



# The Old Radio Times

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## The Story of Joe Palooka Radio Program by Dee Neyhart, The Digital Deli 2011©

### Background

The World's fascination with the daily and Sunday cartoon features began with efforts to either satirize, lampoon, ridicule or graphically editorialize on popular events, politics, social trends or movements of their respective eras. America's tradition of editorial cartoons and regularly syndicated cartoon features stretches back to the Revolutionary War era. In the case of editorial cartoons it's become obvious over American history that a *picture is indeed worth a thousand words in many instances*. Editorial cartoons throughout American history have satirized, mocked or lampooned events such as the colonists' objections to being over taxed by England. They've satirized the extraordinary graft and corruption of the *Tammany Hall* and 'Boss' *Tweed* era of New York politics. *Bill Mauldin* and *Ernie Pyle*, perhaps better than any other two journalists during World War II, could convey with a single cartoon illustration--or a single fox-hole-penned paragraph--the thousands of words necessary to describe the inherent dangers, simplest joys and heart-breaking plights of our

G.I.s overseas.

Throughout the Golden Age of Radio era of American History the daily and Sunday funnies helped millions of Americans cope in the smallest ways with the effects of Women's Suffrage, Child Labor abuses, Industrialization, World War I, the Wall Street Crash, the Great Depression, the homefront arguments--pro and con--throughout the isolationist era leading up to World War II, and of course World War II and its aftermath.

The appearance of many of America's most beloved and popular comic strip characters and their families over Radio seemed a natural extension of Print media strips.

LIFE magazine's June 5, 1939 article on America's favorite cartoon fiction cited forty of the more popular comic strips of the era that ultimately found their way to Radio. Some popular examples of comic strips that found their way to the air follow:

- 1931 *Little Orphan Annie*
- 1932 *Buck Rogers*
- 1932 *The Story of Joe Palooka*
- 1932 *Skippy*

- 1932 *Tarzan*
- 1934 *The Gumps*
- 1935 *Dick Tracy*
- 1935 *Flash Gordon*
- 1935 *Jungle Jim*
- 1935 *Popeye*
- 1937 *Baby Snooks* [from 1904's *The Newly weds*]
- 1937 *Terry and the Pirates*
- 1938 *Red Ryder*
- 1938 *Superman*
- 1938 *The Lone Ranger*
- 1939 *Blondie*
- 1939 *Li'l Abner*
- 1941 *A Date with Judy*
- 1941 *Gasoline Alley*
- 1943 *Archie Andrews*
- 1943 *Black Hood*
- 1945 *The Nebbs*
- 1953 *Beetle Bailey* [The Comic Weekly Man]

In many cases a popular comic strip of the era found its way to the comics section only *after* appearing over Radio. In most instances of comic strip characters finding their way to the air, the original artist, writer or syndicator of the strip maintained control over the franchise irrespective of the medium over which the franchise entertained its audiences. And indeed many of the popular comic strips cited above found their way to Film and eventually Television. That was the staying power of some of America's most popular comic strip characters and their families.

### Ham Fisher brings his Joe Palooka to America's Funny Pages

Hammond Edward 'Ham' Fisher (1900 - 1955), was a Wilkes-Barre native son who



Ham Fisher



1934's *Palooka* for Reliance Pictures featuring Jimmy Durante as Knobby Walsh

from the age of 6 had declared that one day he'd write his own comic strip. Ham had to quit school at the age of 14 to help out his family for a year. His father had suffered some reversals. First struggling as a door to door brush peddler and truck driver, young Ham Fisher also sold automobiles and worked in a haberdashery shop very similar to the one his eventual character 'Knobby Walsh' had owned. He eventually finished high school, illustrating the school's newspaper and making up posters for student activities. *Fisher* eventually found his way to the *Wilkes-Barre Record* working as an ad salesman, cartoonist, and occasional reporter. The *Record* had first hired Fisher on the strength of some political illustrations he'd submitted to the paper. Fisher's *Wilkes-Barre Record* experience served as a stepping stone to the *New York Daily News*. By 1920, *Ham Fisher* had put together a series of sketches and sample portfolio strips of a character he first called '*Joe Dumbel-letski*' then '*Joe Dumbell*.'

Between 1920 and 1927 *Fisher* continued to play around with the character, eventually naming him "*Joe Palooka*." While working for the *McNaught Syndicate* throughout 1927 he began attempting to promote his *Joe Palooka* strip in earnest during the course of his travels across



*Vitaphone's first short film featuring Joe Palooka was 1936's For the Love of Pete with Shemp Howard as Knobby*

the country as a strip salesman for the syndicate.

By 1928, having found a reported twenty interested papers, *Ham Fisher* presented his twenty sales in hand to McNaught as a *fait accompli*. On the strength of those initial nibbles, McNaught agreed to give *Joe Palooka* a trial. Within a few months *Joe Palooka* had become a new Sunday sensation across America. The term "palooka" had first appeared in Print during the early 1920s. Fisher's strip further propelled the word *palooka* in the popular vernacular of the day in reference to prize fighters of varying degrees of success. *Ham Fisher* is also credited

with discovering and mentoring the equally famous *Al Capp* of "*Li'l Abner*" fame.

As *LIFE* magazine told it, *Alfred Caplin* was dejectedly walking down a New York sidewalk late one morning when a *mysterious stranger* pulled up next to him in a car. The stranger asked *Caplin* if the portfolio under *Caplin's* arm might be rejected samples of *his* strips. Young *Alfred Caplin*, better known as *Al Capp*, understandably miffed continued walking on, but the stranger persisted. That *stranger--Ham Fisher--* explained that he'd recently lost his assistant and would *Al Capp* be interested in working with Fisher on *Joe Palooka*. The rest, as the over-worked saying goes, was cartoon history in the making. Unfortunately the relationship between *Fisher* and *Al Capp* would eventually sour years later, but we're getting ahead of ourselves.

*Fisher* never portrayed his *Joe Palooka* as a "palooka." *Ham Fisher's Joe Palooka* was the *heavyweight champeen of da wold*. *Ham Fisher's* initial inspiration for "*Joe Dumbell*" was a real prize fighter he'd met at a pool hall in Wilkes-Barre in 1920. The two chatted a bit while watching the proceedings and *Fisher* was reportedly taken by the pugilist's otherwise mild manners and dedication to supporting his orphaned brother and sister--while still a *wildcat* in the ring. *Fisher* later said that the meeting hit him like an atomic bomb and he literally bowled over the prize fighter in his rush to get to his drawing board at the Wilkes-Barre Record. But we digress. Over the course of the following thirty years, *Fisher's Joe Palooka* franchise found its way into Film, Radio and ultimately Television.

### **Joe Palooka enters Radio's squared circle**

With the *Joe Palooka* strip soon syndicated in hundreds of newspapers throughout America, *Ham Fisher* approached the Columbia System (CBS) chain about the possibility of bringing *Joe*

*Palooka* to Radio. CBS found that *Heinz 57 Varieties* showed interest in sponsoring *The Story of Joe Palooka* to promote their *Heinz Rice Flakes* and *Heinz Breakfast Wheat* cereal products to juvenile adventure fans across America. Originally committing to twenty-six episodes, *The Story of Joe Palooka* premiered on April 12, 1932 over CBS affiliate stations across the chain.

From the April 28th 1932 edition of *The Alden Times*: **Joe Palooka, Boxing Champ, Is Now Heard on the Air**

*Joe Palooka, that lovable boob of the prize ring and comic strip created by Ham Fisher, now comes to radio.*

*Palooka, his fights and troubles and mixups, is being presented each Tuesday and Thursday at 6:45 p. m., EST, over the Columbia system.*

*The dumb, gentle but unbeatable Boxing champ is portrayed by Ted Bergman, 200-pound Columbia actor who looks like a prize-fighter, in the fifteen-minute hilarious sketches adapted by Georgia Backus. His bold and wise-cracking manager, Knobby Walsh, is played by Frank Readick, 130-pound Thespian. Ted Husing describes Joe's tremendous fight scenes and Harry von Zell announces the program.*

Airing every Tuesday and Thursday at the dinner hour, *The Story of Joe Palooka* launched with a huge promotion throughout the U.S. At the time touting "over 10,000,000 fans" of the comic strip, Heinz 57's spot ads of the era heralded the new series as "the greatest 15 minutes of fun on the air." *The Story of Joe Palooka* starred young Teddy Bergman [Alan Reed, the 'voice' of TV's *Fred Flintstone*] in the role of Joe Palooka, with Frank Readick as Knobby Walsh, Joe's friend and manager, and Elmira Roessler, Elsie Hitz, Mary Jane Higby in the role of Ann Howe. Georgia Backus wrote the scripts for the juvenile adventure serial and Ted Husing announced all the ferocious action during Joe's fight scenes. Radio,



*Throughout World War II Pfc Joe Palooka entertained service people at home and abroad, lending his name and images to many Service programs and instructional manuals.*

Film and Television legend *Harry Von Zell* was the series' announcer and Heinz spokesperson. Quickly running through the two-a-week order of twenty-six installments, Heinz 57 Varieties ordered an additional thirteen episodes, for a total of thirty-eight before pulling the plug on the short-lived series.

With a solid cast, comparatively engaging adventures for the genre, renowned sportscaster *Ted Husing's* animated blow-by-blow expositions, and *Frank Readick's* engaging dialogue, the series had every reason to continue beyond its initial run. *Teddy Bergman* was an ideal choice for the role of Joe Palooka and though

listeners couldn't see it at the time, Bergman certainly *looked* the part of a heavyweight. As it turned out, Billboard reported that the reason Heinz *short-counted Joe Palooka out* was that *Mrs. Heinz* idly tuned into the series while attending a soiree in Pttspurgh and upon actually hearing the show for the first time pronounced the series a bit too *undignified* a vehicle to promote the Heinz Family's products. She had *Mr. Heinz* pull the plug on the series. The production performed the last two weeks of the series on the cuff--and CBS aired it *sustained*. It failed to attract another sponsor. But timing was everything--*then as now*.

Understandably *down but by no means out for the count* by the Radio experience, *Ham Fisher* began shopping his Joe Palooka franchise to the Film Industry. And as it turned out, *Ham Fisher* wasn't quite ready to give up on Radio either. But we're getting ahead of *ourselves again*.

### Joe Palooka takes a training run at Hollywood

Joe Palooka's Film career spanned twenty 'B' Films between 1934 and 1951. The first actor to portray Joe Palooka in Film was *Stu Erwin* in 1934's *Palooka* for Reliance Pictures. *Palooka* also featured *Robert Armstrong*, *Lupe Velez*, *Jimmy Durante* and *Thelma Todd*. Jimmy Durante portrayed *Knobby Walsh*, Joe's trainer.

On the strength of that initial box office success, Vitaphone undertook a series of eight more Joe Palooka short films featuring Joe Palooka lookalike *Robert Norton* as Joe and *Shemp Howard* of *The Three Stooges* as *Knobby Walsh*:

- 1936 *For the Love of Pete*
- 1936 *Here's Howe*
- 1936 *Punch and Beauty*
- 1936 *The Choke's on You*
- 1936 *The Blonde Bomber*
- 1937 *Kick Me Again*

**VITAPHONE**

## TO GREATER SALES IN YOUR MARKET



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DELIVER A SALES PUNCH  
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---

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THEY INFLUENCE PURCHASES  
THEY ARE TOMORROW'S BUYERS

---

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LOCAL OR REGIONAL SPONSORSHIP

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360 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE . . . CENTRAL 4374  
CHICAGO 1, ILLINOIS

January 26 1946 North Central Broadcasting spot ad promoting the 1945 and 1946 syndications of *The Story of Joe Palooka*

- 1937 *Taking the Count*
- 1937 *Thirst Aid*

By no means idle during World War II, *Ham Fisher's* comic strip hero went off to War just like millions of other heroes of his day. *Private First Class Joe Palooka* found his way into the hearts of servicemen the world over through both *Stars and Stripes* and *Yank Magazine*. One of the first comic strip heroes to *enlist* (1940) and one of the last to *return to civilian life* (1946), Pfc Palooka's War record left an indelible impression on both the millions of servicemen and seamen who'd read him abroad, and millions back on the homefront.

