



The Old Radio Times

The Official Publication of the Old-Time Radio Researchers

Nov/Dec 2014 www.otrr.org 2673 Subscribers

No.76

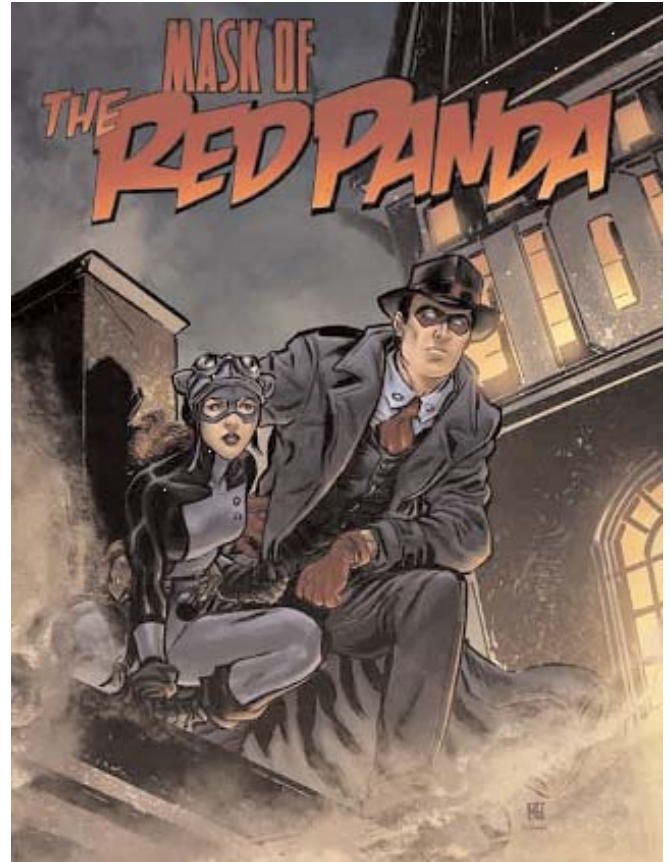
NEW TIME RADIO

By Michael Dean

I know this is a group dedicated to the preservation and study of Old Time Radio. I grew up well into the TV era, but I have been a long time fan of Old Time Radio, dating back to before I knew what it was. I would listen to my aunt's records of Abbott & Costello routines over and over, never realizing they had once been part of a radio show. Over the years I've enjoyed the radio adventures of the Lone Ranger, Superman, Sherlock Holmes, Marshall Dillon and Joe Friday, among dozens of others. I wanted to pass on the love of this medium to my children, but – as children do – they saw it as “old” and “boring.” So, how would I be able to get them to listen?

Well, as it turns out, OTR recordings and BBC broadcasts are not the only means of experiencing quality radio drama these days. There is a large, worldwide community of creative people dedicated to keeping the medium alive and telling new stories through podcasts. If I could hook my kids on some of these new shows, it should be a cinch to roll in the old shows and have them enjoy the stories just as much as I do.

Since my kids love super heroes, the first of these new shows I introduced them to was Decoder Ring Theatre's *Red Panda Adventures*. The kids were hooked almost immediately. Created, written, directed by, and starring Gregg Taylor as the titular hero, the show follows the adventures of Canada's greatest super hero and



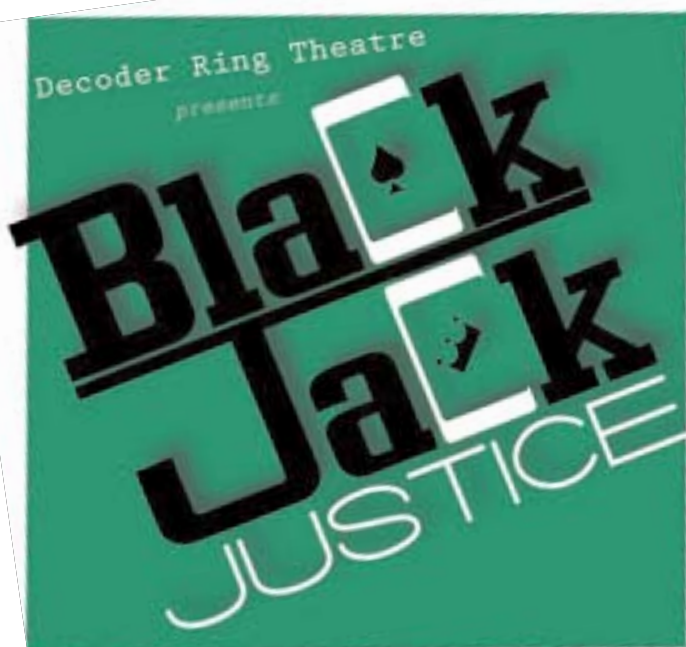
his female sidekick, the Flying Squirrel, played by Taylor's wife, Clarissa Der Nederlanden. Originally conceived as a project for traditional radio, Taylor's group recorded six episodes of a campy World War II super-spy version in 1999. Unable to find a station to back the project, the idea went nowhere for several years. Then, Taylor discovered podcasting. While growing up, Taylor would hear Old Time Radio shows late at night on a local Toronto station. In the years between his first attempt at radio drama and the current Red Panda series, which began running in 2005, he listened to much more OTR via the wonders of mp3. Pointing to Bud Collyer and Orson Welles as his

favorite radio voices, he has a deep respect for the collectors, traders and dealers who saved OTR from becoming completely lost. Having been exposed to long runs of programs, hearing how they grew and developed, Gregg opted to change his approach when he went back to the character. Obviously, and admittedly, influenced by characters ranging from radio's *Shadow* and *Green Hornet* to comics' Batman and the Spirit, the current Red Panda series is very much a love letter to Old Time Radio, pulp magazines and Golden Age comics.

While the storylines for Black Jack skew more mature than *Red Panda*, the stories are on the same level as the more adult OTR shows. Taylor makes a conscious effort to try and keep his shows primarily in line with what would have been broadcast in radio's heyday. His one conscious departure is in his strong female leads. In his own words, "Margo Lane gave Lamont Cranston someone to talk to... but you wish just once that she had her own super powers. You wish she could actually help him. Not to mention, the women that I work with would kill me if I ever wrote them a role that helpless." His approach seems to work, as his audience is a near 50/50 male/female split. That's a rare feat for stories about super heroes and private detectives.

With the *Red Panda* being a hit with the kids, I wanted to give them something different. I wanted to show them that different types of stories work in this form. I wanted to still use a new show, to avoid both the idea that "we don't like old stuff" and giving the impression that Decoder Ring Theatre was the only group doing modern audio drama. Unfortunately, a lot of modern audio drama is not really family-friendly. Fortunately, I found a terrific one that was.

The Radio Adventures of Dr. Floyd was created by Grant Baciocco and Doug Price. Some of the early episodes were aired on Dr. Demento's radio show before becoming primarily a podcast series. The comedy serial follows the world's most brilliant scientist, Dr. Floyd (Doug Price), his young protégé, Dr. Grant (Grant Baciocco), and their robot companion CHIPS (Maira Quirk) as they chase the evil Dr. Steve (Baciocco) and his sock-shaped assistant, Fidget (Baciocco again), through time and space. Inspired partly by Jay Ward cartoons and *Schoolhouse Rock*, the episodes are short,



Besides *Red Panda*, Taylor also created, writes and directs Black Jack Justice, a post-WWII detective series inspired by his enjoyment of the likes of *Philip Marlowe*, *Sam Spade* and *Johnny Dollar*. The twist is that, in addition to hard-boiled PI Jack Justice, his show also includes Trixie Dixon, girl detective. Rather than a single narrative voice, Taylor writes two conflicting narratives. The main characters are played to noir perfection by Christopher Mott and Andrea Lyons, with Taylor barely recognizable in a supporting role as Police Lieutenant Victor Sabien.

fast-paced, smart and funny. Running between 5 and 10 minutes per episode, the kids don't have time to get bored. In true OTR fashion, later episodes feature secret messages kids can decode with the "Official Dr. Floyd Decoder Ring." My kids were hooked with the first episode and, several times, they listened to an entire season of the show in one sitting. In contrast to Gregg Taylor, Grant Baciocco did not come into audio drama as a result of a love of Old Time Radio. He knew of OTR, of course, but Baciocco's biggest influence was comedy albums. He names OTR veteran Stan Freberg as an influence, naming Freberg's album *The History of the United State Volume 1 - The Early Years* as a particular favorite. In 2008, Baciocco was fortunate enough to be able to cast Freberg himself as Sherlock Holmes for a few episodes of *Dr. Floyd*.



While *Dr. Floyd* ended its run in 2010, all of the episodes are still available for download. Grant Baciocco has continued his humorous family-friendly audio drama creation. Since *Dr.*

Floyd wrapped, Baciocco has written 52 one-minute episodes of *Did This Happen?*, presenting humorous takes on real historical events in an effort to get kids to ask questions and do some research. More recently, he has started Saturday Morning Theatre. The plan is for *Saturday Morning Theatre* to feature several different family-friendly series in rotation, with a new episode every Saturday morning.

The first *Saturday Morning Theatre* show was the super hero sitcom *The Adventures of the Thunder Crester*. Partially influenced by Dick Orkin's classic *Chickenman* series, the show was, again, a big hit with my kids. It follows the misadventures of Klamity Flats, Nebraska's newest hero, the Thunder Crester (Kevin Berntson), and his sidekick, Kid Cumulonimbus (Michael Oosterom). That show was followed by *The Tales of Deputy Guppy*, an underwater western initially influenced by a listening marathon of Jimmy Stewart's *Six Shooter* – which Baciocco claims is likely his favorite true OTR program – but eventually owing more to Guy Madison's *Wild Bill Hickock* TV show. Baciocco feels that his preference for keeping his shows family-friendly has been important in gaining an audience. When *Dr. Floyd* debuted in 2004, podcasts were gaining popularity partly due to the lack of FCC restrictions. "At the time podcasts were getting popular because you could swear and say whatever you wanted on the shows. We were one of the earliest shows that people of all ages could listen to and I think that helped us a lot," Baciocco says.

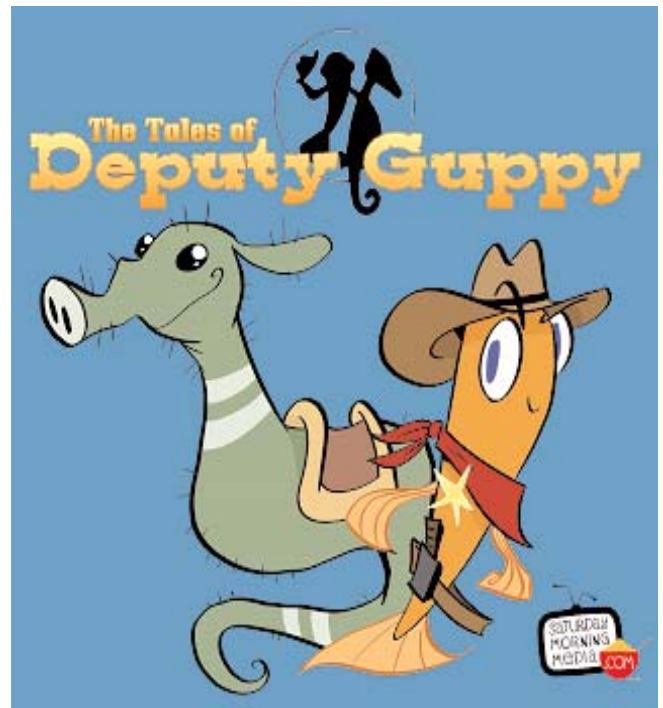
So far, so good. The kids were hooked on two of these modern audio shows. As I was ready to bombard them with true OTR, I stumbled upon one more new show that I decided to introduce them to - *Fable Distortions*, from Misfits Audio Productions. Writer, producer and

voice actor Glenn Hascall is the creator behind the show which puts humorous modern spins on both well-known and obscure fairy tales. One of the earliest episodes featured a great *Dragnet* inspired retelling of “Little Red Riding Hood.”

