

The Old Time Radio Club

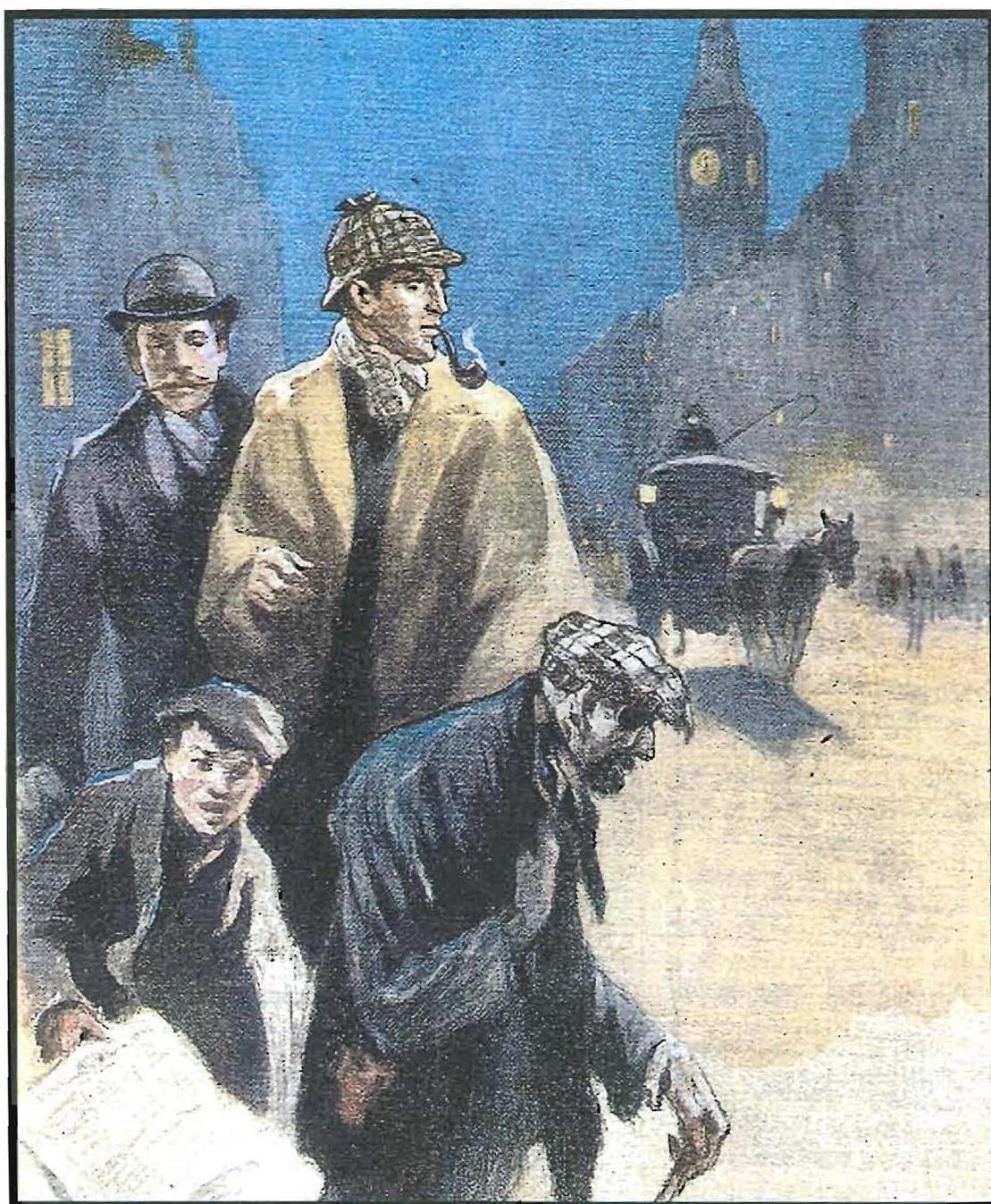
Established 1975

The Illustrated Press

Number 330

May 2005

1975 - 2005 Our 30th Anniversary



Sherlock Holmes

The Illustrated Press

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 the 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 newsletter issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 PM during the months of September through June at St. Aloysius School Hall, Cleveland Drive and Century Road, Cheektowaga, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July, and an informal meeting is held in 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

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Lancaster, NY 14086
E-Mail Address:
otrclub@localnet.com



All Submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

Deadline for *The Illustrated Press* is the 1st of each month prior to publication.

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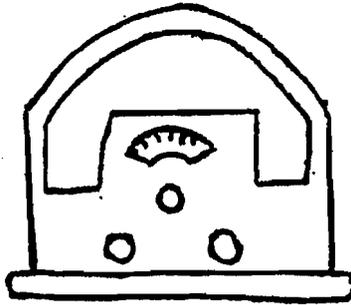
Video and Record Libraries

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Buffalo, NY 14213

Library Rates: Audio cassettes are \$1.95 each and are recorded on a **club supplied cassette** which is **retained** by the member; video cassettes are \$1.85 per month; records are \$.85 per month. Rates include postage and handling and are payable in U.S. funds.

The Illustrated Press

O_{LD}
T_{IME}
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C_{LUB}
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NEWSLETTER
NUMBER ONE
FEBRUARY, 1976

To all members of the OTRCOB: Welcome to the first number of your bimonthly newsletter. The purposes of this newsletter are to provide members with a record of the club's meeting and to present information concerning OTR. All members are invited to contribute to these pages because this newsletter belongs to the membership and it will become only what the members make of it. Remember, we are not merely an association of old radio program collectors but, rather, an organization dedicated to the regeneration of interest in and the enjoyment of that part of vanishing Americana that has become known as the Golden Age of Broadcasting.

February, 1976, marks our tenth month of existence. 300 days ago in May, 1975, we set up certain objectives and goals for the club. Among them were the increasing of publicity and promotion of OTR, an involvement in charity work, and a membership drive. To date, four of our members have appeared on local radio stations discussing and promoting OTR and our club. We have donated tapes to the Channel 17 Fund Drive Auction and we provide a monthly supply of OTR shows to our local VA hospital, a service that has been very well received by the patients. Finally, our membership has increased to 16 people from our original 10, and with our recent decision to expand nationally, is sure to increase. However, this is not the time to slack off. We can become THE national organization devoted to OTR if we all work hard for it.

The OTRCOB has evolved a good deal since May, 1975. In November of last year all the club's officers were in place with Peter Bellanca as president, Ray Oliveri, vice president, Chuck Seeley, secretary, and Dom Parisi as treasurer. In December, the club dues were changed from one dollar per meeting to six dollars annually. A service has been instituted to enable members with small collections to increase their libraries. We now accept mail memberships. And a magazine devoted to OTR, MEMORIES, is being published by the club for national distribution. All members and friends are invited to contribute to MEMORIES. Response in this area has been less than overwhelming. Members are reminded that MEMORIES, as well as the newsletter, is only what the members themselves make it.

The entire club owes a debt of gratitude to Mill Dunworth for her invaluable assistance in our printing ventures and for finding a place for us to meet. Any members with material for the next newsletter, April 1976, or for MEMORIES, should give it to Peter Bellanca or Charles Seeley.

Chuck Seeley, editor

*The very first newsletter published almost a year after
the Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo was formed.*

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EDITOR'S Clips

After putting last month's oversized issue to bed we wondered what we could do for the actual 30th Anniversary Issue. I thought it might be nice to see if we could persuade any of our friends who contributed either articles or columns in the past, to write yet another for old times sake. I was overwhelmed, not one person refused. In fact most came back saying they would be happy to help celebrate our 30th in this manner.

Sprinkled throughout this issue you'll find articles, recollections, comments and normal features but not in any particular order. We moved the deadline as close as we could have to the publication date in order to give everyone as much time as possible. This didn't give us much time to format the issue, but it allowed for the inclusion of all items received up to the deadline.

I have been a club member since 1978 (*joined when I was 3 years old—yeah, right!*) and since that time have seen people come and go in the hobby. The majority of people from my observation point have been friendly and outgoing. If you ever needed advice or were looking for information or even a copy of a particular radio show, there was always someone there to help you out. This is still as true today as it was when I joined the club. OTR collectors and historians are the nicest people in the world.

There have been suggestions that the hobby is on the decline due to the aging of its participants but I don't agree. There have been more books published in the last ten years dealing with OTR plus the Internet has generated interest by a whole new generation of fans.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the people involved in the month-to-month operation of the club. There are a lot of people behind the scenes who make things easier for all of us. Happy Thirtieth everyone.

Herewith then is your *Thirtieth Anniversary Issue* of The Illustrated Press. I hope you enjoy the articles, nostalgia and graphics. I had fun putting it all together and would appreciate your comments good or bad.

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Where Are They?

The "*Parties At Pickfair*" Broadcasts

by DOM PARISI



From February the 11th through June 21, 1936, a 30 minute, 5 month run broadcast called *Parties At Pickfair* was aired on Tuesdays at 10:00 (P.M. I presume).

