

Volume 24, Number 5

November, 1998

# The Adventures of Harry Nile

By Stewart Wright

The radio detective still lives on in The Adventures of Harry Nile which appears regularly on the KIRO Mystery Playhouse in Seattle, WA and the nationally-syndicated Imagination Theatre. The following article is based on interviews I conducted with the creator of Harry Nile, Jim French and Phil Harper, the actor who plays Harry. This article is supplemented by information from a tape of a Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound (REPS) 1991 meeting that featured that Jim French.

An article on Jim French appeared in the July, 1998 issue of *RETURN WITH US NOW...* 

#### Jim French Interviews

REPS Tape - What about your interest in old radio? How did you get started in that?

You say old radio, but to me it is an unfortunate connotation. Because what people of your youthful vintage call "Old Radio" is really a frequently overlooked, but a very viable way to broadcast. It's a way of telling a story, of painting pictures in peoples minds. What got me interested in it

was that radio drama was part of life when I was growing up. If I was listening to the Lux Radio Theater or Suspense or The Whistler or any one of the these I listened to regularly, I knew it all was make-believe, but I loved the technique. In 1947, in Japan with Armed Forces Radio Service I was given the opportunity to write a weekly, dramatized news program. That was my real basic training in the field. When I got out 1948, I teamed with Richard Carr and he and I wrote scripts for the William Morris Agency. I think that our sales were mostly to the Dick Powell Theater, Richard Diamond, and Suspense.

Could you give our readers a little background on Harry Nile?

The Adventures of Harry Nile is a spin-off from the Crisis series I did in the 1970's. I pretty much fell in love with the character and the ambiance of Los Angeles in the 1940's. I lived in L.A. then. I did 26 of them on KVI in Seattle, WA.

"West For My Health" was the pilot show for *Harry Nile*, it was part of the *Crisis* series. Harry was a Chicago undercover cop who had gotten over his head in gambling debts.

In order to pay off the crook who owned the casino, Harry had to agree to go to Los Angeles & rub out a gang enemy of this owner of the casino. He never intended to do it, he had to think of a way to get out of it. He went to L.A., he solved the problem, stayed there, opened up a shop there, and stayed until 1950. Then he came up to Seattle on a case and was wounded. While convalescing, he was approached by a sharp operator of a Seattle cop. That was in the episode called "Mister Fixer." Harry just missed too many trains back to L.A. and stayed in Seattle. He opened up his own shop in Pioneer Square.

I have been listening Phil Harper play Harry Nile for so long, he's almost like an old friend. Harry's a very human character. He not always one step ahead of everyone and he doesn't always win.

Harry Nile is not Sherlock Holmes. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote so Holmes never lost a case. There were times when Sherlock went off on the wrong track, but he always wound up victorious.

See Harry Nile - page 3

# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

Dedicated to the preservation of old time radio programs and to making those programs available to our members.

## RHAC Board Meeting Thursday, December 10, 1998 - 7:30 PM At Larry Weide, 5270 E. Nassau Cir. Englewood, CO

Old time radio is alive and well in Denver!

KRMA Channel 6 Secondary Audio Program, RHAC's show Tribute to OTR Sunday 2:00 PM

KEZW 1430 AM When Radio Was weekdays from 7:00 till 8:00 PM

KEZW 1430 AM Radio Movie Classics Sundays 5:00 till 6:00 PM

KFKA 1310 AM Radio Memories Sundays 6:00 to 12:00 PM

RHAC WEB SITE

The RHAC web page and catalog is on the World Wide Web:

http://www.old-time.com/rhac.html

RETURN WITH US NOW... is the official publication of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc., a nonprofit organization. Cost of membership is \$25.00 for the 1st year with \$15.00 for renewal. Each member in good standing has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below.

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303-761-4139
970-577-0805
303-730-1430
303-937-9476

# Meeting/Christmas Party

No meeting is planned for November. Instead, there will be a Meeting/Christmas Party on Saturday, December 12th at The Church of the Master starting at 6 PM. The Church is located at 5152 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Ave., at the SE corner of Filbert Court in Denver.

