



Volume 33, Number 10

October, 2008

We offer you. . . *Escape*!

By
Stewart Wright
Copyright 2008

Note: Nearly all of the Escape episodes mentioned in this article can be found in the RHAC Tape and CD Libraries.

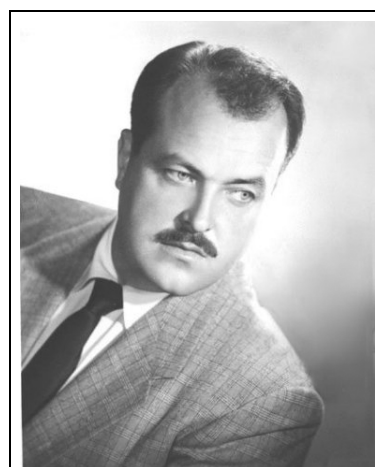
Radio has often been called "The Theatre of the Mind." Few series from the Golden Age of Radio rivaled *Escape* in its ability to combine acting, scripts, music, and sound effects to transport the audience anyplace in the world, or, in some cases, out of this world, and place them in the middle of impossible situations. What other anthology series could have listeners cornered by a deadly Bushmaster snake on a cruise ship on one show, "A Shipment of Mute Fate" and the next week, in "Action" have them hanging by their fingertips on the sheer face of an ice cliff in the Alps?

Them Schedule Changes

Escape was the wandering vagabond of CBS series during its seven-year, 228 episode run. The series aired on every day of the week and in a total of ten different time slots. It is little wonder that, with all these scheduling changes, that *Escape* had trouble attracting sponsors, developing strong ratings, and a loyal audience. The series only had a single significant period of sponsorship, four months in 1950 by the Richfield Oil Corporation, during its entire run.

Sunday was the most common day of airing with 103 *Escape* episodes being broadcast on that day; Saturday and Wednesday were the next most common broadcast day with 27 episodes each. *Escape* generally aired relatively late in the evening with 183 episodes starting at 9:00 PM or later. (All times used in this article are for the Eastern Time Zone.)

Quite frequently runs of *Escape* were short. Several times the series was a Summer replacement series. There were long gaps, ranging from a few months to one of over a year between the various portions the series' run. Only once did *Escape* remain on the air for an entire year in the same time slot.



William Conrad

The Opening and The Voice

Escape hooked the audience from its unique opening, which had gradually evolved over time into an anonymous Voice (which became known as The Voice of *Escape*) that was soothing, but at the same

Continued on Page 3

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

PO BOX 1908, Englewood CO 80150 (303) 761-4139 -

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

Old-Time Radio is Alive and Well in Colorado!

KEZW 1430 AM	"When Radio Was"	Weekdays, 7:00 - 8:00 PM
Pirate Radio 104.7 FM and www.pirate1047.com	"Radio Memories" (Greeley)	Sunday, 6:30 - 12:00 PM
KNUS 710 AM	"Radio Revisited"	Weekdays, 10:00 - 11:00 PM
KRMA TV Channel 6	Secondary Audio Program (SAP), "Tribute to OTR"	Sunday, 2:00 PM

**Hear RHAC on the web, 4th Saturday of every month, at 9:30pm Mountain time at;
<http://www.yesterdayusa.com/saturdaylive.htm>**

**RHAC Web Site - <http://www.rhac.org> RHAC Email - rhac_otr@yahoo.com
RHAC POD-Cast of Internet Shows - www.rhac.libsyn.com - any day, any time!**

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. Any mention of a product in **RETURN WITH US NOW...** does not constitute an endorsement by RHAC.

