



# The Old Radio Times

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## Reliving World War II via Radio

by Eric Beheim



Between 1939 and 1945, most Americans relied on radio to stay informed about the latest developments of *World War II*. Whenever a major battle was being fought or the President spoke to the nation, everyone remained glued to their radio sets.

Many listeners even went so far as to keep maps of the major battlefronts of the world close at hand, so that they could quickly locate the places that war correspondents and military analysts were discussing. (This writer's grandfather updated his maps using colored pins while listening to a Philco Model 40-195 xx console radio.)

Recognizing the historical value of their war-time broadcasts, the major networks and some of their larger affiliates often transcribed them. Heard today, these recordings still have the power to give listeners a sense of the here and now, as dramatic events are described, often while they were taking place.

For those listeners whose tastes run to news

and commentary from radio's "golden age," a wealth of *World War II* material is currently available. For only a modest investment, a collection in the *MP3 format*, for example, can be acquired that is extensive enough to allow you to follow the progress of the war on a week-by-week, and in some cases, hour-by-hour basis. (Hearing the war unfold in near-real time is quite a different experience from reading about it! Listening to radio news reports from the war years, it is possible to sense some of the tension and apprehension that came from not knowing for certain what the final cost of victory would be.)

Here is a list of some of the collections that I've found to be particularly worthwhile listening to:

### **THE WJSV BROADCAST DAY**

On September 21, 1939 (three weeks after war had been declared in Europe), President Franklin D. Roosevelt called a special session of Congress to ask for changes to the country's neutrality laws to allow the sale of arms and mu-

nitions to warring nations on a "cash and carry" basis. Partially as a result of this momentous occasion, CBS's Washington D.C. affiliate WJSV (today's WTOP) transcribed its entire broadcast day -- from sign-on at 5:58 a.m. until sign-off at 1 :00 a.m. the following day -- for the National Archives.

The program schedule included recorded music hosted by *Arthur Godfrey*, *news programs*, *soap operas*, the special session of Congress, a baseball game between the Washington Senators and the Cleveland Indians, *Amos 'n Andy*, *Elmer Davis' news commentary* on the situation in Europe, *quiz shows*, *Major Bowe's Amateur Hour* (one of radio's most listened to programs back then), the *Columbia Radio Workshop*, more news commentary, a repeat of the President's speech from earlier in the day, broadcasts by "name bands" such as *Teddy Powell*, *Jerry Livingston* and *Louis Prima*, etc. *Available inexpensively on a single MP3 disc, it is something that anybody interested in what radio was like during its "golden age" will enjoy listening to.*

### **ELMER DAVIS AND THE NEWS**

During the opening months of the war, CBS commentator Elmer Davis provided a daily 5-minute summary and analysis of important

events that had occurred that day in Europe and Asia. Even though America was not yet involved in the war, many realized that what was happening "over there" would eventually affect them as well, and therefore tuned into Davis' program to stay current on the deepening crisis. *74 of his broadcasts are available on a single MP3 disc.* They provide an almost a day-by-day look at how the war was initially fought in Europe, when both Germany and Soviet Russia were actively engaging in naked aggression against their smaller neighbors.

### **"THIS IS LONDON"**

Fifty-six of the reports that Edward R. Murrow made to American radio listeners from London via shortwave radio between 1939 and 1946. Many of his reports from late 1939 and 1940 describe how the average British citizen was bearing up under the pressures of war-time shortages, blackouts, air raids, and so on. One particularly memorable broadcast is Murrow's report from December 3, 1943, where he describes his experiences while accompanying the crew of Royal Air Force bomber "D-Dog" during a nighttime bombing raid Wover Berlin. Almost 65 years after it aired, it remains an example of radio reporting at its finest!







### WILLIAM L. SHIRER

Of the news programs hosted by veteran CBS newsman William L. Shirer between 1938 and 1944, one of the highlights is Shirer's eyewitness account of France's surrender to Germany on June 21, 1940, on the same spot and in the same railroad car where Germany had surrendered to the Allies at the end of World War I.

### THE DEBATE OVER AMERICAN NEUTRALITY

Even before war broke out in Europe, most Americans were opposed to the U.S. becoming involved in another foreign war. One of the most prominent (and controversial) figures to speak out in favor of American neutrality was *Father Charles E. Coughlin "The Radio Priest"*, who first took to the airwaves in 1926. A charismatic and gifted public speaker, Coughlin's weekly discussions on politics and economics were heard by millions of Americans of all faiths. By 1939, when it became apparent that war in Europe was inevitable, Coughlin began to speak out against what he saw as a plot by the British, the "International Bankers," and the

Roosevelt administration to draw the U.S. into the coming conflict. (One of his broadcasts was a rebuttal to FDR's speech to Congress about changing the neutrality laws.) Although some of Coughlin's political beliefs are still considered objectionable by many, he was an important figure in the history of broadcasting.

### DAY OF INFAMY

Any further debate over whether or not America should remain neutral came to an abrupt end on Sunday, December 7, 1941 with the surprise attack on the Pearl Harbor Naval Base in Hawaii.

Reflecting the uncertainty and confusion of that day, radio's coverage of December 7th consisted primarily of short bulletins and some (understandably) uninformed commentary and analysis. Pearl Harbor radio programs are available from a number of different sources. Covering most of the broadcast day, it includes, in addition to commentary from the likes of Drew Pearson, H.V. Kaltenborn and the correspondents on CBS' *World News Today*, extended excerpts from regularly scheduled programs (everything from *Chats About Dogs* to *American Album of Familiar Music*) that were interrupted by announcements updating listeners on the attack.

### CBS WORLD NEWS TODAY

Airing every Sunday afternoon, *CBS's World News Today*, offered 30 minutes of the latest war news and analysis. Each broadcast featured one or more shortwave reports from CBS correspondents serving in different battle theaters around the world. (Sometimes these reports had to be cancelled or cut short due to poor reception conditions or enemy jamming!) CBS's chief military analyst Major George Fielding Elliott was often on hand to comment on the current military situation. In addition, each program usually featured interviews with someone directly involved in the war effort: the commanding officer of the American camp in Ten-

nessee where German and Italian POWs were being held; the commandant of the U.S. Army's Ranger School in Hawaii, the crew of a Liberator bomber that had recently participated in an important raid over enemy-held territory, etc. (Although the voices were undoubtedly genuine, many of those interviewed sounded like they were reading from a script.) The program was sponsored by the Chicago-based Continental Radio and Television Corporation, makers of Admiral radios. (Since no new consumer radios were produced during the war, the commercials mostly described the role that Admiral was playing in helping to supply radio equipment to the war effort.) Despite some gaps in the program sequence, this collection provides one of the most complete looks at how the war progressed from late 1942 until its conclusion in 1945.

### D-DAY

Early on the morning of June 6, 1944, just as most east coast radio stations were signing off the air, Germany's international shortwave service reported that the Allies' long-expected invasion of Hitler's "Fortress Europe" had begun with landings along the northern coast of France. CBS immediately alerted all of its affiliate stations that it was now providing continuous news coverage of what everyone knew would be one of the most listened-to broadcast days in the history of radio. At first, the only available news was what little could be picked up from German radio. Later in the morning, official confirmation of the invasion was received from the Supreme Head quarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in England. As the day continued, more shortwave reports were received from correspondents in London, some of whom had just returned from having observed the first waves of troops being landed ashore. (Wright Bryant's account of riding onboard a transport plane that delivered airborne troops to France is almost as riveting as Edward R. Murrow's 1943 account of his experiences onboard "D-Dog. ") Even after the networks



resumed their regularly scheduled programs, there were frequent interruptions for news updates. That night, President Roosevelt spoke to the nation and then led a prayer for the troops. Most of the June 6, 1944 broadcast day was transcribed. Some collections only offer highlights of the day's coverage, while others are extensive enough so that the listener can follow "the longest day" beginning when the first announcements were picked up from Germany, and continuing right on through until midnight.

### COMMAND PERFORMANCE

No collection of World War II radio programs would be complete without some examples of *Command Performance*, the spectacular, 60 minute variety show produced weekly by the War Department for direct shortwave transmission to troops fighting overseas. All of the top entertainers of the day appeared on it, and yet it had no budget





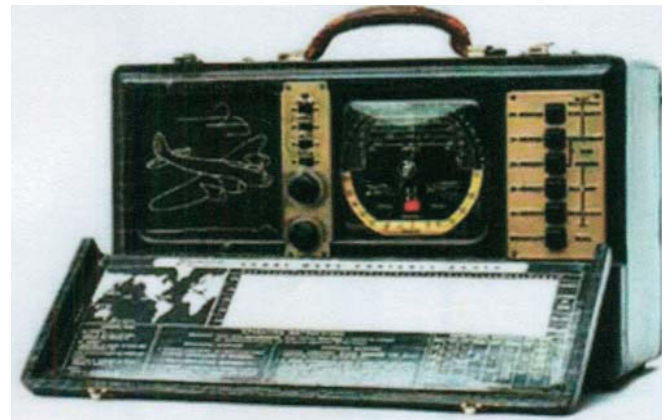
and no one was paid. All talent was donated, including the production staff. Both CBS and NBC made their studio facilities available at no charge. The program's basic premise was that the servicemen themselves would write in and "command" who and what they wanted to hear. It was not uncommon for the likes of *Bing Crosby*, *Bob Hope*, *the Andrews Sisters*, *Red Skelton*, *Edgar Bergen*, *Ethel Waters*, *Spike Jones*, *Dinah Shore*, *Kay Kyser* and *Charles Laughton* to all appear on same broadcast. (Eventually production had to be shifted to Los Angeles to accommodate the flood of requests for appearances by Hollywood screen stars.)

