

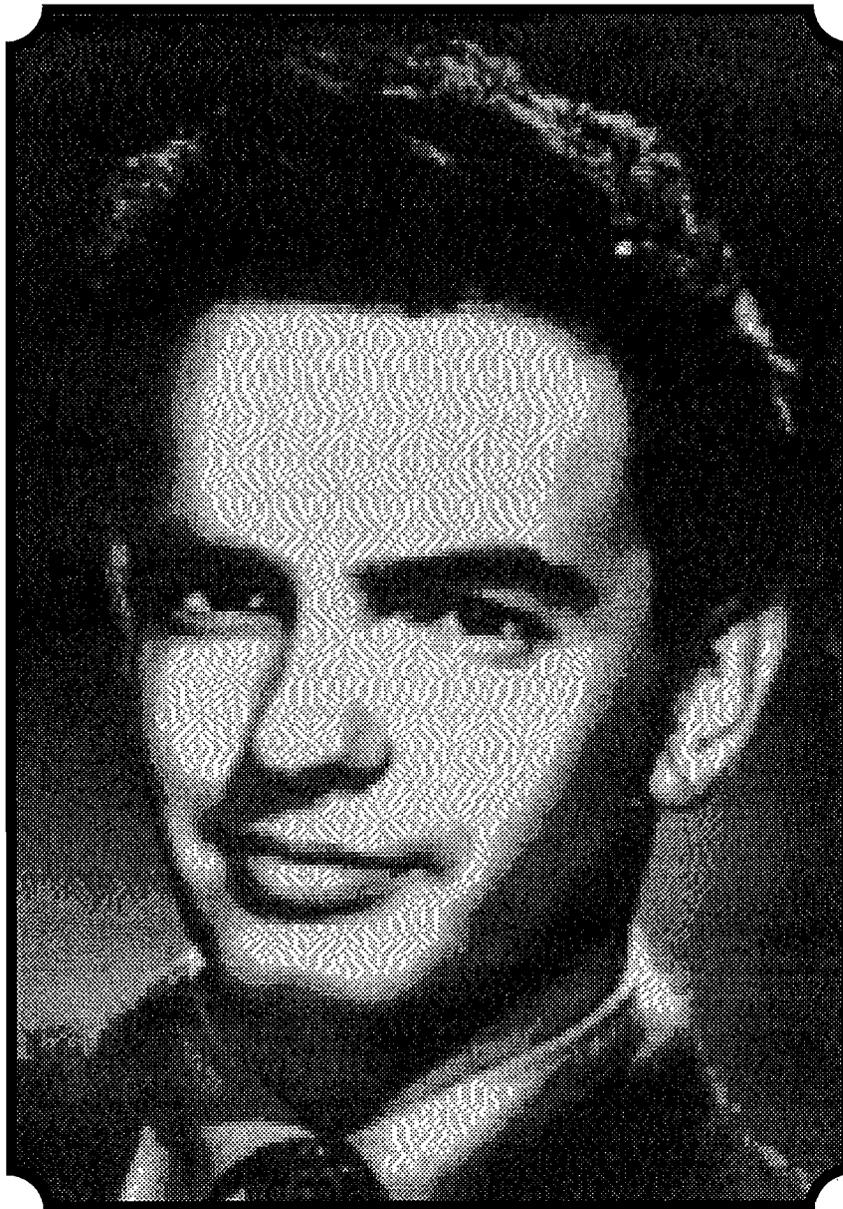
The Old Time Radio Club

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ELLIOTT LEWIS

Membership Information

New member processing, \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: if you join January-March, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 PM during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

Club Mailing Address

Old Time Radio Club
56 Christen Ct.
Lancaster, NY 14086



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With *Monitor*, We Went Places, Did Things

by Jim Cox

In the 1950s increasing mobility among Americans, which was clearly depressed in the decades of the 1930s and 1940s as a result of economic depression and global conflagration, netted an infusion of portability in radio entertainment. As a result, new forms of programming were developed to complement the more active lifestyles of people on the go.

NBC leaped ahead of its competition by providing appropriate responses to the new demands and opportunities. As early as 1953 that network created a couple of series that favorably impacted the shifting patterns in American listening tastes—seeking to satisfy the tune-in/tune-out listening patterns of modern radio audiences. Up to six hours of its Saturday schedule was given to *The Road Show* while a couple of hours on Sunday afternoon were designated for a new series called *Weekend*. Both provided music, snippets of comedy and drama, interviews, advice, news and games.