Having taken a well-earned *big screen* hiatus during the World War II years, the franchise once again found its way to Film in a series of eleven 'B' Films for Monogram. The Monogram Pictures run featured *Joe Kirkwood, Jr.* as Joe Palooka, *Leon Errol* as Knobby Walsh, and *Elyse Knox* as Joe Palooka's love interest, Ann Howe:

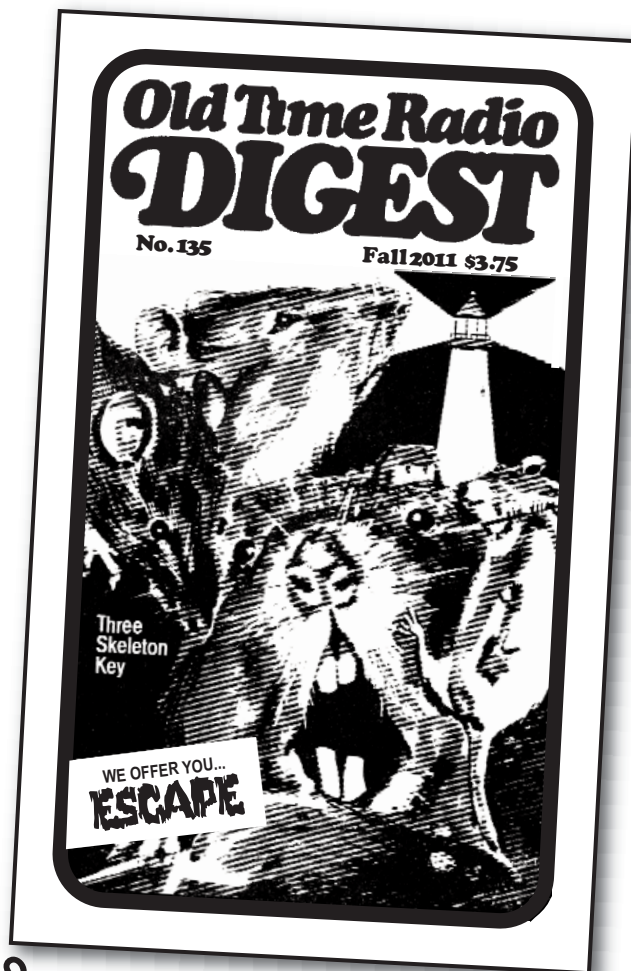
- 1946 *Joe Palooka, Champ*
- 1946 *Gentleman Joe Palooka*
- 1947 *Joe Palooka in The Knockout*
- 1948 *Joe Palooka in Fighting Mad*
- 1948 *Joe Palooka in Winner Take All*
- 1949 *Joe Palooka in The Big Fight*
- 1949 *Joe Palooka in The Counterpunch*
- 1950 *Joe Palooka Meets Humphrey*
- 1950 *Joe Palooka in Humphrey Takes a Chance*
- 1950 *Joe Palooka in The Squared Circle*
- 1951 *Joe Palooka in Triple Cross*



### The Monogram Series prompts Joe Palooka's return to Radio

In yet another demonstration of the adage, "*timing is everything*" *Ham Fisher* took another run at a Radio version of *Joe Palooka*. In 1945, Fisher got NBC interested enough in the project to get them to order two 15-minute audition recordings for the proposed project. *Joe Palooka* had become wildly popular throughout

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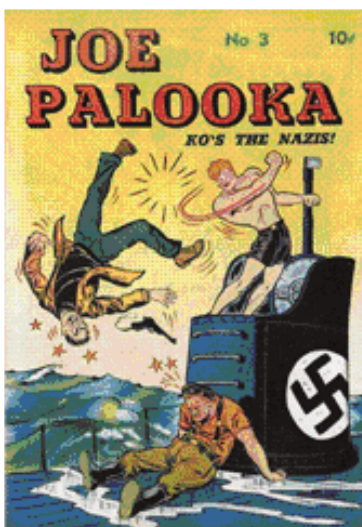
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World War II, so all parties concerned had every expectation that the time was right to give Radio another chance. The Monogram Pictures deal was already underway, *Joe Palooka* was in virtually every major newspaper across America, and *Joe Palooka's* wartime adventures were still fresh in the minds and imaginations of his adoring military and civilian fans--an estimated 60,000,000 of them by 1945.

The first NBC-ordered audition announced that *Ham Fisher* himself would be supervising the proposed *Adventures of Joe Palooka*. Both auditions were recorded and transcribed by NBC's Recording Division under the supervision of *Ham Fisher's* new production company, *Graphic Radio Productions, Incorporated*. One of Fisher's new collaborators in Graphic Radio Productions was *Harold Conrad*, a former Broadway columnist and agent. Conrad wrote the treatments for both of the audition recordings.

The first audition found Joe Palooka and a buddy in the South Pacific, still in uniform and volunteered for a secret mission. But Joe's buddy Jerry Leemy gets talked into a welterweight match with a *ringer*. The second audition continued the *secret mission/welterweight ringer fight* plots. Both auditions gave the impression that--at least through the end of the War in the Pacific--Joe Palooka's adventures would revolve around his multi-faceted Army career--hence the "*Adventures of*" theme of the proposed project. *Timing again being key*, NBC apparently couldn't get any sponsors to



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Joe and his pals Knobby,  
Leemy and Ann step out of  
the comic strip into a brand  
new

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5:30 — 5:45 P. M.

Med-O-Bloom  
Dairy

commit to the project and NBC wasn't inclined to air it sustained.

Still convinced he had a winner on his hands, *Ham Fisher* shopped the project during the summer of 1945 to the short-lived North Central Broadcasting System (NCBS), a comparatively small regional network of primarily upper mid-west, mid-sized affiliate stations. Graphic Radio Productions and NCBS struck a deal to begin recording twenty-six weeks worth of five-a-week serial episodes of *The Story of Joe Palooka*--a total of one hundred thirty, 15-minute episodes--a total of approximately 28 hours of scripted dialogue.

NCBS, already beset with growing financial and licensing problems, would ultimately declare

bankruptcy during 1946-- just as its affiliate stations had the new *The Story of Joe Palooka* well underway.

Employing the same bell-ringing intro as the NBC auditions, the premiere of the new series had Joe Palooka--now a civilian--facing his first opponent after four years of military service. Ann Howe, Joe's fiance, returned to the production, but Joe's first bout resulted in a loss to World Champion Heavyweight Al Wilson in a 15-round decision. From the get-go, continuity for the new series seems to have utterly failed: both the intro and close of the first through sixth episodes announce, "*The Winner and Still Champion, Joe Palooka.*" This is underscored by the fact that the series' first five-part adventure found Joe Palooka suspected of throwing his first World Championship bout since returning to civilian life.

Over the course of at least the first fifty episodes, Joe Palooka was on the run across America for one mistaken criminal accusation against or another. He'd also changed his name three times. Painting America's recent World War II hero, Joe Palooka, as a coward who continually finds himself running away from his problems and accusers instead of facing them head-on doesn't strike us as upholding Joe Palooka's previous long-standing image as either Heavyweight Boxing Champion of the World, a World War II hero, or a clean-living, honest Sports figure. We can't imagine what Graphic Radio Productions and NCBS could have been thinking to mount such an initially negative image of one of America's larger than life heroes in Comics, Film and Radio prior to the NCBS run.

There were other script and production continuity issues during the first week's premiere adventures. The announcer and narrator for the series butchered many of the place names and characters throughout the series. He also man-

## 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.

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gled two out of the first seven teaser titles for the following day's episode(s). This oversight wouldn't be so remarkable but for the fact that this was a transcribed, syndicated series of only 28 hours, entirely recorded and pressed *prior* to its first public broadcasts. By 1945 *Ham Fisher's* net holdings and wealth were an estimated two millions dollars--on the order of \$26M in today's dollars. Why he'd do a second Radio run of *The Story of Joe Palooka* on the cheap is anyone's guess.

No credits have yet surfaced for the 1945-1946 run of *The Story of Joe Palooka*. To our ears the 1932 series was far superior to the NCBS run of *The Story of Joe Palooka*. It sounded more authentic, was better produced, and the acting performances and scripts were the equal of any of the other juvenile adventure series' of the 1930s. The 1945-1946 run by contrast was flat, poorly performed in comparison to the original Radio series, and the production values for the 1945 run were abysmal as compared to the 1932 run. It would appear that the few sponsors of the 1945-1946 run were predominately Dairy Industry concerns throughout the upper Midwest.

### **The Joe Palooka franchise attempts a transition to Television**

Fast forward nine years and the Joe Palooka franchise found its way to 1950s Television with *The Joe Palooka Story*, again starring *Joe Kirkwood, Jr.* as Joe Palooka, but with *Luis Van Rooten* as Knobby Walsh, *Cathy Downs* as Ann Howe, and *Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom* as Clyde. The Television franchise ran for two seasons from 1954 to 1955.

Tragically, *Ham Fisher* took his own life in 1955 at the age of 54, essentially foreclosing any possibility of a continuation of the reasonably well-received Television series.

### **Joe Palooka epilogues**



### **Joe Palooka and Ann Howe**

After an 18-year engagement, during which the McNaught Syndicates Cartoonist Ham Fisher invented one obstacle after another to keep them apart, Joe and his comic-strip sweetheart, Ann Howe, were married on June 24, 1949. In honor of the occasion Fisher—who regards them as his own flesh and blood—sent out a swarm of handsomely engraved invitations.

*Ham Fisher's* two attempts to bring Joe Palooka to the air during Radio's Golden Age failed both times--once through no fault of his own and the second due to an underfunded, poorly written and performed production. His attempt to bring the Joe Palooka franchise to Television failed due to Fisher's suicide. Fisher's comic strips, the two Film franchises, and *Ham Fisher's* generous contributions to the War effort were the Joe Palooka franchise's only real successes. During Ham Fisher's last professional years, his 20-year feud with Al Capp eventually resulted in Fisher's expulsion from the *National Cartoonist's Society*--the only member of the Society ever expelled for "conduct unbecoming a cartoonist."

*Georgia Backus*, the writer for the 1932 Columbia run of *The Story of Joe Palooka*, came under the jaundiced scrutiny of the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Red Channels pamphlets, essentially ending her ca-

reer as either an actress or writer.

*Teddy Bergman*, later known as *Alan Reed*, and Radio's very first Joe Palooka, went on to legendary careers in Radio, the Stage, Film, Advertising, and Television.

*Ted Husing*, the ring announcer for the 1932 series, went on to become one of the most famous sportscasters of Radio's Golden Age. *Husing*, much in the mold of *Ham Fisher*, was also arrogant, highly opinionated and coarse to friends and foes alike. In another irony of the Joe Palooka franchise, *Husing* was struck blind in 1956 during treatment for a malignant brain tumor the year after *Ham Fisher* committed suicide. *Husing* died in 1962 at the age of 61.

*Harry Von Zell*, the announcer and Heinz spokesperson for the 1932 Radio series, went on to his own legendary careers in Radio, Film and Television.

*Frank Readick*, the voice of Knobby Walsh in the 1932 series of *The Story of Joe Palooka*, went on to join *Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre Players*, appearing frequently throughout the *Mercury Theatre* productions over Radio.