**Command Performance**(1942): Christmas Special  
**THE WEAF BROADCAST DAY**

On August 10, 1945, when news was received that Japan had started taking steps to submit a formal surrender offer, radio station WEAF in New York City began transcribing its broadcast day. Since the surrender offer still had not been officially received by the U.S. Government, it soon became obvious that this would not be VJ-Day, and WEAF eventually returned to its regularly scheduled programs, which it continued to transcribe. As a result, about 9 hours of a typical WEAF broadcast day in

1945 were preserved for posterity. It provides still more interesting listening for anybody who wants to know what radio was like during its "golden age."

**WEAF Broadcast (1945):** News with Lyle Van  
**THE RADIO THAT HELPED TO WIN THE WAR**



If there is one radio that is closely associated with World War II, it is Zenith's Model 7G605, the Trans-Oceanic "Clipper". Introduced only days after Pearl Harbor, the Clipper was not only the first Trans-Oceanic, but also the first portable radio to offer shortwave bands. Only about 35,000 of them were made before Zenith stopped producing consumer radios in order to do war work for the U.S. Government. Even though they sold for the relatively high price of \$75 (the equivalent of \$934 in today's dol-

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lars!) many Clippers were bought by U.S. military personnel, who took them into battle zones around the world. Zenith soon began receiving letters telling of Clippers that had been subjected to extreme tropical heat and humidity, sand storms, enemy bombardments, being dropped into the surf during amphibious landings, and all manner of rough treatment, and had still continued to work. In many of the out-of-the-way places where U.S. troops found themselves, someone's personal Clipper was often the only means of getting news and entertainment from back home. With no new Clippers available at any price, considerable ingenuity was used to keep these deployed sets operational. (Zenith files contain an account of one Clipper that was successfully repaired using parts salvaged from captured enemy radio equipment.) It is probably safe to say that, wherever U.S. troops served during the war, a Clipper or two was also there, serving along with them.

Perhaps this explains why a restored Zenith Trans-Oceanic Clipper is one of this writer's personal favorites from among a modest collection of vintage radios. It is also the radio that he most often uses when listening to replays of World War II news and commentary. (Like many collectors of antique radios, I use a low-power, limited-range AM transmitter to broadcast recorded programs to the various sets I have scattered around the house.) I don't know for sure if my Clipper is a combat veteran or if it even left the United States during the war years. However, it is not too hard to imagine that many of these same war-time programs were probably received on it back when they originally aired. Listening to radio's coverage of World War II does not have to be a passive experience. I have found it convenient and more than a little fun to jot down this information in a notebook while listening to them. Coming up with original broadcast dates can also be an interesting challenge. During one undated news broadcast, the commentator, while waiting for an overseas shortwave report, mentions in passing

the terrible fire that had occurred the night before at the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston. A little research turned up that the Cocoanut Grove fire had occurred on Saturday, 11/28/42, so the broadcast date had to be Sunday, 11/29/42. Other program dates were arrived at using similar detective work.

This has been just a brief look at what is available in the way of radio news and commentary from World War II. Whether you're a military buff, a fan of Golden Age Radio, or just interested in hearing how breaking news was reported back before television and 24/7 cable news, I think that you will find these programs to be every bit as fascinating as anything you're likely to tune in today.

Happy listening. ■

*The above article first appeared at [www.otrcat.com](http://www.otrcat.com)*

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#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

*Eric Beheim is a life-long radio enthusiast. A former commanding officer of a Naval Reserve Combat Camera unit based in San Diego.*

*Eric Beheim leads a multi-faceted career as a free-lance writer, professional musician, and owner of his own music and sound project studio.*

*Born in the first wave of "baby boomers" he grew up with radio and remains a life-long radio enthusiast. His particular interests are collecting news and commentary programs from the late 1930s and early 1940s (including World War II news), and programs that feature performances of operettas and musical theater presentations.*

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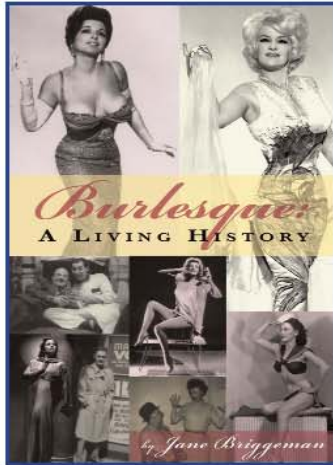




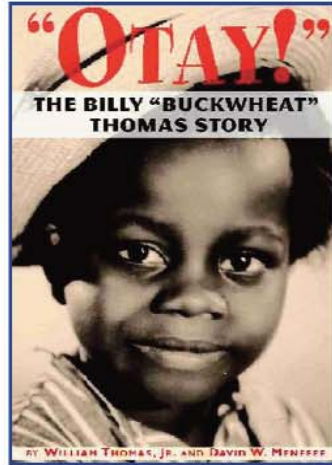
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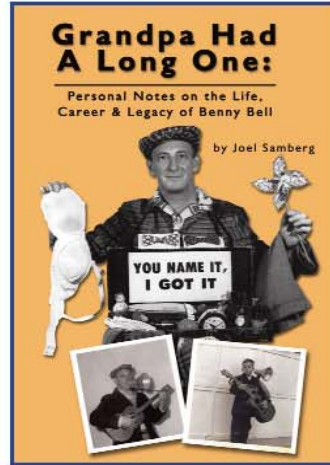
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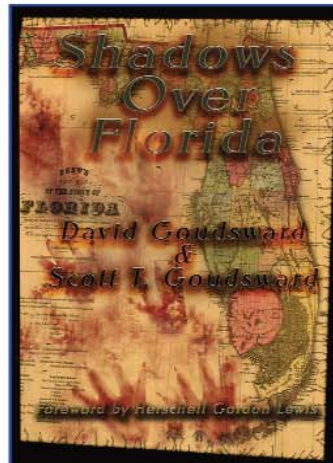
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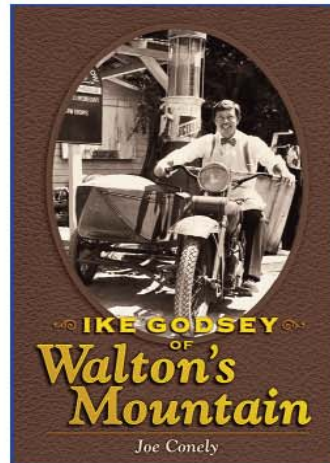
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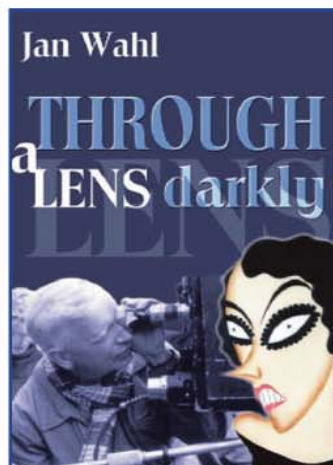
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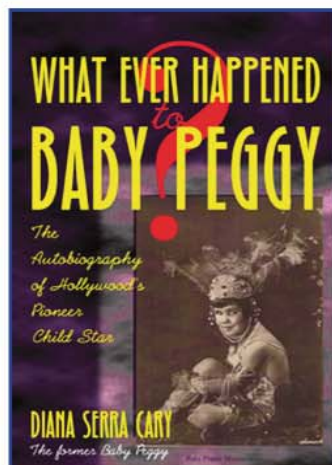
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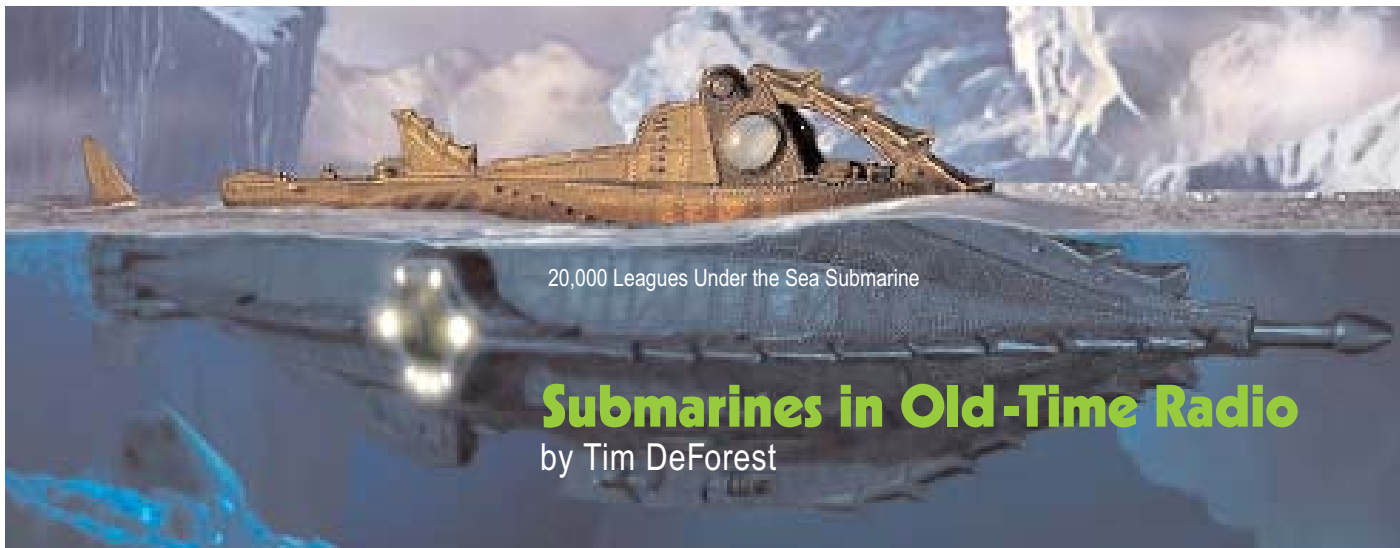
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20,000 Leagues Under the Sea Submarine