For a couple of years beginning in late 1954, CBS answered its major rival with a program titled *Sunday Afternoon*, which ran directly against *Weekend* and was in obvious contrast. While CBS's thrust was never as inclusive as NBC's multiple features, *Sunday Afternoon* focused almost exclusively on live and recorded music.

Growing out of this experimentation, it may unequivocally be stated that the greatest single incarnation transpiring in radio in the 1950s was the onset of NBC's innovative potpourri known as *Monitor*. Without question the omnibus of news and features rejuvenated a decaying medium by infusing it with energized animation for up to 40 hours every weekend. The show's significance could be calculated in the transfer of millions of TV watchers to radio listeners as Americans found a pliable source of audible interest and pleasure.

The brainchild of NBC president (1953-55) Sylvester L. (Pat) Weaver, an early architect of his network's successful *Today*, *Tonight* and *Home* TV series, *Monitor* was the ultimate in flexible programming. "Not a program but a continuous service format, Jim Fleming, *Monitor's* executive producer, cautioned local affiliates

shortly before its launch in midyear 1955. Fleming insisted it was to be "a complete departure from programming of the past."

From the beginning most of broadcasting had adhered to a prevailing pattern of set time periods that was now to be eliminated. *Monitor*, instead, would cover sporting events, rocket liftoffs, presidential announcements, world tragedies and entertainment specials as long as necessary. It was an ingenious suppleness that was to introduce totally new ways of thinking and performing.

Monitor ideologue Weaver shared his dreams for the new radio service with the network's affiliates a few weeks before its start date:

"You have a form now that merely says that from our communications center anything of interest or that can be made of interest to the people we'll bring to the people and in a form that has a vignette feel to it. In other words if you don't like what's announced and what is going to play you know roughly what time it will take and you can come back. . . . Essentially we can once again have the whole American public know that any time in the weekend they need not be alone and they don't have to sit there looking at the television set: they can turn this service on and in will come the flow. It will be like having a personal editor who would go out and listen to everything, read everything, know everything and then be there as your little tame cap-and-bells jester with the whole range of moods telling you the very best of everything that's happening. You certainly can't ask us to do much more than that. . . . For the first time radio really looks at the whole field with no rules. The only rule is: Is it interesting? Is it absorbing? Is it amusing? Will people say: 'Did you hear that?' The minute they say that we're in business. . . . The minute they say that we've got the big audience back and we're really rolling. . . . This show will have more people on it and more important people saying things of high interest and repeatable value than probably anything that has ever been attempted. It will even be able to top the original *Today* plans because of the fact tape on radio is perfect and film on television isn't—certainly isn't yet—with the result that we can do things in this show that we certainly couldn't on TV.

Monitor premiered on June 12, 1955. It was impressive. Mixing news, features, music, comedy, advice and interviews it provided programming for 40 hours over the weekend from Saturday mornings through Sunday nights at its start later beginning on Friday evenings. Remote pick-ups became a crucial part of the mix. Several traditional series like *Meet the Press* and *The National Radio Pulpit* were integrated into its format but most of the material was new.

Some of the highlights included short improvisations by such well-known radio comedians as Bob and Ray, Goodman and Jane Ace, Fibber McGee and Molly, Bob Hope, Phyllis Diller, Henry Morgan, Mike Nichols and Elaine May. Marlene Dietrich offered beauty tips while a vast number of professional gardeners shared their expertise with interviewers like Arlene Francis. *Monitor* was a true magazine cradled in the news and documentary styles that had origins in the 1940s.

The weekend radio service interviewed newsmakers and celebrities, aired live horse races from far-flung places, provided Broadway and movie production vignettes and even offered taped segments from popular TV shows.

Even the weekend radio service's "theme" (referred to on the air as "the *Monitor* beacon") maintained such a delightful resonance that it nearly defies description. Its instantly memorable notes were played often, typically at the beginning and end of segments, following the news before and after commercial breaks and surrounding various special features.

Actually there were dual sets of sounds. The first played repetitiously, might—to anyone unfamiliar with it—be best described as an old-fashioned calliope. The second reverberation, bass sounding notes, climbed up and down the scale. Its origins were in telephone "touch tone" technology that had been labeled by AT&T as *multifreq* timbre. "Even we at the phone company referred to *multifreq tones* as 'Monitor tones,' admits telephone technician Jim Wood, "showing that many of us were familiar with NBC's weekend service."