This year, along with a succulent roast turkey dinner, we will be entertained with a live performance by our RHAC Players. (See below.) The cost of the Christmas party will be \$5.00 per person. Reservations must be received by December 4<sup>th</sup>. Make your reservation by sending your check, payable to RHAC, at:

RHAC

PO Box 1908

Englewood, CO 80150

If you have questions, contact Larry Weide at (303)758-8382 or E-Mail at lweide@ibm.net

The RHAC Players are presenting a wondrous world of entertainment for the December Meeting/Christmas Party. The spotlight first falls on that very talented star of theater and radio, Dick Williamson. He will be visiting with us about Old Time Radio and the shows he is hosting every Sunday evening from 6:00 - 12:00 P.M. on KFKA in Greeley, CO. He will have lots of wonderful things for us to hear. We welcome Dick and his family and are happy that he belongs to RHAC.

Next, the spotlight falls on the RHAC Players who will be presenting *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*. At this time we will ask everyone to travel back in time by relaxing, dimming the lights, turning on the old radio, and watching Johnnie in his cap and red jacket "Call For Phillip Morris," and then become involved in "The No One Was Murdered Case."

Bring a friend & make your reservations early. It's Christmas time, the food will be delicious and the entertainment enchanting. See you there.

# Sad News

By Stewart Wright

"IRC & Tape Squeal are about to bite the dust!" is the lead article for the most recent issue of Tape Squeal, the newsletter of the Indiana Recording Club (IRC.) IRC will cease to exist at year's end after 38 years.

Some of reasons for the demise of the IRC are: dwindling membership (from a high of over 700 in 1971 to less than 300 in 1998), increasing age of members (only 53 IRC members are younger than 60), and lack of volunteers. Several of their members have been holding the same and/or multiple club appointed or elected positions for many years.

What does the demise of IRC mean to RHAC? No, RHAC isn't planning to shut down! However, RHAC can always use more volunteers to help spread out the work required to keep RHAC going. Many of our volunteers have been holding multiple elected and/or appointed positions for long periods of time. In some cases, it is because they enjoy it, but in others it is because no one has stepped forward to take over. If you want to volunteer, write to:

RHAC P.O. Box 1908 Englewood, CO 80150.

### Radio Memories: Messages From Radio Heroes

By Lon McCartt

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles written by Lon McCartt.

When I was a boy, radio was my escape. Every day after school, I would rush home to find out what was happening to my radio heroes. Superman, Jack Armstrong, Captain Midnight, and Sky King were some of my favorites. However there was one thing that was a disappointment. That was the secret message from Captain Midnight. I cannot remember that I

was ever satisfied with it.

For those of you who have seen the movie A Christmas Story with Peter Billingsley as Ralphie, you can see what I experienced. His disappointing message from Little Orphan Annie instructed him to drink his Ovaltine. My first message from Captain Midnight told me to brush my teeth. It was like receiving a request from my mother. That was not what I expected from a secret decoded message.

Despite my disappointment, I continued to send box tops and labels for items such as a plastic ring and a plastic belt which glowed in the dark, an "atomic ring, an Ovaltine mug, and an entire *Sky King* airport made of heavy paper including a small paper helicopter which actually looked like it was flying when dropped from a standing position.

The premiums are all gone now, but the anticipation of receiving a package in the mail is still there. These days I order tapes & compact discs of songs and programs from those memorable years. Now all they need is my credit card number.

## Harry Nile cont'd

The announcer and narrator for Harry Nile, Jay Green, plays a very prominent role in setting the right tone for each episode. How important is Jay to the show?

I wish Jay was still available, but because he is not available to me, we have not used him for the last two years. If you hear him on the show, it's an earlier show. He is a very talented voice & does some wonderful characterizations as well as announcing. Since he not available, I do the announcing.

The theme music for Harry Nile is quite bluesy and moody. It adds a great deal to setting the tone of the show. It there a name for the main theme and who wrote it?

It was written by David Shire and

it is the theme music from "Farewell My Lovely" the movie that starred Robert Mitchum, about 25 years ago. Murphy (played by Jim's wife Pat). Harry's Assistant, is such an integral character in the show. How did Murphy come about?

In one of the episodes, Harry needed to go the Los Angeles Public Library to do a little research and there he encountered Murphy, a librarian. Murphy turned out to be fascinated by knowing a private detective. She went along on that case and helped him solve it. They've been together pretty much ever since.