Actress Mary Pickford was the star of the program, supported in part by Eric Snowden (who also directed *Pickfair*) as Alvin the butler. (Snowden was one of the top west coast radio actors who appeared on *Escape*, *Favorite Story* and *Sherlock Holmes*.) Eric was one of the actors to play Sherlock's close friend Dr. Watson. Others included in the *Pickfair Broadcasts* were Bret Morrison, Lou Merrill, Mary Jane Higby and Ted Osborne.

Parties At Pickfair was a fictionalized show of Hollywood chit-chat. The estate of Mary Pickford (*Pick-*) and her dashing husband Douglas Fairbanks (*Fair*) entertained famous celebrities from royalty, show business and world affairs with trumped-up dialogue read by Morrison and the others. During an interview, Bret Morrison told radio historian Frank Bresee—"There was an attempt to do a remote from the Pickfair estate, but the guys in the band left cigarette burns on the white piano. As a result, the show was broadcast from the CBS radio studio."

I'm not sure if any of the broadcasts have survived or were recorded by any means, disc, tape or whatever—I have never heard or seen the shows listed anywhere. Any member know otherwise? I figure that between 20 and 25 broadcasts were aired during its run in 1936.

How about it—does anyone know if any shows exist?



Happy 30th Anniversary to the Old Time Radio Club. I remember the formation of the club as a spin-off from the Pop Culture Club I belonged to in the early 1970s.

Although I did not immediately join, I did come on board in 1979 and soon became editor of The Illustrated Press. Back in the Old Days, I gathered all of the material for each issue and my wonderful wife proceeded to type it all up. When

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she finished, I took the work to the printer and picked up the issues a few days later. Now, Ken uses the latest in technology to produce each issue and the last issue was an absolute work of art featuring a color cover of the Lone Ranger. Great work Ken. I hope that the Old Time Radio Club is around for another 30 years and with a greatly expanded tape library (due to the generous donations of many OTR dealers) it just might be.

Editor Emeritus Richard Olday



CHARLIE'S FINAGLES

by Chuck Seeley

Pete Bellanca is to blame for the whole business.

I had a slight interest in OTR back then, mostly from local rebroadcasts of the *Shadow*, and Pete encouraged me when he announced that I was co-owner of a box of OTR tapes. I'd never heard of most of the stuff. Pete is of course, much older than I am, so he remembered many shows.

Eventually the club came along and, young and impressionable as I was, I joined along with Pete. Suddenly I found myself in charge of a newsletter. Since I had no experience with that, I made it up as I went along.

It was good times working on the old *IP*. There were rarely enough submissions to fill the thing and I shamelessly solicited articles and columns from anyone in sight. I wanted the *IP* to look better and so hired an artist friend to do logos that I still look upon with fondness. When submitted content ran short I filled the space myself, using pseudonyms for appearance's sake. Same thing with *Memories*.

The guy who ran the local Insty-Prints taught me how to do paste-ups. I'd still rather do it that way than try to figure it out on a computer.

Through trading I met Jim Snyder. One of the first shows I received from him was "The Grassblade Jungle", a BBC thing about insects. To this day, I think Jim believes I picked it just to help a new collector; but truly, just the idea of a radio documentary about insects fascinated me. Jim valiantly stepped forward and com-

mitted to six columns for the *IP* just to see how it would go. I guess it went pretty well.

Time marched on. My enthusiasm was spent and the *IP* passed to other hands. I attended club meetings but frankly, I was less interested in OTR than I was with playing on Ed Wanat's bumper pool table. The table had its own peculiarities and I never did learn all its hills and valleys. Kean Crowe and I took turns being soundly beaten by Bob Davis.

John Otto was a local radio talk show host and somehow I found myself on his show along with Pete and Ray Olivieri several times, discussing OTR. This led to Bob Davis and me doing show business trivia on Otto's show for many years. That was a lot of fun.

Some friends picked up a copy of Silver Screen Trivial Pursuit and invited Bob and I to play as a team. When we got the dice, we ran the board and after that, they wouldn't let us play as a team any more.

So whatever happened to Mike Resnick? Hy Daley?

Damon Runyon

by TOM CHERRE

Years ago back in high school I recall hearing my teachers refer to characters right out of a Damon Runyon story. I had absolutely no idea who this Damon Runyon person was. I just nodded my head like "Oh sure I knew him very well".

Prior to joining the OTR Club I got my feet wet in the hobby by listening to some of the *Damon Runyon Theater* shows I obtained from the public library. I was amazed hearing these shows. They were completely different from what I had heard before. The *Damon Runyon Theater* series had a short run lasting only about a year. It featured stories adapted from the writings of Damon Runyon. The stories were usually set in New York City in the midst of the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, or in the Prohibition era. Runyon spun his tales about gamblers, petty thieves, actors, gangsters, and those who were broken hearted or just plumb down on their luck. His colorful characters had names like Nathan Detroit, Harry the Horse, Good Time Charlie, Dave the Dude, and others along the same line.

The host and narrator was a character called Broadway, played by John Brown. Broadway was featured in every show usually playing one of the lead roles. These stories were told in a very distinctive vernacular style; a mix-

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ture of formal speech and colorful slang, almost exaggerated. The stories were always told in the present tense and always devoid of any contractions.

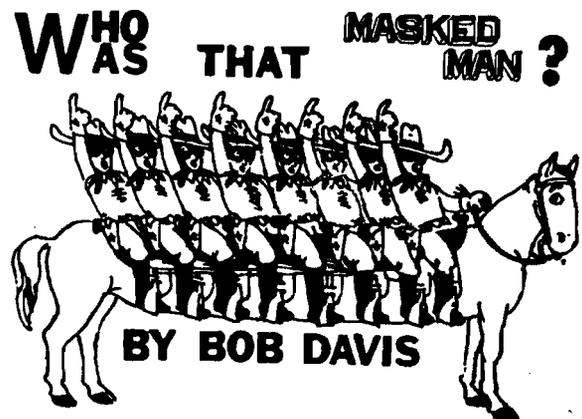
For those few of you who have never experienced the world of Damon Runyon, the opening line of one of his stories entitled "Tobias the Terrible" goes like this. "If I had all the tears that are shed on Broadway by guys in love, I will have enough salt water to start an opposition ocean to the Atlantic and Pacific, with enough left over to run the Great Salt Lake out."

I've always enjoyed listening to the *Damon Runyon Theater*. The stories were nostalgic and always had a heart warming ending. With Broadway narrating, he would always say, "But that is not the end of the story". He would also add "you will find out in a minute". This kept everyone tuned in till the very end with a different twist of an ending.

But just who was this man by the name of Damon Runyon, who could spin yarns and tales better than Uncle Remus. Alfred Damon Runyan was born on October 4th, 1884 in Manhattan, Kansas. He grew up in Pueblo, Colorado, where Runyon Field and Runyon Lake are named after him. His father and grandfather were both newspaper people, and like them he followed in their footsteps. He worked for various newspapers in the Rocky Mountain area. While working at one of the papers he changed the spelling of his last name from Runyan to Runyon. In 1910 Runyon moved to New York City and for the next ten years he worked the sports department covering the New York Giants baseball team and professional boxing for the New York American. He covered every major professional fight up to 1920. He is credited with giving Jimmy Bradock the "Cinderella Man" monicker and making Jack Dempsey the "Manassa Mauler". In his first byline the Alfred was dropped, and he was forever then known as Daman Runyon. As a young man Runyon was both a heavy drinker and smoker. After coming to New York he relaxed his drinking habit, but still continued to smoke heavily throughout his life. Runyon's stories mostly revolved around gamblers and sports. Runyon himself, was a notorious gambler. The famous newspaper columnist and author Jimmy Breslin claimed Runyon practically invented two decades of Broadway charisma. He had everybody believing that his type of Broadway really existed. By the late 1920s Runyon's stories were becoming very popular and his fame was growing immensely. His stories were published in Collier's and Cosmopolitan magazines. His "Guys and Dolls" came out in 1931 and he was known from coast to coast. He spent his winters in Florida and he became acquainted with every shady character and gangster who frequented the many racetracks including a noted businessman

named Alphonse Capone. Runyon's enormous wealth enabled him to live like a king, while the rest of the world was mired deep in the Great Depression. Producer Frank Capra used his story of "Madam LaGimpa" for his "Lady for a Day" movie which was also remade in 1961 as "Pocketfull of Miracles". In 1934 "Little Miss Marker" made Shirley Temple a star. This story was also penned by Runyon.

Runyon's characters are still with us today. Take for example, Tony Soprano of the *Sopranos* or Andy Sipowicz from *NYPD Blue*. Both are typical modern Runyonesque style. Runyon died December 10th, 1946. His heavy smoking was a contributing factor to his death from throat cancer. Runyon may be gone, but his legacy lives on and is available to us through the *Damon Runyon Theater* and the OTR Club.



Although Bob Davis is no longer with us we feel his spirit is and we've reached back to bring you one of his many entertaining columns.

Things to ponder over while you're waiting for a tape to rewind:

What was "Blondie's" real first name? It was obviously a nickname but her real name was never revealed: And how about her child "Cookie"? Cookie Bumstead: Poor kid probably grew up to be a hippie.