All told, *Ham Fisher's* lovable character Joe Palooka launched a multimedia entertainment franchise stretching over fifty-seven years. ■

## Eye on Ebay: The Games People Played

by Doug Hopkinson

Once again we return to the collector's paradise that is Ebay. This time I thought we'd look at some vintage board games that were developed with old time radio personalities, shows or characters as their main focus. It is surprising how many of these games there were. It is even more surprising how many survived the years and the prices they are commanding today in a world where board games are considered to be, well, boring.

Let's take a look at the first candidate for your

consideration.

This is a vintage game from Parker Brothers. It's called Tell it to the Judge. The box says Eddie Cantor's new game. Beyond being a vehicle to sell the game,



Eddie has nothing to do with it. If you think the picture on the box is scary, check out the game board. Now that's downright creepy but ninety-nine cents isn't a bad price for a nice Eddie Cantor collectible.



The next game is based on a comic strip that became a radio show. The Gumps ran from 1934-1937 and was first broadcast on WGN Chicago. Agnes Moorehead was in it. This is a 1938 Milton Bradley game. Is it worth \$200.00?



Next up, the always and ever-popular, Lone Ranger. He made all sorts of people wealthy. At \$49.95 this 1938 Parker Brothers game won't make the seller rich but it's better than nothing.

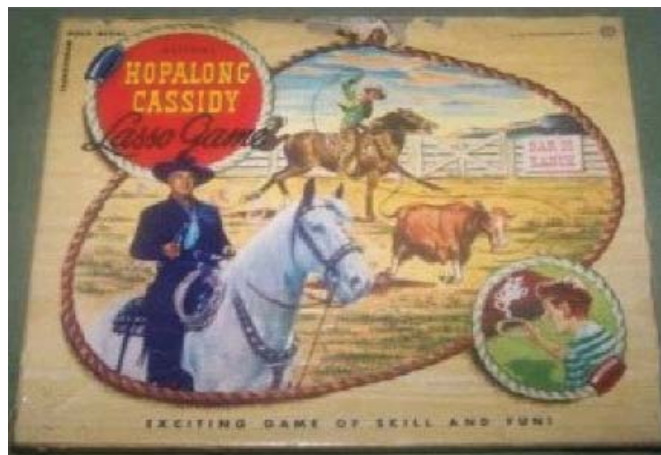


This next game is interesting. It's "Kate Smith's own game, AMERICA". Made in 1944 by Toy Creations, nothing says patriotic like Kate Smith's America. Own it for \$125.00, then sing about it. It even comes with a color photo of Kate. That's what I'm talkin' about!



Moving on, we come to another beloved Western star, Hopalong Cassidy and his Lasso game. Produced in 1950 by Transogram this game fea-

tured a 7-1/2" tall plastic Hoppy on his horse Topper. You stand them up in the center of the game board and players take turns tossing little lasso shaped ropes at them. For just \$160.00 you could re-live your little buckaroo childhood.



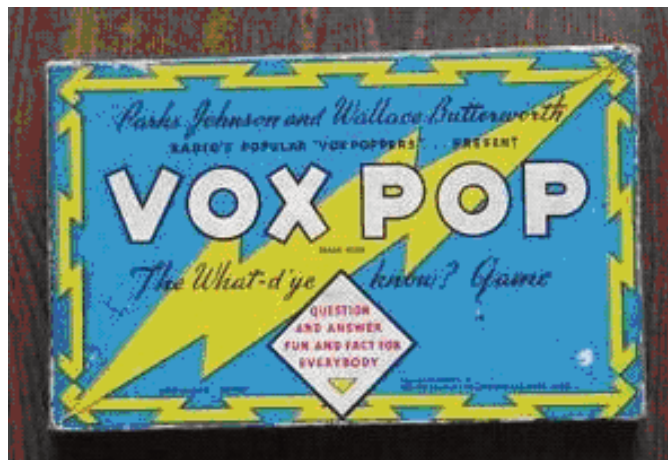
Up next we have a game based on the books and one of radio show collectors most sought after program, Og, Son of Fire. Produced by Whitman in the 1930's this game will set you back in time and also in your bank account. Do the transcription discs of Og really exist or are they just a myth? We may never know the truth but the game is right here. Buy it now! You can't afford not to. \$550 or best offer.



Lastly, we have a game based on the long running radio program Vox Pop. For \$50.00 you can own a game that has questions you'll need

a research team to answer. If you're in the market for this particular game, shop around. This author bought one for \$7.00 last year.

There are many, many more radio related board games out there. Do your own searching on Ebay and you'll see. ■



## Of Mikes & Men

Veteran broadcaster John Rayburn has participated/performed at the Old Time Radio and Nostalgia convention in Cincinnati, the Friends of Old Time Radio convention in Newark, the SPERDVAC convention in L.A. and the REPS convention in Seattle.

Now, he is moving on with technological advances and has nine publications on Amazon's Kindle eBooks. One is *Cat Whiskers and Talking Furniture: A Memoir of Radio and Television Broadcasting*. It uses his 62 years in the industry as a central theme to trace history of the people, places and things that have been central in radio and TV over a seven decade period. Another is *The Spirit of America: Stories to Recognize the History, Humor and Heritage of Our National Culture*, a collection of interesting, informative and entertaining articles about who we are and how we got to be that way.

There are two works of fiction: *You Can't Get There From Here: A Rick O'Shea Adventure*, the

story of a different kind of detective, more of a seeker and finder who searches for things that have been lost, stolen, hidden or forgotten and collects finder's fees from whatever he discovers. And, *Matt Draper: From Riverboat Gambler to Frontier Banker*, a western novel featuring a man who starts his own bank on the frontier with winnings and discovery of an abandoned cache of Confederate gold after the Civil War. A stage holdup, bank robbery, an encounter with remnants of the vicious Quantrill's Raiders, saving a child from drowning and a cattle drive interrupted by a coalition of hostile farmers are partial ingredients of the tale that eventually culminates with the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

There are also five editions of *Thrilling Days of Yesteryear: The Golden Age of Radio*, with background information on the stars and shows that provided the number one form of family entertainment for around a quarter of a century. Go to Kindle eBooks and search under his name and they'll all pop up. Click on any book and scroll down for product description (book content). There's one book there titled *The Big Store* about Sears and one of those who worked on the abridgement is another John Rayburn, not our John. Ignore it!

All these are available as Kindle eBooks and Rayburn is busy on a third work of fiction and will be adding to his Kindle collection on a regular basis. Future plans coming up soon will include a Blog where your comments and contribution of thoughts will be invited. ■



John Rayburn

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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.

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by Martin Grams Jr.

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In 1985, while majoring in film studies at the University of Iowa, Scott Allen Nollen befriended Dr. Edward Lowry, a visiting professor from Texas Christian University, who taught a course on horror films. Both fans of Boris Karloff, the two agreed to co-author a book about the legend who became a household word with his portrayal of Frankenstein's monster, and for a number of big-screen productions was billed on the screen simply as "Karloff." Unfortunately, Lowry passed away before most of the work was accomplished. Nollen wrote his book, a solo effort, which has since been considered a scholarly look at the boogeyman whose voice was perfectly suited for radio horrors. Today, his appearances on *Lights Out!* and *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (note: the proper title is not *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*) are regarded as highlights in the collecting field. Yet very little is known about his radio work, regardless of what has been put to print.

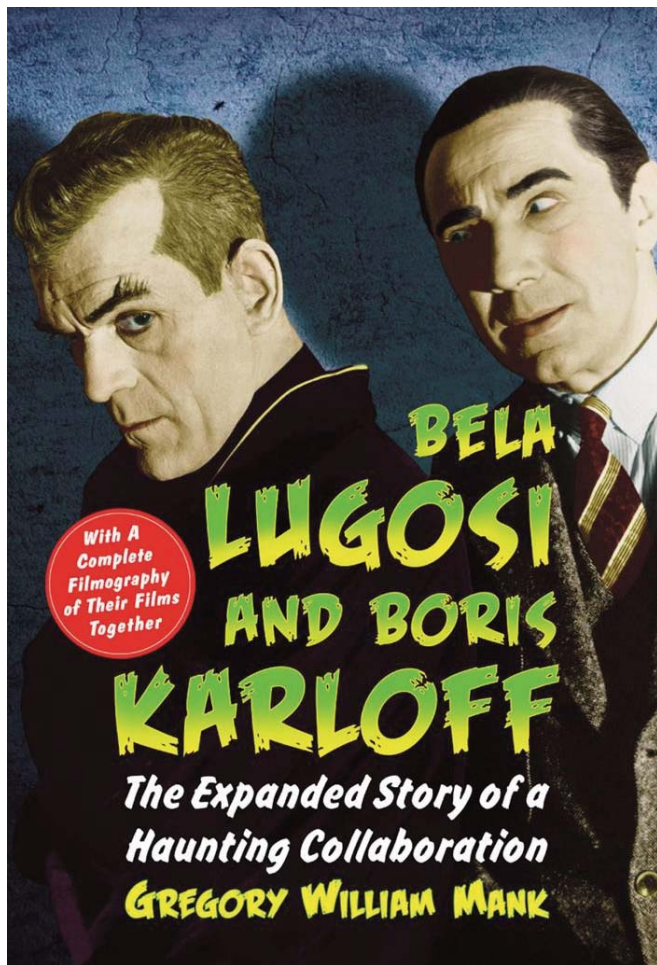
Dedicated in part to the late Dr. Lowry, Nollen's 1991 book, *Boris Karloff: A Critical Account of His Screen, Stage, Radio, Television and Recording Work*, was the first major effort to catalog all of Karloff's known performances behind the radio microphone. Historians have since quoted brief passages from the book. Evelyn Karloff, the actor's widow, praised the tome. Ray Bradbury admitted he was "impressed." But the story continued in 1999 when Nollen, with the participation of Sara Jane Karloff (Boris' daughter), offered a second volume of Karloff's work -- this time centered on the actor's personal life. *Boris Karloff: A Gentleman's Life* was published through Midnight Marquee Press, Inc.



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in 1999, offering a revised and expanded list of Karloff's radio credits. To date, this list is the most comprehensive and the highest compliment I can afford to give is that Nollen's credits have been frequently consulted when a possible new discovery is made.

These two books, combined with Gregory William Mank's superb volume, *Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff: The Expanded Story of a Haunting Collaboration* (2009, McFarland Publishing), provide more information about Boris Karloff than you could ever remember in your lifetime. Gord Shriver's *Boris Karloff: The Man Remembered* (2004) by Gord Shriver and Stephen Jacobs' *Boris Karloff: More Than A Monster* (2011) also offer superb biographies about the actor's super stardom. But after reading all these impressive reference works, and Don Glut's essay, "When The Airwaves Trembled," in Forrest J. Acker-



man's 1969 tribute to Karloff, could there be more information about Karloff's radio work that hasn't been written about? Turns out, there is.

It's a known fact in the old time radio community that no one can possibly create a "definitive" list of radio credits for any particular Hollywood actor. Numerous factors come into play. The main (and most obvious) is because no one sat at a desk for three decades and took notes as to which Hollywood celebrity appeared before the microphone. While on tour to promote their motion pictures, or performing on stage in road companies, celebrities agreed to appear on local radio stations that were independent from the national chains, and most of that programming has been relatively unexplored. For all we know, Karloff took a one week vacation to Canada and while acting as a

tourist in Toronto, agreed to a five minute interview on a local morning radio program. In short, we'll be adding radio credits to such lists year after year after year.

Major Hollywood celebrities such as Clark Gable and Jean Harlow have yet to receive the kind of treatment Nollen gave for Karloff. Even Orson Welles scholars avoid one that exists in circulation: How many people know that Orson Welles makes a brief cameo (in the form of an in-joke reference about him) in the October 3, 1946 broadcast of *Suspense*, "Three Times Murder," which featured Rita Hayworth as a femme fatale? He does.

