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Bob Elliott, Half of the Deadpan Bob and Ray Comedy Team, Dies at 92 by Peter Keepnews and Richart Severo



Bob Elliott starring in Get A Life with son Chris

Bob Elliott, who as half of the comedy team Bob and Ray purveyed a distinctively low-key brand of humor on radio and television for more than 40 years, died on Tuesday at his home in Cundy's Harbor, Me. He was 92.

His death was confirmed by his son Chris Elliott, the actor and comedian, who said his father had had throat cancer.

Mr. Elliott and his partner, Ray Goulding — Bob was the more soft-spoken one, Ray the deep-voiced and more often blustery one — were unusual among two-person comedy teams. Rather than one of them always playing

it straight and the other handling the jokes, they took turns being the straight man.

As Mr. Elliott told Mike Sacks, the author of “Poking a Dead Frog: Conversations With Today’s Top Comedy Writers” (2014), “We were both sort of straight men reacting against the other.”

Together they specialized in debunking gas-bags, political airheads, no-talent entrepreneurs and Madison Avenue hypemasters. Their weapon was not caustic satire but wry understatement.

A typical bit of theirs was called “The Bob and Ray Overstocked Warehouse,” in which Mr. Elliott announced, deadpan: “We have 124 full cases of canned corned beef, which are clearly

stamped 'San Juan Hill, 1898.' If you do not find this corned beef all you had hoped it would be, just leave word with the executor of your estate to return the remaining unopened cans to us." Perhaps the most enduring, and endearing, character they created was Mr. Elliott's mild-mannered but indefatigable radio reporter, Wally Ballou.

Wally, whose reports always began a split-second late ("...ly Ballou here"), was a self-promoter, but a modest one — he was known to introduce himself as "radio's highly regarded Wally Ballou, winner of over seven international diction awards." His interview subjects (all played by Mr. Goulding, of course) had even more to be modest about than he did. They included a farmer who was plagued with bad luck, even though his crop consisted of four-leaf clovers, and the owner of a paper-clip factory whose idea of efficiency was paying his workers 14 cents a week.

An Appraisal: Recalling Bob and Ray, Who Paved the Way for Today's Deadpan Humor.

After Mr. Goulding died in 1990, many feared they would never see or hear Mr. Elliott again, so inseparable was he from his partner. But he continued to work.

He became a cast member of Garrison Keillor's *"American Radio Company of the Air,"* which briefly replaced *"A Prairie Home Companion"* on public radio. He appeared in the Bill Murray movie *"Quick Change."* He played the father of his son Chris in the 1990-92 television series *"Get a Life"* and the 1994 movie *"Cabin Boy."* Comedy was an Elliott family affair. Chris Elliott — who in 1989 wrote a parody of celebrity tell-all books, *"Daddy's Boy,"* with "rebuttals" by his father — has two daughters, Abby and Bridey, who also went into the business. Abby Elliott is a movie and TV actress who spent four seasons



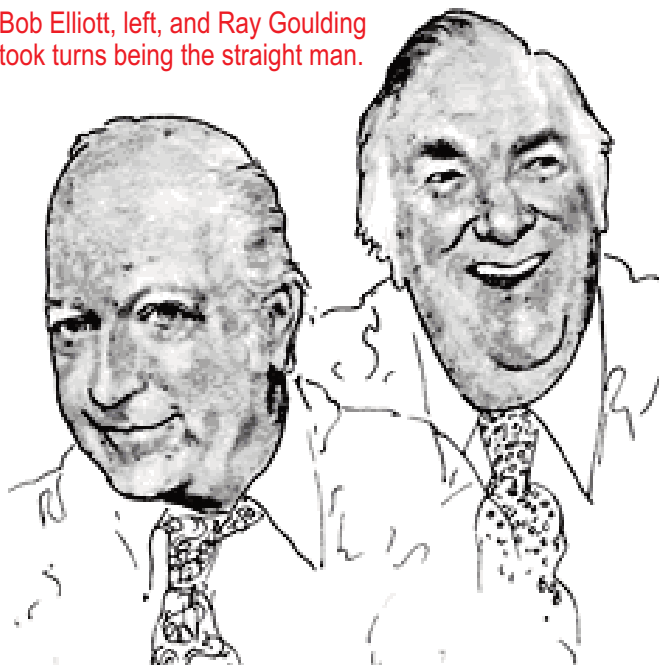
on *"Saturday Night Live,"* where Chris had earlier been a cast member. Bridey Elliott co-starred in the 2015 movie *"Fort Tilden."*

Mr. Elliott also made commercials — real ones, as he had with Mr. Goulding years earlier when they provided the voices for Bert and Harry Piel, the animated spokesmen for a New York brewing company. But any fan who heard Mr. Elliott's mellow voice in a legitimate commercial could not help recalling the spoofs of Madison Avenue spots that he did over the years with Mr. Goulding.

The team's ersatz advertisements included exhortations on behalf of the Monongahela Metal Foundry ("Steel ingots cast with the housewife in mind"), Einbinder Flypaper ("The flypaper you've gradually grown to trust over the course of three generations") and Height Watchers International.

Though Bob and Ray were seen on television, on Broadway and in the movies *"Cold Turkey"* (1971) and *"Author! Author!"* (1982), radio was their natural habitat. "Ray and I both

Bob Elliott, left, and Ray Goulding took turns being the straight man.



grew up with radio,” Mr. Elliott once said. “Our whole hopes for the future were that we’d get into radio.” They won three Peabody Awards for their radio work and were inducted into the National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 1984 and the National Radio Hall of Fame in 1995.

Robert Brackett Elliott was born on March 26, 1923, in Boston. His father was an insurance salesman; his mother refinished antiques. An only child, he grew up in Winchester, Mass., and while attending Winchester High School developed his radio skills over the school’s public address system.

After high school, Mr. Elliott ventured to New York to enroll in the Feagin School of Drama and Radio. Back in Boston, he briefly worked as an announcer at WHDH before serving in Northern Europe with the Army during World War II.

After his discharge in 1946, he returned to WHDH, where he met Mr. Goulding, who had been hired as a D.J. and had a morning show. Mr. Elliott told Whitney Balliett of *The New Yorker* in 1982 that the two hit it off and began to

ad-lib between records to amuse themselves. “It wasn’t always funny,” he recalled, “but it was something.”

Bob and Ray’s style quickly took shape. As the cultural historian Gerald Nachman wrote, they “never felt a need to destroy their targets, preferring to tickle them to death with a well-aimed feather.”

Within a few months, WHDH gave them their own show, “Matinee With Bob and Ray.” New Englanders liked their patter so much that the station soon gave them another, “Breakfast With Bob and Ray.”

After five years in Boston, they went to New York, auditioned for NBC and were given a 13-week contract. They quit their jobs in Boston and started doing a one-hour Saturday night show on NBC radio in 1951.

They soon made the transition to television. Not all the critics loved them: Jack Gould of *The New York Times* dismissed them as “an incredibly inept ‘comedy’ team” that delivered “pedestrian theatrics.” But most of their reviews were good, and they began to acquire a loyal following.

Their career quietly picked up steam throughout the 1950s. They were prominently featured on the NBC weekend radio show “Monitor.” They recorded comedy albums. They began appearing on television variety shows; over the years, they were the guests of Ed Sullivan, Johnny Carson, Steve Allen, David Letterman and others. Along the way, they acquired a silent partner, Tom Koch, the uncredited writer or co-writer of many of their routines.

They brought their act to Broadway in 1970 with “The Two and Only,” in which Mr. Elliott appeared as Wally Ballou and as, among other characters, the president of the Slow Talkers of America, who talked so slowly that he drove his interviewer, Mr. Goulding, into a rage. (He was



still talking as the curtain fell for intermission — and still in midsentence when it rose again for the second act.) It ran for five months.

By the early 1980s, Bob and Ray's gentle approach had largely been supplanted by a louder and angrier brand of comedy. But they were not forgotten — perhaps, Mr. Elliott theorized, because the "hilarity of pomposity" had not gone out of style — and in 1982, they returned to the airwaves with "*The Bob and Ray Public Radio Show*" on NPR. They remained on the air for as long as Mr. Goulding's failing health allowed.

When not performing, Mr. Elliott liked to paint, and he kept a studio in Manhattan for that purpose. He also liked carpentry and prided himself on personally having built at least half his house in Maine.

Mr. Elliott's marriage to Jane Underwood ended in divorce. His second wife, the former Lee Pepper, died in 2012.

Besides his son Chris, he is survived by another son, Robert Jr.; three daughters, Colony Elliott Santangelo, Amy Elliott Andersen and Shannon Elliott; 11 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

The reasons for Bob and Ray's lasting appeal were hard to pin down. "Maybe the secret of our success," Mr. Elliott himself once suggested, "is that we emerge only every few years. We don't saturate the public, and new generations seem to keep discovering us."

They were still being discovered two decades after Mr. Goulding's death, and Mr. Elliott remained proud of their accomplishments — although he tended to express that pride, as he expressed almost everything, very quietly.

One expected no less from a man who once said of his partner and himself, "By the time we discovered we were introverts, it was too late to do anything about it." ■



Bert & Harry Piel model drawings, about 1953

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WLS & STAND BY by Andy Ooms



As someone interested in radio programming history and radio station history, especially that related to Chicago, sometime back I was an appreciative recipient of a great gift. At a yard sale in Payson, Arizona a friend of mine bought a box of magazines published by Chicago radio station WLS more than 70 years ago. The magazine was titled Stand By! It was published weekly, and mailed to subscribers for \$1.00 per year. Individual copies were five cents. My friend paid \$5.00 for the magazines and gave them to me. The copies I now have were originally mailed to an individual in Farmersburg, Indiana; I have more than 160 issues dating from February 1935 to February 1938.