Why didn't "Harrington" on *Mister District Attorney* have a first name? For that matter why didn't the D.A. himself have a name? There's something suspicious going on when a high-ranking officer of the law doesn't use his name. The David Brian series doesn't count . . . after all, we all know that the real Mr. D. A. was Jay Jostyn.

Why didn't Ozzie Nelson ever go to work. He lived well and had a nice house. He and his family all dressed well and seemed to want for nothing but the sonofagun was

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always home. He must have had an unemployment book that was three hundred pages thick. The most incredible part of the whole thing was that he was home twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, for years and years and never once did he and Harriet ever have an argument: Not even a harsh word.

How come the relationship between Lamont Cranston and Margo Lane never raised the ire of the radio censors? Their relationship was as close as this and the word marriage was never brought up. Shocking . . . really shocking . . . and this at a time when things were much more strict than they are today. Where was Morality in Media when we needed it?

Was "Tonto" a first name or a last name? Leroy Tonto, it does have a kind of ring to it. Or how about Tonto Hickerson? Now there's a name to reckon with.

"Kato" falls into that same category. Kean Kato, sounds like the name of a champion sumo wrestler: On the other hand Kato Seeley sounds like an ex-editor of a certain radio-related newsletter.

Why did *The Whistler* claim to know many things because he walked by night? Couldn't he have learned much more by going out in the daytime when the visibility is much better? The only thing I've learned by walking at night is that you shouldn't go out walking at night: It's dangerous out there.

How come *The First Nighter* always went to the theater alone? Was he antisocial or did he get stood up every week? Maybe he was just a wimpy looking guy with a complexion problem that kept the girls away. Week after week this guy would attend another gala opening all by himself and afterwards would leave all by himself. Could be he was just a cheapskate.

There are more . . . many more but the one that is really outstanding in my mind is just what is going on between Daddy Warbucks and Little Orphan Annie? That man should be tarred and feathered. The less said about this sordid situation, the better.

An honest-to-gosh, legit item . . . In the tradition of "Star Wars" and "The Empire Strikes Back", National Public Radio will, in the near future, be presenting a multi-part series based on the hit movie "War Games".

I don't know when it will be aired as it is in production now, but this is one I'm really looking forward to hearing. When I hear any more about it, I'll let you know. See ya next time:

November 1983 . . . The Illustrated Press

A few words from the only "Lifetime Member" of The Old Time Radio Club

Gads!!! The Old Time Radio Club is now 30 years old. Congratulations on a very envious record. I'd like to share a little of my own background with the club, which will undoubtedly be of no interest to anyone.

I joined about a year after the club started and since it wasn't practical to attend meetings my interest and involvement was with the two publications. The first article I wrote for the club was a review of the new CBS series, the *General Mills Radio Adventure Theater*. Chuck Seeley, who was the founding editor of the Newsletter (which became the Illustrated Press two years later), then asked me to do an article for every other issue, six times a year. I wrote a reply saying that I really didn't know anything about OTR and wouldn't be able to do it. But then I got to thinking that everyone else would probably give him the same response so I sat down and dreamed up a list of six possible topics that I did think I could write about and so I tore up my original refusal and told Chuck that I would give it a try for a year. Chuck put the title of "Wireless Wanderings" on my articles with a little logo of a radio hiking up a road. I am still using that logo with my articles, in another OTR publication, 29 years later.

By the way, regarding that original list of six topics, I pulled it out after five years and found that I had only used one item from it in all those five years. Other things occurred to me as I went along. Perhaps that should encourage some of the rest of you who think that you don't have anything to write about to give it a try. When I started I only had one reference book to refer to and now there are loads of OTR topics to be found on the internet. I'm sure our editor would love to have you give it a try.

I suppose I must have an oversize ego to think that anyone would be the least interested in what I've had to say over these 29 years. Actually, I think that I started doing the column because it forced me into learning more about this hobby that interests us all. Knowing that I had to write something forced me to do research and that has been of great personal value.

In those early years a number of my columns were quite controversial. In those I discussed my views on what was happening with various aspects of the hobby, and those were often very critical. Some of them upset others. For example, after an annual column talking about dealers, one of them threatened to break both my legs and later

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another anonymous member sent me an application for enrolling in the Toledo School of Meat Cutting.

I did actually have one piece of influence on the club. Its original name was the "Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo." After almost four years I suggested that while the club was certainly centered in Buffalo it was national in its outlook and was trying to recruit a national membership for its publications. It seemed to me that it would be easier to recruit members from around the country if the name wasn't so parochial. My suggestion was adopted and in early 1979 the "of Buffalo" was dropped from the name.

Since I've been a member for all these 30 years I am delighted to see the club still going strong. We're all proud of your accomplishments. And many thanks to you hard working people in Buffalo for keeping it going for the rest of us.

Jim Snyder

Mesa, Arizona

PRIVATE EYELASHES (The Downside of Updates)

by Jack French 2005

By the time my book "Private Eyelashes; Radio's Lady Detectives" was released by Bear Manor Media in April



CANDY MATSON

Illustration by Timothy Wallace

Matson, YU 2-8209, died within two days of each other the last week of December 2003, although I did not learn of their deaths until January 2004. Helen Kleeb, whose supporting roles nearly matched the number of appearances of the three leads on *Candy Matson*, was 96 years old when she died on December 28th. The senior sound man on that series, William "Brownie" Brownell, passed

away on December 30, three weeks after his 78th birthday. Both of them had contributed to almost every episode of *Candy Matson* for the two years it was on NBC. Jan Miner, who was prominent in my book for her roles as the co-lead in *Casey, Crime Photographer* and *Perry Mason*, died on February 15, 2004 at the age of 86. Although my book related that she was alive and well (in December 2003) and she had unfortunately died before the book saw print, my prediction about her specific area of fame was borne out. I had pointed out that most people today think of her primarily in her long-running TV commercial as "Madge the Manicurist", hawking Palmolive liquid soap. When her obituaries started appearing, most concentrated on that one commercial and her 25 years at the radio microphone in leading roles were largely glossed over.

Two weeks after Miner's death, the title lead in *Defense Attorney*, Mercedes McCambridge, passed away on March 2, 2004, having been in relative seclusion for many months. The most surprising thing about her death was that it resulted in revealing her true date of birth. For all of her public life, McCambridge claimed she was born on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1918. Upon her death, her executor disclosed she had actually been born March 16, 1916, so in life she had subtracted two years and one day from her date of birth. (Not an uncommon occurrence for female performers, Arlene Francis and Marlene Dietrich were among the dozens who fudged about their age.)

While there is no way to predict when elderly people will leave us, one would hope that other mistakes in a non-fiction book could be avoided if sufficient verification of factual data was possible. But, with the constraints of publishing deadlines, such verifications cannot always be concluded in time.

One embarrassment for me involved my review of the kids' adventure series, *The Lady in Blue*. Like many OTR collectors, I had the two existing audio copies of this crime-busting heroine, whose secret identity was concealed with a blue veil. While the two episodes reveal nothing of the cast, network or time slot, Jay Hickerson's "Ultimate Guide" advises that *The Lady in Blue* was an NBC Saturday program that ran from May to December of 1951. There can't be two kids' series with the same name so it must be the same series, right? Wrong! Three months after my book was published, I finally found the scripts of the NBC show, thanks to the assistance of ace OTR researcher, Karl Schadow. The scripts reveal this version was a musical variety show for the kiddies, produced at WNBC in Manhattan, with June Winters telling stories and spinning juvenile music records. Conclusion: the two audio episodes are probably audition shows that never aired. And while there are no

Two OTR personalities, both of whom were mainstays in *Candy Matson*, YU 2-8209, died within two days of each other the last week of December 2003, although I did not learn of their deaths until January 2004. Helen Kleeb, whose supporting roles nearly matched the number of appearances of the three leads on *Candy Matson*, was 96 years old when she died on December 28th. The senior sound man on that series, William "Brownie" Brownell, passed

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audio copies of the NBC version, most of the scripts are at the Library of Congress.

Of course, much of what I've discovered since the publication of my book is supplemental material which will find its way into the second edition. Some of this material came to me from readers of "Private Eyelashes." After reading my section on *Police Woman*, the 1946-47 series with Betty Garde, a Chicago police officer wrote me. He told me that Mary Sullivan, on whom the series was based upon, had a 1938 autobiography entitled "My Double Life" and he gave me instructions for obtaining it through the Inter-library system. About a month later, a prominent OTR researcher and author, Martin Grams, Jr. sent me a copy of the original 1946 budget for *Police Woman* which he had found in the papers of the producer, Phillips H. Lord. The economy exercised is surprising, even for that era. As a sustaining show, Lord allowed \$ 250 per episode, plus a modest amount for royalties to Sullivan. That total included \$35 each for five actors for this 15 minute show plus their two hours of rehearsal. The sound man, organist, and director were paid by ABC Network at no cost to Lord.

