroom houses with prices starting well under \$20,000.

KNBC saw major staff reductions in all departments starting in the 1950's. Union contracts required layoffs to be in order of inverse seniority. The last hired was the first fired. Although this was not required with non-union employees, the same policy usually was followed. The result was that many employees at Radio City were middle-aged or older.

Today even in major markets many radio station employees are young. The industry eats its young by burning them out. The broadcast industry is very different from the way it was when KGO and KNBC shared Radio City.



Flash Gordon: A Review

Hank Harwell

This series had such great promise. I am deeply aware that it was a series aimed at a much younger audience, and was intended to supplement the comic strip that ran in the Hearst-published newspapers at the time.

It began well, with the hero, Flash, and his love interest, Dale Arden, and their eccentric-but-brilliant scientist friend, Dr. Hans Zarkov crash-landing on Mongo, the planet ruled by Ming the Merciless. Ming, using his alien technology, had brought Mongo close to earth for conquest. Flash, Dale and Zarkov traveled there to find a way to stop Mongo (and unbeknownst to them at the time, Ming)

There, the trio meet all of the colorful alien characters that has made Flash Gordon such a perennial favorite among sci-fi buffs. The adventures zip along for nearly half of the series (which can be found at the [Internet Archive site](#)). Perhaps the best arc involved Flash's encounter with the Hawkmen, and how he forged his friendship with Vultan, king of the Hawkmen.

But then, as Flash is systematically working his way to take possession of the territories that Ming challenges him to conquer, it all starts to bog down. The pace begins to really drag during the trio's struggles against Queen Azura and the Blue Magic People. The interminably slow pace made me wonder why any youngster would keep up with the series.

In addition, I found myself becoming more and more annoyed with the Dale Arden character. She must have had some major insecurity issues! She would vacillate from proclaiming her undying faith in and love for Flash, and then when another female character makes advances to him, Dale decides he must be more interested in the rival and begins to pout. It's cute . . . at first. Then it begins to become wearisome.

It's interesting that the last handful of episodes feature a 'miraculous' return to earth and encounter with Jungle Jim, another Hearst comic character, and a transition as *The Adventures of Flash Gordon* morphs into *The Adventures of Jungle Jim*. I was so ready for the conclusion of this series.



An Old Time Radio Show Guaranteed to Let You "Escape" From the Daily Grind Ned Norris

In the Golden Days of Radio, back in the 1930s to the 1950s, most popular radio series had a set time for going out each week. Occasionally there might be a change in the schedule, but on the whole a consistent time-slot was something that helped build a large audience and so was something the big networks aimed to achieve.

One noticeable exception to the above rule was a wonderful dramatic adventure anthology series called *Escape*, whose time-slot shifted eighteen times in its seven-year run from 1947-54. To make matters even worse it had a habit of coming and going and sometimes disappearing off the schedules altogether at short notice for weeks on end only to resurface weeks later in a completely different timeslot.

The fragrant disregard CBS paid to building a regular timeslot and audience for *Escape* could make you think that it was a mediocre show that was only good as lightweight filler for when the regular show was off-the-air, such as during the quiet summer months. In my opinion, and that of many old radio aficionados, this couldn't be further from the truth. *Escape* is probably the best adventure anthology ever broadcast.

For me, *Escape* is everything that was good about old-time radio drama rolled into one. The title itself almost sums up the very essence of what radio drama is all about. Each and every episode was a micro drama carefully planned to capture the listener's attention for thirty minutes. There were over two-hundred episodes made and almost every one is as good today as it was half a century ago. For the first few years the opening announcement varied on an almost weekly basis, but by the 1950s it had become the now famous:

Tired of the everyday grind?
Ever dream of a life of romantic adventure?
Want to get away from it all?
We offer you ... ESCAPE!

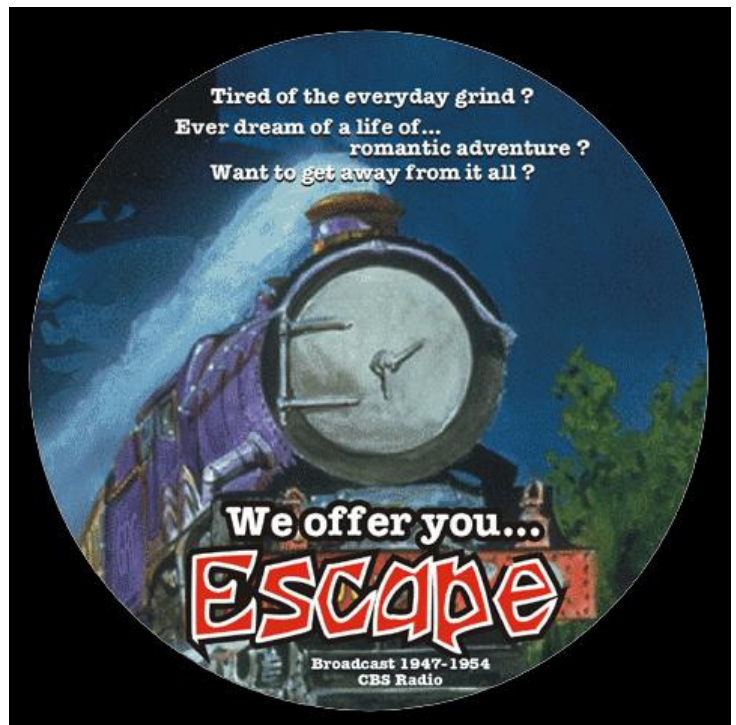
This may give the wrong impression as *Escape* was far more than a swashbuckling adventure yarn.

It was a superbly scripted, brilliantly produced series that brought to the radio adaptations of classic stories by famous writers as well as new work by unknown talent. Many of the stories were later reused by more high profile shows such as *Suspense*, but on the whole the *Escape* versions were of equal quality and sometimes more dramatically focused and atmospheric.

When Radio Life wrote "These stories all possess many times the reality that most radio writing conveys" it hit the nail on the head. This is a quality show in every way.

If you've never given this tremendous series a chance it's well worth tracking down. Whether you listen in the car on your daily commute, whilst doing the housework, relaxing in your favorite easy-chair, or snuggled up in bed - you really will be thrilled!

Ned Norris is the webmaster of www.rusc.com.



Archives of the Airwaves (7 Volumes)

By Roger C. Paulson

Publisher - BearManor Media

Price - \$135.00

Reviewed by Jim Beshires

Archives of the Airwaves is a seven volume set of paperback books, with each book addressing radio programs and stars beginning with a particular letter of the alphabet. For instance, Volume One covers the letters 'A thru C', and is 323 pages long. There is no index, which makes it a bit difficult to locate subjects. After getting frustrated in looking in several books to find items, my solution to this problem was to tape a small piece of paper to each spine listing the letters the book covered.

According to the publisher, this set has been twenty years in the making, and proposes to be the most complete old-time radio encyclopedia ever written. It does have a good amount of both series and stars that I was not familiar with, and my career in old time radio goes back to the early 60s. I was glad to see this coverage of so many obscure shows.

