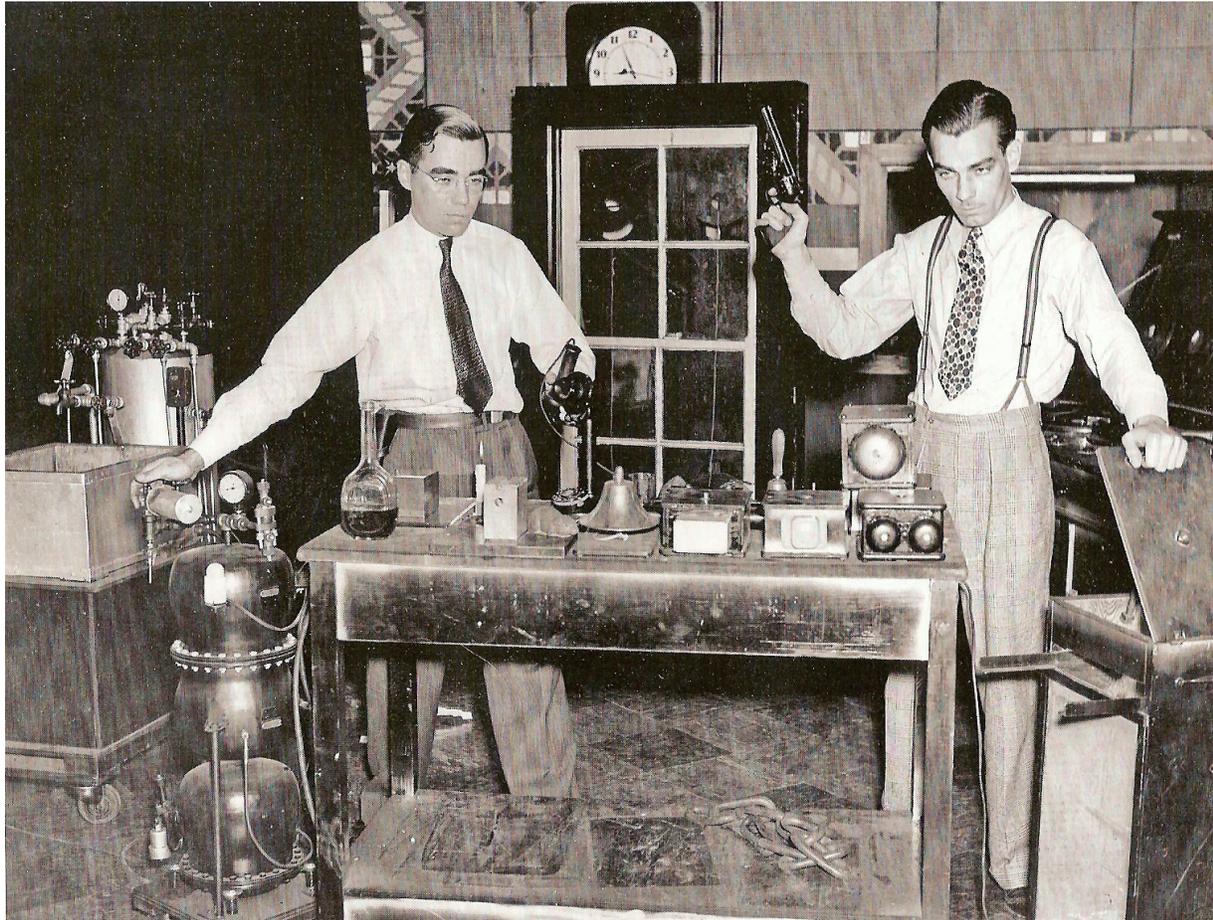


THE OLD RADIO TIMES

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SPECIAL SUMMER ISSUE
FEATURING
SOUND EFFECTS

Welcome to our first special issue of 'The Old Radio Times'. One of our good members, Henry Morse, sent us two articles for publication, that had sound clips embedded in the pdf.

The size of the files prevented them from being included in a regular issue, so we chose this method.

Enjoy, and look for your next exciting issue of 'The Old Radio Times' real soon!

