



# The Old Radio Times

The Official Publication of the Old-Time Radio Researchers

Sept/Oct 2010 www.otrr.org 2160 Subscribers

Number 51



## THE ORIGIN OF THE SHADOW by Martin Grams

Harry Engman Charlot, creator of “The Shadow,” sinister figure of many detective story thrillers and radio broadcasts, died on Thursday night, October 3, 1935, in a Bowery hotel. According to the New York Times, his death came under circumstances which, “according to the police, rivaled the strange deaths of many of his fiction characters.” He was 31 years old.\*

*\* A number of reference guides have inaccurately reported Charlot’s death as September 28. Numerous newspapers verify the date as Thursday, October 3.*

Walter Gibson, vacationing in Orlando, Florida, experienced a real surprise when he read a news report in *The Sunday Sentinel-Star* that the creator of “The Shadow” had died. The newspaper reported the author’s body was discovered in his room at the Majestic Hotel, 270 Bowery, where, according to the hotel manager, he had been living for several days under the name of “Mr. Loe of New York.” At first it ap-

peared a heart attack was to blame. Later, however, after the body had been delivered to the Bellevue Hospital morgue, doctors determined that an unknown poison caused Charlot’s death.

An autopsy performed by Dr. Benjamin M. Vance, assistant medical examiner, revealed a general congestion in the internal organs and contradicted the first report of a heart attack. After finding evidence of poison, Dr. Vance ordered a chemical analysis to determine its nature. A complete analysis would take several days. While the medical authorities asserted death might have been caused by alcohol poisoning, the police had not yet determined whether the poison was taken by Charlot or administered by some other person. The police were still investigating.

The author’s body lay in the morgue unidentified while further investigation unveiled a few facts adding to the mystery: Charlot had been admitted to the hospital twice since 1933 suffer-

ing from psychosis, and he had undergone treatment at Rockland State Hospital. The author resided at 14-15 159th Street, Beechhurst, Queens. After his mother and wife identified his body, his mother told reporters he had suffered from heart disease for several years. His wife claimed she was to meet him in New York on Thursday, the evening he died. He often browsed around second-hand book stores in the Bowery neighborhood, she told police.

Back in Orlando, it was the last paragraph of the article that caused Walter Gibson concern. The article claimed Charlot's character, "The Shadow," first appeared in the magazines of publisher Street & Smith in 1928. The character, who pitted himself against the underworld and police alike, soon became widely popular. This was inaccurate and Gibson immediately phoned the offices of Street & Smith in New York to ask for an explanation.

"I wrote the first Shadow story nearly five years ago," Gibson explained. "It was published in *The Shadow Magazine*, which immediately became a regular publication; and which now appears twice a month. Since all of The Shadow stories have been of my own origination, I felt that this statement should be made. No other author has been connected with this work; and The Shadow, as a character, has been developed through my stories."

The confusion resulted from the newspapers jumping to conclusions for the sake of a sensational story rather than investigating the facts. Harry E. Charlot created the radio version of "The Shadow" in 1930 while working for the Judson Radio Program Corporation in the development of a mystery program promoting Street & Smith's *Detective Story Magazine*. Walter Gibson, under the pen name of Maxwell Grant, was contracted to write novels for *The Shadow Magazine*, which premiered on newsstands in 1931.

*The Shadow Magazine* was owned by Street & Smith, and various forms of promotion were used, including the radio program. Gibson told reporters this may have explained the error which credited another person as the author.

Harry Engman Charlot was born in Springfield, Missouri, and had been educated at Smith Academy, St. Louis, Missouri; the Taft School of Waterbury, Connecticut, and Princeton University. An author of short stories, including "The Paris Flapper," which appeared in the June 1928 issue of *McCall's*, Charlot took a job with the Judson company, writing scripts for the *True Detective* radio program and responsible for proposing the lead narrator be a mysterious figure known as "The Shadow." At the time of his death, he had been working on a play which had been accepted for production that winter.

To eliminate the confusion to magazine readers, the December 1, 1935, issue of *The Shadow Magazine* featured this brief notice:





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**NOTICE:** Recent newspaper articles reporting the death of Harry E. Charlot, have credited him with creating the character of *The Shadow* and writing *The Shadow* stories for *Street & Smith*. We wish to say that *The Shadow* was created for our readers by Maxwell Grant, and that every *Shadow* story printed has come from the pen of Mr. Grant as the exclusive author of *The Shadow's* exploits, and that he will continue to produce them for *The Shadow Magazine* alone. Any other statements are erroneous.

While Charlot had been given credit for creating the character of "The Shadow" for radio, several men were responsible for the formation of the radio program featuring the mysterious narrator. The inspiration began with a rival periodical, *True Detective Stories*, from Macfadden Publications.

In the fall of 1927, the Judson Radio Program Corporation made its bow before the microphone in an effort to pioneer the craft of storytelling. It assumed the responsibility of producing all radio presentations for the Columbia Broadcasting System. In its infancy, radio was supply-

ing music, news and commentary. Dramas were few and far between. By the late twenties, dramas (or sketches, as they were often called) were increasing in popularity. The costs involved to hire a number of actors, sound men and a scriptwriter was, however, far more expensive than two musicians and an announcer filling the same time slot. One only needs to look at the radio listings of the mid-twenties to discover that music easily dominated more than 80 percent of radio broadcasting.

The Judson organization took its name from a close alliance with concert manager Arthur Judson, but its real chiefs were William B. Murray and John T. Adams — both well-known in the musical world — who decided to create an independent program-making organization. Murray would join the William Morris office in 1932, starting the agency's expansion in radio packaging by building shows around its top talent, including Eddie Cantor, Burns and Allen, Fanny Brice, Amos 'n' Andy and others.

To be doubly certain of the best in radio programs, scripts and actors, the newly organized Judson company hired Frank Moulan circa late March and early April 1928. He was responsible for getting the Roxy Orchestra moved to radio and helped develop the original "Capitol Gang" for radio. Moulan was an old-timer in comic opera and used his experience to help build programs for Judson.

By June 1928, one of the largest and most scientifically planned radio studio outlets in the country was being rushed to completion by electrical and acoustical engineers for Judson's use. Located on four floors of the Steinway Building in New York City, occupancy was expected in the early summer. Several of the studios already were being used for audition, rehearsal and broadcasting purposes. The studios ranged in size from a small audition room to a large hall



seating 200 people. Because numerous musical organizations rehearsed or broadcast from these studios at the same time, the engineers deemed it wise to scatter the layout over several floors to reduce confusion, hall and lobby congestion and to segregate the various units. The layout of the complex became a standard across the country as newly founded stations built their own sound-proof studios and decided on microphone placement.

In late June, the corporation opened its doors for auditions. Each applicant submitted a complete history of musical training and experience, together with previous experience in operatic concert, theatrical or broadcasting fields. The applicant was then booked for an audition in front of an auditions committee. According to the December 13, 1928, issue of the (Emmetsburg, Iowa) *Palo Alto Tribune*, "The Judson Radio Program Corporation says that during the past two years it has tried out more than 5,000 singers for radio performances and only 22 seemed to have any conception of the requirements."

This small crew began to plot, plan and prepare radio programs for commercial sponsors and by early 1929 became known as "the greatest organization of its kind in radio," according to the July 21, 1929, issue of the *Syracuse Herald*. By that time they were employing many artists to take part in such programs as *Atwater Kent Hour*, *General Motors Family Party*, *Armstrong Quakers*, *True Story Hour* and *True Detective Mysteries*.

Bernarr Macfadden grew a publishing empire during the nineteen-twenties with a number of magazines. His most popular was *True Story*, which hit the newsstands in May 1919 and attracted immediate attention because the articles in this magazine were stories about love and disappointment and were written by ordinary people, not professional writers. By 1923, *True*

*You Are Cordially*

**INVITED TO  
LISTEN NEXT  
TUESDAY NIGHT**

At

10:00 P. M. EASTERN STANDARD TIME  
9:00 P. M. CENTRAL STANDARD TIME  
8:00 P. M. ROCKY MOUNTAIN TIME


**TO THE RADIO  
SHADOW**

The weird, fascinating, uncanny SHADOW is back on the air. He invites you to tune in next Tuesday night on any of the twenty-seven powerful Columbia Broadcasting Stations. His program will thrill you, and grip you, and set the cold shivers traveling up and down your spine!

**A PERSONAL  
INVITATION  
from  
America's  
Premier  
Radio  
Star**

**THE  
SHADOW**

*See Inside!*



ON STATIONS		
WABC	KRLD	KJF
WQAD	KLZ	WQAU
WQAG	WETZ	WQAG
WQAC	WQND	KDEL
WQAK	WQDC	KNDL
WQAH	KJRH	WFL
WQAI	WQEM	WSPS
WQAM	WQAC	WQEM
WQAD	WQDC	WQAL

*Story* was the largest newsstand seller with \$300,000 in sales. By 1926, sales had skyrocketed to \$2 million. Not wanting to be upstaged by his competition, he contracted with Judson Radio to produce a series of dramas based on stories in current issues of *True Story*. Billed as "a musical travelogue of the United States in search of true stories," the featured 30 minutes of music, followed by a true-life story with hosts Mary (actresses Joan Banks and Nora Stirling) and Bob (played over time by four men: William Brenton, Erik Rolf, David Ross and Cecil Seccrest), later nicknamed "radio's original sweethearts." \*

\* Among the cast of *True Story Hour* were Rita Allyn, Helen Madge Brown, Nelson Case, Paul Douglas, Ethel Everett, Ben Grauer, Elsie Hitz, Ted Husing, Elaine Ivans, Richard Keith, James La Curto, Bernard Lenrow, Estelle Levy, Art Millet, Virginia Morgan, Everett Sloane, Vivian Smolen, Harry Sothern, Arthur Vinton, Lucille Wall and Ned Wever. Musical directors were Howard Barlow and Arnold Johnson. Barlow also doubled for brief acting roles.





Each week from the program's start on January 26, 1928, Mary and Bob were on location to introduce a true story taken from the pages of the magazine. One week they were in Miami and the next week they were Missouri — or so the audience assumed. In reality, the program originated from the Judson studios. Listeners, however, enjoyed the stories and the announcer never failed to mention the month's current issue on newsstands at the conclusion of every broadcast. Sales for *True Story* grew.