In its format it's very similar to Dunning's 'On The Air', in that it attempts to give a synopsis of the series, network affiliation, broadcast dates and times. It also lists sponsors.

Most synopsis' are short - a paragraph or two, three at the most, so it obviously does not go into the depth of descriptions as some other reference books do, and it does contain a fair amount of misinformation, most that only a serious researcher would catch, and I have heard from some highly respected OTR people on this subject of the errors. Some of them feel the set contains too many. But nearly all other reference books contain some errors, as reference sources are constantly being revised, updated, or new ones being discovered. Researching old time radio is not an easy job, and that's why it's very important to cross-check everything.

The set boasts that it's at least seven times the size of Dunning's book, but this is a real exaggeration. It more likely is twice the size, but remember, Dunning's book does not include bios of radio stars, and Archives does. The bios are fairly complete, with birth dates, death deaths, and credit

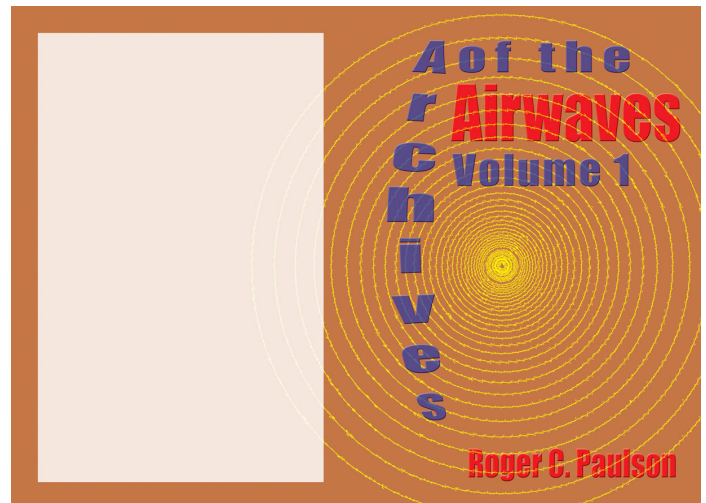
lists included.

It is certainly the most comprehensive set ever attempted.

The set can be purchased from BearManor Media for \$135.00, but also can be found in many major book stores and also online. Individual volumes can be purchased for around \$21.95 each.

Should you purchase them? The price would deter most collectors, but I believe that it would be a good addition to any serious researcher's reference set, despite some of its mistakes. Many libraries may be interested in having this set, so you might want to inquire into this possibility with your library.

Would I recommend it? Certainly I'm glad to have it to add to my reference library. It provides another tool when I'm researching a series, and we need all the help we can get. I'd also be very interested in hearing from others who've purchased this set as to what they think of it.



OTRR Certifies *Police Headquarters*

The Old Time Radio Researchers Organization announced today that work was complete on *Police Headquarters*.

"Bruce Eells Associates produced this 15-minute series that was then an early syndication, via Broadcasters Program Syndicate/Bruce Eells and Associates syndication. As was usual then, music filled the first part of the show, so that the local station announcer could do a commercial or two. So the writer and actors were left with a 12 1/2-minute mystery.

"The IOU Murder" spins the tale of a mansion murder in which the shot is not suicide. "Paid in Full" is a plot twister in which the guilty is known, but can't be pinned with the crime. In the "Stolen Brain" a professor's body has been "gone missing" and the brain is held for \$35,000 ransom. That's a lot of money even today for a mass of "little grey cells." In another, Mrs. North is found bound and gagged by a dead man in her bedroom. A woman is pushed out from a speeding roadster owned by an Italian with an airtight alibi, but the dead dame has twin brothers who swear vengeance on him anyway. An overdose of cocaine kills a recluse who hasn't left his room in 20 years. A crook cashes a check from a Count who may be a no-count. A boxer is permanently KO'd after a big fight, but the cops finger one of three men taking a shower as the killer. Pretty aggressive stuff for 1932!

The shows have very few wrinkles for a 70-year-old (they sound pretty darn good). Twists and turns in plot are as many as the minutes allow. These are fun to hear!

There isn't much information on who did the acting. But radio in 1932 was still in its beginnings as a national pastime. This show is a great example of those still early days of radio, when the concept of syndication was still in its infancy. The networks refused to use pre-recorded disks until after WWII! This organization was recording a show on acetate disks and then sending copies out (carefully, as they could break!) to customer stations across America. It was, for that era, very sophisticated media merchandising!

These early shows of the police weren't fact based, but just good old crime drama." (Jon-

www.otrcat.com)

OTRR CERTIFIED
POLICE HEADQUARTERS
Version One

The Old Time Radio Researchers Group on Yahoo - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OldTimeRadioResearchersGroup/> and located on the web at www.otrr.org has certified this series. The Series Researchers, Log Researchers and Database compilers of the Old Time Radio Researchers (OTRR) Group have thoroughly researched this Old Time Radio Series, utilizing information found on the Internet, books published on this series and old time radio in general. They have determined that as of NOVEMBER 28, 2008, this series is as complete as possible, with the most current information included as to broadcast dates, episode numbers, episode titles, number of episodes broadcast, and best encodes at the time of Certification. Each file has been named in accordance with the Uniform Naming Code as based on the OTR Database to be found at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Otr-Project/> The Old Time Radio Researchers Group now declares this series to be CERTIFIED COMPLETE. There is ONE CD in this release, which represents the most up-to-date and accurate version endorsed by the OTRR. In order to ensure that only the best possible version of this series is in circulation, we recommend that all prior OTRR versions be discarded. As always, it is possible that more information will surface which will show that some of our conclusions were wrong. Please e-mail us at (beshiresjim@yahoo.com), or post your corrections at <http://www.otrr.org/pmwiki/Misc/Releaselssues> and let us know if any corrections are required. Also, if you have any better encodes of the series, or additional episodes, please let us know so that we can include them with the next release of the Certified Series.

The Old Time Radio Researchers Group would like to thank the following people who helped on this series -

Series Coordinator - Jim Beshires
Quality Listener(s) - Ernie Cosgrove, Alicia Williams, Terry Caswell
Series Synopsis - Terry Caswell
Sound Upgrades - Jim Beshires
Missing Episodes - n/a
Audio Briefs Announcer(s) - Sue Sieger
Audio Briefs Compiler(s) - Sue Sieger

Pictures, other extras - Jon- www.otrcat.com

Artwork - Brian Allen

Stars Bios - n/a

File corrections - n/a

And all the members and friends of the OTRR for their contributions of time, knowledge, funds, and other support. This series will shortly go into distribution by the organization and other old time radio clubs. It will also appear on archive.org in the future.

The History of WMAQ Radio

Chapter 1

Tom Gootee

The history of WMAQ, Chicago's first radio station, so clearly parallels the history of radio broadcasting that it reads like a chronicle of many trials, tribulations, failures and successes that beset the first broadcasters, who were unknowingly laying the foundation for a great new industry: radio. It is a far cry from the early twenties to present day broadcasting.