Who Was That Masked Man – Some Recollections

Henry L. Morse

Prologue

This article contains embedded sound files called “clips” that serve to illustrate points in the article and enhance the appreciation of the magic of old time radio. These are useful to anyone viewing this document on a computer. If you wish to hear the sound clips, just click on the “play” box. If you are just reading the article, these will not interfere with your reading enjoyment.

Introduction

In a previous article I began with my first recollection of The Shadow, which was at age 9. Actually my love affair with radio goes back even further than that. I was 6 years old and WWII was still being fought. I was in the first grade and walked about a mile to school every day. My two most vivid memories of that time were a girl named Judy, a vision of loveliness who had the most gorgeous blond pipe curls that one could ever image. The other is lying on the living floor with my head on a pillow right in front of our 1937 Zenith Black Dial console radio. Since we were fairly close to the coastline the blackout rules were often in effect. The dimly lit conditions only added to the mystique of listening to the radio. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights I was allowed to stay up late to listen to The Lone Ranger.

Play 1 Is there a more stirring introduction to an old time radio program than the crisp notes of the trumpet ushering in the galloping hoof beats of the great horse Silver? This introduction is among the three or four most recognized beginnings to an old time radio program along with some others such as The Shadow, Inner Sanctum, and Superman. Fred Foy, arguably the best of the announcers in this series intones:

“A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty Hi-Yo-Silver. The Lone Ranger! With his faithful companion, Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early western United States. Nowhere in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yester-year. From out of the past come the thundering hoof beats of the great horse, Silver! The Lone Ranger rides again!” this quickly followed by words spoken by the Lone Ranger, “Come on Silver! Let’s go big fella! Ho-Yo Silver, Away!”

Development of the Lone Ranger Radio Program

According to my research, in 1933, George Trendle of failing station WXYZ in Detroit wanted to develop an original show not tied to the CBS network. He was looking for a local show using local actors and sponsors that he thought would be more profitable. He had his own company called the James Jewell Players and wanted to use them. His concept for the show was to aim it at children, as he believed they would be less critical, but he still wanted to attract an adult audience as well. He decided on a western theme

because he thought he could develop a more wholesome show as opposed to a crime drama. When Trendle learned of Fran Striker's work on a Buffalo, New York series entitled Covered Wagon Days he offered Fran the opportunity to help develop and to write a new series.

Meetings took place where George and Fran conceived the forthcoming Lone Ranger program. They decided on the following precepts for the show:

- The hero (Lone Ranger) would be masked, much in the image of Zorro and Robin Hood. This gave endless possibilities for the upcoming story lines. This would be good for marketing and publicity as well.
- The Lone Ranger would use silver bullets – inspired by the silver tips on Robin Hood's arrows.
- His horse would be a magnificent white stallion called Silver and would wear silver horseshoes. It has been said that this notion of "silver" was connected to the original sponsor, Silvercup bread – this was not true.
- The Lone Ranger would need a companion to allow for dialog in the storylines and lessen the dependence on narration to carry the story.
- The companion would be a Native American with special abilities such as hunting, tracking, survival, and natural medicines. The name Tonto was chosen, which has a negative meaning in Spanish. There was no intent to be negative – it was purely an accident. Trendle wanted a positive image for the Indian Tonto. Interestingly enough, Tonto did not even have a horse until 1935. He either ran along side the Lone Ranger or rode double. Tonto's name for the Lone Ranger, Ke-mo-sabe, faithful friend, was derived from the name of a boys camp in Michigan known to Trendle.

The show was developed and on the air in about six weeks. The writer Striker was paid \$5 per script copy with usually seven copies needed per episode. Striker wrote three episodes per week and would eventually be responsible for the scripts for two other shows; Challenge of the Yukon and The Green Hornet. Fans of all three shows will note some similarities between the three shows. For example, each hero had a special mode of transportation, i.e., the great horse silver, the Black Beauty for the Green Hornet, and Sergeant Preston's legendary dog sled team. Each hero had a faithful companion, i.e., Tonto, Kato for the Hornet, and the lead dog King for Sergeant Preston.

While this article deals mainly with the Lone Ranger on radio, he appeared in many different forms. There were serials, full-length movies, toys, novels, comic strips, and comic books. The Lone Ranger became a cultural icon in its time.