Henry Brugsch attests that those *multifreq tones* "had an interesting musical cadence when mixed and played together." Brugsch observes: "Someone cleverly discovered the tonal relationships and made them work by juxtaposing recordings of them."

Ken Piletic explains how it worked: "Previously long distance calls were routed through manual switchboards. While pulse dial relays were involved several operators were required to route the calls. By the 1950s, however, advanced proficiency allowed tones to be coupled between circuits to perform switching operations. When the touchtones were tested they could be heard on the phone lines as the routing was taking place. Someone at NBC heard the tones and decided to record them, slow them down, speed them up, over-dub them and mix them to produce the *Monitor* beacon. Those tones, incidentally, aren't necessarily those in use today. There were many problems with some of the frequencies then in use."

Thus the *Monitor* beacon was born. It became one of the most identifiable sounds in radio and was promptly

associated with the weekend radio service for nearly two decades.

The structure was set in four-hour segments with well-known "communicators" (later "hosts") officiating over each portion. Some of the most recognized voices among those presiders belonged to Red Barber, Frank Blair, Hugh Downs, Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding, Clifton Fadiman, Art Ford, Allen Funt, Frank Gallop, Dave Garroway, Ben Grauer, Ed McMahon, Leon Pearson, Gene Rayburn, John Cameron Swayze, J. B. Tucker and David Wayne.

The flexibility of the weekend radio service that Pat Weaver had espoused in the spring of 1955 was eventually curtailed to an extent in its later years. By then *Monitor* evolved into a pattern of providing five minutes of network news at the top of every hour, as its leading competition was doing. That was followed by 25 minutes of music and the traditional features for which *Monitor* was well recognized. On the half-hour NBC offered five minutes of music, some vocal, some instrumental. Local affiliates could opt to carry their own programming and commercials in those five minutes. Or they could air the network music that was briefly introduced by the host of the hour.

At 35:00 strains of the *Monitor* beacon wafted above the fading tunes. Another 25 minutes of archetypal *Monitor* interviews and music completed the hour. Near the midpoint of every half-hour, five seconds of the beacon signaled the start of a break. There would be a 70-second instrumental melody—when local stations could air commercials or public service announcements if they chose—followed by five seconds of the beacon. Then the host would introduce more music and features. [In earlier years, during such breaks the beacon was preceded by this announcement from the communicator: "You're on the *Monitor* beacon. Take one." The latter reference was to the one minute that local stations were given to cut away from the network. Sometimes host would substitute: "This is *Monitor*, going places and doing things. Take one." The latter phrase adroitly summarized what the service was about.]

Restructuring *Monitor's* multiple hours into specific time frames helped affiliates adapt the network offering to local scheduling preferences. With established breaks hourly at 00:00, 05:00, 30:00 and 35:00, stations had more options for integrating their own mix of local shows. This made the weekend service more attractive to the affiliates, of course, and kept many of them on board. Others discontinued the marathon altogether, preferring to air local programming exclusively that netted them larger infusions of cash.

The affiliates had earlier gained the upper hand in dealing with the network on many counts. The bottom line was that stations had far greater control than they had ever experienced over what they broadcast. Fortunately, a crucial number remained loyal to *Monitor* and its faithful audiences until the network at last withdrew the weekend radio service.

In observing NBC's enormously successful *Monitor*, a couple of competing networks jumped on the bandwagon. [Recall that CBS was already programming *Sunday Afternoon* two hours of live and recorded music. CBS made no further efforts to capitalize on the new form.] While applications of the magazine format by the other networks were never as bold or as well received as the original, those webs gave it a try, albeit in limited doses.

Possibly sensing a developing trend, MBS was the first to attempt to emulate the model via a service termed *Companionate Radio* that it introduced in July 1955. Four months later ABC premiered its own weekday evening magazine called *New Sounds*. Neither experiment lasted; both never found substantial audiences. There may have been a lack of genuine commitment by their respective networks, too.