In 1924 Macfadden published the first issue of *True Detective Mysteries*, in much the same vein as *True Story*, but centered on crime and detective stories — again submitted by ordinary people. With the success of the Mary and Bob radio program, Judson Radio put together a second series titled *True Detective Mysteries*. Sans music presentation, this half-hour anthology also dramatized stories taken from the magazine. Charles A. Schenck directed the productions, beginning with the premiere on May 29, 1929. The show tackled authentic cases, justifying its claim as “a real story of a real crime solved by real people with a real criminal brought to justice.”

Like *True Story Hour*, the crime drama helped boost circulation of *True Detective Mysteries* for Macfadden. The show, with colorful titles, such as “The Vanishing Phantom of Leaven worth” (July 11, 1929), and creepy dramas, easily held the attention of listeners.

Among the program's highlights was “Who Killed Elsie Sigel?” (June 27, 1929), taken from the pages of the May 1929 issue. The editor of the magazine described it as the inside story of the brutal murder of Elsie Sigel as told to a skilled writer by Inspector Van Wagner, who handled the case.

The broadcast of October 17, 1929, featured the story of California's Red Rose murder, an amazing and exciting tale of police operations and a man's final redemption. The program the week after detailed how the New York police solved the dramatically staged Wiener jewel robbery, which had made headlines months before, and finally discovered the identity of the mysterious “Mrs. X.”

“The Coffey Murder Case” (January 30, 1930), which stirred Madison, Wisconsin, and vicinity in 1927, re-enacted the story of the murder as written by Lyall Wright, former sheriff of Juneau County. William N. Coffey of Madison was traveling salesman. He was already married, but that didn't stop him from marrying Mrs. Hales, supposedly a wealthy widow. Her body was found later, buried in the woods near Platteville, after Coffey directed sheriff's officers to the spot.

The April 10, 1930, broadcast centered on the famous Kalamazoo “hex” murder in which the victim was credited with the powers of witch

craft. Mrs. Etta Fairchild, widow of a minister, was accused of witch craft by Eugene Burgess and his wife, who took the aged woman's life in order to protect their home. This was not the first mystery presented in the maga-

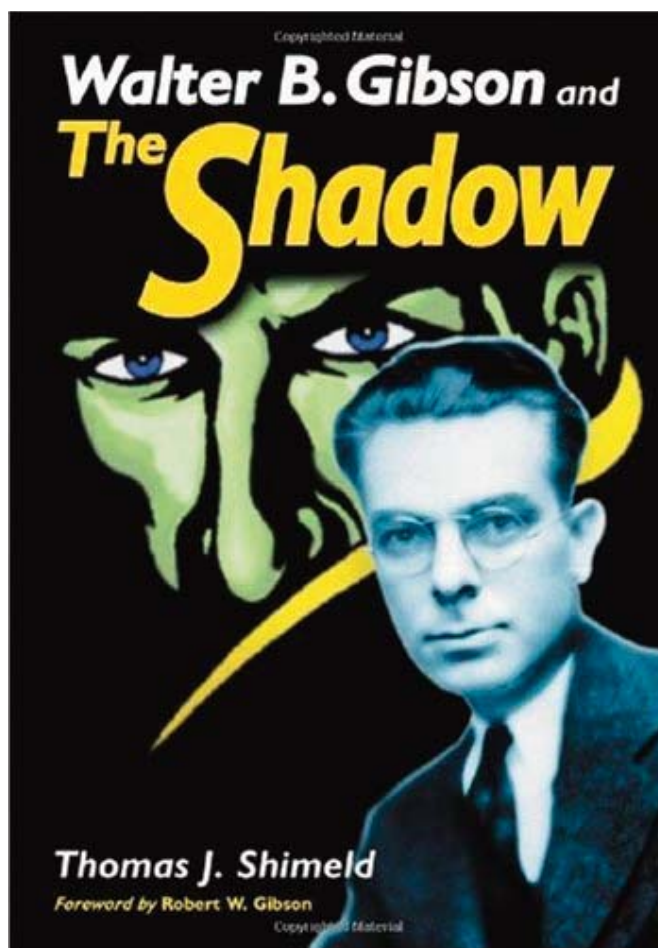


zine and the radio program to be solved by Sheriff Jerome S. Borden, billed as "Michigan's astute detective." The broadcast took the radio audience with Sheriff Borden through each step of the investigation following Mrs. Fairchild's disappearance. A radio columnist for The Komono (Indiana) Tribune remarked that a carefully selected cast impersonated the various characters, accompanied by weird sound effects and unusual music, which was a staple in the True Detective Mysteries presentations.

The Judson company featured a staff of celebrated radio characters such as Edward (Tiny) Ruffner, Louis Reed, Alois Havrilla and Charles A. Schenck Jr., the latter of whom directed all of the *True Detective Mysteries* and *True Story* productions. Musicians Leopold Stokowski, Arturo Toscanini, Sir Thomas Beecham, Josef Pasternack, David Mendoza, Arthur Pryor and others were exclusive artists employed by Judson. Entertainers and artists such as Mary Garden, Florence Easton, Lois Bennett, Rosa Ponselle, Feodor Chalapin, Titta Ruffo, Sophie Braslau and numerous others were exclusive staff members.

Among the staff was William Sweets, known to his friends as Bill or Billy, who became a key figure in the formation of *The Shadow* radio programs. Originally from Kentucky, Sweets did political reporting for the *Washington Times*, became studio manager of WRC in Washington, and then joined NBC in New York as its initial continuity editor. He turned freelance director in 1928 on *True Story* and doubled as script writer by adapting short stories from the magazine for the *True Story Hour* and the *Sandy and Lil* program when it premiered for Eskimo Pie in the fall of 1930.

In 1933, *The Court of Human Relations* premiered over the NBC Red network, sponsored by True Story Magazine. Actors Brian Donlevy-



Porter Hall and Allyn Joslyn were heard as the court clerk, and Percy Hemus played the role of Judge William Sweets -- named after the creator/producer/director. Naming fictional characters after the cast and crew was not unusual and helped prevent lawsuits from listeners who did not accept coincidental names that matched their own and believed they were defamed by the broadcasts.

According to the January 17, 1936, issue of the *Oakland Tribune*, Sweets was a veteran of 11 years of broadcasting and given credit for the success of these programs, having done all the casting as well as producing and writing most of the scripts. Along with a group of talented performers, he put together a variety of radio thrillers for late-night airing. From January 5 to 7, 1931, Sweets directed a three-part psycho-



logical thriller titled *The Threshold*, with Georgia Backus and Frank Readick in the leads. The production encompassed a single continuous storyline, but each broadcast was a separate experiment in storytelling. The March 29, 1931, issue of the *Charleston Daily Mail* referred to the actors under Sweets' direction as "the Story Hour Players," establishing his status as a pioneer radio producer.

In May 1930, *True Detective Mysteries* concluded on the radio. Street & Smith had its own *Detective Story Magazine* which premiered on newsstands in 1915. Attempting to capitalize on the same idea as their competition, David Chrisman of the Ruthrauff & Ryan Advertising Agency convinced Street & Smith executives to make the transition to radio in an effort to increase sales of their magazine. Chrisman also served as the series' producer, profiting from the successful arrangement.

Attempting to out-do *True Detective Mysteries*, Chrisman worked closely with the staff at Judson and oversaw the earliest productions with Bill Sweets. The host/narrator of the program had to have an "edge" and, certainly, a mystery shrouding his identity to keep the radio audience attentive to the broadcasts. For this job, there was not a "shadow of a doubt." Menacing figures cloaked in black were popular characters in mystery tales. Heroes and villains hiding behind hooded masks were almost commonplace in silent film serials and stage plays. Such a character to host a radio program was elementary.

Back in early 1925, *The Goodrich Silvertown Orchestra*, under the musical direction of Joseph Knecht, featured a tenor whose voice generated a number of fan letters from radio listeners asking for his identity so they could place a name to the voice. Knecht devised a clever approach to retain the radio audience by adding a spark of mystery — he withheld the identity of the tenor and referred to him simply as the "Silver Masked Tenor."

For almost five years, the Silver Masked Tenor entertained in the dual role of delighting and mystifying his radio friends while wearing a real mask supposedly made of silver that covered the top half of his face. In the summer of 1925, he received a new mask as a result of a practical joke. The announcer at the New York studio made a remark that the tenor's mask was beginning to look shabby from such continuous use and that if he didn't get a new one, his voice would surely lose some of its silvery sweetness. The remark was not overlooked by the radio audience, and some of his admirers immediately began to send in contributions to fund the purchase of a new mask. The nest egg grew quickly and a new mask was bought with a special engraving reminding him what the mask was for

If you met The Silver Masked Tenor  
and offered him a Lucky Strike,  
he'd say to you:



"On a vaudeville tour or in front of the microphone I know that Lucky Strikes will give me complete relaxation and pleasure. Furthermore, the assurance that my voice will be left clear and smooth after smoking permits me to indulge as frequently as I choose."  
*Silver Masked Tenor.*

You, too, will find that Lucky Strikes are mild and mellow—the finest cigarettes you ever smoked, made of the finest Turkish and domestic tobaccos, properly aged and blended with great skill, and there is an extra process—"It's toasted"—no harshness, not a bit of bite.

**"It's toasted"**  
*Your Throat Protection*



When in New York please carefully inspect to see how Lucky Strikes are made at our mills, corner Broadway and 45th Street.

