



# The Old Radio Times

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## The Best Radio Shows Survey by Ned Norris



### Introduction

Joy and I have been running the RU Sitting Comfortably web site ever since 1999.

Since the site first saw the light of day we've reviewed tens of thousands of shows for the site. Everything from classic radio drama through to comedy, science-fiction and quizzes.

One day we were making a long journey by car when we started to discuss what the best old time radio series of all time was. After two hours, and numerous 'discussions' about the merits of each show we decided it was impossible for us to come up with a

conclusive answer between just the two of us.

There was only one answer!

Ask everyone else what they think and then compile the results to get a definitive answer.

We figured if we could get a hundred people to nominate their favorite series we'd have a good representative sample.

As it turned out we had over 600 people fill out their answers. Wow! Now that means this answer is pretty conclusive I'm sure you'll agree.

### The Voting Process

We felt it was unfair to list the series that



we thought would be the contenders and then get people to vote on those. That would definitely have been easier for gathering the results, but easiest isn't always best.

To make it as fair as possible we simply asked people to list their three favorite series in order. There was no prompting, or urging people to nominate specific shows, as that would have made the results invalid. We wanted to keep the process as simple as possible. Just list your three favorite shows in order and click done. Simple!

We put up the survey on the 9th of November 2013. By the morning of the 14th of November we had hit the 600 mark, which was a long way above the hundred or so nominations we'd been expecting. With each of the 600 respondents listing three shows that meant there were 1,800 shows to count through. Guess who got the honor of doing all the counting. I'm sure there must be automated tools for doing this kind of stuff, but sometimes there's nothing like a manual challenge to tax the old grey cells.

It took me from the 14th of November to the 17th to tally everything up and you'll find the results of all this counting?

For anyone interested in old time radio shows this sure makes interesting reading. Isn't it wonderful that after all the decades there is still such a huge interest in these shows?

## The Results

First I have listed the top 20 series of all-time when taking onto account series listed as favorite, second favorite and third favorite. After that I have include the individual lists for series nominated as most favorite, followed by the series nominated second most favorite, and then those that were most often voted as third favorite. I've also included pie charts to provide a graphical representation of the top results.

### The Favorite Series of All-Time (Combined)

The table below combines all the voting together.

I have weighted it as follows.

- When a series was voted as a favorite series it received 3 points.
- When a series was voted as second most favorite it received 2 points.
- When a series was voted as third most favorite





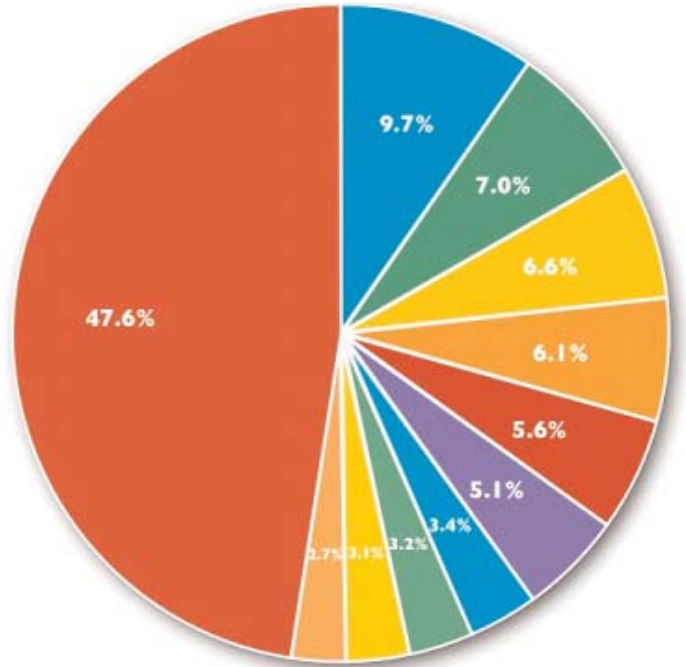
		Points
1	Jack Benny	340
2	Gunsmoke	247
3	Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar	230
4	The Shadow	213
5	Fibber McGee & Molly	196
6	Suspense	179
7	Dragnet	120
8	Great Gildersleeve	111
9	X Minus One	110
10	Amos & Andy	94
11	Lone Ranger	92
12	Sherlock Holmes	77
13	The Whistler	66
14	I love A Mystery	61
15	Philip Marlowe	50
16	Our Miss Brooks	50
17	Escape	47
18	Inner Sanctum	46
19	CBS Radio Mystery Theatre	46
20	Richard Diamond	44
21	Lux Radio Theater	40
22	Sam Spade	39
23	Boston Blackie	39
24	Six Shooter	37
25	Lum & Abner	36
26	Burns & Allen	30
27	Life of Riley	27
28	Night Beat	26
29	Adventures of Nero Wolfe	25
30	Broadway Is My Beat	25

### Pie Chart: Favorite Series of All-Time

(Combined Results)

Here's how the combined voting stacks up as a pie chart. As you can clearly see over half the votes went to the top 10 series, which really goes to show how universally popular these ten series are. However, looking at it from the other direction, you could say that half the people who voted had favorites that were not in the top 10, which goes to show how well loved a wide variety of old time radio series are.

- Jack Benny
- Gunsmoke
- Johnny Dollar
- Shadow
- Fibber McGee
- Suspense
- Dragnet
- Gildersleeve
- X Minus 1
- Amos & Andy
- Other



### Nominated as Favorite Show of All-Time

The series listed in the table below were nominated the most frequently as being the fa-

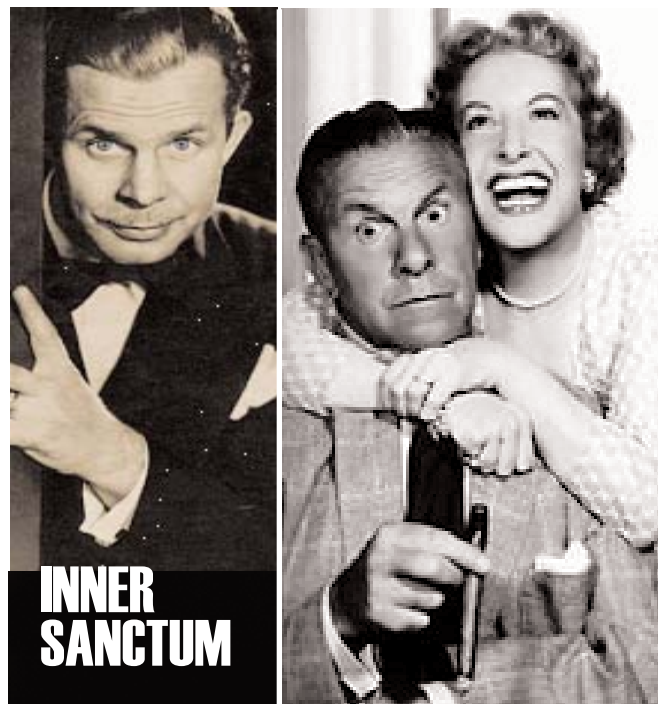
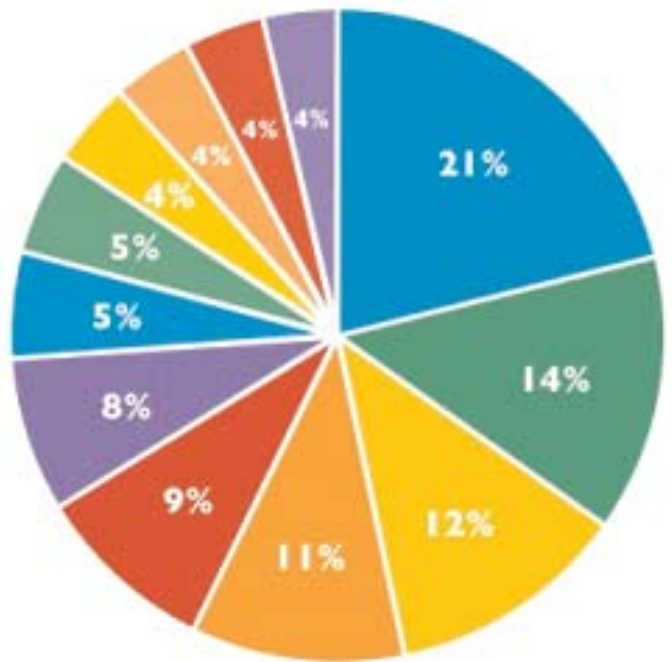
		Count	Frequency
1	Jack Benny	80	13.36%
2	Gunsmoke	52	8.68%
3	The Shadow	45	7.51%
4	Johnny Dollar	40	6.68%
5	Fibber McGee & Molly	34	5.68%
6	Suspense	29	4.84%
7	Great Gildersleeve	20	3.34%
8	Dragnet	19	3.17%
9	Lone Ranger	16	2.67%
10	Amos & Andy	15	2.50%
11	I Love A Mystery	15	2.50%
12	Sherlock Holmes	14	2.34%

It is very clear that the Jack Benny Program was the leader by quite some margin. In the second and third favorite nominations voting was a lot closer between all the different series, but when it came to voting on the favorite the same shows came up again and again, and by quite some margin from all the other shows.

It is quite amazing that Jack Benny received roughly 60% more votes than the nearest rival, which was Gunsmoke with 8.68% of the vote. In total the top five series received an amazing 41.9% of the vote between

Here's how the voting for the favorite looks as a pie chart.

- Jack Benny
- Gildersleeve
- Gunsmoke
- Dragnet
- The Shadow
- Lone Ranger
- Johnny Dollar
- Amos & Andy
- Fibber McGee & Molly
- I Love A Mystery
- Suspense
- Sherlock Homes



**Nominated as Second Favorite Show of All-Time.** The series listed in the table below were nominated the most frequently as being the second favorite old-time radio series.