In *Monitor's* twilight years the show devoted multiple segments in tribute to such earlier epochs as the big band and rock 'n' roll eras. For a typical offering on the evening of Sunday, August 19, 1973 from 7:35 to 8 p.m., host Art Ford—a former local New York disc jockey and one of *Monitor's* smoothest voices—introduced a popular vocalist special: "Crooners, Spooners and Rockers." It featured recorded excerpts by singers Jack Leonard, Frank Sinatra, Vaughn Monroe, Bob Eberle, Perry Como, Dinah Shore, Doris Day and Peggy Lee. Recorded interviews with Como and Day were added. Several of the big bands—with headliners Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Ted Weems, Les Brown and Benny Goodman among them—backed the singers or were featured in instrumental tunes.

On such occasions, host Ford frequently invited listeners to register their response to these musical feasts. Near the close of this one he expanded the marketing research: "If you're enjoying it [the show] why not drop me a line and tell me?" he inquired. "While you're at it, tell me what kind of radio you heard it on: a transistor, a car radio, a plug-in set at home. Tell me if you lived through the early days of popular music and the vocalists who sang it, or if you're just discovering them now. Write to me, Art Ford, care of *Monitor*, 30 Rockefeller Center, New York, New York 10020." Such opportunities were regularly presented in later years but if the replies were sparse that might have hastened *Monitor's* demise.

The end finally arrived on the fourth weekend of 1974 nearly two decades after its inception, 14-plus years beyond what was generally considered radio's golden age. On Saturday, January 25, 1974, a day before *Monitor* signed off forever, host John Bartholomew Tucker asked Frank Blair to reminisce about the durable series' humble origins:

"It is sad. . . . I think *Monitor* was one of the greatest radio shows that was ever devised by our good friend and imaginative chairman of the board of NBC, Pat Weaver. . . . He thought radio should not be a static thing, that it should be on the move and I think that was what was behind *Monitor*. And I had the privilege of being the first voice heard on *Monitor* because I was assigned to the Saturday morning four-hour stint that started on June 12th. I was in here at . . . oh, way before 8 o'clock in the morning and I did the 8-to-12 shift. What started out as an experiment turned out to be an institution."

Monitor may have begun as an experiment all right, but Blair was right on the money: it wound up becoming an institution. The indelible mark *Monitor* made on the medium is one that was lamely imitated but was never equaled. In what this protracted radio series attempted to do, none did better. And it remained a viable option for those seeking knowledge and enjoyment long after old time radio was dead.

MEL, The Lion-Hearted

(Continued from last month)



That was the slamming of the door. The stranger stopped walking. Mel stopped retreating. And both stared, with mingled emotions, at Mr. Colby who had entered the shop. "What's going on here? Heard you yelling half-way down the block, Mel. What have you got yourself into this time? I heard something about a lamp." Before Mel could answer, the strange customer spoke up. The suavity and the Oxford English were back in his voice. "This stupid shop-keeper! I leave my precious Spooingshire lamp in here to be fixed and what does he do? Now, my good man, give it to me immediately and we'll have no more of this nonsense. I should have known better than to bring it in here in the first place. I'll take it with me and have it repaired in the next town I come to."

It was Mr. Colby who stopped him, once more . . . this time with his hand on his arm. "No, you don't," he boomed, outraged pride written all over his face. "We

can't let it be said that strangers get gypped in our town. Mel Blanc may be our misfortune, but we won't let visitors here suffer from it. I know where there's the exact duplicate of that lamp, in the furniture store down the street. Genuine Spoofingshire it is, too. I'm not going to let you walk out of here with a broken lamp—no, siree! Mel can run right down—” “But I don't want another lamp! I want this one!” there was a harried, look beginning to creep into his cold, fishy eyes. “Won't hear of it,” Mr. Colby puffed. “That other lamp is the exact duplicate of this one antique, too.” He turned with what Mel could only describe to himself as a leer, and patted the shopowner's shoulder. “Go on, my boy . . . get that lamp. Only costs three hundred dollars. Of course, that might put you out of business. You might even go to jail. You might not be able to see Betty for a long, long time.” The stranger was trying desperately to pull away from Mr. Colby's heavy hand. “I don't want another lamp!” he repeated. “Leave me alone, you jerk!”