Hascall is also the brains behind several other family-friendly series on the Misfits website, including *The Bullies* - about a group of talking bulldog puppies, *Five-Minute Classics* – bite-size humorous chunks of classic literature, and *Pawn Quests* – a mystery series set in a small town pawn shop. His next series is scheduled to be *Dudley Junction*, a history show similar in tone to *Fable Distortions*. He has also written some fine stand alone dramas and contributes to Misfits’ recreations of *Lone Ranger* radio episodes.

With 30 years in broadcasting, Hascall says that audio drama has always been a part of his life. While several stations that he has worked for ran OTR programs, he – like Grant Baciocco – names Stan Freberg as an influence. He has listened to dozens of OTR shows and, while he cannot name a favorite, loves the notion of the “Theater of the Mind.” “Audio drama allows you to see what a movie never could,” he states. “I just love the idea of a more cost effective way to share a blockbuster.”

Well, with the kids now hooked on *The Red Panda Adventures*, *The Radio Adventures of Dr. Floyd* and *Fable Distortions*, it was time to bring back out the real OTR shows. Being a huge *Lone Ranger* fan, we started there. I had already shown them episodes of the Clayton Moore TV series, so they were familiar with the character. Next, we went back to the super hero well with *The Adventures of Superman* and *Green Lama*. Not only were the shows well received, but I found they eagerly wanted to hear more. Now, if I put on an unfamiliar show while



we’re driving (that’s when we usually listen), there will be a moment of “What’s this?” That is usually followed by a “Shhh. If Dad is listening to it, it’s probably good.”

Over the past two years now the kids have heard a wide variety of Old Time Radio and modern audio drama. The boys gravitate to action/adventure shows, like *Superman* and *Green Lama*, while my daughter leans toward mysteries like *Sherlock Holmes* or *Johnny Dollar*, and comedies like *Burns & Allen* or *Jack Benny*. The shows – old and new – feed their imaginations. They have shown me countless drawings and Lego creations based on characters and scenes from audio programs. Two of them were even named the winners of Grant Baciocco’s “Draw Thunder Crester & Kid Cumulonimbus’ Costumes Contest” for Saturday Morning Theatre earlier this year. Sure, they will choose to watch a video if they have that option, but it still warms the heart to get in the car and hear “Dad, can we listen to *Green Hornet* today?”

The Script Library: Radio Drama on a Budget by Ryan Ellett



Most fans of old time radio are knowledgeable about the business of transcribed radio programs, at least at a general conversational level. Sparked by Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden who saw the potential for considerable financial gain by selling their *Amos 'n' Andy* program to non-NBC network stations, transcription services were common from the 1930s on. World Transcription Service and C. P. MacGregor are two more widely remembered transcription services, though there were numerous others. In the latter years of the dramatic radio era, as network resistance to pre-recorded material dissolved, Ziv became a major player in the transcription market before moving into television.

What has not received as much attention in the old time radio literature are the numerous script libraries which co-existed with transcription library providers. There were any number of companies, some large and some small, which

sold scripts to stations which would then be produced using their local staff members. Among these script library providers were Radio Centre Limited (Ontario, Canada), Radio Features (Washington, D.C.), Radio Features of America (New York), Radio House, Inc. (New York), and Radio Programme Producers (Montreal, Canada). Not all such libraries were for-profit ventures. The Works Progress Administration's Federal Radio Educational Project had such a library, headed by William Dow Boutwell, which offered scripts to educators and stations.

One such script library was owned by Radio Events, Inc., a company run by Joseph Koehler and Georgia Backus, the latter of whom is remembered for her supporting roles in films (notably *Citizen Kane*) and a number of radio series. Radio Events provided a number of radio-related services and on May 1, 1937, because of the company's growth it split off its



script library service into a separate subsidiary named, simply, The Script Library. While Koehler and Backus remained with Radio Events, Inc., as president and chairman of the board respectively, The Script Library was headed by Genevieve Pace as station contact secretary and Marie L. Braun



Fred Ziv

as business manager. At the time of the corporate split The Script Library had 112 writers in its stable. Among those writers were: Joseph Alexander (Backus' husband), Gladys Allen, Marvin Angier, Margot Beaton, Heywood Broun, Ronald Dawson (production and continuity chief at WCHS, Charleston, WV, and writer for The Script Library for at least ten years), Raymond Dumont, John Fleming, John F. Gantt, Jael Garrison, Carl Glick, Leon Goldstein, Lloyd Graham, Claire Griffin, Virginia Gunn, Mary Hatch, Ben Hawthorne (grandson of Nathaniel Hawthorne), Bob Jellison, E. B. Jenkins, Lawrence Menkin, Leslie Morrison, Edwin (Edward) H. Morse, Marjorie Mueller, Wayne Pool, Edward Goldsmith Reilly, C. E. Risse, J. O. Simon, Martin Smith, Donal Spatz, Alfred Vogt, Willard Wallace, Alice Ward, Emory Ward, Fred L. Webber, Muir Whittall, Eugenia Whyte, Mar-

jorie Williams, and Karl Zomar.

Many of the writers lived in smaller areas away from the major broadcasting centers and often they were connected with local radio stations. When submitted scripts were accepted by The Script Library sales were split 50-50 with the authors and royalty checks then sent out monthly. The company targeted primarily smaller stations which did not have the resources to write their own material, though they also sold material to small theater groups who supplemented their live performances with radio broadcasts. Prices for script rights ranged from \$3 for a half hour serial episode, to \$5 for a week's worth of quarter-hour serial episodes, to less than \$1 for a short one-to-five minute filler script. Prices could also vary depending on the renown of the author; for instance, they charged \$500 for a script written by Lord Dunsany. As an incentive for their more prominent writers, The Script Library began selling some scripts only if stations agreed to run the author's name in a broadcast byline. Stations received six-month rights to use of the script and could reuse it as many times as they wished.

The Script Library's fees were in line with those of competitors. Sam Stiefel Enterprises, which also handled musical and acting talent, offered scripts for \$0.50 to \$2.00, ranging from 3 ½ minutes to a full half-hour. Their pricing structure did not differ whether the scripts were used in a sustaining or sponsored timeslot. Unlike The Script Library, Stiefel's writers, who included Fanny May Baldrige, Al Bernard, James Lyons, and Henla Perfit, also received a flat salary in addition to a percentage of sales.

Few of the series created by Script Library authors are familiar to old time radio fans today; perhaps only *The Answer Man* survives in any sort of recorded form. This makes sense con-

sidering the primary market was small stations which had little financial incentive or technical capability to record their own material. The Script Library released scripts in seasonal batches to suit changing weather and moods. In promotional material their summer scripts were described as “light in character” featuring small casts and inexpensive production requirements, benefits ascribed to all their series.

Three of their summer, 1937, series were *Oh Jenkins*, a comedy, *Murder in the 400*, a mystery, and *Love Is A Word*, a romance. All were 26-episode runs priced at \$25 each. These weekly series were complemented by an “across the boards” serial for stations wanting a six-times-per-week program. Entitled *The Road to Nowhere*, the show required only two actors who played Guy and Sadie, a British intelligence officer and a Broadway chorus girl who meet and find trouble in India. *The Road to Nowhere* was one of the company’s specialties, so-called “twosomes” which only required two actors.

Other Script Library series tackled more high brow literature such as Dickens’ *David Copperfield* by Jay Clark, *Royal Romances* by Richard Osgood, Ibsen’s *Doll’s House* adapted by Ronald Dawson, and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* written by his grandson Ben Hawthorne.

The Script Library was servicing over 300 stations by 1937 and that year they upped their promotional output. First, they released a 96-page catalog edited and compiled by Georgia Backus and Julienne Dupuy of their scripts to station and production officials (but not agencies due to printing costs). Then staff began sending out “Trends and a Few Opinions,” a multi-page newsletter which predicted programming trends and offered promotional ideas to stations as well as commercial information about overseas



radio. Further, The Script Library began marketing more heavily to small theater groups with the thought that they would be good sources to develop acting, writing, and directing talent for radio.

Executives for the script service found more markets abroad, notably in Australia and Central and South America, but also in Europe. They had a foothold in Australia by 1937 when they took over direct distribution of their own scripts, replacing former distributor J. B. Chandler & Co. In Central and South America the company was represented by the Melchor Guzman Co., an organization that specialized in representing foreign radio stations. The company both translated the American programs and created appropriate foreign language promotional materials. One of the first series to find a foreign market this way was *Gods of Bangah*, written for print by Achmid Baroudi and adapted for radio by John Fleming. XEQ in Mexico City purchased the series for a 13-week run. Recognizing that their listeners were not familiar with American-style radio drama, the station began interspersing short dramatic pieces in between their musical broadcasts. The station slowly increased the length of these dramatic interludes to “educate listeners to spoken programs.

Orders from stations in Holland, Switzerland and Palestine showed a preference for mysteries and thrillers, and Puerto Rico's WKAQ in San Juan ordered the mystery Murder in 400. A different translation service, National Export Adv. in New York, ensured Spanish listeners would appreciate the serial.

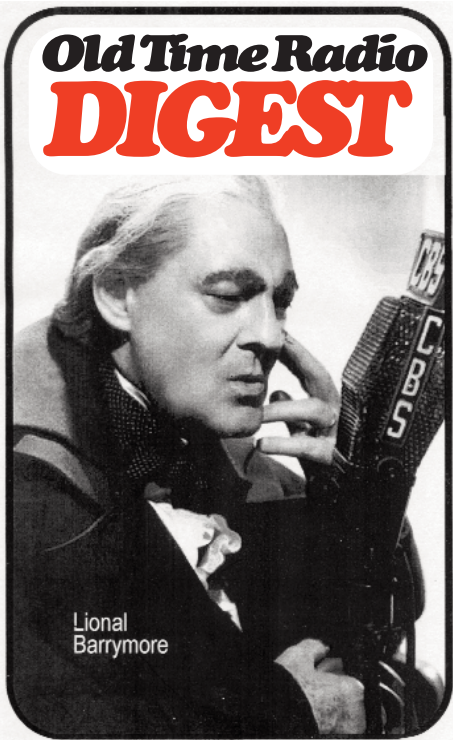
In a sign that the company believed in regular turnover of scripts to ensure a fresh product for stations, the Library sold over 3,000 scripts to Michigan State. Ostensibly the scripts were sold for the benefit of radio students who could use them to prepare for careers in broadcasting. More likely, the Library weeded out dated scripts which no longer offered a reasonable prospect of bringing in money and unloaded them. Under terms of the sale the university was still obli-

gated to pay author royalties if the scripts were ever aired over a commercial station.

Some of The Script Library's most popular offerings in the early 1940s were *First Person Plural*, *Crime Quiz*, and *So You Think You Know Fashion*. *First Person Plural* had an unusual format; the weekly show was split into two 15-minute broadcasts. The first quarter-hour featured the actors introducing themselves to the audience before whom they would be performing during the second quarter hour. Stations which purchased this series included WTIC, KGLO, WMAS, WESX, KOIN, WWSW, WCHS, WOW, WRJN, KFRC, KFOX, WRUF.

So You Think You Know Fashion by Marjorie Mueller and *Crime Quiz* by John Henry (former manager of the Central States Broadcasting

We are now offering the Digest digitized in color for subscription



We converted the current issue you show what it looks like in color. If you would like to get a copy send us your email address. With the increase in the cost of printing and postage over the years this would be of help to us. It will still be possible for you to get a paper copy, and that's fine with us. Some still like to hold something when they read. I do.

Make checks payable to Bob Burchett



Yes, enter my ___ year(s) subscription _____. One year \$15 for 4 issues

email _____
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____

New subscription Renew Complete my current subscription digitized color
 10280 Gunpowder Road Florence, KY 41042 bob_Burchett@msn.com

System) were complementary shows; The first was geared to female listeners while the second to male listeners. Each was sold separately, however. In mid-1940 purchasers of *Crime Quiz* included KFIZ, WDWS, WLAK, WFBM, WCAX, KCKN, KDLR, WMAN, KPAB, KGGM, WHOP, KFVB, KUTA, KPMC, KSOO, WMOB, KRBM, WQDM, WHLS, WBTM, WHBQ, WQAN, WIND, KSFO, WBNS, WTMJ, WGBI, KFXM, WHBL, WNBC, WJBC, KRGV, KYW, WRC, KDB, WKOK, KCMO, KHBC, WTAD, PRD2 (Rio de Janeiro), and several Canadian stations, CHNS, CHSJ, CFRB, CFRN, CFCN, CKOV, and CHRC. In total the series scripts were ordered by at least 111 stations.