As a fan of old horror films, documenting radio credits of such luminaries as Bela Lugosi and Lon Chaney Jr. have become an obsession. Every possible lead to track down another program title and airdate opens the door to a new discovery. I have yet to see a list of Bela Lugosi's radio credits published that is impressive, or accurate. Stephen D. Youngkin, author of *The Lost One: A Life of Peter Lorre* (2005, University Press of Kentucky), featured an extensive list of Peter Lorre's radio credits, courtesy of Cheryl Morris, who tracked down such minute details as Lorre's German radio credentials! Just last month, I handed Cheryl two more entries to add to the list, recently unearthed at an archive. These are examples of such continued documentation.

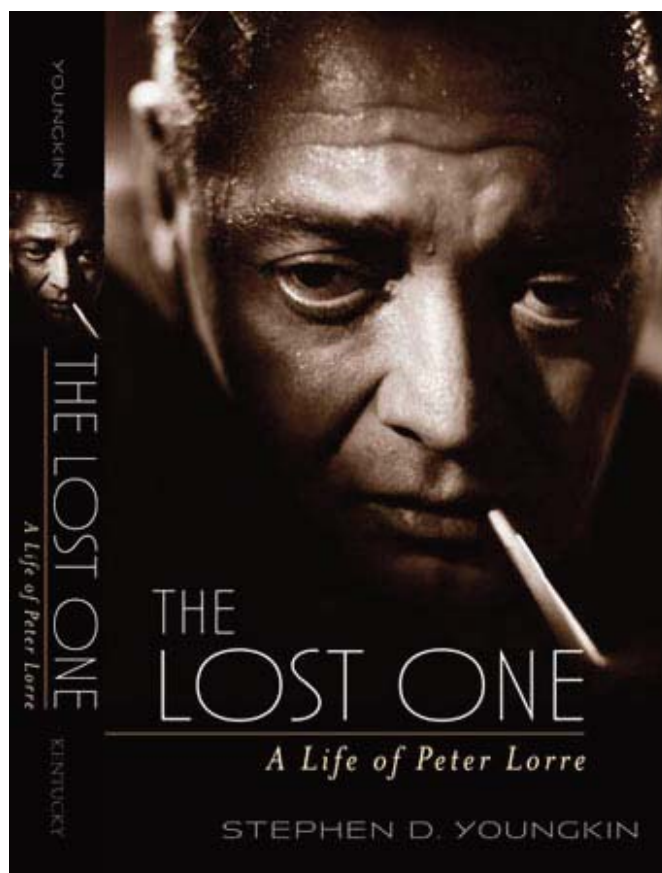
And there is some good news to come out of all this. Three of us have recently made a giant leap in radio research. Up until now, people went through newspaper listings on microfilm and that process has been extremely slow. After four years of scanning what must be tens of thousands of pages into "searchable PDF files," and with the assistance of two good friends, a massive, customized database has been finally been compiled on a terabyte hard drive. With a little

patience and some clever maneuvering, we can now explore documents that open the gateway to trekking further than ever in the field of old-time radio research. Gerry Hamlin customized and created the software that now allows us to search all of our customized files. The three of us can now utilize this system and document radio credits for Hollywood actors that might otherwise have continued to go unnoticed and undocumented in the coming centuries.

In an effort to test the system after the entire project was completed, our first choice was simple: Boris Karloff. What follows is a list of previously undocumented radio credits, or what some might refer to as Boris Karloff's "lost" radio credits. But before you scroll down the list and start jotting down titles and broadcast dates, I would like to add a few notes of importance.

**1.** This is probably the first time knowledge of this database has gone public. Close friends in the past six months have been aware of the project and been kind enough to keep it under wraps. As much as we would love to make this database available to the public (and more importantly, to scholars and authors who want to start documenting extensive lists of their own), we do not have the capability of putting this database online. For this, I apologize in advance and can assure you honestly and sincerely, when the opportunity rises, we will do so.

**2.** The database was not compiled from newspaper listings or trade periodicals that "predict" what was scheduled for nation-wide, network broadcasts. I know of no serious historian or college/university professor who relies on those sources (Radio Daily included). Why? Because they act in the same manner as TV Guide. Newspaper listing offer what was "planned" or "scheduled," and last minute changes were quite common. (Heck, if you con-



sulted the New York Times for 20 years of Suspense radio broadcasts, you'll find that almost one out of every four entries cites an incorrect title or actor. So why on Earth would anyone want to consult newspaper listings?) And I cannot stress this enough: I know of no true researcher in the field who relies on newspapers for reference and anyone who claims to use newspapers as a source of information needs to reevaluate their past findings. I proved this multiple times with a slide show presentation at the 2010 Friends of Old Time Radio Convention in Newark, New Jersey, and everyone seemed to agree with me. Newspapers cannot be trusted.

**3.** The source for our database comes from periodicals and archival network files which printed cast names after-the-fact. These include radio reviews and broadcast logs that were recorded at the networks. Yes, a critic's review of last night's broadcast in a periodical such as



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Variety or Broadcasting is far more accurate than a newspaper listing.

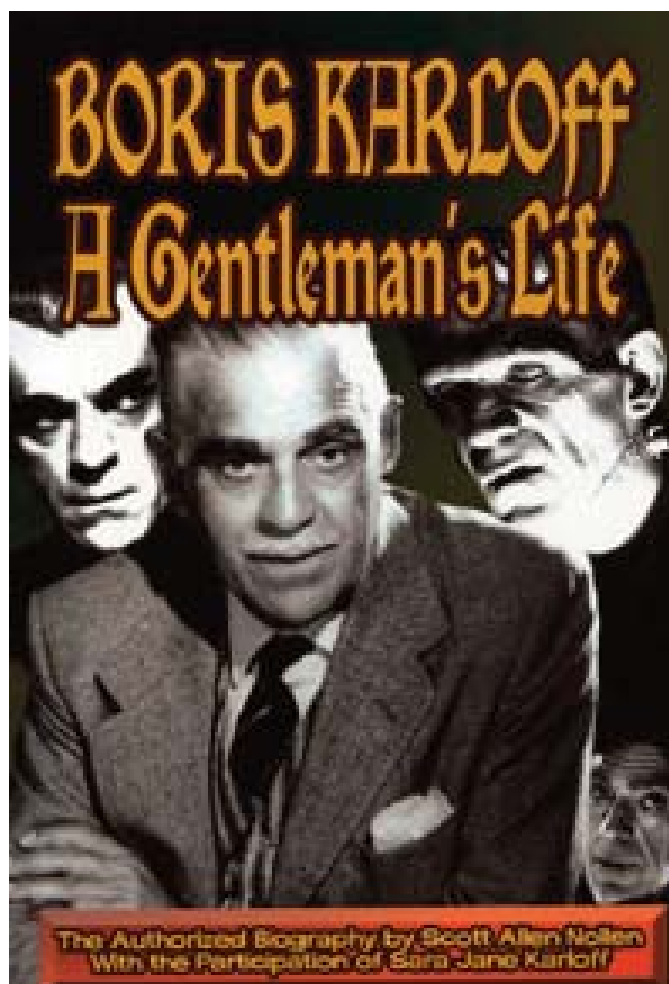
Personal note: In March of 2011, I made the trek up to Syracuse, New York, to attend the annual Cinefest Convention. For four days, cinephiles were treated to some rare gems screened from archival 16 and 35mm masters. They screened silent films I never heard of, pre-code classics and a version of *Alice in Wonderland* (1931) that I never heard before. For me, the highlight of the weekend was on the morning of March 18, when a 1941 film short, *Information, Please*, based on the popular radio quiz program, featured guest Boris Karloff. One can easily see that Karloff got along very well with the witty panelists, which explains his numerous appearances on the radio program. Oscar Levant made a great comment about the boys grow-

ing up, comparing himself to Karloff. The short closed with a question from Clifton Fadiman asking for the name of drinks, after describing the ingredients. Karloff, at the last second, figured out one of the drinks was a "zombie."

### **BOX IT IN**

This is not meant to be a complete list of all known radio appearances of Boris Karloff. If you found this web-page in the hopes of finding a complete list of Karloff's radio career, my advanced apologies. The focus of the list is to document what has not yet been preserved in published reference guides. Obviously, broadcasts not listed below can be found in Scott Allen Nollen's book, including the obvious Karloff appearance on *Lights Out!* such as the widely-circulating "Cat Wife." I have no intention of posting the information found within the pages of his book. To do so would not only be a disservice to Mr. Nollen, but disrespectful. There is already enough people "lifting" material from successfully published books, for various reasons, for inclusion on their own web-sites. This author will have nothing to do with that. Nollen's book (along with all the others mentioned above) come with my highest recommendation and deserve space on your book shelf.

Among the previously-undocumented episodes is *Listen, America* (1941-42), which was meant to dramatize the stirring and significant story of America's mighty new quest for health. Presented by NBC in cooperation with the Women's National Emergency Committee, each episode featured an epochal story in the progress of man's war against hunger and malnutrition; a real-life case-history dramatization. The People's Nutritional Forum serve as a clearing house for questions from radio listeners who wrote in each week asking questions about health and nutrition. Distinguished figures in the



field of public health serve as forum chairmen. Merle Kendrick and his orchestra provided musical bridges and background. For one particular episode, Boris Karloff appeared in a special drama written for the program, which showed (as explained by the announcer) that he was no longer the world's greatest menace. "Malnutrition" had taken place.

The latest research also unearthed some mysterious questions. For the December 12, 1954, broadcast of The Nutrilite Show, we know that Virginia O'Brien, a song-vocalist noted for her way of singing "deadpan," was also a guest. And this particular broadcast happened to be the last episode for Robert Armbruster conducting the orchestra. But what Karloff did or said on the program remains unknown. It seems we know more about the broadcast and nothing about Karloff's contribution.

For the November 2, 1949, broadcast of This Is Your Life, we discovered he was not the guest recipient, as one would normally expect. Mrs. Erna Rex, real estate agent of Los Angeles, is the guest of honor. Broadcast by transcription, transcribed in an abandoned house, 7060 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood. The house was referred to in Hollywood as "Boris Karloff's house." (The commercial was delivered from Hollywood studios.) In keeping with the Halloween theme, Mrs. Rex was ushered into a house "haunted" by her relatives and friends. Ralph Edwards was disguised as a "doctor" and Mrs. Rex was taken to the house by her daughter who led her mother to believe that the doctor wanted to sell his house. Mrs. Rex was chosen as guest because she represented a profession that rendered service to many, especially in the post-war days with housing situations as tight as they were. To make her work easier, Mrs. Rex received a Buick coupe for use in her contact work as a real estate agent. The Buick, plus a radio-

Kate Smith



phonograph-television set, comprised Mrs. Rex's "Philip Morris Future." The special guest who appeared during the final two minutes of the broadcast to tell everybody to get out of his house is Boris Karloff.

#### **Edna Wallace Hopper Variety Show**

(January 3, 1932)

**Format:** musical/comedy variety;

**Network:** CBS; **Performers:** Edna Wallace Hopper; **Broadcast Time:** 10 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

#### **Hollywood on the Air** (November 24, 1932)

**Format:** interviews; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Tangee Natural Lipstick; **Performers:** Jimmy Fidler; **Other Guests:** Joel McCrea and Katherine Hepburn; **Broadcast Time:** 12:30 a.m. (technically Nov. 25); **Running Time:** 60 minutes.

#### **45 Minutes in Hollywood** (August 2, 1934)

**Format:** variety and interviews; **Network:** CBS; **Sponsor:** Bordens; **Performers:** Cal York with Mark Warnow's Orchestra; **Broadcast Time:** 10 p.m.; **Running Time:** 45 minutes.