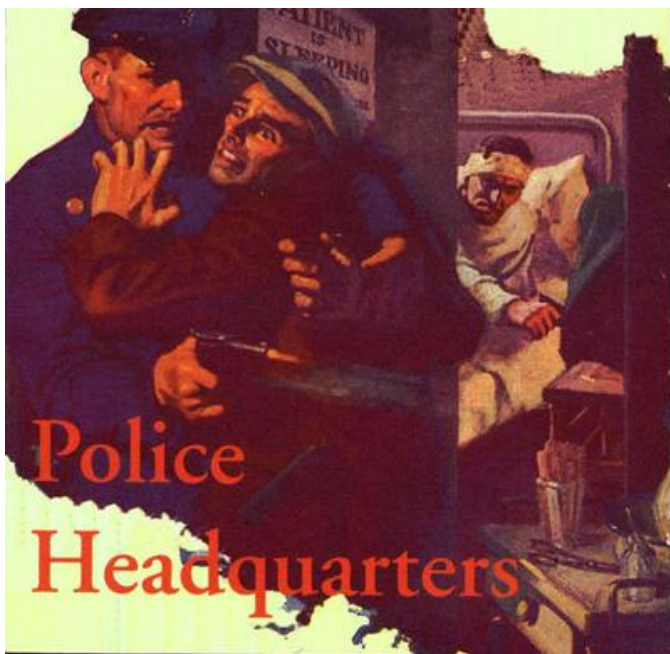
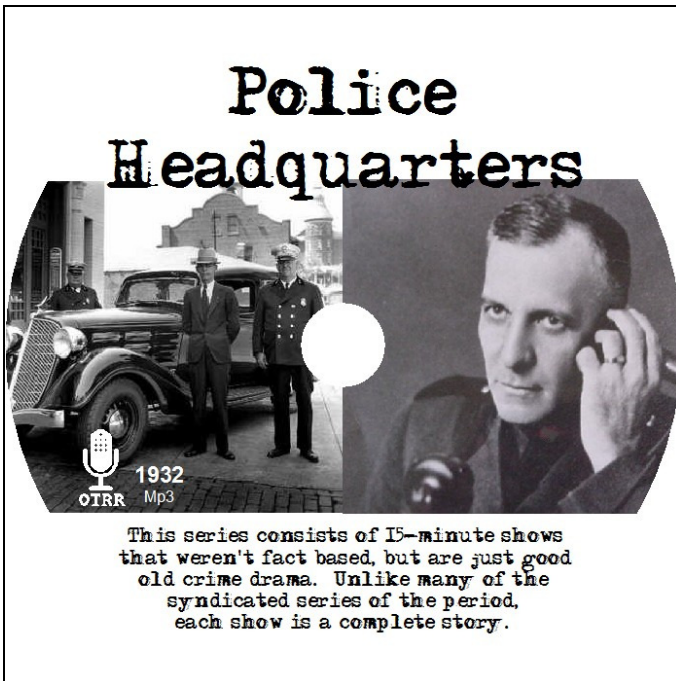
No industry has ever moved so quickly, so efficiently, to the high state of perfection that broadcasting enjoys today. It is difficult for most of us who have lived and worked through this change to fully comprehend the historical and sociological significance of our progress. Yet all this happened within a span of less than twenty years, two amazing decades.

It is hard to say exactly when broadcasting first began, Before the First World War there were a few thousand radio amateurs, most of them boys and young men, who tinkered occasionally with spark sets and established purely local telegraphic communication.

During the War, however, the radio art underwent the first of its many radical changes. The army became interested in radio as a means of field communication and experimentation began on a more important scale. The vacuum tube was developed and used with some fair success, and this opened the path for many new circuits never possible before. Many of the radio amateurs received further training from the Government and, in addition to serving their country both here and abroad, they gained a great deal of practical experience in radio communication.

After the War was over there were well over twenty thousand men in this country with a technical working knowledge of radio. Some of these found immediate employment as ship or land commercial operators. But a much greater number returned to their former employment and looked upon radio - specifically amateur radio - as just an interesting hobby.

The ban on amateur activity was lifted in the summer of 1919, and new ham stations using new equipment began to appear, various scattered from



50 to 250 meters. They were still primarily interested in radio telegraphy, because telephony was too new and much too expensive for experimentation. Vacuum tubes could neither be bought nor manufactured except by the Government due to frozen patent rights held by competing companies.

In spite of these adverse conditions, many amateurs went ahead with radio telephonic experimentation. The priceless "E" tubes, "OG" tubes and others were occasionally obtained by some amateurs, usually "from a friend in the Coast Guard", or other slightly illegal sources. The many difficulties blocking the paths of the early radio amateurs in their experimentation did little to shake their enthusiasm. By the winter of 1919, there were many amateurs on the air actually talking. And from that time Morse code was destined to take a back seat in radio, to be used principally for communication.

Not satisfied with merely talking to other local amateurs (and, incidentally not being tied down by any federal regulations) the hams soon conceived the idea of broadcasting entertainment. And so, using their home-made rigs and makeshift equipment, they began transmitting programs to their friends and to the public.

This condition was particularly so in the Chicago area, where a great many amateurs resided within a comparatively small area. One of the largest of these stations was owned by Austin A. Edward, an influential ham who not only had the best equipment available but also constructed a small studio in his home. Other well known stations in this same vicinity were operated by Thorne Donnelly, Arthur Leonard, Jr. and even our own Larry Dutton (NBC, Chicago). All through the spring of 1920 interest in amateur radio broadcasting continued on the gradual increase. Hams gladly built and sold small crystal receiving sets for their neighbors and friends, but there were relatively few people who knew - or even cared - about the possibilities of radio.

Then a remarkable thing happened and radio underwent another radical change. A Pittsburgh engineer, Frank Conrad, had spent most of the spring developing and perfecting a radio-telephone transmitter in the Westinghouse Laboratories at East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was assigned an experimental call by the government, and began transmitting speech and test programs late in the spring. Only a few amateurs with receiving sets heard his programs. Then others began to listen.

Soon Dr. Conrad had an enthusiastic following of listeners, and he began a more-or-less regular experimental schedule.

Late in the spring of 1920, Pittsburgh department stores advertised and quickly sold "receiving apparatus for listening to Doctor Conrad's radio programs". The general public was finally becoming conscious of radio broadcasting. Every program, no matter how irregular, was assured of a large audience. And the Westinghouse Electric Company began to take an interest in the possibility of broadcasting.

With the 1920 fall election approaching, the Westinghouse Electric Company conceived the idea of broadcasting the election returns. Accordingly, a large studio was built and equipped with the latest carbon microphones, and the original transmitter was overhauled, further adjusting the studio. A new call was assigned to the station: KDKA, indicating that the transmitter was no longer considered experimental equipment. There was a line installed between the new studio and the offices of the Pittsburgh Post, and the election results were broadcast throughout the evening. The broadcasting idea was an instant success and drew nationwide attention to KDKA. A new industry was being born.