Some context may help here, although likely redundant for some of you. WLS in the thirties, as now, broadcast at the maximum allowable power for United States AM stations, 50,000 watts. Back then, WLS was at 870 on the dial. After a North American broadcasters' agreement reached in the 1940's, WLS moved to its current position of 890 kilohertz. (Kilohertz replaced kilocycles as the conventional term of choice a few decades ago.)

WLS was operated by Sears shortly after its beginning in 1924 and the company was happy to encourage the understanding that WLS referred to World's Largest Store. (The Federal government licenses station call letters, but is not involved in station slogans or determinations as to what the call letters stand for.) WBBX, WES, and WJR (assigned to Detroit almost immediately thereafter) were considered as call letters, but the final deci-

sion was WLS.

By the 1930's, Sears had sold the station to the Prairie Farmer company. The Prairie Farmer, one of the company's products, was an immensely successful and respected farm magazine circulated throughout the Midwestern states. WLS' programming was thoroughly consistent with the company brand, happily accepting its urban audience (many of whom had moved to the city from the farm not too long before) but really emphasizing its rural outreach during an era when rural America did not have nearly the access to mainstream media and culture that it does now.

So what did the American farm family do during its evening leisure hours before the 1920's? It is a little hard for us to imagine a time when radio and television broadcasting was non-existent, and newspapers were hard to get on a timely basis for many rural readers. Rural evenings were then spent playing games, making music and listening to family members make music, reading, and chatting when guests visited. By today's standards, bed time was much earlier.

Try to imagine the growing excitement created by the fantastic new pastime of radio listening. What started as mostly younger and middle-aged males who experimented with non-user friendly crystal sets and earphones and erratic programming schedules (early radio geeks) became by 1930 a huge audience of all ages, no longer predominately male, that listened to the magic of information and entertainment every day and night from local and long-distance sources.

Stand By! entered the picture as Prairie Farmer solidified listener loyalty by making its listeners part of the

growing WLS family of staff and audience. The magazine contributed to a fabulously successful combination of city-dwelling, regional, and somewhat isolated sometimes distant rural listeners, with extremely popular country music programming, information services of unlimited variety, and an emphasis on a human, folksy, and charismatic staff. WLS was not the only station to utilize a magazine to emphasize being part of the listener's family and probably not the only Chicago station to do so. But the essence and evidence of WLS' success is captured in these issues of Stand By!

The magazine began in 1935 with 16 pages and grew to twenty pages within a few months. It was printed on cheap paper, identical to that used by comic books back then. The only color used was on the cover, consisting of a solid color background framing a black and white photo of a station personality.

Magazine content covered an extensive landscape including recipes, sewing patterns, dress and hat sketches, and other homemaker hints pages with regular writers.

Also several folksy comment columns were included, some humorous, some personality oriented, and some describing various station operations matters.

Many poignant depression era items appeared in Stand By! Descriptions of street urchins trying to sell shoelaces or shoe shines even after dark and in the winter, and of adults wandering the streets looking for work, and stories of listeners in dire need of basics for their families are not uncommon in the magazine. A lasting word picture was that of the row of 30 or more unemployed adult men waiting at the elevated and subway exit stairs for the newspapers that employed riders gave them after they had read them on their way to work.

Personal items about station staff, musicians, announcers, and technicians were published each week. Staff marriages and births were announced, often accompanied by photos. In some cases, the subsequent birthdays of staff children would be noted, along with birthday party pictures involving cakes and siblings. Within a few years, more than 15 weddings in which both bride and groom were station personnel, so plenty of marriage and family news was available. Because so much programming was live, the staff was very large, including easily over 100 performers in addition to technical and administrative support personnel. Consequently, there was never a shortage of staff news items of vari-

WLS
The World's Largest Store is
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No matter what you need for your radio-enthusiasm it's a complete set of the world's greatest sets to had from **RADIO HEADQUARTERS** in plans that save you money.

Our new **RADIO Catalog** is ready. Your copy is waiting for you on EB in and wait the longest before. We would like you to see the many radio bargains that the World's Largest Store has to offer. We don't think there is a store in America that has a better selection than.

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Send for your copy now.

Mail the coupon TODAY to the store nearest you.

Send Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Send me the _____

Sears Roebuck and Co.

ous types.

Other personal news items included that of staff involved in traffic accidents and more pleasantly, fishing success stories and vacation trips.

News of staff illnesses and deaths was also commonplace. In those pre-antibiotic times, deaths due to pneumonia and flu-like diseases sometimes happened to young performers and others, and frequently after very short periods of illness. An illness would be reported, and within an issue or two, a resultant death might be noted. Then the listeners' responses would often be described, and consolation letters from listeners and readers would be printed.

One or more pages of listeners' letters were published each week. Letters covered appreciation of on-air staff, condolences for staff-related deaths, expressions of music preferences, questions about previous staff no longer with WLS, and questions about station personalities. The marital status of on-air staff was of great interest, and related questions were answered factually. Unusual now, the new airwave location of personnel leaving the station was reported.

Listeners wrote in their opinions on a variety of radio

related subjects, such as whether listening to exciting radio programs was okay for children. A great number were comments about styles of music broadcast on WLS and other stations.

There were one or two humor columnists writing each week; a regular was Pat Buttram, later famous for being Gene Autry's sidekick on the CBS radio show, Melody Ranch. Pat was mocked for his Arkansas roots in other columns, and he gave as good as he got with his hillbilly dialect humor in a regular column.

Poems were also printed, humorous or serious and folksy in style. Edgar Guest, at one point a nationally syndicated newspaper poet and author of several poetry volumes, was a regular. His work was low-key, cheerful, homespun, common sense oriented; and it is easy to see how encouraging and popular his work was during the depression years. Actually Edgar was a Detroit, traveling by train each Tuesday to Chicago for his WLS weekly program, as almost all programming then was live.

Pictures were an important feature. In addition to the large cover picture of the "star of the week" were pictures of new babies, new personnel, orphanages blessed by the largesse of WLS contributions, womens' clothing designs, and electronic gear like remote broadcast trucks.

A regular feature was a musical library page. The content of that page did not necessarily involve the music heard on WLS, but consisted of a full printing of the lyrics of forgotten or lost old songs requested by readers or listeners who had dim memories of long-ago heard melodies, or who could no longer find their copy of the sheet music of the song. Sheet music was still popular then, soon to be replaced by increasingly available records and phonographs, and apparently the music columnist had access to thousands of sheet music booklets. He reported that he had hundred of requests for information monthly so frequently reminded readers that he could not begin to answer all of them. The lyrics of many of the printed songs were very touching and sentimental involving dying children or relatives or lovers, disappeared lovers, non-returning military sons and husbands, dear old mothers, and wonderful childhood memories. There were also some upbeat lyrics involving happy lovers and great religious faith and hope. Not so upbeat were songs titled: "Don't Sell Mother's Picture at the Sale," and the euphemistic "Baby's Gone to Sleep."

Copies of sheet music were called songs. Offers to trade songs by listeners were listed weekly. One woman eager to trade claimed to possess 2895 songs, not all sheet music but some painstakingly copied from listening to broadcasts. She was trumped by a Francis



Pat Buttram



Edgar Guest

Queener of Marinette, WI who claimed to own 18,000 songs and was willing to trade.

The station produced and sold one book of 100 songs; another was the WLS Book of Hymns, advertised in Stand By! They were gratefully referred to by many letter writers.

Each week the program schedule for the following week was published. Surprisingly by today's standards a column of additional listening suggestions was also carried which listed highlights of programs on other networks and stations. Apparently the bond of being part of radio in the earlier days was greater than loyalty to a single station, even on the part of station management.

During the second year of Stand By! classified ads began to appear, and soon filled an entire page. Ads ranged from corporate (ways to make money, health remedies) to individual (need a live-in maid, have a farm for sale). A couple of comic strips were carried from time to time, always humorous, usually making sport of hillbilly ways and speech.

One of the curiosities of early broadcasting was the situation of frequency sharing. That meant that more than one company broadcast on the same frequency, obviously at different times. I do not know if any frequency sharing now exists; about ten years ago there were still some sharing cases in Kansas and Texas. Chicago had one frequency, 1240, which for many decades until not too long ago had 3 stations; WSBC,

WEDC, and WCRW. They usually broadcast in a variety of mostly European languages which may explain to some of you why they don't sound familiar.

WLS shared 870 and later 890 kilohertz with WENR, another venerated but now silent set of call letters, until the late 1950's. I remember hearing station identification announcements as WLS WENR Chicago often, although I presume that during certain hours the calls were announced separately. What were those hours? Well, they could puzzle an average listener and I expect many did not care as long as they were hearing something of interest to them.

The schedule for much of the time-sharing period for WLS was: Sunday, 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.; Monday through Friday, 5 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.; and Saturday, 5 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. The daytime gaps and the last evening hours except for Saturday belonged to WENR. Although some technical and managerial employees of both stations knew and interacted with each other, the stations were entirely separate entities with offices and studios at separate locations. Although the magazine did not list all the WENR programs, its WLS schedule did show "sign off for WENR" at the appropriate spots.

If listeners cared about stations and networks, they had to pay attention. Besides hearing two sets of call letters on the same frequency, another confusing factor was the NBC Red and NBC Blue network situation. In the 1940's the Federal Communications Commission ruled that NBC improperly owned two networks, the Blue and the Red. So NBC (National Broadcasting Company) spun off its Blue Network which was named ABC, (American Broadcasting Company) shortly thereafter and which continues as such today.