#### **Kraft Music Hall** (September 2, 1937)

**Format:** comedy/variety; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Kraft Phoenix Cheese Corp.; **Performers:** Bob Burns;

**Other Guests:** Dolores Del Rio and Mario Chamlee; **Broadcast Time:** 10 p.m.;

**Running Time:** 60 minutes.

**For Men Only** (April 10, 1938)

**Format:** drama/variety; **Network:** NBC;

**Sponsor:** Bristol-Myers; **Performers:** George

Jessel; **Broadcast Time:** 8:30 p.m.; **Running**

**Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Amidst a number of talk and drama subjects, Boris Karloff appears in person for five minutes to talk about his movie work.



**The Fleischmann Hour** (January 5, 1939)

**Format:** comedy/variety; **Network:** NBC;

**Sponsor:** Standard Brands, Inc.; **Performers:**

Rudy Vallee; **Other Guests:** Marek Windheim, singer, and Barney Grant, comedian; **Broadcast**

**Time:** 8:00 p.m.; **Running Time:** 60 minutes.

**Material:** Boris Karloff and Walter Tetley stars in a skit titled, "There's Always Joe Winters."

Claude Rains was originally slated for the role, but he was unable to attend due to an illness so Boris Karloff filled in as the guest.

**The Circle** (April 16, 1939)

**Format:** Variety; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:**

Kellogg's; **Performers:** Basil Rathbone and

Madeline Carroll; **Other Guests:** Jose Iturbi;

**Broadcast Time:** 10 p.m.; **Running Time:**

60 minutes.

**The Kate Smith Show** (March 7, 1941)

**Format:** musical/comedy variety; **Network:**

CBS; **Sponsor:** General Foods; **Performers:**

Kate Smith; **Broadcast Time:** 8 p.m.;

**Running Time:** 55 minutes.

**Bundles for Britain** (April 14, 1941)

**Format:** patriotic fund raiser; **Network:** WMCA

in New York; **Other Guests:** Mrs. Arthur Woods

and Nancy Walker; **Broadcast Time:** 4:30 p.m.;

**Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Special

war-time broadcast to help raise money for

British relief, sponsored by the Bundles For

Britain Fund Appeal.

**Friendship Bridge** (July 3, 1941)

**Format:** Variety; **Network:** WMCA in New York;

**Broadcast Time:** 4 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30

minutes. **Material:** Karloff performs "The Fall of

the House of Usher."

**The Gloria Whitney Show** (August 13, 1941)

**Format:** musical variety; **Network:** WHN in New

York; **Sponsor:** unknown; **Performers:** Gloria

Whitney, singer; **Broadcast Time:** 7 p.m.;

**Running Time:** 15 minutes. **Material:** Karloff

appears on the show for an interview.

Special U.S.O. Program (November 23, 1941)

**Format:** patriotic fund raiser; **Network:** WMCA in

New York; **Other Guests:** Paul Lukas; **Broadcast**

**Time:** 9 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**Listen, America** (March 22, 1942)

**Format:** news and music; **Network:** NBC Red;

**Performers:** John B. Kennedy; **Other Guests:**

Dr. W.H. Sebrell; **Broadcast Time:** 3:30 p.m.;

**Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**War Bond Show** (April 9, 1942)

**Format:** patriotic fund raiser; **Network:** WMCA

in New York; **Other Guests:** Helen Twelvetrees and Carol Bruce; **Broadcast Time:** 8:03 p.m.; **Running Time:** 27 minutes. **Material:** This was the first of two war bond rally specials (the other was broadcast April 16). Karloff only participated with this broadcast.

**Information, Please** (May 17, 1943)

**Format:** quiz; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Heinz; **Performers:** Franklin P. Adams and John Kieran; **Other Guests:** Jan Struther; **Broadcast Time:** 10:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**Information, Please** (November 20, 1944)

**Format:** quiz; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Heinz; Franklin P. Adams and John Kieran; **Other Guests:** Reginald Gardiner; **Broadcast Time:** 9:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**Information, Please** (November 5, 1945)

**Format:** quiz; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Mobil Oil; Franklin P. Adams and John Kieran; **Other Guests:** Corp. Arthur Schesinger, Jr.; **Broadcast Time:** 9:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**The Kate Smith Show** (January 4, 1946)

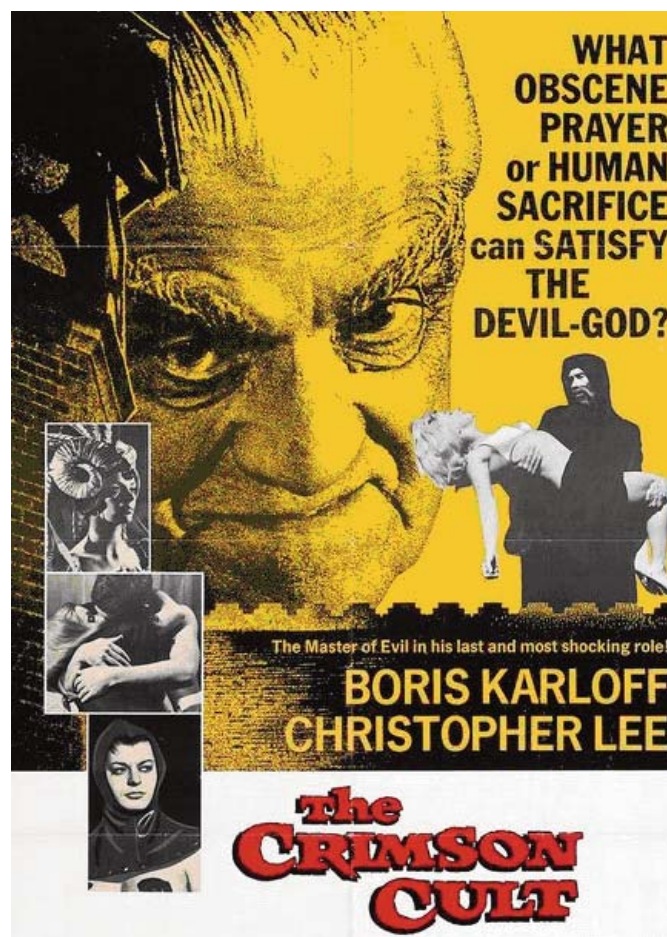
**Format:** musical variety; **Network:** CBS; **Sponsor:** General Foods; **Performers:** Kate Smith; **Broadcast Time:** 8:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 25 minutes.

**The Chesterfield Supper Club** (January 16, 1946)

**Format:** music and drama; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Liggett & Myers; **Performers:** Perry Como and Jo Stafford; **Broadcast Time:** 7:00 p.m.; **Running Time:** 15 minutes. **Material:** Karloff does a scene from David Stanhope's last great act ("The State demands the life of David Stanhope for the murder of his wife...") Bernard Lenrow, radio actor, supported Boris Karloff in the scene brief drama.

**The Sealtest Village Store** (February 14, 1946)

**Format:** comedy/variety; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Sealtest Dairy Company (product: Armour); **Performers:** Jack Haley and Eve Arden; **Broadcast Time:** 9:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30



**Fitch Bandwagon** (March 24, 1946)

**Format:** music and interviews; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** F.W. Fitch; **Performers:** Cass Daley; **Broadcast Time:** 7:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Karloff appeared courtesy of RKO, and the announcer closed the episode with a mention that the screen boogeyman could currently be seen in Bedlam. This program was a popular, long-running program with a guest orchestra and a comedy routine, every week. Larry Keating was the emcee.

**The Ginny Simms Show** (April 5, 1946)

**Format:** musical variety; **Network:** WABC; **Sponsor:** Bordens; **Performers:** Ginny Simms, singer; **Broadcast Time:** 7:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**Truth of Consequences** (October 26, 1946)

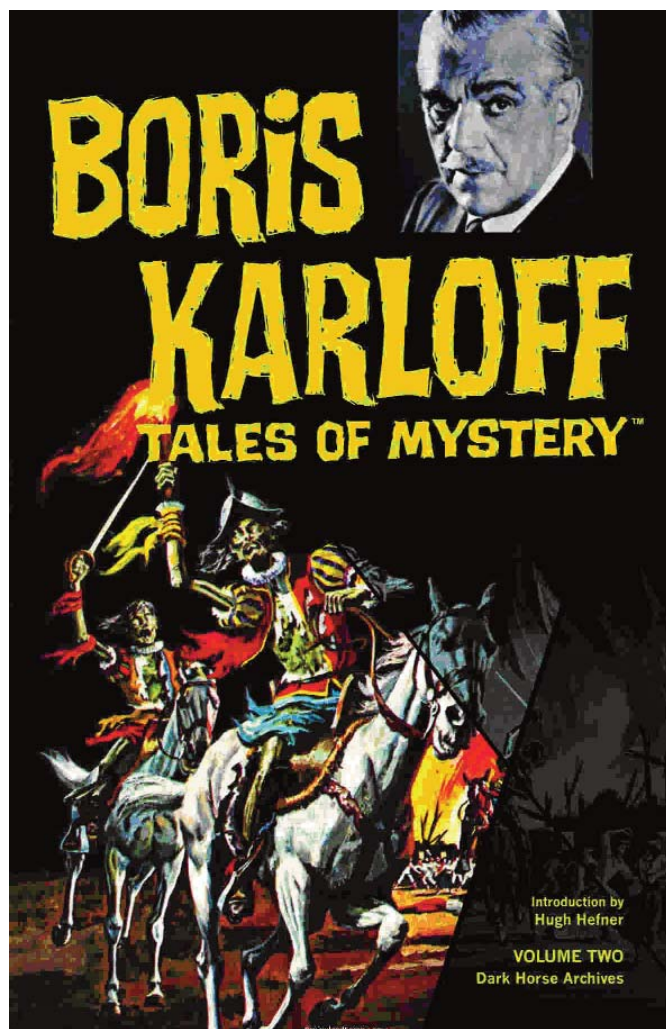
**Format:** quiz show; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Proctor and Gamble; **Performers:** Ralph Ed-

wards; **Broadcast Time:** 8:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. From Hollywood studios.

**Material:** Karloff takes part in one of the stunts.

**Kay Kyser's College of Musical Knowledge** (March 12, 1947)

**Format:** musical variety; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company; **Performers:** Kay Kyser; **Broadcast Time:** 10:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.



**Duffy's Tavern** (May 21, 1947)

**Format:** comedy; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Bristol-Myers; **Performers:** Ed Gardner and Charlie Cantor; **Broadcast Time:** 9:00 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** A real estate man named S. Crow comes down to the tavern to purchase the building from Archie, who does-

n't want to sell. Archie gets Boris Karloff to "haunt" the place and scare the guy away.

**Information, Please** (January 16, 1948)

**Format:** quiz; **Network:** Mutual; **Sponsor:** sustained/none; Franklin P. Adams and John Kieran; **Other Guests:** George S. Kaufman; **Broadcast Time:** 9:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**We, The People** (January 27, 1948)

**Format:** human interest; **Network:** CBS; **Sponsor:** Gulf Oil and Gas; **Other Guests:** Connie Boswell; **Broadcast Time:** 9 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**Skippy Hollywood Theater** (February 24, 1948)

**Format:** dramatic anthology; **Network:** CBS; **Sponsor:** Rosefield Packing Company; **Broadcast Time:** 7:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Karloff appears in a drama titled, "Mr. Bittereau's Mission."

**We, The People** (July 27, 1948)

**Format:** human interest; **Network:** CBS; **Sponsor:** Gulf Oil and Gas; **Other Guests:** James Melton; **Broadcast Time:** 9 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**Hi! Jinx** (August 13, 1948)

**Format:** interviews; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Schenbrunn and Sus.; **Performers:** Jinx Falkenburg; **Broadcast Time:** 8:30 a.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Jinx Falkenburg, the host of the program, was unable to attend this broadcast because she was at the Polyclinic Hospital in New York City, giving birth to her son, Kevin, born on this date. An unknown substitute host interviewed Boris Karloff in honor of Friday the 13th. The subject of superstition was the main topic of the day.

