

# SPERDVAC *RADIOGRAM*

Vol. XV, No. 4    The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy    APRIL 1989

## "Shark " Boris Aplon Takes Mike



The cast of **Captain Midnight** at Mutual's Studios in Chicago. From left, Kirby Hawkes (Director), Jack Bivans (Chuck), Ed Prentiss (Captain Midnight), unidentified sound man, Angeline Orr (Joyce), Sherman Marks (Ichabod Mudd) and Boris Aplon (Ivan Shark).

by Dan Haefele

**Boris Aplon** got the acting bug when he was an eight year old boy soprano on stage of the Chicago Civic Opera. That was seven decades ago. Since then he has had a successful stage, television and motion picture career.

His first radio appearance was on a local program in Chicago in 1925. Then 15 years old, Aplon commanded a salary of three dollars per show.

courtesy Boris Aplon

In 1931 he was a regular on the **General Tire Show**, an early-day **March of Time** which dramatized news events. Around 1938, despite his youth, Aplon became Daddy Oliver Warbucks on **Little Orphan Annie**.

### Becomes Ivan Shark In 1938

Also in 1938, Aplon won an audition to play villain Ivan Shark on **Captain Midnight**. Actor **Bill Bouchey** played the lead in the series, which was originally syndicat-

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to Glenda Kelly. Glenda is the newest SPERDVAC volunteer. She has taken the job of volunteer coordinator for the general library. In addition, we have taken several steps to make this service run more efficiently. We plan multicassettes of our most popular programs and are now organizing a list of copiers to carry out this task. Also, we plan to speed up the typing aspect of our catalog pages so that we can issue one per month.

### Radio Notes

For those listeners in the Los Angeles area, the following information may be of interest: **Same Time, Same station** with John and Larry Gassman and Dan Haefele can now be heard Sundays from 5 to 7 PM on KPCC 89.3 FM in Pasadena. Also, Chuck Cecil's **Swingin' Years** can be heard now on Saturdays from 12 to 4 PM on KPCC.

Welcome back **Your Hit Parade** to the LA area every Friday at 9 AM with Andre Baruch and Bea Wain. This fine syndicated show is heard throughout the country and is now heard once again in Los Angeles on KPCC, Pasadena.

### SPERDVAC Planning Meeting to Come

On Saturday April 8th SPERDVAC will hold its yearly planning meeting at American S & L, 12185 Ventura Blvd., Studio City at 10:30 AM. We will discuss, among other items: the 1989 convention, upgrading our libraries, our status on obtaining grants for preservation, and general activities which will occur during the course of the year. Please arrive early or on time at the latest.

### PPB Honors Oldsters and Honors Freberg

Congratulations to Nelson Olmsted and Audrey Marsh who received Diamond Circle awards from the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters at a recent luncheon honoring Stan Freberg. These awards are given to those who have reached the golden age of 75 and have contributed with pioneering energy to radio broadcasting.

The salute to Stan Freberg was one of the best PPB luncheons ever. A further tribute to his popularity was the 800 friends and fans who gathered to be with him on Friday, March 17th. Stan was our first SPERDVAC honorary member and has consented to join us again, with many of his radio and commercial cast creations at a future SPERDVAC gathering. It would be nice to have him at our convention in November. We'll see what develops.

A further comment about **Stan Freberg**. His album, **Stan Freberg Presents The United States of America**, has recently been transferred to compact disc. The earlier album version had to be edited due to time constraints. The compact disc will feature two selections not heard on the album. The selections have been in proper sequential order. The added routines are: *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*, and *The Invention of Electricity*. These recordings will be released on April 12th to a compact disc store near you. Sorry for the rather straight advertising push, Stan, but then I don't get paid to do what you do.

## NEW BOD MEMBERS

*Larry Gassman, President*  
*Michael Plett (Vice Pres)*  
*Don McCrosky*  
*Barbara Watkins*  
*Bobb Lynes*  
*Richard Glasband*  
*Jerry Williams*

### The Vote Is In

The March BOD election is now history. See boxed list elsewhere this issue for results.