The company continued to add variety to their script offerings. *Nocturne* was written by Georgia Backus who in mid-1940 resigned from her position as dramatic director at CBS. *Family Almanac* scripts were purchased by at least 138 stations, including KROC, Rochester, MN. As a change of pace from their fifteen- and thirty-minute programs, The Script Library added stand-alone scripts including a pair of hour-long Christmas broadcasts as well as two half-hour scripts, *Voodoo* and *Silver Mist*. Their writers created two hour-long series, *Your Variety Show* and *Your Minstrel Show* and three new half-hour series, *Supernaturally Speaking*, *Future Formulas*, and *Nick Silvo*, Newspaperman. Additional quarter-hour series introduced in the early 1940s were *Payoffs* and *Slanguage*. *The Answer Man*, mentioned above, was written by Gloyd Thrailkill, the continuity editor at KWTO, Springfield, MO before she moved to KMMJ, Grand Island, NE, for a similar position.

In an unusual move The Script Library released three scripts with patriotic themes in celebration of the Fourth of July in 1940 for free to any stations which could not afford the regular

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.

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

We will gladly carry free ads for any other old time radio group or any group devoted to nostalgia. Submit your ads to: **bob_burchett@msn.com**

Edited by Bob Burchett
bob_burchett@msn.com
Distributed by Jim Beshires
beshiresjim@yahoo.com

purchase fee. That same month The Script Library celebrated the broadcast of its 200,000th script. That milestone script was *San Juan City* written by Miranda Azin and it was aired over Missoula, MT's KGVO. It had taken The Script Library just over eight years to reach that point, recognizing their first script broadcast on June 22, 1932, over the Yankee Network.

Patriotic themes became more popular as World War II expanded overseas and the United States entered in 1941. Writing to industry insiders, Joseph Koehler noted just a few months after America's entry in the war that The Script Library's biggest demand from stations was for scripts which were heavy on plot with less focus on character development. Stations also clamored for patriotic material, thought not scripts which spent too much time on "the horrors of war" nor anything that had even the slightest pacifist message. Demand for "romantic twaddle" was almost nonexistent. The company also made moves into sports coverage, inking a deal with Dunkel Sports Research Service, Inc., to distribute the Service's information in a program format that stations could use to find local sponsors.

In 1938 The Script Library made an exploratory step into the infant television industry. They briefly started selling scripts for television even though there was not yet an indication of a market for such a product. The offerings were partially to allow executives to begin studying the logistics of producing for the medium and actors for performing over it. Had television development not been delayed by the onset of World War II the company may have had a profitable hand in the new industry. However, by the time television began to take off in the late 1940s and early 1950s, The Script Library

had apparently passed from the commercial scene.

Unless business records for The Script Library are uncovered in the future, it seems likely that the venture will remain little more than a curiosity, one of the many side stories of radio's Golden Age. It's impossible to gauge the quality of their scripts since recordings are unknown except for The Answer Man and copies of other series have yet to be discovered. Considering the low budget market in which the scripts were circulated, there's little reason to think the average quality could approach that of the network programming with which fans of the era are so familiar. Further discoveries involving these script libraries, however, may open new pathways for individuals researching smaller stations and guide us to a fuller understanding of the material they broadcast on a regular basis.



**NOW AVAILABLE
SUPPLEMENT #3**

The 4th Revised Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming & Guide to all Circulation Shows

Written by Jay Hickerson December, 2013

Lists many changes and additions to network programming.

Lists many new dated shows in circulation with the source of every show.

Lists more theme songs.

.....
Cost of Supplement 3 \$20

Cost of Supplements 1-3 \$45

Cost of Supplements 2&3 \$35

Cost includes postage & handling.

Cost of entire 570 - page book with the supplements:

\$67.00

Cost includes postage & handling.

Subscribers to the Old Radio Times get a \$10 discount. Your cost is \$57 includes postage and handling.

Jay Hickerson, 27436 Desert Rose Ct.,
Leesburg, FL 34748 352-728-6731
FAX 352-728-2405 E-mail: Jayhick@aol.com

American Radio Networking

By Henry L. Morse



Theatrophone

Introduction

This article is a continuation of my series on radio technology and events. The first two articles appeared in the January/February 2013 and July/August issues of Radio Times. After reading these articles readers should have some understanding of how a radio actually works and some of the key events that have been transmitted to listening audiences. For purposes of this discussion, I define a radio program as a series of sounds, voice, and music sent from a point of origination, to listeners in a remote location(s), and emanating from a single transmitter located at a particular radio station. A network a radio program is sent from a central transmitter to other radio stations in areas simultaneously, so that the program being broadcast can be received by listeners in a geographic area beyond the range of the central transmitter. I will start in the unlikely place of the late 1800s, proceed through the experimental and freewheeling growth of radio, and finally into networks.

Before the Dawn of Radio - Theatrophone

The first effort to transmit entertainment from the site of a performance to remote listeners used a system demonstrated by Clement Ader at the 1881 World Exposition in Paris. Ader arranged 80 telephone transmitters across the front of a stage to create binaural stereophonic sound. These transmitters were on the stage of the Paris Opera and connected to a suite of rooms 2 kilometers distant where visitors could hear the performances of Comedie-Francaise and opera using headphones.

In 1884, King Luis 1st of Portugal used the system starting in 1884 to listen to the opera. System installation was done by the Edison Gower Bell Company, an Edison company established to protect Edison and Bell's patents. This system came into use in Belgium in 1884 and Sweden in 1887. In the summer of 1890 an audience of about 800 at the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York listened to a telephonic transmission of The Charge of the Light

Brigade originating at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

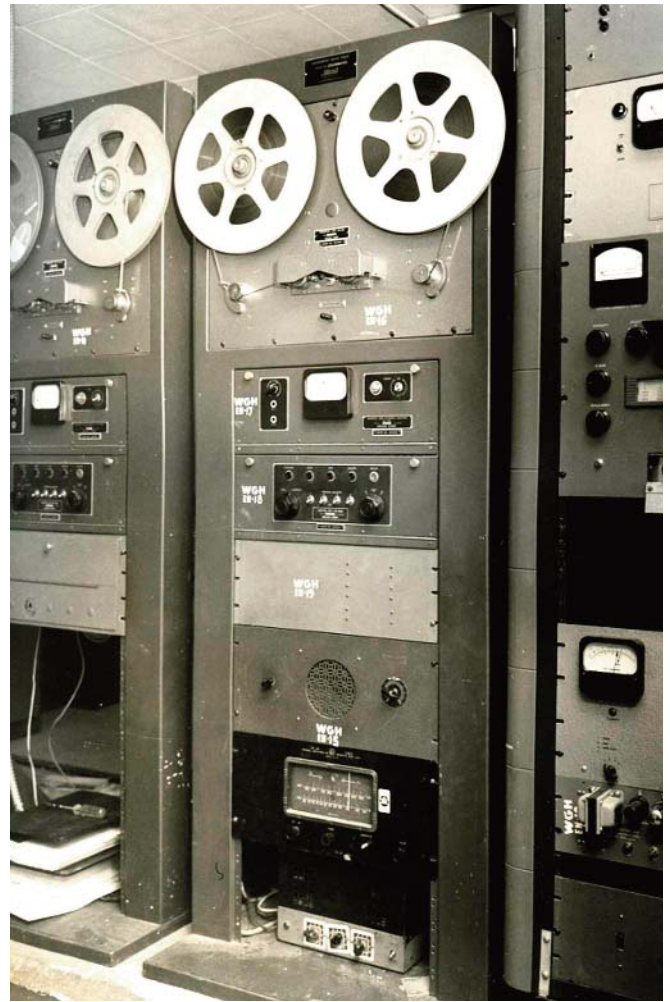
The Theatrophone system became commercially available in Paris in 1890 as a subscription service and was available to home subscribers. One could also think of this service as a telephone newspaper since news broadcasts were included at regular intervals. In addition the company included coin operated receivers in hotels, cafes, and clubs. Similar systems were tried in London. The Paris Opera was transmitted to London in 1913. The Compagnie du Theatrophone succumbed to the rising popularity of radio broadcasting and of the phonograph and shut down in 1932.

One could ask why this topic is important in a discussion of radio networking. There are two factors to consider. First audiences would gravitate toward receiving entertainment performed at one location and received in a remote location(s) – even in the home. Second, was the practicality of using telephone circuits to distribute broadcast content would morph into use by large radio networks sending material from coast to coast.

But first, let us look at the beginnings of sending from a radio transmitter to a receiver that were made practical by the invention of the vacuum tube. There were two important developments. First, was Fleming's 1904 invention of the Fleming Valve, more commonly called the diode, containing two elements. The real breakthrough came with De Forest's invention of the triode, containing three elements, allowing any signal passing through the tube to be amplified. These two inventions made it possible to control radio signal levels both at transmitters and receivers.

Early Radio Experimentation

Before networks radio technology grew there



during a period of experimental radio transmission. These were broadcast from a single transmitter and received at locations with compatible radio receivers. Although, there was work being done in other parts of the world, this writing is focused on US activity. Some notable examples are:

- On Christmas Eve 1906 Reginald Fessenden broadcast an experimental program of Christmas music from his Brant Rock, Massachusetts transmitter to ships of the United Fruit Company with receivers equipped to receive his broadcast. Legend has it that this was the first time entertainment had ever been broadcast to the public.
- In 1907 Eugenia Farrar sang into a morning glory horn from Lee De Forest's laboratory in

Manhattan. Lee received calls saying that his short broadcast was received in Brooklyn.

- In 1909 The Herold School of Electronics Institute in downtown San Jose sent out daily experimental broadcasts from his downtown location using the identification San Jose Calling. He claimed the invention of antennas for both transmitter and receivers enabling him to reach wide audiences. His school station's call letters were FN, later becoming KQW. FN was the first licensed radio station in the US.
- In 1910 The Metropolitan Opera broadcast an aria sung by Enrico Caruso that could be heard by listeners in New York.
- In 1916 De Forest introduced the Audion transmitter tube, called the triode. The grid element in the tube could be used to control the strength of the signal flow and could provide amplification of the signal. He began weekly broadcasts from his station 2XG in New York. He also broadcast election returns from the Wilson presi-



dential election of that year. His updates were provided by telegraph from the offices of the New York American to an estimated audience of about 7000 who were up to 200 miles away. In the US all such activity was prohibited with the advent of WWI. Early pioneers used this intervening period to make technical improvements so when the ban was lifted the golden age was ushered in.

However, a few companies were allowed to continue experiments during the war. Frank Conrad, a Westinghouse engineer began making transmissions of music programs in 1916. Earle M. Terry, of the University of Wisconsin, experimented with voice broadcasts in 1917 in order to work on improvements in audio distortion, while providing farm prices and weather reports.

These broadcasts were not networked because the transmitter sent radio signals that could be tuned in only by those able to receive the broadcast signal. Receiving equipment was mainly in the hands of experimenters, hobbyists, and early adopters of technology. Early receivers were mainly crystal receivers with the listener using headphones.

Beginnings of Commercial Broadcasting

During the early 1920s radio was loosely regulated – strict regulation came later when federal government began regulating frequency assignment and station power. Small radio stations were set up in homes and offices. Programming was sporadic and often relegated to a small number of hours and days. In addition to fixed locations for broadcasting, many stations were portable, often set up on trucks so that they could be driven from location to location to appear at special events such as radio expositions or fairs. Expositions were used by manufacturers to demonstrate radio and pro-

mote the benefits of radio. In addition retail establishments were able to promote their line of wares. These portable radio stations generated publicity for the fledgling radio industry. Sometimes people attending these events could appear on radio sparking even more interest.