One of the most delightful discoveries that my book indirectly produced was locating the original star of *Helen Holden, Government Girl*, a combination soap opera and adventure series begun in 1940 in Washington, DC for Mutual. A columnist for *The Washington Post*, John Kelly, wrote about my book in the fall of 2004 and included a notice that none of the original cast had ever been found. (Nor did I think they would be since the series went off the air over 60 years prior.) But a Colorado niece of Nancy Ordway contacted Kelly and told him her aunt Nancy, the lead in that series, was alive and well in Key West, FL. Kelly and I tracked her down and interviewed her by telephone. A spry 90 year old, Ordway well remembered the series and was delighted to be "rediscovered."

When I began the chapter in my book on *Candy Matson, YU 2-8209* I was the beneficiary of the generosity of Stewart Wright, a dedicated OTR researcher, who had reviewed about half of the 93 scripts of that series which are archived at Thousand Oaks Library, about 30 miles from Los Angeles. I could not fit in a trip to the West Coast until the fall of 2004 when I attended the SPERD-VAC convention. So I was then able to finish the review of the *Candy Matson* scripts. It was a fascinating event and I learned a great deal of information about the series that was not even hinted at in the fourteen surviving episodes. In the preliminary audition script, Candy Matson was a man (played by Monty Masters) and his girl friend was Christine Blake (the voice of Natalie Masters.) Candy was a rough and tough P.I. under contract to International Insurance Company and was

assigned to guard \$ 5 million worth of jewelry. Armed gunman stormed the place, wounded Candy, and escaped with most of the jewelry. In the conclusion of the episode, Candy found the robbers and shot one .

By the time NBC approved the audition for *Candy Matson* the gender had been changed, Natalie was in the lead, and Monty bowed out of the cast to devote more time to writing and directing the series. A review of the late 1950s and early 1951 scripts revealed an additional surprise: Mallard was not the only boy friend that Candy had on the series. A new character, Hi Waters, an engineer, was introduced in the November 13, 1950 episode. Played by Edward Perry, he had his first date with Candy when they attend a football game. In the December 4, 1950 program, Hi took Candy to the movies and Mallard became jealous. The episode one week later had Hi out of town and Candy blushed about him when Rembrandt teased her about her missing boyfriend. Hi and Candy went ice-skating in the January 8, 1951 program. In the episode two weeks later, Candy got Mallard to drive her to a restaurant where she had a dinner date with Hi. Although the romance seemed to be going well, Monty apparently had second thoughts about this subplot so Hi Waters disappeared from the series without a further trace.

Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club

On behalf of the officers and membership of the Metropolitan Washington Old Time Radio Club, I extend the heartiest of congratulations to the Old Time Radio Club on your 30th Anniversary. When our club was founded way back in 1984, your organization had already logged nine full years of dedicated service to this wonderful hobby of ours.

In many ways, we mirrored the services you had been providing to your membership, including a rental audio and reference library as well as a regular publication. Over the years we have exchanged articles in each other's publications to the benefit of our respective readers.

The three decades of your existence are very commendable and we salute your officers, volunteers, and all the members of your club who have kept your organization vibrant and energetic.

Our best wishes always,

Chuck Langdon
President, MWOTRC



A BOOK REVIEW

GANG BUSTERS

The Crime Fighters of American Broadcasting

by **Martin Grams, Jr.**

Reviewed by **Linda DeCecco**

I had the honor to review "Gang Busters" by Martin Grams, Jr. In his book Mr. Grams begins with a short biography of Phillips H. Lord the creator of the long running radio show *Gang Busters*. Among other money making schemes while attending Bowdoin college in Brunswick, Maine, Mr. Lord began selling books to his fellow students undercutting the price charged at the college bookstore. By the time he finished school Mr. Lord found he had a flare for selling just about anything. After several odd jobs following college Lord's radio career began in earnest during the early 1930s. His first radio series was called *Seth Parker's Singing School*, and the main character was patterned after his grandfather. *Seth Parker* ran for six months.

Lord wrote several other radio shows before he turned his attention to the crime wave sweeping America. He approached J. Edgar Hoover and pitched the idea about a radio show based upon closed FBI files which would be approved by Hoover. Thus *G Men* was created and was on the air for less than six months but it paved the way for Mr. Lord's best known show *Gang Busters* which had a run from 1935 to 1958. *Gang Busters* used police files from around the country.

Included in Gram's book is an episode guide listing broadcast date, episode title and a short description of the story line for both *G Men* and *Gang Busters*.

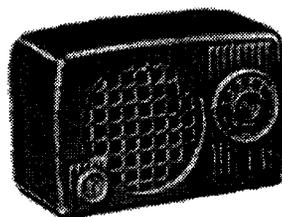
Mr. Grams has done a wonderful job in putting this book together and has also excelled in the art of storytelling.

690 pages, Soft Cover, 6" x 9"

OTR Publishing

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**SAME TIME,
SAME STATION**

Child's Play

by **JIM COX**

I was startled not long ago to learn that 50 percent of the audience of *The Edge of Night*, a daytime TV serial between 1956-84, was made up of men, and that school-children comprised a large part of the remainder. At first that seemed odd for what might be construed as a women's soap opera. Then I learned why.

The program aired at 4:30 p.m. ET, easily intercepted by legions of males working first shifts, and youngsters home from classes. While the accessibility was imperative, as crucial was the fact that the show discarded the pattern of immorality, indiscretions and incest prevailing on most soap operas. That was replaced by cops-and-robbers action, mystery and mayhem, a throwback to the Saturday matinees at local Bijous and weekday afternoon juvenile adventures on radio. The thrill-a-minute exploits in the lives of *Jack Armstrong*, *Bobby Benson*, *The Cisco Kid*, *Hop Harrigan*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*, *Straight Arrow*, *Tom Mix* and dozens more were something kids and their fathers enjoyed in common, although possibly in widely separated epochs. Thus, a narrative with a chilling crime theme was a significant draw to both groups.

On radio, those typically quarter-hour, late afternoon, serialized yarns featured role models, both young and old, who instilled adolescents with lofty ideals and ambitions, and implored them to become responsible citizens. Parents were generally satisfied with the positive messages contained in their pithy, highly implausible slices of life. The result was a nation of youngsters focused on practical concepts that contributed to their own self-esteem that simultaneously built sterling character to last a lifetime.

Media historiographer Jim Harmon wrote in 1967: "You listened to the radio every day at five o'clock. Everybody in the United States of America over twenty-five years of age must have listened intently to the radio at that hour during some period of their lives."

Children began to take an interest in radio as early as three years of age according to research conducted dur-

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ing the period. Kids showed little selective bias between programs, however, until they were at least four. Specific features on the ether started to capture their interests by then. Curiosity rose as they advanced, reaching a peak at age 10. The typical juvenile was tuning in seven or more programs every week, according to studies. Of a multiplicity of formats specifically offered to this age level, dramatizations—and, especially, serialized adventure—appealed most to both boys and girls.

Over the years the selections became quite diverse, including high school crimefighting heroes, comic book favorites, aces of the airwaves, cowboys, Indians and many other ethnic representations. All were destined for a life of escapades, and sooner or later all would pursue nefarious types of many diverse persuasions.

Everybody, I suppose, in “those days” had his or her favorites. I can’t elaborate on many of the series pitched to adolescents because I wasn’t listening to them. Nobody could hear them all for they were counter-programmed, principally occupying the ABC and MBS chains between five and six o’clock in the afternoon Eastern Time, although a few started earlier or ran later. I can comment on those I customarily heard at varying times in the late 1940s and early 1950s, however, and will offer a couple of personal preferences.

Sky King, “America’s favorite flying cowboy,” is among the first shows I recall hearing regularly. The hero crossed the entire western United States in one of his dual fleet aircraft, the Songbird and the Flying Arrow. Those small planes even took their occupants to exotic locales like Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe when an occasion demanded. (Think how long it must have taken those little aircraft to cross an ocean!) I remember being introduced to Galveston, Texas (having never heard of it before) when Sky once chased a villain to that coastal city as he made a sweep of the panoramic Southwest.

Based at the Flying Crown Ranch near Grover, Arizona, rancher Schuyler J. King and his niece Penny, nephew Clipper and the spread’s foreman Jim Bell (Uncle Jim) flew numerous missions in relentless crimefighting efforts to put desperadoes behind bars. They included cattle rustlers, foreign espionage agents, bank thieves and many more. The show was episodic with cliffhanger chapters, initially in 15-minute segments but later extended to 25- and 30-minute formats.

Five actors portrayed the daring Sky King between 1946-54. In order of appearance, they were Roy Engel, Jack Lester, Earl Nightingale, Carlton KaDell and John Reed King. Beryl Vaughn and Beverly Younger impersonated Penny while Jack Bivens and Johnny Coons

played Clipper and Cliff Soubier was Uncle Jim. Better recalled by me, however, was the fact that Myron (Mike) Wallace—the very same reporter on CBS-TV’s *60 Minutes*—told us how Peter Pan peanut butter tasted. He made it sound so good that I wanted it then and I have purchased it almost exclusively since. Talk about durable sponsor loyalty!

There were several other aces of the airways on the airwaves: *The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen*, *Captain Midnight*, *Hop Harrigan* and *Tailspin Tommy* all in their own series, plus several more who were comfortable behind the controls in a cockpit—*Tom Mix*, *Dick Tracy*, Jack Packard of *I Love a Mystery* and Uncle Jim Fairfield and Vic Hardy of *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*.