Out of a possible 1465 only 180 brave souls ventured to cast ballots. Thanks to you, the active minority. Next year we hope to have some new faces on the BOD. We ask you to seriously consider getting involved. Being a board member could be a most rewarding experience for you.

### Society of Singers Seeks Support

Recently on **Same Time, Same Station**, Gassman, Gassman, and Haefele had as their special guests Andre Baruch and Bea Wain. During the course of the show Bea mentioned the **Society of Singers**. The organization was established to help those singers who are not doing well financially. They have no union and in many instances have been left with very little money. The Society of Singers is seeing to it that these wonderful people are taken care of. To support the society you may call: (213)469-4956. Their board of directors reads like a Who's Who of Hollywood. Frank Sinatra is, of course, The Chairman of the Board. Included as guiding forces are: Bea Wain, Patty Andrews, Ray Charles, Tony Martin and Helen O'Connell. A new chapter of the Society has started in New York as well. The membership charge is \$75 per year. You don't have to be a singer to join. Their address is 1741 North Ivar Ave., Suite 118, Hollywood, CA 90028. They will be holding a benefit for singers on April 28th at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. The fundraiser is for the Society of Singers who will be saluting Ella Fitzgerald on her birthday. The evening will include dinner plus a star studded show with many of the vocal superstars of music. This tax deductible fee on this particular night is \$250. The money will go to help those singers who are less fortunate than many of us. If you are able, please find a way to support this worthwhile organization.

A reminder that if you have moved and or will be moving please let us know. We found recently that a few of our members have not received our **Radiogram** because we received no indication of a new address. Until next month, please keep in touch.

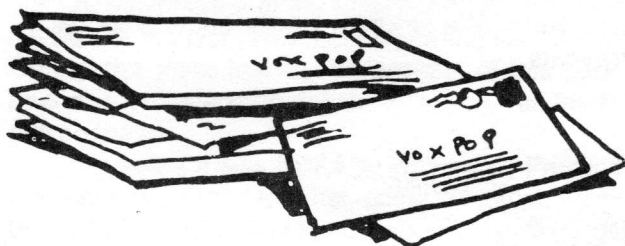
**DEADLINE**

**MAY ISSUE**

**14 April 1989**



# VOX POP



Like . . . "Hello, again".

Would like to clear up two errors as printed in Hugh's Hues: Bob Elson, baseball: W G N (not WSN) Chicago--very famous baseball station, still covering the Cubs with Harry Caray. AND, sir! CBS broadcast the first World News Roundup--not NBC. The names Murrow, Trout, Shirer should have rung some bells. Bob Trout anchored from Columbia Square in 1938 and I was the announcer. Trout was the finest ad-lib man in broadcasting, and the coolest man ever under fire. After reaching 65, the mandatory CBS retirement age, he was given a great assignment by ABC--in Spain, where he always wanted to live. I believe he's still there, and occasionally heard and seen on ABC.

**Dick Joy**  
Talent, OR

It was good to read your excellent article on Jean Vander Pyl, who was always one of the best actresses around. I have many fond memories of working with her on Father Knows Best. A couple of corrections, however. Jean, of course, played Margaret Anderson, not Betty, who was my sister (played by Rhoda Williams), and FKB was not on the air in 1948 (although the audition show was made in December of that year), but went on in September of 1949. The show moved to Chicago for three weeks in December of 1952 when Robert Young was touring in The Country Girl.

Again, many thanks for the good work.

**Ted Donaldson**  
Hollywood, CA

I've enjoyed reading the comments in the Radiogram about the first "disk jockey", as related by James Ahern and others. He is correct that KQW in San Jose qualifies as the first broadcaster. The "little man" he refers to was Dr. Charles Herrold, who operated the station from his school, the Herrold College of Engineering and Wireless in San Jose, as early as 1909.

Herrold and a student, Ray Newby, experimented with voice transmissions using a spark transmitter, and began to get so many requests from ham radio operators to transmit that they began doing their experimenting on Wednesday nights. This developed into a regular schedule of programs as early as 1910, first using this spark transmitter, and later a modulated quenched arc device of

Herrold's own design, which he called his "Arcphone". Herrold would discuss news items on the air and read newspaper articles, or play records from his phonograph. The broadcasts were heard up and down the West Coast at the time.