“Here! Here! What's going on?” Patrolman Danny Killoran stood in the opening, all six feet of solid bone and muscle, his face red and his eyes popping. “What's all the racket about?” “No trouble at all, Officer—” four voices answered in perfect unison. “Then what—Mel Blanc, what you up to this time? And you—” pointing his stick at the Beau Brummell stranger—“haven't I seen you some place before? Don't I know you?” The man he had indicated drew himself up stiffly, though a bit shakily. “Perhaps, my good man.” His voice was almost haughty. “It's the price people like myself have to pay for being rich and famous. Naturally I'm traveling incognito—but here's my card.” “Samuel Orpington Percheron, the Three.” Danny Killoran read out loud, and then reached up to push his cap back and scratch his head. “Percheron—let me see—Percheron—”

Mr. Colby leaped into the breach. “Of course we know Mr. Percheron. Everybody knows Mr. Percheron!” The calling card had made a big impression on Betty's father. “It's nothing, Officer.” Once again Mr. Colby asserted himself. “Mel has ruined a lamp that belongs to Mr. Percheron but Mel is going to buy another one just like it, in its place.” “But I don't want—give me my lamp!” The Oxford English slipped a notch. Then Mel piped up He had been getting a little dizzy, listening to the others settling his affairs. Courage came to him, suddenly. “He doesn't want any other lamp! And that other one is three hundred—I mean, this is just as good. Watch, Officer Killoran, I'll show you. Inspiration came to him in a flash. “This patch makes it as good as new. It will hold the oil or the kerosene or whatever is supposed to go into it—I'll show you—I'll fill it with water—” and suiting his actions to his words, Mel held the lamp quickly under the faucet.

“Don't do that!” yelled Mr. Percheron. But nobody paid any attention to him. “See?” Mel flourished the lamp in the air and it was true—no water dripped from its patched and mended side. “See, Mr. Colby? I don't have to replace it with any other. I'll just pour the water out of this spout—” They watched. But nothing happened. The water stayed in the lamp.

“What's the matter with the thing?” asked Danny Killoran, puzzled “And what's the matter with you, Mr. Percheron? Where you goin' in such a hurry? Quit your crowding me out of this doorway!” The policeman clutched the arm of the stranger in a vise-like clamp and hung on. It was an instinctive act—but Mr. Percheron was acting most peculiarly. Gone, suddenly, was the polite, urbane facade of his manners. Gone was his boredom and his nonchalance. He kicked; he struggled in Danny's grasp; he snarled. And the language that came from his throat didn't match in elegance the fawn-colored gloves and the spats. There was only one thing to do and the policeman did it. He sat on Mr. Samuel Orpington Percheron the Three.

Mel and Betty were staring in rapt wonder at the little paper-wrapped cone they had pulled out of the spout; the obstruction that had kept the water in the lamp. Or, rather, they stared at what was in the paper. “Gee,” Mel breathed, in wonder, “isn't it a pretty ring? Looks just like the one I got out of that candy box, Betty!” “Candy box!” The officer snorted. “That's the Grimes diamond ring or my name isn't Killoran. Slippery Sam the jewel thief. And I've caught him—err—we've caught him, Mel my boy. Don't know how you were so smart as to hold him here until I came or thought to pour water into that lamp.” “Mel thought—Mel did—” Mr. Colby was strangling. “Be quiet, Mr. Colby.” Officer Killoran wasn't to be distracted. “This was a clever stunt of Slippery Sam's. Putting that ring in that lamp and leaving it here to be fixed until his train left. That way, if he were picked up, it wouldn't be on his person nor in his room at the hotel. I guess he thought you were stupid enough not to investigate, Mel.” He shook his head, thoughtfully, shifting his bulk a little on the complaining Mr. Percheron. “Would have thought so, myself. Never gave you credit for any brains before.”

“Well, come along, Slippery Sam.” The policeman heaved himself to his feet and yanked the other along with him. “It's down to the jail with you. Mrs. Grimes will be glad to get that ring back. I'll bet she'll be falling all over your neck, Mel my boy. And there's a reward. We'll split it between us, if you've no objections.”

It was much later that same evening and the big Grimes mansion was ablaze with lights. Music came softly from the drawing room, wafting over the head of

the dancing couples out the open french doors to where two people stood in the semi darkness on the lawn. "Gee, Betty," Mel pinched himself for the tenth time that evening. "I can hardly believe it. Here I am a guest at the Grimes house and everyone says I'm a hero." She snuggled up to him and he took a frightened, backward step. "Yes, isn't it grand, Mel? Your picture in the papers and that hundred dollars reward and everybody so proud of you. Daddy can't believe it. He even loaned you that tuxedo you're wearing. And the shirt and everything. He says he can't believe it—but he can't very well be mad at you when everybody else is so proud! Oh, Mel—" she moved closer still and he retreated backwards again—"maybe now we can get married! Maybe—*Mel!* watch were you're going! Oh!"