Sky King arrived on television from 1951-54, initially on NBC, then ABC, and in reruns of the original on Saturday afternoons on CBS from 1959-66. (Just imagine that happening today!) The *Chicago Sun-Times* abandoned an early 1950s attempt at distributing *Sky King* in comic strip form. In 1964 TV sponsor Nabisco produced a 16-page comic book, *Sky King and the Runaway Train*. I recall that sponsors of both the radio and TV series made optimum use of premiums as evidenced by the kids in my elementary school. Sky King insignia on anything was the rage for a while. Today some of those trinkets, like decoder rings found in mint condition, can bring premium prices.

Most of the juvenile adventure series aired before the supper hour in most homes, there were a few that also aired following the customary dinnertime in some parts of the country. I still wonder if they were designed as much for adults as they were for pubescent youngsters.

My all time favorite was the epic western drama *The Lone Ranger*. Interestingly, in our market it wasn’t carried by the local ABC affiliate but instead recorded by the CBS affiliate and played back later at 5 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, two-and-a-half hours before the next live show on ABC. I mention that because my dad loved *The Lone Ranger* as much as I did. He left his job downtown at five o’clock in the afternoon and started for home, about a 25 minute drive. Of course, *The Lone Ranger* was inevitably playing on the car radio. At home, meanwhile, I was tuning in. I would hear my father pull into the driveway at about 5:25 every afternoon. But he didn’t get out of the car until he had heard someone say, “Don’t you know who that masked man is? Why, he’s the Lone Ranger!” The car door would slam and pop would come bounding up the back stairs. We would often compare notes over supper about the day’s adventure.

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One of my biggest thrills in attending old time radio conventions occurred a few years ago in Los Angeles when I showed up for the SPERDVAC meeting and immediately ran into longtime OTR buff Jim Snyder. He was talking with another gentleman in the hotel lobby. My friend Jim inquired, "Do you know Fred Foy?" So in shock was I to be in the hallowed presence of the very man who for so many years said "No where in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice" that I had to nearly pick myself up off the floor! And you know, I found him to be as personable as the man with the commandingly resonant voice I had loved as a child. It could only have been better if Brace Beemer (the Ranger I remember, who was in the role from 1941-56) was alive and present. Fred Foy talked to me for a spell and let me re-live some of my fondest memories. A couple of years ago I encountered him at the FOTR convention in Newark. He was still the same gracious, affable, selfeffacing fellow, still an inspiration to all who admired him for so long.

Others who played the Ranger on radio, in addition to Beemer, were George Stenius (a pseudonym for George Seaton), Jack Deeds, James Jewell and Earl Graser. John Todd was always heard as Tonto, his sidekick. A large company of recurring WXYZ actors appeared on the show as well as on *The Green Hornet*, *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon* (aka *The Challenge of the Yukon*) and a few others emanating from the originating Detroit station. The series ran from 1933-56 although original shows ended in 1954. As has been pondered frequently, who among us can listen to *Rossini's William Tell Overture* and not immediately think of *The Lone Ranger*? Perhaps even those who weren't alive when the series was airing have been so conditioned to it through commercials that they, too, instantly recognize it. Has there ever been a greater identifying piece of music?

The legendary superhero espousing high ideals appeared in video form over ABC from 1949-57. CBS offered those shows in reruns from 1953-60 and ABC did the same from 1957-61. There was a cartoon version on CBS from 1966-69 and 1980-82. Of course, *The Lone Ranger* proliferated in comic books, films and premiums. A controversial 1981 full-length motion picture starred Klinton Spilsbury with Michael Horse as Tonto. While it received considerable press and some of us hoped there would be more movies later, that one wasn't well received by the critics.

By the mid 1950s virtually all of the champions we had idolized as kids in my generation had left the airwaves forever. A few continued in television and still fewer were available at Saturday matinees. But the memories of some delightful years and pleasant associations with those warriors fighting evil remained. Now, a half-centu-

ry beyond, we continue to recall the happy sounds of thundering hoofbeats and propeller-driven planes. And Peter Pan still tastes just as good as it did back then.

Jim Cox is a prolific writer on the subject of OTR. His books are available from McFarland Publishers <http://mcfarlandpub.com/> or 800-253-2187 (M-F Daytime)

The Great Radio Soap Operas (1999)
The Great Radio Audience Participation Shows (2001)
Say Goodnight Gracie: The Last Years of Network Radio (2002)
Radio Crime Fighters: Over 300 Shows from the Golden Age (2002)
Frank and Anne Hummert's Radio Factory: The Programs and Personalities of Broadcasting's Most Prolific Producers (2003)
Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons: A Complete History and Episode Log of Radio's Most Durable Detective (2004)
Music Radio: The Great Performers and Programs of the 1920s through Early 1960s (2005)

* * *

Sherlock Holmes

And there was Watson

by FRANCIS EDWARD BORK



Elementary my dear Watson. This was said in several of the Sherlock Holmes movies, mostly by Basil Rathbone in his portrayal of Holmes. No, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle never wrote that expression in any of his Sherlock Holmes stories. That was dreamed up by a Hollywood writer, who I do not know. They seem to have a way of messing things up out there in Hollywood.

Hollywood, enter Nigel Bruce as Dr. John Hamish Watson. Nigel Bruce played Watson as somewhat of a bumbling fool at times. Can you believe that a British Army Doctor would be a bumbling fool? That's the way the Hollywood writers, wrote the part of Dr. Watson for Bruce to portray. I personally have met many Doctors, both in Service and in civilian life. All these Doctors were intelligent gentlemen. I have yet to meet a Doctor who is a bumbling fool. Bruce's portrayal of Doctor John Hamish Watson was that of a perfect humourous buffoon and foil for Rathbone's intense seriousness in his portrayal of the Master Detective. Could it have been Bruce's idea to play Dr. Watson in this manner? I think not, but rather that of the Hollywood script writers. Why, who can say?

After all Dr. Watson was the recorder and writer of all the Sherlock Holmes cases, written in story form and published in *The Strand Magazine* and in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. Therefore it seems rather odd that the good Doctor would portray himself as some what of a dumbell. Then when his books became known world wide, would he continue to be the fool? That too is rather a hard pill to swallow.

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During the 1950s the BBC Radio and Television Company did broadcast a series of Sherlock Holmes stories, although they were not the best Holmes Shows I have seen, they did portray Holmes and Watson as equals in intelligence and true friends. Howard Crawford as the ex-military Doctor excelled in the part of Watson. Ron Howard played Sherlock Holmes a part in which he too excelled showing complete respect for his friend Dr. Watson. During this series the two showed a lot of respect and humor between them. I'm sure that was the intention Sir Arthur had while writing his wonderful stories.

As a young boy when I first saw Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson I believed that he really was Dr. Watson. As the years rolled by I got to see many actors play the part. When I saw that these actor Doctors were not dumbbells, I decided it's time to select a new favorite actor who played the good Doctor. I saw many, many actors in the part and I must say several did an excellent job of playing Dr. Watson, but now my all time favorite is David Burke. I think that he played the part so well, you might believe he really is a Doctor.

There was a time in the play "The Secret of Sherlock Holmes" (not written by Sir Arthur) when Watson proved himself himself to be quite clever. Watson began to deduce that Holmes was indeed alive and well and had survived the incident at Reichenbach Falls. In relating the details of that incident, he states, I found that I had mislaid some of my Medical notes. After much thought I concluded that I had left the papers at 221B. That very morning I called upon Mrs. Hudson and learned from her that Mycroft Holmes had instructed her to keep the Baker Street rooms just as they were when Holmes and I left for Europe. He had told her that he would pay the rent for the rooms until further notice. It was at this point that I began to wonder, was Holmes indeed alive? Why would his brother Mycroft pay the rent to keep empty rooms?

Having recovered my notes I then decided to visit Mycroft Holmes at the Diogenes Club. Upon entering and giving my card to the Valet, instructing him that I wished to see Mr. Mycroft Holmes he lead me to the Stranger's Room. Mycroft Holmes came into the room in a matter of minutes. Dr. Watson how good to see you, he exclaimed upon seeing me. Mr. Holmes my pleasure I'm sure I said, I then asked him about the Rooms at 221B. Oh, he replied, I guess I'm just a sentimental fellow to keep the Rooms, but, they are a reminder of my dear brother, Sherlock. Of course, "The Adventure of the Empty House", proved me correct, Holmes was indeed alive. So in that adventure, Watson was rather clever indeed.

In another movie there was one more stupid Dr. Watson. An Australian actor by the name of Ian Fleming (not the Ian Fleming author of the James Bond Books) played the good Doctor as did Nigel Bruce, a somewhat dim witted buffoon. Maybe just to emphasize the brilliance of Arthur Wontner's Sherlock Holmes.

In "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes", Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes tells Bruce playing Dr. Watson, I'm afraid, Watson you are an incorrigible bungler. Would you say that to your friend? But, then Holmes pats Watson on the shoulder, just to show Watson that they were still friends, even if Watson was a little bit stupid. I guess the writers seem to think Holmes would not appear intelligent enough unless Watson is a dumbbell. An ex British Army Doctor a numskull? Really? Ah, Hollywood .