## Submarines in Old-Time Radio

by Tim DeForest

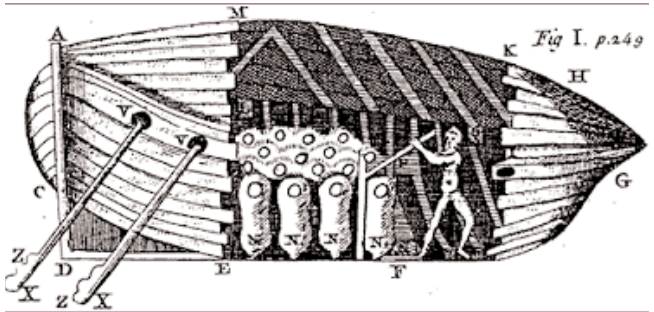
It seems that for as long as mankind has been sailing the seas, we've also been trying to figure out ways to dive under it and explore the last unknown frontier. It's not surprising that the idea of a submersible vehicle had a romantic appeal even before such a vehicle was actually invented. To dive below the ocean-to explore the unknown--to be the first person to see new things--that's an idea that is bound to appeal to the imagination. On top of that, there's all the inherent dangers--crushing pressure when diving particularly deep; depth charges dropped by enemy vessels; depleted oxygen supplies; and the occasional giant squid or sea monster.

Submarines exist as weapons of war or vessels of exploration, but they are also perfectly designed to be the centerpiece of outstanding adventure stories. Submarines have actually been around longer than many of us realize. It's possible that a Dutchman named Cornelius Drebbel built a prototype for James I of England in 1623--though if it was actually built, it was likely little more than a decked-over rowboat. In 1776, David Bushnell built a small submarine dubbed the "Turtle." Maneuvered while submerged by handcranks, the "Turtle" was used in an unsuccessful attempt to screw a hole in the

bottom of a British warship anchored in New York Harbor.

Throughout the 19th Century, inventors such as Thomas Fulton attempted to create a truly practical submarine. During the American Civil War, the Confederate Navy tried out a craft dubbed the *Hunley* (named after its inventor). Technology, though, had not yet caught up to imagination. The *Hunley* was more deadly to its own crew than to the Union Navy, though it did manage to sink the *U.S.S. Housatonic* in Charleston harbor before sinking itself.

By the end of the 19th Century, practical submarines were becoming a reality. But even before that, Jules Verne's 1870 novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* cemented the idea that *Submarines Are Awesome* in public consciousness. So it's not surprising that other



Cornelius Drebbel built a prototype in 1623





In 1776, David Bushnell built a small submarine dubbed the "Turtle."



works of fiction began taking their audiences under the sea as well. Radio was no exception to this.

*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* was adapted to radio several times. Both *Favorite Story* (December 20, 1947) and *Family Theater* (August 23, 1950) did remarkably effective jobs condensing the novels into their half-hour time slots. On February 17, 1955, Bob Hope brought us a hi-

larious parody of the then-current Disney version of the story.

The dramatic potential of submarines spilled over into other stories. The August 11, 1941 episode of *Cavalcade of America* was "Red Lanterns on St. Michaels," a fictional account of the *Hunley*—the primitive Confederate submarine—and its attack on a Federal ship.

The commander of the Rebel submersible in that episode was played by William Johnstone, who took a break from portraying the Shadow to climb aboard the *Hunley*. But it was Johnstone's predecessor as the *Shadow*, Orson Welles, who played the weird crimefighter in a story involving a submarine. "Death from the Deep" (June 12, 1938) pitted the *Shadow* against a megalomaniacal millionaire who outfitted a sub to attack commercial shipping. Other radio heroes encountered subs. The June 11, 1934 episode of *Mandrake the Magician* found Mandrake aboard a submarine being used by international spies. The only hope for escape involved faking his own death.

Coincidentally, when Bulldog Drummond dealt with spies in contact with German U-boats on the Sept. 16, 1943 episode of his show, he also had to fake his own death to get himself and his perpetually put-upon butler Denny out of trouble.

Spies and submarines often go together. *I Love Adventure's* "The China Coast Incident" (April 24, 1948) found Jack Packard aboard a refugee ship, working to recover a valuable microfilm and prevent a sub from sinking the ship if he doesn't give up that microfilm.

*The Adventures of Superman* took the Man of Steel undersea in May 1941 when enemy agents tried to hijack an experimental submarine during its first test dive. A rescue sub is nearly captured as well, though a reporter brought along to observe the mission (a mild-

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mannered fellow named Kent) insists he can help if he's allowed to leave through the escape hatch.

Not all problems encountered by submarines are as mundane as mere spies, though. The heroes of a 1936 serial titled *The Magic Island* encountered an entire island—ruled by mad scientists—that was able to submerge.

The unfortunate crew of a submarine on the July 8, 1944 episode of *Author's Playhouse* ("The Kraken") found themselves and their vessel dragged into an undersea cave by a rather large octopus. This, by the way, is a particularly creepy episode—especially a scene in which a diver manages to maintain radio contact with the sub even after being swallowed by the monster.

Not surprisingly, many submarine stories were set during the Second World War. The short-lived but excellent wartime series *The Man Behind the Gun* gave us "Incident in the Pacific" on February 19, 1944. This is about a Pharmacist's Mate aboard an American sub who has to perform an appendectomy on one of his crewmates. It's a premise that sounds like pure melodrama, but the story is based on a true story. In 1942, a Pharmacist's Mate named Wheeler B. Lipes actually did take out an appendix while his sub rested on the sea bottom 120 feet below the surface.

*Escape*, one of radio's finest adventure series, did three submarine stories during its five-year run. "Pressure" (March 22, 1953) is a very suspenseful story about an American submarine enduring an extended depth charge attack by Japanese destroyers. It's a situation that has become the biggest cliché in submarine stories. But "Pressure" demonstrates why this has become a cliché—when done well, it makes for edge-of-your-seat storytelling.

"Up Periscope" (August 8, 1951) is a more

unusual tale. The protagonist is an American submariner recently discharged from the Navy for medical reasons in the late 1930s. He's approached by a representative from the Chinese government and offered command of a broken-down submarine in which to fight the invading Japanese. This is a great episode—with authentic-sounding characters and a strong plot.

"The Log" (9/20/53) introduces us to a sub commander sailing his beloved sub to the scrap yard. At least that's what he's supposed to do.

*The Mysterious Traveler* indulged in a little bit of wish-fulfillment on March 24, 1945. A month before Adolf Hitler committed suicide in a Berlin bunker, "Death Comes to Adolf Hitler" had the dictator trying to escape to South America in a U-boat. But the ghosts of his many victims might just have something to say about that.

This script was used again on April 18, 1950 under the title "Death at Fifty Fathoms."