Before the spin off, NBC moved programs from one of its networks to the other at its managerial discretion. The unofficial practice was that the better programs with the more famous performers and the higher ad rates were on the Red network; Blue carried the B list. Programs were moved from Blue to Red or from Red to Blue depending on schedule issues, sponsor and listener attitudes, and subjective opinions as to which programs were better than others.

In Chicago, NBC Red was usually carried by WMAQ and NBC Blue by both WENR and WLS. So WMAQ had Fibber McGee and Molly while WLS frequently broadcast programs almost no one remembers now. Pro-



Lullu Belle & Scotty were favorites on Barn Dance

grams sometimes moved from WMAQ to one of the other two and back again.

Adding to the confusion, the first issues of Stand By! for about a year referred to the NBC New York feed stations so NBC Red references were printed as NBC WJZ and NBC Blue as NBC WEA. While of not much interest to many listeners, others (such as the kind I would have been) were intrigued by all of this and indicated that by their questioning letters. Obviously one of the greatest services rendered by Stand By! in addition to publishing its own program schedules, was its printing of some news of other stations, and its network listening suggestions including some Mutual and CBS programs never carried on WLS. Also, the CBS New York flagship station was sometimes mentioned, WABC. As the ABC network and company did not exist then, CBS owning WABC was not remarkable. Today it would be puzzling; the New York flagships today are WABC for ABC and WCBS for CBS.

One of the station news items published was that Fort Wayne, IN now had 2 new NBC affiliates. WOWO would be NBC Blue; WLL would have an option of NBC Blue or NBC Red. Even a radio detail hobbyist like me would be puzzled by that time. After those years of ample NBC possibilities, it is a somewhat remarkable that it has been several years since NBC has had any radio presence whatsoever.

As mentioned previously, Stand By! was not bothered in the least by mentioning the competition. Chicago sta-



Fibber McGee & Molly

tions mentioned in various contexts included WGN, WCFL (now WMVP), WSBC, WBBM, WMAQ (WSCR now at that frequency), and long-gone stations WOK, WQJ, WBCN, KYW whose call letters now reside in Philadelphia, WGES, WIBO, WAAF, WEBH and the greatly missed by some of us, WJJD.

A diversion here: my favorite call letters at one time or another included WREN, Topeka because of its musical symbolism, and WIND, Chicago because of its reference to the magic of sounds being carried through the air. Not too long ago, I found out that it was named WIND because its transmitter was originally located in Indiana (IND), bit of a disappointment, that. Its first call letters were WJKS and it was licensed as a Gary station. Stand By! refers to it as WIND, Gary.

Some of the interest in station news on the part of WLS listeners and subscribers is that DXing (DX being radio shorthand for distance) was a big part of the early years of radio broadcasting. The frequencies were much less crowded in the early decades of broadcasting than they were later, so distant stations were easier to catch. Quite a few stations were on frequencies occupied by no other station anywhere in the United States or Canada. Also many of today's sources of interference and static were absent or less intrusive back then. Few stations, including those of the power and scope of WLS, broadcast after midnight, so those who did broadcast during the night throughout the country could be heard at tremendous distances. Some Chicago stations

in the twenties even voluntarily ceased broadcasting Monday evenings so that Chicago listeners could catch signals from other cities. This was reciprocated by other cities that had different nights of silence.

WLS was heard to some degree throughout the country. It was not always possible to tell if listeners writing in had heard WLS or had heard its Saturday Night Barn Dance which was carried, in part, by NBC and its increasingly numerous affiliates. Many listeners in Alaska or Montana didn't really care about the details; they heard WLS one way or another. But responses to non-network programming came from people in the Atlantic seaboard states, the far West, and from several Canadian provinces. New Zealand and Australian listeners were also heard from. Listeners wrote from Hudson Bay and Churchill, Manitoba. We can only imagine how appreciated radio was in those Arctic places, which were actually probably pretty good locations for catching North American and European signals.

Some of the many drop-in visitors to the station were reported such as the group of Wyoming sheep men who had accompanied several rail car loads of lambs to the Chicago Stockyards (then the largest in the country, handling 11% of the nation's meat). The Wyoming men dropped in to say hello to one of their sources of farm news and music and to say that they were on the way to Detroit to buy about a dozen new vehicles for citizens of their town, using the lamb sales proceeds. Stand By! reported this as a wonderful example of capitalism in action; during those dismal depression years, good economic news was highly regarded when it could be found.

Groups visiting the station included schools, scout and Brownie troops, the baseball Cubs, and the hockey Blackhawks.

Now that we know what could be read in the station magazine, let's get on to what could be heard on the station.

Music is the most famous aspect of the WLS Prairie Farmer years, specifically that which is now known as country music. Then it was more often referred to as hillbilly, Western, or barn dance music. Interestingly, in its next format under different ownership, WLS was also famous across much of our country for music, its very popular rock n' roll and Top Forty programming, in the fifties, sixties, and seventies.

Saturday nights on WLS were huge. Taking over

from WENR at 6:30 p.m., Saturday night programming segments typically included the Keystone Barn Dance Party, followed by the National Barn Dance at 7:30 carried by NBC Blue nationwide. Winding down the evening with local programming again the Prairie Farmer program came on at 8:30 with many of the same performers and the same music as the earlier segment. Special nights, like New Year's Eve, had additional programming segments such as the Prairie Ramblers with Patsy Montana and Red Foley and the Hoosier Sod Busters, or the Hoosier Hot Shots, the Barn Dance Jamboree, Barn Dance Varieties, or the Aladdin Hayloft Theatre.

The Barn Dance was held in the Eighth Street Theatre, and usually sold out at about 2000 tickets weekly. Admission was 50 or 75 cents.

Broadcasting a Saturday night barn dance was not limited to WLS, although it was one of the first. One of the early famous WSM Nashville Grand Ol' Opry emcees, George D. Hay already calling himself the "Solemn Ol Judge" at the age of 30, first started at WLS. Others Saturday night programs heard for decades beginning in the twenties and thirties include the Louisiana Hayride on KWKH, Shreveport, the Midwestern Hayride WLW, Cincinnati, the Saturday Night Jamboree, WWVA, Wheeling, and the one I grew up with, The Missouri Valley Barn Dance, WNAX, Yankton, SD.

Groups of WLS Barn Dance performers were booked for various venues almost every night of the year at high school auditoriums and other venues throughout a dozen states, and as far away as the Oklahoma State Fair in Tulsa. Typically 20 performances of WLS Minstrels were scheduled away from Chicago weekly.

Famous or moderately famous WLS performers or guests appearing on the Barn Dance included frequent visitor Gene Autry, regulars Pat Buttram, Red Foley (first of a three generation set of music chartists, his son-in-law being Pat Boone, his granddaughter being Debbie Boone, good for a trifecta of number ones on three charts, county-pop-Christian), Arky the Arkansas Wood-chopper, the Novelodeons, Jimmy Dean in his pre-sausage days, the Maple City Four, Patsy Montana (one listener wrote that she had written down the date and time of over 700 hundred songs Patsy sang over WLS over the years), the Hometowners, the Sod Busters, the teen-age George Gobel (long before his Mean Old Alice days), the Prairie Ramblers, the beloved Lulu Belle & Scotty, the Hoosier Hotshots, Uncle Ezra, and Smiley



Farm families far and near were not the only deeply appreciative listeners

Burnette.

Most, if not all, of the music on WLS was country. The NBC Symphony was on WENR, and popular music was left to other Chicago stations. Listeners' letters were almost unanimously in favor of old time music (country), and no other. Occasionally, someone would write in asking for a greater variety of music and would get resoundingly berated in subsequent letters, many in the vein of "Don't you have a way to change stations on your radio if you don't like WLS music?" One listener requested much less yodeling and again yodeling was supported in later editions. Popular music and jazz was referred to as new music. One columnist described some jazz as reminding him of the noise that would be made if a truckload of empty milk cans ran into a freight car of hogs on the way to market.

Farm families far and near were not the only deeply appreciative listeners. Many letters came from aged or disabled shut-ins whose radios made a huge contribution to their quality of life. Each year the magazine listed hundreds of radios that WLS donated to orphanages, hospitals, senior citizen homes, veterans' homes, and schools. A picture was occasionally published showing groups of grateful orphans or others, some as far away as Nome, Alaska.

In addition to Saturday nights, WLS broadcast live country music every morning for several hours, interspersed with farm market news, other news, weather, and chit chat. A studio organist and story teller, named Ralph Waldo Emerson after his ancestor essayist and



philosopher was a popular daily performer. Weather for the ships on the Great Lakes was presented daily for a time, and its cancellation was objected to greatly.

Farm news was huge. Livestock and grain prices were as interesting to many people as the Dow Jones average is to many of us today. Crop predictions, agricultural advice, and down home events in various areas were essential for the business of farming and a lot of fun for some as well. Gardening tips for farm and city dwellers were popular. Listeners sent in seeds and plants for identification, and sometimes samples of crops for the staff to identify or enjoy. A plant grown from seeds dropped by migratory birds was one enigma to be solved and identified by the highly-regarded WLS agricultural experts.

A major block of farm-related programming beside the early morning hours was another hugely popular noon time Dinner Bell Roundup, with more live country music and much more farm news, including the stockyards and grain exchange prices of that morning.