Murphy's a funny character. She brought up Harry's car from Los Angeles to Seattle. She shows up and Harry says, "I didn't know that you knew how to drive."

She says, "Well I don't know to drive and I don't have a driver's license." Harry asks, "How did you do it?" Murphy replies, "I am a librarian and

the library is full of books and one of them is on how to drive a car."

The audience laughed their heads off at that. Anyway, Murphy asserted herself and now she is not his unpaid

In least one episode (Funeral At Midnight) the listeners get the impression that Murphy romantically inclined towards Harry. It sounds like Harry is a aware of it, but isn't romantically inclined.

That's exactly the situation. Will any more come of it?

I really don't know what's going to happen from month-to-month. It depends on Harry. Murphy is smitten with him, but she's a very bright lady and knows better than to pressure him. So I don't know how that will work out.

Your Harry Nile episodes seem to be slower-paced than many of the detective series of the 1940's and 50's. Is pacing important to your shows?

destroyed the realism, but added to the my electric train, that's my hobby. excitement. I'm trying strike a balmy thinking as I write these things to shows that were done 50 years ago.

I think that *Harry Nile* as attained a stature, an identity of his own in my mind. And so pace is something which generally accelerates towards the end of each episode, but it can start rather introspectively. One of the things that I try to do that was seldom done in the half-hour radio dramas in the 40's and earlier, is to build characters who have a lot of detail to them. To emphasize the characters who are going to be in the show and not just use voices.

I never cease to be amazed how you are able to develop a story & characters in less than a half hour of air time. What are the keys to do it?

That refers to what I just said. I don't know if there are any keys to it. I've done this a long time and I realize that you have to deal with an economy of words. You throw in a few little, occasional key element into a line of dialog which help to round out the character I'm trying to present.

I have a feeling that Harry's going to be going on for quite a while.

I hope so. The answer to that is how long I can keep writing. Even if KIRO decided to drop the Mystery Play-house I would do them even if they would not be aired locally. I don't think that they would do it; the shows aren't costing KIRO that much money and they doing really good business as far as the audience is concerned. I'll keep doing them as long as I can. Harry won't get killed.

There are 107 episodes of Adventures of Harry Nile. Episode 108 is in work. (This was as mid-June 1998.) More may be released as boxed sets of tapes later.

REPS Tape

I don't care if I get paid to do it or not. It's fun to do it. What you listen The rapid pace of those shows to on these show is you're sharing in

There is nothing to compare to ance. I don't really refer that much in hearing your own lines being read by a fine actor. They're much better than you thought they were or worst depending on how well they were written.

### DHIL HARDER INTERVIEW

I believe you are the only actor to play Harry Nile?

Yes, that right. I've done about 107 or 108 episodes.

Could you tell us a little bit about your radio drama background?

I feel extremely lucky to be involved in radio drama. I was born in 1940, that's the radio I grew up with. When radio drama turned out to be actually happening where I was, I really tried to get on board.

I came to Seattle in the Spring of 1974 as a Rock & Roll Disc Jockey and heard that somebody in town was doing Radio drama which excited the heck out of me. I called up Jim and asked him if I could read for him.

When I started working for him I did about 20 non-Harry Nile roles over the next year and a half on Crisis. I played astronauts, the Devil, people consigned to Heaven, and all kinds of roles. Since then I have done many other parts. Jim French has an eclectic typewriter; he does all kinds of stories.

Jim called me and said he had written this hour-long show with a down-and-out detective. This had to be in the Fall of 1976. Jim said he wanted me to do it because, although the guy was in Los Angeles, he was a former Chicago cop who becoming a private detective. I was from Chicago and there was something about my accent that makes Jim convinced that I was the perfect Harry Nile.