There was a loud splash. That last step of Mel's had been his undoing and he had gone, backwards, right into the Grimes goldfish pool. There was a gurgle and then another splash, and then the dripping form of Mel Blanc rose from the water. "I'm all wrong," he mourned. "As usual. Oh, gosh, Betty—look what I've done to your father's best tuxedo!" "His only tuxedo," corrected Betty with a wail. "Now he'll be madder at you than ever, and he won't let me see you, and he'll call you a dope, and—and we'll never get married!"

Mel climbed out of the pool. "Maybe I can get it fixed. Maybe a tailor can clean it up and press it, and he'll never know. Maybe. . . ." In the distance came a voice, jovial-sounding still, but like the trump of doom nevertheless. "Mel! Betty! Where are you?" Spiritlessly, Mel wrang water out of his—no, Mr. Colby's—coattails. And the voice was nearer now. There was no escape. Betty knew it. Mel knew it. Another moment or two would bring the Colby wrath down on his head, and once again Mel Blanc of the Fix-It Shop would be in a fix that no mere Fix-It Shop could ever fix. The fix he would always be in, unless some miracle happened. Some miracle like, say, the kind wrought by Aladdin's Lamp . . .

LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

- 2923 Crime & Peter Chambers "Too Many Guns" 6/22/54
- Crime & Peter Chambers "Trail of the Deadly Tiard" 6/29/54
- 2924 Screen Director's Playhouse "Hold back the Dawn" 5/15/49
- Screen Director's Playhouse "Her Husband's Affair" 5/22/49
- 2925 Inner Sanctum "You Could Die Laughing" 5/7/46

- 2926 Inner Sanctum "Eight Steps to Murder" 6/4/46
- Rocky Jordan "Passport for Bebe" 3/20/49
- Rocky Jordan "Everything Shipshape" 3/27/49
- 2927 The Clock "Bank Vault"
- The Clock "The Hitchhiker"
- 2928 Dragnet "Big Bid" 1/27/54
- Dragnet "Big Fitch" 2/2/54
- 2929 Halls of Ivy "Is Professor Gearhart Cheating?"
- Halls of Ivy "Ivy Chamber Music, Knockwurst"
- 2930 Mr. District Attorney "Museum Mystery" 12/10/41
- Mr. District Attorney "Labor Pirates" 8/19/42
- 2931 Tales of the Texas Rangers "Dead or Alive"
- Tales of the Texas Rangers "Play For Keeps"
- 2932 Tales of the Texas Rangers "Illusion" 4/20/52
- Tales of the Texas Rangers "Address Unknown" 4/27/52
- Tales of the Texas Rangers "Unleashed Fury" 5/11/52
- 2933 Creaking Door "Three Wishes"
- Creaking Door "Midnight Express"
- 2934 Suspense "Name of the Beast" 4/11/46
- Suspense "The Night Reveals" 4/18/46
- 2935 Counterspy "Double Crossing Defender" 1/21/51
- Counterspy "Insidious Impersonation" 10/27/51
- 2936 The Fat Man "The Crooked Horse" 9/9/46
- The Fat Man "Murder is the Medium"
- 2937 The Lone Ranger "Pledge to a Dead Man" 7/7/55
- The Lone Ranger "Pursuit" 8/1/55
- 2938 The Lone Ranger "The Dead Outlaw" 3/15/56
- The Lone Ranger "Boots and the Rodeo" 3/16/56
- 2939 The Lone Ranger "Billy Tilden's Mission" 3/19/56
- The Lone Ranger "The Waterfall Gang" 3/20/56
- 2940 The Lone Ranger "The Silver Colt" 3/21/56
- The Lone Ranger "Murder at Tricom Ranch" 3/22/56
- 2941 The Lone Ranger "Matter of Life and Death" 3/23/56
- The Lone Ranger "The Paleta Diamond" 3/26/56
- 2942 The Lone Ranger "Look to the Future" 3/29/56
- The Lone Ranger "Flood Waters" 3/30/56
- 2943 The Lone Ranger "Double Frameup" 4/3/56
- The Lone Ranger "Running Iron Dodge"
- 2944 The Lone Ranger "Chief and the Colonel" 4/4/56
- The Lone Ranger "Partner in Crime" 4/5/56
- 2945 The Lone Ranger "Sword of Honor" 3/27/56
- The Lone Ranger "Notorious Diablo" 3/28/56
- 2946 The Great Gildersleeve "Mae Home for Vacation" 7/22/53
- The Great Gildersleeve "Leroy to Visit Aunt Hattie" 7/29/53

Them Were The Good Old Days

In 1945, the Institute of Radio Engineers held its first Pioneers Party before an assembly of 1300 members, to be reconvened every 15 years. At that memorable occasion, noted radio personality, Frank Night read the following poem he had written especially for the occasion, accompanied on the piano by well known radio entertainer, Ed East.