Sponsors and Promotions

The show was initially sponsored by Silvercup bread in the east and Gingham bread in the west. There is a legend that Gingham asked Trendle to change the name of the great horse silver to Gingham. Trendle expletively turned them down! There was Merita

bread in the south. General Mills, the makers of Cheerios, took over in 1942 and sponsored until the end of the show.

Special offers had to be one of the most anticipated events in any young boys life in the 1940s. All one had to do was send in a box top and something between a dime and a quarter and the most wondrous things would appear some agonizing weeks later. There were such items as an Atomic Bomb Ring, which I spent many hours in my closet trying to see the little radioactive explosions, and never did. There was a pedometer woven cleverly into one episode and a six-shooter ring that appeared in 4 storylines in 1948. Nothing can beat that day when the little brown envelope appeared in the mailbox, and better yet if you were the first one on the block to get yours. These items regularly appear on EBAY if the reader is interested.

Another special premium offered to listeners was The Lone Ranger Frontier town. One would send away for maps at ten cents per section and, of course, a Cheerios box top. The cereal boxes had cutouts of buildings that were just folded and located on the various maps.

One cannot properly immortalize this series without mentioning the Lone Ranger Safety Club first announced in 1935. The premise was that applicants would pick up an application at stores selling the sponsor's products. The applicant and his/her parents would sign the application with the children promising to do the following:

- Cross only at crosswalks
- Be Kind to birds and animals
- Not play in the streets
- Always tell the truth
- Not to ride on the running boards of cars
- To promote safety
- Always obey parents

For this the applicant would get a membership card, a secret code for messages, a safety scout badge, a letter from the Lone Ranger, and a picture of the masked man. The applicant could get an additional card by having 3 prospective customers sign a pledge to purchase the sponsor's products. Additional cards were provided for every three new customers signed up. Of course, it was all based on the honor system.

By the end of 1939 more than 2 million eager listeners signed up.

Who Was This Lone Ranger

Trendle had definite ideas about the character of the Lone Ranger. He was to be a Robin Hood like figure helping the weak and oppressed. He would:

- Be benevolent, sacrificing, honest, strong, alert, and enterprising among others.
- Fight against all odds, but would stop to help an injured animal.

- Speak perfect English grammar as an example to children listening
- Be tolerant of different races and religious beliefs.
- Be a patriotic figure astride a white horse.
- Be a pure hero and would not drink, smoke, gamble, or womanize.
- Never kill anyone – would shoot to wound only.

The Lone Ranger was always true to Trendle's ideals. As a case in point, the Lone Ranger never shot to kill. He killed one person, and that was by accident, in the entire run of the show – more on that later.

The Cast of Characters

The series, which ran from January 30, 1933 to 1954, and then transcribed until 1956, featured five actors playing the part of the Lone Ranger. There were three actors who played the part from January 1933 to May of 1933 until the part was finally given to Earl Grasser. Earl, who sounded like this, **Play 2**, played the role from May of 1933 to April in 1941. If there was ever an unlikely person to play the part it was Earl. He had never been in the west, shot a pistol, could not ride a horse, had a slight build, and was rumored to have a drinking problem. Earl died on April 8, 1941 and was eulogized in a New York Times Editorial the following day. In order to spare the many devoted fans of the Lone Ranger the loss of their hero figure Trendle devised an ingenious plan. In the April 9 episode the Lone Ranger was seriously wounded. In the first 5 following episodes he spoke barely in a whisper **Play 3** in order to make a gradual transition to the voice of the actor Brace Beamer so that listeners could gradually become accustomed to the new voice of the Lone Ranger. The ruse worked, and Brace Beamer, who had been the station manager at WXYZ, then announcer, and was a good horseman to boot, became the familiar voice **Play 4** of the Lone Ranger on April 21, 1941 staying until the final broadcast on September 3, 1954.

Of course, the other most famous character in the series was John Todd, who played Tonto for the entire run, with a few exceptions for unforeseen circumstances. Tonto's character clearly illustrates the power of radio to paint a mental picture of a character. **Play 5** What image does that conjure up for you? Actually Tonto was a short, stocky, and balding man whose voice was absolutely convincing as a tall, stalwart, Native American. Radio fans might also remember another example like this one. Robert Conrad, another short and stocky actor, played the voice of Matt Dillon, in the Gunsmoke radio series. If anyone has seen the TV series Canon I think you get the picture.