One annual highlight of the WLS agricultural empha-

sis for several years was the National Corn Husking Contest. The contest held in Fountain County, Indiana in November 1935 had 110,000 attendees. Apparently it was great entertainment with no admission charge. The 18 best huskers from 9 states husked for 80 minutes without a break, up to 50 ears a minute. Due to a lot of practicing at his farm at home for many weeks, the 1935 winner set a world record of 36.9 bushels husked in his 80 minutes. The proceedings were broadcast on WLS, of course.

Matters of faith were an important aspect of broadcasting in those days when most country music programming on any station included a hymn toward the end of each hour. WLS had morning devotions daily, a Sunday School review program on Saturday morning, and several hours of Christian programming on Sunday morning. All of the devotional programming, including the Sunday morning block, was live and in studio. Remote broadcasts from local churches and national religious programming was not a part of WLS in those days. In addition to the religious music provided by the station organist and almost any of the other staff musicians, Dr. John W. Holland spoke daily, and was deeply appreciated by many listeners as a source of comfort and encouragement.

WLS carried several newscasts daily, 5 to 15 minutes in duration. At that time, news on the hour or on the half-hour had not been initiated on any stations, and definitely all news all the time stations were still to be formatted. Stations had three or four shorter newscasts daily, but network stations carried some high profile commentators on the news nightly. WLS, being replaced by WENR most evenings, does not appear to have had a national commentator during the mid-thirties. Of course, its farm news was extended during the breakfast and lunchtime shows, likely not limited to 15 minutes when the markets or weather or farm-related events were newsworthy.

WLS newsman Herbert Morrison is still remembered for his recorded broadcast made while he watched the Hindenburg zeppelin burn and crash on May 6, 1937. His comments, which can still be heard on records and the Internet, start with a description of the awesome sight of the beautiful slow-moving air balloon approaching its New Jersey landing field. When it suddenly began to burn and came down, he became very excited naturally, and he uttered his famous phrase, "Oh, the



humanity, the humanity.” After breaking down, he turned away to compose himself, but soon turned back to finish the report. He had flown to New Jersey from Chicago to report the landing, and his recording was sent back to WLS for broadcast the next day, the only eyewitness radio report, I believe, and certainly the first broadcast. Mr. Morrison received a Pulitzer for that event which he would have preferred to miss.

Although WLS did not carry the virtual wall-to-wall soap operas that WBBM and WMAQ did Monday through Friday, over 15 per day per station, they did have the popular Ma Perkins and Pepper Young’s Family in the mornings. The magazine reported that Proctor and Gamble sponsored 73 programs weekly on the NBC Red and Blue networks alone.

As did most stations in those days, the station carried a great variety of special events and speakers on a large number of subjects, including health, gardening, government, education conventions, child raising issues, and business. College debate teams covered current political and economic issues.

Special events carried included opening ceremonies for the 1936 Olympics, frog jumping contests, Queen Mary’s first voyage, and a sun eclipse tracked from several locations.

Due to an infantile paralysis concern in 1937, the beginning of school in September was delayed for several weeks. During those weeks, WLS and 5 other Chicago stations broadcast class sessions. Chicago newspapers printed the class schedules.

The 1937 flood of much of the Ohio River valley was described as the then largest natural disaster to hit the

United States. WLS listeners contributed more than \$100,000 for relief of citizens of Indiana and Ohio. During those years, 25 cents was a significant amount of money, and probably was about the average size of the flood contributions.

In 1934, WLS received 1,051,041 letters. One week they received over 67,000, partly due to a contest or premium offer. They did schedule occasional contests with prizes that are negligible by today’s standards.

Occasionally, a doctor or hospital would call the station about a need for donations for blood for specific patients. One such call for the needs of a boy resulted in about 200 volunteers calling the hospital or station within an hour or two.

The station regretfully announced that it could not broadcast missing person reports as several hundred people disappeared monthly into a metropolis the size of Chicago. Hopefully most of the disappearances were temporary as newcomers hoping to make their fortune likely had some very haphazard employment and residence situations in their early days in the city.

Although WLS did not have many live play-by-play sports broadcasts, Stand By! listed the events carried by other stations. Baseball wasn’t mentioned; broadcasts of every game every year did not go back as far as less frequently occurring events did. Events carried by other Chicago stations included rowing (Yale-Harvard, the Poughkeepsie Regatta, Oxford-Cambridge), horse races, amateur boxing championships from Yankee Stadium, the Bears versus the College All-Americans, tennis (the Forest Hills National Championships, now the U. S. Open, and the international Wrightman

Cup), the National Air Races, boxing, the national softball tournament, and the Indianapolis 500. Sportscasts were mainly on WGN, WMAQ, and WBBM, the same stations if not the same call letters as today. WGN carried the Bears and all Blackhawk home games.

College football was prominent. Northwestern, Illinois, and Notre Dame games were well-covered, especially home games. Rose Bowl, Sugar Bowl, and Army-Navy games were carried by the networks.

As you might guess, 160 plus magazines of 16 to 20 pages contain enough information to make a summarization go on and on. I have gone on and on; there is more I haven't covered, but I will finish this with my expression of appreciation for your attention to this scan of an example of an extremely popular interactive media situation that occurred long before "interactive media" became created as a phrase. ■



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Everyone who is on the internet and has email needs to take a quick few seconds and click on this link: www.RicksPlace.info and sign up. It's absolutely free. Rick's Place, named after the upscale nightclub and gambling den in Casablanca (1942), is a newsgroup that started back in January, providing the latest news about conventions, comics, books, movies, old-time radio and anything in between. This has proven to be a valuable vehicle that delivers pertinent information and items of interest to the membership. The discussion group has, in past issues, discovered that the Asheville Western Film Festival was recently cancelled due to a disagreement with the convention management and the hotel, new DVD releases, and recent old-time radio findings. Over 2,000 people have subscribed already, according to Dave, the man in charge, and an average of two additional people subscribe every day. "What I would like to see is more discussions about old-time radio," he explained. So take a moment and subscribe at www.RicksPlace.info. If you do not like what you read, you can always unsubscribe.

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

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The Life of Dana Andrews

by Elizabeth McLeod

Dana Andrews spent his entire career portraying tough, driven men on the screen and on the air, but his bitterest enemy turned out to be the one most difficult to defeat: one which lurked within the depths of his own mind. But, he did defeat that enemy — not with fists, or at the point of a gun, but through sheer determined discipline.

Carver Dana Andrews began life in a tiny Mississippi town with the unlikely name of "Don't." He was one of thirteen children born into a strict Southern Baptist family. Between his upbringing and the name of his home town he was certainly not unfamiliar with a life of discipline. His path seemed laid out for him: a good, solid education and a respectable job in a quiet town. Somewhere along the line, however, young Carver decided that he'd rather make his own decisions.

He gave up a promising job as an oil-company accountant, stuffed what he could carry into a grip, and thumbed his way west. In his heart, he wanted to be in show business. He had a healthy baritone voice, and saw himself as a singer — but once he got to Hollywood, just then well-supplied with glossy-haired pearly-teethed crooners, he found the market for his talents to be somewhat less than he had anticipated.

He ended up returning to the oil business, although in decidedly reduced circumstances. Instead of wearing a clean white collar every day and adding up columns of figures in an oil-company ledger, he donned overalls and a clip-on bow tie, and manned the pumps at a gas station in Van Nuys. A humbling experience for most, but Carver Dana Andrews, even then, was



a tough guy. Too tough, in fact, to go on calling himself Carver. Dana had a snappier, manlier ring to it, and it was under that name that he decided to become an actor at the Pasadena Playhouse.

The Playhouse was one of many repertory companies populating the greater Los Angeles landscape, offering would-be thespians a taste of stage life and a roughscrabble education in the ways of show business. You worked your way up from the bottom in these companies, starting in thankless walk-on roles, working your way up to bit parts, then supporting roles, and maybe, if you were good enough and smart enough and tough enough, you might grind your way up to leading parts. Dana Andrews was that good and that smart and that tough, and by 1938 he had come to the attention of one of producer Sam Goldwyn's many roving talent scouts. Goldwyn had the habit of picking up fresh young promising talent and throwing them into roles to see if they could handle the even

greater grind of moviemaking. Andrews rose to the challenge, in a small but juicy role in William Wyler's *The Westerner*. From there, the parts came faster and got better, until 20th Century Fox beckoned with offers of more prestigious roles.

By the mid-forties, when many leading men were in the service, Dana Andrews had become one of the top names of the screen — playing a wide range of tough-yet-sympathetic, charismatic-yet-vulnerable parts. He shone alongside Henry Fonda in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, and he became a critical favorite as the driven investigator in the film-noir classic *Laura*. And, he hit the peak of his fame, his popularity, and his prestige as a tormented Air Corps veteran trying to pick up the pieces of his life after the war in the Oscar-winning *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

As Dana Andrews was climbing to the top of the Hollywood pyramid, he was being followed by something as dark and deadly as any of the adversaries he tackled on film. Southern Baptists didn't drink, didn't touch alcohol. But, Dana Andrews had come a long way from Don't, Mississippi, and Hollywood was awash in booze. Liquor was the lubricant greasing the wheels of the movieland machine — it helped make the deals that made the films, it helped the talent and the crews unwind after endless days and nights on the set, it lurked in every swank nightclub and in every upholstered office and behind every glamorous, glittering doorway. And so, very early in his Hollywood career, Dana Andrews started drinking.