Then of course there is Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard. In several of the radio shows and movies, Lestrade is also portrayed as somewhat of a numskull. It is amazing that a man could obtain the rank of Inspector in a highly respected Police organization such as Scotland Yard. Now that in itself is completely unbelievable.

I believe that the most hideous literary crime was the deliberate character assassination of Bruce's portrayal of Dr. Watson. Once again "Hollywood".

We must remember that there would be no Sherlock Holmes stories without the good Doctor. He is the writer, recorder and story-teller of all Holmes cases. Therefore, why would he record himself as a numskull, dumbbell and an incorragble bungler? Yet, he did in all of Holmes cases announce his presence, neither to maximize nor minimize the roll that he played in each case, except for "The Musgrave Ritual" of course, which was before young Stanford introduced Watson to Holmes. With a slight change in time and date, Jeremy Britt and Edward Hardwick did in fact play Holmes and Dr. Watson solving the Musgrave ritual together.

My personal favorite Holmes and Watson had always been Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson. Over the years I have collected all their movies and have a large collection of their radio shows. I also have most of Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwick - David Burke Sherlock Holmes BBC T.V. series. I must confess that I am now swaying more and more to the Brett, Hardwick-Burke portrayal of Holmes and Watson. I do like the way Brett and Burke played Holmes and Watson and if I were asked now which two actors were my favorites, they are the ones. As Holmes would say to Watson "The Games Afoot". Not only in England, but also in most of the civilized world.

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Here's an example. In the Soviet Union, Sherlock Holmes has long been a favorite in books (for which they have never paid a royalty to the estate of Sir Arthur) and now in their movies and T.V. a fine Russian actor, Vasily Levanov played Sherlock Holmes and Vitaly Mefodjevich Solomin as Dr. Watson. Borislav Brondukov was Inspector Lestrade. Both Watson and Lestrade were played as intelligent men. The series was viewed as the most successful series in the history of Russian television, where the Holmes adventures were played faithful to the canon written by Sir Arthur. Although the Russians had a habit of injecting one story into another in the form a flashback. The games afoot comrade Doctor.

Over these many years I have belonged to several Sherlock Holmes Clubs and have subscribed to a few Sherlock Holmes Newsletters. Some of the articles I found I just couldn't take was Holmes and Watson being Gay. The other was that Dr. Watson was really a woman. Would you believe, written by a College Professor teaching at U.B.? The is nowhere in the canon written by Sir Arthur to indicate this theory. In Victorian England it was common practice for two men to share "Digs" in a normal manner, only for the purpose of sharing expenses. Next, a woman Doctor in the British Army? I'm sure Sir Arthur did not have that in mind when he wrote the stories.

There are hundreds of stories and books written about the great detective by authors, other than Sir Arthur. I hope they never stop writing these great stories.

BITS 'N' PIECES

From Jim Bisco, Western New York Heritage Magazine:

Thank you very much for the copy of the Illustrated Press with the Striker story. It looks great. You create a fine publication. Hope we can stay in touch. I'm involved in developing a radio drama project that the club may be interested in taking a look at I'll fill you in on the details later if you'd like.

From Jack French:

April issue arrived today. Wow! Whadda cover....wonderful graphics! The 17 jam-packed pages are certainly going to delight your readers. Really nice job from cover to cover.

....and thanks for the plug on Private Eyelashes.

From Jim Cox:

The article you got permission to use on The Lone Ranger was one of the most fascinating I've read on

Striker and Trendle and company. Thank you for it. Loved Casey and the others, too!

From Dick Olday:

GIANT NEIGHBORHOOD GARAGE SALE Saturday, May 14—8 AM until 3 PM. 171 Parwood Trail, Depew (at end of Rehm Rd. on Cheektowaga side of Transit Rd.) Lots of Old Time Radio programs for sale on records, CD's and MP3's. Also old time TV shows on VHS & DVD plus movie serials and lots more (old computers, monitors, etc.). Please come early for best selection. Proceeds to benefit Citizens Regional Transit Corp.

In the April issue of the I.P. Karl Schadow's e-mail to Dick Olday was posted. In it Karl was looking for any information on a program titled *Mystery Hall* which was produced in Buffalo and broadcast over WGR or WKBW. It ran from 1940-1943 and again from 1949-1950 over the Mutual Network. He is specifically searching for any surviving episodes, scripts or archives that might be available. Any help would be appreciated.

Karl Schadow, P.O. Box 1031, Sandston, VA 23150
804-737-8856, bluecar91@hotmail.com

Pluckin' Mem'ry Strings

by Owens L. Pomeroy

The Adventures of Tarzan

The original adaptation of *Tarzan* was regarded as the first syndicated serial, heard widely over WOR in New York. Tarzan was originally played by James Pierce, Jane was played by his real-life wife, Joan Burroughs, who was the daughter of Edgar Rice Burroughs, the author of *Tarzan*. The story begins with Lord and Lady Graystroke and their young son marooned on an African coast. The young paents are later killed by the apes and Tarzan is raised by them.

One of the early sponsors was the Hearst Newspapers, who carried the comic strip in their daily and Sunday editions. The first broadcast was September 12, 1932 and the final broadcast was June 27, 1953, making it one of the longest running radio shows on record.

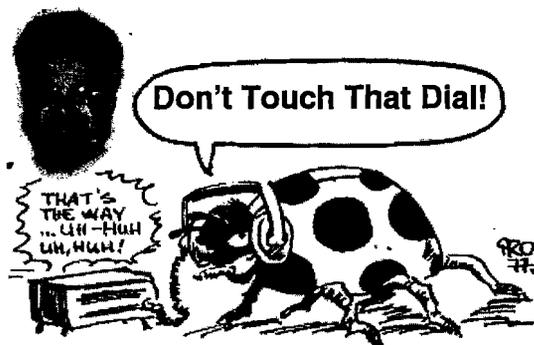
The cast over the years consisted of James Pierce, Joan Burroughs, Gale Gordon, Cy Kendall, Fred Shields, Carlton KaDell and Barbara Luddy (of First Nighter fame). The announcer was John McIntyre and the producer was Fred Shields.

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CONGRATULATIONS!!

On behalf of my Co-founder, Gene Leitner, the membership and Board of Governors of The Golden Radio Buffs of Maryland, Inc. I wish to congratulate Ken Krug and the Old Time Radio Club celebrating 30 years of club activities this year. May you have 30 more.

Owens L. Pomeroy



JERRY COLLINS

What a wonderful ride it has been. Although I have not been there since the beginning, it has been 28 wonderful years with the Old Time Radio Club. I first became involved in the revival of radio when I purchased a dozen records from Twin Fair and GEX. You might also have those same *Lone Ranger*, *Shadow*, *Jack Benny*, *Suspense*, *Inner Sanctum* and *George Burns and Gracie Allen* shows. It would be the OTRC that would make me so successful and contented in this hobby.

I was born in 1941 and thus I was raised listening to *The Lone Ranger*, *The Shadow*, *Terry and the Pirates*, *Jack Armstrong*, *Captain Midnight*, *Sam Spade*, *the Fat Man*, *Jack Benny*, *Sammy Kaye* (while eating a Sunday dinner of meat loaf topped with tomato soup), all those soap operas and all those wonderful baseball games of the early 1950s.

Some twenty years later the revival of Old Time Radio led me to listen to any record, reel to reel tape or eight track that I could find. I was looking for variety and I acquired a little bit of everything, from the *Lone Ranger* to *The Shadow* and unfortunately *Bob Hope* to *The Railroad Hour*.

Before I become more negative, let me list my 50 favorite shows (Everybody is doing this, why not me); *The Great Gildersleeve*, *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*, *Nick Carter*, *Master Detective*, *The Shadow*, *I Love a Mystery*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Sgt. Preston of the Yukon*, *The Green*

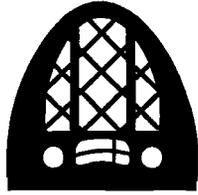
Hornet, *Sam Spade* (Howard Duff, radio's greatest actor), *Sherlock Holmes* (Rathbone and Bruce), *Jack Benny* (The Lucky Strike shows with Rochester, Phil Harris and Dennis Day, 1942-), *Mr. District Attorney* (Jay Jostyn), *Nero Wolfe*, *the Aldrich Family*, *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, *The Edgar Bergen-Charlie McCarthy Show*, *Ellery Queen*, *Yours Truly Johnny Dollar*, *The Thin Man*, *Gunsmoke*, *Superman*, *Mr. Keen Tracer of Lost Persons*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Lux Radio Theater*, *Life with Luigi*, *Casey Crime Photographer*, *The Saint*, *Tom Mix*, *Bulldog Drummond*, *Our Miss Brooks*, *Big Town*, *Amos and Andy*, *Night Beat*, *Suspense*, *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, *David Harding Counterspy*, *Duffy's Tavern*, *Richard Diamond*, *The FBI in Peace and War*, *The Halls of Ivy*, *My Friend Irma*, *Dr. Kildare*, *The Fred Allen Show*, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, *Cavalcade of America*, *The Whistler*, *The Mysterious Traveler*, *Ma Perkins*, *Dr. Christian* and *One Man's Family*.