The world beneath the waves can seem alien, dangerous and romantic for those of us who spend most of our lives on dry land. It's not surprising that so many radio shows have made use of that inherent romance to tell exciting and suspenseful stories. ■







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,



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## Personality Profile: Ned Wever by Lou Dumont

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Personality-spotlight this time looks toward a man who was in the Broadway musical, "The Second Little Show" (at New York's Royale Theatre) a few months before he turned to radio as a dramatic actor. He was also a lyricist, working with composers of a number of popular songs in the 1930's. His name: Ned Wever

In October 2005, while preparing to produce a radio broadcasts known as "Collectible Classics", I came upon a recording made by singer Mildred Bailey. That disc (a Vocalion) was "Trust in Me." Its label read: Ned Wever, lyric; Jean Schwartz and Milton Ager, music.

In the 1950s, work found me on the highways of New England; the car radio carrying great daytime dramas known as soap operas. I'd heard a voice and wanted to know more about the person behind the voice.

The radio fan-magazines of the time contained articles dealing with radio's top daytime dramas, but I never found them on the newsstand on the street.

Ned Wever was born in New York April 27, 1899. In his senior year at Princeton University, he wrote the book and lyrics for Princeton's Tri-

angle Club show.

In September of 1930, he appeared on Broadway in the cast of "The Second Little Show." It was short-lived, running 63 performances. When it closed, Wever directed his energy to radio, becoming a pioneer on the art of daytime radio drama.

From 1932-1940, he was a member of the cast "Betty and Bob." He also appeared on:

- Big Sister (1936-52) playing newspaperman Jerry Miller
- Bulldog Drummond (1943-44)  
Ned Wever in Bulldog Drummond Jan 17, 1947: "Claim Check Murders" (26:05)
- Cavalcade of America (1943-44)
- The Court of Human Relations (1934-39)
- Dick Tracy (1938)  
Ned Wever in Dick Tracy Sept 13, 1945: "Case of the Buried Treasure" (14:29)
- Her Honor, Nancy James (1938-39) (playing Anthony Hale, a district attorney.) The program musical theme, Song of Youth, was played by organist Lew White
- Irene Rich Dramas (mid 1930's)
- Kate Hopkins, Angel of Mercy (1940-42)
- Lora Lawton (co-starring with Jan Miner) (1947-48)  
Ned Wever in Lora Lawton:  
Dec 4, 1947 Broadcast (15:17)
- The Shadow (in a supporting role with Orson Welles) (1938)
- Showboat (as the speaking voice for Conrad Thibault) (1934)
- Treasury Star Parade (as an American Pilot \ downed in China, WWII)
- Twenty Thousand Years in Sing-Sing (1933-37)
- Two on a Clue (co-starring with Loui Fitch) (1944-46)
- Under Arrest (sharing with actor Joe DeSan-



tis the role of Captain Jim Scott (1948-54)

- Valiant Lady (1942-46)
- X-Minus One (1956)  
Ned Wever in on X-Minus One  
May 29, 1956: "Lulungameena" (28:26)
- Ned Wever is well-remembered as Dr Anthony Loring on the long-running serial Young Widder Brown (1941-56).  
Ned Wever in Young Widder Brown:  
Episode 3051 (9:14)

After his years on radio, he turned to TV and films. On the smaller screen, he dropped in on "Petticoat Junction" in 1964 on "George Burns and Gracie Allen" in 1968; and on "Get Smart" in 1969.

On the wider screen, his roles would include playing judges, police detective, an FBI chief, doctors, and attorney, the owner of a bar, and several productions for Walt Disney Company.

Ned Wever died on May 6th, 1984 at Laguna Hills, California. His heart has given out. I will always think not only of his clear radio voice but of his work in composing lyrics to songs such as:

- "I Can't Resist You" 1940, Benny Goodman (Columbia); by Hal Kemp (Victor); Ted Steele (Thesaurus)
- "Sing a New Song" 1932 Art Kassel (Columbia); Bennie Krueger (Brunswick); The Coon-Sanders Nighthawks (Victor)
- "Trouble in Paradise" 1933 Ted Weems (Blue bird); Freddy Martin (Melotone)
- "Sweet Stranger" 1938 Mildred Bailey (Vocalion); Wayne King (Victor); Abe Lyman (Decca); Eddie Fisher (Victor); Roy Rogers (Decca); Patti Page (Mercury); Etta James (Argo)

In 1933, Ned Wever became a member of the music licensing firm of The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. Before moving to the west coast for his work in film/TV, Mr Wever's home was in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. ■

The above article first appeared at [www.otrcat.com](http://www.otrcat.com).

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Written by Jay Hickerson January, 2017

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## Aimee Semple McPherson: Radio Religion & Reality by Anthony Rudel



The recent death of the great and underrated actress Jean Simmons got me to thinking about the movie *Elmer Gantry* in which Simmons portrayed the evangelist Sister Sharon Falconer. Simmons, though British, brought this quintessentially American character to vivid life in a way the original novel's author, Sinclair Lewis, couldn't have ever imagined. The 1960 movie, which starred Burt Lancaster as the slimy and duplicitous preacher Elmer Gantry is spectacular, but one of the reasons it, and the original novel, should be of interest to the OTRCAT fans is its reliance and wonderfully detailed involvement of radio.

Religion on the radio is nothing new; in fact it had its roots early on in that laboratory of programming Pittsburgh's KDKA when, on a Sunday morning in January of 1921 they put a microphone in a local church and broadcast the morning's services. The legion of preachers who took to the airwaves is long, varied, dynamic and oh so colorful, but chief among those radio rabble rousers of religion was the Canadian born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson who was the real-life the model for Sinclair Lewis'



Sister Sharon.

McPherson, was born on October 9, 1890; her original name was Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy. Though her religious parents dedicated her life to God, as a teenager she had difficulty reconciling the scriptures with the innovative and controversial science of people like Darwin, and so, rejecting her parents, she became an avid atheist who publicly debated her beliefs. That devotion to atheism lasted until she heard the preacher Robert Semple under whose spell she fell; she became a devout follower and

also, Mrs. Semple. Within months Aimee was preaching to large crowds, including an overflow gathering of more than 15,000 people in London. Unfortunately, Robert, while on a mission in China, died less than a year later. Pregnant, Aimee moved to New York where her mother was working for the Salvation Army. In New York she married Harold McPherson, but domestic bliss wasn't her thing, and she claimed God was calling her to spread the word. She bought a used car and drove coast to coast with hand-made billboards attached to the vehicle; on one side JESUS IS COMING—GET READY; on the other WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY? Stopping along the way, she preached to overflow crowds in her canvas cathedral. Los Angeles became her home and she quickly formed a congregation, but unlike Billy Sunday and his ilk, her sermons were not fire and brimstone, but rather celebrations alive with music, storytelling, healing, visions, and biblical stories acted out. Much to the annoyance of Los Angeles' other preachers, she was a celebrity and raised money easily, eventually building one of the largest sanctuaries in all of California, the spectacular Angelus Temple. Her radio debut was on KHJ, the station owned by Harry Chandler, the publisher of the Los Angeles Times. Her tremendous success and ease on the air led her congregation to determine that Aimee needed her own radio station. They raised \$25,000 and on February 6th, 1924 KFSG—a powerful 500 Watt station broadcasting at 278 Meters—went on the air. The station's chief engineer, who Aimee stole from KHJ, was Kenneth Ormiston who would later play a key role in the personal travails and mysteries of Aimee Semple McPherson's personal life, but that's another story for another time...

Soon after it went on the air, KFSG, a true re-



ligious radio powerhouse that brought Aimee's sermons directly into homes, started interfering with other stations, many of which noted and reported that KFSG was far exceeding its power limitations. Secretary of Commerce Hoover ordered the department's regional director to inform the station that further violation of its power limitations would lead to the station being shut. Aimee responded with a telegram directly to Secretary Hoover:

*PLEASE ORDER YOUR MINIONS OF SATAN TO LEAVE MY STATION ALONE. YOU CANNOT EXPECT THE ALMIGHTY TO ABIDE YOUR WAVE LENGTH NONSENSE. WHEN I OFFER MY PRAYERS TO HIM I MUST FIT INTO HIS WAVELENGTH RECEPTION. OPEN THIS STATION AT ONCE.*

The station was reopened.