KDKA continued to operate on regular schedules for a few hours a day and almost immediately the way was cleared for other radio stations in other locations to erect and operate broadcasting equipment. Radio patents held by the General Electric Company, the Western Electric Company, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and the newly formed Radio Corporation of America were pooled together and arrangements were completed for the construction of radio tubes, radio equipment, and complete broadcast transmitters for sale to private individuals and the government.

The Westinghouse Company itself was not slow to realize the immense possibilities of broadcasting, and got to work developing and constructing transmission equipment. In September, 1921, there was a grand total of four stations in the United States, and a fifth was put on the air in October. But it was not until November of that year that Chicago welcomed its first radio station.

This article was originally published at <http://www.richsamuels.com/nbcm/wmaq/history/> and reprinted here by permission.

You Can't Do Business With Hitler

The Old Time Radio Researchers announces the re-certification of *You Can't Do Business With Hitler*, a series of radio shows, written and produced by the radio section of the Office of War Information (OWI), was transcribed four times a month. The series was re-certified November 15, 2008

Elwood Hoffman wrote the scripts, and Frank Telford directed the production.

This series is one of the many thousands of government propaganda plays that were broadcast to help the war effort during World War II.

The series was based on the experiences of Douglas Miller who was for 15 years commercial attaché to the American Embassy in Berlin. Douglas Miller revealed the NAZI technique of plundering and looting conquered lands.

This re-certification features a number of added features, one of which is the 1942 movie "Hitler - Dead or Alive." Critics say this movie is so bad that it's good! Ward Bond stars as the leader of a team of ex-con bounty hunters who go to Germany in search of Hitler. If they can find him, a million dollar reward is to be paid to them. Other upgrades include many more WW2 newspaper ads from companies supporting the war effort and a short radio series from 1942 called *Dear Adolf*.

OTRR CERTIFIED *YOU CAN'T DO BUSINESS WITH HITLER* VERSION TWO

The Old Time Radio Researchers Group on <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OldTimeRadioResearchersGroups> and located on the web at www.otrr.org.

The Series Researchers, Log Researchers and Database compilers of the Old Time Radio Researchers (OTRR) Group have thoroughly researched this Old Time Radio Series, utilizing information found on the Internet, books published on this series and old time radio in general. They have determined that as of NOVEMBER 15, 2008, this series is as complete as possible, with the most current information included as to broadcast dates, episode numbers, episode titles, number of episodes broadcast, and best encodes at the time of Certification.

Each file has been named in accordance with the Uniform Naming Code as based on the OTR

Database to be found at -

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Otr-Project/>

The Old Time Radio Researchers Group now declares this series to be CERTIFIED ACCURATE. There ONE CD in this release, which represents the most up-to-date and accurate version endorsed by the OTRR. In order to ensure that only the best possible version of this series is in circulation, we recommend that all prior OTRR versions be discarded. Additional series synopsis were added, a related series *Dear Adolf* was added, and many WW2-related photos were added

As always, it is possible that more information will surface which will show that some of our conclusions were wrong. Please e-mail us at (beshiresjim@yahoo.com) and let us know if any corrections are required. Also, if you have any better encodes of the series, or additional episodes, please let us know so that we can include them with the next release of the Certified Series.

The OTRR would like to thank the following people who helped on this series -

Series Coordinator - Roger Hohenbrink, Doug Hopkinson

Quality Listener(s) - Doug Hopkinson

Series Synopsis - Doug Hopkinson

Sound Upgrades - n/a

Missing Episodes - n/a

Audio Briefs Announcer(s) - Fred Bertlesen, Doug Hopkinson

Audio Briefs Compiler(s) - Doug Hopkinson

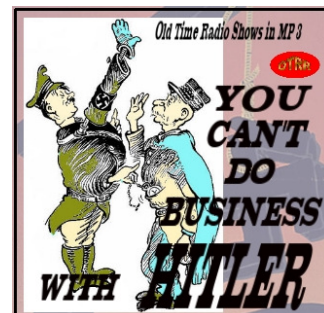
Pictures, other extras - Terry Caswell

Artwork - Roger Hohenbrink

Stars Bios - n/a

And all the members of the OTRR for their contributions of time, knowledge, funds, and other support.

This series will shortly be available from the OTRR Distribution Center, sister old time radio clubs and groups, and eventually from www.archive.org.



This Day in Network Radio

By Jim Cox

Reviewed by Ryan Ellett

Jim Cox's latest book, *This Day in Network Radio*, hits the market just in time for Christmas and let me assure you this book is a perfect stocking stuffer for the old time radio fan in your life.

This Day is a step out of line with Mr. Cox's other works which focus on a single series (*Mr. Keen*), a single genre (like his previous book *Sold on Radio*), or a single aspect (*Frank and Anne Hummert's Radio Factory*) of old time radio. Instead the book gives the reader day-by-day old time radio highlights including births, deaths, debuts, and cancellations.

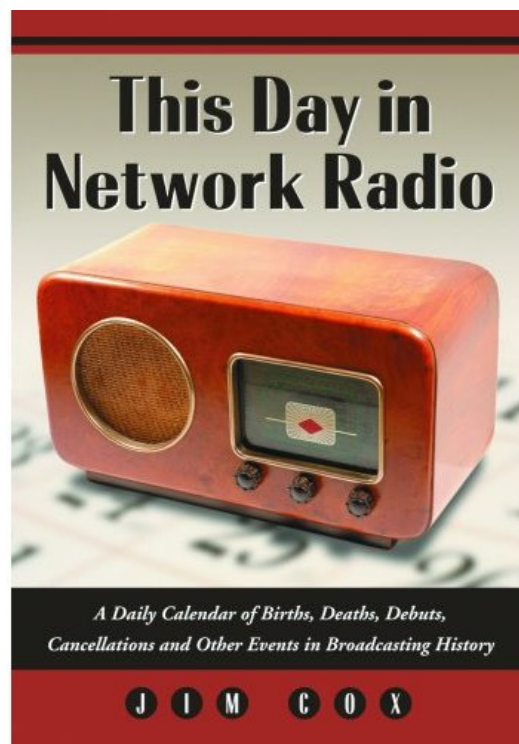
This effort is a fun compilation of so much information that Mr. Cox has given us in past works and other new information that surely was compiled during his research but did not sneak into those works. As we've come to expect from the jovial pen-wielder, Mr. Cox focuses not only on the well-known actors, actresses, and series of radio's Golden Age but he delves into the nooks and crannies of the field, spotlighting the lesser-known series and behind-the-scenes men and women who made the industry hum.

The first question that comes to mind in reviewing the book is why didn't somebody do this earlier?