President:	Larry Weide	
Vice-President:	<i>Open Position</i>	
Secretary:	<i>Open Position</i>	
Treasurer:	Maletha King	
Newsletter:	Carol Tiffany	1394 Golf Vista Court N. E., Palm Bay, FL 32905 (321) 723-7803 ctiffany@worldnet.att.net
Talking Newsletter	B.J. George	Email - bj39@tds.net Talking Newsletter egroup - http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rwun
Membership:	Maletha King	PO BOX 1908 Englewood, CO 80150
Tape Donations:	Bill McCracken	
	Herb Duniven	
Directors at Large:	Herb Duniven	

LIBRARIES

Reference Material:	Bill McCracken			
Logs & Scripts:	Fred Hinz			
Open Reel Tape:	Maletha King	900 W. Quincy Ave.	Englewood, CO 80110	
Cassette Tape:				
#1 (1-499)	David Gatch	PO Box 70	Glen Haven, CO 80532	(970) 577-0805
#2 (500-999)	David Gatch	PO Box 70	Glen Haven, CO 80532	(970) 577-0805
#3 (1000-2000)	Dave Logan	5557 S. Sherman Cir.	Littleton, CO 80121	(303) 730-1430
#4 (5001-up)	Mika Rhoden	3950 W. Dartmouth Ave.	Denver, CO 80236	(303) 937-9476
CD Library:	Thomas Woessner	9693 W. Euclid Dr	Littleton CO 80123-3192	(303) 936-4643

2008 Convention Schedules

33rd Friends of Old-time Radio Convention, Oct 23 – 26, 2008 Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For info: Jay Hickerson, 27436 Desert Rose Ct, Leesburg, FL 34748 (352) 727-6731, JayHick@aol.com, web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

CREDIT: This publication may, under license, use objects and/or images from one or more of the following: Lotus Wordpro97 and Corel Gallery. These software packages are protected by the copyright laws of the United States, Canada and elsewhere. This publication is copywrited 2008, with all rights reserved.

RETURN WITH US NOW...

-2-

October, 2008

time somehow dangerous that asked some seemingly innocuous questions:

*"Tired of the everyday routine?
Ever dream of a life of romantic adventure?
Want to get away from it all?"
Followed by announcer stating:
"We offer you. . . Escape!
Escape!. . . designed to free you from the four
walls of Today for a half hour of High
Adventure."*

The Voice then returned to pull you into that night's episode such as in the 1953 production of "Wild Jack Rhett":

"You are standing in a moonlit street of a Western cow town. . . alone and friendless. While moving slowly down on you. . . their horses crowding every exit, is a band of killers. . . each one of whom has been paid to shoot you dead."

When combined with the music, it made for an opening which was most memorable.

While The Voice of *Escape* was done by many performers, it was most frequently and memorably done by two actors: William Conrad and Paul Frees. Their voices seem to add just the right qualities of danger and adventure.



Paul Frees

The Stories

The series featured a superb mix of original scripts and adaptations of novels and short stories. The adaptations were done by some radio's finest writers.

The first run of the series, 07/07/1947 - 08/18/1947, featured adaptations of classic and contemporary fiction that set the standard for quality scripts that would be a hallmark of *Escape*. Four of the episodes were Les Crutchfield adaptations of

classic stories by: Rudyard Kipling - "The Man Who Would Be King", Joseph Conrad - "Typhoon", Robert Louis Stevenson - "Sire de Maletroit's Door", and Arthur Conan Doyle - "The Ring of Thoth". The other three episodes were adaptations of more recent fiction: "Operation Fleur De Lys" by Stewart Alsop & Thomas Bradon (adapted by William N. Robson), "The Diamond As Big As The Ritz" by F. Scott Fitzgerald (adapted by Les Crutchfield), and "The Fourth Man" by John Russell (adapted by Irving Ravetch.)

Through the end of 1949 the stories aired on *Escape* were almost exclusively adaptations of classic and contemporary fiction and adaptations would remain a staple during the series' entire run. Three radio classic adaptations had their first airings on the series: "Leiningen Versus the Ants", "A Shipment of Mute Fate", and "Three Skeleton Key" would terrify and captivate audiences and would be reprised on *Escape* and other series. Adaptations of many genres of literature were aired on *Escape*. Here are just a few examples Science Fiction - "The Time Machine", "Mars Is Heaven" and "The Outer Limit"; Horror - "The Fall of the House of Usher", "Ancient Sorceries", and "Snake Doctor"; Western - "Command" and "Wild Jack Rhett"; Espionage - "The Great Impersonation" and "Confidential Agent"; and Crime - "When the Man Comes, Follow Him" and "Crossing Paris".