We did the hour-long show called "West For My Health." Harry was a Chicago undercover cop and got some information on a bunch of crooked cops. He resigned. He stepped on a

#### TAPE 5423 NIGHTFALL (CBC)

1200

- 1L 3-25-83 The Hit
  - 4-1-83 Walter's Dog
- 2L 4-8-83 Safe in the Arms of Jesus
  - 4-15-83 The Wedding
- 1R 4-22-83 Hypnotized
  - 4-29-83 After Sunset
- 2R 5-6-83 The Servants of Cerberus
  - 5-13-83 Waters Under the Bridge

#### VARIOUS SERIAL DRAMA PROGRAMS Tapes 5424 through 5435

Backstage Wife (Tapes 5424-5431) was another Frank and Anne Hummert creation. The show first aired in 1935 on WGN Chicago, next on Mutual for a short time, and then on NBC March 30, 1936 - July 1, 1955 in late afternoons. It was sponsored by Sterling Drugs and Proctor & Gamble. CBS broadcast the program from 1955 to January 2, 1959.

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It was the story of Mary Noble and famous Broadway star Larry Noble. Other cast members included family friends character actress Maud Marlowe and playright Tom Bryson, plus son Larry Jr. For this series, others included aspiring actress and fortune-hunter Claudia Vincent, conniving millionaire Rupert Barlow, his secretary-housekeeper Julia Dickson, her boy friend Oliver Wilson, and mysterious handyman Victor. Clara, Lu, and Em (5431) is known as radio's first soap opera.

Clara, Lu, and Em (5431) is known as radio's first soap opera. First on WGN in 1930, by February 15, 1932 NBC carried the program weekdays, sponsored by Super Suds. The story was about three women in a small-town duplex discussing daily events. The show ended in 1936 following a cast death; it returned for six months in 1942 for CBS.

The Mary Lee Taylor Program (5431-5435) was on CBS Saturday mornings starting November 7, 1933, then moved to NBC on October 23, 1948, remaining there until October 9, 1954. This series featured episodes in the life of newlyweds Jim and Sally Carter, plus the recipe of the week, which always used Pet Milk. The announcer was Del King.

Donations for this section are from RHAC members Duane Griffin (Backstage Wife), Jack Mandik (Clara) and Dick King (Taylor).

#### TAPE 5424 BACKSTAGE WIFE

1800

- 1L 5-15-50 #3913 5-17-50 #3915 5-19-50 #3917 5-23-50 #3919 5-16-50 #3914 5-18-50 #3916 5-22-50 #3918 5-24-50 #3920 Mary tells Maud about house guest Claudia; Julia and Oliver are in Bermuda; Mary sees Rupert about loan to the Nobles; Claudia tries her charms on Larry
- 2L 5-25-50 #3921 5-29-50 #3923 5-31-50 #3925 6-2-50 #3927 5-26-50 #3922 5-30-50 #3924 6-1-50 #3926 6-5-50 #3928 Claudia sees Larry's play; Maud gets part; Mary and Larry argue about Claudia's staying; Julia refuses Rupert's phone call; Tom dines with Mary, meets Claudia.

(Issued November, 1998)