At \$50 it's a bit pricey, especially for a paperback and one that checks in at 235 pages, short by Mr. Cox's standards. If one is still missing some of the author's previous works I would recommend sinking the money into one of those as they only sell for an extra five or ten dollars. If your lucky and have a complete Jim Cox library you won't regret adding this volume to your shelf.

I plan to leave this book on a shelf in my water closet and read daily entries during my morning visits. The next best thing to starting one's day with an OTR recording is starting one's day by reading about OTR.

This Day in Network Radio is published by McFarland (www.mcfarlandpub.com) and can be ordered by calling 1-800-253-2187. It is likely available at Amazon.com and other online book sources.



Jim Cox is the award-winning author of numerous books on broadcasting history, including *Sold on Radio* (2008), *Radio Speakers* (2006), *The Daytime Serials of Television, 1946-1960* (2006), *Music Radio* (2005), *Frank and Anne Hummert's Radio Factory* (2003), *Radio Crime Fighters* (2002), and *The Great Radio Audience Participation Shows* (2001), all from McFarland. He is a retired college professor living in Louisville, Kentucky.



The Final Radio Years

Excerpts from Bing Crosby — The Radio Directories (out of print)
compiled by Lionel Pairpoint
reprinted by permission

During the summer of 1954 with radio audiences everywhere declining dramatically, Bing Crosby decided not to continue with a major weekly radio show involving the expense of guest stars and a 22 piece orchestra. In a letter to John Scott Trotter dated 9th September 1954, he said:

“...I of course, John, feel pretty sad about not going back on the radio there this season. I have given many reasons for this decision to many different people, but I feel I can tell you the truth and that you will believe and understand me. John I don't sing anywhere near as good as I used to, and I feel sincerely that it's getting worse. I don't see any purpose in trying to stretch something out that was once acceptable and that now is merely adequate, if that. I don't know what the reason for this condition is, unless it's apathy. I just don't have the interest in singing. I am not keen about it any more. Songs all sound alike to me and some of them so shoddy and trivial. I don't mean I didn't sing some cheap songs and bad songs in the old days, but I had such a tremendous interest in singing and was so wrapped up in the work that it didn't matter. I don't know how to diagnose the condition, but it seems to me that possibly this apathy, this lack of desire, when I have to go to a recording session, transmits itself into nervous exhaustion and fatigue.

“This must all sound very vague to you, but it's the best I can do, and at least I assure you that I am very sincere in what I am trying to describe. The sycophants that hang about, the press, the photographers, the song publishers and pluggers and the pests of all descriptions that grab me everytime I step outside my front door, weary me indescribably. Succinctly, John, I seem to have had it.

“Maybe a year or so away will make me feel differently, and my interest will revive. I certainly hate to see the wonderful organisation we have break up, and it gives me a wrench to be an instrument in its dissolution. I shall never forget all the good years you and I had together, and all the wonderful unselfish things you did for me and my interests. You

had a great deal to put up with at times, and your patience and forbearance was always incredible. You must know how grateful I am to you for everything that you have done. And I don't mean just professionally either. Much of the same goes to Murdo. There's a great boy, and I think the radio industry should prepare some sort of a plaque or citation for him for just putting up with Morrow through the years, if putting up with me wasn't enough.....”

Within a month or two however, Bing was persuaded to continue in radio, albeit in a different and cheaper format. On November 22nd 1954 *The Bing Crosby Show* emerged on CBS at 9:00 p.m. preceding *Amos 'N Andy*. The show was broadcast daily Mondays to Fridays and was of 15 minutes duration with Bing talking about all manner of different subjects and usually including three songs around the dialogue. Bill Morrow provided a script of sorts, Ken Carpenter was the announcer, and Murdo MacKenzie edited it all together using songs that Bing had pre-recorded at sessions with Buddy Cole and his trio (Buddy on piano and electric organ, Perry Botkin [later replaced by Vince Terri] on guitar, banjo etc., Don Whittaker on bass, Nick Fatool on drums). Commercial recordings and songs utilised in the earlier General Electric series were employed as were guest appearances of his sons, primarily Lindsay. The show ran until December 31st, 1956, without a break. Sponsorship was intermittent with Lanolin Plus Liquid, New Coffee Flavour Instant Postum, and Philip Morris advertising in some shows. Initially Bing used “Moonlight Becomes You” as his theme tune before switching to “Something In Common.”

The audience rating was 3.1 for 1954-55 which earned the programme fourteenth position in the Nielsen ratings. Jack Benny's show was in top position with 5.8. In 1955-56, the audience rating was 2.2 which placed the programme in tenth position in the Nielsen ratings of evening programs. *Our Miss Brooks* (starring Eve Arden) was in top position with 4.3.

Conventions

Cinefest 2009 - March 2009. For more information, contact Robert Oliver -

[ROLIVER9@twcny.rr.com?Subject=Cinefest 2008](mailto:ROLIVER9@twcny.rr.com?Subject=Cinefest%202008)
Cincinnati's 23rd Annual Nostalgia and Old Time Radio Convention - April 24-25, 2009, Crowne Plaza, 11911 Sheraton Lane, Cincinnati, OH 45246. For more information, contact Bob Burchett, (888) 477-9112 or e-mail to: haradio@hotmail.com.

20th Annual Radio Classics Live! - May 2, 2009. Buckley Performing Arts Center, Massasoit Community College, Brockton, MA. Contact Bob Bowers (508) 758-4865, or e-mail bobowers@version.net for more information.

MidAtlantic Nostalgia Convention - Aug 27-29, 2009

The last year or so I've been trying to keep our monthly issues to roughly 20 pages or so due to personal time restraints. We had so much good stuff in our hands, however, that instead of parsing it out over a couple issues we decided to give you an early Christmas present with an issue bursting at the seams.

Our staff is very excited to feature the first contribution by Martin Grams, Jr., prominent old time radio historian and author. While new to our pages, he's no stranger to the hobby.

We're also tickled to follow Martin's piece up with another effort by the esteemed Jim Cox, no slouch in the historian/author category himself. This month he sheds some light on ABC founder Ed Noble, a frequently overlooked personality in old time radio.

The rest of the issue is jam-packed as you've discovered by now; there's really too much to spotlight here. If you can't find something of interest in this month's effort then you probably don't have a pulse.

Don't fear that we're cleaning out the vaults with this year-end ball! We have so much material piling up that we're filling issues into next summer, much of it by authors we've featured in the last couple months.

We're trying a new font this month to address concerns some readers have had about readability. Let us know yay or nay if it enhances your reading pleasure. While I'm limited in the amount of layout design and graphics used every month, I'm open to suggestions that would spruce up these pages.

Enjoy the holidays and we'll tune in together next month as we welcome 2009. Happy listening and good health to all!