When Crosby was only a crooner
And not a corporation,
When a program was simply a program
And not an "operation."

When Valee had his adenoids
And Ed Wynn was top buffoon
And McNamee sold Texaco
By calling it "gasoloon."
When the corn was green in the studios
and the Amateur was craze
When Noble was making Life Savers
THEM WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

When Gernshack first startled the world
Like a bolt from out of the blue
By predicting 100 things a month
In the hopes that one would come true.
When Telsa worked for Westinghouse
And Steinmetz for GE
Before Zworkin was working for RCA
and they all worked for FTC.
When Atwater Kent worked for a living
And his scholarships were the craze
When Western Electric MADE telephones
THEM WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

When the NBC chimes were rung by hand
When there was still a J. P. Morgan
When Ed Armstrong was a steeplejack
Before Hammond brought out his organ.
When the Blue and the Red were Siamese Twins
And were functioning unwitting
That the FCC would later decide
It was incest they were committing.
Before Milton Cross went erudite
And still called a vahze a vase
When Jack Binns made the headlines
THEM WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

When Winchell was a columnist
And not head of the FBI
When NBC's Christmas parties

Defiantly were not dry
When Sarnoff was still a private
Way before Philco went wild
And started making radio sets
And the other set makers got riled
When Heatter was hotter than Hitler
When Mark Woods got his first raise
When a Net went berserk if you used the word "jerk"
THEM WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

When S.O.S. was C.Q.D. And a man said
"Do you think you ought'a start out in that NCI
with a ham Like Harry Sadfenwater?"
When FCC was the FRC
And television was only a phrase
When radio was in its infancy
THEM WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

But when 1960 rolls around
and we gather again to praise
The achievements since 1945
THEY'LL BE THE GOOD OLD DAYS!
Owens L. Pomeroy (Oh, it's good to be back!)

Reviews by Owens L. Pomeroy A Different Kind of OTR Reference Book

There have been some great OTR books written recently and should be in every OTR buffs library. But there is one book that has been published within the past two years, that is most entertaining. If you can remember the "Return With Us Now" series, then this book should be on your OTR shelf.



The title of this outstanding 264 page book is *Radio's Golden Years*. It is composed entirely of pen and ink sketches describing each radio show. One page for each one. Written by professional illustrator Bobb Lynes, who does the art work for SPERDVAC Newsletter, who did the drawings, and Frank Bresee, who did the text, this book covers more territory on one illustrated page than most OTR books did in ten. The forward by Norman Corwin is worth the most reasonable price of \$25.00 post paid. . . . "Back to the years when the theatre of the mind entertained the world with comedy, drama, music and variety. It informs you about the creators and stars of this great era" Norman Corwin.

If you would like a copy, send your check/mo payable to Bobb Lynes and mail to: Radio's Golden Years, c/o Bobb Lynes, Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031.

Canadian Radio: A Source

There is an excellent book on the History of Canadian Radio from the early Twenties (preceding USA Radio), up to the late 1970s, called "From Coast To Coast"; A Personal History of Radio In Canada, written by noted Canadian Radio personality, Sandy Stewart, and published by CBC Enterprises/Les Enterprises Radio Canada, in 1985. There are stories about the early pioneering programs and performers who migrated to the USA; Lorne Greene, Leslie Neilson, William Shaftner, James Doolin (Scotty of Star Trek), and Wayne and Schuster a very funny comedy team on radio, that made the American debut on the Ed Sullivan TV Show.

It also relates how the Canadian Broadcasters would have special programs in the 1920s to lure American listeners, such as Foster Hewitt's "Saturday Night Hockey Games." The first chapter, called "How God Created The CBC (with a little help from his friends)" is worth the price of the book. One good thing about Canadian Radio, is they are still producing radio drama, comedy, variety, quiz, and documentary shows seven days a week, 365 days a year. I strongly advise anyone with a powerful radio receiver with short-wave bands or if you are a ham radio operator, to tune in to Canadian Radio if you want to really relive OUR HEYDAY. This book is a must for any OTR Library.