**Stars Over Hollywood** (November 6, 1948)  
**Format:** drama; **Network:** CBS; **Sponsor:** Armour; **Broadcast Time:** 2 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Karloff stars in a drama titled "Ghost of a Chance."

**This Is Your Life** (November 2, 1949)

**Format:** interview; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Philip Morris; **Performers:** Ralph Edwards; **Broadcast Time:** 8 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**The Barbara Welles Show** (August 18, 1950)

**Format:** interview; **Network:** Mutual; **Sponsor:** unknown; **Performers:** Barbara Welles; **Broadcast Time:** 4 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**The Wayne Howell Show** (October 7, 1950)

**Format:** news and interviews; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** unknown; **Performers:** Wayne Howell; **Broadcast Time:** varies; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Howell usually interviewed two guests on each of his broadcasts. Boris Karloff was one of the guests for this broadcast.

**Peter Pan** (December 27, 1950)

**Format:** musical/drama; **Network:** WNYC in New York; **Other Guests:** Jean Arthur and Nehemiah Persoff; **Broadcast Time:** 5:50 p.m.; **Running Time:** 55 minutes. **Material:** Beginning April 24, 1950, Boris Karloff played the role of Captain Hook on stage for a total of 321 performances. Jean Arthur played the title role and Nehemiah Persoff played the role of Cecco. The company later recorded a Columbia LP featuring an abridged version of the play. That recording aired over WNYC in New York City, as a special holiday offering for the benefit of the juvenile listeners. The same recording would later be aired on other programs.

**Ralph Edwards Show** (January 4, 1952)

**Format:** variety/interviews; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** unknown; **Performers:** Ralph Edwards; **Broadcast Time:** 2:00 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**The Paula Stone Show** (February 11, 1952)

**Format:** interview; **Network:** WMGM in New York City; **Sponsor:** unknown; **Performers:** Paula Stone; **Broadcast Time:** 12 noon; **Running Time:** 15 minutes.



**The Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis Show**

(April 18, 1952)

**Format:** comedy/variety; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Chesterfield, Anacin and Dentyne; **Performers:** Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis; **Broadcast Time:** 8 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. A recording of this broadcast exists.

**What's My Line?** (May 27, 1952)

**Format:** quiz show; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** Philip Morris; **Performers:** John Daly, moderator; **Broadcast Time:** 10:00 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes. **Material:** Karloff is the "mystery guest."

**Sunday With Garroway** (July 18, 1954)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** NBC; **Sponsor:** multiple sponsors; **Performers:** Dave Garroway; **Broadcast Time:** 8:00 p.m.; **Running Time:** two hours. **Material:** Karloff

performs a reading of “The Three Billy Goats Gruff,” from the Caedmon LP titled, The Pony Engine and Other Stories for Children.

**The Nutrilite Show** (December 12, 1954)

**Format:** musical variety; **Network:** NBC;

**Sponsor:** Mytinger & Casselberry, Inc.;

**Performers:** Dennis Day; **Broadcast Time:** 5:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.



**The Spoken Word** (March 29, 1956)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WQXR in New York;

**Sponsor:** unknown; **Broadcast Time:** 9:05

p.m.; **Running Time:** 25 minutes. **Material:** Karloff reads three of Rudyard Kipling’s “Just So” stories: “The Cat That Walked by Himself,” “The Butterfly That Stamped” and “How the First Letter Was Written.” These recordings originate from the Caedmon LP. Karloff received a “Best Children’s Album” Grammy Award nomination for this recording. The same recordings would later be aired on other programs.

**Monitor** (May 20, 1956)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WRCA in New York;

**Performers:** Dave Garroway; **Broadcast Time:** 7 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**The Spoken Word** (June 14, 1956)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WQXR in New York;

**Broadcast Time:** 9:05 p.m.; **Running Time:** 25 minutes. **Material:** Karloff reads Rudyard Kipling’s “Mowgli” stories, including “The Jungle Book: Mowgli’s Brothers” (abridged), from the Caedmon LP titled, Rudyard Kipling: Just So Stories and Other Tales.

**Let’s Listen to a Story** (October 13, 1956)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WNYC in New York;

**Broadcast Time:** 11 a.m.; **Running Time:** 15 minutes. **Material:** Karloff reads one of Rudyard Kipling’s “Just So” stories, from a Caedmon LP.

**Monitor** (February 17, 1957)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WRCA in New York;

**Performers:** Dave Garroway; **Broadcast Time:** 8:30 p.m.; **Running Time:** 30 minutes.

**Monitor** (February 22, 1958)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WRCA in New York;

**Performers:** Dave Garroway; **Broadcast Time:** 8 p.m.; **Running Time:** 60 minutes.

**Let’s Listen to a Story** (May 31, 1958)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WMCA in New York;

**Broadcast Time:** 9:05 p.m.; **Running Time:** 25 minutes. **Material:** Excerpts from a Caedmon LP are played, featuring Karloff reading Kipling’s “Just So” stories.

**Let’s Listen to a Story** (June 7, 1958)

**Format:** musical/drama; **Network:** WMCA in

New York; **Other Guests:** Jean Arthur and Ne-

hemiah Persoff; **Broadcast Time:** 9:05 a.m.; **Running Time:** 25 minutes. **Material:** Features a recording of the first half of the 1950 Columbia LP, “Peter Pan.”

**Let’s Listen to a Story** (June 14, 1958)

**Format:** musical/drama; **Network:** WMCA in

New York; **Other Guests:** Jean Arthur and Ne-

hemiah Persoff; **Broadcast Time:** 9:05 a.m.; **Running Time:** 25 minutes. Features a recording of the second half of the 1950 Columbia LP, “Peter Pan.”

**Monitor** (September 6, 1958)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WRCA in New York;  
**Performers:** Dave Garroway; **Broadcast Time:**  
3 p.m.; **Running Time:** 60 minutes.

**Let's Listen to a Story** (May 31, 1959)

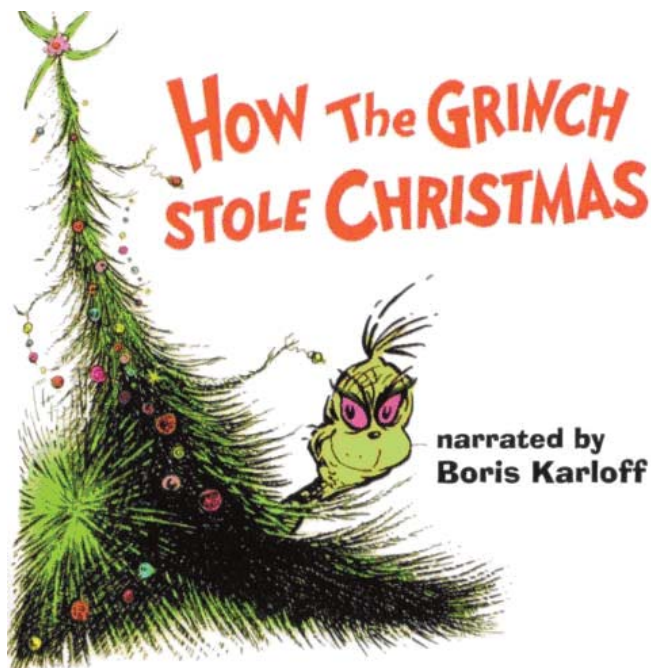
**Format:** variety; **Network:** WMCA in New York;  
**Broadcast Time:** 8:05 p.m.; **Running Time:**  
25 minutes. **Material:** Karloff reads Rudyard  
Kipling's "Just So" stories, played back from a  
Caedmon LP.

**The Spoken Word** (August 24, 1959)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WYNC in New York;  
**Broadcast Time:** 11 a.m.; **Running Time:** 60  
minutes. **Material:** Karloff reads from Kenneth  
Grahame's "The Reluctant Dragon." The record-  
ing originates from a Caedmon LP titled, Ken-  
neth Grahame: The Reluctant Dragon.

**The Spoken Word** (December 25, 1959)

**Format:** variety; **Network:** WNYC in New York;  
**Broadcast Time:** 11 a.m.; **Running Time:** 60  
minutes. **Material:** Karloff reads "The Fir Tree."  
The recording originates from the 1959 Caed-  
mon LP titled, Hans Christian Andersen: The  
Ugly Duckling and Other Tales. ■



## An Interview With Randy Riddle

**OTR BUFFET:** Thanks so much for joining me and doing this interview! [Your blog](http://rand-sesotericotr.podbean.com/) is definitely one of the cooler things on the internet.

**Randy Riddle:** Thanks - that's a great compliment.

**OTR BUFFET:** Please give us a little background about yourself and the blog.

**Randy Riddle:** I live in North Carolina and work for Duke University. I've been in the area all my life - I grew up in the mountains of NC and majored in history in school. I've always been fascinated with the thirties, forties and fifties and old time radio's a big part of that.

I started the blog about three years ago. I'd found so many great shows from other collectors on the web that I wanted to give a little something back to the hobby. I thought I might one or two shows a week, but it kind of snowballed from there.

**OTR BUFFET:** I'd love to know how you got involved in the world of old-time radio and also how you got involved with OTRR?

**Randy Riddle:** I was lucky to grow up in the early 1970s when there was the whole nostalgia craze. I was hooked on old movies on tv and that led me to discover old time radio shows like "Suspense", "The Great Gildersleeve" and "Jack Benny" that were running on public radio stations and "The CBS Radio Mystery Theater". I was also an avid listener of "Lum n' Abner" - a country FM station in Statesville, North Carolina was running it every afternoon at 5:45.

It's funny, but my parents never really listened to radio during the Golden Age, so they were never really interested in my old time radio hobby. They grew up very poor and didn't have a radio, but they remembered walking a few miles to one of the neighbor's farms on special



nights to hear "Amos n' Andy" or "The Grand Ol' Opry". They got their first radio in the late fifties - a used 1932 Majestic console - after my dad got a job when he got out of the Navy. The classic otr era was over by then.

I started collecting shows on LP and tape after discovering some at my local public library. I can remember what a big deal it was to get the Radio Yesteryear catalogue and decide what LP or reel to reel tape I'd spend my precious allowance on next. Now, old time radio is so accessible on the Internet.

After I started my blog, I wanted to share my shows in a way that they would help out other otr fans and researchers. I don't put all my shows on the blog and limit the file sizes so it's workable in the blog format. I started donating transfers of my shows to OTRR so they could help circulate high quality copies of shows from the blog and some programs that I haven't posted. I've also done transfers of discs for the group and help them watch out for auctions or sales of shows they're looking for.