Starting in 1950, original radio plays began to air on *Escape* and they too would run the range of genres. Some of these original plays were "The Man from Tomorrow" by Irving Reis, "Sundown" by Joel Murcott, "The Sure Thing" by John and Gwen Bagni, "North of Polaris" by Charles Smith, "Train from Obisfelde" by Ross Murray, "Violent Night" by Les Crutchfield, "Pressure" by Richard Chandlee, and "The Island" by Millard Kaufman. Several of these original radio plays would be reproduced on other series.

Script Re-Use

During its network run, 28 scripts were reused on *Escape*. Each reuse was a new production and not simply a repeat broadcast of earlier aired episodes. These new productions usually had rewritten dialog and included new cast and crew members. These initial script uses and subsequent reuses accounted for a total of 66 episodes. One script, "A Shipment of Mute Fate", was used four times on the series with a different actor playing the lead role in each production: Jack Webb (10/15/1947), Harry Bartell

(3/28/1948), John Lund (3/13/1949), and David Ellis (7/7/1950.) Six scripts were used three times: "The Country of the Blind", "Evening Primrose", "The Fourth Man", "Leiningen Versus the Ants", "Three Skeleton Key", and "The Diamond As Big As The Ritz". The productions of the latter script was unusual in that the lead roles were played by brothers: Jack Edwards on 7/21/1947 and Sam Edwards on 8/29/1948 and 3/27/1949.

The quality of the scripts used on *Escape* was confirmed by the later reuse of many of them on other series.

Twenty-nine *Escape* scripts were subsequently produced on *Suspense*. The following are a few examples. Classic *Escape* scripts "A Shipment of Mute Fate", "Three Skeleton Key", "Country of the Blind", and "Leiningen Versus the Ants" were later used on that series. Director William N. Robson adapted an Ambrose Bierce short story, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge", for *Escape* in 1947 and later reused the adaptation three times while he served as the director of *Suspense*. Actor John Dehner penned two scripts: "The Man with the Steel Teeth" and "Lily and the Colonel", that were initially produced on *Escape* by director Antony Ellis and later reused by Ellis when he directed *Suspense*. Script alterations were made in the series openings and closings, and dialog, cast and crew changes were made.

The Herb Purdum script "Macao" was first produced on *Escape* on 07/18/1951 and approximately a year later was produced on *Romance* as "The Red Angel". For the *Romance* production, Purdum made significant changes to the final act.

Antony Ellis also reused some *Escape* scripts on the various series he directed. When he was the director of *Suspense*, he reused some scripts from the time period when he wrote for and directed *Escape*: "The Game", "A Study In Wax", and "Classified Secret". Ellis also wrote "The Cave" which was used on at least three series: first *Escape*, then *Suspense*, and finally *Romance*. When "The Cave" was produced on the latter two series, Ellis was also the series director.

Missing Episodes Real and Imagined

All but a handful of *Escape* episodes are in circulation. Those episodes that are not in circulation are "The Run of the Yellow Mail", "The Primitive", "The Blue Wall", "The Big Sponge", "Transport to Terror", "Pagosa", "Nightmare In The

Sun", "Dangerous Man", "The Blue Hotel", and "One-Eighth Apache".

There were several stories that were announced on *Escape* as upcoming episodes, but were never broadcast. Most of these shows had proceeded in the production process as far as a draft script, however there is no indication that any of these shows were ever cast, rehearsed, or recorded. These shows are: "The Haunted Man", "The Canterville Ghost", "Grand Canyon Suite", and "Mute Witness".

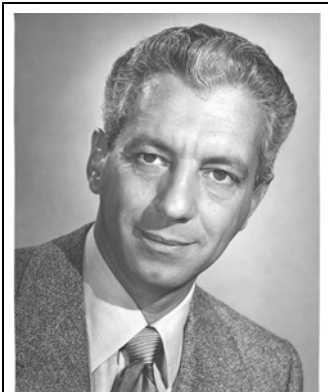
And now, we offer you new information about an episode that never was part of *Escape*. Often reputed to be a lost *Escape* episode, "Your Grandfather's Necktie", is commonly listed in *Escape* logs as a special broadcast. that either aired on 08/26/1950 or 08/31/1950. Recent research by the author has determined that "Your Grandfather's Necktie" was not an *Escape* episode, but was actually an episode of the series *Stars Over Hollywood* which aired on August 26, 1950 and starred Alan Young. This information was verified by consulting the original *Escape* scripts, director Norman Macdonnell's personal papers, and period Radio Listing Sections from the New York Times and several other newspapers.