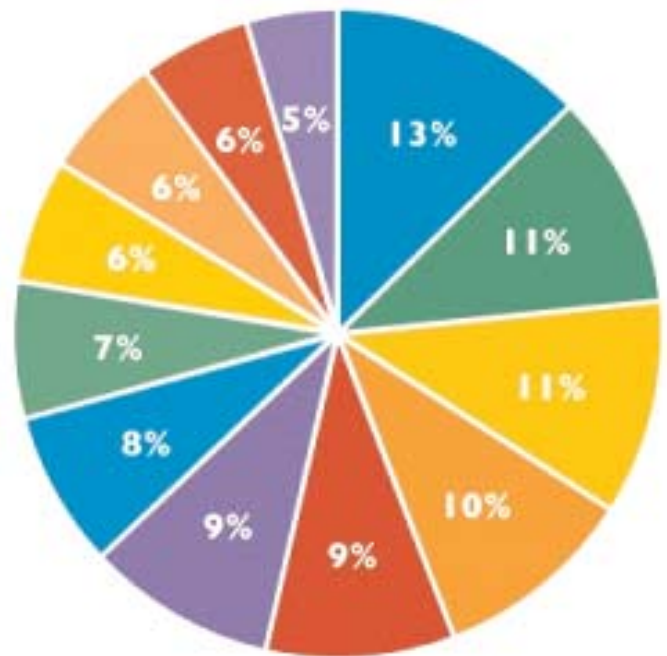
		Count	Frequency
1	Johnny Dollar	39	6.72%
2	Gunsmoke	33	5.69%
3	Jack Benny	33	5.69%
4	Fibber McGee & Molly	31	5.34%
5	Shadow	29	5.00%
6	Suspense	29	5.00%
7	Great Gildersleeve	24	4.14%
8	Dragnet	21	3.62%
9	Amos & Andy	19	3.28%
10	X Minus 1	19	3.28%
11	Lone Ranger	17	2.93%
12	Our Miss Brooks	14	2.41%

The voting for the second favorite was a lot closer. There was no runaway leader like for the favorite series. Gunsmoke held its place at number 2, whilst Jack Benny fell down to third place and Johnny Dollar leapt from fourth place into first place. Making an appearance at number 10 was Dimension X and X Minus 1. I combined the voting for these shows together as so many of the nominations that came in listed them both at the same time, which is understandable I suppose.



Here's how the voting for second favorite looks as a pie chart.

- Johnny Dollar
- Gildersleeve
- Gunsmoke
- Dragnet
- Jack Benny
- Amos & Andy
- Fibber McGee & Molly
- X Minus 1
- Shadow
- Lone Ranger
- Suspense
- Our Miss Brooks

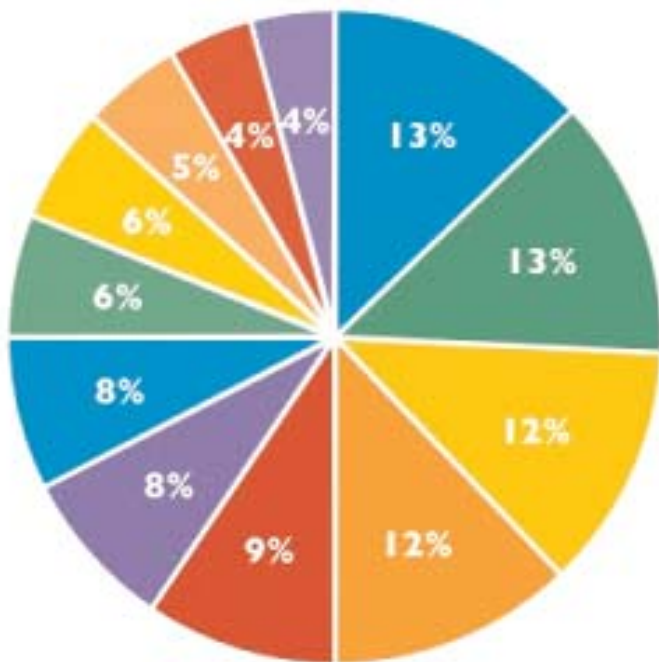




**Nominated as Third Favorite Show of All-Time.** The series listed in the table below were nominated the most frequently as being the third favorite old-time radio series.

		Count	Frequency
1	Jack Benny	34	6.12%
2	Suspense	34	6.12%
3	Fibber McGee & Molly	32	5.76%
4	Johnny Dollar	32	5.76%
5	Gunsmoke	25	4.50%
6	Dragnet	21	3.78%
7	Shadow	20	3.60%
8	Great Gildersleeve	16	2.88%
9	X Minus 1	15	2.70%
10	Whistler	13	2.34%
11	Amos & Andy	11	1.98%
12	Lux Radio Theater	11	1.98%

- Jack Benny
- Suspense
- Fibber McGee & Molly
- Johnny Dollar
- Gunsmoke
- Dragnet
- Shadow
- Gildersleeve
- X Minus 1
- Whistler
- Amos & Andy
- Lux Radio Theater



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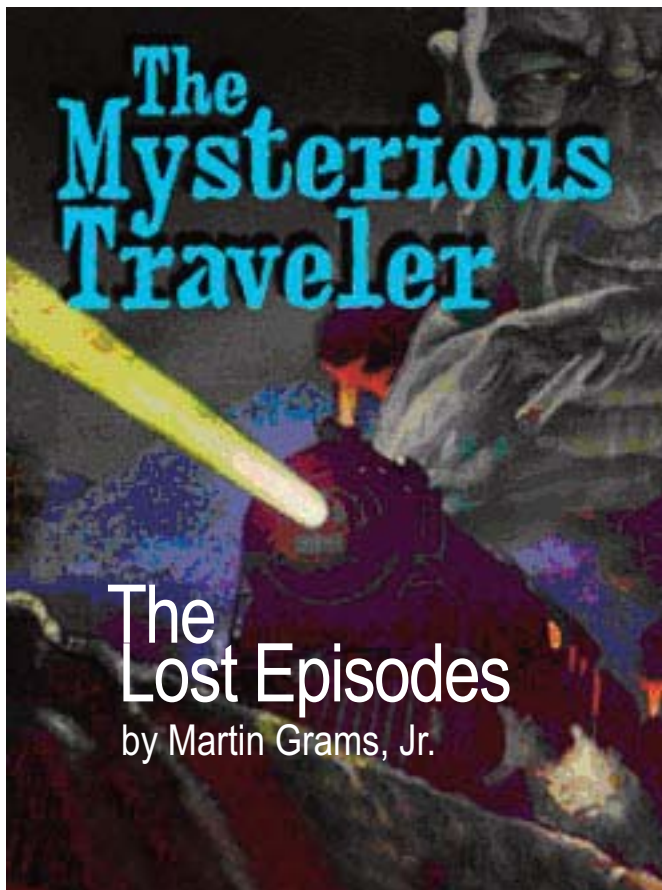
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Romantically, fans of old-time radio (and fans of old horror radio programs) rave about *The Mysterious Traveler*. Chilling tales of murder -- and on occasion -- science fiction and horror. One can easily compare the stories to those of E.C. Comics (Tales from the Crypt, The Vault of Horror, etc.) and while the series today ranks among the most popular of radio chillers (as opposed to the often overlooked and underrated *Quiet, Please* series), in reality it was not as popular at the time it was first broadcast. The best example I can come up with at the moment is the motion-picture, *It's a Wonderful Life*. Never reaching box office success at the time of release, it's become a pop classic today. In reality, *The Mysterious Traveler* was a sustaining filler for time slots on the Mutual Broadcasting System's irregular schedule. A sustaining program was simply as it suggests: the network

forked out the production costs in the hopes that a sponsor would buy what network executives believed was a promising program. Ford was a temporary sponsor in 1950, but only for a few broadcasts. (Ford did the same for a large number of radio programs in the same manner in late 1950.)

The radio program spawned a short-lived series of comic books and four mystery magazines. These collectibles vary in price depending on the quality of the comics and magazines. The front and back cover, and the tightness of the spine, are inspected for grading quality so if the magazine is in superb condition but half the front cover is torn, the value is so cheap you can pay \$5 bucks for it. The usual going price for a good condition copy of the magazine is \$20 per issue.

The series was created and scripted by Robert Arthur and David Kogan. I suspect (and am presently working on digging for proof) that they rarely co-wrote a script together. Instead, they wrote the scripts solo and shared joint authorship for every radio script broadcast. (In the same manner as Lennon and McCartney as The Beatles.) Many of the episodes were reused for *The Sealed Book*, *The Strange Doctor Weird* and a couple recycled for the later episodes of *Suspense*. Robert Arthur later adapted a number of his *Mysterious Traveler* scripts for short stories in magazines. During the late fifties and early sixties, Arthur ghost wrote the introductions for Alfred Hitchcock in the paperback and hardcover anthologies. You can always tell if Arthur was the editor because there was always one story among the selection penned by Arthur -- many of which were adaptations of *Mysterious Traveler* scripts.

Regardless of what is reported on a number of internet websites, *The Mysterious Traveler*



did not inspire other mystery radio programs such as *Dark Venture*, *Murder by Experts* and *The Teller of Tales*. Anthology programs were a dime a dozen and rarely was one radio program the inspiration for another. In fact, producers insisted on their own variation-on-a-theme so they could avoid potential lawsuits. One website goes as far as to suggest that *The Mysterious Traveler* competed against *Inner Sanctum Mystery* and *Lights Out!* and that "the same big three networks were forced to continually shuffle their offerings back and forth on the radio dial to continue to fend off the upstart *Mysterious Traveler*." This, naturally, is incorrect and merely an assumption. The same site claims: "While simply a road-bump to MBS, the blacklisting of one of radio's greatest writing teams effectively ended their radio writing careers with the cancellation of *The Mysterious Traveler*." This is not true. Executives at Mutual made a financial decision to cancel the program after it was determined that selling the series to potential sponsors in an era where it was acknowledged that television was going to dominate the field was not feasible.