He could handle it at first, he thought. It helped knock down the nerves, helped manage the stress, it made work just that much easier. Just one more for the road, here's how, bottoms up, make it a double, and before he knew

it, Dana Andrews couldn't live without one more drink. When word began to get around among the producers and directors and casting offices, Dana Andrews suddenly wasn't quite right for this role or that role. "Oh, he's talented, no question," they'd say. "But." And, then they'd make that universally-recognized gesture: a fist with a thumb extended, tipped up and toward the mouth ... the universally-recognized sign for a drunk.



Dana Andrews kept plugging, kept taking work. If the movies weren't interested, they weren't the only game in town. When radio producer Frederic W. Ziv came calling in 1952, Andrews jumped at the chance to star in his own series. He'd enjoyed his appearances on the *Lux Radio Theatre*, *The Screen Guild Theatre*, and the various other Hollywood showcases of the air. His voice was perfect for radio, and the broadcasting routine was far less arduous than the continuous grind of moviemaking. It was just then the fashion for Hollywood favorites to star in their own syndicated series — and the role offered to Andrews seemed ideal for his established persona of the tough, tormented All-American Man. The program grew out of the true-life story of one Matt Cvetic, an FBI operative who had posed as a Communist in order to infiltrate



the Communist Party USA in the years prior to World War II. His highly-embellished account of his adventures as a counteragent became a best-seller in the years of the postwar Red Scare, and the book's episodic nature made it perfect for radio. Ziv radio productions were never flashy, but they were produced to a high standard, with well-turned scripts by quality writers and excellent supporting casts. Andrews was a perfect fit as Cvetic, conveying all manner of anger and disillusionment, tension and determination in his interpretation of what could have been just a cheap propaganda role. *I Was A Communist For The FBI* premiered in the spring of 1952, and eventually sold to over 600 stations.

Andrews recorded 78 episodes of the series, enough for about two seasons. Usually two seasons were all that was required for such a program — after which the costs of production would likely be recovered, and everything after that would be profit for the distributor. The series could be sold year after year after year to new markets, but the talent only got paid for the original recording sessions. So, Dana Andrews had to keep plugging, had to keep trying for roles an actor of his talent shouldn't have to try out for, and all the while he kept drinking until finally he

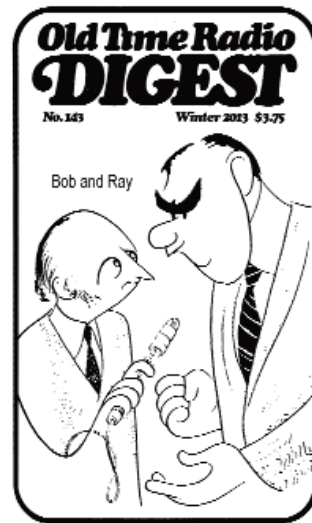
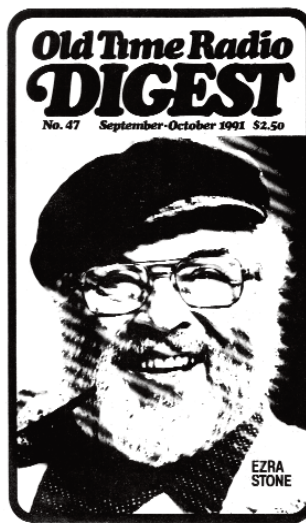
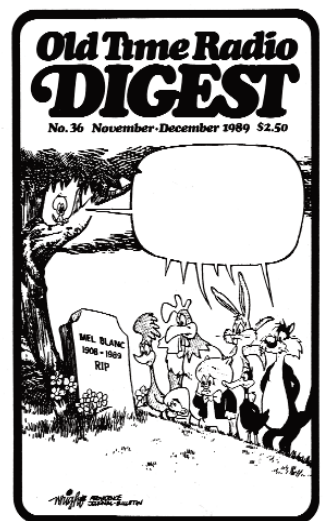
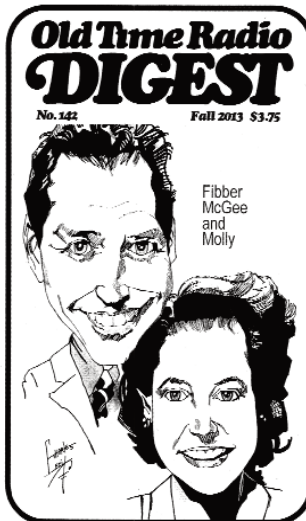
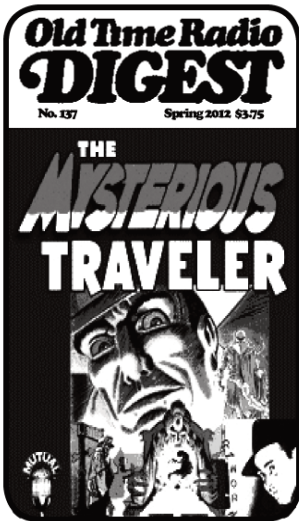
couldn't take it anymore. He looked in the mirror and saw the man he could have been and determined to be that man after all. He looked at colleagues that he admired, actors with the discipline necessary to keep the bottle in its place — among them the president of the Screen Actors Guild, the amiable Ronald Reagan.

He had seen Reagan up close and knew him to be a man who knew when to say "when" and when to say "none for me, thanks." Dana determined to follow that example, and the example of other disciplined performers. He pushed himself and pushed himself through the 1960s, working in television, working on the stage, making the occasional film, taking whatever parts he could get, and even served a term himself as SAG president. Finally, he put down the bottle for the last time in 1969. He had beaten his toughest foe with discipline and with dignity.

Dana Andrews lived another twenty-three years after that, and continued to act into the early 1980s. When he died, in 1992, friends and fans remembered a man who could have been a bigger star than he had been, but couldn't have been a braver man. ■

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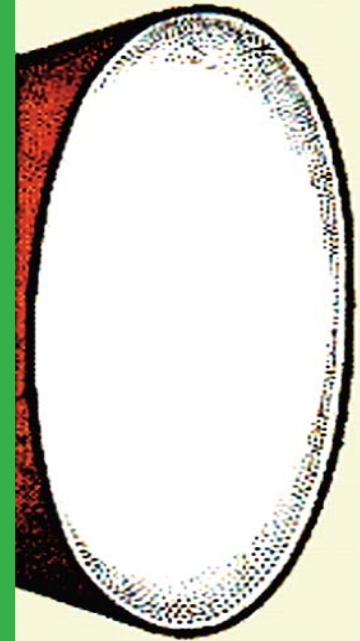
UNITED STATES EARLY RADIO HISTORY

A Wireless Message



PART 4 **Development of Radio Networks** (1919-1926)

by Thomas H. White



The introduction of vacuum-tube amplification for telephone lines allowed AT&T to experiment with sending speeches to distant audiences that listened over loudspeakers. The next step would be to use the lines to interconnect radio stations, and in December, 1921 a memo written by two AT&T engineers, J. F. Bratney and H. C. Lauderback, outlined the establishment of a national radio network, financially supported by advertising. General Electric, Westinghouse and RCA responded by forming their own radio network, however, unable to match AT&T's progress, in 1926 they bought out AT&T's network operations, which were reorganized to form the National Broadcasting Company.

EXPERIMENTAL OVER-THE-AIR RETRANSMISSIONS

Beginning in early 1919, General Electric began a series of radio telephone tests, using a

high-power alternator-transmitter at NFF, the Navy station located at New Brunswick, New Jersey, in conjunction with a lower-powered vacuum-tube transmitter aboard the U.S.S. George Washington, which was sailing in the Atlantic ocean. An unusual feature of this test was that, because of the reception configuration, signals received at NFF were automatically retransmitted by that station, thus, everything received from the George Washington was widely heard on NFF's longwave signal. On July 4, 1919 a special program was broadcast by the George Washington, which was heard as far inland as North Dakota. Theodore Gaty, noting the remarkable range of this broadcast, contacted General Electric radio engineer Ernst Alexander-son, and reported in Re Mr. Corum's Letter in January QST from the April, 1920 QST about the dual transmissions. Also, early 1920 saw an



USS George Washillington off New York City, circa 1919

impromptu joint transmission, as Music 400 Miles by Radio from the April, 1920 Electrical Experimenter, reported that a concert broadcast from the government station in Chicago, Illinois had been picked up and retransmitted by its counterpart in Detroit, Michigan.



AT&T INTRODUCES RADIO NETWORKING

Large companies are often slow to innovate. A notable exception occurred when the research and experimentation by the American Telephone & Telegraph Company -- the largest company in the world -- on interconnecting telephone lines, loud speakers, and radio transmitters led in late 1921 to a plan to create a national radio network, supported by advertising, at a time when most people had yet to even hear a radio broadcast. AT&T's intention to set up nationwide broadcasting was formally announced on February 11, 1922 and publicized in articles such as National Radio Broadcast By Bell System, which appeared in the April, 1922 issue of Science & Invention. Most of the network broadcasts origi-

nated from WEAF in New York City, thus the network was generally called the "WEAF Chain". However, company circuit charts marked the inter-city telephone links in red pencil, so the chain of stations was also known as "the red network". From 1922 until 1926 AT&T would be the most important company in the programming side of U.S. broadcasting. Its advertising-supported radio network, including flagship station WEAF, set the standard for the entire industry.

CONSOLIDATION UNDER THE NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY

After AT&T began organizing the first U.S. radio network, the three companies that comprised the "radio group" -- General Electric, Westinghouse, and their jointly-owned subsidiary, the Radio Corporation of America -- responded by creating their own, smaller, radio network, centered on WJZ in New York City. But, blocked by AT&T from using telephone lines to connect their stations, this other network had to find some other way to link up stations. Initially leased telegraph wires were used. However, the telegraph companies hadn't been in the habit of

employing acoustics experts or installing lines with more fidelity than what was needed for basic telegraph service, so this often resulted in low fidelity broadcasts accompanied by loud hums. Also tried was connecting the stations using shortwave radio links, but this couldn't meet the reliability or sound quality requirements. Another idea that was investigated was increasing transmitter powers, to create a small number of "superpower" stations of upwards of 50,000 watts. This higher power might have helped some, but still didn't match the reliability and flexibility provided by local stations linked together by high-quality phone lines.