Now my dark horse or sleeper shows. They might not be as good as the shows listed above, but they are still very enjoyable to listen to. I hope some of you have enjoyed the following shows as well as I have; *Straight Arrow*, *Mark Trail*, *Frank Merriwell*, *Mayor of the Town*, *The Hallmark Playhouse*, *The Six Shooter*, *Fort Laramie*, *Frontier Gentleman*, *Luke Slaughter of Tombstone*, *The Casebook of Gregory Hood*, *Dick Cole*, *Dick Tracy*, *The Voyage of the Scarlet Queen*, *Murder and Mr. Malone*, *Hop Harrigan*, *Mr. President*, *Chandu the Magician*, *Twenty-First Precinct*, *The Lineup*, *Box 13*, *I Love Adventure*, *Rocky Jordan*, *Lorenzo Jones* and *Pepper Young's Family*.

Here is where I come out of the closet and make a lot of enemies in the process. There is little that you could do to convince me to listen to the following shows; *Abbott and Costello*, *Ed Wynn*, *Eddie Cantor*, *Bob Hope*, *Jimmy Durante*, *Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis*, *Mel Blanc*, *Gene Autry*, *Roy Rogers*, *The Cisco Kid*, *Hopalong Cassidy* (I watched too many cowboy shows and movies in the 1950s), *Red Skelton*, *Vic and Sade*, *Broadway is My Beat*, *Dragnet*, *Pat Novak for Hire*, *Jeff Regan*, *Johnny Madero*, *Rocky Fortune*, *Inner Sanctum*, *Quiet Please*, *The Witch's Tale*, *The Hermit's Cave*, *Lights Out*, *The Avenger*, *The Weird Circle*, *The Black Castle*, *Arthur Godfrey*, *Big Jon and Sparkie*, *Baby Snooks* and *Escape*.

In addition I rarely listen to any science fiction shows and never listen to any British, Australian or South African shows. I wonder if anyone will speak to me at the next meeting.

Please write or e-mail me with your lists of favorite and least favorite shows. Ken Krug is looking for your views for the Illustrated Press.



RADIOLDIES

by DAN MARAFINO

Paul Sutton portrayed the traitorous Collins in "Return of Cavendish", the Lone Ranger's twentieth anniversary show.

Gale Gordon starred in the *Halls of Ivy* audition, but was prohibited from starring in the actual series due to similarities between the roles of college president William Toddhunter Hall and *Our Miss Brooks* principal Conklin.

Harry Von Zell's trademark laugh earned him the nickname "giggles" in high school.

Judy Garland made 32 feature films, did voice-over work for two more, and appeared in at least a half dozen movie short subjects.

William N. Robson, who on the *CBS Radio Workshop*, utilized the talents of such diverse talents as newsman Edward R. Murrow, humorist Stan Freberg and future president John F. Kennedy.

Hans Conried originally played Professor Kropotkin with an aristocratic Russian voice, but later altered the accent to a Jewish dialect.

Eve Arden was offered the title role in *Our Miss Brooks* after it had been declined by Shirley Booth, Joan Blondell and Lucille Ball, who's Desilu Studio later produced *The Our Miss Brooks* TV show.

William Boyd re-edited his *Hopalong Cassidy* films for television and launched a licensing bonanza that generated more than \$70 million in sales in 1950 alone.

Ezra Stone was a teacher at the American Theatre Wing, where his students included Peter Falk, James Earl Jones, Sidney Lumet and Hal Holbrook.

Sydney Greenstreet made his stage debut in 1902 playing a murderer in a British production of William Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes*.

Norman Macdonnell later produced the TV series *The Ballad of Josie* and *This Savage Land*, and served as executive producer on *The Virginian*.

Alice Frost made frequent guest appearances on *The Shadow*, frequently playing the roles she recalled as "the crazy ladies."



A Radio Legend

One of the great character actors of all time as far as radio and TV goes, was William Conrad, the man with that magnificent resonant, deep sounding voice. Bill Conrad had a voice that was made for radio and it kept him employed for a long, long time. His own series, *Gunsmoke*, ran for ten years on CBS, either on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday. In radio, that's a long run. Of course it wasn't all Bill Conrad, he had a great supporting cast and that helps.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1920, he grew up, did his schooling and later found work as a newspaper reporter. His family then moved to Los Angeles, and at seventeen the ambitious young man asked for and received a job audition at radio station KMPC in Beverly Hills. Because of that adult sounding deep voice, Conrad was hired and soon moved on to network radio to become an active performer.

Conrad's character roles were heard on such celebrated radio series as *Escape*, *Suspense*, *The Screen Guild Players*, *The Philip Morris Playhouse*, *Mr. and Mrs. North* and many, many more. The man was never out of work, everyone seemed to have a need for "that voice". To me, it was the kind of a voice that reaches out and grabs you. You HAVE to listen. And we did, we liked it and we wanted more. We don't do that anymore.

In addition to his work on radio and TV, he became a character actor in Hollywood, usually playing the villain in such films as "The Killers" 1946, "Sorry, Wrong Number" 1948, and "Johnny Concho" 1956. Conrad produced and directed several films, including "My Blood Runs Cold" 1965 and "An American Dream" 1966 and has been heard by millions as the speaking voice of several cartoon characters, most notably *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*.

Bill Conrad died in 1994, but his outstanding performances will live forever, thanks to tape, CDs and appreciation of a fine actor's work. . . . **Dan Marafino**



A BOOK REVIEW

**Radio Sound Effects:
Who Did It, and How,
in the Era of
Live Broadcasting**
by **Robert L. Mott**

Reviewed by Jerry Collins

What was common to such radio shows as *Gangbusters*, *The Shadow*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Jack Benny* and *Fibber McGee and Molly*? They all had excellent sound effect crews. Without these skilled and hard working technicians, radio scripts would have included such comments as; Did you hear that car? Or I think a horse and a dog have just arrived outside our cabin. Instead, according to Bob Mott, radio sound effects allowed us to picture every scene as though we were actually there. The complete title of Mott's book explains its purpose, *Radio Sound Effects. Who Did it and How, in the Era of Live Broadcasting*.

In the early days of radio there was too much talking and too much emphasis on vaudevillian techniques and theatrical pauses. In the late 1920s the husband and wife sound effects team of Arthur and Ora Nichols entered the scene and live radio would never be the same. They not only brought all their theatrical and silent film experience to radio, but they also introduced sound effects props.

This is the author's second book on the topic. Once again he proves to be a technical expert, a good historian and an excellent raconteur. Since I am a historian not a technician, I will relate some of Mott's best stories. Whether the sound effects personnel were veterans of other media or coming off the college campuses, they were some of the most creative, dedicated and resourceful people in radio. They worked on limited budgets, on limited time schedules and they had to deal with some of the most trying and vexing situations. The book concludes with brief biographies of 148 of the top sound effects artists in radio. The book contains their stories.

Shoes were very important to a sound effects man. They were always left in the studio and only worn on the job. They could not show any uneven wear. They had to be checked frequently to make certain that they had not picked up any gum, food, tacks or wrappers. Radio audiences were made up of trained listeners. They rarely missed a false sound.

Sand and gravel boxes had to be carefully prepared and guarded until they were used. The latter definitely applied if there were child actors in the studio. Mott relates the story of a young boy who removed all the pebbles from the sand and another boy who hid all the sand. Then there was the embarrassing little incident caused by the female star's cat.

Splash boxes filled with water were also important props. Just as the artists were prepared to suck water with straws to make a bubbly sound, an actor put out a fire by dumping the contents of an ashtray into the water.

Then there was the record of the Mogambi Falls; it was used for so many thundering sounds. When the sound effects man wanted to use it for a waterfall, the director rejected it.

Orson Welles was a very demanding person to work for. He required real grass to be brought to the studio for a lawn-mowing scene. The sound was perfect for the rehearsal, but when there was no grass to cut on the live show they returned to the use of shredded newspapers.

Then there were all those problems with guns. Some of them misfired; some were too loud, while others were too quiet. Some performers were so frightened by the sound of the gunshots that they said some highly unspeakable things on the air.

Maintaining complete security over these guns was of the utmost importance. Bob Mott remembers taking his two guns to a bank while making a financial transaction between a rehearsal and live performance. Without thinking he placed his guns on the counter and then complicated matters by leaving one gun behind.

Gun problems also existed in the early days of television. The performers on *Rocky Norton*, *Private Eye* were firing blanks on a fire escape near the Dumont Studios. Almost immediately the police appeared on the scene with guns drawn. The director had failed to clear things with the police department.

Most radio studios were converted theater. You can sense a combination of jealousy mixed with respect when Bob Mott comments very favorably about one memorable exception, WXYZ's spacious studios in the Mendelsohn's Mansion in Detroit. In addition, each one of George Trendle's shows had five sound effects artists.