TAPE 5424 BACKSTAGE WIFE (Continued) 1800	1
1R 6-6-50 #3929 6-8-50 #3931 6-12-50 #3933 6-14-50 #3935 6-7-50 #3930 6-9-50 #3932 6-13-50 #3934 6-15-50 #3936 Rupert and Victor meet Julia and Oliver at pier; Sheila wants to leave play; Marand Claudia clash late at night waiting for Larry; Harold upset at Sheila's plan	ry n
2R 6-16-50 #3937 6-20-50 #3939 6-22-50 #3941 6-26-50 #3943 6-19-50 #3938 6-21-50 #3940 6-23-50 #3942 6-27-50 #3944 Larry Jr. sees his father kissing Claudia; Larry wants Claudia to replace Sheila Rupert quarrels with Julia, visits Mary and Maud; Larry, Claudia and Sheila mee	a; t
TAPE 5425 BACKSTAGE WIFE 1800	1
1L 6-28-50 #3945 6-30-50 #3947 7-4-50 #3949 7-6-50 #3951 6-29-50 #3946 7-3-50 #3948 7-5-50 #3950 7-7-50 #3952 Sheila talks to gossip columnist Marty Rufus; Oliver makes inquiries; Rupert returns securities; Harold impressed with Claudia's reading; gossip hits papers	<b>.</b>
2L 7-10-50 #3953 7-12-50 #3955 7-14-50 #3957 7-18-50 #3959 7-11-50 #3954 7-13-50 #3956 7-17-50 #3958 7-19-50 #3960 Mary takes drive with Rupert, Larry upset; Tom visits Rosehaven; Harold agrees replace Sheila; Oliver tells Rupert he wants to marry Julia; Maud reads gossip	to
1R 7-20-50 #3961 7-24-50 #3963 7-26-50 #3965 7-28-50 #3967 7-21-50 #3962 7-25-50 #3964 7-27-50 #3966 7-31-50 #3968 Larry finds securities, reacts badly; Rupert's visit includes Claudia and Larry Victor plans to discredit Oliver, Maud the same for Claudia; party preparations	' <b>;</b>
2R 8-1-50 #3969 8-3-50 #3971 8-7-50 #3973 8-9-50 #3975 8-2-50 #3970 8-4-50 #3972 8-8-50 #3974 8-10-50 #3976 Rupert's garden party; Maud tells Claudia that Oliver is rich; Larry and Claudi leave early; Maud talks to Oliver about Claudia; rehearsals don't go well	.a
TAPE 5426 BACKSTAGE WIFE 1800	)"
1L 8-11-50 #3977 8-15-50 #3979 8-17-50 #3981 8-21-50 #3983 8-14-50 #3978 8-16-50 #3980 8-18-50 #3982 8-22-50 #3984 Mary invites Tom, Maud, Julia and Rupert to Claudia's debut; after brief court- ship, Oliver and Claudia are secretly married, tell separate false stories	•
2L 8-23-50 #3985 8-25-50 #3987 8-29-50 #3989 8-31-50 #3991 8-24-50 #3986 8-28-50 #3988 8-30-50 #3990 9-1-50 #3992 Julia and Rupert quarrel; Oliver fights Larry, confronts Claudia; Julia creates a scene; Oliver wants to make up with Julia; Victor seen near the theater	3
1R 9-4-50 #3993 9-6-50 #3995 9-8-50 #3997 9-12-50 #3999 9-5-50 #3994 9-7-50 #3996 9-11-50 #3998 9-13-50 #4000 Debut goes badly, group moves backstage; Claudia tells everyone of the marriage Julia realizes her folly; Victor confronts Oliver; Mary finds Oliver murdered	2;
2R 9-14-50 #4001 9-18-50 #4003 9-20-50 #4005 9-22-50 #4007 9-15-50 #4002 9-19-50 #4004 9-21-50 #4006 9-25-50 #4008 Sgt. Riley starts the questioning; Maud's role in bringing Claudia and Oliver together revealed; Rupert accuses Larry in interview; play goes on; police water	≥h
(Issued November, 1998)	

lot of feet, had gotten into some trouble, and had to leave town. For some reason, that show got a lot of comment, people called the station about it. About a year later, Jim wrote another one. I don't know what the title of the second one was, but it was only a half-hour one. He got more comment that he did on the first one. We did about 4 or 5 or 6 of them as part of the regular Crisis series.

Then Jim decided to make Harry Nile a regular show. We did pretty close to 30 shows before he left KVI. It was the end of radio drama for a while

In the early 1990's, I was very surprised and pleased when I heard those old shows were going to start running again on KIRO. Almost on the heels of that, KIRO needed more material. So we started taping new shows before an audience at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle, WA. Since Jim started doing them at the Museum over five years ago, we have done about 70 more Harry Nile shows.

One of Harry's qualities is his humanity. He's not hard-boiled; he's very human.

That's the nice thing about Harry. Harry is always taking on sort of pro bono cases. He tries to stay cool and aloof, but always gets involved. I am always aware that Jim's word are saying that Harry really cares and he wants the outcome to be good for his clients.

Editor's Note:

Sixty episodes of The Adventures of Harry Nile are available in eight two-tape sets through commercial outlets such as Radio Spirits

The Adventures of Harry Nile regularly appear on the nationallysyndicated Imagination Theatre. Their Web site is located at:

http://www.transmediasf.com /imag.html

To find out if it is broadcast in your area, contact the show's syndicator, Transmedia. at 1-800-229-7234. Cassettes & compact discs of many of the A new order form for Library #1 will Harry Nile shows are available from Transmedia.