Herrold began broadcasting before there was any government regulation of radio, and when licenses were first required in 1912, he was the first in the country to obtain one for voice transmissions

However, the honor of being the world's first "disk jockey" probably belongs to Harold's wife, Sybil, who regularly broadcast what she called her "Little Ham Program", using many of the techniques of modern disk jockey.

Herrold sold his station to the First Baptist Church in 1925, and it was later acquired by the CBS network, to become today's KCBS.

John F. Schneider

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**AUDIO RADIOGRAMS:** Send C-90 cassette in returnable mailer to Stuart Lubin, 627 N. Fuller Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90036

**AUDIO SPERDVAC CATALOGS:** Contact Bob Herman, 437 Curtis St., NE Grand Rapids, MI 49505

**MEMBERSHIP BADGES:** Send \$5.00 each to Don Keith, Box 5861, Glendale, CA 91221

**ACQUISITIONS: (Discs and Tapes):** John Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90604, (213)947-9800 for both the General and Archives Libraries.

**PRINTED MATERIALS ACQUISITIONS:** Jerry Williams, 13861 Rayen, Arleta, CA 91331, (818)892-1446

# Steve Allen, KCSN to Air "Meeting of Minds"

What would happen if President Ulysses S. Grant, Queen Marie Antoinette, Sir Thomas More and Dr. Karl Marx sat down for a round table discussion? Well, there is one way to find out by turning into **Meeting of Minds**, a thirteen-part series debuting on KCSN, 88.5 FM, on April 15 at 7 p.m. The hour-long programs are the brainchild of actor, author, comedian and composer Steve Allen.

## TV Scripts Adapted

Allen gave KCSN permission to adapt his original television scripts for use on radio. The scripts were revised by David Williamson and come to life under the direction of Jonathan Hughes. The series is produced by KCSN's Thirty Minutes to Curtain production crew with Stan Reburn as Executive Producer.

The moderator for **Meeting of Minds** is June Foray, SPERDVAC member, the voice of Rocky the Squirrel from Bullwinkle cartoons. Cast members include TV and radio voice over actor, Alan Oppenheimer, Shakespearean stage actress, Katherine Hendryk, Saturday Night Live alumnus, Gail Mathais, Broadway star, Barry Ingham and Cheryl Rhoads, who has appeared on the Tracy Ullman program. Several SPERDVAC members are involved.

The seeds for **Meeting of Minds** go back to when Steve Allen was about 10 years old. He wondered, "What would happen if the various comic strip characters who were never defeated despite the strength of their opponents happened to go up against each other." The heroes then were Tarzan, Joe Palooka and Popeye. The

idea of bringing people together who could never have met in reality is what many hears later occurred to him in writing the series **Meeting of Minds**.

## Old Idea; New Impetus

The impetus for the actual **Meeting of Minds** came from Allen's concern "for the general collapse of intelligence and the lack of adherence to cultural standards in our country." To reach the greatest number of people with his ideas, Allen turned to television. In the '50s Allen had his own comedy and variety program on NBC on Sunday nights opposite The Ed Sullivan Show. He thought of incorporating a **Meeting of Minds** segment within his show but the network and his advertiser, Chrysler, felt differently.

The concept went back on the shelf for seventeen years until he produced a **Meeting of Minds** segment for one of his nationally syndicated TV programs. Allen didn't realize until sometime later that that particular show was only seen in Los Angeles. It was frustrating but there was nothing he could do about it.

## First PBS, Now Radio

Allen continued his quest to interest the commercial TV Networks in reviving the **Meeting of Minds** concept but his efforts proved fruitless. Eventually in the mid-'70s

the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) picked up the mantle and Allen did 24 one-hour shows which he said, "met with warm success."