Following are a couple of examples:

- In 1923, the Edison Electric Company in Boston used this method to generate interest in the many labor saving, electrically powered appliances, for use in the home. Their first appearance was in Dedham, MA at an electrical show, using the call letters WTAT, later WATT. Edison employees performed, read news reports, and hawked the use of electricity in the home. Edison used his own permanent radio station WEEI for the same purposes.



- Charles Messter went on the air as WCBR with 5 watts of power on frequency 1220 kc. He traveled around New England setting up his broadcasting equipment anywhere he could mount his 200 foot antenna. As a theater lover himself he often set up his portable transmitter in theaters where patrons could not only see a movie and/or a stage show, but could also appear in his radio broadcasts. In addition, he often invited local personalities and politicians to

appear on his broadcasts. He set up his portable radio station at fairs and amusement parks. His activities served to increase public interest in the growing medium of radio.

Shortly after his heyday, portable broadcasting units were prohibited because of interference with other sources of radio.

Networks Anyone !

Early radio programming reception by radio receivers was limited by the strength of the transmitter. The earliest transmitters were fairly low powered by today's standards. This meant that programming could only be received within a certain radius of the broadcasting station. Station owners, radio personalities, and commercial sponsors quickly realized the benefits that could accrue if stations could be heard across wider geographic areas. Networking would be a winner all around.

What a great idea! Imagine having a program originating at a radio station and being heard way beyond its broadcast radius. Doing that would allow using more talented, and more expensive, personalities whose cost could never be justified in a small local market area. Before networking, and even after, many programs were "sustained", in that it's costs of the broadcast borne by the originating station. Radio station operators would air a program with the objective of attracting sponsors who would then pay the station to advertise their products. The wider the coverage, the more listeners would hear the sponsor's message. More listeners meant a lower cost to the advertiser as more ears heard the message. Networking provided another advantage in that once the network was wide enough, individual stations could insert advertisements for local businesses thus serving their listeners. This notion attracted more advertisers to support previ-

ously sustained programming. Networking could also serve the public interest in that news of regional or even national emergencies could be quickly disseminated. Consider how quickly the entire nation learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor on a quiet Sunday afternoon. Also, stations could encourage programs dedicated to cultural, political, or religious interests. As I said, networking was a win-win-win.



Networking That Was Not Radio

Before the radio programming could be networked, the underlying technology had to be tested. The quality of telephone lines in reproducing both voice and music had to be verified, as well as the reliability of the connections. Various system components such as amplifiers, switches, and the like required testing. In addition, coordination between engineers and other people managing the connection had to be documented and rehearsed. President Harding's Armistice address was a perfect test of the entire system.

President Harding spoke to a crowd assembled at the Washington Arlington Memorial. His words were heard by throngs in New York's

Madison Square Garden and in the San Francisco Civic Auditorium. The president spoke into a microphone connected to a control room on site where the sounds of his voice were carried to control rooms in both New York and San Francisco. These control rooms were manned by multiple sound engineers. The both fed sounds of the event across telephone lines and then to speakers where the crowds were gathered. These sound facilities used over three thousand miles of telephone lines, multiple amplifiers, and a myriad of other electrical equipment to achieve this historic broadcast. More than 150,000 thousand Americans heard Harding's glowing tribute. This was just the beginning of what would be possible once radio programs could be shared this way.

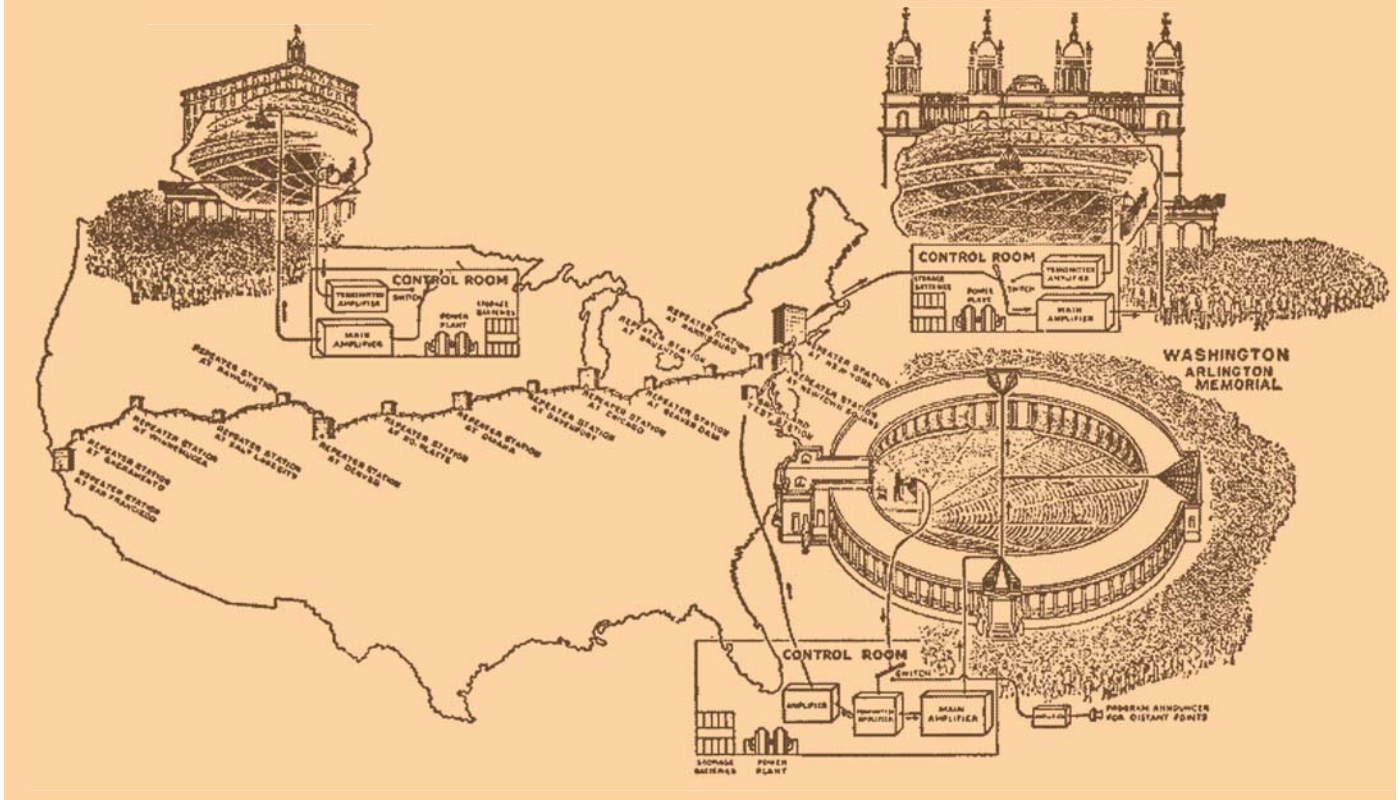
Early Networks

Radio networking starting in the 1920s was accomplished using the following methods. .

- One was to mail 16 inch transcription disks to stations that would broadcast a certain program at a certain time. These disks were aluminum platters with an acetate coating that captured the sounds of radio players speaking into microphones that were connected to a transcription record cutting lathe. A master disk was thus created, and reproduced, according to the needs of the radio station that created them. These disks would be sent to the stations (affiliates) on the network and played at an appointed time. Sponsor's commercials could be included on the disks. Another method was to have affiliate station pause at a specific time to allow a sponsor's to be distributed in real time. Individual stations would insert their own regional commercials as agreed by the originating station.
- A newer and improved method, starting in 1923, was to link the stations in the affiliate net-

SAN FRANCISCO CIVIC AUDITORIUM

NEW YORK MADISON SQUARE GARDEN



Telephone circuits and vacuum-tube amplifiers carried President Harding's Armistice Day Address, in 1921

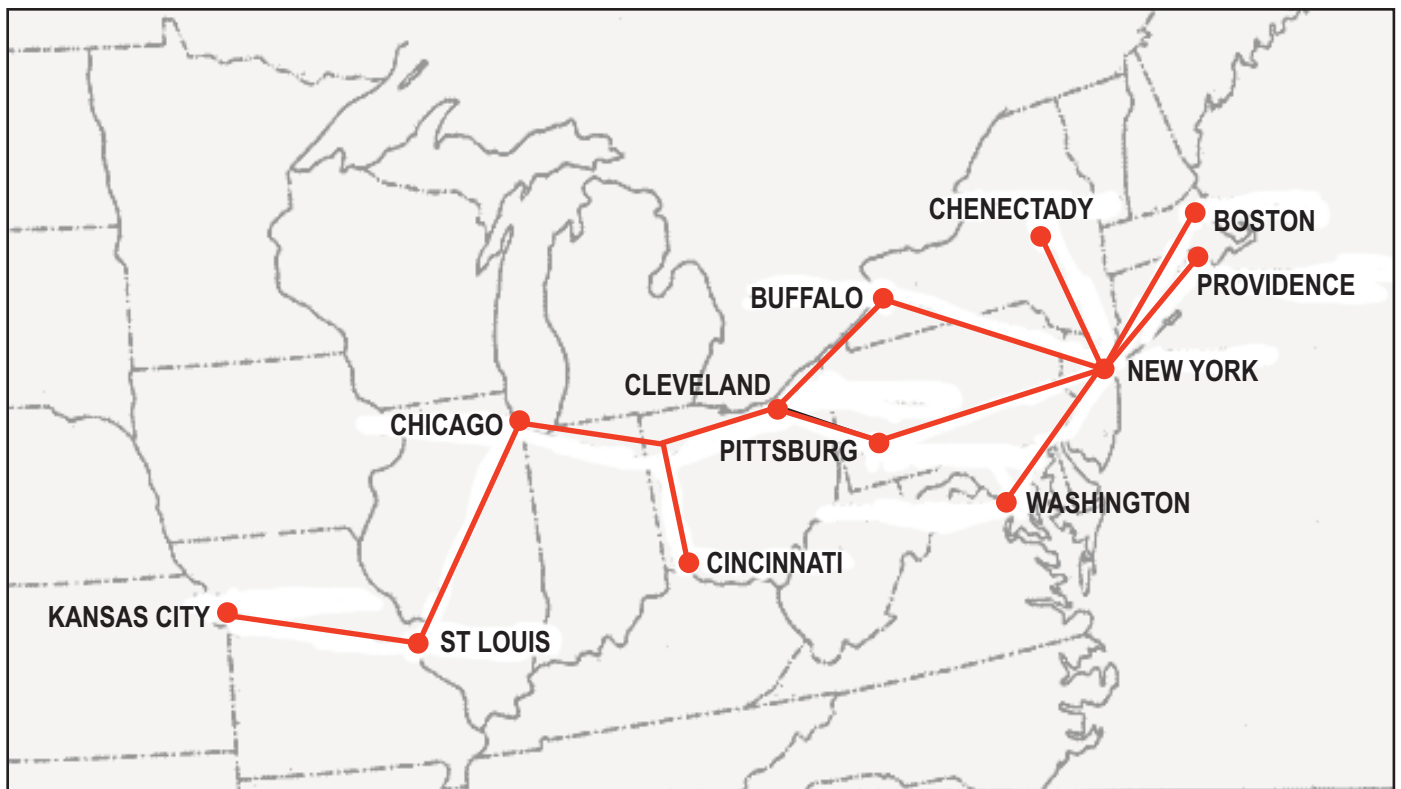
work to the originating station using leased telephone lines. When it was time to air a broadcast the originating station transmitted the program to receivers in its own area of reception while simultaneously sending the program throughout the network. In that way all stations in the network were airing the broadcast simultaneously, to listeners within their reception area.

Of course, these technologies were supported by many electronics devices including amplifiers, noise filters, suppressors, and other gear with operations being supported by numerous engineers at the originating station as well as at the other stations in the network.

This following diagram depicts the broadcast of the Republican National Convention in 1924. The convention was received by all the cities on

the diagram and in turn broadcast to all the radio receivers in the coverage areas of the cities in the network.