Transcription discs for "lost" episodes are expensive because they rarely turn up on eBay. Just a hair over 70 episodes are known to exist and while unscrupulous mp3 vendors have been altering episodes of *The Sealed Book* and retitling them to fool gullible consumers into believing they are buying over 100 episodes, discs do seem to turn up from time to time. I recently paid \$225 for three transcription discs and they are presently being transferred to audio CDs. The dates on the disc labels do not cohere with the radio scripts so whether they are "lost" recordings or simply ones that exist already has yet to be determined until the discs and CDs arrive and I can listen to them. So in the meantime,



here are a few plot summaries for "lost" episodes for you to enjoy.

### Episode #140

#### "I'LL DANCE ON YOUR COFFIN"

Broadcast February 10, 1948

**PLOT:** This is the story of Anita Barnes, a pretty girl from a small Southern town, who came to New York with a burning ambition to achieve fame and success as a dancer. There, she meets Tony Dervish, a vaudeville tap dancer who is looking for a new partner for his act, The Dancing Dervishes. He sees talent in the little lady and encourages her to marry him, promising a signed contract in Hollywood in five years. Tony, however, prefers to practice, practice and practice till she has blisters on her toes. Two years later, Anita's love for Tony diminishes. Andy Thomas, a publicity manager with eyes for

Anita, convinces the tap dancer to poison her husband's cup of coffee, causing him to fall off the roof of a high-story building during a publicity stunt. Tony doesn't die. Instead, he is stuck recovering in a clinic in Arizona. While Tony is recovering, Anita and Andy get a contract in Hollywood and enjoy their new life... until Tony surprises Anita (who still visits him once a month in the clinic to keep up the act of the suffering wife). Tony is starting to walk and in another year he might be able to start dancing again. Back in Hollywood, Anita receives a phone call from Doctor Richards. Tony somehow slipped away from the hospital. His whereabouts are unknown. Anita knows, however, as she phones Andy to let him know that Tony has arrived at her apartment. "Tony's coming to get me!" she shouts over the receiver. Andy races to the apartment house and forces the superintendent to unlock her front door. His car broke down and it's been an hour since she phoned him. The superintendent said neighbors were complaining because of all the dancing and "driving the people down below crazy." Inside, Andy finds Anita dead. She danced herself to death. "Dancing like that kill anybody," says the super. "Faster, faster, faster! The heart can't stand it!" Before Andy leaves the room, the phone rings. Doctor Richards breaks the bad news. They found Tony, dead at the wheel of an automobile. "He ran off the road with the car he stole," the doctor explains. "He died an hour ago..."

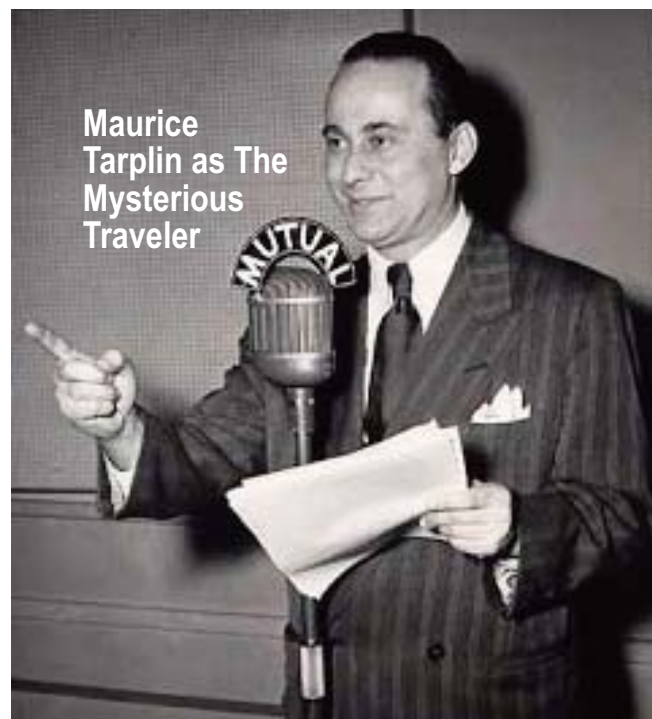
### Episode #146

#### "SEVEN YEARS TO WAIT"

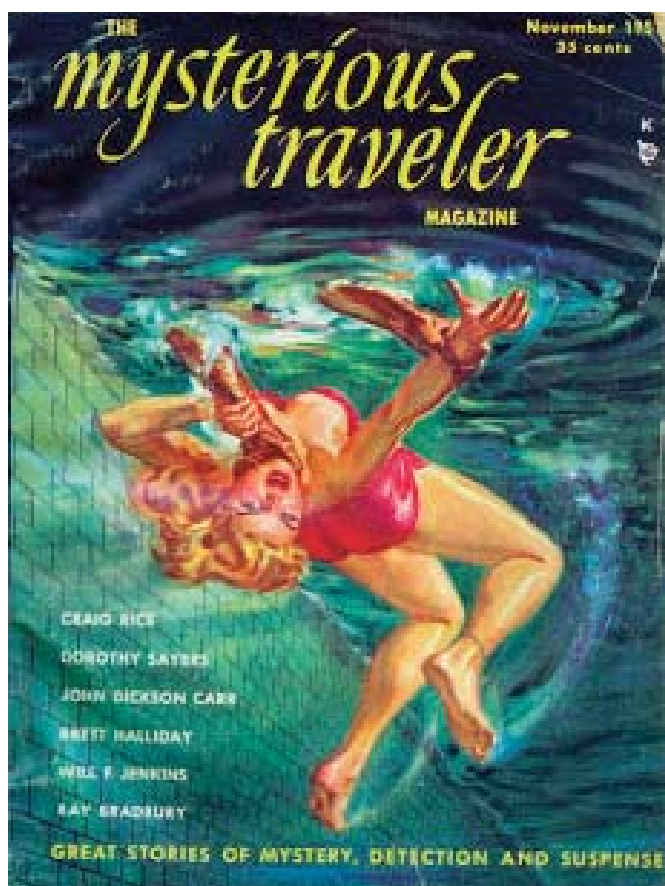
Broadcast March 23, 1948

**PLOT:** In 1940, in a small New England city, George Adams and his wife, Louise, find themselves in financial direness. George wants to pay off the old family mortgage but wealthy brother Jeff, who came to visit his brother for a

few hours, will not contribute. There was a reason why Uncle Philip left the family fortune in Jeff's name. Angry, George, with the assistance of Louise, plots the murder of Jeff and buries his body in the cellar. Only after the crime is committed does George discover that his brother was heir to \$250,000. Now George and Louise have to wait seven years for Jeff to be classified as "dead" and George can inherit the money. Seven long years passed in which George and Louise Adams lived in their dreams of the future. Their daily life was a constant struggle to meet the mortgage and tax payments. Then one day a real estate man pays a visit and offers \$40,000 for the property. His client wants to build a ten story office building. George and Louise cannot sell because of the secret hidden in the cellar. Angry, the real estate agent promises to have the city council raise the taxes to force the couple to sell. George and Louise decide to rent out part of the house to Larry Martin, who quickly discovers the couple's crime and blackmails them with



a proposition. Larry wants to pretend he is Jeff Adams and claim the estate. George will not agree so Larry contacts the police. George and Louise confess to the crime but Larry continues his charade and pretends to be Jeff, complete with an engraved wrist watch and other forms of identification. The police dig up the grave only to find a framed photo of Larry. The authorities, suspecting George and Louise need to spend time at an institution, take the couple in... leaving Larry, who apparently dug up the body of Jeff and disposed of him elsewhere, alone to receive



### Episode #128

#### "MY DATE IS WITH DEATH"

Broadcast November 11, 1947

**Plot:** John Hart, a partner in the Sharon Fabrics Company, meets a stranger with a glowing face who represents himself as Mr. Death. While waiting for his train at Rosedale, John Hart at-

tempts to evade the stranger only to wake and find his entire experience a nightmare. At home, he discovers the stranger handed him a newspaper predicting his death in two days. "John Hart was found scalded to death early this morning in the steam testing room of the plant, where new fabrics are subjected to intense heat," the newspaper reports. Suspecting one of his partners, George Hutchinson, of eliminating his business partner in the same manner as depicted in the newspaper, John cleverly finds a way of killing George on a lonely, deserted road. The next day, John meets his other business partner, Tom Fearing, only to discover Tom was the puppet master. Tom was the stranger in the waiting room, wearing powder that glowed in the dark. The newspaper was fake, planted by John's wife, Diana. Framed for murder, John is ordered to leave town -- or else. John, however, removes an ace up his sleeve when he pulls a gun on Tom and orders him into the steam testing room. Locking themselves in the room, John turns up the steam and throws the key down the ventilator. Tom screams out of desperation to avoid being scalded to death. John wakes to find himself still sitting in the train depot, having fallen asleep next to the stove. Was his dream a premonition?

### Episode #130

#### "DEATH CANCELS ALL DEBTS"

Broadcast December 2, 1947

**Plot:** Paul Edgar, a quaint little man who runs a bookstore, is a modern-day miser who saves every dollar he can, regardless of the precautions he put into effect -- including installing a burglar-proof safe in his home. Late one evening his brother Joe arrives, bleeding and begging for \$2,000 cash. It seems Joe was playing cards and got into a fight. He snatched



up a knife and stabbed a card player. With a police dragnet searching for him, Joe begs his brother for money. Offering to sign off on a \$20,000 endowment policy carefully arranged by their father, Joe forfeits the policy to his brother in return for \$2,000. Paul agrees and months later cashes in on the policy because his brother's dead body was found by police. Hours after receiving the claim, Paul receives another visit from his brother. Joe confesses how he switched his wallet and watch on the dead body of a tramp and tricked both the police and his brother into thinking he was dead. Joe wants half of the money, \$10,000, or he will turn himself over to the police. It seems the man he stabbed never died and Joe is no longer wanted by the police. Paul attempts to stall for time while romancing Gladys, the secretary at the insurance firm. Gladys knows Joe is alive and well and agrees to marry Paul in return for the money -- the firm she works for has other options, including legally forcing for the return of the money. Paul reluctantly agrees. But when Gladys and her boss, Andrews, arrives at Paul's residence, they find Joe reluctant to surrender the money. "I couldn't bring myself to give back the money," Paul explains, "But it's all right -- it's perfectly all right." Opening a door, Paul reveals the horror -- Joe Edgar is dead, hanging from the chandelier.