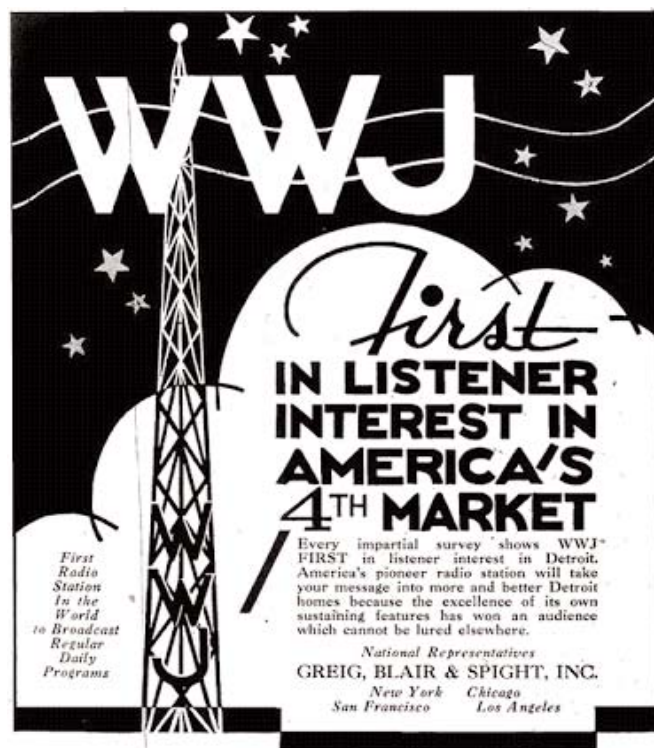


Merlin H. Aylesworth



At this point, the radio group got a break. After four years of increasing success in the broadcasting arena, AT&T decided that it no longer wanted to run a radio network. In May, 1926, it transferred WEA and the network operations into a wholly-owned subsidiary, the Broadcasting Company of America. Then came the bombshell announcement -- AT&T was selling WEA and its network to the radio group companies for \$1,000,000. (RCA's David Sarnoff was fond of saying "when life hands you a lemon, make lemonade". In this case, the strategy became "buy the other guy's lemonade stand".) At this point a new company was

formed, the National Broadcasting Company, which took over the Broadcasting Company of America assets, and merged them with the radio group's fledgling network operations. AT&T's original WEA Chain was renamed the NBC-Red network, with WEA continuing as the flagship station, and the small network that the radio group had organized around WJZ became the NBC-Blue network. In September, 1926 NBC's formation was publicized in full-page ads that appeared in numerous publications: Announcing the National Broadcasting Company, Inc. The new network's debut broadcast followed on November 15, 1926. NBC's first president was Merlin H. Aylesworth, the energetic former director of the National Electric Light Association. Ben Gross, in his 1954 book *I Looked and I Listened*, included a biographical sketch of Aylesworth, noting that "If there is one man who may be said to have 'put over' broadcasting with both the public and the sponsors, it is this first president of NBC." ■



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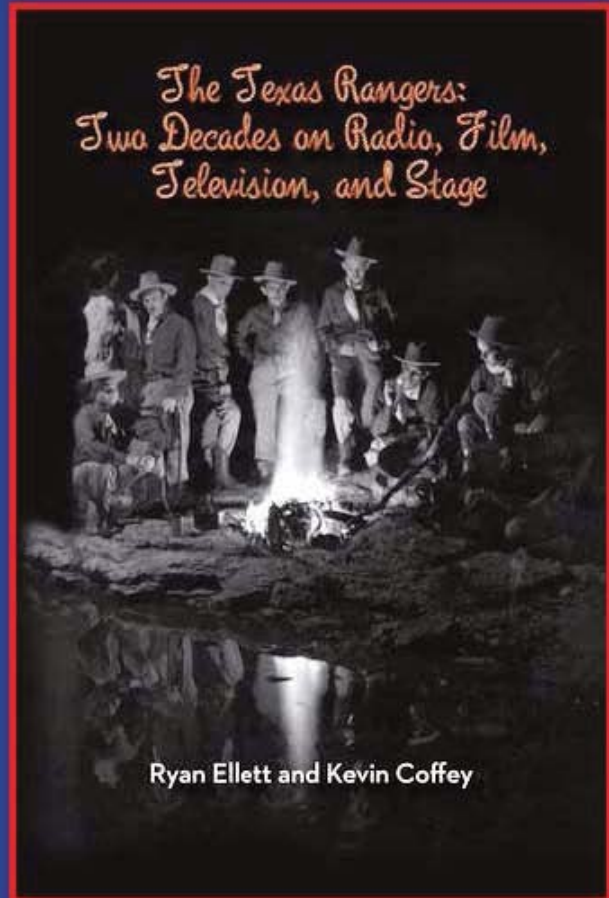
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The Texas Rangers. Millions of people heard them on radio and saw them in movies featuring Gene Autry, Johnny Mack Brown, and others.

Kansas City's KMBC was home to many Country and Western artists during radio's Golden Age, but few could match the popularity and longevity of The Texas Rangers. Debuting in 1932, The Texas Rangers entertained America by radio, records, tours, motion pictures, and television before finally disbanding in the 1950s.

With few commercially released singles, The Texas Rangers were soon forgotten after their heyday except by the most devoted fans of the genre. Now, nearly six decades after the end of their performing years, *The Texas Rangers: Two Decades on Radio, Film, Television, and Stage* offers an in-depth history of the Texas Rangers. This book provides a rare look into the personalities and business dealings that kept the group performing before the public for more than twenty years.



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OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES AND UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES FOR MARCH AND APRIL

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 January and February. 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 For reel-to-reels, contact david0@centurytel.net & for transcription disks tony_senior@yahoo.com

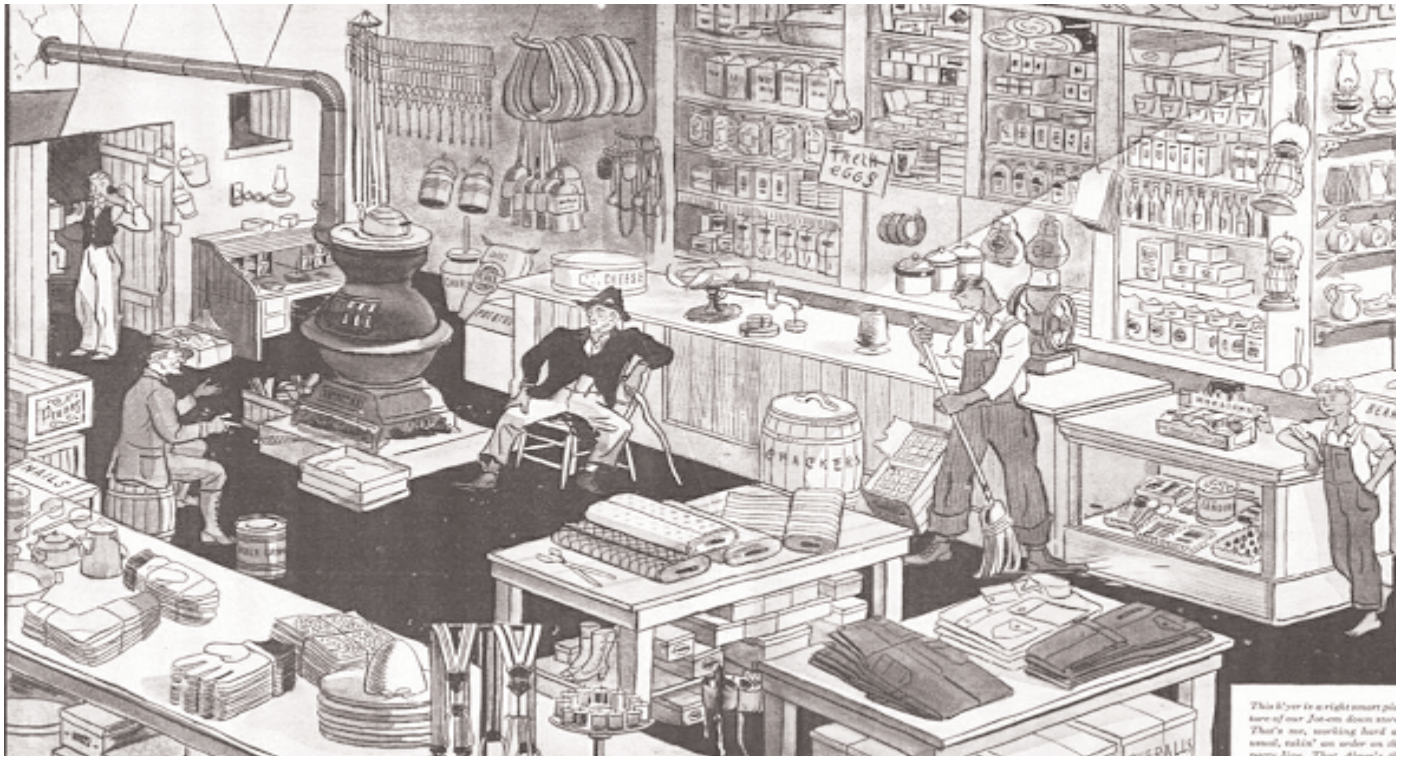
Refreshment Club

01-01-37 1st Song - Labumba.mp3
01-04-37 1st song - Your Tuscany.mp3
01-05-37 1st song - The Continental.mp3
01-06-37 1st song - Billboard March.mp3
01-07-37 1st song - It happened in Chicago.mp3
01-08-37 1st song - Why do I lie to myself about you.mp3
01-11-37 1st song - High and low.mp3
01-12-37 1st song - First call.mp3
01-13-37 1st song - Hail to the spirit of liberty.mp3
01-14-37 1st song - We saw the sea.mp3
01-15-37 1st song - Golddiggers Lullaby.mp3
01-18-37 1st song - I love a parade.mp3
01-19-37 1st song - Happy Landing.mp3
01-20-37 1st Song - March Time.mp3
01-21-37 1st Song - Rise and shine.mp3
01-22-37 1st Song - Love is sweeping the country.mp3
01-25-37 1st Song - My Love_Parade.mp3
01-26-37 1st Song - I take to you(1).mp3
01-27-37 1st Song - War correspondent march.mp3
1st Song - Gee but your swell.mp3
01-29-37 1st Song - The lady in red.mp3
02-01-37 1st Song - Things look rosy now.mp3