The other familiar voice on the Lone Ranger was that of Fred Foy who was the announcer narrator in the later years of the show. The narrator played a key role in setting the stage for adventure during the many scene changes in each Lone Ranger episode. He even played the masked man in the March 29, 1954 episode.

The Lone Ranger Creed

In every media representation of the Lone Ranger he lived according to a strict moral code created and adopted by Frank Striker from the very beginning of the radio series:

“I believe.....

That to have a friend, a man must be one. That all men are created equal and that everyone has within himself the power to make this a better world. That God put the firewood there, but that every man must gather and light it himself. In being prepared physically, mentally, and morally to fight when necessary for that which is right. That a man should make the most of what equipment he has. That 'this government of the people, by the people, and for the people' shall live always. That men should live by the rule of what is best for the greatest number. That sooner or later, somewhere, somehow, we must settle with the world and make payment for what we have taken. That all things change but truth, and that truth alone, lives on forever. In my Creator, my country, and my fellow man”

The Character Of The Lone Ranger

The Lone Ranger had many great character traits. Many of these character strengths are illustrated in episode 2410 dated June 30, 1948. As far as I can tell, this was the first telling of Origin of the Lone Ranger, how he met Silver, and how he found his nephew Dan Reid. To summarize briefly, while a band of six Texas Rangers were on the trail of the notorious Cavendish gang they were led into an ambush at Bryant’s Gap. Two of the rangers were the Reid brothers, Captain Reid leading the band, and the other his brother. Captain Reid asked his brother to take care of his wife and son (Dan), who were traveling west to meet him, should he not survive the attack. **Play 6** This promise was made and kept. In the end all of the rangers were gunned down and left for dead. That night a lone Indian, Tonto, found the rangers and discovered that the brother of Captain Reid was still alive, although badly wounded. Tonto summoned all his knowledge of Indian medicine and nursed him back to health. He dug an extra grave so that the Cavendish gang would think none of the rangers survived. When Reid regained his strength he vowed to bring all the members of the gang to justice. He realized that he must never reveal his identity, donned the familiar black mask, and became the Lone Ranger. **Play 7** Is this an emotional moment or what! He ultimately found and brought all the members of the gang to justice.

While in pursuit of the last of the gang the horse he was riding was shot and killed leaving him without a mount. He and Tonto had heard of a wild and spirited white stallion. They found him locked in mortal combat with a savage buffalo. Just as this brave horse was about to falter, the Lone Ranger rescued him. They cared for him and when he was well the Lone Ranger simply let him go his way. As he galloped away the Lone Ranger commented that his coat shown like silver in the receding light of day and he called to him – Silver, here Silver. The horse came back and was broken gently to the saddle becoming the great horse Silver. **Play 8**

He searched far and wide for Dan and his mother. He found that his mother had been killed and that his nephew was living with a woman named Grandma Frisbee. He took Dan under his wing, provided for his education and upbringing, and shaped Dan's character to reflect his own.

These vignettes illustrate many of Trendle's concepts of the Lone Ranger. He was tireless in pursuit of keeping his word. He showed the strength to "persevere" after surviving grave wounds that would have felled a lesser man. Another of Trendle's precepts was to respect and preserve animal life. A white stallion was in mortal danger locked in a close quarters death struggle with the buffalo. The Lone Ranger risked his life to save the stallion. After saving the stallion's life he and Tonto "gently cared" for him. Although the Lone Ranger desperately wanted the brave stallion as his mount, when the stallion's strength returned the Lone Ranger "unselfishly" gave him the option to be free. When he came back he was gently broken to the saddle showing great "respect" for animal life. When he found Dan Reid he showed his "integrity" by keeping his promise to care for his young nephew.