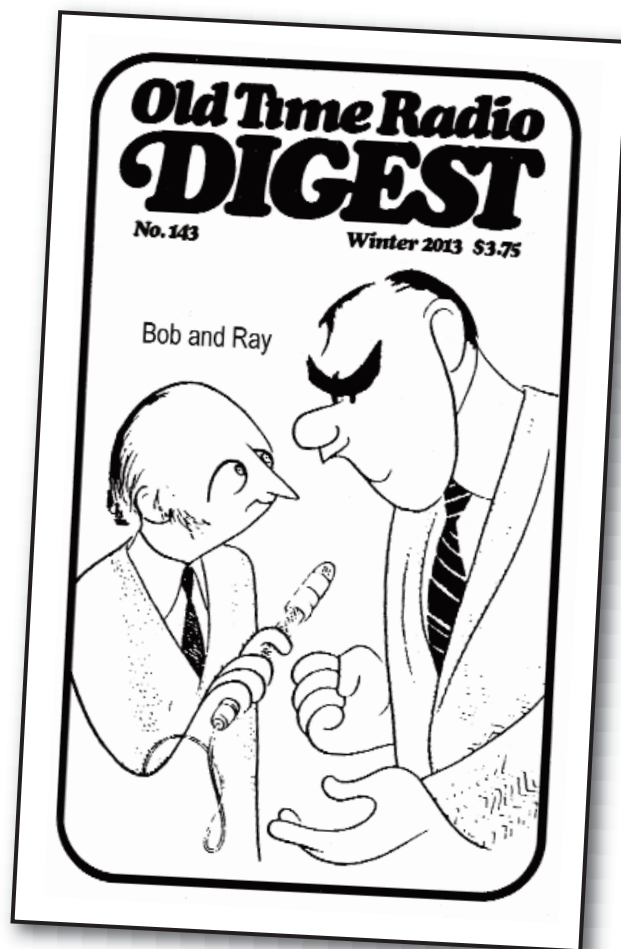
**Episode #151**

**"THE LITTLE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE"**

Broadcast April 27, 1948

**Plot:** Lying on a hospital bed in an Eastern metropolis, Johnny Becker recounts to Lieutenant Morris, of the Homicide Squad, the events of the past week that led him to his present situation, while trying to prevent crying out in pain. Johnny was a habitual gambler who discovered that Maxie, an employee at Barney Sloan's pool par-

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lor, has a rare gift. Maxie is not smart enough to do anything but sweep floors and cannot remember anything two minutes after someone tells him... but he swears he can communicate with his dead brother, Siggy. Maxie shrugs it off until Siggy (through Maxie) is correctly able to predict the winners of the races. Maxie soon strikes a bargain with Siggy (who communicates only with Maxie). Siggy provide a list of winners for upcoming races and Maxie will pay for a bigger tombstone for Siggy's grave. The partnership works out to perfection -- until Big Ed wants a private meeting with the habitual winner. Big Ed suspects Johnny has an inside source and proposes a percentage of the winnings if Maxie provides a list of his intel. The healthy share of dividends turns foul, however, when Big Ed wagers most of the Syndicate's money on a prize fight that Johnny swears: "Mike Sanders will win by a decision." When Killer Lewis wins the fight, the Syndicate puts the heat on Johnny, who is promptly shot in the streets. Back in the hospital bed, Johnny finishes his story moments before he dies and Lieutenant Morris is shocked to learn from the doctor that the newspapers are reporting that Killer Lewis did not win the fight last night. "That last punch he hit Mike Sanders was low," the doctor explains. "Sanders claimed a foul. The motion pictures proved he was right. The boxing commission reversed the decision, and awarded the championship to Sanders."

### **Episode #133**

#### **"MR. TRIMBLE'S TURNABOUT CHRISTMAS"**

Broadcast December 23, 1947

**PLOT:** The Mysterious Traveler opens the broadcast with a reminder of the holiday season when hearts are light and stories should be gay to match the mood of the occasion. "So tonight we'll have no screams, no groans, no moans, no pistol shots." Mr. Timothy Trimble of Brooklyn

Heights, Brooklyn, wakes on Christmas morning to discover a live Santa Claus, eighteen inches tall, sitting on top of his bureau. Benny, as the small figures explains, is invisible to the human eye except for Mr. Trimble. Benny is a Christmas Spirit who has come to bestow on Mr. Trimble the Christmas Spirits Goodness Award for 1947. As a reward, everything that could ever happen to Mr. Trimble is going to happen for the next 24 hours. As Mr. Trimble walks about town buying last-minute Christmas presents, he is shocked to discover how generous everyone is and all of the gifts are on the house. A waitress at the diner tips him five dollars! A police officer fails to give Mr. Trimble a speeding ticket. Mr. Trimble receives a brand new Superior Eight, replacing his 1928 model. Mr. Trimble is the winner of the Super-Duper Jackpot of 1947, receiving a ton of prizes including a \$25,000 home on Long Island, a ranch in New Mexico, a 38-foot cabin cruiser, a jet propelled airplane, a \$2,000 mink coat, a silver-plated cement mixer, his own private Pullman car, a 12 carat ring and anything else a man of his standing should receive. Only at the end of the day,



back in his warm home, does Mr. Timothy Thomas Trimble discover the surprise waiting for him. Benny has just discovered he made a mistake. He was to bestow the award to Timothy T. Trimble (Timothy Timothy Trimble) and because of the mix-up is forced to turn back the clock to 10 a.m.... where Mr. Trimble wakes on Christmas morning... wondering if it was all a dream.



### Episode #163 "THE CHASE"

Broadcast July 20, 1948

**PLOT:** Mike Thomas, in the middle of a four-year term for extortion, makes arrangements for his wife, Flo, to pick up Danny Nelson, just finishing a five-year sentence for a hold up. Danny was diagnosed by the prison doctors that he suffers from a severe case of claustrophobia. While incarcerated, Mike learns that Albert Raymond, a former cashier at the Fifth National, is also leaving prison. \$48,000 was never recovered and both Mike and Danny suspect Albert hid the proceeds of his crime, planning to recover the

stolen loot after he is released. Working with Flo, Danny keeps tabs on the whereabouts of Albert and discovers where the money was hidden. Following Albert to Boston on board a luxury liner, the two criminals steal the suitcase of cash and make a swift getaway in a small boat for Havana. After crashing into the rocks, the boat capsizes in the water, trapping both Danny and Flo in an air-tight cabin, submerged below the water's surface. With no possible avenue of escape, Danny and Flo try to figure out a way to survive until help comes. Realizing there may not be enough oxygen for two, Danny strangles Flo. Panicking from claustrophobia, Danny decides to smash the porthole and allow all the water to flow in -- then planning to escape by making a swim for it. His plan fails because of the physics and a rescue party above watches as a great big air bubble races to the surface... along with hundred dollar bills floating on the surface like seaweed.

**Trivia:** The above radio script was revised and re-titled as "Dead Man's Story" for the May 15, 1960 broadcast of *Suspense*, with Kevin McCarthy playing the lead.

### Episode #155

#### "DEATH IS MY CO-PILOT"

Broadcast May 25, 1948

**PLOT:** Two Americans, Steve Gordon and Joe Weinburg, joined a group of courageous pilots who have gone to their deaths over the treacherous Himalayas. Indo-China Airlines pays extremely well for pilots who can maneuver above the mountain peaks. During their flight, the men run out of fuel and are forced to make an emergency landing on the mountain side. When Steve and Joe discover the wreckage of a former cargo plane, owned by Barney King, they also find Barney King alive and well, keeping warm in a cave. Steve and Joe think Barney is joking when they are told that they are all dead.



Someone named Mr. Benedict comes to the cave and guides them to their next destination. Barney and his co-pilot have resolved themselves to their fate but Steve and Joe will not allow themselves to be taken by Mr. Benedict -- at least, not yet. Transferring gas from Barney's plane, Steve means to fly away. Joe, however, chooses to stay and remain. The next day, Steve finds himself facing Hank Farrell and Sam Morris of the airlines, recovering at the field hospital in Chungking. His tale is too bizarre for Hank and Sam to believe... until Steve starts shouting that Mr. Benedict is at the bedside. No one can see the invisible man as Steve shouts, "Don't let him take me!" Moments later, Steve dies. Hank and Sam believe the dead man was off his rocker due to trauma... until Sam finds Barney King's lucky ring in the pocket of Steve's flying jacket.