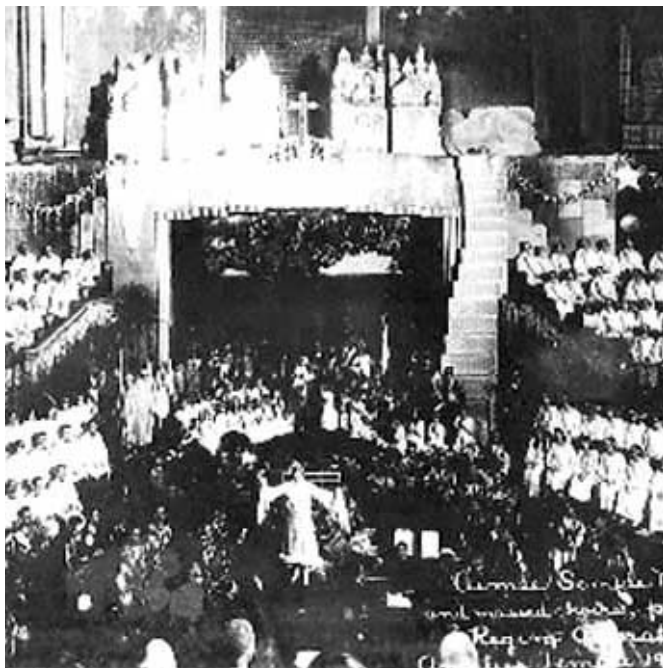
The story of Aimee Semple McPherson is one that is hard to believe, but impossible to have made up. There are gaping holes and personal mysteries, but what we do know is that she was an amazing orator who delivered a distinct message to a huge and powerful audience.

*The Aimee Semple McPherson collection from OTRCAT.COM really gives today's more sophisticated audiences a clear understanding*



of how she did what she did. Long before the far more insidious Father Coughlin manipulated his audience, McPherson entertained hers, bringing them with her, like a pied-piper of the airwaves.

Open your ears to the amazing way she used her voice and told stories to her audience. She was a colorful character indeed, but from a radio standpoint she was an innovative, forward looking radio pioneer and this new collection will thrill, and in some ways, even terrify old radio fans. For more on Aimee Semple McPherson, read Anthony Rudel's *HELLO, EVERYBODY! THE DAWN OF AMERICAN RADIO*. ■



**EVERY-BODY COMES TO RICK'S PLACE!**

Everyone who is on the internet and has email needs to take a quick few seconds and click on this link: [www.RicksPlace.info](http://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](http://www.RicksPlace.info). If you do not like what you read, you can always unsubscribe.

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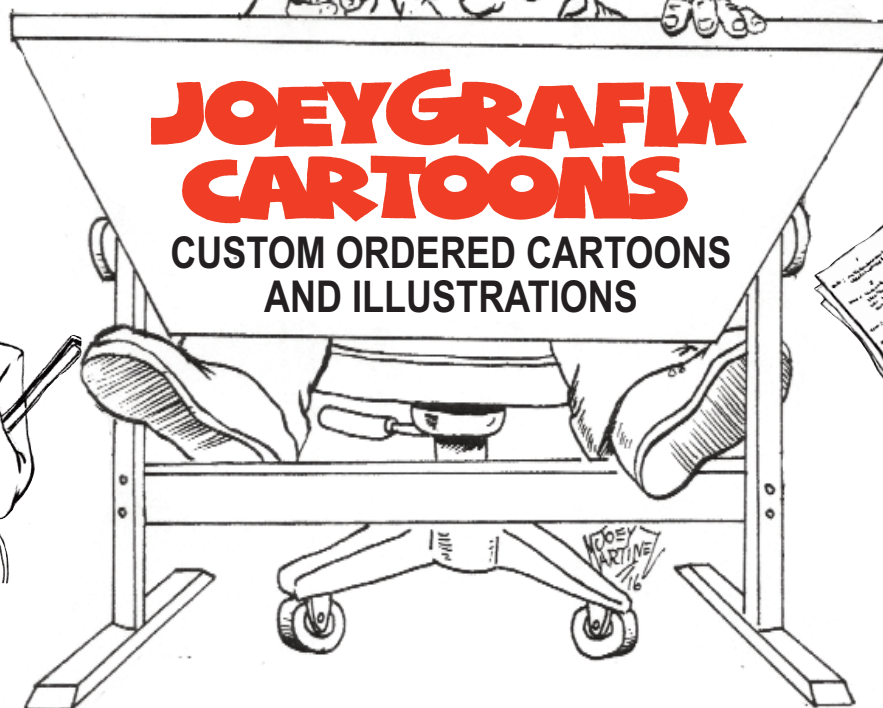
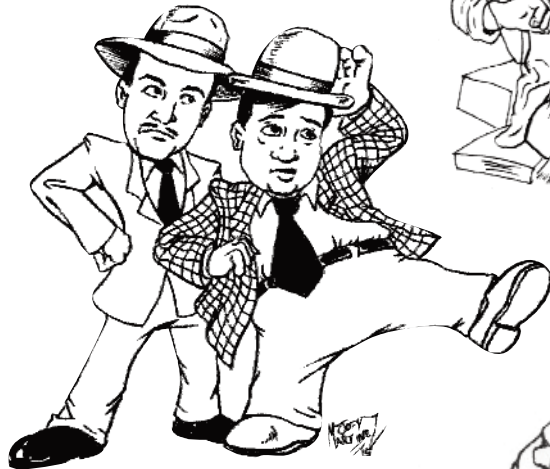
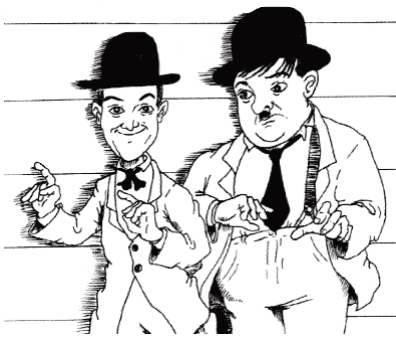
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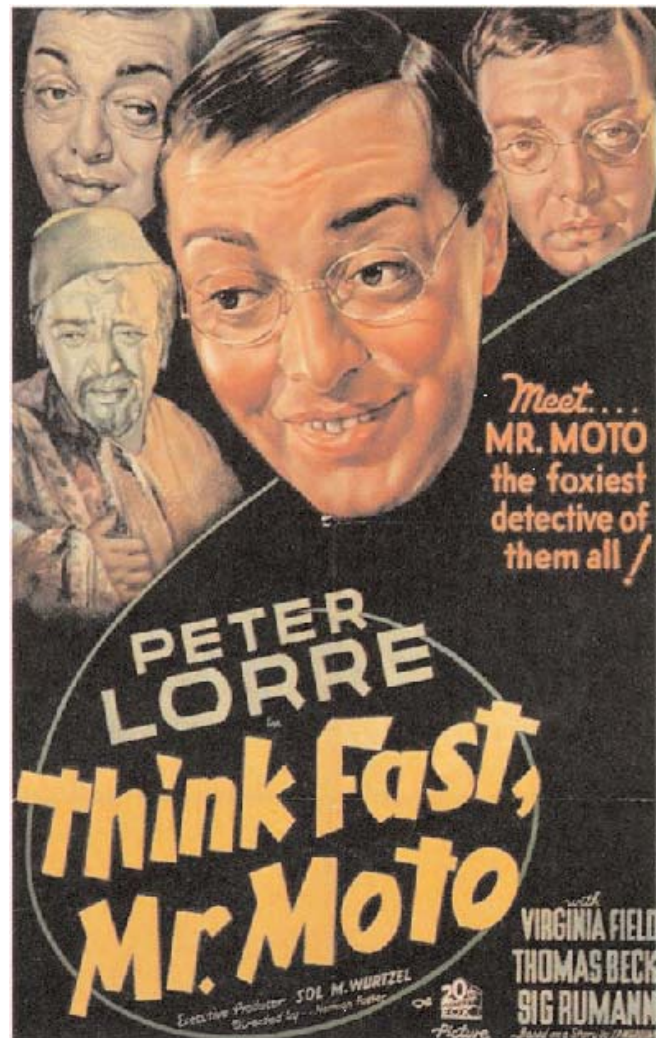
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## Peter Lorre in *Mystery in the Air* by Tim Deforest

*Mystery in the Air* was more or less based on the premise that it would be entertaining to listen to Peter Lorre go insane once a week. Airing on NBC in 1947 as a summer replacement, it ran from July through September of that year. It was an anthology series in which, as announcer Harry Morgan would inform us, “Peter Lorre brings us the excitement of the strange and unusual—the dark and compelling masterpieces culled from the four corners of world literature.”

It was a format that was a perfect fit for that particular actor. Lorre, a native of what was then Austria-Hungary, had gained fame in Europe in 1931, portraying a child murderer in the Fritz Lang-directed film *M*. When the Nazis gained power in Germany, Lorre came to America, where he had demonstrated his versatility in many films. He was able to do character parts such as the effeminate Joel Cairo in *The Maltese Falcon* or the sleazy Ugarte in *Casablanca*; he played Rashkolnikov in a 1935 adaptation of *Crime and Punishment*; he showed a talent for comedy in *Arsenic and Old Lace*; and he did a wonderful job portraying the Japanese detective Mr. Moto in eight films.

Despite this wide variety of roles, he'd been type-cast in the mind of the public as a horror movie icon. *Mystery in the Air* played off this image, taking some of the creepier tales from the classics and placing Lorre in the lead roles. Radio historian John Dunning accurately describes Lorre's work on the show as “intense, supercharged performances of men tortured and driven by dark impulses.” (The quote is from Dunning's *Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*.) He was backed up by a strong supporting cast (including Peggy Webber, Agnes Moorehead, and



Ben Wright) and literate scripts that remained faithful to the source material.