The Lone Ranger constantly showed his "respect for human life" by never shooting to kill. In the June 30, 1948 episode the Lone Ranger and Tonto were riding when suddenly ambushed by a young man with a rifle. He could have shot him immediately but chose to merely disarm the fellow by shooting the rifle out of his hand. I have to admit, from the limited knowledge I have for pistol accuracy learned in the US Marines, this was quite a prodigious feat, perhaps straining credibility. However, as a child I was simply awestruck by this in episode after episode when the Lone Ranger shot guns away or simply wounded men who were trying to kill him. Throughout the entire run of the show I know of only one instance where the Lone Ranger actually killed a man. This was in the 20th anniversary show on January 30, 1953 when he was tracking the escaped Butch Cavendish. By miracle of script writing both Butch Cavendish and the Lone Ranger returned to Bryant' Gap where the Ranger was to be ambushed again. This time the Lone Ranger saw him and climbed up the canyon wall to surprise Butch. In the struggle of the climb he lost his gun and was forced to fight man to man. In the ensuing melee Butch was forced off the cliff to his death. I eagerly forgave this single transgression.

There are way too many examples of his strength of character to be detailed in this short missive, one could just go on an on.

In Closing

As a boy growing up I was both thrilled and envious of the strength of the Lone Ranger. I would like to believe that listening to his exploits had some indirect effect on my own character development. But, it would be a bit disingenuous of me to say that whenever I did some right or failed to do something wrong it was a direct effect of having listened. But I can't help but thinking that in a subconscious way some of his strengths have found their way into me. I sincerely hope so.

I was lucky to have such a strong hero in my childhood. I cannot think of a contemporary hero that has the strength and depth of character of the Lone Ranger. If you have the opportunity, please listen to a few episodes. Better yet, introduce a young person to the Lone Ranger.

Episodes usually ended with “Who was that masked man – that was the Lone Ranger” or “we have to thank the Lone Ranger and Tonto”. **Play 9**

Henry Morse is a veteran volunteer using old time radio at the local veteran’s home and frequent lecturer on the golden age of radio at local libraries and other venues in central New Jersey. He can be reached at otrman@optonline.net.

A Listener's Perspective On Sound Effects Draft

Henry L. Morse

Introduction

In my last two articles I focused on my experiences listening to old time radio in my youth. I wrote about The Shadow and The Lone Ranger.

In this article, instead of the how, when, and where of sound effects, I will focus on my own ideas on sound effects, my listening experiences, and some of my most memorable moments in sound by including embedded sound clips. There are a lot of technical details in correctly applying sound effects to any story being told. Those looking for more detail can refer to the excellent book by Robert L. Mott entitled "Radio Sound Effects". The Mott book is an excellent source of who did it and how they did it in the era of live broadcasting. This book not only a good reference on sound effects, but is filled with lots of interesting anecdotes from Mr. Mott's career in broadcasting. There are a number of websites dedicated to the discussion of sound effects. Interested readers can reference the links shown below:

http://www.greatnorthernaudio.com/audio_theater/Sound_Effects.html

<http://www.old-time.com/sfx.html>

Since this will be the prototype of what I hope are many old time radio articles to contain sound clips, this first cut will be fairly short.

Defining Sound Effects

Let me begin with my definition of the nature of sound effects. In my opinion, a sound effect is that part of a radio show that uses any kind of sound to trigger what I like to call the "theater of the mind". For this reason, my perception of sound effects goes well beyond the gunshot, squealing tires, or hoof beats.

In my mind sound effects can include:

- Narration – because it uses a voice not part of the plot to help create the scene of the story in the mind of the listener, or to explain parts of the plot that might not be obvious using only the dialog between characters. In some cases, the narrator engages in dialog with story characters.
- Music – as a theme, a background, scenery change, "sting" (more later) used to emphasize a story point to enhance an emotion.

Both of these are often used to create ambience for the listener. Also, keep in mind that one of the most powerful sound effects is silence. A brief pause can greatly enhance the listener's impression of the story being told.

Then there are the more classical examples of sound effects:

- **Manual** – when props are used to create a sound necessary to the telling of the story. For example, coconut shells rhythmically banged against a bed of sand; were used to create the sound of hoof beats in *The Lone Ranger* as well as other shows with western themes. An actual blank firing pistol was used to create the sound of a gunshot. Some props were very simple and some very elaborate such as the Foster Gun – it could produce just about any type of gunshot from pistol to artillery.
- **Many sounds** were recorded to what we all have come to know and love as “transcription disks” and played on cue as needed in the story. Often, multiple turntables were employed to create the effect needed for the story.
- **Vocal** – when the voice is used to create a sound. These can be animal sounds, imitations of manual effects, or vocal accents.