By Maletha & Dick King

Radio really came into it's own during the Great Depression. The average housewife did not work out of the home. There were no jobs for them. The radio was the daily companion of the hard-pressed housewife trying to stretch the family dollar, and it became the daily practice to tune in to the "Soaps" to hear that others had problems too. The great thing about radio was that a housewife was not trapped into watching these dramas, but could continue her daily chores while listening to the radio.

Mary Nobel - Back Stage Wife had a great following amongst the ladies of that day. It took a little of the pressure off them to hear that someone else, a clean, upstanding wife like Mary Noble, had more troubles than they had and could only live from dayto-day to find another problem. The women listened intently to Mary's trials and felt they were blessed not to have her problems.

Those were the days of family washing and ironing, long before the advent of wash-and-wear. The soap operas helped the long hours of drudgery pass quickly for the listeners. We hope that you will all enjoy these shows and wait impatiently for next month's entries.

#### **New Tape Librarian**

Starting in mid-November we will have a new librarian for Cassette Tape Library #1. Marilyn J. Turner will be taking over the librarianship on November 15, 1998. Please do not send her orders for tapes until then. Marilyn's address is:

> Marilyn J. Turner 2299 S. Sable Blvd. Aurora, CO 80014

appear in the next Newsletter.

We would like to thank the members who stepped forward to volunteer to take on the librarianship of Cassette Tape Library #1. Your offers to help are greatly appreciated. Thanks you to Maletha King for filling in as the temporary librarian of Cassette Library #1.

#### **Use Those Forms!**

When you receive an order from any of the tape libraries, you receive a new tape order form for your next order. Some members are not keeping these forms and are sending in orders on plain paper and unsigned.

Please save the new order form you receive with your tape order and use it for your next order!

If we have to resume the monthly printing of tape library order forms in the Newsletter, the number of articles that appear will be reduced. In the course of a year, members will lose the equivalent of two full issues of Return With Us Now ....

#### Radio Quiz

A new quiz will by David Michael appear next month.

#### September Answers

Below are names of characters appearing regularly on Old-Time Radio programs - Name the program and, if you can, the radio actor who played the part.

- 1. Mrs. Davis Our Miss Brooks, Jane Morgan
- Jughead Archie Andrews, Harlan Stone
- 3. Bob Regeant Chandu, **Bob Bixby**
- Ajax Cassidy Fred Allen, Peter Donald
- Broadway Damon Runyon Theatre, John Brown
- Tank Tinker Hop Harrigan, Jackson Beck
- 7. Lt. Levinson Richard Diamond, Ed Begley
- Shuffle Ma Perkins, Charles Egleston

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#### FIRST CLASS MAIL

P.O. Box 1908 Englewood, CO 80150 Radio Historical Association of Colorado



## OTR On The Web

Editor's Note: If you find an interesting Old-Time Radio-related World-Wide Web (WWW) site, why not tell our readers by writing a short article on it for Return with Us Now.... Send the article to Stewart Wright. My E-Mail address can be found on page 2.

### The Olde Tyme **Padio Network**

http://www.otrsite.com/broadcast

Through the magic of the WWW, OTR fans can now listen to two weekly Old-Time Radio anthology shows. These shows are broadcast using Real-Audio tech-

nology on The Olde Tyme Radio Network, which is part of Jerry Haendiges' Vintage Radio Place Web site. They are rebroadcasts of recent shows and are available 24hours a day over the Web. Also at this Web site, are listings of recent programs for each of the anthology shows. These shows are:

Same Time, Same Station

John & Larry Gassman have produced and hosted this two-hour anthology program from Pasadena, CA for over eighteen years. Same Time, Same Station is a program which airs the best shows from the Golden Days of Radio. In addition they have many interesting interviews from people from that era.

Heritage Radio Theatre

Tom Heathwood has been producing radio broadcasts from Boston since the early 1970's. Tom's broadcasts have also been heard on the Internet for the past thirteen years. His Heritage Radio Theatre is a weekly one and a half hour show which features classic Old-Time Radio series.

#### By-Laws

Included in this month's Newsletter is the updated edition of the RHAC By-Laws. This set of By-Laws replaces the set labeled "Amended July 17, 1986." Please place this new set of By-Laws in the front of your RHAC catalog.

If you have any objections or concerns regarding the new By-Laws, please send them in writing RHAC (By-Laws) to:

PO Box 1908

Englewood, CO 80150