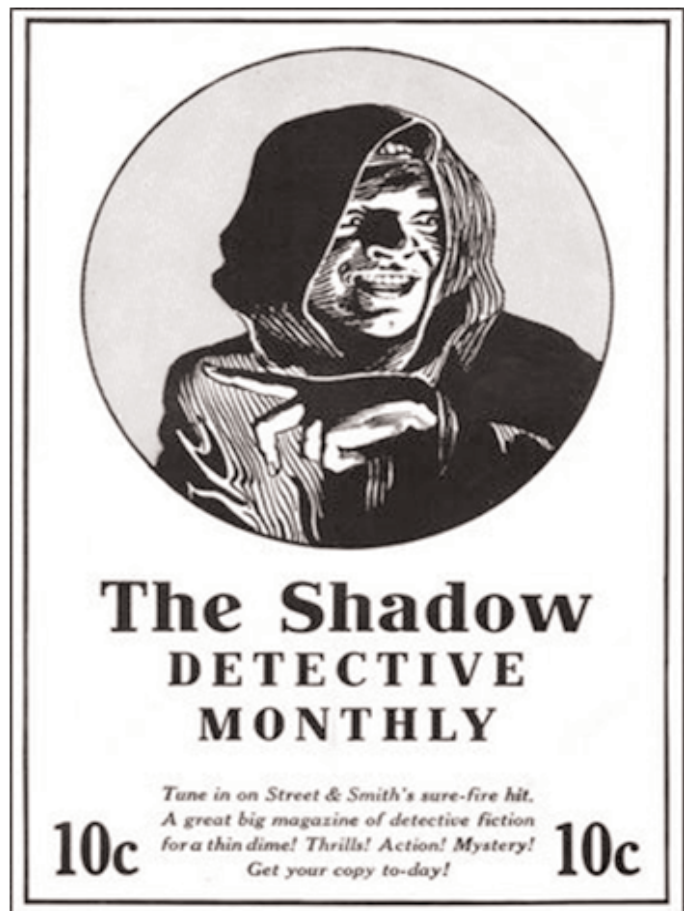
and where it came from. \*

*\* It wasn't until 1930 that his identity became public knowledge after much speculation that the Silver Masked Tenor was a famous celebrity. The tenor was Joe White, who never had a singing career until he donned the mask and premiered on the Goodrich program.*

The Goodrich Silvertown Orchestra became one of the most popular aggregations of musicians featured on the radio, partly because of the mystery surrounding the masked tenor. William Sweets knew the *Detective Story Magazine Hour*\* needed a similar aura to accompany the dramatic productions. While Sweets and Harry Charlot were adapting short stories from the mystery magazine into feasible radio scripts, one of them decided to have the prelude and introduction to the scenes delivered by an anonymous announcer with an ethereal presence who acted like a guilty conscience to the protagonists who could not hear him. It was Charlot who created the idea and name of "The Shadow."

*\* A few reference guides claim the title of the program switched from Detective Story Hour to Detective Story Program after the first few broadcasts. This, however, is inaccurate. The source of this information may have originated from newspapers, which oftentimes failed to report the correct or full title among the radio listings. The correct title was Detective Story Magazine Hour and never changed during the 52 weeks it was on the air. Even though the program ran a half-hour, programs referred to as "Hour" were broadcast on the hour, or on the half-hour; the designation did not indicate the program length. Newspaper listings should never be taken as the gospel, especially when one considers the Washington Post listed this program as "Tales of Mystery" in their radio listings.*

The July 31, 1930, issue of The Boston Daily Globe featured a news brief in its "What's On The Air" column referring to the premiere broadcast: "A new program which will be heard for the first time this evening over WNAC at 9:30 o'clock, will be that of *Detective Story Magazine*. The exact nature of the program will be made in the initial broadcast tonight." The program's format possibly was still being established at the time the press release was issued and that the ghostly narrator with a menacing laugh was not created weeks in advance. After the character was established, newspaper publicity built the sinister character without a public identity into as much of a success as the Silver Masked Tenor. The January 3, 1932, issue of the Topeka *Daily Capital-Journal* reported: "The Shadow' has refused to reveal his identity and whenever he was scheduled to appear for a broadcast, those who





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were in the studio were afforded only a glimpse of him as he dashed to the microphone.”

An undated 1931 column reported: “Secrecy surrounding ‘The Shadow’ announcer for *Detective Stories* is maintained by having him sneak into the studios via the freight elevator.” The September 4 issue of the *New York Evening Journal* reported the same news about the freight elevator, remarking, “Those press agents!” suggesting more publicity stunt than fact. The freight elevator story was widely circulated, appearing in numerous newspapers and *Variety* through late October.

The April 10, 1932, “Airy Chats” column penned by Bill Schudt (a Columbia scout) reported a series of mishaps that occurred over the network, including: “The night the Shadow was trying to be so mysterious on that *Detective Hour* and his mask slipped off, and three people immediately recognized him.”

In the newly- founded pulp magazine, The Shadow character also remained a mystery with little about his past or identity revealed in the first two years. The mystery deepened for the



radio listeners when they discovered that he delivered his prologues as coded messages depicted in the pulps. (More about that later).

Contracted for a series of 52 broadcasts with a 26- week cancellation clause, Street & Smith chose thrilling tales from their pulp pages to kick off the initial offering. Allyn Jay Marsh was the account executive at Ruthrauff & Ryan, located then at 132 West 31st Street in New York City, who oversaw the radio production and worked closely with Bill Sweets, who wrote the radio dramas and selected stories which fit the mold of the program. Marsh was formerly an advertising salesman for the *New York Times* and would later become director of network program sales for CBS.

The premiere broadcast, “The Serpent Stings” (July 31, 1930), was adapted from the short story of the same name by Herman Landon. It centered on a daring jewel robbery with two ruthless murders pressuring the detective, who finds a number of suspects. Among them are Mrs. Wakeling, Shorty, the rodman’s moll, Margy, who squealed when she thought he gave her the “double-cross,” and Wolf Garrett, who ultimately got the hot seat for murder and was a strong character in the play. One columnist remarked “the program builders might be a little more careful, however, in selecting voices that show contrast. There was some confusion at times, because of vocal similarities.” \*

\* A copy of the radio script has not been found. Various newspaper advertisements promoted “The Serpent Stings,” but a dedicated researcher knows that newspaper listings and advertisements reported what was “planned” to air. The title for this broadcast was verified not through a magazine or newspaper review, but an editorial that appeared in the August 30, 1930 issue of *Detective Story Magazine*.

According to a letter in the “Headquarters Chat” column in the August 30, 1930 issue of *Detective Story Magazine*, James H. Parker of Rochester, New York wrote: “I tuned in on my radio one Thursday evening, and heard one of the best plays that I ever heard sent over the air... It made an exciting play. The next morning, I bought my first copy of *Detective Story Magazine*. I found that certain liberties had been taken with the story in the process of dramatization. But in adapting novels for plays and motion pictures, this is always done. And, really, the introducing of a love element into the radio story, which was not in the magazine version, certainly greatly strengthened the drama.” The editor of the magazine claimed this was “the tenor of all the hundreds of tellers that come to us. Many go as far as to say that the radio program which is being put on by Street & Smith’s *Detective Story Magazine* is the big radio hit of the season.” There is cause to suspect the letter reprinted in the magazine was staged to help promote both the magazine and the radio program. No evidence has been found to verify the number of letters written to the magazine.

The second episode, “Three Minutes to Go” (August 7, 1930), was adapted from the short story by Bryan Irvine and dramatized a nickel thriller involving much crashing of thunder, puffing of trains and ticking of time bombs. Fate evidently had a sense of poetic justice. Professor Jordan, a Chicago crook, pays a midnight visit to Abner Waubaugh’s lonely mountain cabin in search of gold rumored to be hidden within its walls. The professor is found dead and the police investigate — at first suspecting an explosion — but with no trace or mark on the body, they are stumped. The solution comes down to fright, as depicted by the talented cast and the sound effects men — the cause of death was a tremendous clap of thunder and the coroner’s verdict is heart failure.

The third episode, “Money on Demand” (August 14, 1930), was adapted from the short story by Roy W. Hinds and was built around the well-known badger game, with a young wastrel’s wealthy mother as the intended victim. A rich young man-about-town refuses to give the gangsters money, so they try to get it from his family by a complicated form of blackmail. The solution comes in the form of her cockney butler who saves the family honor. A radio critic for the Buffalo Evening News reviewed the broadcast: “*Detective Story Magazine* offered a crook play which was almost too polite for the name. . . . The crook’s part was done best of any.”

The Shadow himself opened each episode with a sinister narrative, concluding with the sound of cymbal chimes before the music bridged into the story. At the intermission, The Shadow returned to offer analysis of the victimized protagonist and spiritual guidance to assure the radio listeners the story is not over... the tale will deepen before it concludes. At the end of





each episode, the announcer closed the broadcast with a sales pitch for Street & Smith's *Detective Story Magazine*, from which the evening's story was adapted. Further study into the selection of tales verifies the 52 broadcasts were, indeed, adaptations of short stories which appeared in the weekly mystery magazine. If listeners were to venture to their local newsstand for the magazine, they would find the same short story they heard dramatized the night before, among others.

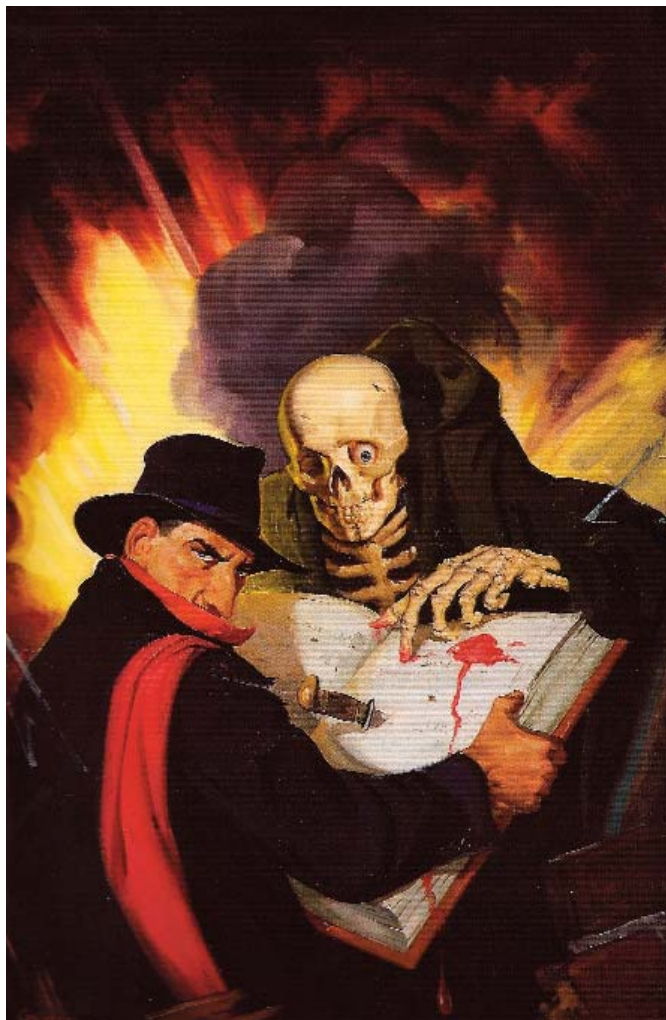
The critics were not equally enthusiastic when offering their reviews, including a few who questioned whether it might be beneficial to the program itself to eliminate the spooky narrator. The August 22, 1930, issue of the *New York Evening Journal* remarked: "There's excellent

radio theatre in the WABC detective story scripts, though the Thursday night adventures are a bit thunderous. And there are acting and atmosphere, too, all of which provide a half-hour of well-planned suspense and thrills. It seems the radio writers have learned, in this instance, at least, how to do it. That allegorical character, 'The Shadow,' who laughs diabolically through the pieces, and the opening bits of hokum, however, could well be spared and the time given over to a bit more narrative. But such trifles aside, there's good entertainment following the sleuths, even though the trails lead through quicksand and gore." \*