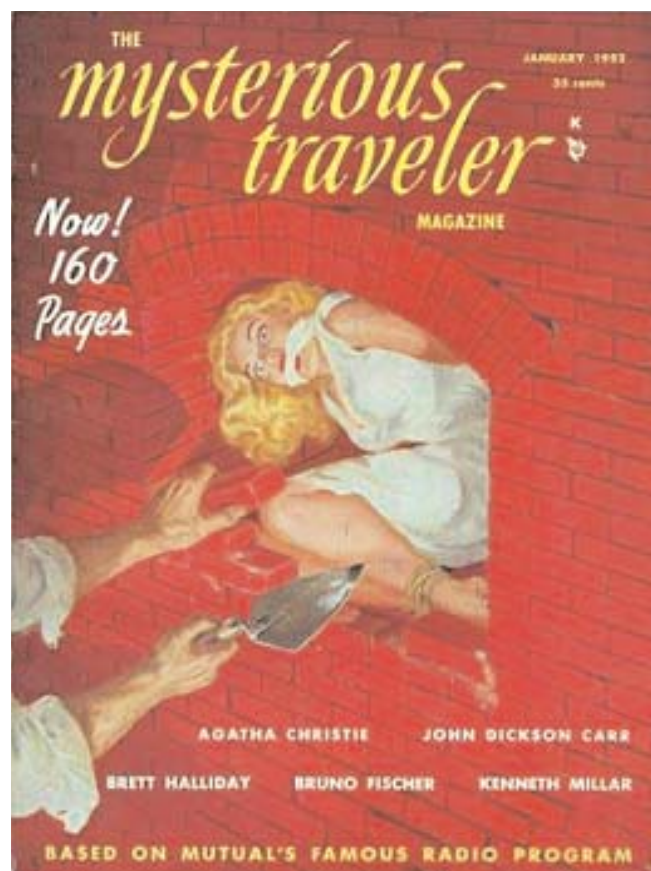
### Episode #187

#### "DEATH IS MY PARTNER"

Broadcast January 20, 1949

**Plot:** Harry Leseur, a dark, powerfully built young man, has just returned home after being missing for two years, following a plane crash in the remote mountains of India. There, he learned about catalepsy, a condition when the heart and the breathing are so close to stopping, a person appears to be dead. Even if he is stabbed by a nail or large needle, he will not feel a thing or react to the pain. Sometimes it happens naturally. In India, the yogis have learned to induce it artificially. Harry, recently rescued from India, reveals the trick to his wife, Lucy, and plots a fake heart attack to fool the doctor, the coroner and the life insurance company into a \$25,000 policy payoff. Lucy plays the role of the grieving widow, trying her best to prevent the doctor and the coroner from performing an autopsy or embalm her husband. The ruse works and two days later her husband's coffin is placed into the family vault -- where Lucy eventually gets to late at night to revive her husband

with the trick he demonstrated days before. The doctor and the coroner, however, played a trick on Lucy. In spite of what they promised her, and how she felt about the body not being touched, and his religious beliefs, the men snuck the body down to the morgue to embalm him, like the law says. Back in the vault, Lucy rubs the wrists of her late husband, begging for him to wake up. "It's been fifteen minutes since I gave you the medicine! Harry, please wake up! Harry... Harry... Harry!"



### Episode #188

#### "THE GHOST MAKERS"

Broadcast January 27, 1949

**Plot:** In the little New England village of Wilton, in a old colonial house just across the road from the town's ancient cemetery, Agatha Wainwright entertains her nephew Ned, who is in debt from Chicago gamblers and is in desperate need of money. With the assistance of Pro-

fessor Piedmont, who runs phony spiritualistic cults, the men plot to create ghosts and scare the old woman into an asylum so Ned can oversee the estate's finances. Four magic tricks and two weeks later, Henry, the hired man and Stella, the maid, resign in terror. Aunt Agatha, however, ignores the ghostly knocks, footsteps and voices that professor Piedmont's ingenuity devises. After a month the whole town is buzzing with tales of her haunted house... but she refuses to heed them. After two months, in desperation, the Professor and Ned devise a plan that will not fail. Departing for Boston, the men arrange for a staff member of a Boston hospital to phone Aunt Agatha and report the death of her nephew and his friend. The two would then return and play ghost. On route back to the mansion, the car skids on the slippery road, goes down a steep embankment and turns over on its side. The temperature is hovering near zero and Ned's ankle is broken. For a half hour the men struggle to get to the mansion, the only house within miles. Having received the phone call, Aunt Agatha's mind has finally cracked -- and believes the cries outside the front door are real ghosts. "Aunt Agatha! We'll



freeze to death if you don't open the door!" Ned's cries go unanswered.

### **Episode #189**

#### **"DEATH SPINS A WEB"**

Broadcast February 3, 1949

**Plot:** Carl and Dora Evans, fleeing from the police after committing criminal schemes, find themselves stranded along a deserted road through the Maine woods, heading north, for Canada. There, they find a moderate-sized stone house, a surprising sight in the dense woods. After observing how Dora's ankle is sprained, an accomplished pianist by the name of Leonard Vance shelters the couple, believing they are brother and sister. Vance explains how he leads a lonely life and, delighted to have company, allows them to stay over for a few days. By the end of the week, Vance has fallen in love with Dora and, in an effort to convince her that he is not penniless, reveals a hidden wall safe containing \$50,000. Dora accepts the marriage proposal. Dora and Carl scheme to kill the old man, make it look like suicide, and steal the money. When Leonard's brother comes to visit, Herbert insists on calling off the wedding -- Leonard should remain isolated in his small stone house. Before Herbert can do anything about it, he succumbs from a heart attack and dies. Carl takes matters into his own hands and shoots Leonard dead, then makes it appear as if Leonard shot himself in an act of suicide. After drinking a toast of wine to celebrate, the couple open the safe and remove the \$50,000 - - and the yellow, brittle newspaper clippings about a pianist sought for murder. It seems Leonard used a bottle of poison whose symptoms duplicated those of heart failure. Herbert was merely trying to protect his brother... and Dora. Before the two can share a laugh of irony, both Carl and Dora get weak and feel a squeezing of the heart...

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**Trivia, etc.** The music Leonard plays on the piano is “Danse Macabre.” Maurice Tarplin doubled the role of Herbert Vance.

**Episode #190 “TONIGHT I DIE”**

Broadcast February 10, 1949

**Cast:** Frank Behrens (Alex Drake); Gwen Jordan (George Adams and the doctor); and Henry Neely (Professor Erlich).

**Plot:** Alex Drake, a haggard looking man in his early thirties, finds himself pacing the few short feet between the locked door of his room and the barred window. In desperation, he composes a letter recounting the events that led to his incarceration and why he knows he will die tonight. Eight months ago he was an instructor in bio-chemistry at Mid-Western State University. After accepting an invitation from Professor Erlich, Alex discovers the professor discovered a way to bring the dead back to life. Once deterioration of the body tissue and brain tissue sets in, it is impossible to bring anyone back from the dead. But he has since conquered the problem with a special serum. Alex witnesses one experiment after another and eventually agrees to be a human guinea pig. During his dream-like state

of unconsciousness, Alex finds himself in a vast, white plain. In the distance was a huge gate... and tens of thousands of people before it. Among the people was George Adams, a colleague, who explains that he died four hours ago in an automobile accident. Alex wakes an hour later, revived from the dead by Professor Erlich, and discovers George really did die a few hours ago. Remembering what George said about knowing the past, present and future, Alex wants the Professor to kill him again. A week later, Alex succumbs from the same fate and discovers he will die on February 10, 1949 at 9:52. When he wakes, the Professor explains that he will not commit the crime a third time. Angry, Alex Drake strangles the Professor.

Before he can finish his letter describing the events that since happened, Alex Drake dies from a heart attack, clutching the seven page letter in his hand. The lieutenant claims the letter “reads like the truth.” The doctor, however, accounts for the prediction because the patient frightened himself to death. “Come now, Lieutenant. Drake speaks of having murdered a





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Professor Erlich six months ago. That was a sheer hallucination. You know as well as I do that Drake's been in this insane asylum, under lock and key, for the past ten years."

**Trivia, etc.** Maurice Tarplin doubles for the role of the lieutenant. The time of Drake's death coincides with the time of broadcast. This episode of *The Mysterious Traveler* aired from 9:30 to 9:55 p.m., Eastern.

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**Episode #191 "COLLECTOR'S ITEM"**

Broadcast February 17, 1949

**Cast:** Bob Dryden (Jennings and Lansing); Cameron Prud'homme (Edward Morlock and the man); and Bill Zuckert (Cain Morlock).

**Plot:** Four hundreds miles south of San Francisco, Edward Morlock, a pale, plump man who has been confined to a wheelchair since an accident in his boyhood, proudly displays his private collection of merchandise related to hideous murders. These include a dress worn by one of the victims of Jack the Ripper and the very glass in which the notorious Dr. Crippen served poison to his wife. The only things lacking to make the collection complete, Edward remarks, are a murderer and a victim. After his servant, Jennings, discovers that Edward cheated his brother Cain out of his father's will, the servant blackmails his employer. As a solution, Edward calls on his brother, Cain, wanted

for numerous murders. Cain is morbidly sensitive about his unusually large hands, compulsively killing anyone who reacts and gets within reach of his hands. Edward tricks Cain into strangling the life out of Jennings, then drugs his brother unconscious so the police can take the killer away. Months later, Cain is executed -- but not before he swears revenge on Edward. A few days later, Edward is making arrangements for Jennings and Cain to be buried in the garden just outside the window -- his collection is now complete. When the echo of Cain's voice torments vengeance against Edward, the hand-capped victim dies from a heart attack... an bruises about his throat made by a pair of unusually large hands.