In this article I will discuss each of these, some memorable stories using them, and emphasize with embedded audio clips. Although sound effects were used in many different genres of programming, this article will focus mainly on sound effects used in westerns, drama, horror, and other programs geared to providing “thrilling” stories.

Examples of Narration

There are two forms of narration. The narrator often sets the scene and overall ambience. This is done because the dialog might not make the scene entirely apparent to the listener.

The second is when a cast member is telling a part of the story in a narrative form. This may take the form of a straight narrative, include some dialog with one of the cast, or simply have cast members continuing to relate the story. This technique is used because the amount of script dialog needed might lengthen the performance beyond its available time slot or to make the story more interesting.

An example of the first form is contained in the episode of the *Lone Ranger* entitled “Origin of The Lone Ranger”. This was released on Decca Records in 1951 along with some other stories about the Lone Ranger. The creators just decided that in spite of immense popularity of the series on radio, no one actually knew where the Lone Ranger came from. Fred Foy, the announcer on the *Lone Ranger* Radio show relates the morphing of one of six Texas Rangers, killed in a deadly ambush by the notorious Cavendish gang of outlaws. Listen to Foy as he sets the scene. **(Clip 1)** The listener should now have an idea of the ferocity of the gang and the knowledge that a band of Texas Rangers is in pursuit.

In a continuation of this same story, the rangers are in a narrow steep canyon with numerous boulders lining both the walls and trail through the canyon. The rangers have sent a scout ahead to check for the presence of the gang. Unknown to the band of rangers, the scout is in cahoots with the gang and helps to lead the rangers into a trap. In this case Foy continues relating the story intermingled with dialog with the cast. **(Clip 2)** At this point the listener knows that the Cavendish has apparently killed all of the pursuing rangers.

Examples of The Use of Music

Music, as a sound effect, can be used in many ways:

- Music can be as an introduction to a program episode. Who can forget the familiar “William Tell Overture” that begins every episode of The Lone Ranger or Saint-Saens “Omphale’s Spinning Wheel”, as played by Rosa Rio that opened every episode of The Shadow. In my own personal listening experience, when I hear these, I am immediately transported to the mindset of either of these. Play **(Clip 3)** here to hear the stirring introduction to the masked man and **(Clip 4)** here to hear The Shadow introduction from “Mansion of Madness” aired January 5, 1939.
- Music that transports helps provide the listener with an immediate understanding of what is happening in the story. In the origin of The Lone Ranger, Tonto has done his best to minister to the many wounds suffered by one of the Texas Rangers wounded in the Cavendish gang ambush. The music suddenly becomes strident **(Clip 5)** as the narrator relates that instead of an imminent recovery the wounds have now become infected and the life of the ranger is threatened. There are three bits of music in this clip. The first, strident and shrill, and is meant to reinforce the danger faced by the ranger as his wounds become infected. The second is meant to reinforce how hard Tonto was working to save the life of the ranger. Finally, the music depicts serenity as the ranger awakens after his long ordeal and apparently on the way to recovery.
- Another form of musical expression is called “A Sting”. This is a sudden, shrill or strident chord played on the organ. Stings were used to emphasize things that were happening or about to happen in the story. In the Inner Sanctum episode “Between Two Worlds” aired December 20, 1948, a really rotten gangster about to be killed by the mob is given one last chance to perform a decent act. In this clip two mobsters confront each other. Nick attempts to shoot the fearful Sam, with apparently no effect. Nick then falls dead as if strangled by some unknown force. Sam is now off to perform his last good deed. **(Clip 6)** There are multiple examples of the sting in this clip used to emphasize the storyline.