The broadcast originated in Cleveland, the site of the convention. The signal was carried eastward The over Bell System lines from Cleveland through Pittsburg to New York where it was distributed to stations in Boston, Providence, Schenectady, Buffalo, and Washington. The signal was carried westward to Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, and Kansas City. There was often an extra pair of lines along the path as backup in case of trouble in transmission. Experimentation continued as the networks we know today emerged. There are great stories concerning how the pioneers created, merged, divested networks, and portions of networks. I



In 1924 it was considered a major accomplishment when Bell System Wires connected radio stations in twelve cities for broadcasting the proceedings of the Republican National Convention.

view my descriptions on networking much as I would view a voyage on a sailboat. As many sailors know, a journey from point A to point B is rarely, if ever, a straight line. The journey is a series of turns called “tacks” that ultimately arrive at point B. I will describe the network journeys from inception but not describe every twist and turn by the players involved. Such descriptions would be a tome far beyond the scope of this writing. In addition, I will limit the scope of this writing from inception into the late 1930s. For those who want to dig into the details of network developments I have included a bibliography.

How Networks Grew in the US Starting with NBC

Now that ATT had demonstrated that voice and music could be broadcast great distances and with fidelity, it was time to apply the same concepts to the transmission of radio programming. It is important to note that the following

descriptions are meant to be a brief summaries rather than an exhaustive history.

In 1923 AT&T successfully connected two stations – WEAJ New York and WNAC Boston – using an AT&T circuit for a 3 hour broadcast in January. By 1926 a chain of stations were receiving broadcasts from what was then being called the WEAJ Chain, that then grew to 19 stations in the Northeast and Midwest. Because the circuit diagrams for this chain were marked in red, it was also called the “red Network”. AT&T considered this approach a profit making business.

While this was going on three companies, General Electric, Westinghouse, and Radio Corporation of America (Radio Group), created their own network on RCA’s WJZ (now WABC) broadcasting from New York. The Radio Group decided that they would emphasize service in



their communications to the public. Initially AT&T refused to lease lines to the Radio Group to protect its own interests. After all, they had developed the technology to transmit quality voice and music over telephone lines. Radio Group tried Western Union (WE) telegraph lines but WE's lines did not have the same quality nor did WE's engineers did not have the technical capabilities possessed by the AT&T engineers. Radio Group experimented with other technologies such as short wave but none proved a match for AT&T's technical sophistication. While WEAJ had 19 stations, WJZ had only 4. While all this was going on there was arbitration over AT&T's patent rights. Then in a turnabout AT&T decided it wanted to get out of the broadcasting business and sold the WEAJ chain to Radio Group for one million dollars. The terms of the sale included the right for Radio Group to lease lines from AT&T and also gave them the rights to sell airtime launching the NBC-Red Network with WEAJ the flagship station, while the WJZ became the NBC-Blue Network. By the late 1930s the red network had approximately 94 affiliates and the blue network had 42 affiliates.

Then Came the Columbia Broadcasting System

As time progressed another network came

into being. Arthur Judson, and his associates, was a performing artist representative. They had the idea that they could supply top talent to NBC. They approached David Sarnoff and were rebuffed. The Columbia Phonograph Company became interested in the project seeing advantages because of their interest in phonograph equipment, records, and performing artists. The company that would ultimately be called the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) was incorporated as the United Independent Broadcasters, Inc. They began signing up affiliates in March of 1927, cobbled together a network of transmissions lines, and began broadcasting in September of 1927 from WOR in Newark, NJ. Their network extended east and west. WOR ultimately moved to New York City and later became one of the founding stations for the Mutual Broadcasting Network as their flagship station – more on Mutual a bit later. There were some excellent performances but the overall flow and scripting was panned by some critics – but it was a start.

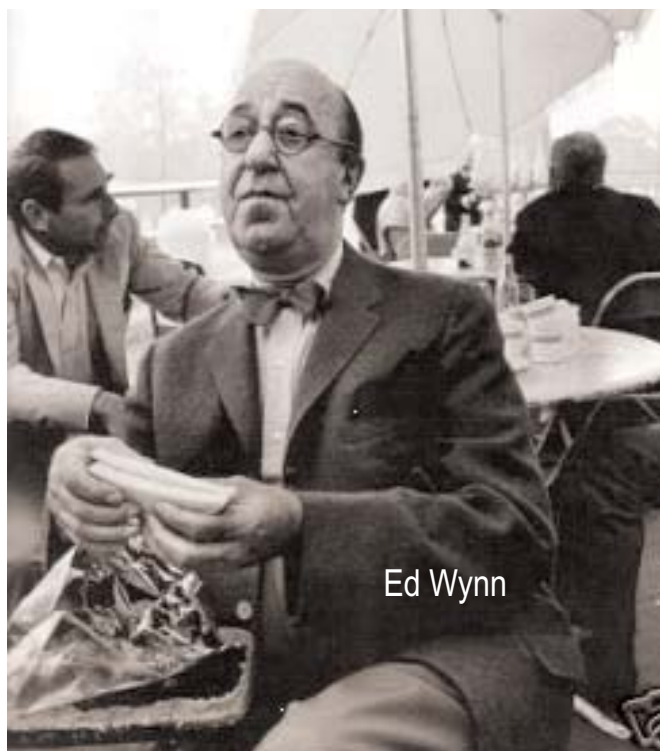
The new network had financial difficulties



right from the start and there was considerable shuffling of the stock between investors. Early on they survived by financial infusions from the Columbia Phonograph Company and some wealthy contributors. William Paley bought a 41 percent interest in the company, now called UIB-CBS, and his kin held an additional 39 percent giving Paley full control over the network. Paley was Chairman of the Board until his passing in 1989 and was largely responsible for its growth. CBS and NBC jockeyed back and forth for leadership in affiliates for years. While beginning with 16 affiliates, CBS had grown to 138 by the late 1930s.

Amalgamated Broadcasting System

There was a furtive start to provide an alternative to the two NBC (Red and Blue) networks and CBS. The idea was the brainchild of Ed Wynn, the notable radio comedy star of NBC's *Texaco Hour*. His idea was to provide more entertainment and less advertising ballyhoo as he put it. Its flagship station was the 250 watt sta-



tion WBNX in New York. Besides battling the 50 KW of power of the flagship stations of the other three networks, it had to share its broadcast capacity with its partner WAWZ. ABS came on the air with a 14 station network that included low powered mid-Atlantic stations in September of 1933 and unable to attract program sponsors, ceased operations on November 1.

Mutual Broadcasting System

The Mutual Broadcasting System was formed in 1934 by 4 radio stations with WOR as its flagship station, and is still broadcasting from New York. The other three were WGN Chicago, WLW Cincinnati, and WXYZ Detroit. This new network had an advantage in that 3 of the 4 stations had 50 thousand watts of power giving them a wide swath in reaching audiences. In addition, there was a marked difference in corporate structure in that these four stations owned the network, but not the affiliates, as with NBC and CBS. Detroit was the home of George Trendle, the creator of *The Lone Ranger* program, which began broadcasting in 1933 in Detroit over the Michigan Radio Network. Incidentally George Trendle had tried to work out a deal with NBC and CBS to no avail. There is urban legend that Mutual was formed because of the popularity of the *Lone Ranger*, but actually the new network was formed for economic reasons.

The *Lone Ranger* episodes were created and staged by writers and actors at WXYZ with latter additions of *The Green Hornet* and *The Challenge of the Yukon* all geared to a pre-teen audience. Trendle did form an alliance with NBC Blue in 1935 but was not able to move the program to NBC until 1942 because of contractual obligations. There is a huge story surrounding Mutual and its many artists and

achievements but the telling would require a book rather than this brief introduction.

By the late 1930s Mutual had added a number of new affiliates as well as stations from the Colonial Network in New England, the West Coast Don Lee network, the Texas Network, the Yankee Network, the Allegheny Mountain Network, and the Inter Mountain network. They grew from 50 stations to some 400 in 1947.

American Broadcasting System (Company)

In 1938 the FCC began a process that took the availability of national networks from three to four, the three being NBC (Red and Blue), Mutual, and CBS. The FCC was concerned that NBC, by having two major high powered stations in New York, gave the red and blue networks an unfair advantage. In addition, the FCC determined that this was not in the public interest. They determined that the red and blue networks were separate in name only. The only competition between the two networks was akin to two operating divisions in a large company having sort of the friendly competition among them. When either the red or blue networks were faced with sponsor misgivings, the blue could recommend the red and vice versa. The FCC decreed that NBC would have to divest, spin off, the blue network and offer it for sale leaving NBC with the red network. The process began in 1938 and was not completed until 1942. Staffs had to be divided with NBC allowing most staff members to choose to stay with NBC or go with divested red network. Departments, transmitters, studios, furnishings, and personnel were divided in 1941. In 1942 the Blue Network Company, Inc. was established and offered for sale for 8 million dollars.

Edward Noble of the Life Saver Company paid the asking price and took ownership of the company. Thus in 1943 the company was sold



to Noble's American Broadcasting System, Inc. with the flagship station as WJZ. There were many complex parts of the transaction including leasing of theaters and equipment that are too detailed for a writing of this scope. The company was rebranded as the American Broadcasting Company consisting of 116 affiliates. At that time NBC red had 236, CBS 115, and MBS had 191 outlets.

Regional Networks

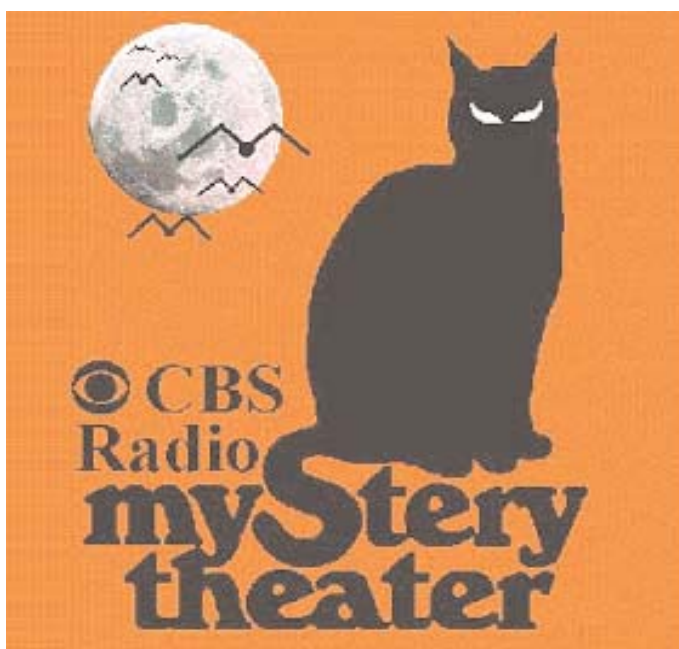
During the time when the major networks were being established, there were a number of regional networks established. These networks were designed to serve the needs of a particular geographic area or market. Often they were also tied into one of the four major networks mentioned above. This also made it possible to serve the needs of particular advertisers. In effect a bread company could be advertising in one location on the network while a local car dealership could be advertising in another location on the network. These networks often served the special needs of particular listeners. They could be dedicated to religion, politics, or cultural interest in a specific region of the country. There were 20 of these on the air in 1941 with only 6 of them providing coverage beyond

a single state. There are many examples including the Yankee Network in New England and the Don Lee Network on the west coast. For further information on these please refer to Jim Cox's book referenced in the bibliography.

Modern Network Technologies

Although the basic concepts of networking have remained the same, technologies improved. Copper wire circuits were enhanced by microwave links and some circuits replaced by fiber optic cables. These methods were mixed and matched to keep production costs in check. Today's networks mainly use satellites with the originating station feeding programming by (up-linking) to a leased satellite transponder, with individual radio stations (down-linking) programming and then broadcasting to the listeners in their coverage area. In cases where the receiving station was out of direct line of sight of the satellite, copper, fiber optic, or microwave methods are used depending on cost and practicality. There are satellite dishes at originating stations and at affiliate stations.