One Man Show

To show you the versatility of some of the OTR Performers, and how good they were at different roles from young to old, etc. There was a *Suspense* show called "Waxworks" starring William Conrad—and ONLY William Conrad! He portrayed no less than 10 different characters in that show by using his voice at different levels. That's what I call a radio actor!!

SIDELIGHT: when CBS was planning the TV version of *Gunsmoke*, William Conrad was a little put out that he was not asked to do the TV version—and he let the powers to be know it. What was also ironic about that *Gunsmoke* TV show was, they approached John Wayne for the lead—but, either he was committed to a picture deal, or he did not want to do a TV series. He suggested his good friend James Arness for the lead and the rest is history. Wayne did make an appearance, however on the very first episode of *Gunsmoke*. He introduced Arness as "the new Matt Dillon!"

Radio Station "Blown off the Air"

In those early pioneering days of radio broadcasting, many stations getting started had to "set-up shop" wherever they could. One such station was WFBR in

Baltimore, MD (Debut, June, 1922). This station was first housed in a small room in the basement of the Maryland National Guard's 5th Regiment Armory. They could NOT broadcast from 6-6:30 PM weeknights. Though this may sound rather complicated, the explanation is really quite simple. You see the station was DIRECTLY UNDER the Guard's shooting gallery/target or practice area, and the machine gun battalion practiced for one-half hour from 6-6:30 PM weeknights. Soooo...it was either one-half hour of silence, or the rat-a-tat-tat of machine guns!! The call letters stood for First Broadcasting Regiment—WFBR). They used those letters in return for rent-free use of the basement room and on-air plugs for recruitment in the guard. They signed off each night with: . . . "This is station WFBR, the World's First Broadcasting Regiment, located in the Maryland 5th Regiment Armory, ending another broadcast day." Those call letters lasted with the station until it was sold in the mid-eighties.

Lux Radio Theater on PBS

I would like to know if any of the subscribers in the California area saw the excellent presentation at the Pasadena Playhouse of "It's A Wonderful Life" that was presented on PBS last year and this year. If you did, I would like to know your opinion of it, considering that only two cast members (Martin Landeau and Casey Kaseem), and the SFX man, Ray Englehorn were the only ones that were former radio performers.

To me, this was a very good blending of the two mediums and should be repeated every once-in-awhile. The only thing I could see, as a former OTR performer, that was not authentic was that they used loose-leaf note books! I sure did miss them dropping the script pages on the floor as they finished them, although Bill Pellham did drop his notebook at the end of the program and had to read off another cast members script.

Owens Pomeroy

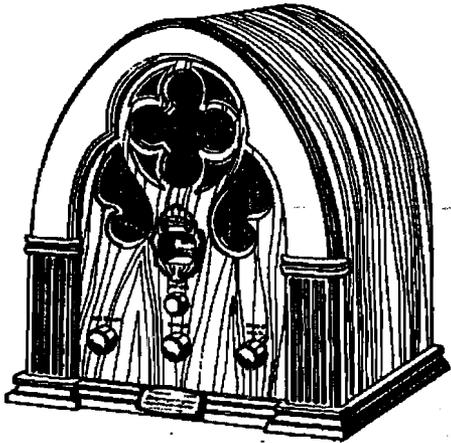


While doing some spring cleaning we found a few boxes of past issues of *The Illustrated Press* from the last twenty years. If you would like to have some of these "blasts from the past" we're making 12 issues available for \$10, postage paid. Just send a note and your check to our Reel-to-Reel and Reference Librarian, Ed Wanat. (See information page for

address.) He'll have them out to you right away. Issues will be randomly selected, please specify what decade you would like them from. They are also available to non-members.

Old Time Radio Club

49 Regal Street
Depew, NY 14043



FIRST CLASS MAIL

HAPPY TUESDAY
Ladies and Gentlemen—

Happy Tuesday! Ben Bernie and all the lads send you greetings, tonight, at the usual hour, the good ship Blue Ribbon Malt weighs anchor with the old maestro at the helm. And, let me steer you straight. When it comes to malt extract, choose Blue Ribbon — that which there is none whicher. Always full three pounds of the highest quality. The most and best in malt—yooast!

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