**Trivia, etc.** Maurice Tarplin doubled for the role Commissioner Tennant.

**Episode #192 "TIME IS RUNNING OUT"**

Broadcast February 24, 1949

**Plot:** Captain Miller wakes to finds himself at an Army Airfield Hospital in Maine, delirious as he recounts to Lt. Wells and General Bryson the events that led to his present surroundings. Miller and Major Pulaski piloted the first experimental rocket, powered by rocket and jet propulsion, known as the XR-1. The metal is a new discovery which can withstand thousands of degrees of heat and reach an altitude of 300,000 feet. The launch goes according to plan but the flight suffers complications. The controls are frozen and the men are on a fast ride into the ionosphere. They have emergency rockets to slow them down, to act as a brake, when they re-enter the atmosphere but hesitate using them until the fuel is all used up. Hoping to raise a number of radio stations, the men overhear the Presidential Inauguration of Governor Webster. Hawaii recently became the newest state in the union and the date is Janu-

ary 20, 1953. At first the men believe some radio genius is giving them his cockeyed version of the world of tomorrow -- until they change channels and overhear a language they never heard before. Looking outside the observation window the pilots observe what they first thought were falling meteors. Then it turns out to be ships... hundreds of them... coming down to Earth. When the rocket ship plunges back to Earth, it crashes and Pulaski dies. Moments after Miller is done telling his story, he passes on. But his delirium may have some basis of truth to it -- 40 feet of tape from the tape recording machine was found among the wreckage and the strange language has been deciphered by folks back in Washington: "Supreme Commander to Fleet Commanders. We are now entering the Earth's stratosphere. Alert all crews. Man all guns. Task Force A will proceed to destroy..."

**Trivia, etc.** Arthur and Kogan's predictions of the future were not unrealistic. Hawaii did become a State on August 21, 1959. The first successful attempt at firing a rocket into space was achieved by the Soviet Union in about 1956 when their "Sputnik 1" was placed into orbit. ■



## Radio Rides the Range

### *A Reference Guide to Western Drama on the Air, 1929-1967*

Review by Jim Widner

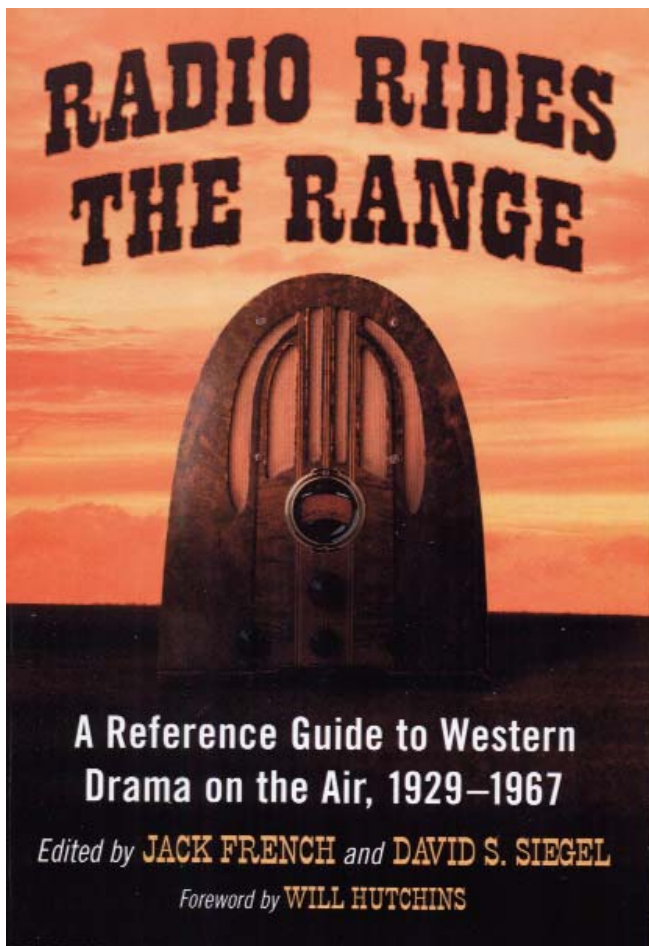
First a confession: when I began collecting old time radio dramas forty years ago, my interest lay primarily in Thrillers and Science Fiction. My collection did include a number of western radio dramas, but other than a few from the fifties: *Gunsmoke*, *Fort Laramie*, and others I never showed much interest in them.

Now, before me I have a new historical look at radio westerns – *Radio Rides the Range: A Reference Guide to Western Drama on the Air, 1929-1967*, edited by Jack French and David Siegel, both of whom are well qualified radio historians - whose very subject are the programs that I tended not to collect. Wow! Did I miss out on some interesting gems! Not that I didn't know about these programs, I just didn't know their histories and how effective many of them were. Additionally, looking over this book, there are many I have never heard of and of which little is still known.

This softcover book published by McFarland, which has a reputation for detailed reference books of various subjects, is very affordable to the historian and collector of old time radio. The forward was written by Will Hutchens, former star of the television series, *Sugarfoot*, who himself admittedly never appeared on radio. However, his interest in all things western was formed from radio and not television. Will is a gregarious guy who absolutely loves radio drama and it is reflected in his introduction, which in itself was a treat to read.

This book is an absolute must for collectors and historians who want to have a handy starting point on western drama. The editors have





taken a very clear, concise approach benefiting anyone who is starting out researching western-themed radio drama. However, don't expect to find in it every western-themed radio program. The preface defines clearly what one will find in the book by its declarations on what is NOT included.

The shows are listed alphabetically making them easy to find, and where titles are in dispute, both are used with reference to the primary or popular title. There is even an appendix timeline by year of the series, so if you know a year, you can look for a series in that fashion. Most of the titles featured begin with a category listing consisting of the Network, Format, Duration of Run, Sponsors, Audio Copies Extant, and where the scripts are archived (if known). When little is known about

a series, or no audio copies are known to exist, the listing is not displayed. For some of the series nothing more is known than information from a publication of the time such as *Broadcasting or Variety*.

Each series was researched by individuals who, according to the editors, "had a broad knowledge of U.S. broadcast history, coupled with a specialty in western radio drama." Some of the series were very well researched given the plethora of information known to exist. It was obvious that these individuals had been researching the series long before this publication. Some of the entries could have had more detail provided by the researcher when available, but which was either not sought or not discovered. One example is the Great Northern Railroad's program *The Empire Builders*, which has a lot written about it in the newspapers and magazines of the day, which could have added perhaps more detail. The book states for this series that the "identity of the scriptwriter(s) has yet to be discovered" even though it is known through newspaper accounts that Wyllis Cooper wrote a number of the scripts as W.O. Cooper. It also states the show moved from New York to Chicago in September 1930, yet an article exists from May 1930 in which one "Chief Fisher" toured the studio in Chicago where the show was in rehearsal.

But given the scope of this book, some of these errors can be overlooked though one wonders why one researcher referred to Roy Rogers birth location as where "Riverfront Stadium now stands" (near Cincinnati) when Riverfront was torn down ten years ago. Nonetheless, to be able to pull together series, some of which probably haven't seen the light of day since they were last broadcast, is an amazing feat and one that makes this book a good research tool for



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this genre. Every notation is cited and some of the presentations are outstanding. Some of the series were locally based productions, though syndicated, yet contain well researched details, such as *Life on Red Horse Ranch* which touches upon cultural depictions of ethnicities of some of the characters. Often, encyclopedic works such as this do not have much room for such discussions, yet this book doesn't shy away from them. It begins in the preface by the editors, and continues within for some of the pieces by the researchers of the entries. This is an added bonus allowing an even more in-depth look at some of these programs. The entries on *The Lone Ranger*, *Frontier Gentleman*, *Red Ryder* and *The Lone Indian* show particularly strong research and depth. Perhaps these particular entries demand their own individual books someday.

In reviewing this book, I found myself reminded of those late night commercial offers for kitchen items with bonus pieces, when the presenter says something like "and wait there's more..." Besides the series presented with some detail, this reference includes a section of series titles "with insufficient data to classify or describe" offering what little it can. Perhaps this is a reminder of the vast research just waiting for others who want to take up the challenge. Complete bibliographies, script repositories and timelines of the programs are all included in several appendices. I wish the book's preface presented an overview of the history of western-themed radio drama as a cultural phenomenon. It seems this would be a place for such a discussion, but its focus was on how the entries were structured and the criteria for selection. The entries leave it pretty much up to the reader to try to understand this genre's significance in the history of

radio. Perhaps this was beyond the scope of this particular volume, but as this book seems to be the first to actually focus on these programs, it might have been an added bonus to hear the editors' thoughts especially from these two distinguished radio historians. As I said, this is perhaps my own personal wish, and certainly does not detract from the excellence of the volume. When reading *Radio Rides the Range* prepare yourself for a remarkable ride through a time when the networks and syndicators presented the lands west of the Mississippi both in modern and very early times. If you are a radio drama researcher, this book should be on your shelf, and if you are interested in western-theme radio drama, this book is a certainly a must. ■

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(<http://www.mcfarlandpub.com>, 800-253-2187)

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**UNUSUAL PAIR** - Art Linkletter (left) and Cedric Adams, shown here in caricature, distinguish KTSA-CBS' newest program of fun and frolic, along with some seriousness! It is "House Party," and is the only hour on the air that includes a columnist-commentator (Adams) along with comedy, contests, games and what not by the star (Linkletter).