Since the end of the golden age modern networks have been increasingly dominated by



music, news, sports, and talk radio. There has been some original drama created, most notably the CBS Mystery Theater hosted by E. G. Marshall that ran from 1974 to 1982. These were aired on WBCS weeknights from 7 to 8 PM. Sometimes I was able to hear them on my way home from work. Currently the BBC airs contemporary drama such as The Chrysalides, John Wyndham's science fiction classic, set a few thousand years into the future. There are contemporary serials still being offered in Australia – Castlereagh Line, Cattleman, and Dad and Dave being aired today.

And there is Internet radio:

- There is AccuRadio, <http://www accuradio.com>. This one plays mostly music and features many genres. One can join for free and listen on both computers and mobile devices. It is free, except for commercials.
- Another similar service is Pandora which also allows listeners to hear their favorite genres of music on their computers and mobile devices. One is offered the chance to purchase music they have been hearing.
- SiriusXM is a subscription offering that offers many genres of radio including music, talk, and sports. The real advantage is that you can pretty much drive cross country and listen to the same station coast to coast. Unfortunately they do not offer old time radio.

Network Ownership Today

At this point we have covered a brief history of how the four major radio networks came into being. TV has taken center stage in network entertainment interests. Radio networks today are largely in the hands of very diverse interests. These networks and companies have been sold and resold beginning in the 1950s. Today radio stations and networks are owned

and operated by a variety of companies. For Example, Clear Channel Communications owns a conservative talk network, Fox Sports Radio, and Fox News Radio. Disney has ABC News Radio via Cumulus Media Networks and Radio Disney. Westwood One owns the CBS Radio Network and NBC Radio Network.

There are state commercial networks, non-commercial networks, national government broadcasters, public radio networks, and religious networks. The list goes on and on and changes often as companies are bought and sold.

Please look at the following link to get an idea of the scope of radio ownership today.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_radio_networks Of course, bear in mind that information that information on Wikipedia is subject to constant revision.

Summary

At this point we have covered a brief history of radio networking technologies and how the four major radio networks came into being. As the radio industry matured there has been less emphasis on entertainment programming as that role has been largely turned over the television. Today most emphasis is on news, talk, sports, and music.

Bibliography

For those seeking a more information on radio networking I suggest the following books:
"American Radio Networks, A History", Jim Cox, McFarland & Company, 2009
"Airways Of New York", Bill Jaker, Frank Sulek, and Peter Kanze, McFarland & Company, 1998
There is a wealth of information on the Internet which pops up when you use a search engine with the keywords "radio networking."
In addition, Mark Durenberger provides a very detailed analysis of the growth of radio networking. He can be reached at <http://www.durenberger.com/>

About The Author

Henry Morse is an amateur radio historian who has lectured extensively at libraries, senior centers, and art centers in New Jersey. He is a member of the Old Time Radio Research Group and has written other articles for Radio Times. ■

LIFE ON THE RADIO WAVE



THE NEW HERO





Going strong for 30 years, the **Metropolitan Washington Old Time Radio Club** brings people together who have an interest in Old Time Radio (OTR). This is done through monthly meetings consisting of presentations about OTR stars and programs, and recreations of classic OTR shows, plus occasional performances of member-penned scripts produced in the OTR style.

Radio Recall is our illustrated twelve page journal published every other month, edited by Jack French, OTR historian and author. Articles by Jim Cox,



RADIO RECALL

Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club



Martin Grams, Jr., Karl Schadow, Jim Widner and other OTR researchers. OTR book reviews, upcoming OTR events, and historical footnotes. Available in full-color PDF via email, B&W hardcopy via USPS, or distributed to members at meetings.



Gather 'Round the Radio (GRTR) has been a monthly e-Newsletter feature of the Club since 2005, containing book and

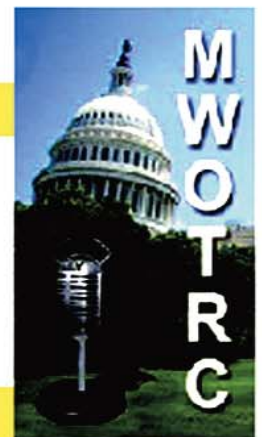
music reviews, bits of nostalgia, and essays by Club members. Recently the GRTR has morphed into The GRTR Studio Edition which is a fanciful use of the format of old-time radio variety shows, and the popular NPR talk-show "Fresh Air." GRTR brings lively information about entertainment and nostalgia.

Dues: \$20/year (discounts available)

Member Benefits

- Access to our Audio Library (CD and cassette)
- Book and DVD Library
- Radio Recall and GRTR delivered directly to you
- Monthly meetings in the Washington DC area

For more information please visit our web site at www.mwotrc.com or email: membership@mwotrc.com



Spring at Pine Ridge by Rex Nelson

APRIL 16, 2014 Arkansas Democrat, Gazette

Wednesday the perfect day to drive through the Ouachita Mountains of west Arkansas. The temperature was in the upper 30s when I awoke in Mena, where I had spoken to a banquet the night before, but it rose quickly on the sunny spring day.

There was little traffic as I made my way east on Arkansas 88. The redbuds were in full bloom and the dogwoods were just starting to bloom as I drove through the communities of Ink and Cherry Hill.

Just after crossing from Polk County into Montgomery County, I found myself in tiny Pine Ridge. On my left was a classic Arkansas attraction, the Lum and Abner Museum. There I were no other visitors, just the proprietor and her two dogs sitting on the front porch, enjoying the weather. I already was dressed for a speaking engagement later in the day at the Hot Springs Rotary Club

"I bet you don't get many people in here wearing a coat and tie," I said.

"It has been a while," she replied.

This is perhaps the most remote museum in Arkansas, but it brings to life an amazing chapter in the state's cultural ring: two bright Arkansans who were among the country's most popular performers during the Great Depression aired from 1931-55. Chet Lauck, born in October 1902 at Alleene in Little River County, played Lum. His friend Norris "Toffy" Goff, born in May 1906 at Cove in Polk County, played Abner.

Lauck and Goff's families had moved to Mena in 1911. Goff's father owned a wholesale general merchandise business that served several counties. Lauck's father was prominent in the banking and timber industries. Though Lauck



was more than three years older than Goff, the two became close friends and often entertained Mena residents at various events. Both attended the University of Arkansas after graduating Down-Store in the then-fictitious Arkansas community of Pine Ridge. The characters were created when Lauck and Goff were invited to appear on a flood relief broadcast on Hot Springs radio station KTHS in April 1931. They came up with the names Lurn Edwards and Abner Peabody just seconds before going on the air. KTHS officials liked what they heard and began airing a regular program. Soon, Lauck and Goff were in Chicago auditioning for a nationally broadcast show on NBC. The program was picked up, marking the start of an incredible run of almost 5,800 daily 15-minute programs that aired live

through the years on four radio networks-NBC, ABC, CBS and Mutual.

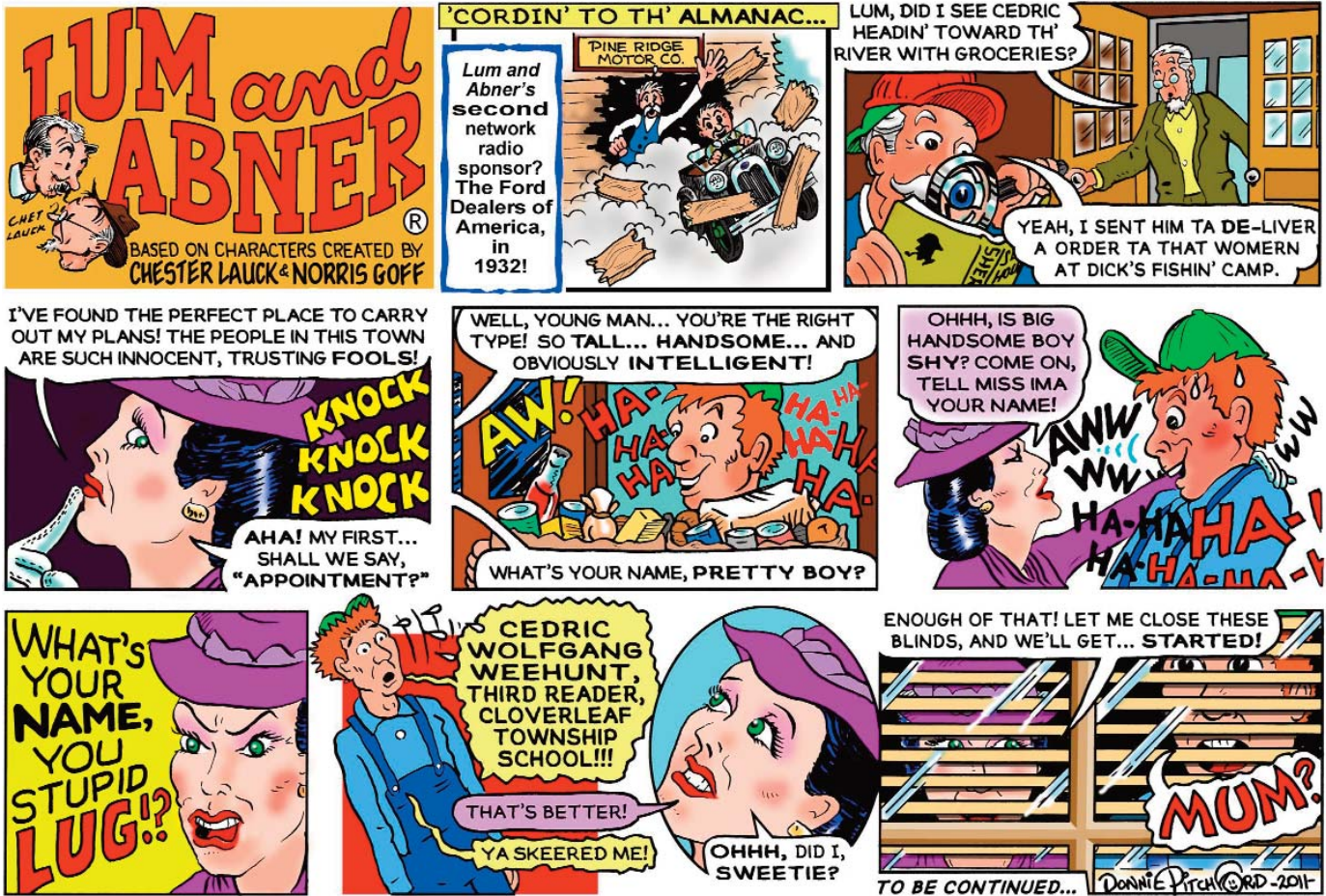
In 1933, Lum and Abner became the first network program broadcast from Radio City in New York. Lauck and Goff were the first radio stars to host marathon charity broadcasts and the first to do a transatlantic simulcast with Goff in Chicago and Lauck in London. During World War II, Armed Forces Radio aired their daily program to troops around the world. The radio show had moved to Hollywood in 1939 so Lauck and Goff could also pursue movie careers. They made six movies during the 1940s and one more in Europe in 1956 that was intended to be a television pilot. That seventh movie was never released to theaters.

Lum and Goff based their Jot 'Em Down

Store and a real store at Waters in Montgomery County. Henry Waters had operated a sawmill and a cotton gin there in the late 1880s. When he established a post office at his store in 1886, the community was named for him. A. A. McKinzie built a general store at Waters in 1904. Five years later, Dick Huddleston built a store across the street, which housed the post office in the 1920s and again became the post office in 1983. The Jot 'Em Down Store in the radio series was based on the McKinzie store.