It's not surprising that the producers and writers turned to Edgar Allen Poe for at least two episodes. Sadly, the adaptation of the *Tell-Tale Heart* has not survived, but the September 18, 1947 broadcast of The Black Cat is still around and is worth close examination.

Poe's mastery of the English language is perhaps surpassed only by Dickens and Twain. When telling his dark tales of murder and insanity, he always picked exactly the right words and sentence structures to generate an atmosphere dripping with terror. Poe had a prose style that demands to be read aloud. This, in addition to his habitual use of a first person nar-



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rator, makes him ideal fodder for dramatic radio.

*The Black Cat* is structured as the final confession of a man about to hang for murdering his wife. The radio play retains this conceit, allowing Lorre to narrate the action and thus keeping much of Poe's original prose intact. The play makes no major changes—its one cheat (probably a concession to the network censors) comes when the main character, acting in “fiendish malevolence,” mutilates his pet cat. In the original, he deliberately cuts out one of the cat's eyes. In the radio play, he beats the cat and inadvertently tears off one of its ears. The radio play is less horrific and thus slightly less effective for building up the proper atmosphere, but it's a minor glitch in an otherwise excellent half-hour. In all other aspects—the narrator's descent into alcohol-fueled brutality, the killing of the cat, the house fire, the appearance of the second cat, the murder of the wife and the discovery of the body by the police in the famous and still shocking climax—the radio play does not significantly deviate from Poe. With Lorre's strong performance at the center, it is dramatic radio at its best.

In each of the seven other surviving episodes, Lorre is equally good. Apparently, he would perform alone at his own microphone (the supporting cast would gather around another mike), gesturing wildly as he worked up to the extreme level of emotion necessary to play the roles he was given. On one occasion, partway through the first half of the show, he got a little too carried away and threw his script into the air, scattering it about the studio. Some judicious improvisation got him to the commercial break and allowed time to gather the script up and get the pages back in order.

The August 14 broadcast was *The Horla*, by French author Guy de Maupassant. This is the

story of a man who becomes convinced that he's being stalked by an invisible and malevolent being called a Horla. Whether the man is simply insane or the Horla is genuine is never really made clear.

Once again, Lorre's strong performance and a good script made for a magnificently eerie thirty minutes. In fact, the radio play improves upon the original short story in one respect. A particularly ghastly moment comes late in the story, when the protagonist sets fire to his home in hopes of destroying the Horla. In the original, he realizes with horror that the servants are still inside and that it's now too late to save them. It's an effective scene, but less so than it might have been since the servants were faceless characters, never given any personalities of their own.

In the radio version, we get to meet one of the servants—Marie the maid, played by Peggy Webber. Despite having relatively few lines of dialogue, Webber infuses Marie with enough individuality to make her likeable. When she







and the other servants are trapped in the burning building, Lorre's character is too far gone into his obsession to even notice. It's a touch that adds an additional level of drama to the story.

It also adds a nifty little bit to the ending, where Lorre breaks character and brings his panic over the Horla into "real life," ranting at the cast and crew that he knows he's still on the air, but the invisible monster will get them all nonetheless.

The September 11, 1947 episode took the audience on a figurative trip to Russia for an adaptation of Alexander Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*. Here we listen to Lorre become obsessed with the idea that an elderly Countess can tell him exactly what three cards to bet on in a game of faro. Peggy Webber once again provides Lorre with excellent support, playing the young lady Lorre seduces in hopes of getting access to the Countess. And, once again, he's commits a murder and ends up in an asylum by the time the episode ends.

Of the surviving episodes, the only one that fails to completely satisfy is the adaptation of

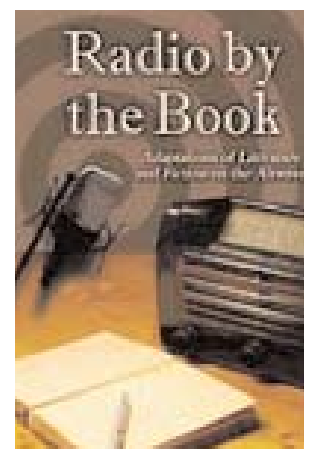
*Crime and Punishment*. Lorre returns to the role of Rashkolnikov, the poverty-stricken student who commits murder and is overcome by guilt and paranoia. It's fine for what it is, but you really need a bit longer than a half-hour to do proper justice to Dostoevsky.

But that's just one small stumble amidst some otherwise great radio. It's a pity *Mystery in the Air* didn't have a longer life or that more episodes didn't survive. Because, yes, it really is entertaining to hear Peter Lorre go insane once a week.

[This article was adapted from a chapter of *Radio by the Book*:

**Adaptations of Literature and Fiction on the Airwaves (2008), by Tim DeForest.]**

Tim DeForest has been geeking out on various elements of early 20th Century pop culture for most of his life. He is the author of several books



on old-time radio, comic strips and pulp fiction. His first book—Storytelling in the Pulps, Comics and Radio: How Technology Changed Popular Fiction in America--was published in 2004. Radio by the Book: Adaptations of Fiction and Literature on the Airwaves, was published in 2008. Tim also maintains a blog about comics, radio and pulp fiction.

Tim has also written magazine articles on military history and the American West. He regularly teaches several Bible studies and has served as a short-term missionary in Haiti and south Sudan. ■

*This article first appeared at [www.otrcat.com](http://www.otrcat.com)*



## Letter from reader:

**From:** Matthew Craig

[knightsdice@yahoo.com](mailto:knightsdice@yahoo.com)>

**Subject:** Thanks for your good work!

**To:** [beshiresjim@yahoo.com](mailto:beshiresjim@yahoo.com)

**Cc:** [menachem.shapiro@gmail.com](mailto:menachem.shapiro@gmail.com)

**Date:** Saturday, April 22, 2017, 7:01 PM

Found your website as I am looking for OTR shows online. What a treasure trove. I have been a fan of OTR since finding Gunsmoke on archive.org about ten years ago. The new radio drama podcasts do not compare to the OTR programs, even though I have subscribed to them for years hoping for up to date stories.

Some questions as I start to use your website. Is there a way that you recommend transferring files? Is there someone that would send me a hard drive with a mirror of your archive? Or do you recommend wget or curl with certain options to make it not so leeching?

I just had a new radio installed in my car to make it easier to listen to OTR shows on my short drives. It has a USB port and I look forward to listening to all the episodes of Crisis soon, it is yet another excellent show that I just discovered.

Thanks for your work making this available. I hope to make a financial donation to your project soon.

*Matthew from New Hampshire*

### NEW LOGS

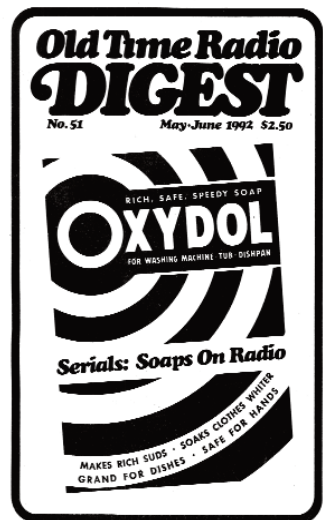
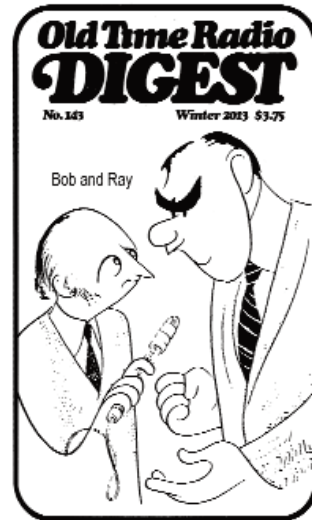
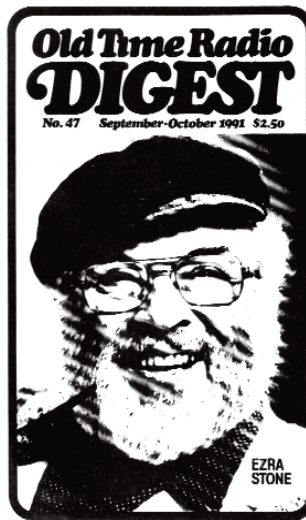
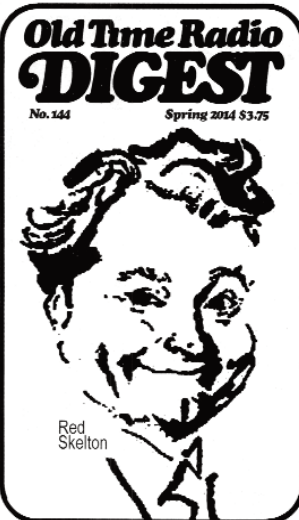
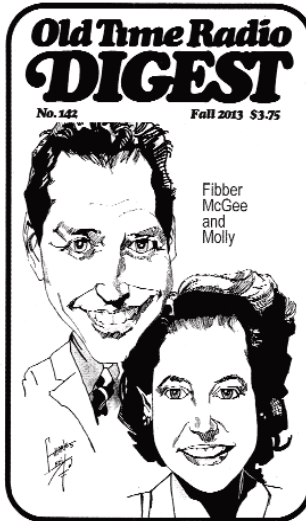
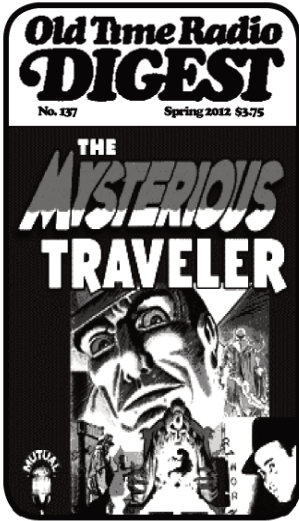
Number Please Love On The Line