\* *It still remains unclear if the narrator was referred to by name during his first radio appearance on July 31, but the August 22 issue of the New York Evening Journal verified that during the fourth episode of the series he was called "The Shadow."*

The October 29, 1930, issue of *Variety* remarked: "*The Shadow*, announcing the Street & Smith detective stories, waxes more melodramatic than the characters themselves in the skit presented. WABC lost one of its MacFadden 'dick' assignments but picked this one up." The October 9, 1930, issue of the *Cincinnati Times-Star* informed their readers that if they wanted "more than an average thrill, turn down your lights or put them out entirely." The same column verified the scriptwriter was William Sweets for all of the episodes. \*

\* *Listed in Red Channels, the 1950 catalog produced by the anti-Communist newsletter Counterattack, Sweets was one of the first and most severely hurt victims of the secret blacklisting practices of the broadcasting industry. His radio career was destroyed almost overnight. He and his wife were driven from town and opened an antique business in Manchester, Vermont.*



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The following is a list of radio stations featuring the Detective Story program as of April 1931.\*

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<b>WADC</b>	Akron, Ohio
<b>WCAO</b>	Baltimore, Maryland
<b>WNAC</b>	Boston, Massachusetts
<b>WKBW</b>	Buffalo, New York
<b>WBBM</b>	Chicago, Illinois
<b>WKRC</b>	Cincinnati, Ohio
<b>WHK</b>	Cleveland, Ohio
<b>WXYZ</b>	Detroit, Michigan
<b>WOWO</b>	Ft. Wayne, Indiana
<b>WDRC</b>	Hartford, Connecticut
<b>KMBC</b>	Kansas City, Kansas
<b>WABC</b>	New York, New York
<b>KOIL</b>	Omaha-Council Bluffs
<b>WCAU</b>	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
<b>WJAS</b>	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
<b>WEAN</b>	Providence, Rhode Island
<b>KMOX</b>	St. Louis, Missouri
<b>WFBL</b>	Syracuse, New York
<b>WSPD</b>	Toledo, Ohio
<b>WMAL</b>	Washington, D.C.

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\* *The broadcast time jumped to a full hour later beginning with the broadcast of October 2. It returned to the original time slot beginning with the broadcast of May 7.*

The November 1930 issue of *What's On The Air* featured a highlight of the *Detective Story Magazine Hour*, reporting that Bill Sweets, "experienced playwright and familiar to radio listeners for many years because of his excellent work on *True Story Hour*, has handled the mystery scripts since the inception of the program." Actual production and selection of the cast, according to the same periodical, was handled by David Chrisman, director of radio for Ruthrauff & Ryan, and Dana Noyes, of the same organization. "Messrs. Chrisman, Noyes and Sweets collaborate on the selection of the proper actors

and actresses to portray the widely varied parts found in these stories. Auditions are given only to experienced thespians. Voice tests are given to between 150 to 200 applicants weekly to obtain just the right intonation for the part." \*

\* *The December 11, 1930, issue of the Cincinnati Times-Star and the January 29, 1931, issue of the Charleston Daily Mail also verified that Dana Noyes and David Chrisman were the producers.*

This may have been an exaggeration for the sake of publicity, as a producer already had a stable of professional radio actors from which to choose. Familiar with the numerous dialects and voices each actor could perform, the selection was made from those they felt were capable for the roles. "Scenes must be depicted simply, or the plot becomes involved," Sweets explained in the same article, commenting on his dramatizations of the detective stories.

*Detective Story Magazine Hour* concluded on the evening of July 30, 1931, after 52 broadcasts, with "Fugitives' Retreat," which portrayed the efforts and methods used by criminals to stay out of reach of the law.

The first person to play the role of The Shadow was James La Curto. A *New Yorker* and a graduate of the American Academy of Dra-





matic Arts, La Curto was recruited for the role of "The Shadow" because of his distinct voice. He was a part of the Judson repertory company and was among the rotating cast of actors for the *True Story* program. Because of the mystery surrounding the narrator of the Detective Story program, press releases did not feature the common biographical material that would often be submitted to the newspapers, creating a larger challenge when it comes to digging into his personal life when compared with other radio celebrities of the time. Even those who attended the stage plays he performed were reportedly unable to connect the two, unaware he was doubling as The Shadow on radio.

Among his notable stage work, La Curto played the principal role of Wah-No-TEE in *No More Women* in 1926, a four-flushing salesman in *A Man's Man* in the summer of 1928, and Carl Sanderson (second billing) in *Appearances* in the spring of 1929. Shortly after taking up the role of "The Shadow," La Curto was playing the role of Nick Medich in *The Noble Experiment* in late 1930.

La Curto's performance was praised by *Variety* in an October 29, 1930, column: "While the True Detective Stories beat Street & Smith to the air with a dramatization of its mag story, the latter firm does its best to make its program creepy, starting with the opening announcement by 'The Shadow' who delivers in low register, hissing and growling in villainous fashion."

### **Frank Readick**

Replacing James La Curto as The Shadow was Frank Readick, who made his debut as the spooky narrator beginning with the broadcast of October 16, 1930.\* Readick was among the supporting cast before taking over the assignment, and supposedly it was decided that La Curto's rendition of The Shadow was pedestrian and not differentiated from his regular dramatic perform-



ances. A more probable explanation is that La Curto resigned from the radio role so he could appear six nights a week in *The Noble Experiment*, which premiered at the Waldorf on October 27. Rehearsals began in New York in early September and the first performance to test audience reaction was October 6 in Waterbury, Connecticut. La Curto discovered juggling both roles was not easy and soon decided he could not do both. Readick was hired to replace him.

\* *The November 28, 1930, issue of The Decatur Review reported: "There was a new 'Shadow' to introduce the CBS Detective Story Thursday. The regular shadow has a voice that vibrates one's backbone. The sub was almost a tenor!" Could there have been a third person playing the role of The Shadow for the broadcast of November 27?*

In 1931, Street & Smith commissioned a contest for the radio listeners with a \$1,000 cash

---

prize for the person who could best describe “The Shadow.” Submissions poured in while the identity of the announcer, Frank Readick, remained a closely guarded secret. \*

\* *Even though newspapers still reported the identity of The Shadow as a mystery as late as 1932, the July 8, 1931, issue of The Boston Post reported the identity of the Shadow “not even known by members of that cast, has been uncovered. ‘The Shadow’ is portrayed by Frank Readick, character artist of the CBS, the same man who enacted the majority of the roles in Time Magazine’s broadcast, and has also taken parts in Columbia’s True Story hours.”*

Six-year-old Bobby Readick had just entered school that year when he stood before the class and revealed the secret: He knew who The Shadow was — his father! The young man was sent home, accused by the teacher of lying. The next day, his mother, having learned the facts, escorted the boy back to school to explain that his father, Frank Readick, was The Shadow and young Bobby was not lying.

Like many of the radio actors during that time, Readick came from a theatrical family; his father had played the role of Sherlock Holmes on stage and his mother originated the title role of *Abie’s Irish Rose*. On the illustrious *March of Time* program, Readick impersonated such luminaries as Charles Lindbergh, Mayor Jimmy Walker of New York, and Japanese Emperor Hirohito.

Readick was part of the repertory group who appeared in multiple radio programs each day throughout the week. The May 27, 1931, issue of *The Circleville Herald* reported that he was appearing in 28 dramatic broadcasts weekly. He proved so valuable that when he played the lead on *Smilin’ Jack* and came down with the flu one day, the entire production shifted the broadcast from the studio to his bedside in the Beaux Arts apartment complex where he lived. Police soon responded to a call from neighbors who were frightened by the gunshots fired on the veranda,

unaware it was a radio broadcast.

When Orson Welles moved to California in 1939, one of his proposed projects was a film adaptation of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. One newspaper column reported Welles had engaged five additional members of his Mercury Theatre troupe — Frank Readick among them.

### **The Shadow Unmasks**

Eight weeks after the *Detective Story Magazine Hour* ended, The Shadow supposedly made an appearance on a radio broadcast heard over KMOX, KSD and KWK in St. Louis, Missouri. Sponsored by the Seventh Annual Southwest National Radio and Allied Products Exposition, the *St. Louis Radio Show* was heard twice a day from 4:45 to 5:15 and 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., CST, in a week-long special broadcast (Monday through Saturday, September 21-26, 1931) from the Crystal Coliseum. Most of the performances were musical in nature, with the Hawaiian Melodists (Joe and Dick), Eddie Jackson’s Crackerjacks, *Romeo and Juliet* (performed by Robert Betts, tenor, and Grace McGowan, soprano), and Helen Traubel. Not all of the stage performances were broadcast, but on the evening of Friday, September 25, The Shadow was heard over the ether in a rare public appearance. As pictured in this advertisement, The Shadow was scheduled to unmask in front of those in attendance!