The Players

While many series could claim that they featured big-name stars, *Escape* was one of the first series to develop a "company" of regular performers. Frequent performers on the series included Parley Baer, Joan Banks, Michael Ann Barrett, Tony Barrett, Edgar Barrier, Harry Bartell, Jeanne Bates, Herb Butterfield, Lillian Buyeff, William Conrad, Hans Conried, Jeff Corey, Ted de Corsia, Don Diamond, Lawrence Dobkin, Paul Dubov, Sam Edwards, Georgia Ellis, Paul Frees, Will Geer, Virginia Gregg, Wilms Herbert, Ramsey Hill, Vivi Janiss, Bill Johnstone, Joseph Kearns, Berry Kroeger, Lou Krugman, Jack Kruschen, Peter Leeds, Frank Lovejoy, Charles Lung, Jeanette Nolan, Jay Novello, Vic Perrin, Barney Phillips, Luis Van Rooten, Jack Webb, Peggy Webber, Ben Wright, and Barton Yarborough.

Over the years I have been fortunate to hear many actors talk about the Golden Age of Radio and their favorite series. Many of those actors mentioned *Escape* as one of the series on which they most enjoyed performing. Perhaps Harry Bartell best summed up how actors felt about the series. In a 1998 interview Harry shared his feelings with me about *Escape*, "The scripts were wonderful, many of

them were based on Classics that stood the test of time. They offered me, as an actor, parts that I never would have gotten on any other program. They were exciting, fun to do and very rewarding from a performance standpoint."



Harry Bartell

Directors

For most of its run, *Escape* was directed by three of Hollywood's finest: William N. Robson, Norman Macdonnell, and Antony Ellis. Robson was a veteran director with over ten years experience. For Macdonnell, a recently returned World War II veteran, *Escape* was his chance to move from acting to directing. Ellis, an experienced actor and writer/adaptor, got his first extensive experience in direction on *Escape*.

Robson was one of the most honored directors during Radio's Golden Age. He was *Escape's* initial director through late March, 1948. In October, 1949, Robson returned to direct *Escape* through mid-August of 1950. His other directorial credits include *Calling All Cars*, *The Columbia Workshop*, *The Man Behind The Gun*, *Doorway To Life*, *Suspense*, *Romance*, and *The CBS Radio Workshop*.

Norman Macdonnell got his first directing experience on *Escape*. Early in *Escape's* run, he was the assistant director to producer/director William Robson. In the beginning of 1948, Robson was so busy with other CBS series that he turned over the direction of *Escape's* broadcasts for the West Coast audiences to Macdonnell. By late March, 1948, Macdonnell became the director and producer of the series and continued in those positions until late August of 1949. Macdonnell returned to resume directing *Escape* for 16 episodes in 1950, 12 episodes in 1951, 16 episodes in 1952, 7 episodes in 1953, and 14 episodes in 1954. Macdonnell became one of the busiest CBS radio directors during the last 15 years of the Golden Age of Radio. His credits

include *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe*, *Fort Laramie*, *Gunsmoke*, *Have Gun - Will Travel*, *Honest Harold*, *Rogers of the Gazette*, *Romance*, and *Suspense*.

Antony Ellis had started in Hollywood as an actor and writer/adaptor. Counted in his extensive writing/adapting experience are 27 episodes of *Escape*; including 14 episodes while he also directed the series. Ellis got his directing start on the series *Pursuit*. He directed most of the *Escape* episodes from December, 1952 through mid-October, 1953 and later also directed *Romance*, *Suspense*, *The CBS Radio Workshop*, and *Frontier Gentleman*.