In 1936, residents of Waters asked the federal government to designate the post office there as Pine Ridge. The current museum contains a 1936 letter from then-US. Rep. Ben Cravens noting that while Postal Service officials initially had balked since there were so many

Join us on Facebook: Lum and Abner Comic Strip Group



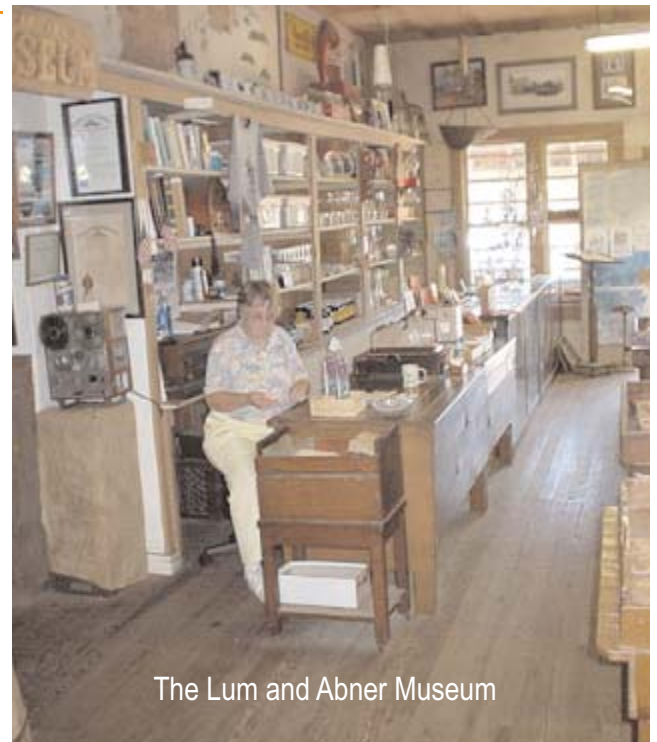
"Lum and Abner" is a registered trademark, used by permission of Chester Lauck, Jr. Copyright © 2014 Chester Lauck, Jr. and Donnie Pitchford. All rights reserved.

communities named Pine Ridge across the country, he had convinced the postmaster general to change the name. Cravens, a Fort Smith attorney, represented a large part of western Arkansas in Congress from 1907-13 and again beginning in 1933. He died Jan.13, 1939, in Washington of bronchial pneumonia, just 10 days into his seventh term.

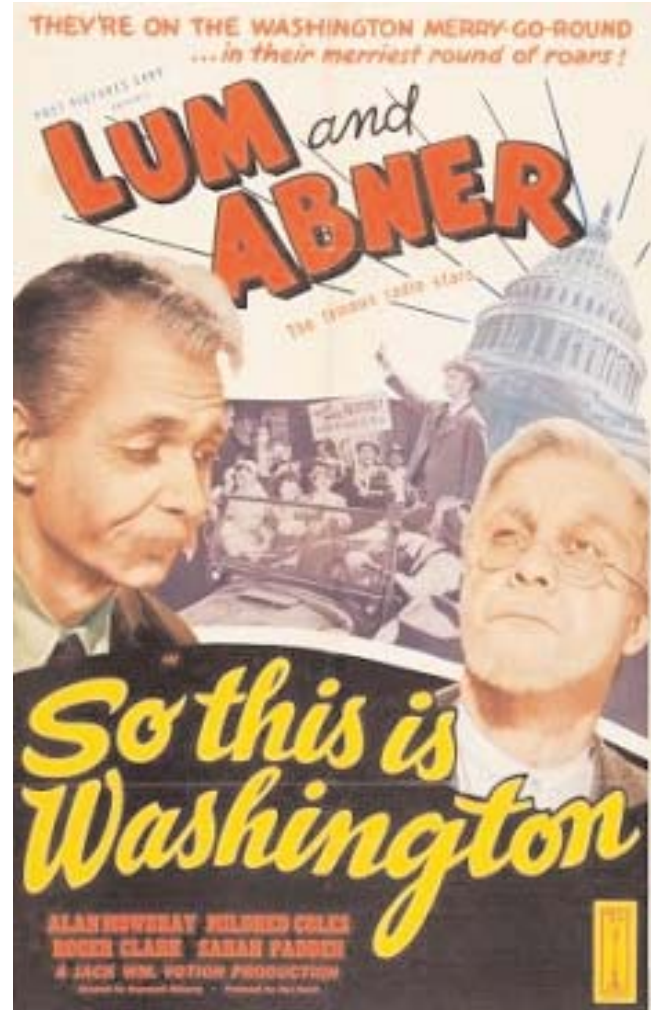
The name change from Waters to Pine Ridge was spotlighted during a ceremony at the state Capitol that was part of the 1936 Arkansas centennial celebration. The McKinzie store later was moved a few hundred yards and connected to the Huddleston store. The Huddleston store contains a gift shop and still serves as the Pine Ridge post office. The museum portion, which opened in 1971, is in the McKinzie store. Both buildings were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in October 1984.

Goff and Lauck retired from regular performances in 1955. Goff and his family remained in Southern California. Goff died in June 1978 at Palm Desert, Calif., and is buried there. Lauck continued to portray Lum for Conoco Oil Co., where he was the vice president of public relations. He returned to his Arkansas roots in 1963, opening a public relations firm at Hot Springs and serving on the state Racing Commission. He died in February 1980 and is buried at Hot

Freelance columnist Rex Nelson is the president of Arkansas' Independent Colleges and Universities. He's also the author of the Southern Fried blog at rexnelsonsouthernfried.com.



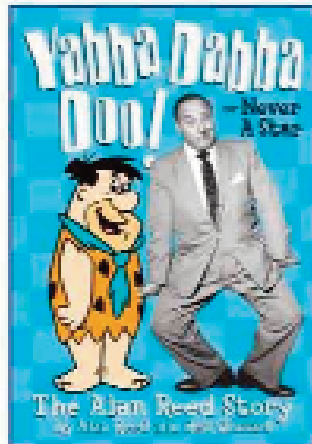
The Lum and Abner Museum



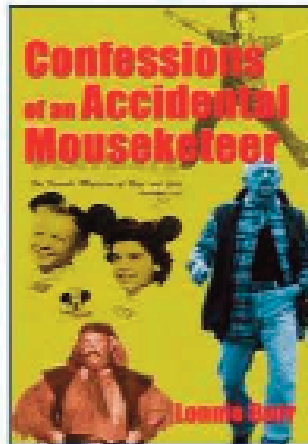
Bear Manor Media



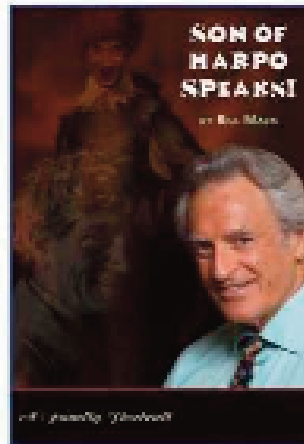
Can you resist looking at these great titles from Bear Manor Media?



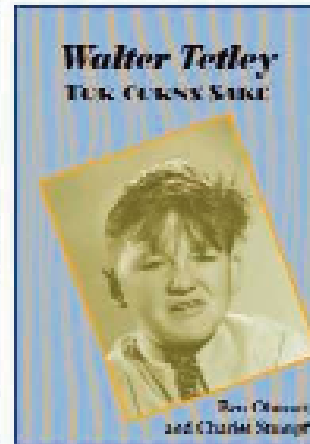
\$19.95



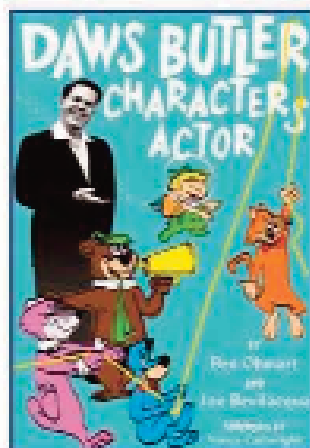
\$26.95



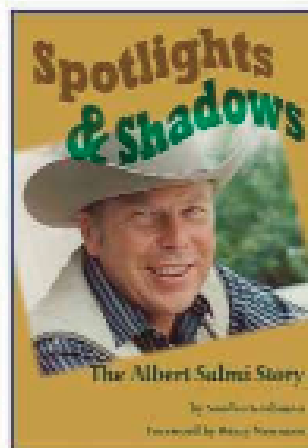
\$24.95



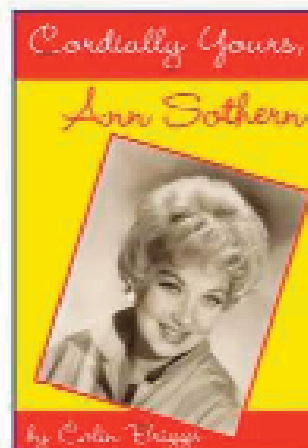
\$24.95



\$24.95



\$19.95



\$24.95

Check out our latest titles!

BearManor Media P O Box 1129 • Duncan, OK 73534 1129

580-252-3547 (Sandy Grabman)

www.bearmanormedia.com

Add \$5.00 shipping for the first book, \$1.00 for each additional

Please join our online mailing list for news and coupons!

<http://groups.google.com/group/bearmanor>

Contact us at books@benchmart.com

YES, PLEASE? The Days In the Life of Dennis Day

By Elizabeth McLeod



Part of what made The Jack Benny Program memorable was the endearing presence of Jack's "gang." This assembly of humorous characters was the perfect fodder for Benny's distinctive style of comedy. While Jack wasn't the first comedian to pursue the "gang" idea --Eddie Cantor beat him to that punch by a couple of years -- he was the first to give his supporting cast juicy comic business of their own, as opposed to using them as simply stooges for the star. And for thirty years, one of the most distinctive, most talented, and most underrated members of this supporting cast was Dennis Day.

The role of the "boy singer" on Benny's program fell into place very early on in the show's run -- with straightforward radio tenors like James Melton and Frank Parker pioneering the role in the mid-1930s. But, it wasn't until Kenny Baker stepped into the cast in late 1935 that the essential pattern was cast -- the young tenor as a naive foil for Benny's pretended worldliness. Baker established the basic characterization, but it was Dennis Day who nailed it down

for all time.

Owen Patrick Eugene McNulty wasn't quite as young, and nowhere near as naive, as he seemed on the air. However, he was just beginning his professional show business career when he joined the Benny program in 1939. As Irish as his name, the young performer had parlayed a college interest in glee-club singing into stage aspirations shortly after his graduation. Although the heyday of the crooning Irish tenor had reached its apotheosis in the 1910s with the popularity of John McCormack, the continuing success of Parker, Morton Downey, and other performers in the style on radio during the 1930s demonstrated that there was plenty of room for another.

Kenny Baker left the Benny troupe in 1939, having grown tired of the simpleton role and fearing its long-term impact on his career as a serious singer. Jack spent that summer searching for a replacement -- a tenor, preferably young, who could fill the same comic spot in the cast as Baker had ... but who could avoid

seeming a slavish imitation. Gene McNulty had done a bit of broadcasting the previous summer, singing on a local New York program with Larry Clinton's orchestra. Following his graduation from Manhattan College in June of 1939, he even decided to try his luck under a new professional name, "Dennis Day."

Hearing about Baker's departure from the Benny program, he submitted a photo and an audition record --which caught the attention of Mary Livingstone, who convinced Jack to give the boy a chance. When Benny summoned the young singer into the audition room, legend has it that Day cracked up the comic with a wide-eyed, piping "Yes, please?"

Whether that legend is true or not, Dennis's voice and manner impressed the comedian enough to earn him a trial shot on the program. That trial run turned into a three-decade engagement as Dennis took the character into a delightful surrealism far removed from Kenny Baker's goofy-twit interpretation. Dennis became Gracie Allen in pants, with his own logically-illogical view of the world, of life, and of Mr. Benny himself. Day played the character as being of indeterminate-yet-adolescent age -- old enough to be interested in women, but young enough to be terrified of them. His youthful voice and appearance let the joke continue for the rest of his career, even as, in real life, the performer married and raised a large family.

The character of Dennis' oppressive mother, played by Verna Felton, found her way into the cast as well, but never became a permanent figure -- perhaps because Dennis was the errant child of the Benny radio family itself. He wasn't quite a "Baby Snooks" to Jack's "Daddy," but there was still a trace of willful mischief in the way in which he spun out Iris comic lines ... to the increasing frustration of "Mr. Benny".