“After publishing in this column some weeks ago that the real name of ‘The Shadow’ had never been revealed, we received several confidential letters stating that his name was Frank Readick. We have since verified this information.”  
Editor’s Mailbox, May 22-29, 1932, issue of Radio Guide

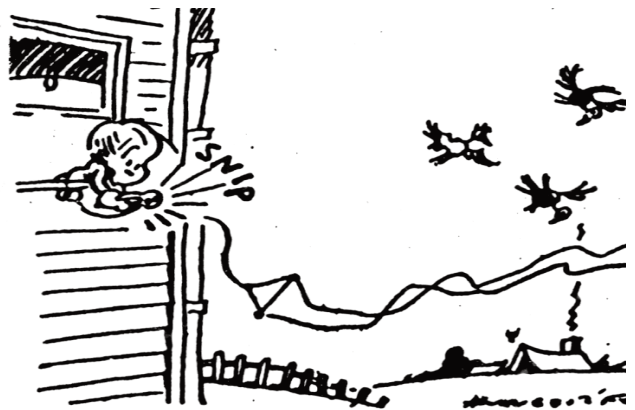
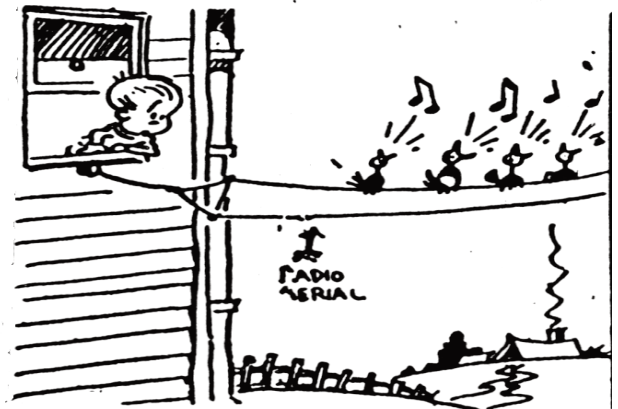


According to a number of news items following the unmasking, Frank Readick was the actor on stage portraying the mysterious Shadow. When The Shadow later made a return to radio, newspapers reprinted a press release issued by the radio station that the masked man's identity still remained a mystery. A number of columnists who recalled the news item of September 1931 were quick to point out that Frank Readick's name had been reported as the elusive figure and questioned the validity of the press release. At the time of the unmasking, Street & Smith may have had no intentions to revive The Shadow and therefore created the confusion that mounted throughout the months following. ■

**LAST 2 DAYS** Friday & Saturday  
**RADIO SHOW**  
**COLISEUM** 2 to 11 P. M.  
 FRIDAY NITE AT 9:15 P. M.  
**THE SHADOW WILL UNMASK**  
 and Saturday from 2 to 6 Hanley's 100 Child Artists will present a Sensational Review. Also See TELEVISION and the Death Defying ICEBERG BAKER Frozen in Solid Ice  
 CHILDREN 25c ALL DAY SATURDAY

Advertising of the unmasking as it appears in the September 25, 1931, issue of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

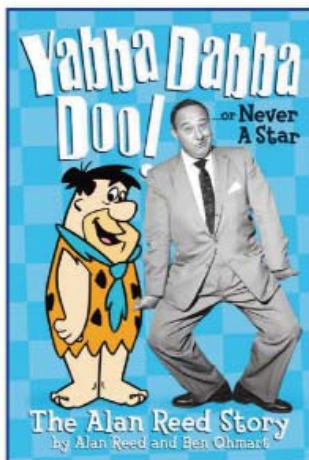
**TUESDAY NIGHT IS TEXACO NIGHT!**  
 TUNE IN 9:30 W L W THE **JUMBO**  
**FIRE-CHIEF**  
 PROGRAM  
 BIGGER THAN A SHOW BETTER THAN A CIRCUS  
 JIMMY DURANTE DONALD NOVIS GLORIA GRAFTON ARTHUR SINCLAIR 32 PIECE ORCHESTRA 32 MALE VOICES  
 SPONSORED BY THE MAKERS OF TEXACO FIRE-CHIEF GASOLINE



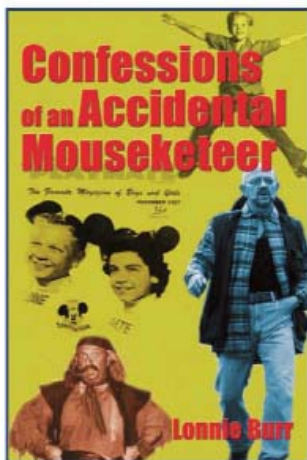
# Bear Manor Media



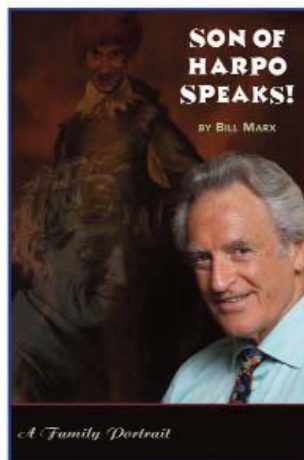
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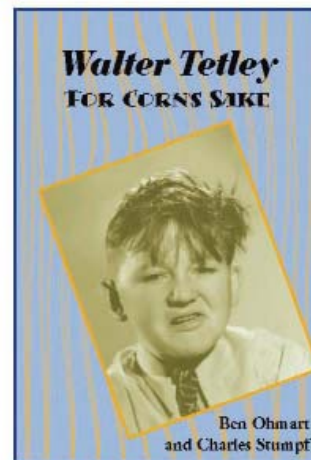
\$19.95



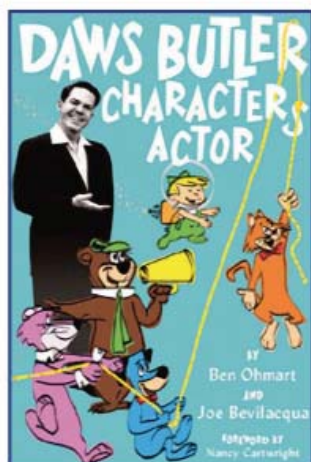
\$26.95



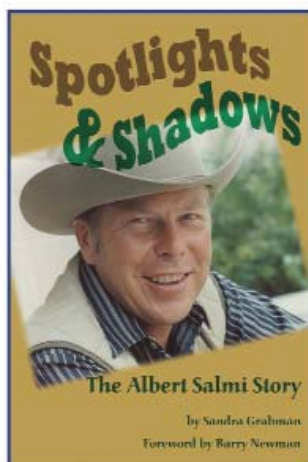
\$24.95



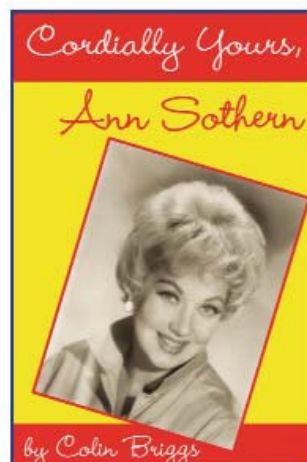
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## NEWS FLUFFS

It's always fun to look at the errors that occasionally creep into radio broadcasts. Take a look at these from assorted newscasts.

- A news commentator in Ottawa, Canada talking about the Pope's lighting a new fire for Easter said, 'The fire was lit in a brassiere.....I beg your pardon, a brazier!'
- From a local broadcast – 'And still missing from the armed robbery is half a million dollars of blue chop sticks.'
- This is your eleven o'clock announcer bringing you an eye on the pot report.. I mean the spot retort, the tot report...oh well, let's just skip it!'
- President Johnson and Premier Kosygin are now having luncheon comprising of a typical American meal in Gasboro, New Jersey, That should be Glassboro, and now a word from our sponsor, Alka Seltzer.'
- This controversial pill will be checked by the Pure Dude and Fugg Administration.'
- The battered bodies of the two young women, both clad in black bathing suits, were found by fishermen last Friday. The younger girl had been fatally shot, and her companion was killed by a blow to the head with a sharp object, possibly an ax. Both had fractured skulls from blows to the back of the head and both of the women were stabbed in the abdomen. Their bodies were tied around the neck with an electrical cord attached to a concrete block. Police suspect foul play.
- From a morning newscast in Boston. 'Police in Danvers discovered the half nude body of a young man lodged in a sewer pipe. It's not believed to be connected to the resent rash of gangland killings, but police are ruling it a death by sewerside'.
- And keeping an eye on the Woodstock Rock Festival was New York Governor Rockin Nelson-feller.'

Taken from the Winter 2001 edition of Nara News

## Editorial Policy of the Old Radio Times

It is the policy of The Old Radio Times not to accept paid advertising in any form. We feel that it would be detrimental to the goal of the Old Time Radio Researchers organization to distribute its' products freely to all wishing them. Accepting paid advertising would compromise that goal, as dealers whose ideals are not in line with ours could buy ad space.

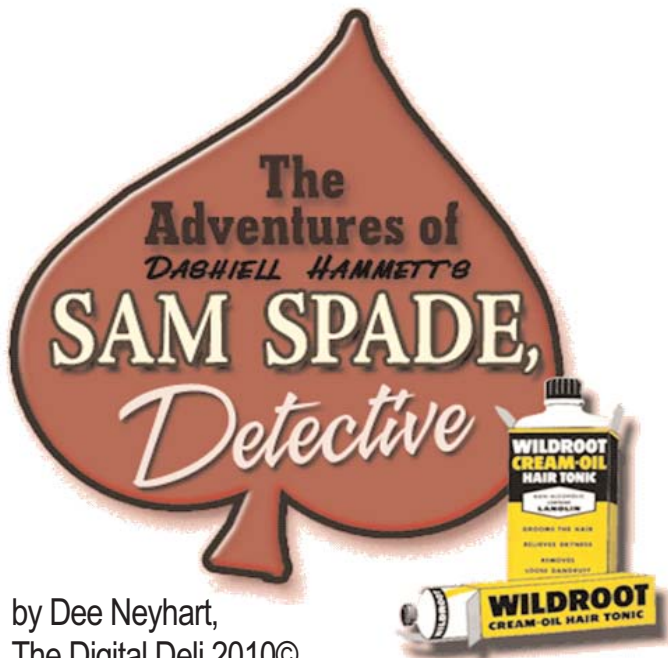
That being said. The Old Radio Times will run free ads from individuals, groups. and dealers whose ideals are in line with the group's goals and who support the hobby.