### REVISED LOGS –

Arch Oboler's Plays Honor The Law  
Hollywood Sound Stage Inner Sanctum Mystery  
Biography In Sound Lux Radio Theater  
Ripley's Believe It Or Not Green Hornet

InJoy! [jimb](#)





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## **OTRR ACQUIRES NEW EPISODES AND UPGRADED SOUND ENCODES FOR MAY AND JUNE**

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

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### **Lester Smith Commentary**

49-08-08 Soviets Extending Rule Over Europe.mp3

### **Love On The Line**

xx-xx-xx (01) Peggy calls up Paul to thank him (Audition 1).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (02) Peggy calls Paul to congratulate him on the big game (Audition 2).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (03) Peggy gets a call from Paul trying to talk her out of hating bankers (Audition 3).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (04) Paul calls up Peggy to tell her that he's tried to join the Navy (Audition 4).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (05) Paul tells Peggy about his uncle Joe who has spent time in the South (Audition 5).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (06) Peggy was kept after school because of her accent (Audition 6).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (a1) Paul and Peggy talk about the big game (Audition a1).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (a2) Aunt Prissy is upset About Paul and Peggy (Audition a2).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (a3) Paul has talked to Uncle Joe (Audition a3).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (b1) Aunt Prissy won't let Peggy go to the football banquet (Audition b1).mp3

xx-xx-xx (b2) Aunt Prissy doesn't like Paul because he talks like a Yankee (Audition b2).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (b3) Paul and Peggy finally get to go to the football banquet (Audition b3).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (c1) Peggy Calls Up Paul To Thank Him (Audition c1).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (c2) Peggy calls Paul to congratulate him on the big game (Audition c2).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (c3) Peggy was kept after school because of her accent (Audition c3).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (c4) Paul calls up Peggy to tell her that he's tried to join the Navy (Audition c4).mp3  
xx-xx-xx (c5) Paul tells Peggy about his uncle Joe who has spent time in the South (Audition c5).mp3

### **Chuck Schaden Interviews**

09-04-88 Mel Blanc (by telephone) on WBBM Radio Classics 51 min.mp3  
09-15-05 Midwest Pioneer Broadcasters Chicago IL 69 min.mp3  
10-24-98 Mason Adams at FOTR Convention 11 min.mp3

### **Aldrich Family**

1940-02-20 Rabbits and Pigeons.mp3  
1940-11-07 Henry's Hot Idea Cools Off.mp3  
942-06-18 Selling Christmas cards.mp3  
1949-02-10 Geometry homework.mp3  
1949-03-03 Trip to Washington.mp3  
1949-04-07 Blind date.mp3  
1949-04-28 Date with a tall girl.mp3  
Briefcase Database

### **Chuck Schaden Interviews**

05-28-94 Marty Halperin (Former AFRS Technician) 32 min(1).mp3  
05-28-94 Marty Halperin (Form AFRS Technician) 32 min.mp3  
06-15-88 Mary Lee Robb Palm Desert CA 28 min.mp3

08-25-77 Maury Amsterdam Hyatt Regency  
OHare 30 min.mp3  
10-29-76 Mercedes McCambridge Drury Lane  
Theatre 30 min.mp3  
10-29-76 Michael Dawson On Radio Classics  
Chicago IL 14 min.mp3  
04-10-79 Michael Rye Studio F Paramount  
Pictures Sears Radio.mp3  
09-23-89 Mike Wallace at MBC in  
Chicago IL 27 min.mp3

### **Life with Luigi**

1949-01-09 First date with an American girl.mp3  
1949-01-16 Surprise party.mp3  
1949-01-30 Character references.mp3  
1949-03-27 Luigi goes to dance school.mp3  
1949-05-01 Plans a block party.mp3  
1950-06-06 Party line troubles.mp3  
1950-06-13 Luigi stands up to Pasquale.mp3  
1952-02-26 Joins local civil defense group.mp3  
1952-03-04 Pasquale threatens to evict  
Luigi.mp3  
1952-03-11 Income tax problems.mp3

### **Lights Out**

1937-05-12 Organ  
1937-12-22 Uninhabited.mp3  
1938-04-06 Cat Wife.mp3  
1938-05-11 It Happened.mp3  
1939-04-26 The Devil's Due.mp3

### **Music for Moderns**

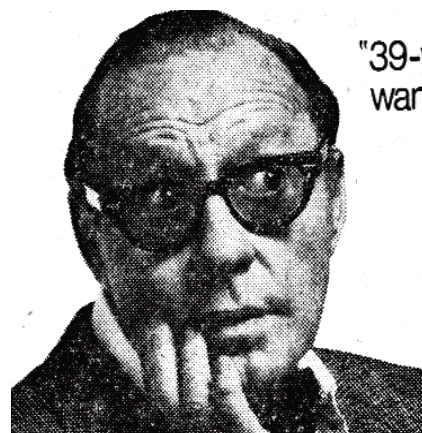
02-07-53 Count Basie and his band.mp3  
02-14-53 Count Basie and his band.mp3  
02-28-53 Teddy Wilson and his trio.mp3  
03-07-53 Woody Herman and the  
third herd.mp3  
03-14-53 Woody Herman and the  
third herd(1).mp3  
03-14-53 Woody Herman and the  
third herd.mp3  
03-22-53 Dave Brubek Quartet and the  
Chubby Jackson Bill Harris Herd.mp3

04-04-53 Stan Kenton and his orchestra.mp3  
04-11-53 Jack Teagarden and his  
orchestra.mp3  
041753\_Jack\_Teagarden\_and\_his\_  
orchestra.mp3  
04-25-53 Buddy DeFranco Quartet and  
Oscar Peterson.mp3  
05-02-53 Buddy DeFranco Quartet and  
Oscar Peterson.mp3  
05-09-53 Charlie Ventura and his combo  
(from the Blue Note).mp3  
05-23-53 Charlie Ventura and his combo  
(from the Blue Note).mp3

### **Jack Benny**

1945-02-11 From Glen View AFB, Illinois.mp3  
1945-10-28 Eighty-Five Thousand Dollar  
Bet.mp3  
1949-09-18 Edward, My Son.mp3  
1950-01-22 I Was Betrayed.mp3  
1950-03-19 The Champion.mp3  
1951-01-07 King Solomon's Mines.mp3  
1952-03-30 My Naval Career.mp3  
1952-10-05 Scoop Benny.mp3