Another key part of Dennis Day's comic suc-



cess on the Benny show was his astonishing versatility. Not only was he an outstanding vocalist (handling both the traditional Irish-tenor repertoire and the latest hits from Broadway and the movies with equal zest), he soon emerged as one of radio's best vocal mimics, mastering a wide range of impressions of other comic performers. He could, at will, shift into a dead-on impersonation of Bob Hope sidekick Jerry Colonna that lacked only the moustache, or an elegant simulation of the suave Ronald Colman that captured every bit of Colman's savoir-faire and pretended disdain for Benny. Perhaps his best sustained impression was his portrayal of "Titus Day," an uncanny simulation of Parker Fennelly's Titus Moody characterization on a Benny "tribute" to Allen's Alley. In each of these roles, Dennis displayed a sound ear for vocal duplication, and a strong understanding of what made each of these characterizations work. Unlike any other of Benny's vocalists, Dennis Day was, and enjoyed being, a pol-



ished, gifted comedian.

Military service briefly interrupted his performing career in 1944 when he took a commission as a lieutenant in the U. S. Navy. Singer Larry Stevens filled his role on the Benny program during his absence, but made no attempt to take over his characterization. In his five years with the program Dennis had made the role forever his own.

Day's skill as a comic was such that, like showmate Phil Harris, he received his own program in 1946. *In A Day in the Life of Dennis Day*, he played a variation of his Benny character -- but not that actual character. On his own program, Dennis Day was a wistful, well-meaning small-town bumbler whose good nature and perseverance always managed to sort out the weekly crisis by program's end. This Dennis Day sometimes spoke dismissively of that "other" Dennis Day, the one on Jack Benny's program, giving the series its own unique metaphysical twist -- while at the same time not compromising Dennis's established persona within the Benny troupe. The program enjoyed a successful five-year run on radio and, while it failed to make inroads on television, Dennis himself enjoyed a

successful career as a guest performer on the small screen, on his own and as part of the Benny program.

When Jack Benny moved into television in the early 1950s, tightening budgets and evolving formats meant the days of Jack's "gang" as a prominent regular feature of the program were numbered. Increasingly, the TV show featured Jack as the master of ceremonies of a variety program, or in sitcom antics revolving around guest stars, with his "gang" in an increasingly limited role. But Dennis Day continued to make frequent appearances on the television series -- although he had aged visibly, he had also aged gracefully, which somehow made the continuing naivete of his character even funnier. Even after the end of Jack's regular TV series, Dennis continued to appear in the comedian's series of specials.

Offscreen, he enjoyed a quiet, respectable family life -- avoiding the perils and temptations of the showbiz spotlight, he remained devoutly religious in his private life, and enjoyed a long and stable marriage that produced ten happy, healthy children. He also invested his money well, lived frugally, and proved himself an extremely astute businessman. He no longer needed to perform by the 1960s, but he continued to do so simply because he had so much fun, even as his relationship with Jack Benny deepened into a sincere and lifelong friendship. Throughout all the years, Dennis Day pursued a successful career as a nightclub singer, as a recording artist, and as a voice performer in animated films. Even into the 1970s and 1980s, he continued to perform -- in TV guest roles, in touring shows, and in dinner theatre -- until his battle with Lou Gehrig's disease finally brought his career to an end. He died in 1988, a seventy-one year old man who somehow had never seemed to age at all, and a performer who made an indelible mark in radio history.

This was a reprint for thr Radio Collectors of America Newsletter May issue.

Old Time Radio Books and Paper

We have one of the largest selections in the USA of out of print books and paper items on all aspects of radio broadcasting.

Books: A large assortment of books on the history of broadcasting, radio writing, stars' biographies, radio shows, and radio plays. Also books on broadcasting techniques, social impact of radio etc ..

B15. (2) a certificate good for \$4 off on any catalog purchase and (3) a copy of our next catalog when issued,
We do not list the items in our catalog on the Internet.

Ephemera: Material on specific radio stations, radio scripts, advertising literature, radio premiums, NAB annual reports, etc.

WHY NOT VISIT OUR SHOP?

Bequaert OM Books is located in the southwestern corner of NH in historic Fitzwilliam just a short drive from Route 91. From April to November we are open Thursday and Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 12 noon to 5 p.m. on weekends.

ORDER OUR CATALOG

Our last catalog (B25) was issued in July 2010 and includes over 300 items including a nice variety of items we have never seen before plus a number of old favorites that were not included in our last catalog. Most items in the catalog are still available. To receive a copy, send us one dollar in cash or stamps and ask for the Radio Broadcasting Catalog. We shall send you (1) Catalog

We have a large general stock plus extensive collections in Radio Broadcasting, Technical Radio and Electronics. If you wish information on travel or accommodations, give us a call or visit our web site: www.beqbooks.com. From our site you can take a tour of our shop or find out all about Fitzwilliam NH.

Bequaert Old Books

P.O.Box 775, Fitzwilliam, NH 03447 (603) 585.3448 www.beqbooks.com

OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES AND UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

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 September and October. 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 & for transcription disks tony_senior@yahoo.com.

Fun At Breakfast Show

A.mp3
B.mp3
C.mp3
D.mp3
E.mp3
F.mp3

Grand Ole Opry

47xxx - AFRS 50 - 1st Detour Sign.mp3
010750_Tennessee_Ernie_Ford_Program_115_(AFRS).mp3
011450_Jimie_Wakely_Program_114_(AFRS).mp3
021550_Ernest_Tubb_Program_117_(AFRS).mp3
021650_Hank_Williams_Program_116_(AFRS).mp3
071550_Elton_Britt_Program_135_(AFRS).mp3
072250_Merle_Travis_Program_136_(AFRS).mp3
072642_NBC_Blue_with_Minnie_Pearl_Roy_Acuff.mp3
091650_George_Morgan_Program_143_(AFRS).mp3
100750_Tennessee_Ernie_Ford_Program_147_(AFRS).mp3
01450_Molly_Dorr_and_Bud_Messner_Program_148_(AFRS).mp3
102150_Elton_Britt_Program_149_(AFRS).mp3
102550_Jimmie_Dickens_Program_146_

(AFRS).mp3

Great Plays

012542_The_Pillars_of_Society.mp3
022341_Curtain_calls_for_the_Queen.mp3
030241_The_Climbers.mp3
032341_The_American_Theatre_1920-1940.mp3
033041_Robert_E_Lee.mp3
041341_The_Servant_in_the_House_(Easter).mp3
050540_Winterset.mp3
101340_Greece_to_Broadway.mp3
110340_The_Story_of_Dr_Faustus.mp3
122841_The_Taming_Of_the_Shrew.mp3

Heartbeat Theatre

032165_Welcome_home_Miss_Munson_-_Episode_473.mp3
032865_Sallys_Locket_-_Episode_474.mp3
040465_Bread_upon_the_waters_-_Episode_475.mp3
041165_The_silent_world_of_Timmy_Barton_-_Episode_476.mp3
07135_The_trial_of_Joe_the_Turk.mp3
100663_One_of_the_boys_-_Episode_397.mp3
101363_Double_Ugly_-_Episode_398.mp3
102063_The_two_faces_of_love_-_Episode_399.mp3
102763_The_Journey_-_Episode_400.mp3
110363_Birth_of_a_salesman_-_Episode_401.mp3
111063_Blind_Vision_-_Episode_402.mp3
111763_Every_day_is_the_4th_of_July_-_Episode_403.mp3
112463_John_Balls_Thanksgiving_-_Episode_476.mp3

Henry Morgan

471029.mp3

Hermits Cave

368 - 1942 - The Crimson Hand.mp3

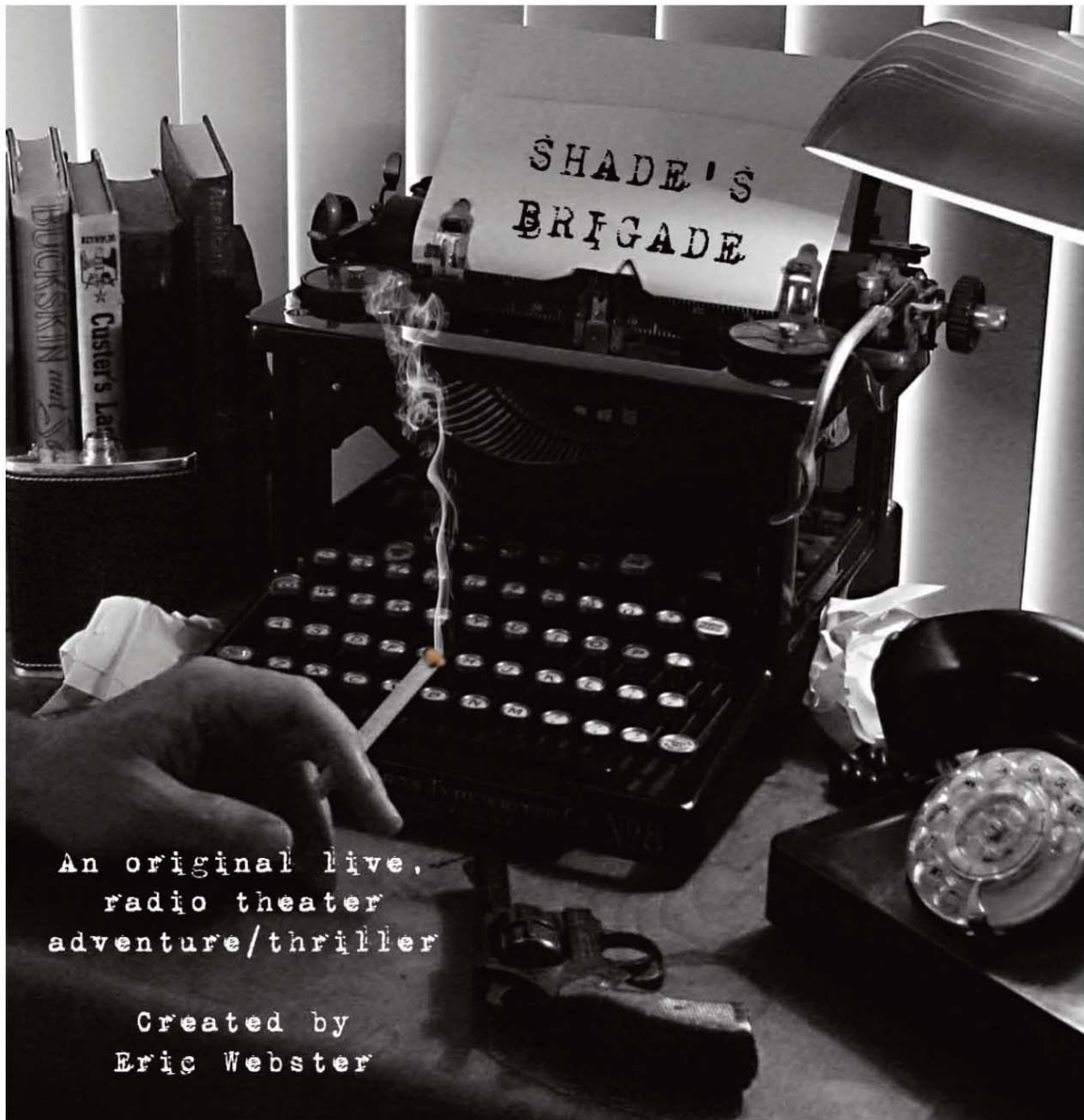
Hop Harrigan

020143_Cargo_Planes_Crash.mp3
070747_Mystery_of_the_vanishing_men_Ep_1.mp3
091545_Renegade_Nazis.mp3

Howard & Shelton For Royal Crown

41xxx - 075.mp3
41xxx - 080.mp3

An original radio thriller, produced in the style of the golden age of radio and performed live on stage with four actors performing all the characters and sound effects!



**Shade's Brigade performs a new episode *live* each month
at the Jerome Hill Theater in St. Paul, MN**

Not in the Twin Cities area? No problem! Listen to Shade's Brigade online for free at www.shadesbrigade.com and follow the ongoing adventures of Jack Shade and his group of mercenaries.

Want to bring Shade's Brigade to life in your city? Contact The Producing House at producinghouse@mac.com