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## **OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES AND UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES FOR Nov/Dec**

This 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 Nov and Dec. 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) & for transcription disks [tony\\_senior@yahoo.com](mailto:tony_senior@yahoo.com)

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### **Amos N Andy**

1950-01-15 Brown vs Brown.mp3  
1950-01-21 Mama & Hubert Smithers.mp3  
1950-01-29 Stolen Suits.mp3  
1950-02-04 New Parking Lot.mp3  
1950-02-18 The Best in Town.mp3  
1950-03-04 Sapphire on Television.mp3  
1950-03-19 Andy Romances Eloise Walker.mp3  
1950-03-26 The Happy Stevenses.mp3  
1950-04-02 Andy Goes to Charm School.mp3  
1950-04-16 The Census Taker.mp3  
1950-04-23 Lodge Convention in Chicago.mp3  
1950-04-30 Andy Inherits 25,000 Dollars.mp3  
1950-05-07 Battle Over Andy's Inheritance.mp3  
1950-05-14 Andy and the IRS.mp3  
1950-05-21 Summer at Pine Crest Lodge.mp3  
1950-10-01 Kingfish is Drafted.mp3  
1950-10-08 Kingfish is in the Service.mp3  
1950-12-17 Sapphire Leaves the Kingfish.mp3

### **Broadway's My Beat**

52-07-05 The Stacy Parker Murder Case.mp3  
53-07-04 The John Rand Murder Case.mp3

### **Crime Does Not Pay**

49-12-12 Gasoline Cocktail.mp3

### **Crime On The Waterfront**

49-02-24 Audition Show.mp3

### **Fibber McGee & Molly**

55-03-31 The Owl And The Pussycat.wav  
55-04-03 Little Boy Lost.wav  
55-04-04 McGee Looks For His Raincoat.wav  
55-04-05 McGee Discovers A Talent.wav  
55-04-06 In The Recording Session.wav  
55-04-07 Les' Career Is Over.wav  
55-04-11 The Shopping Crush.wav  
55-04-12 McGee Thinks Parking Meters Are Coming.wav  
55-04-13 Someone Keeps Phoning the McGees.wav  
55-04-15 McGee Gets A Pedometer.wav  
55-04-17 McGee Finds An Old Unopened Letter.wav  
55-04-18 Molly Insists The Windows Be Washed.wav  
55-04-19 Molly Gets Tired of Doc's And McGee's Insults.wav  
55-04-20 The McGees Offer To Babysit.wav  
55-04-21 The First Day Of Sitting.wav  
55-04-24 McGee Judges A Beauty Contest.wav  
55-04-25 The Noise Abatement Committee.wav  
55-04-26 Doc And McGee Vie In A Golf Match.wav  
55-04-27 The Golf Match Continues.wav  
55-04-28 The Golf Match Finally Concludes.wav  
55-05-01 The Mystery Ladies Society.wav  
55-05-02 McGee Finds A Phone Number In An Old Wallet.wav  
55-05-03 Molly Gets Her Christmas Cards Ready.wav  
55-05-04 Molly Gets A Plumbing Job.wav  
55-05-05 Doc Gamble Lays McGee Up.wav  
55-05-08 McGee Writes To His Congressman.wav  
55-05-09 Molly Gets Jury Duty.wav  
55-05-10 McGee Finds A \$1 Error In His Bank Statement.wav

## Fibber McGee & Molly

55-05-11 McGee Learns About Business Problems.wav  
 55-05-12 McGee Loses A Tune.wav  
 55-05-15 The McGees Take In A Movie.wav  
 55-05-16 McGee Finds An Old Recipe For Chili.wav  
 55-05-17 Doc And McGee Fix The Garage Lock.wav  
 55-05-18 Chef McGee.wav  
 55-05-19 Running The Malt Shop.wav  
 55-05-22 All You Can Eat For A Dollar.wav  
 55-05-23 The Streamliner Belt.wav  
 55-05-25 The Bee Swarm Invades.wav  
 55-05-29 Fun Night At The Elks Club.wav  
 55-05-31 McGee Brings Molly The Wrong

Dress.wav  
 55-06-01 The Lost Kid.wav  
 55-06-05 McGee Makes Some Ice Cream.wav  
 55-06-06 McGee Works out His Activity Guide.wav  
 55-06-07 McGee's Mentality.wav  
 55-06-08 Frugal McGee Is Stuck Downtown.wav  
 55-06-09 Nightclubbing It.wav  
 55-06-12 The Chipmunk.wav  
 55-06-13 McGee Forgets A Special Day.wav  
 55-06-14 McGee Finds A Stock Certificate.wav  
 55-05-24.wav  
 55-05-30 McGee Is Caught At The Cleaners.wav  
 55-05-26 The Bee Man.wav

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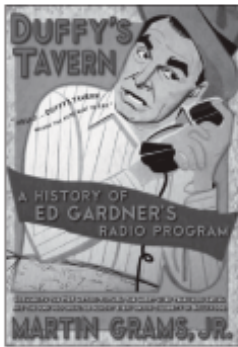
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**“Hello, Duffy’s Tavern, where the elite meet to eat. Archie the manager speakin’... Duffy ain’t here”**

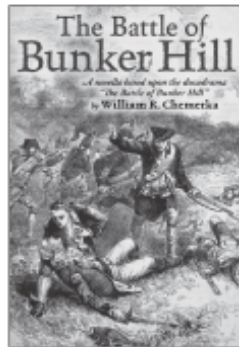
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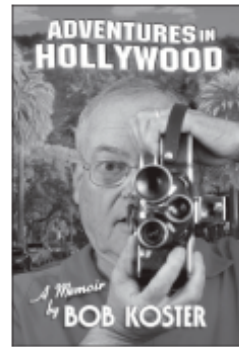
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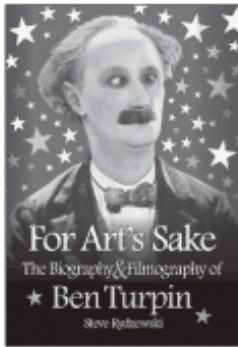
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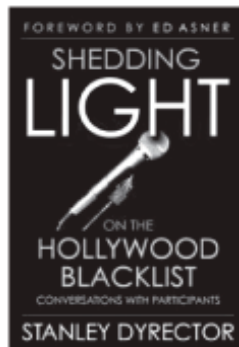
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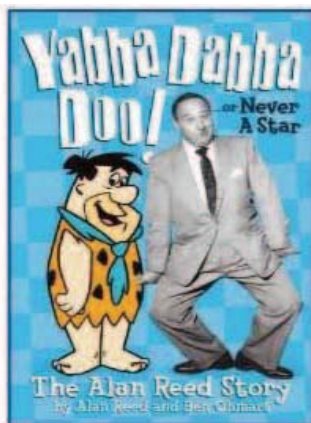


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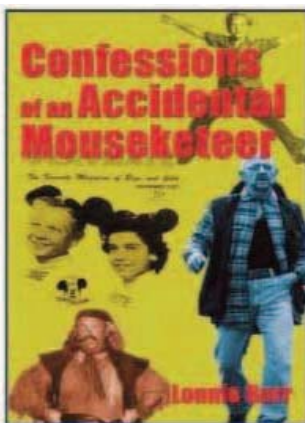


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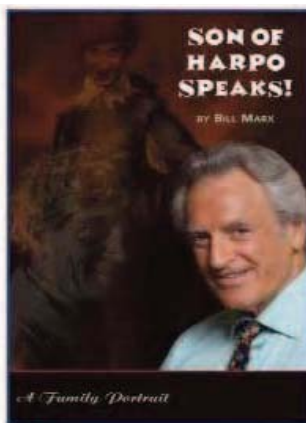
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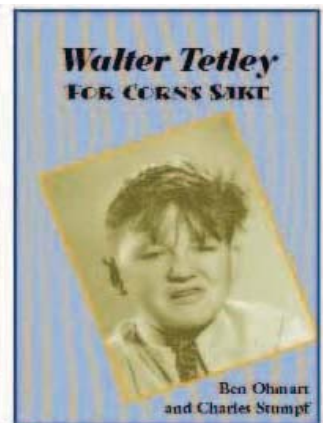
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## Walt Lochman: Kansas City's Original Sportscaster

By Ryan Ellett

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In 1940 Walt Lochman, as announcer for the Kansas City Blues, received 65,000 votes in a Sporting News popularity contest seeking the best radio baseball announcer in the nation. This total was enough for first place in the minor league class; WGN's Bob Elson, a future member of the Baseball Hall of Fame and long-time White Sox announcer, won first place amongst major league announcers. The New York Yankees-affiliated Kansas City Blues were a AA franchise with roots stretching back to the 1880s and the closest the city got to big-time ball until the arrival of the Athletics in the 1950s.

Lochman wasn't just popular with listeners; management loved him. Yearly paid attendance reached 300,000 that year, three times the paid attendance just five years earlier. That summer of 1940 Lochman's daily radio show on KMBC drew 51% of listeners compared to WDAF's second place showing of 10%. The legendary juvenile adventure show *Little Orphan Annie* may have done well against nefarious evil doers but she only managed a 5% rating against Lochman. With such ratings, the money was sure to follow, and it did. General Mills' Wheaties cereal and Socony-Vacuum Oil Company signed on for another year of sponsorship, eager to have their products continue to be pitched to listeners by this beloved play caller. Such success, however, hadn't come over night.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, on November 4, 1906, Lochman's full given name was Walton but he would be known as Walt throughout his professional career. Like many boys he loved



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playing various sports and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Blues, but an unfortunate injury kept him from participating in any sports at a competitive level. Unable to perform on the athletic field, Lochman turned his competitive drive toward singing and as a high school senior in 1925 won first place in a state-wide vocal contest.

Lochman developed his vocal talents through musical endeavors and in 1927 he started on radio. According to one written account he joined the fledgling KMBC which had recently become a commercial station under the leadership of Arthur B. Church. The Kansas City station would become CBS' westernmost outlet the following year in 1928. The story passed down through the family varies, however, and indicates Lochman's first radio work was a singing job on a musical variety show over WDAF, an early affiliate of the NBC Red network. If surviving accounts are to be trusted, his vocal prowess earned him spots alongside the wildly popular Kansas City jazz band Coon Sanders Nighthawks on some of their WDAF

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broadcasts.

Walt Lochman's first sportscasting opportunity came about by happenstance when the feed for the 1929 World Series was lost and Lochman recreated the game from the incoming Western Union ticker. Despite receiving glowing reviews for the effort, there were few chances for further sports announcing on the airwaves at the time so he pursued other opportunities at other stations. He left KMBC or WDAF (or both) in 1929 and over the next six years worked at WIBW (Topeka), KGBX (Springfield, MO), and KCKN (Kansas City, KS). Most of his work during this time was talk shows and programs of recorded music. The period also included a short stint as station manager, program director, and general announcer at W9XBY, an experimental high fidelity station in the early 1930s owned by First National Television, one of Arthur Church's broadcasting ventures.