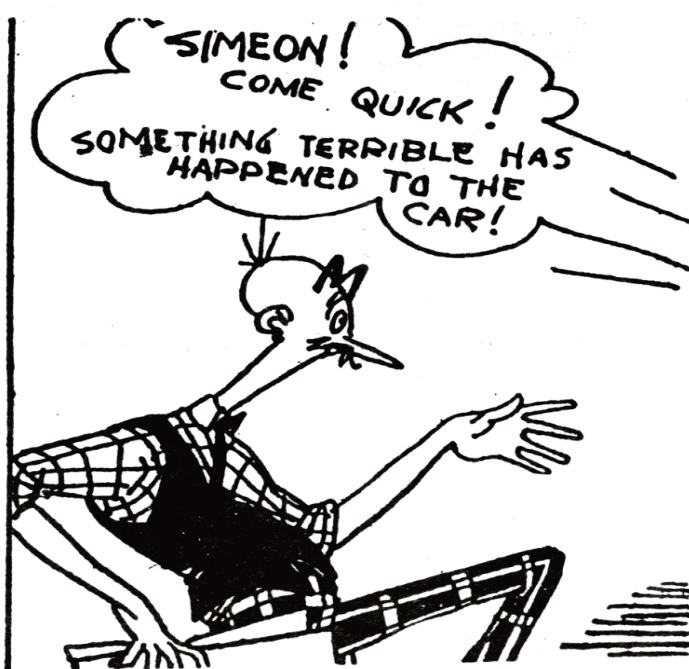
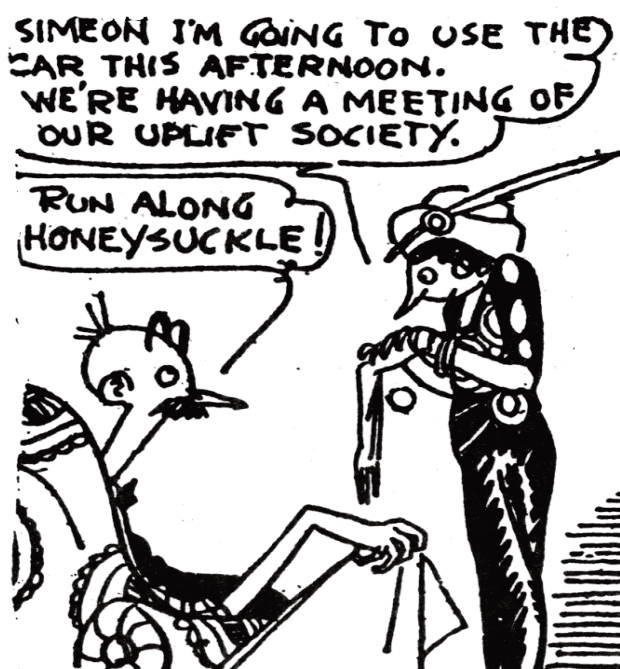
**OTR BUFETT:** Can you tell us about your transcription collection?

**Randy Riddle:** I had been collecting old time radio off and on for several years on tape and LP. I started collecting a few years ago when I had a chance to get a turntable that would play 16" discs. I already had styli and equalizers that I used with 78s and early lps, so collecting radio transcriptions was a nice extension of my music collecting.

I decided to concentrate on shows that were more obscure. There are many fans of "Gun-smoke", "Johnny Dollar" or "Suspense" and working on preserving them. I've been listening to the big shows for so many years, so I thought it would be interesting to go after programs I'd never heard of before.

I get some of my discs through Internet auctions, but have individuals that approach me with discs for sale on occasion. Some are literally throw-aways - transcriptions that they're ready to toss out because they couldn't sell them to other collectors.

Getting these throw-aways lets you find some rare or previously lost material. For example, many transcription collectors have so many Armed Forces Radio discs that they tend to ig



nore them and have many they haven't even played. Some people have the discs for sale and have no way to play them. The labels on the AFRS transcriptions only have the name of the series and the program number of the show, so you have to look at the matrix area in the vinyl around the label for a date or actually listen to the disc to see what particular show is there. That's how I found a couple of previously lost "Suspense" shows like "The Lost Special" with Orson Welles and a complete version of "The Rescue" with Jimmy Stewart.

Sometimes, I'll buy a group of 16" lacquers with no labels that can turn up lost shows. One I found a few months ago was a previously lost episode of "Here's Morgan". In that same group, there were several discs from 1947 of Los Angeles area radio stations that an engineer recorded in the studio or off the air when doing some equipment tests. So you get to hear ten or fifteen minutes of things like local dj shows or a station sign-on. I got contacted by one of the big movie studios for a copy of those discs - they're thinking about using the excerpts

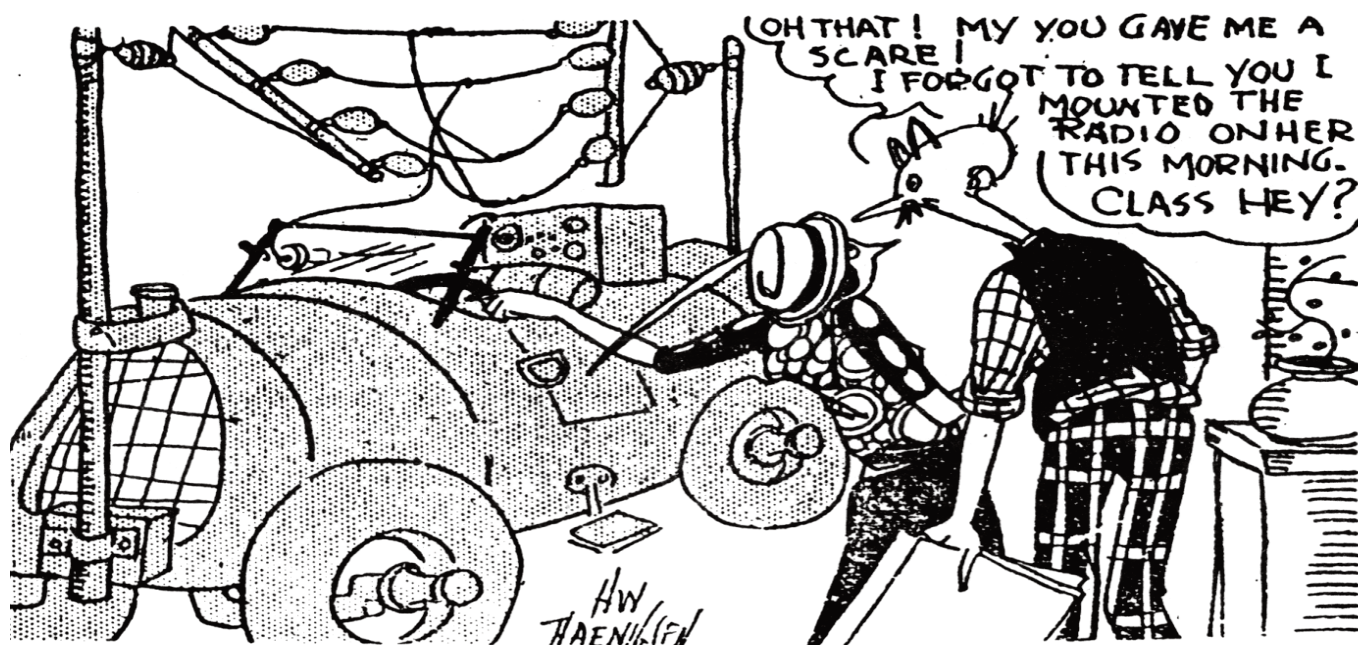
in the soundtrack of a period crime drama they're producing.

Things will slip through your fingers once in a while. I still get teary-eyed thinking about a set of thirty or so episodes of "Og, Son of Fire", that I wasn't able to work out a deal on from one collector. It's a CBS kids adventure show about cavemen and dinosaurs from the early 30s that's otherwise completely lost. I still wonder what that show actually sounds like.

I also try to get transcriptions that are good examples of the different ways that shows were recorded or syndicated. So, I've got an original uncoated aluminum disc of a couple of early 30s "Ma Perkins" episodes and some World Broadcasting shows and "Witch's Tale" programs that were done on experimental plastics. Several of the early shows were pressed on thick 16" shellac discs pressed by Columbia - these things weigh about three pounds each.

I've got a few master lacquers that were used to make transcriptions for a 1940s Ziv syndicated series. Recently, I got the original master pressing plates for a couple of lost 1935

SIMEON BATTS N.Y. Evening Mail February, 1923



episodes of "The Air Adventures of Jimmy Allen" - they're the nickel and copper plates used by World Broadcasting to press the transcriptions. I've probably got six or seven hundred transcriptions in my collection and I'm running out of room. I've started donating some of the more historically important material to Duke University's Special Collections Library. They have the archives of the big advertising agencies and also collect in areas like Women's Studies and African-American related material. They're pleased to get the discs since I also donate an archival high quality digital copy of the discs and high resolution scans of the labels, so researchers can use them right away. It's a way to make sure the discs are preserved in the long run.

**OTR BUFFET:** Do you have any favorite shows/characters/actors? What would they be?

**Randy Riddle:** I've always been a big fan of Fred Allen, especially his "Town Hall Tonight" shows. It can be tough for a modern audience to "get" it, though. Fred's humor was topical, so you have to know a bit about what was in the news at the time to really appreciate it. And I also liked the way he would have ordinary people on the show with unusual talents or have them in panels and other bits. You can tell he really enjoyed making jokes and having a good time with the audience. If you've never heard it, check out Fred's famous "eagle" show, where a trained eagle gets loose in the audience for much of the program. You just never knew quite what would happen on a Fred Allen program.

I also like surreal humor - things like "The Goon Show" or Bob and Ray. I was giddy when I was lucky enough to get an original 16" transcription set of a couple of "Goon Show" episodes from the original 50's BBC syndicated run of the program. I also really enjoy detective shows of the forties and fifties - "The Adventures of Frank Race" is a favorite from my collection -

and some of the adventure serials like "Jungle Jim".

You can find great radio in almost any genre. Probably one of the favorite transcriptions I have is an episode of the CBS soap opera "Rosemary". It has the most wonderful over the top performance by this actress playing a woman trying to run a scam on one of the lead characters. She could have taught Orson Welles a thing or two about chewing up scenery.

There's one transcription set I get out once in a while - "Command Performance - Victory Extra". It's a special show, almost two hours long, celebrating the end of World War II. It has the most amazing array of great stars and personalities there to thank the troops. It's quite an emotional experience when you think about what the country had been through and how everyone involved must have felt putting on the show.

**OTR BUFFET:** I tend to ask everyone this question, but no one seems to be able to come up with a good answer -- but I know you will have



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good one! What show should we be listening to but aren't? (Or, which show is the best show that very few people listen to?)

**Randy Riddle:** Ah, that's an easy one. "Non-sense and Melody". I have about half of the series in my collection and they're on the blog. It's one of those little quarter-hour variety shows that Transco syndicated in the mid-1930s. The show is hosted by comedians Frank Gill, Jr. and Bill Doemling and features these wonderful quirky thirties arrangements of popular tunes sometimes by a vocal group called the Three Jack Tars and at other times featuring soloists from the band on accordion, banjo and other odd instruments. It's a great little time capsule of pre-War music and comedy.

One series is a favorite among some of my friends - "The Two Daffodils". It features these vaudeville performers, Ken Gillum and Duke Atterbury, and was syndicated in 1930. They do this kind of stream of consciousness comedy, going from one brief comedy routine to the next and doing these clever little numbers on piano at breakneck speed. They're great fun.

There's also a fascinating show I think everyone should check out at archive.org- the "Live at the Shamrock Hotel" episode of the "Sealtest Variety Theater" hosted by Dorothy Lamour with Ed Gardner as the guest. It's a fascinating look at how everything could go wrong on live radio. The engineers that set up the remote for the show at this new hotel wired everything backwards, so the engineers were going out live on the network. Then, when they fixed it, the audience and cast couldn't hear the show and weren't sure if they were really on the air. Probably the biggest disaster on live radio I've ever heard. I'd love to see the internal memos from the network and ad agency that went out after that one!

**OTR BUFFET:** I know you have some weird

transcription stuff, because I have read about it on your blog. What's are the strangest things you have?

**Randy Riddle:** Well, that's a tough question. I have so many odd shows, it's hard to choose!

Probably the strangest concept for a show I've got is "Dick and Jeannie". It's a five minute daily soap syndicated in the late 1940s. The story is about this guy who works at a radio network and is trying to break into the business as a singer and this young woman he's dating. Every episode has the couple getting into misunderstandings about paying for dinner or how they feel about each other. Now, that wouldn't be so odd, but they break into a song that's related to the story on each show. I sometimes play an episode to chase away guests from my home - it's really that bad.

Another dreadful series is "Southland Echoes". It was syndicated in 1949 by Black Draught Laxative. The show has the Homeland Harmony Quartet, a pioneering Southern Gospel group, but they pair them with Jam Up n' Honey, a blackface comedy duo, and a trio of yodeling sisters. Combine that with commercials for laxative and Cardui, a tonic for women going through certain monthly changes we don't want to talk about, and it's a pretty weird little show. It probably didn't sound so odd to listeners of local country music shows in the South at the time, but it's downright surreal today.