Publishing houses who wish to advertise in this magazine will be considered if they supply the publisher and editor with a review copy of their new publication. Anyone is free to submit a review or a new publication about old time radio or nostalgia though.

Dealers whose ads we carry or may carry have agreed to give those placing orders with them a discount if they mention that they saw their ad in 'The Old Radio Times'. This is in line with the groups goal of making otr available to the collecting community.

We will gladly carry free ads for any other old time radio group or any group devoted to nostalgia. Submit your ads to: [haradio@msn.com](mailto:haradio@msn.com)

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### Broken Leg Stops Spade

HOLLYWOOD, Oct. 31.—(INS) Howard Duff, the Sam Spade of radio, faced a 3-month layoff from his screen and radio work today as a result of a fractured right leg. The actor fell down the stairs at his home.

### Film Rights Tied Up

Howard Duff is still anxious to play his radio character, Sam Spade, on the screen. But the film rights are tied up by a suit brought by Warner Brothers. The studio claims prior rights to the character, having introduced him in "The Maltese Falcon."

Neither Howard Duff or any other star will be playing Sam Spade on the screen. Warners claims Sam belongs to them and has tied up the character through litigation. . . .

More to the point, here's Howard Duff's contemporaneous observations--in his own words--about the premature demise of Sam Spade, Radio Detective, from the Tuesday, October 10, 1950 Edition of *The Indiana Evening Gazette* [Pennsylvania]:

### Duff Morns Demise of Sam Spade

HOLLYWOOD, Oct. 10. (AP) -- "I'm sorry Sam couldn't show up. He's not very reliable, you know. Probably out on a case."

This was Howard Duff jesting about Sam Spade, the radio sleuth Duff has been playing on the air. He admitted a little lonely without Sam, from whom he parted company three weeks ago. The program was yanked off the air.

"It was very simple," Duff explained. "The sponsor wanted a cheaper show."

But what seemed like a simple cancellation of an air show has created something of a furor. The sponsor has reportedly been flooded with a wave of letters, many of them of a threatening nature. The NBC offices here have received protest letters executives say total 45,000, with other parts of the network not yet counted.

NBC, which has no further connection with the show, is reportedly peeved over what to do with the mail. The network was further upset by zealous members of the Howard Duff Fan Club, which set up a picket protest at the studio after Sam Spade was cancelled.

All this amazes and no doubt delights Duff, who confesses an affection for his late friend, Spade.

"I'd hate to see the old boy die off forever," he



remarked. "After all, we've been together four and a half years without a vacation or Summer layoff. You can grow fond of a person in that time."

Not to mention the moola which the weekly show brought in. And Duff can credit Spade for bringing him



to film fame. He was just another free-lance radio actor when he tried out for the show. Much to his surprise, he landed the role.

His radio fame led him to the movies, and the late Mark Hellinger picked him for "Brute Force" and "The Naked City." He caught on with the bobbysocked crowd and currently leads at least one of the movie magazine popularity polls.

Duff said he hoped to return to the air with Spade, but he has his doubts. Radio is still suffering from the TV jitters and many another top show is languishing without a sponsor.

"Any sponsor who buys Sam will want the TV rights, too," he said.

I can't get tied down to a weekly TV show and do pictures. That would interfere with the deal."

Also, there is a legal snag. Warner Brothers has sued to stop the air show. Sam Spade is the character Humphrey Bogart played in "The Maltese Falcon" and the studio claims it owns all rights. The case has not yet been settled.

Sam has been the most popular private eye on the air and Duff offered his theory: "I think it's because Sam doesn't take himself seriously. He can always see the humor in a situation.

"Still, he can be tough when he needs to be. He's a man of extremes. When he's in good spirits, he's higher than anyone. But when he's low, there's nobody lower.



Lurene Tuttle and Howard Duff at the CBS Mike

Ah, I'll miss him," sighed Duff, and I thought I saw a tear drop into his cup of black coffee.

After the cancellation of Sam Spade, Howard Duff, who confessed an affection for his late friend Sam, remarked "*I'd hate to see the old boy die off forever.*"

And so effectively ended one of Radio's most heralded and beloved Golden Age Radio Programs. Dashiell Hammett enjoyed a relatively brief dalliance with Hollywood for just over seventeen years on and off. During that period his *Maltese Falcon* was brought to the big screen three times:

- 1931's *The Maltese Falcon* with Ricardo Cortez as Sam Spade, Bebe Daniels as 'Ruth Wonderly' (among other colorful aliases), scary looking *Walter Long* as the ill-fated Miles Archer, *Una Merkel* as Effie, and *Dudley Digges* as Casper Gutman. While briefly renamed '*Dangerous Female*' once it came to Television, it has since reverted to its original *The Maltese Falcon* by its current owners, *Turner Classic Movies*.



- 1936's *Satan Met A Lady*, directed by William Dieterle, and *Warren William* as 'Ted Shane' (Sam Spade), *Bette Davis* as Valerie Purvis (among other colorful aliases), *Arthur Treacher* as Anthony Travers (Joel Cairo), *Allison Skipworth* as Madame Barrabas (Kasper Gutman), *Maynard Holmes* as 'Kenneth' (Wilmer Cook), and *Marie Wilson* as Miss Murgatroyd (Effie). A

rather transparently veiled send up to *The Maltese Falcon*, it's pretty much a calculatedly out of control farce version of Hammett's classic.

- 1941's classic *The Maltese Falcon*, directed by *John Huston*, screenplay by both *John Huston* and *Dashiell Hammett*, and starring *Humphrey Bogart* as *Sam Spade*, *Mary Astor* as *Brigid O'Shaughnessey* (among other colorful aliases), *Sydney Greenstreet* as *Kasper Gutman*, *Peter Lorre* as *Joel Cairo*, *Elisha Cook, Jr.* as *Wilmer Cook* and *Ward Bond* as *Detective Polhaus*. This is considered the definitive *The Maltese Falcon*.



The Radio version of *Sam Spade* came to the airwaves in the Summer of 1946 as a Summer replacement for the popular *Woody Herman Show*. Titled *The Adventures of Sam Spade, Detective*, Radio's *Sam Spade* was interpreted by young *Howard Duff*, a relative newcomer to Network Radio. And although *Duff* was a relative novice in a featured Network role, he was supported by no less than '*Radio's First Lady*',

*Lurene Tuttle* as *Effie Perrine* and legendary Radio Director *William Spier*, who'd already made a name for himself with the equally legendary and timeless *Suspense series*. *Gil Doud*, *Robert Tallman*, *William Spier*, *Jason James [as Jo Eisinger]*, *Elliot Lewis*, *E. Jack Neuman*, and *Howard Swanton* took the writers' credits over the years, fashioning Radio's *Sam Spade* as a cross between *Ricardo Cortez's* rogueish *Spade* and *Warren William's* wise-cracking, over-the-top *Ted Shane* from 1936's *Satan Met A Lady*.

Indeed, although the series had a markedly humorous, tongue-in-cheek slant, most of the mysteries--or '*capers*'--presented during the production run were wonderfully twisty, convoluted who-dun-its in their own right. There were several other competing, similarly entertaining detective mysteries on Radio at the time. What set *Sam Spade* apart from most of them was the wonderful interplay between *Howard Duff* and *Lurene Tuttle*, masterfully timed and paced by *William Spier*. And though not characteristically noted for his comedic timing, *Spier's* crisp, fast-moving direction never truly allowed the occasional slapstick or *Tuttle-Duff* exchanges to sidetrack the arc of the script.

The equally entertaining *Let George Do It* allowed for a great deal of wise-cracking and droll humor between *George Valentine* and his own '*Effie*', *Brooksie*. *George* and *Brooksie* had a more intentionally romantic slant to their relationship, whereas *Effie Perrine* had always pretty much reconciled herself to *Sam Spade's* philandering, while still holding a torch for him. Indeed, *Effie's* endearing loyalty and concern for *Sam* became an integral element of the underlying humor of the production as she indefatigably attempts to reform her reprobate employer.

*Lurene Tuttle* is never more of a scene-stealer than in *The Adventures of Sam Spade*,



---

*Detective*. And professionally generous to a fault, her on-air self-deprecation, feigned witlessness and blind adoration of Sam Spade, create an unprecedented opportunity for *Howard Duff* to shine as her drunken, morally and economically challenged scoundrel of a boss. But in yet another perfect marriage of character to actor, Howard Duff manages to pull it all off, despite his character's scurrilous proclivities. By the end of every episode he somehow finds his conscience, solves the mystery at issue, and redeems himself in time to say, "Goodnight, Sweetheart"--and appear to sincerely mean it.

---



The magic combination of *Tuttle*, *Spier* and *Duff* was virtually guaranteed to gain an unprecedentedly loyal audience. Duff, despite his character's wanton moral abandon, continued to charm his audiences for over 220 episodes. Ever the archetypal bad-boy as Sam Spade, Howard Duff's natural charm and irrepressible Irish humor elevated both his role and his career opportunities with each passing year of Sam Spade's production run. But *Tuttle*, *Duff* and *Spier* didn't work their magic in a vacuum. The program's brilliant writers provided consistently intelligent, wonderfully humorous, and engaging material for their stars and director.

It's quite obvious from almost every episode



that the production staff loved their work. One can find an audible break of one kind or another in almost every episode. Either the cast didn't have to rehearse that or the scripts were so funny and well-timed that even after re-

hearsing they couldn't help but break each other *up on air*. This is a delicate balance, to be sure. If overdone, it can become a distraction to the listening audience. But *Spier* seems to have created the perfect environment in which to allow such occasional professional lapses to play themselves out, without interfering with the timing of his scripts. Given both *Lurene Tuttle* and *Howard Duff*'s inherent personal charm and good humor, their occasional lapses soon became an anticipated feature of most of their episodes together. Somewhat like the 'Easter Eggs' DVD enthusiasts of today have come to demand from their viewing favorites.

Keep in mind that this was, for the most part, live radio. While often transcribed for airing in different time zones, the basic production didn't make allowance for any but the most drastic re-cuts or edits between recording session and broadcast. The program's most avid fans came to expect these charming, spontaneous lapses from their two favorite stars. Over the years, their scripted--and *unscripted*--interplay only endeared them even further to their rapidly growing audience.

It's also quite apparent that the various supporting casts over the years enjoyed their appearances on *Sam Spade* with equal zeal.