An apocryphal story claims that while working for Springfield's KGBX, Lochman spent 13 weeks broadcasting with Red Grange out of Winnipeg over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Grange retired from football in 1933 and did get into sports announcing so the tale is possible if not provable.



Walt Lochman and his uncle

It was at KCKN in 1935 where Lochman's sportscasting really began to take off. An uncle of Lochman's unexpectedly lost his sight and was very vocal to Walt in expressing his disappointment at the poor commentary provided by local broadcasters who made it difficult for him to follow his beloved Blues. Because Lochman is the first known sportscaster for the team, it's likely this earlier coverage of the team which his uncle found so disappointing was recreations made via ticker tape feeds, an effort which could easily turn out poorly in the hands of less-talented radio professionals. Remembering the accolades he'd received years before, Walt took it upon himself to create more vivid and colorful descriptions for his uncle.

In the spring of 1935 Lochman approached Blues owner Johnny Kling. He requested to be allowed to cover a ten-game home stand to test the power of live minor league baseball broadcasts. Kling was hesitant, afraid the broadcasts would cut into attendance. Finally Kling agreed on the condition that if attendance decreased Lochman would stop his broadcasts. During that home stand attendance increased five-fold, from 2,000 to 10,000 per game over that span. Season-long attendance doubled for the franchise, from 100,000 total paid attendance in 1934 to 200,000 in 1935. A few short years later it hit 300,000. A closer review of Blues' history may suggest that this growth in attendance was not entirely due to Lochman's broadcasts. In 1937 the team switched affiliations from the Chicago White Sox to the New York Yankees, a club which was in the middle of winning four consecutive World Series (1936-1939). The Blues no doubt fielded some impressive talent during these years which has a tendency to draw fans to the ballpark.

The General Mills and Socony-Vacuum

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sponsorship of Lochman through the Knox-Reeves advertising agency was a part of the companies' \$1.5 million investment in national baseball advertising during the 1938 season. The year after receiving this contract, in 1939, Lochman returned to KMBC as a general staff member, a decade after leaving the station originally. Based on Lochman's growing reputation in sportscasting KMBC won the rights to air the Blues' games and began to originate many of them though some continued to be fed to KCKN. Kansas City fans appreciated Lochman enough to boost his ratings well past his on-air competition which included such musical luminaries as Kay Kyser and Bing Crosby.

The following year KCKN reclaimed primary rights to the Blues broadcasts via the Wheaties contract and they also acquired Lochman's services though he continued to be employed by KMBC. A little known aspect of the business dealings of KMBC's Arthur Church was his role as agent for a number of radio personalities, foremost among them Caroline Ellis (discussed two years ago) and Ace Goodman, the writer of *Easy Aces* and eventually the highest paid writer in television by the late 1960s. Church acted in this capacity for Walt Lochman, arranging work for him on competing stations while paying him a bi-weekly salary of \$200. Even while broadcasting games over other stations he continued to air daily sports reports over KMBC.

For the next few years Walt Lochman was the king of Kansas City sports, announcing not only baseball but Big 7 football (a predecessor to the current Big 12 Division 1 college sports conference), the Greyhound's minor league team of the American Hockey Association (but only the final periods), boxing, and Naismith League basketball over KMBC. His programs were never short of sponsors, earning the ad-



Walt on stage with unknown speaker.

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vertising dollars of Ford, the Saturday Evening Post, and Kansas City's Pla-Mor entertainment center in addition to previously mentioned General Mills and Socony-Vacuum Oil. Lochman's popularity was such that he was credited with calling the play-by-play for over 900 Kansas City Blues baseball games during the six seasons from 1935 to 1940.

As Lochman's agent Arthur Church worked diligently to get him a job announcing in the Major Leagues. In February, 1943, Lochman got that chance and he moved his family to Chicago where he announced for the White Sox over WIND. This opportunity to announce the big leagues was relatively short lived, however, and came to an end after the 1944 season.

Walt Lochman returned quietly to Kansas City with his family where he found work at KCMO doing a sports wrap-up program at 6:00 and 9:00 p.m. He also did some Big 6 (formerly the Big 7) play-by-play for the station as well as weekend variety shows. This job lasted from 1945 until 1949 after which Lochman again



moved his family, this time to Topeka, KS, where he started on KJAY in 1950. KJAY was a young station, having just gone on the air in 1947. His main work for the station was a morning talk show on which he had a variety of guests including local sports figures and elected officials. The program was a bit unusual as it was actually broadcast from the Lochman's kitchen table. He returned to sportscasting minor league ball with the Topeka Owls, a job he shared – according to Walt's son Bill Lochman – with Merle Harmon who was just beginning his illustrious broadcasting career. By 1952 Lochman had worked his way up to the role of sports director for the station.

Walt Lochman passed away March 16, 1954, at the age of 47, already a 27-year veteran of radio. He had four children: Walton, Jr., born in 1930, Curtis, born in 1933, Connie, born in 1934, and William, born in 1941. His love of radio was passed on to two of his sons, Walt, Jr., and Bill, both of whom had long careers in Kansas City radio. Walt, Jr., worked as a salesman for both KCKN and WHB then as sales manager and a general manager for 18 years at

KMBZ. Bill, too, was a salesman at stations KCKN and WDAF. He worked as a sales manager at KMBC-TV during the 1970s and in the 1980s as general manager of KCFM. Bill's son and daughter also started in radio but according to Bill as the industry changed they eventually got out and moved on to other endeavors.

Though Walton Lochman ended his two decades of radio work in anonymity, fans of sports radio should not forget the tremendous impact he had on creating a high quality sports broadcasting tradition in Kansas City. Author's note: This material was originally presented at the 7th Great Plains Radio History Symposium sponsored by Kansas State University. Interestingly, Frank Absher, pre-eminent historian of St. Louis radio, presented on sportscaster Francis Laux. Laux had a career remarkably similar in its rise and decline to Walt Lochman, the difference being he was based in St. Louis and not Kansas City. The story of these two men reminds radio history fans of the fickleness of the medium and that sustained popularity was elusive for most. ■

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—N. Y. Tribune

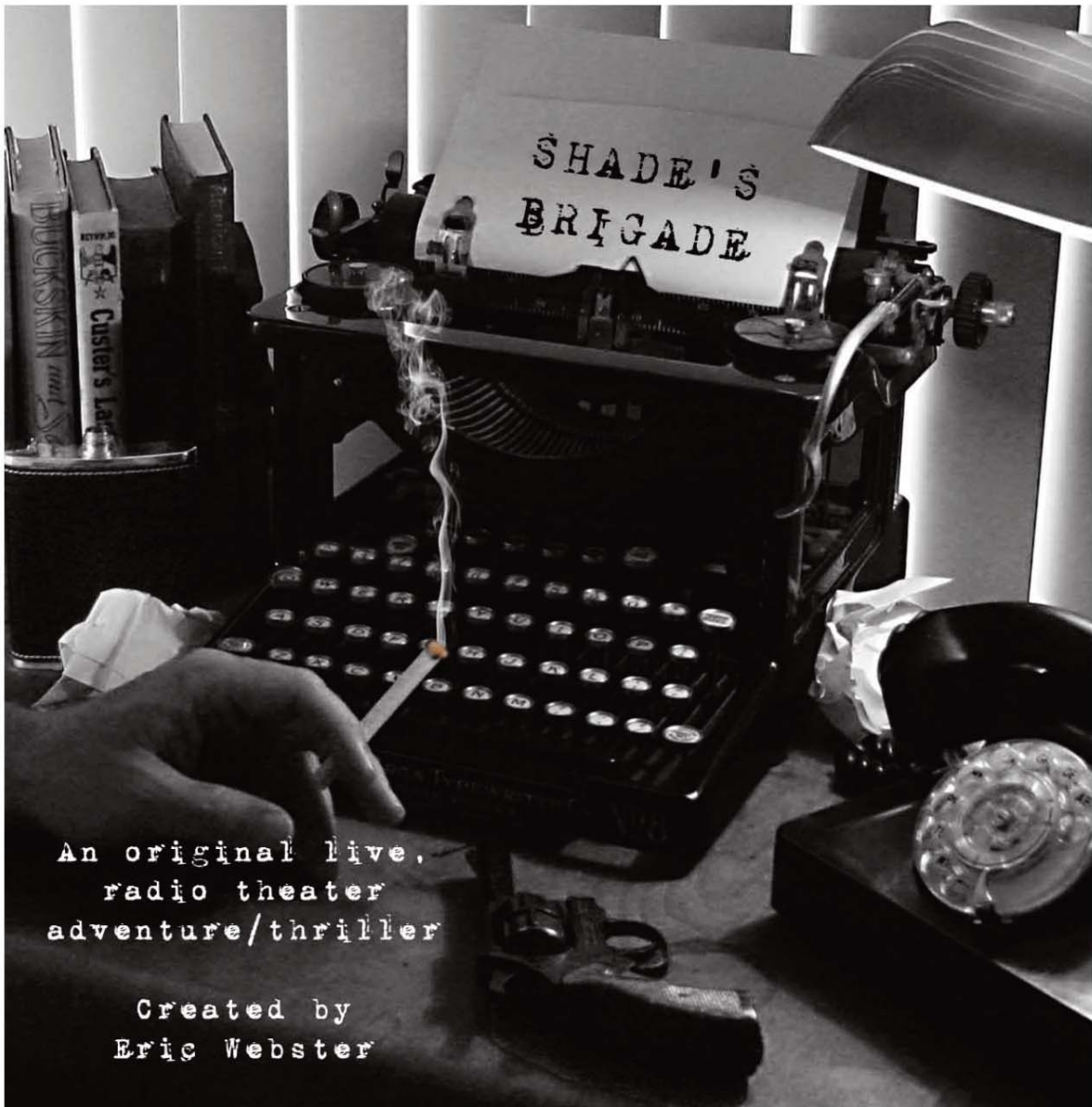
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