There's one show I wish I had in my collection, but I do have some memorabilia from it. "The Hartz Radio Canaries" was a quarter hour of music played on organ and violin accompanied by live chirping canaries in the studio. It was sponsored by Hartz, which sold pet food. The idea was that you could tune in to the show to encourage your canaries to sing along to songs like "The Mexican Hat Dance" and "Tales from the Vienna Woods". It was carried on Mu-

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tual in the 30s and 40s, but there's only one episode that survives - it's in OTRR's first Singles and Doubles Collection at archive.org. I've got a set of the original 78s they sold in pet shops featuring the Hartz Radio Canaries.

I've got one series I played for a liberal friend of mine that had him actually getting red-faced and yelling out loud at my transcription turntable. "American Family Robinson" was a soap opera from the mid thirties about the owner of a small town newspaper that was put out by the National Association of Manufacturers to promote conservative business policies and to fight FDR's New Deal policies. So, you've got this little drama where the characters suddenly go into these diatribes about the government taxing business too much or lazy workers with do-nothing jobs on the government dole. One of my blog readers commented that she was listening to an episode when her husband came in the room and he said, "I didn't know Ayn Rand did a radio show!"

"American Family Robinson" was heard on over 300 stations and was a big scandal at the time, but no one remembers it today. NAM produced the show under a pseudonym, "The National Industrial Council", to make it sound like it was made by some government agency. The government was producing shows to promote different government programs like music programs featuring WPA musicians or talks about new loans for housing, so the NAM felt they had to compete.

They tried to get it on both CBS and NBC and both turned them down because it was too political and controversial. NAM wound up syndicating it to stations with local businesses or a Chamber of Commerce picking up the tab. The show was the topic of Congressional hearings that investigated misleading political advertising in radio. It's funny how we've come full circle with political groups getting big money from

anonymous donors doing pretty much the same thing on radio and tv today that was all over the radio in the mid-1930s.

**OTR BUFFET:** Everytime I visit your site lately, I see you are "on hiatus." We all need a break and it's good to take one. But we miss your blog a lot! When are you coming back?

**Randy Riddle:** Well, I'm pretty swamped right now with work and family. I'll probably get back to posting a few shows now and again later this Fall when things settle down a bit. It's a lot of work to transfer and restore the shows.

I'm also doing some research on an old time radio idea I've been mulling over for some time. The generation that grew up during the OTR era and the "second generation" that came after that are getting up in years. So I'm looking at how to capture the knowledge otr fans have about these shows to open up OTR to academic researchers that might be looking at World War II history, economics, women's issues or other subjects and not think of OTR as a source for material.

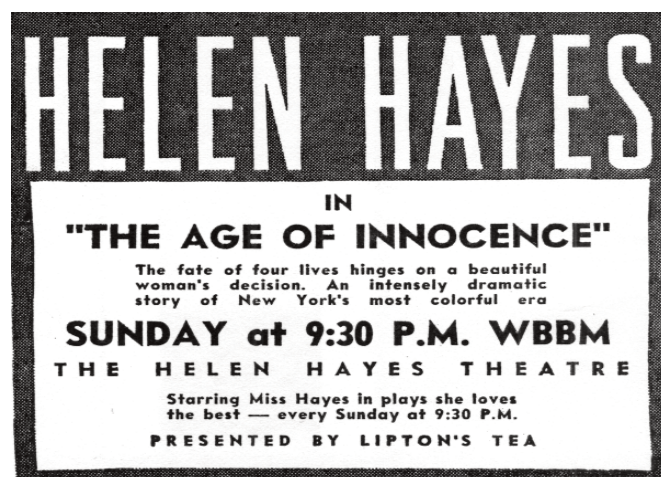
**OTR BUFFET:** Thank you so much for the interview!

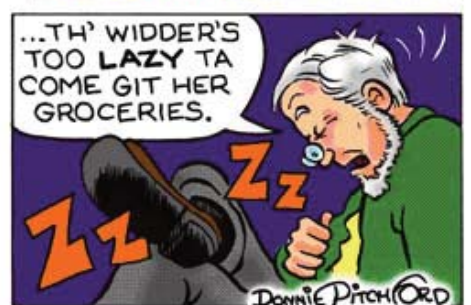
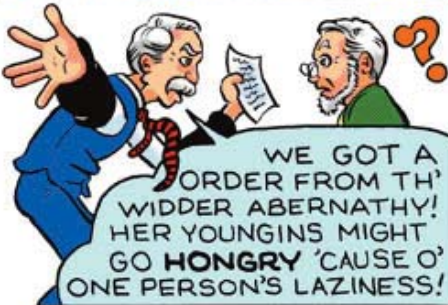
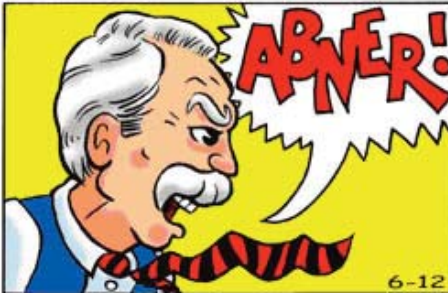
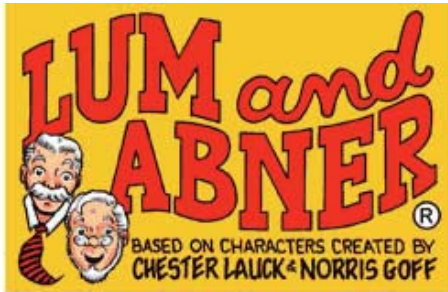
**Randy Riddle:** Thank you - glad to oblige! ■

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The <http://otrbuff.blogspot.com> OTR Buffet can be found on the internet.

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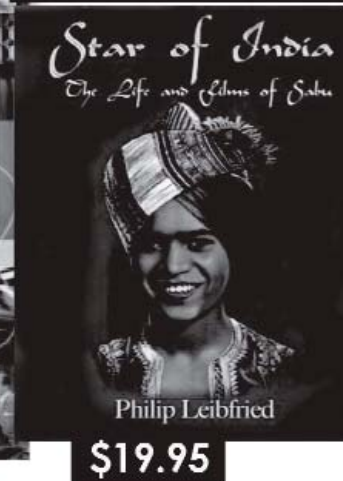
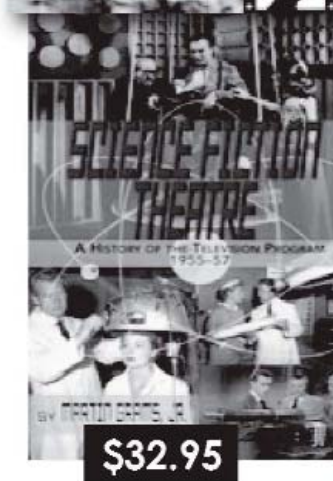
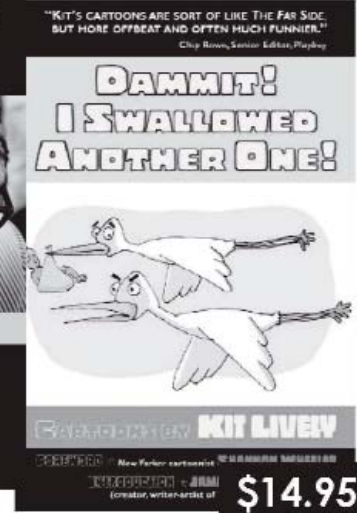
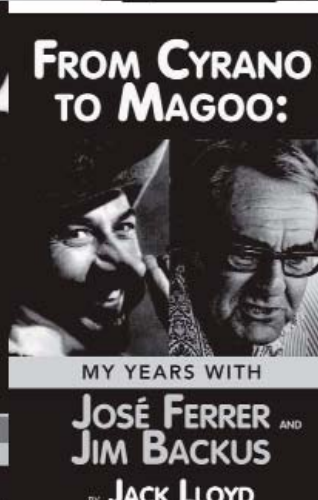
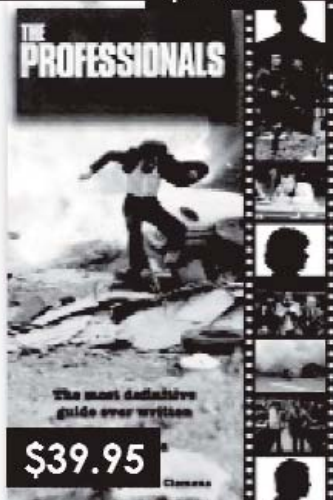
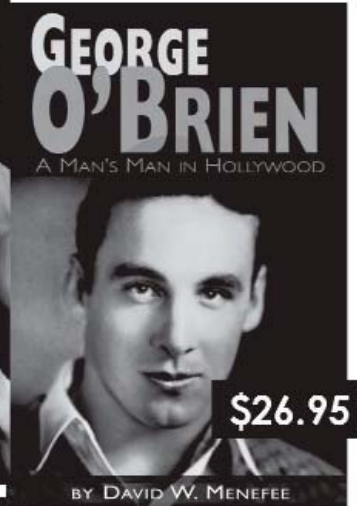
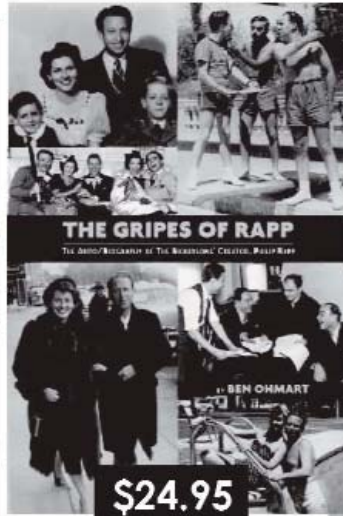
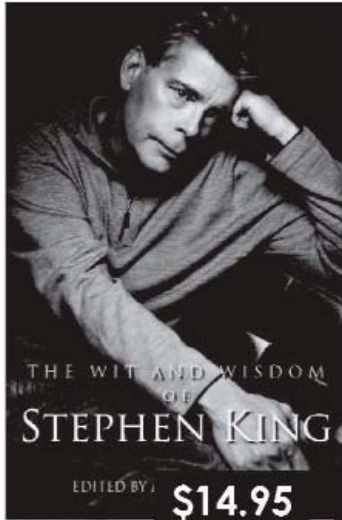
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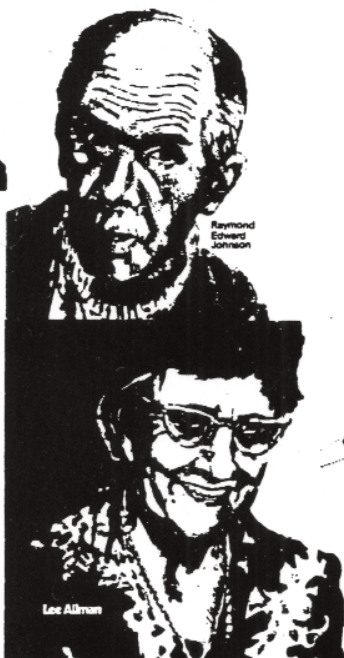
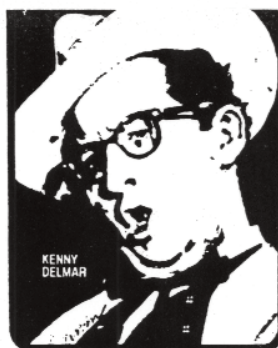
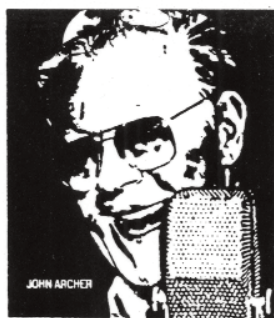
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