02-02-37 1st Song - Maine Song.mp3
02-03-37 1st Song - March for liberty.mp3
02-04-37 1st Song - Crazy Rythm.mp3
12-01-36 1st Song - Cross_Patch.mp3
12-02-36 1st Song - Strilke up the band.mp3
12-03-36 1st Song - Coming at you(1).mp3
12-03-36 1st Song - Coming at you.mp3
12-04-36 1st Song - Goody Goody.mp3
12-07-36 1st Song - Fare thee well Anabelle.mp3
12-08-36 1st Song - Pennies from heaven.mp3
12-09-36 1st Song - March Time.mp3
12-10-36 1st Song - Two buck Tim.mp3
12-11-36 1st Song - Wake up and sing.mp3
12-14-36 1st Song - Let yourself go.mp3
12-15-36 1st Song - You hit the spot.mp3
12-16-36 1st Song - On the square march.mp3
12-17-36 1st Song - _I feel a song coming on .mp3
12-18-36 1st Song - Sing its good for you.mp3
12-21-36 1st Song - Roll out of bed with a smile.mp3
12-22-36 1st Song - Tell the truth.mp3
12-23-36 1st Song - The diplomat March.mp3
12-24-36 1st Song - Drums in my heart.mp3
12-25-36 1st Song - I Love Louisa (Yuletide Show).mp3
12-28-31 1st Song - Dixie.mp3
12-29-36 1st Song - Frost on the moon.mp3
12-30-36 1st Song - On the ball march.mp3
12-31-36 1st Song - Stand up and cheer.mp3

Silver Eagle

06-29-54 Redmans Vengeance.mp3
07-08-54 Murder on Mukluk Creek.mp3
07-22-54 Indian War Clouds.mp3
07-29-54 Blood Brother.mp3
12-0254 Border Renegade (cut opening).mp3



This store is a right smart job
 one of our best men down here
 that's one, working hard a
 usual, takes' an order on a
 usual, takes' an order on a

LUM and ABNER

BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY
 CHESTER LAUCK & NORRIS GOFF

LUM! LUM!

I'M RIGHT THERE,
 ABNER! BE QUIET!!

CEDRIC WEEHUNT IS MISSING...

A-ABNER... WE
 GOTTA SEE IF
 THESE FOKES
 IS SHORE 'NUFF
 D-D-D-DEAD!

L-L-LET'S
 ASK 'EM!

G-GO ON, ABNER, TETCH THAT'N!

LUM,
 DON'T
 PUSH MY
 ARM--

GASP! **PLOP**

L-L-LUM... THAT
 F-F-FELLER...
 HE'S... S-S-S-STIFF AN'
 C-C-C-COLD!!

L-L-LUM?

UH-OH...

THIS'S STILL
 WARM!

L-L-LUM!

OH-H... CAM YERSELF,
 ABNER... IT'S... IT'S ME...

I... JIST... OHH... TRIPPED... I THINK...

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I THOUGHT
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 B-BEEN... CEDRIC...

WHAT ABOUT CEDRIC?

Donnie Pitchford 2011



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.

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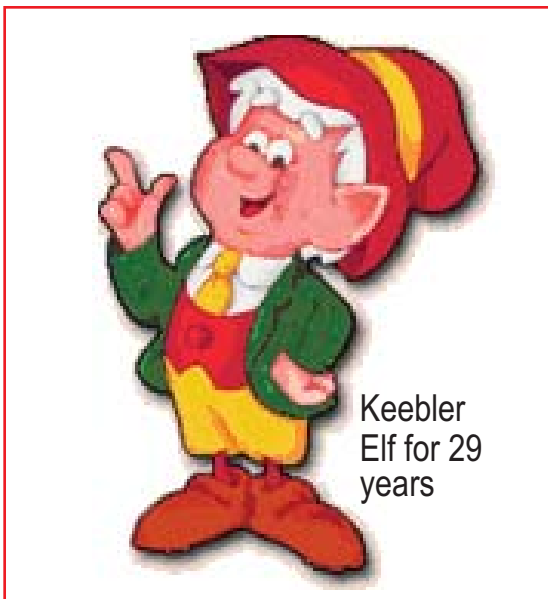
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Chester Proudfoot from Gunsmoke



Mayor Stoner on Andy Griffith Show

Parley Baer (wikipedia)

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, Parley Baer's first stage performance was in a high school play, the three-act comedy "Hands-Up" in 1932. A born leader and organizer, Baer was the Student Director of the cast. He continued to perform on Stage while attending the University of Utah in 1933, with the college's annual production for the school year, "The Youngest," a three-act comedy by Philip Barry. 1934 found him in the role of Ringmaster for the university's annual 'Big Top' production. This would prove to be an ironic harbinger of Baer's life to come. 1934 also found him performing in "The Trial of Mary Dugan," a whodunit farce by Bayard Veiler for the national Drama Society, Theta Alpha Phi. Young Baer rounded out the year with two stirring orations for the annual University of Utah Homecoming football rally in November. Finding himself most adept at comedy, Baer appeared in several more skits and three-act comedies over the next four years at the University of Utah--to ever more favorable notices in the local newspapers. Soon becoming a fixture at most dramatic events on the Salt Lake City cultural calendar, Parley Baer continued to perform both with the University and with Theta Alpha Phi until he graduated from the University of Utah in 1938.

He embarked on his Radio career at Salt Lake City radio station KSL in 1939, becoming a Director for some of their dramatic productions by 1940. Parley Baer had appeared on Radio as early as 1933 in several local drama productions. Baer's characteristically twangy voice lent itself to Western characters but he was equally versatile in employing his amazing voice, raw acting talent and natural gift for comedy to virtually any characterization. The 1940s found Baer very busy at KSL Radio as newsreader, actor, Director and occasional engineer. By 1942 Baer had performed 300 times over KSL as one of the two 'Bates Boys', a skit comedy series that aired locally.

Parley Baer joined the Army Air Forces during World War II with a commission as a Lieutenant. Baer completed his 3-year service as a Captain, having been awarded



Herb Darby the Nelson's neighbor



As Miles Dugan in The Young and the Restless, ca. 1977



Ring Master

seven Battle Stars and a Presidential Unit Citation from his time in the Pacific Theatre of Operations. Baer returned to Radio station KSL as the Program Director for the station.

In April 1946, Parley Baer traveled to New York City where he met and married the famous former bareback equestrienne Ernestine Clarke. It was a wonderful human interest story for the day, as follows: ***"Circus Star Jinxes Tradition To Marry Utah Veteran"***

Five generations of family and circus tradition broke Tuesday when Miss Ernestine Clark, star bareback rider with one of the world's largest circuses, married an "outsider." Parley Baer, son of Mr. and Mrs. C.E. Baer, 176 Cleveland ave., Salt Lake City.

Program director for KSL, Mr. Baer recently returned from three years' service with the armed forces. A member of the famed Hanneford circus family, Miss Clarke entertained at a press "reception" by riding "Stranger," her favorite horse, in Madison Square garden where her troupe, Ringling Bros.-Barnum and Bailey circus, is appearing. An elephant presented a huge bridal bouquet to Miss Clarke as she sat her horse. The marriage ceremony in the Little Church Around the Corner in New York City, where the bride's mother, Elizabeth Hanneford, featured rider in her day, and the bride's brother, "Poodles" Hanneford, riding clown, were married, was brief and simple. Rev. Dr. Randolph Day officiated.

Mr. Baer will remain in New York for a week before returning to his work in Salt Lake City. His new wife will join him here when her bookings end."

Parley Baer gave up his Program Director position at KSL to relocate to Southern California where he embarked on a more expansive career in network Radio. His first recurring performances were on The Whistler (1947) and The Count of Monte Cristo (1949), but he was appearing regularly in literally hundreds of other network broadcasts throughout the late 1940s.

The circus connection continued to serve him well during some of the leaner years of his acting career to meet the demands and responsibilities of a growing family. At various times, Baer served as Ringmaster for his own touring circus, performed at Thousand Oaks' Jungland



In The Young Lions Movie with Brando



Golden Girls



Mr. Corbett in Gomer Pyle 1966



"The 86 proof spring" F Troop (?)

with seven tigers, and served as a docent with the Los Angeles Zoo.