November Contributors

Jim Beshires * Bob Cox * Jim Cox * Ryan Ellett * Tom Gootee * Martin Grams * Hank Harwell * Fred Krock * Ned Norris * Lionel Pairpoint

Edited by Ryan Ellett
Distributed by Jim Beshires

RADIO RARITIES BY *Dooley* →

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BLUE NETWORK VOCALIST; ALTHOUGH BORN IN FALL RIVER, MASS, COULDN'T SPEAK A WORD OF ENGLISH UNTIL SHE WAS TWELVE! SHE WAS SCHOOLED AT A FRENCH CONVENT IN PARIS!

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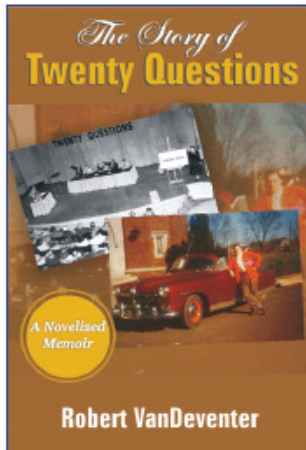
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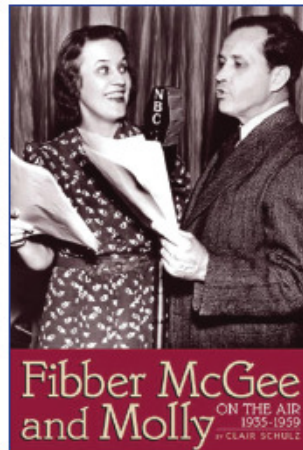
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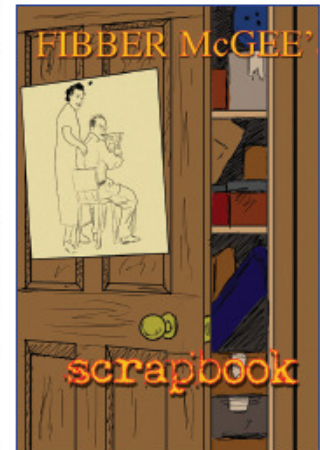
The Story of Twenty Questions
by Robert VanDeventer



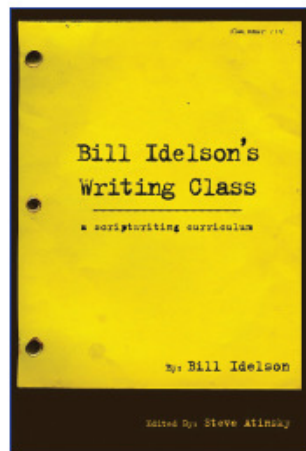
The Eternal Light
by Eli Segal



Fibber McGee and Molly
by Clair Schulz



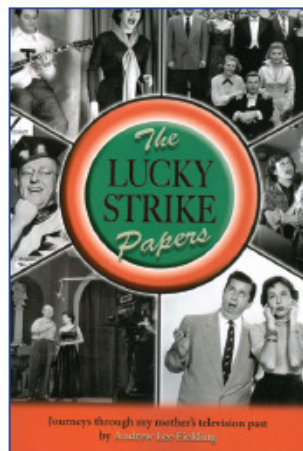
Fibber McGee's Scrapbook
by Clair Schulz



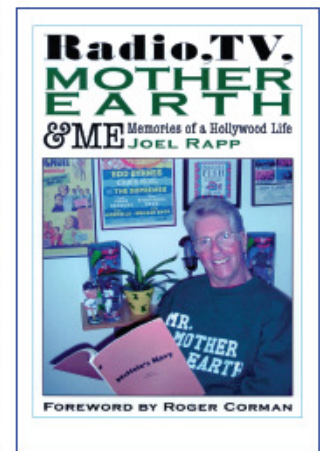
Bill Idelson's Writing Class
by Bill Idelson



Don't Wear Silver in the Winter
by Janet Cantor Gari



The Lucky Strike Papers
by Andrew Lee Felding



Radio, TV, Mother Earth & Me
by Joel Rapp

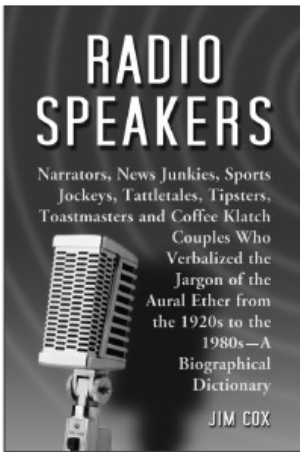
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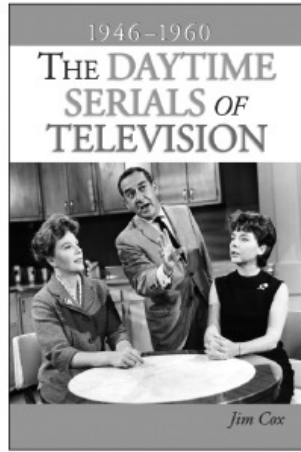
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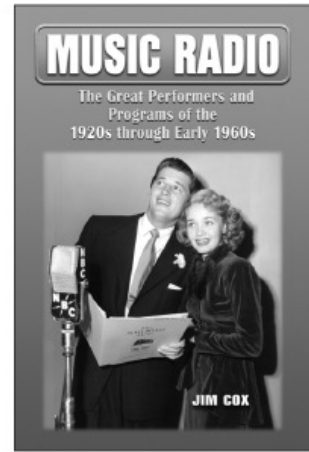
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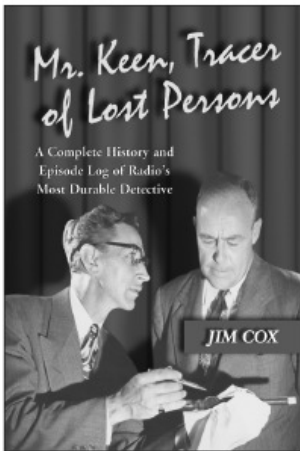
Jim Cox. 2007, \$55 hardcover (7 × 10), appendix, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-0-7864-2780-2.



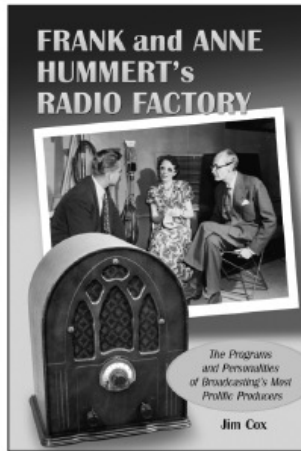
Jim Cox. 2006, \$49.95 hardcover (7 × 10), photos, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-0-7864-2429-0.