## **Texaco's new Sky Chief Gasoline is for people like Jack Benny.**



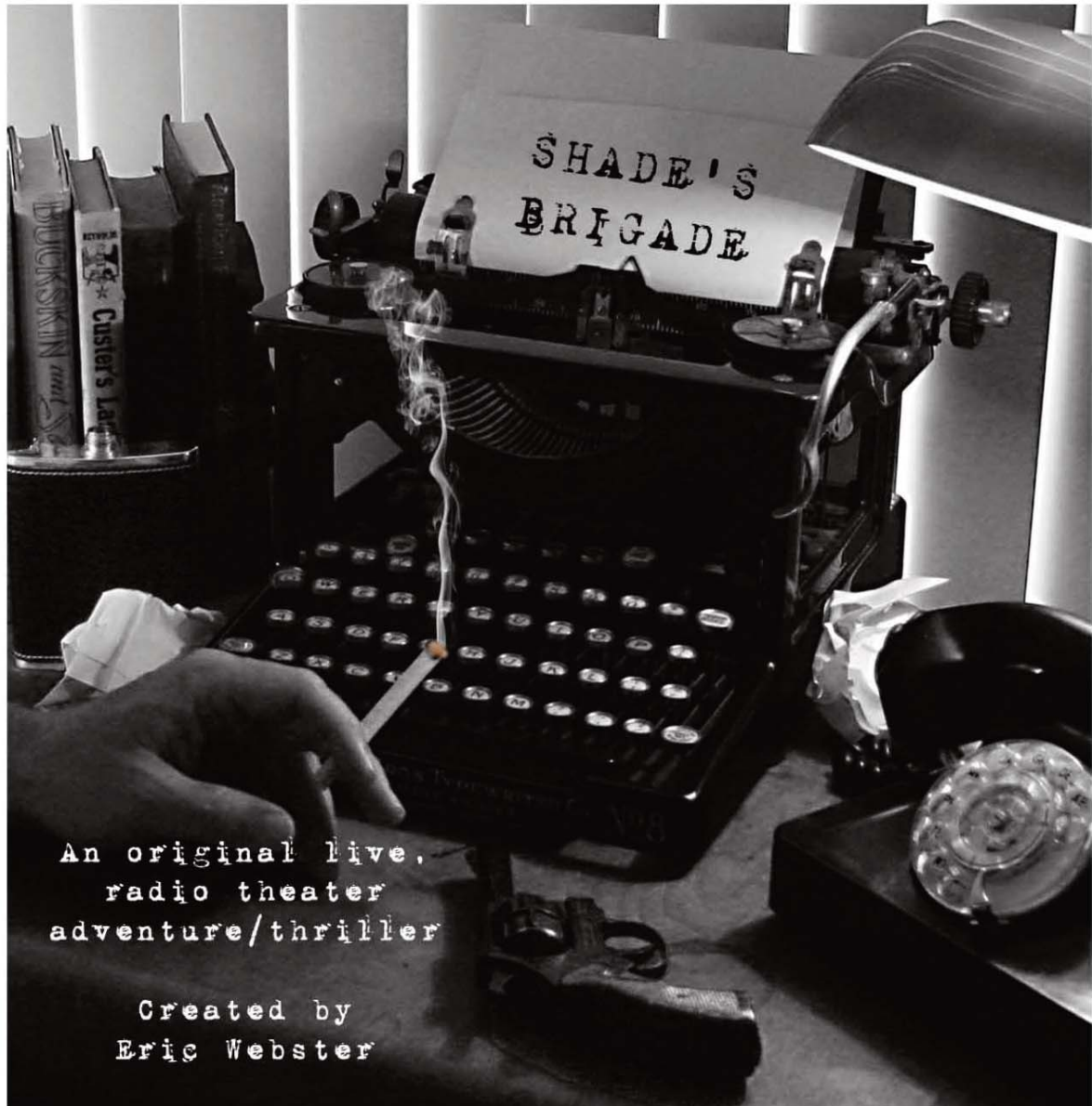
"39-year-olds who  
want to save money?"





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*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!*



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Want to bring Shade's Brigade to life in your city? Contact The Producing House at [producinghouse@mac.com](mailto:producinghouse@mac.com)



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## ACROSS THE RADIO DIAL.....

This will be a somewhat irregular column by the publisher of the Old Radio Times, to keep you informed as to what's going on in the old time radio world. It will consist of items I think are important and you, the readers might have missed. It will be written in a stream of consciousness, taking no particular form or fashion.

### DONATIONS TO THE OTRRG -

Yes, we do receive donations from time to time, and we will take the opportunity here to acknowledge them. At present, we have to way to tell which web site they came from, but they do come in, and for that we are grateful. What do we use the donations for? Depending on the time of year that they come in, they are routed to either one of two ways. If they come in when the payment is due on the web sites, we route them to that item. Otherwise, they go to assisting with the purchase of new materials. While the OTRRG has a purchasing group that brings in enough funds to run the group with, extra money is always appreciated. We spent in excess of \$2,400.00 last year acquiring transcription disks, CDs, and mp3s that are new to the groups. This is what the official group spent and private individuals spent at least that much or more on behalf of the group. The OTRRG never makes a charge to anyone when we make new materials available.

John Weiss \$25.00  
Daniel Waller \$25.00  
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Terrance Dillon \$20.00  
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This month and since I started keeping records of the donations that come in via the donate buttons on the home pages of our websites. This does not include the dues of \$5.00 paid in by the 56 members of the Purchasing Group. If you'd like to get involved in purchasing new materials, or better encodes and getting copies of them in 256 encode at least a year before they are released to the general public, e-mail me and I'll hook you up!

If you are not a member of the OTRRG Face-



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book group, you might have missed the posting about the availability of "A Pictorial History of Radio" (Hardcover) by Irving Settel (Author) This is a book that ought to be in the library of every serious OTR'er. I have a copy that I purchased years ago and take it off the shelf from time to time to peruse it. You might be able to pick up a hard copy of the book for less than \$2.00! Check this out at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

The OTRRG now has its' own You tube channel with over 10,000 programs for you to listen to. Among the latest is 'The Lone Ranger'. The channelmaster is Brian Kavanaugh, who is doing a fantastic job there. Check out the channel at <https://youtu.be/4H7jlynqW7k>.

Jim French has officially retired from the editorship of the Washington Group's newsletter. Jim, you are being let out to pasture yet. We expect to see you writing for other 'zines shortly. And at the same time Martin Grams, Jr. will assume the editorship. Martin, are you sure that you are not triplets? You are the premier person in the old time community, write a book every few months, run your own convention, and make appearances at every other one. How do you do it all? Like the 'Times'? Hate the 'Times'? Why not write me a short note about something or some article that recently appeared in our pages. Send kudos or bricks to [beshiresjim@yahoo.com](mailto:beshiresjim@yahoo.com)





# LUM and ABNER

BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY CHESTER LAUCK & NORRIS GOFF

'CORDIN' TO TH' ALMANAC...

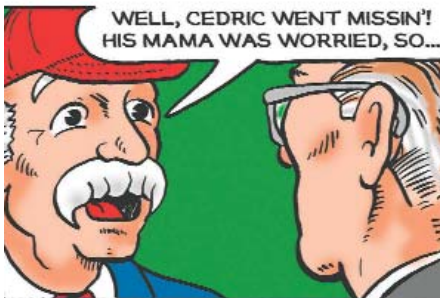


The real Dick Huddleston led a movement to change the name of Waters, Arkansas to Pine Ridge in 1936!

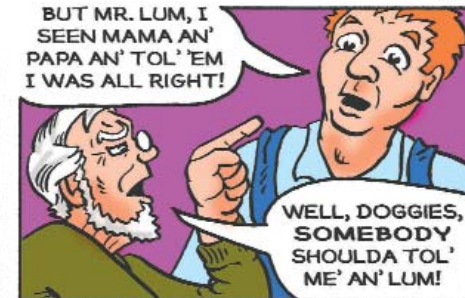
I'M SORROWFUL WE BROKE THAT DOOR DOWN, DICK...



BUT LUM, WHAT MADE YOU THINK MISS CARVER HAD KILLED CEDRIC?

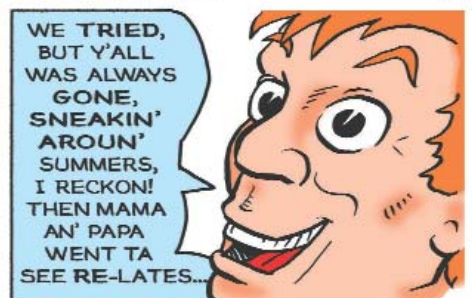


WELL, CEDRIC WENT MISSIN'! HIS MAMA WAS WORRIED, SO...

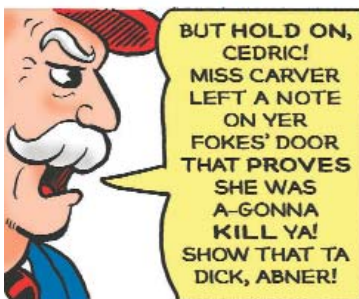


BUT MR. LUM, I SEEN MAMA AN' PAPA AN' TOL' 'EM I WAS ALL RIGHT!

WELL, DOGGIES, SOMEBODY SHOULD TOL' ME AN' LUM!



WE TRIED, BUT Y'ALL WAS ALWAYS GONE, SNEAKIN' AROUN' SUMMERS, I RECKON! THEN MAMA AN' PAPA WENT TA SEE RE-LATES...



BUT HOLD ON, CEDRIC! MISS CARVER LEFT A NOTE ON YER FOKES' DOOR THAT PROVES SHE WAS A-GONNA KILL YA! SHOW THAT TA DICK, ABNER!



HERE IT IS! IT SAYS "IT'S TIME FER TH' KILLIN'!" SHE DON'T SPELL TOO GOOD, THOUGH...

CEDRIC IS WITH ME! IT'S TIME FOR THE KILN!

HA HA! OH, MEN, THAT WORD IS "KILN!" IT'S LIKE A BIG OVEN THEY USE TO BAKE THOSE CLAY SCULPTURES SHE MAKES!



FER THE LAND SAKES...

DONNIE PITCHFORD - 2012 -