While working steadily in Radio, the 1950s found him embarking on both Television and Film careers. All told, Mr. Baer eventually compiled an extraordinary sixty-year career encompassing more than 60 feature films, 1,600 Television appearances and 15,000 Radio appearances. Clearly one of the Entertainment World's busiest performers, his career was sadly either overlooked or taken for granted in the greater scheme of public notoriety. And yet this was perhaps his greatest, most everlasting tribute. A self-identified character actor, Parley Baer simply performed exceptionally in every role he ever undertook, going back as far as to his high school days. Indeed the finest character actors of Mr. Baer's caliber are the first to point with pride to their virtual invisibility in the public eye. This was, after all, precisely what they set out to accomplish: to make their performances so believable, so authentic and so seamlessly performed that they were taken for granted.

With the extraordinary success that Parley Baer amassed over his career, the short, colloquial version of the above observation is that he was laughing all the way to the bank. It's the hallmark of history's greatest character actors to dismiss public acclaim in favor of being universally identified as Masters of their Craft by their peers and artistic collaborators. And Parley Baer was clearly a Master of his chosen Craft in every measurable way. Indeed though not quite the scene stealer as Lurene Tuttle, for example, Mr. Baer's most ardent fans can quickly point out the hundreds of memorable performances over the years where his archetypal 'fuss-budget' characterizations literally stole the show, be they over Radio, Television or in Film.

A perfect case in point was his memorable recurring role as Chester Wesley Proudfoot in Radio's legendary Gunsmoke series (1952-1961), in which Parley Baer appeared over 400 times alone, almost always drawing justifiable attention to his character and as often as not stealing a few scenes of each performance in the process. And yet, while Baer was often quoted as saying that the role of Chester was his most fulfilling of his Radio



"The Fugitive" Outer Limits program



Doktor Pohlmann, Hogan's Heroes



Mr. Hube in Life Goes On from 1989

years, it's a hard observation to square with the literally thousands of other often equally memorable characterizations Baer gave life to over the years. A favorite actor of equally legendary director Norm MacDonnell, their collaboration over the years began with *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe* in 1949 and culminated with Baer's Television appearances in Norm MacDonnell's *The Virginian* in 1970.

But as legendary as Baer's appearances were over Radio, Baer found an even more popular following over Television. At one time or another during Baer's extraordinary Television career, Parley Baer appeared in virtually every popular program one might recite from Television's Golden Age. From his regular appearances as Herb Darby, the know-it-all neighbor of *The Nelsons* in TV's *Ozzie and Harriet* (1955 - 1965) to his equally memorable character Mayor Stoner on *The Andy Griffith Show* (1962-1963), Parley Baer's often sympathetic portrayals of very real, very lifelike, ordinary Main Street type characters endeared him to three generations of Television viewers.

Not to be overlooked in the least, is Parley Baer's equally noteworthy Film career. Beginning with an uncredited off screen appearance in *The Kid from Texas* (1950), Mr. Baer began appearing in a number of Westerns and Detective genre films as either crusty townspeople or hard-bitten detectives. Prematurely balding by the early 1950s and somewhat over-nourished, Baer's big screen appearances tended toward older characters. Baer's first substantial Film role was in *Away All Boats* (1956) as Doctor Gates. He played opposite Marlon Brando in *The Young Lions* (1958) as Sergeant Brandt.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s Parley Baer had acquired a reputation as a durable, memorable character actor in Film and his appearances in Film from that time forward were both more substantial and memorable. *The FBI Story* (1959) saw him performing opposite Jimmy Stewart and in 1962's *Gypsy* he portrayed his most interesting counter-type role as Mr. Kringelein, opposite Natalie Wood and Rosalind Russell. 1964's *Bedtime Story* found him working with Marlon Brando yet again as well as with David Niven. 1965's *Those Calloways* was the first of many Walt Disney Studio projects that Baer would



From an I Love Lucy show



From the Addams Family show.



Bob Burchett and Parley at one of the Cincinnati Conventions he attended. He was signing the new Gunsmoke book that was being introduced then. (1990)

appear in over the years, among them, *The Ugly Dachshund* (1966), *Follow Me Boys* (1966) and *The Gnome-Mobile* (1967), as well as eleven appearances in Walt Disney's various Television specials and series of the 1970s.

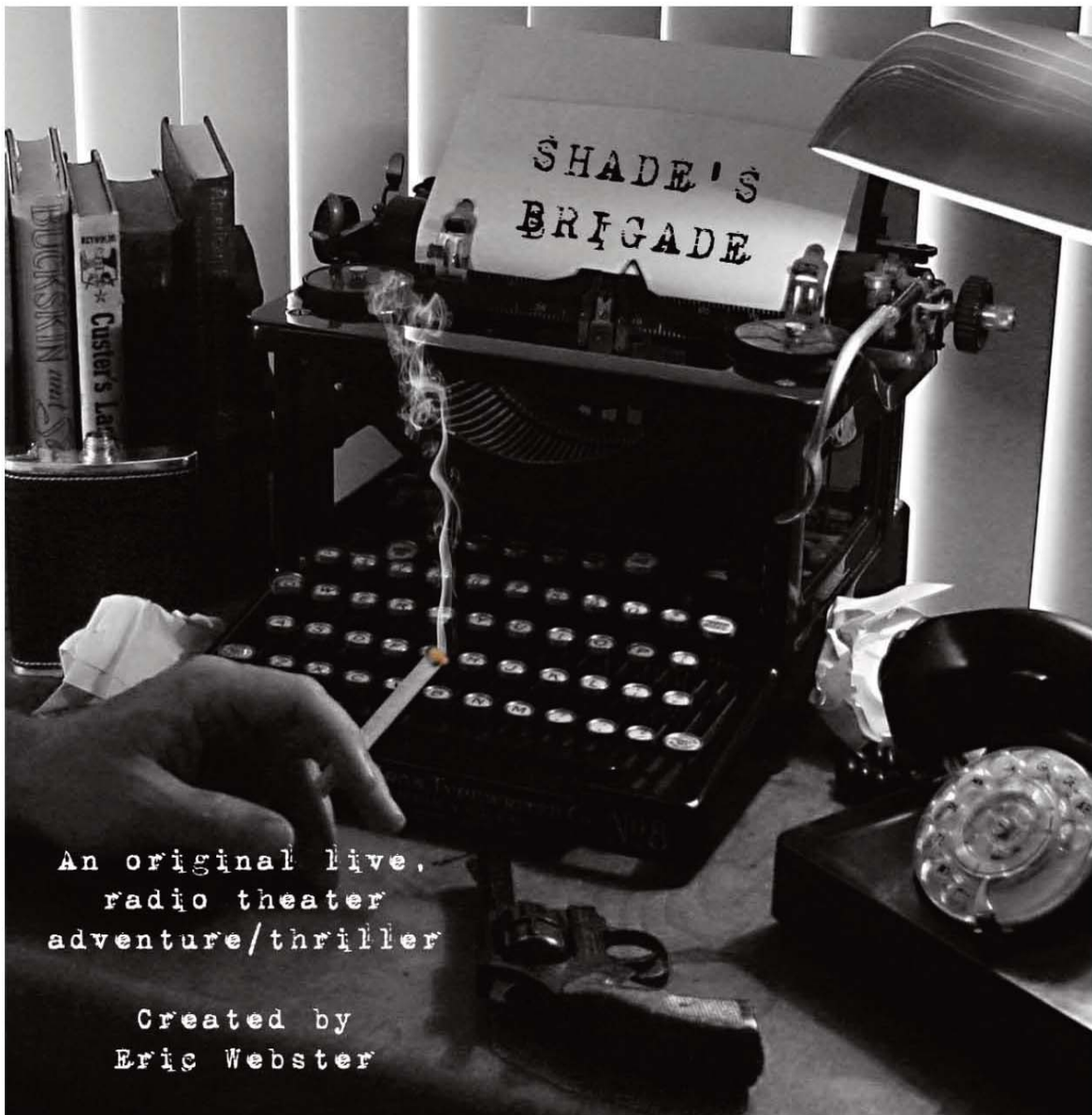
As a pop-culture icon, Parley Baer was also the voice behind the irrepressible Keebler Elf from the Keebler's Bakery commercials, a role he voiced for over twenty-nine years. During the later years of his career, Parley Baer co-founded and became actively involved in Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters with Radio, Film and Television veterans Ralph Edwards and Art Gilmore, among others. Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters was established as a networking organization open to Radio and Television Broadcasting professionals with at least 20 years of experience in Broadcasting or allied fields.

A mild stroke in 1997 effectively cut short Parley Baer's big and small screen careers, affecting his speech, memory and mobility. Baer's only significant public appearances from that point forward were at exploitation appearances for 'OTR' conventions and the like over the next three years. Clearly physically taxed during such appearances, Baer retired completely in 2000 after the passing of his wife of fifty-four years, Ernestine Clarke. Parley Baer died of natural causes two years later in 2002 at the age of 88.

One of the Entertainment World's sturdiest and most recognizable character actors for over sixty-three years, both locally throughout Utah and then nationally and internationally, Parley Baer remains one of America's great character actors of all time. Arguably even more popular today, with the appearance of thousands of his Television and Radio recordings, Parley Baer continues to gain even more fans as we enter the 21st Century. With what will have been his 100th anniversary approaching, there's no doubt that Parley Baer's performances will continue to delight and entertain tens of thousands more fans with each passing year.

The epitaph on his headstone eloquently describes both how he lived his own life and his continuing contribution to the lives of others: ***"He lived his life with talent, humor and most of all, love"***

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