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



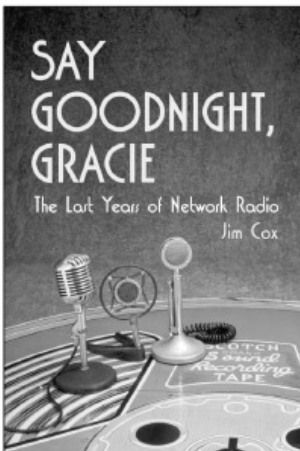
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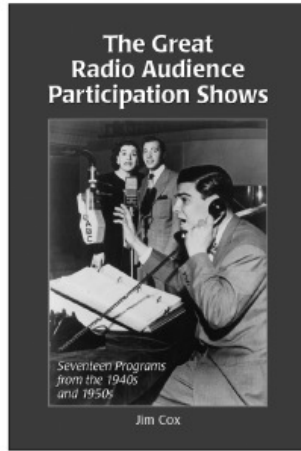
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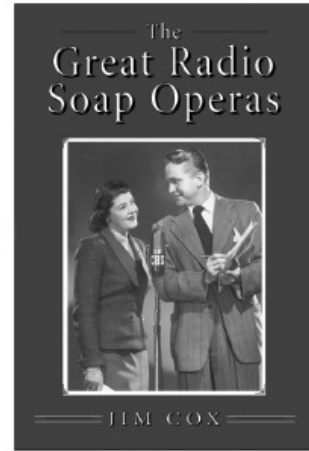
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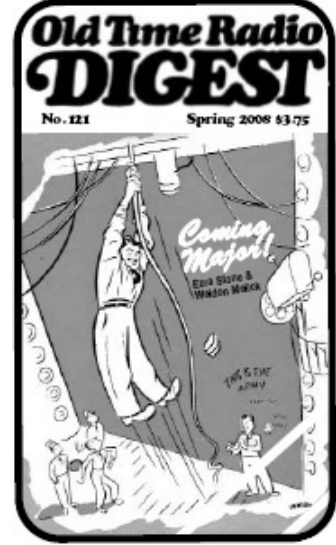
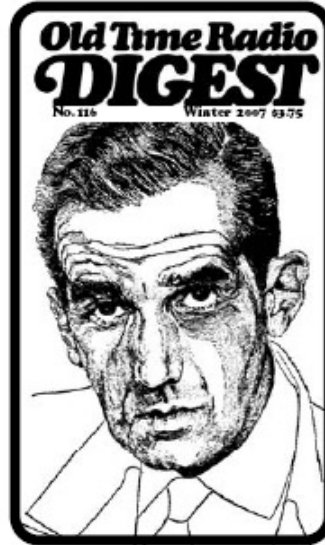
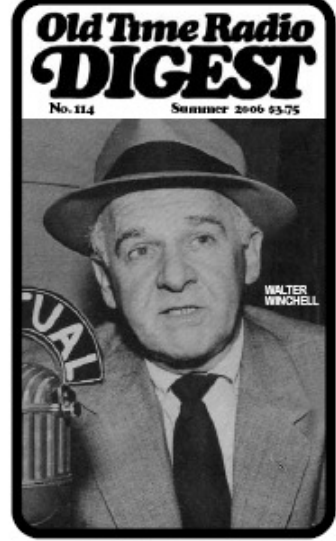
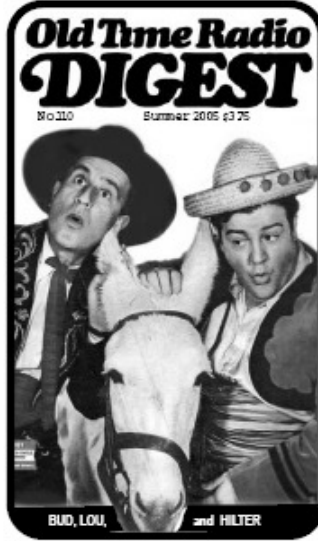
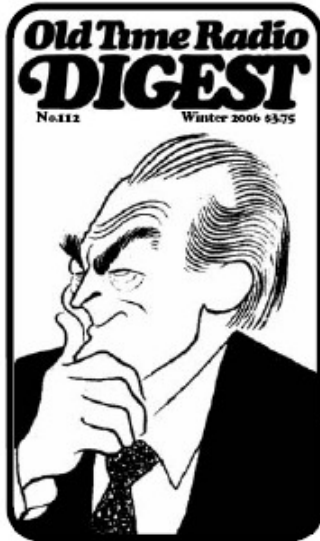
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OTRR Acquisitions and Upgrades

The following is a list of newly acquired series/episodes. They may either be new to mp3 or better encodes. These were acquired by the Group during the month of September. These episodes were purchased by donations from members and friends of the Old Time Radio Researchers or donated by interested parties.

If you have cassettes that you would like to donate, please e-mail beshiresjim@yahoo.com. For reel-to-reels, contact david0@centurytel.net and for transcription disks tony_senior@yahoo.com.

#1 Ladies Detective Agency 04-09-10 (01) The Daddy.mp3
#1 Ladies Detective Agency 04-09-17 (02) The Bone.mp3
#1 Ladies Detective Agency 04-09-24 (03) The Maid.mp3
#1 Ladies Detective Agency 04-10-01 (04) Tears Of The Giraffe.mp3
#1 Ladies Detective Agency 05-08-30 (01) The Chief Justice Of Beauty.mp3
#1 Ladies Detective Agency 05-09-06 (02) The Confession.mp3
#1 Ladies Detective Agency 05-09-13 (03) The Kalahari Typing School For Men.mp3
#1 Ladies Detective Agency 05-09-20 (04) The Admirer.mp3

Adventures Of Ozzie And Harriet, The 50-11-26 The Ballet Tickets.mp3

Alan Young Show, The 45-03-13.mp3

Aldrich Family, The 40-03-05 (36) Mary's New Dress.mp3

Amos And Andy Show 51-04-29 Cousin Sidney Visits.mp3

Amos And Andy Show, The 45-01-12 The Antique Desk.mp3

Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts xx-xx-xx Joe E Brown Substitutes.mp3

Big Story, The 50-01-04 The Sam Melnick Story.mp3
Big Story, The 50-01-11 Gambling And Divorce Can

Mean Murder.mp3
Big Story, The 50-07-12 A Shotgun And A Fatal Accident.mp3

Bobby Benson And The B Bar B Riders 51-11-17 Salute To A Soldier.mp3
Bobby Benson And The B Bar B Riders 51-12-01 The Queen Of The Cowgirls.mp3
Bobby Benson And The B Bar B Riders 51-12-17 The Lost Tribe.mp3

Burns And Allen Show, The 45-05-24 (74).mp3

COTY 51-11-06 (944) Forbidden Ground.mp3
COTY 51-11-08 (945) Si Atkin's Gold.mp3
COTY 51-11-11 (946) The Forgetful Killer.mp3

Casey, Crime Photographer 49-11-17 The Upholsterer.mp3

Cisco Kid, The 54-05-04 (187) Thirst.mp3
Cisco Kid, The 58-02-11 (583) Murder At North San Juan.mp3
Cisco Kid, The 58-02-13 (584) Porfirio And The Bearded Lady.mp3
Cisco Kid, The xx-xx-xx (697) Rescue In Matamoros.mp3
Cisco Kid, The xx-xx-xx (698) Death Gun.mp3