Hopefully my comments have convinced you to read *Radio Sound Effects* by Robert Mott, a McFarland book. With all his first hand information, Mott is extremely knowledgeable on the topic. He is also a very talented

The Illustrated Press

writer. If I have not given you enough enticements, here are three more. Read the book and discover how Bob Keeshan became Clarabell. Find out why Bing Crosby was so anxious to pre-record his radio shows. Finally discover why women who listened to soap operas always were very alert to the organ music being played on the show.

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Cincinnati's 19th Annual Old Time Radio & Nostalgia Convention

by **DICK OLDAY**

On Thursday, April 14th, Arlene AND I traveled to Cincinnati to attend this year's convention. We arrived shortly after 4 PM and found several OTR friends already gathering in the lobby. We learned that the group was going to Famous Dave's for dinner. As usual a large group of fans went to dinner which was within walking distance of our motel. After enjoying dinner & many lively conversations, we headed back to the motel to turn in early so as to head to the dealer's room first thing on Friday morning. On Friday, after a quick breakfast, we quickly made our way into the dealer's room where we spent \$\$\$\$\$.

In the afternoon, we listened to the Blue Coal Trio (no, they are not singers) present a nostalgic look at OTR which they present to many local groups and even on cruises. In the evening, we were entertained by a re-creation of *Escape*.

Saturday morning after breakfast, we went back to the dealer's room (\$\$\$\$). Shortly after lunch, Hal Stone Esther Geddes and Rosemary Rice starred in a couple of re-creations. They were part one of *Bold Venture* and a *Suspense* show "Zero Hour". Not to take anything away from the fine performances of the stars and volunteers, but I was very impressed with Rosemary's acting in *Suspense*. After the re-creations, we went back to the dealer's room for the raffle drawing. Before the drawing, Many dealers generously donated to our OTR library.

More on this later. Our own Frank Boncore won many prizes from the raffle.

The evening started with cocktails and dinner at the hotel followed by two more re-creations. *Bold Venture* part two and *Our Miss Brooks*. The festivities concluded with awards, but the night was not over as we journeyed up to the second floor to attend a farewell party for the convention. A good time was had by all and soon it was time to head up to our rooms for the night. Even though some of the stars were not able to attend, everyone seemed to have a very enjoyable time.

Unfortunately, the motel had recently undergone a name change and was in the middle of renovations and staff changes, but we did not let that interfere with our enjoyment of the convention. Thanks to the two Bobs for another great time.

As mentioned earlier, our club received a large number of OTR donations (as Billy says it was HUGE). We acquired hundreds (that is not a misprint) of new shows for our library which will be listed in future I.P.s. Thanks to the following: Radio Memories, P.O. Box 94548, North Little Rock, AR; Great American Radio, Genesee, MI 48437-0504; BRC Productions, P.O. Box 158, Dearborn Hts., MI 48127-0158 and Leo Gawroniak, P.O. Box 248, Glen Gardner, NJ 08826. Please mention our club when ordering from these generous dealers.—

Addendum: "Bits 'n' Pieces" note on Karl Schadow's search for *Mystery Hall* information. "I discovered one more Herb Rice production: On Sunday, Jan. 26, 1941, at 10:30 p.m. ET, the BBC (*Buffalo Broadcasting Company*) via WKBW sent to Mutual (125 stations), *Mutual Sunday Night Playhouse*. Herb wrote, directed and produced this first episode entitled "Ambition". So far I've seen this program billed under all four names in the title which will add to the confusion in trying to track down audio copies and scripts. This particular program lasted into May 1941." . . . *Karl Schadow*





Just the Facts Ma'am

by **FRANK BONCORE**

The Cincinnati Convention

For several years I attended the FOTR Convention at Newark. Times change and two of my daughters moved south. Since then I have attended the OTR Convention in Cincinnati and used the opportunity to visit them afterwards.

While Newark is flashier and has more OTR stars, Cincinnati has made up for it with the warm personal midwestern way that the guests are welcomed. Bob Burchett and his sidekicks Bob Neuman and Don Ramlow went out of their way to thank us for coming. I'd like to thank them for having a convention that I was able to attend.

When I arrived I saw the hotel was under renovation. I wondered if I should take my tools out of the trunk and bill the hotel for my time. The clerk gave me a room, which was as far away from the elevator as one could get. The help spoke English not Portuguese as in Newark. However I don't think that some of them understood English.

It's true that there are not the number of stars in Cincinnati as there is in Newark, however Cincinnati is a twit free convention (Dick Olday, Martin Grams and myself agree on that). However, OTR was well represented by Hal Stone, Rosemary Rice and Ester Geddes and I hope these class stars come back next year.

The Dealer's Room is my favorite place. It was great to see my friends, Ted Davenport and Tom Monroe of Radio Memories, Bob Burnham of BRC Productions, Gary Kramer and his lovely wife LaDonna of Great American Radio, Leo Gawroniak, Terry Salmonson of Audio Classics all OTR dealers, and Martin Grams, one of OTR's future leaders, were there selling their wares. However, there was a strange void. Barry Hill (originally from the UK), who just last year told me how proud he was to become an American citizen, has passed on. Also Barry's partner, Ivan Snell of "The Shadow's Sanctum" in Wichita, Kansas had also passed a few months later.

Ted Davenport and Tom Monroe received well-deserved awards for their years of preserving the hobby by providing OTR shows to individuals and donating the same to the OTR clubs. I can't think of an OTR club or collector that hasn't benefited by the hard work and dedication of these two men.

That brings me to Martin Grams who received two awards, the Parley Baer and the Stone Waterman. First, I want to say Martin makes me feel old since he is younger than my youngest daughter. Martin's research has resulted in guides on *Suspense*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Gangbusters*, *Cbs Radio Mystery Theater* with Gordon Payton just to name some. These will (if they haven't already) become OTR standards.

Life would be beautiful if OTR had more people like those named above.

OTR is changing. Not too long ago one would buy OTR shows on records, reel-to-reel or cassettes. Now it's an alphabet soup of CDs, DVDs or MP3s. My ex wife once said I was born 50 years too late, and she might be right. I have no problem with CDs. Maybe I will somehow adjust to DVDs but I believe that cramming shows on MP3s will kill this hobby. Everyone know that there is little money in OTR shows. Can anyone tell me how a dealer can even cover his costs now that MP3s are on the market. Why should Bob Davenport or Terry Salmonson break their necks cleaning up "new" finds? It appears to me that they, for all their time and costs in restoring this material, may not be able to recover their expenses.

It's up to us to support OTR by supporting OTR dealers, attending OTR conventions, and promoting OTR by sharing it with others.

Watch the last page of future IPs for updates on new additions to the Cassette Library.

We are always on the lookout for articles, pictures and cartoons relating to old time radio.

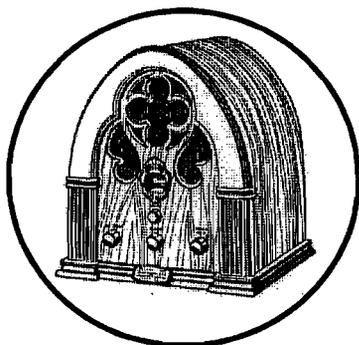
Speaking of articles, how about YOU taking a few minutes to perhaps review one of your favorite OTR programs or write something for publication in the I.P.

Looking for a particular show or information on anything relating to Old Time Radio? Write or E-mail the editor and we'll print your inquiry.

And last but not least we want to thank all who contributed to this and last month's super-sized anniversary issues.

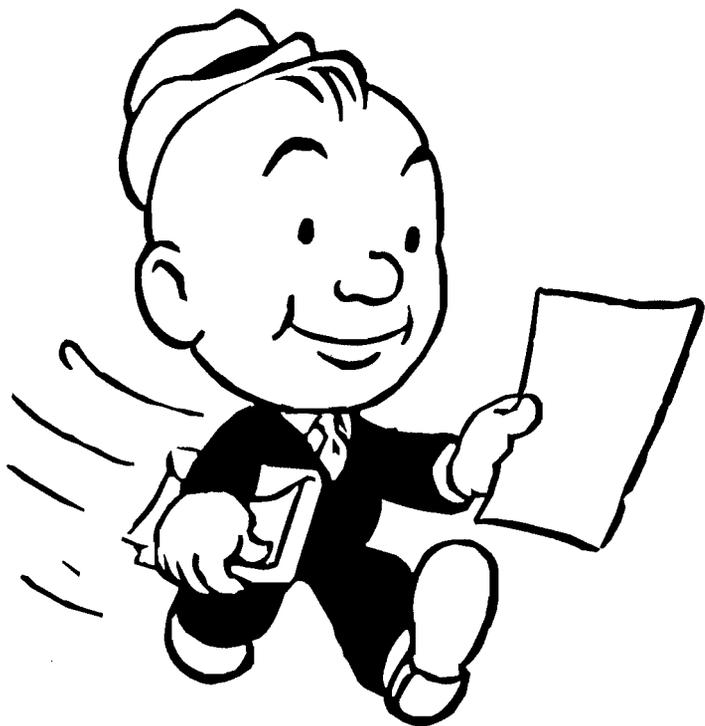
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