Examples of Manual Sound Effects

Manual sound effects were accomplished by using common objects to create sound effects. These effects had many forms. Having someone walk in a tray filed with cornstarch could create the sound of someone walking in the snow. Walking on a wooden panel could recreate the sound of walking on a wood floor. Listeners might observe that in the golden age of radio, no one ever had carpeting. There would be only wood floors as it might be an interesting challenge to create the sound of someone walking (silently) on a carpeted floor. An actual blank pistol was often used in the creation of gunshots. There are numerous legends surrounding this effect. For example, a novice soundman had checked out blank pistols from the prop master and was preparing to participate in a dress rehearsal of a particular show. He loaded the props with blanks and left to have a smoke while waiting for the rehearsal to begin. When it was time to fire the pistols all he got was a resounding click instead of a gunshot. He quickly recovered from this embarrassment by shouting “Bang, Bang” into the microphone. Of course the entire cast burst into guffaws of laughter. Of course, now initiated into the broadcasting club, he never left a prop unattended after that.

To this day The Lone Ranger has always been one of my favorites. Therefore I would like to explore the gun shot sound effects used in this series as it matured from the 1930s to its finality in the 1950s. In the early days gunshots on the Lone Ranger sounded like this. **(Clip 07)** These gunshots are from the episode “Coming of Age” aired March 23, 1938. As far as my research takes me these early sounds were made by striking a broomstick against a cardboard box. Aficionados of the masked man have already noticed that the sound of gunshots changed markedly in the later years, such as these in the episode entitled “One Eyed Bandit” aired November 16, 1950. **(Clip 08)** I am told that striking a pillow with a stick, enhancing, and recording onto a disk made these later sounds. Perhaps, this explains why these sounds and the rhythm of the six shots were so consistent over the later years.

There are other manual effects. One that I remember most is the famous introductory creaking door from Inner Sanctum. Hyman Brown, Creator of Inner Sanctum, related that the door leading to the basement of a studio where he worked had a most dreadful sound. He recorded the sound and brought to Inner Sanctum, with all its campy melodrama, is most remembered by this sound effect. **(Clip 09)**

Lights Out program was legendary as one of the most intense horror shows on radio. In its early days it was usually aired very late in the evening, sometimes after midnight. Besides all of the usual elements of a good drama: writing, directing, and acting, it was especially notable for its gruesome sound effects. The sound effects man broke real bones when the story called for broken bones. A head to be split open was a head of cabbage split by meat cleaver. There are numerous grizzly examples, all done with manual props. One of the ones I remember best is a short episode written by the very talented Arch Oboler. The reason I say “very talented” is that he was as good as a comedy writer as a writer of horror. He wrote the “Adam and Eve” skit performed on the “Edgar Bergen – Charley McCarthy” featuring performances by Mae West and Don Ameche. Readers may remember this as the performance that got Ms. West banned from radio for a number of years. I digress!

One memorable episode was a Lights Out story by Mr. Oboler entitled “The Dark” aired December 29, 1937. In this episode two policemen are summoned to answer an emergency call. When they arrive they are greeted by a hysterical old woman who points to a locked door. Upon forcing their way in they discover a man who has been turned inside out lying on the floor. They then perceive a dark fog moving toward them and they are each turned inside out. The soundman used a wet rubber glove pulled off a microphone, while an assistant simultaneously crushed a wooden berry box; you know the kind that we used to buy blueberries and such in. The following clip is the last of the policemen swallowed up by the fog and being turned inside out. **(Clip 10)**

Another memorable example of manual sound effects appears in the Mercury Theater Of The Air production of the H. G. Wells classic, “War of The Worlds” aired October 30, 1938. As we all recall huge cylinders, containing Martian war machines, and described by Professor Pearson (played by Orson Welles, as about 30 meters in diameter, began landing on earth. The radio performance focuses on the first one that landed on a farm in Grover’s Mill, near Princeton, New Jersey. As a large crowd, police, and finally the New Jersey State Militia were observing the cylinder it began to open.

The script called for the top of the cylinder to unscrew to allow the emergence of these war machines. A clever sound effects woman, yes I said woman, as there were not a lot of women working in the technical aspects of radio production at that time, came up with a clever idea. She unscrewed the cap from a mason jar while holding it down inside the bowl of a toilet in the ladies room. The closeness of the microphone to the jar and its confinement in a tight, acoustically live location provided just the right sound. During the broadcast she simply responded on cue and the sound in the next clip was produced; certainly the stuff of legends. **(Clip 11)**

Recorded Sound Effects

Many common sounds were recorded and transcribed on disks. For example, a microphone and recording machine could be setup near a railroad track and capture the sound of a train as it past. Other sounds were recorded in the studio thus preserved for future use. Some of these recordings were so unique that no other show would ever use that sound. The recording of the squeaking door used on Inner Sanctum was never used on another show. The opening sound of marching feet coupled with machine gun fire used on Gangbusters was treated the same way.