Broadcast from the West Coast for almost the entire run, the predominately West Coast actor pool provided a wealth of talent to the productions. Radio legends *Olan Soulé*, *Bea Benadaret*, *Hans Conreid*, *Elliott Lewis*, *Paul Frees*, *Junius Matthews*, *William Conrad*, *Jack Webb*, *Frank Lovejoy*, *Tudor Owen*, *Wally Maher*, *Dick Powell*, *Jerry Hausner*, *Cathy Lewis*, *Joseph Kearns*, *Jeanette Nolan*, *Mary Jane Croft*, *Betty Lou Gerson*, and *Elliott Reid* supported the production over the years. Indeed, appearances by William Spier' wives *Kay Thompson* and *June Havoc*, *Peter Lorre*, and *Lurene Tuttle's* daughter, *Barbara Ruick* (while still a teenager) were among several fascinating, uncredited contributions to the series over the years. To say a good time was had by all, understates the experience. The on-air staff's pranks extended to even their legendary announcer, *Dick Joy*, upon whom several attempts were made over the years to flummox one of Radio's most professional announcers--*to no avail*.



*Howard Duff with his two mentors, Lurene Tuttle, left, and William Spier, center. ca. 1946*

Such was the environment that William Spier created for his cast and crew--and for his listening audience as well. The good humor extended to their sponsor, *Wildroot Cream Oil*, whose emblematic jingle had become part and parcel of

every broadcast they sponsored. As equally associated with *Fearless Fosdick* as *Sam Spade*, their advertising campaign featured both fearless sleuths in a series of equally entertaining and engaging comic strips over the years of their sponsorship. Reportedly aired live during each episode, The Wildroot Barbershop Quartet's lively performances of "*It's Wildroot Cream Oil, Charlie*" remain one of the campier elements of each commercial broadcast.



*The very first Adventures of Sam Spade CBS spot ad, from July 12, 1946*

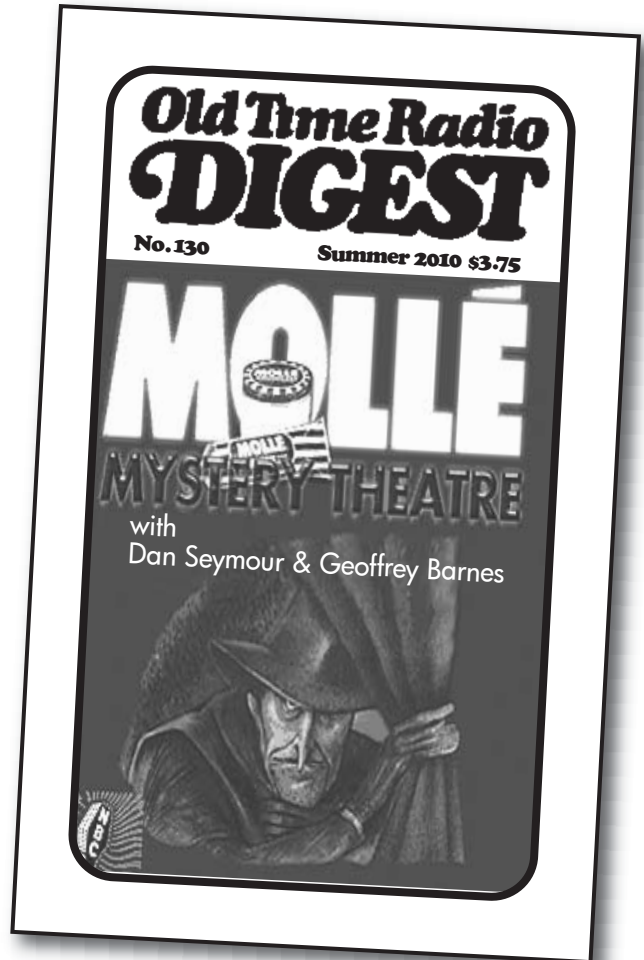
Wildroot Cream Oil's relationship with The Adventures of Sam Spade, Detective was all roses and champagne until one of Sam Spade's scripts made a passing reference to a notoriously corrupt, Right-Wing Republican Congressional Representative from New Jersey. Thomas, famous for scanning the newspapers for any perceived slight to him or his committee, undertook an 'investigation' of members of The Adventures of Sam Spade, Detective production company. An archetypal conflicted right-winger, J. Parnell Thomas employed the tried and true right-wing tactic of diverting attention from one's own corrupt dealings by pointing to imagined, fabricated misdeeds of others. In this case, his

targets were 'Sam' Hammett and by implication, Howard Duff himself. At the same time, investigative journalists Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson were undertaking investigations of their own--into Thomas' own corruption problems.

Hammett had already made many very public, deprecatory observations regarding J. Parnell Thomas' right-wing machinations, as well as those of the witch-hunting House Un-American Activities Committee. The HUAC, one of the Right-Wing's more shameful and outlandish 'strawman' witch hunts over the years, was comprised of some of Congress' most sexually conflicted, corrupt, and morally compromised politicians, aides and henchmen who ever gained public office. They exercised their growing power through intimidation, fabricating 'evidence' and outright libel and slander. Duff's efforts in support of labor unions were conflated by the HUAC through their influence over "Red Channels", American History's most cowardly, shameful, and opaque 'blacklist'. Once a performer's name made an appearance in *Red Channels*, no amount of genuine rebuttal could erase the taint on his or her career.

Even though the damage to *Howard Duff* and *The Adventures of Sam Spade* had already been planted by J. Parnell Thomas, The American Legion [Black Shirt Chapter] and the HUAC, it took Wildroot a year to weigh its 'options'. Apparently feeling that their shiny, slicked-back hair demographic was at risk with further sponsorship of *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, they ruminated over either cancelling *Sam Spade* outright or undertaking another Detective Drama with which to retain the same audience. They decided to do both. Wildroot, to its shame, ultimately canceled *Sam Spade*, citing Dashiell Hammett's 'creator' credit and Howard Duff's starring role. Determined to shift their sponsorship to "*Charlie Wild, Detective*", Wildroot decided to abandon *The Ad-*

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ventures of *Sam Spade*, Detective entirely. Citing layer upon layer of nonsensical reasons for the series' abrupt cancellation, NBC was understandably deluged with a reported 45,000 to 250,000 demands for the show's reinstatement. But by that time, Howard Duff had wisely moved on to a more fulfilling--and financially predictable--Film career.

In an fitting twist, J. Parnell Thomas was brought down at about the same time that Wildroot was approaching NBC about cancelling the program. The House Republican Steering Committee predictably dragged out any sanctions or investigation of Thomas for most of 1949, but a Grand Jury was eventually seated. Thomas was tried and convicted to 18 months in prison for carrying personnel on his Congressional payroll while depositing their pay in his own accounts, and Thomas resigned from Congress in January of 1950, only days before he was to begin his prison sentence at Danbury. In a further, predictable Right-Wing twist, Thomas had taken the Fifth throughout his trial, much the same as Dashiell Hammett had attempted to when he was brought before Thomas's HUAC. In the case of the HUAC, they simply refused to accept a Fifth Amendment election from Hammett. But the trial of J. Parnell Thomas correctly accepted his Fifth Amendment election, while ultimately convicting him anyway.

Indeed, some Radio historians cite the cancellation of *Sam Spade* as the beginning of the end of The Golden Age of Radio. When it became obvious that the political machinations of fringe right-wingers could bring down a program as popular as *Sam Spade* it marked a major sea-change in the rapidly eroding *public ownership of the public airwaves*. NBC finally bowed to the unprecedented public demand to reinstate *Sam Spade* and aired *The New Adventures of*

*Sam Spade, Detective* two months after its cancellation as *The Adventures of Sam Spade, Detective*--less its sponsor and star. West Coast NBC up-and-comer *Steve Dunne* was cast as *Howard Duff's* replacement. But as even the show's most ardent fans would admit, the show could never have been the same again without the *Howard Duff/Lurene Tuttle* magic. The program limped along for another twenty-four episodes before its ultimate demise.



*The Adventures of Sam Spade, Detective* remains one of the most popular programs from The Golden Age of Radio. While there are only a fifth of the *Sam Spade production* programs in circulation, a few previously uncirculated episodes make their way into circulation every few years. One can only hope that all of them will eventually be released by their holders. There's no question that they exist. Consumer

recording and transcription equipment was readily available throughout the production run. It's just a matter of time, greed, and conscience before the remainder of the recorded episodes find their way back to the public that popularized them in the first place.

As can be noted in the detailed log below, NBC wasn't quite sure if they'd resurrect *The Adventures of Sam Spade* as late as July of 1951, but as history has proven, there was no further resurrection of the production.

Well Howard, you got your wish. Sam Spade lives on in the hearts and minds of the millions of Golden Age Radio fans who still listen to and treasure this classic Golden Age Radio program even more now than when it first aired. ■

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I really enjoy each issue of 'The Old Radio Times' and think it's the best 'zine on otr being published today, but I might be a bit prejudiced! But you are really doing a good job and I know that each reader thanks you.

I have a question that no-one has ever answered to my satisfaction for me and I'm hoping that one of our readers might be able to do so. It is .... What-ever happened to the SCANFAX collection that was given to the North American Radio Archives(NARA) in the late 1990s'?

As you recall it was given to NARA by the Brigham Young University and consisted of 80,000 reels of old time radio programs. Each reel contained 30 minutes of program, but I know a lot of the reels were in poor shape.

NARA was slowly transferring these programs to cassette in the fall of 2000, but were appealing for a financial grant to assist them.

I did read an appeal from their librarian for assistance in paying the storage fee on them and he stated that he hoped to get them moved

closer to his home.

As you know, NARA disintegrated shortly after the summer of 2003. I heard rumors that the librarian sold the SCANFAX collection to a dealer, and I know that some portions of it did show up in a dealer's catalog, but who bought it? Where is the rest of the collection at? If the collection was sold, why was it not offered to one of the other otr clubs such as SPERDVAC, or the Colorado club?

Additionally NARA had an excellent print library with a lot of out of print and very rare items. What did the print librarian do with it? Again I heard stories that it wound up in a dump in Arizona. I would hope that is not true.

Any assistance in clearing this puzzle up for me would be greatly appreciated.