Club Fifteen xx-xx-xx (849).mp3
Club Fifteen xx-xx-xx (850).mp3
Club Fifteen xx-xx-xx (877).mp3
Club Fifteen xx-xx-xx (878).mp3
Club Fifteen xx-xx-xx (Program) 912.mp3

Dave Garroway xx-xx-xx (346).mp3

Dimension X 50-05-13 Almost Human.mp3

Edge Bergen And Charlie McCarthy Show xx-xx-xx (51).mp3

FBI In Peace And War, The 49-11-03 The Fourth Round.mp3

Fifteen Minutes 45-xx-xx With Jack Bundy.mp3

Flair 61-xx-xx (610).mp3
Flair 61-xx-xx (611).mp3

Fullness Of Life 38-xx-xx (10) A City Beautiful.mp3

Grand Ole Opry Time 51-12-15 (195) Guest - Red Foley.mp3

Greatest Story Ever Told, The - 48-06-06 Disputed Boundary.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 49-xx-xx Patience Has A Story.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 50-12-03 Night Call.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 51-01-20 I'll Be Waiting.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 51-05-13 How Could This Happen.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 51-05-20 Fifty Days.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 51-06-10 Is There Any Difference.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 51-06-17 Welcome Home Soldier.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 52-04-27 Evening Star.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 52-05-03 Baa, Baa Black Sheep.mp3

Hour Of St Francis 52-xx-xx Greater Love Than This.mp3

Kay Kyser's Kollege Of Musical Knowledge 44-04-23 (96) AFRS.mp3

Kay Kyser's Kollege Of Musical Knowledge 45-09-06 (118) AFRS.mp3

Last Man Out 53-12-06 Communist Teacher.mp3

Lest We Forget 43-xx-xx (01) Youth Marches.mp3

Lest We Forget 43-xx-xx (02) Education For Democracy (skips).mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (01) The Story Of Wendell Wilkie.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (02) The Story of Joseph Goldberger.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (03) The Story of Jane Addams.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (04) The Story of Brandeis-Holmes.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (05) The Story Of George Washington Carver.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (06) The Story Of Al Smith.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (07) The Story Of George W Norris.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (08) The Story Of Joseph

Pulitzer.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (09) Arrow In The Air.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (09) The Story Of Franz Boaz.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (10) The Carolina Kid.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (10) The Story Of Samuel Gompers.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (11) A Party For The Doctor.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (12) My Own, My Navtive City.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (3) The Bridge Builder.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (4) Occupation-Housewife.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (7) One Small Voice.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx (8) Chain Reaction.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx Blow That Whistle.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx Face To Face.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx The Story Of Woodrow Wilson.mp3

Lest We Forget xx-xx-xx The Story of FDR - Part One.mp3

My Friend Irma 49-05-02 (108).mp3

My Friend Irma 49-05-09 (109).mp3

New Life Movement, The 47-xx-xx (01) Coming Alive.mp3

New Life Movement, The 47-xx-xx (02) Creative Living.mp3

New Life Movement, The 47-xx-xx (03) The Human Comedy.mp3

New Life Movement, The 47-xx-xx (04) Your Allergies.mp3

New Life Movement, The 47-xx-xx (05) The Hardest Decision.mp3

New Life Movement, The 47-xx-xx (06) Life In The Open.mp3

Personal Album xx-xx-xx (1577) Guest - Joe Graydon.mp3

Personal Album xx-xx-xx (1578) Guest - Tony Parris.mp3

Personal Album xx-xx-xx (53) Guest - The Kingsmen.mp3

Personal Album xx-xx-xx (54) Guest - Shirley Ross.mp3

Personal Album xx-xx-xx (61) Guest - Phil Regan.mp3

Personal Album xx-xx-xx (62) Guest - Shirley

Ross.mp3
 Personal Album xx-xx-xx (967) Guest - Josephine Rangan.mp3
 Personal Album xx-xx-xx (968) Guest - Eilieen Woods.mp3

Red Grange Football Show 49-xx-xx (8) Great Stars Of 1950.mp3
 Red Grange Football Show 4x-xx-xx (09)
 Outstanding Football Plays Of The Season.mp3

Shadow, The 38-06-26 The Old People.mp3
 Shadow, The 38-07-03 The Voice Of The Trumpet.mp3

Singing Sam Story 49-xx-xx Tribute To Singing Sam (End clipped).mp3

Strange 55-xx-xx (87) Capt. Robinson (AFRS).mp3
 Strange 55-xx-xx (88) Deja Vu In France (AFRS).mp3

That Strong Guy - AU xx-xx-xx #25) Widowed Twice.mp3
 That Strong Guy - AU xx-xx-xx (10) Diamond Killing.mp3
 That Strong Guy - AU xx-xx-xx (12) Fight Fixed.mp3
 That Strong Guy - AU xx-xx-xx (30) Tony On Parole.mp3
 That Strong Guy - AU xx-xx-xx (34) King Midas.mp3

This Is The Story 50-12-27 (114) The Barrier.mp3
 This Is The Story 50-xx-xx (115) Ralph Waldo Emerson, Queen Victoria.mp3
 This Is The Story 51-xx-xx (16) The Reluctant Fighter.mp3
 This Is The Story 52-11-27 (149) Arctic Mistake.mp3
 This Is The Story 52-xx-xx (145) Little Jack Horner, Christmas Seals.mp3
 This Is The Story 52-xx-xx (146) Daniel Defoe, Singer Sewing Machine.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (063) City Of London.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (064) Paper.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (081) Gutenberg Printing Press.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (082) Easter Eggs.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (087) Woolworth.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (088) Mustard Mrs. Clements.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (098) The Great

McGraw.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (103) Boston Blackstone's Bull, Pearl Buck.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (104) Robert E. Lee's Mother, Einstein.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (116) Bismarck, Beatrice Lillie.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (117) Charles Dickens Old Curiosity Shop, Voltaire.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (118) McGuffey's Reader, W.C. Fields.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (133) Ulysses S. Grant, Giuseppe Verdi.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (134) Whitman Leaves Of Grass, Yehudi Menuin.mp3
 This Is The Story 5x-xx-xx (155) Hans Christian Anderson.mp3

Those Sensational Years 47-01-28 The Story Of Earl Sandy.mp3

Tribute To A Trooper 48-06-17 Tribute To Singing Sam.mp3

Upper Room, The 47-xx-xx (01) Those Whom God Hath Joined Together.mp3
 Upper Room, The 47-xx-xx (02) For Richer, For Poorer.mp3
 Upper Room, The 47-xx-xx (03) Romantic Life VS Marital Love.mp3
 Upper Room, The 47-xx-xx (04) Slings And Arrows Of Outrageous Fortune.mp3
 Upper Room, The xx-xx-xx (05) Two Heads Are Better Than One.mp3
 Upper Room, The xx-xx-xx (06) A Child Shall Lead Them.mp3

Witness, The xx-xx-xx (08) Papa Knows Best.mp3
 Witness, The xx-xx-xx (09) A Child Is To Love.mp3

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RADIO ROUND-UPS

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