1954: The End Of The Line

During 1954, its last year on the air, 24 episodes of *Escape* were broadcast. Again there were changes in broadcast nights and time slots. Still the script, music, sound effects and acting quality was there and several memorable episodes were produced and aired.

The first twelve of episodes were aired on Thursday nights; six from mid-March to mid-April at 10 PM (ET), a single episode in May, and the remaining five episodes on consecutive Thursday nights at 9:30 PM from June 3rd through July 1st. Norman Macdonnell was again the director. Included in this group of shows were three written by actors who regularly performed on *Escape*: "Affair at Mandrake" by Ben Wright, "Bechillina and the Fisherman" by John Dehner, and "Blood Waters" by Tony Barrett.

On July 10, 1954, *Escape* made its final move to Saturdays to the 8:00 PM (ET) slot. Again it was a Summer replacement series. The final run started with a fine adaptation of the Daphne du Maurier story, "The Birds". After the first two episodes, Norman Macdonnell turned over the directorial reins to the team of David Friedkin and Morton Fine. (The duo also wrote two of the final twelve episodes: "Night of the Guns" and "Carnival In Vienna".) An early September episode, "The Boiling Sea", placed the listener in a most improbable spot: on a ship in the Philippines that was surrounded by a rapidly rising undersea volcano. The magic of *Escape* was still potent.

As the reading of the credits for the final episode, "The Heart of Kali", on September 25th was completed and announcer George Walsh said "Next week," the audience was not treated to the usual music bridge used to precede the teaser for the next week's episode of *Escape*. Instead, the theme of

With this announcement, one of the finest anthology series in Radio history ended. However, since so many *Escape* episodes have survived, we and future generations still can be transported for a "half-hour of High Adventure" to exotic locales and be placed in situations "from which there is . . . no Escape!"



by Maletha King

We then go on to include several reels of “The Quiz Kids”. Now, in 2008, I have to wonder what ever happened to those juvenile geniuses? I guess they would be too old now to be in the presidential race.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ Hey, did you notice that this month we once
★ again are featuring new articles?
★
★

★ This is because Carol Tiffany, our RWUN
★ newsletter publisher is back on the job.
★
★

★ We're all so glad to have her back to health
★ and doing the thing she likes best - OTR!.
★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

By Larry Weide, Pres. RHAC

Unfortunately, I don't have a picture of Dave, but those who use this library know that you can be sure that he's there at his desk quietly seeing to it that his customers are being very well served.

Thanks Dave for so many years of excellent service.

Owens, a retired engraver for Stieff Silver and Samuel Kirk & Son, both in Baltimore, was an OTR fan, collector, and author. He was a linchpin in the Golden Radio Buffs and was active in it until his death. Owens was a part of their meetings, banquets, and re-creations in which he starred as W.C. Fields. The OTR club he co-founded grew from six members to over a hundred. During the 70s and 80s, the club hosted a special radio section within the Baltimore Museum of Industry.

Cards and letters will reach the family if sent to his daughter, Sandra Jordan, 958 Middleborough Road, Essex, MD 21221

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION of COLORADO

ORDER BLANK FOR CASSETTE LIBRARY #3 1000-2000

Librarian - Dave Logan

5557 S. Sherman Cir., Littleton CO 80121

(303) 730-1430

**** Make Check Payable to "RHAC" ****

Enclosed is my check or money order for the sum of \$_____ to cover the ONE MONTHS Rental charge of \$2.50 per set for the cassettes ordered. You are allowed to order 5 cassette sets at one time although you may only have 5 cassette sets from this library at one time.

Minimum order is \$7.50

Cassette number:

Title:

1_____

2_____

3_____

4_____

5_____

Alternates:

1_____ 4_____ 7_____ 10_____

2_____ 5_____ 8_____ 11_____

3_____ 6_____ 9_____ 12_____

Ship To:_____ Date_____

Address:_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

I do hereby agree to abide by the RHAC rules and agree not to sell or use library materials for monetary gain and *I will return the tape on time.*

SIGNATURE

PHONE NUMBER

**RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION of COLO.
PO BOX 1908 ENGLEWOOD, CO 80150**

FIRST CLASS MAIL