Jim Beshires [beshiresjim@yahoo.com](mailto:beshiresjim@yahoo.com)

Lead Moderator Old Time Radio Researchers

**Editor's note:** Don't want to answer this in a public form, but to my knowledge the print library did not end up in a dump in Arizona. Again, as far as I know the librarian still has all the tapes. He is also a dealer.





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# The 4th Revised Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming & Guide to All Circulating Shows

Written by Jay Hickerson October, 2010  
Editor of Hello Again

# 565-page reference book listing over 6000 network, regional, local and syndicated radio programs. (Soft cover and spiral bound). This information was first presented in this combined format in 1992 with separate publications issued in 1986.

# Traces each program by giving broadcast dates, sponsors, network and air time. Often a brief description with one or two cast members is given. The main purpose, however, is to trace each program by showing when it was on the air.

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## Once upon a time there was old time radio

By Ned Norris

Back when gasoline was just a dime a gallon, when fresh milk was still delivered to people's doorsteps in glass bottles, when America had just discovered sliced bread and automatic pop-up toasters...back when times were simple...  
...there was old-time-radio.

Of course, we call it "old-time-radio" today but back in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, radio was the newest, most popular and powerful medium around. Radio was to the 1930s what the Internet was to the 1990s.

The years between 1959 and 1962 are often referred to as the Golden Age of Radio -- and radio programs that were broadcast during that period had significantly more variety than radio programming today.

The shows captured the hearts and imaginations of Americans from coast to coast. It was a time when families would gather 'round the radio in the living room -- that "magic box" that had the mysterious power to snatch laughter, tears, drama, thrills and adventure out of the air and bring it into our homes.



Golden Age of Radio started in 1929 with the debut of radio shows like *The Goldbergs*, *True*



*Detective Mysteries*, *National Farm and Home Hour*, and the *Rudy Vallee Show*. It continued through into the 1930s when shows like *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Lux Radio Theater*, *The Aldrich Family*, *Bob Hope*, and the *Al Jolson Show* hit the airwaves.



By the 1940s radio broadcasting was in full flow. Shows like *Abbott and Costello*, *Escape*, *Suspense*, *This is Your Life*, *FBI*, the *Judy Canova Show*, *You Bet Your Life*, and *The Adventures of Phillip Marlow* dominated the airwaves

By the time the 1950s came around radio had a serious competitor in the form of television, but many high quality shows could be heard every night of the week. *Gunsmoke*,





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*Dimension X, Tales of the Texas Rangers, Dr. Kildare* and *The Sixty-Four Dollar Question* were heard by millions.

By the late 1950s the glory years of radio drama were coming to an end. In September 1962 the last episodes of *Suspense* and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* were broadcast. It was the end of a glorious era. An era that exploded into the public consciousness in the 1920s, but had finally been cast aside in favor of the new visual medium of television.

What happened to all those old radio shows and why would anyone want to listen to them today?

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It's been over 70 years since Amos n' Andy hit the airwaves, nearly 50 years since Fibber McGee's junk-filled closet crashed down on anyone that happened to open the door, and over 40 years since Johnny Dollar filed his final expenses

claim, so why would anyone want to listen to decades-old radio shows when we have literally

hundreds of TV and cable channels to choose from, and an endless selection of movies on the big screen, not to mention online entertainment with all its interactive bells and whistles?

One of the primary reasons is nostalgia for the "Good Old Days". Old-time-radio shows enable listeners to take a pleasant stroll down memory lane to when times were simple. For older listeners it brings back memories of their childhood or early adult life, and for the younger generations it provides a wonderful insight into how lives have changed over the years.

Another reason why the old time radio shows are seeing a renaissance is the amazing variety of shows that were recorded during radio's golden period. There are literally thousands of old-time-radio programs to suit every taste, mood and age bracket, covering everything from spine tingling thrillers through to surreal comedy.

Finally, there is an ever increasing desire for wholesome entertainment. Old-time-radio shows offer a refreshing respite from the vulgarities, profanities, sex and violence that punctuate modern-day TV, movies and other forms of entertainment.

Fortunately, over the years many people have collected and restored these old shows so that they can be enjoyed again as much by older listeners as a new generation coming to them for the first time. Ironically, it was the growth in popularity of a brand new technological medium, the Internet, that really helped to make these classic radio shows available to a wider audience.

So, whether it is for nostalgia reasons, for wholesomeness, or just for plain entertainment value, old-time radio shows are becoming an increasingly popular alternative to today's mainstream media and one that is well worth checking out whether you're 9 or 90.

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## OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES & UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES

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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 months of November and December. They were purchased by donations from members and friends of the Old Time Radio Researchers. If you have cassettes that you would like to donate, please e-mail [beshiresjim@yahoo.com](mailto:beshiresjim@yahoo.com). For reel-to-reels, contact [david0@centurytel.net](mailto:david0@centurytel.net) and for transcription disks [tony\\_senior@yahoo.com](mailto:tony_senior@yahoo.com).

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### Arthur Godfrey Time

6x-xx-xx (2586) First Song - My Ukulele.wav  
6x-xx-xx (2587) First Song - Daydream.wav

### Calumet Show

48-09-06 First Song - Ugg, Ugg, Gigalo.wav  
48-xx-xx First Song - Hasty Teacup.wav  
48-xx-xx First Song - Oopsie Daisy, Excuse Me Darling.wav  
48-xx-xx First Song - Rover, Scoot Over.wav

### Chase, The

52-10-12 The Cat's Meow.wav  
52-10-19 Manhunt.wav  
52-11-23 Blackout.wav  
52-11-30 The Most Dangerous Game.wav  
52-12-28 (31) No Contact.wav  
53-01-04 (32) Fortune Hunter.wav

### Chesterfield Supper Club

45-05-23 First Song theme song of Pick and Pat's radio program..wav  
45-05-30 First Song - Carry On, Brother, Carry On.wav

### Chuckwagon Jamboree

50-08-25 First Song - Oh, For The Life Of A Cowboy.wav

### Country Hoe Down

58-xx-xx First Song - Send For My Baby.wav  
58-xx-xx First Song - That's All.wav

### Country Music Time (Air Force)

xx-xx-xx (183) First Tune - Don't It Make You Wanna Go.wav

xx-xx-xx (185) First Tune - Today I Started Loving You Again.wav

xx-xx-xx (186) First Tune - Cut Across, Shorty.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - Put It Off Until Tomorrow.wav

### Country Style U.S.A

xx-xx-xx (240) First Song - Anytime.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - Movin' On.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - I'm Gonna Give Myself A Party.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - Virginia Reel.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - That's The Way I Feel.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - I'm Guilty Of Dreaming And Talking Out Loud.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - No See, No Talk, No Hear.wav

xx-xx-xx First Song - On My Mind.wav

### Curtain Time

47-03-15 (88) A Bridge For Martha.wav

47-03-22 (89) Wanted - A Name.wav

47-03-29 (90) Lightning Strikes Twice.wav

47-04-05 (91) Mr. Justice Jimmy.wav

47-04-12 (92) Reluctant Hero.wav

47-04-19 (93) Hometown Girl.wav

47-04-26 (94) Positive Reaction.wav

47-05-03 (95) Birds Of A Feather.wav

47-05-10 (96) Cassanova On The Mountain.wav

47-05-17 (97) The World Between.wav

47-05-24 (98) Wanted - An Old Fashioned Girl.wav

47-05-31 (99) Twice Blessed.wav

47-06-14 (101) Reluctant Bride.wav

47-06-21 (1002) Hook, Line And Sinker.wav

47-06-28 (103) The Belle Of The Barbary Coast.wav

47-09-13 (114) Lady In The Night.wav

Curtain Time 47-09-20 (115) Double Life.wav



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## Curtain Time

47-09-27 (116) Grandmother Knew Best.wav

47-10-04 (117) Part Time Husband.wav

47-10-11 (118) Ticker Tape Romance.wav

## Enchanted Keyboard

xx-xx-xx (101) First selection is a rondo by Schubert (AFRS).wav

xx-xx-xx (102) First Song - Albanez (AFRS).wav

xx-xx-xx (103) First selection is an improvisation based on a concerto by Rachmoninov (AFRS).wav

xx-xx-xx (104) Guest - Timira Mazlov (AFRS).wav

## Escape

47-12-10 Owl Creek Bridge.wav

48-09-05 Dream Of Armageddon.wav

50-07-21 Yellow Wake.wav

50-10-21 (142) Time Machine.wav

50-11-10 Earth Abides - Pt1.wav

50-11-17 Earth Abides - Pt2.wav

51-08-15 A Rough Sheet.wav

52-10-12 Gringo.wav

## Faultless Starch Time

52-11-30 First Song - I Want To Be Wanted.wav

52-12-07 First Song - A Bouquet Of Roses.wav

52-12-28 First Song - The Cowboy's Dance Song.wav

53-01-04 First Song - Till The End Of The World.wav

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## McCARTHY'S RIVAL

NEITHER "CHARLIE" NOR REAL, LIVE GIRLS CAN TAKE "OPHELIA'S" PLACE IN EDGAR BERGEN'S AFFECTIONS

Out in Hollywood, it's an open secret that it's never closed season-matrimonially speaking-on Edgar Bergen. The canny son of a Swede is one of the most eligible bachelors in show-business, and there are plenty of girls who would give him their last bottle of hair tonic just to claim squatters' rights on that knee which *Charlie McCarthy*

occupies with such aplomb. They would willingly stepmother *Charlie* (and even *Mortimer Snerd*) if Bergen would only speak for himself.

But NBC's ventriloquist star remains elusive, and you can't blame the girls for thinking there must be a mystery woman somewhere in the lucrative Bergen woodpile. So what have they finally found? *Ophelia*—a goblin wisp of a woman who eats right out of Bergen's hand and, in face, even talks through his fingers!

Friends have often seen *Ophelia* perform at private parties, where Bergen creates her on the spot with a borrowed lipstick and eyebrow pencil and his own handkerchief for a shawl. Radio fans, however, heard her for the first time on a broadcast of the Blue Network's "What's New?" Ever since, letters have been creeping into TUNE IN's mail, demanding the lowdown on the little woman.



From **TUNE IN** Magazine March, 1944