One of the most memorable for me was the sound of thousands of rats gnawing their way through barrier after barrier to get to the three keepers of a lighthouse. Intrigued? Good! The story I am talking about is an Escape episode entitled “Three Skeleton Key” aired on various dates between 1949 and 1953. In this story three lighthouse keepers spot that appears to be a derelict ship on the horizon. As it gets closer to the small, rocky island where the lighthouse rises up out of the sea, they notice a moving mass on the decks and other parts of the ship. As the ship moved closer they come to the grizzly realization that the ship is filled with huge rats – thousands of them. The ship then runs aground and the

rats spill off the ship heading toward the source of the food smell – the lighthouse keepers. The balance of the story is about a gradual retreat to the upper levels of the lighthouse with the rats in pursuit. Since many of the doors and barriers were made of wood, the rats made short work of them by just gnawing through them. The sound effect used was the crushing of multiple wooden berry boxes. The sound of this crushing was recorded onto disks and seven turntables were used by multiple soundmen to create the sound of this multitude of rats pursuing the men through the doors and other barriers.

(Clip 12)

Another more recent example comes from an episode of CBS Mystery Theater entitled “Lost Dog” and aired on January 09, 1974. A woman is being abused by her cruel husband. Knowing her fear of dogs, he brings one home and allows the dog to terrorize her. In this clip there is fright in the voice of the woman, meanness in the voice of the husband, against the recorded sound of a dog barking and growling. **(Clip 13)**

Examples of Vocal Sound Effects

There were many uses of vocal sound effects. Many times the writers of a particular story required a person to speak with an accent. Some soundmen specialized in a particular dialect while some could do multiple dialects. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll did the many dialects and vocal inflections on the “Amos And Andy Show”, one of the most popular radio programs during the depression era. Although most vocal sound effects involved characterizations of the human voice, there are also some examples of vocal imitations of animals, trains, baby sounds, and others.

“A Prairie Home Companion”, is a contemporary program currently being aired on the Public Broadcasting System and is broadcast weekly. In the New York Metro area it is aired on FM 93.9 at 6PM on Saturday evenings. Garrison Keillor is a legend for his humorous treatment of the events in Lake Wobegon. Fred Newman, the sound effects man on the show provides a variety of sounds vocally. In this clip Garrison Keillor, host of the show, is narrating a train ride from New York to Vermont. This bit was part of the show episode aired September 6, 2008. Here Fred is vocally creating the sounds of the train ride. **(Clip 14)**

Another example is that of comedian Victor Borge giving an oral dissertation on punctuation. This comedy routine appeared on both radio and TV on various dates during the 1950s. He is concerned that a story told in a book is more understandable by the reader than an oral rendition of the same story because of the punctuation. In one of his funniest bits Mr. Borge posits that if oral communication contained punctuation, it would be easier to understand. In this clip Mr. Borge defines a set of oral punctuation marks and then relates a short story using them. **(Clip 15)**

Fanny Brice capped her long stage and film career by playing “Baby Snooks” on the radio. She often got herself in trouble and ended up getting a spanking. In an episode

entitled “The Missing Dollar”, aired on February 22, 1940, her father sends her out to the store with a dollar. The mission is to buy him a newspaper and return with the change. Of course, she comes back sans dollar and offers numerous preposterous explanations. Finally she admits the truth and her father decides to punish her with a spanking. **(Clip 16)**

All of the above examples are fine examples of the state of the vocal art during the golden age of radio. However, there is one example of a fellow who has taken the art of vocal effects to new heights. Although this is not an old time radio example, I believe it merits special attention and deserves to be included here. Jay Leno recently hosted Joe Fava on his show. The following clip features Mr. Fava impersonating an airplane, train, 18-wheeler, and a NASCAR crash. It is truly amazing what he can do with his voice. **(Clip 17)**

This concludes our little journey through the wonderful world of sound effects in radio. It is my hope that readers will have their appetites whetted by hearing actual sound clips along with the discussion of sound effects.

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