Allen is happy to see his series being revived on KCSN. For him this is another pleasant chapter in the up and down history of a program whose origin goes back some fifty years.



by Barbara J. Watkins

Mark your calendars. 1989's first old time radio convention will take place in Cincinnati, Ohio on April 21 and 22. The two-day event will be located at the Marriot Inn, 11320 Chester Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246, (513)772-1720. Be sure to mention the convention when calling for room reservations. Your rate is \$65 per night, single or double.

This year a special guest will be appearing from California: the Great Gildersleeve himself, Willard Waterman! Two of the planned re-creations will feature Mr. Waterman from series in which he appeared in radio, **The Whistler** and **Tom Mix**, along with a portion of **The Great Gildersleeve**. The re-creations are planned for Saturday.

Another attraction of the convention is the dealers' room which will be open both Friday and Saturday. Because there are no banquets or meals included, Cincinnati's convention is an event we all can afford: only \$2.50 per day. Now if only the airfare. . . .

For nice photo coverage of last year's convention in Cincinnati, see the Jan.-Feb. 1989 issue of the "Old Time Radio Digest." Also featured in this issue is SPERDVAC member Gary Yoggy's article about the **War of the Worlds** broadcast. Nine pages are devoted to Part One of "Incredible as it may seem": Radio's Most Famous Broadcast Revisited, a fifty-year retrospective. For a one-year subscription to "Old Time Radio Digest" (six issues), send \$12.50 to Royal Promotions, 4114 Montgomery Road, Cincinnati, OH 45212. Single issues are \$2.50.

Does anyone remember Don Blandings' radio shows? He broadcast from a Los Angeles station sometime in the 1930's. He is the author of **Vagabond House** and other well-known poetry. Any information you may have should be sent to Kay Huff, 495 Central, Coos Bay, OR 97420.

Send any information you would like to share with members or questions you may have to: Barbara J. Watkins, Information Please, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Till next time, spaceman's luck!



# It Maybe Started Here

by Chris Lembesis

A recent issue of the Radiogram brought up the discussion of the first radio station and the first disc jockey. One of the more fascinating aspects of this hobby has been the long standing debate on which was the first station on the air.

For years it was KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that was considered the first, going on the air on November 2, 1920 and backed by just about every textbook written. Other stations such as WWJ in Detroit, Michigan, have made claims, but there is one other that has not received its recognition as perhaps being the first, and that despite solid evidence to support it.

On February 23, 1962, a local program from San Francisco, California called SPECTRUM, had as its guest Professor Gordon Greb of the Department of Journalism at San Jose State College talking about why he believed that KQW in San Jose was the very first station on the air. Host Scott Beach had him on for one hour, which allowed him time to explain his thesis.

On that program, Greb explained that three years prior he had written an article for THE JOURNAL OF BROADCASTING detailing his claim that this pioneer station had gone on the air in 1909! I researched this article and found it fascinating.

Written in 1959, it was titled THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY OF BROADCASTING. KQW in San Jose went on the air in 1909 from the Garden City Bank Building. Its founder was Charles D. Herrold, also known as "Dr" because of the radio school he had created.

The station went on so early in the 20th century, that call letters were not required! The station identified itself to all those who could pick up its signal as "San Jose Calling." The school Herrold operated was the Herrold College of Engineering and Wireless. It is interesting to note that present day KCBS Radio in San Francisco started as KQW. In fact, KQW's call letters were not assigned until 1922, and stayed in San Jose until 1949 when the station moved to its present location.

It was a simple 15 watt spark transmitter that Herrold experimented with. In a letter written to Dr. Lee de Forest in 1940, Herrold recalled how he first went on the air. "On January 1, 1909, I opened my School of Radio in San Jose. From the first, broadcasts were a part of my routine. When I opened my school I kept some sort of wireless telephone equipment hooked up all the time. The output was always small up to late 1911, and the distances covered were small. In spite of continual changes in apparatus, there was always music of some sort coming from my station. It was real broadcasting - how do I know? Because I had to make my own audience. I went out through the valley and installed crystal sets so that people could listen to the music."

Now remember that this was more than three years before Congress enacted the Radio Act of 1912, which required licenses and call letters from voice transmitters,

which explains why Herrold's station simply identified itself as "San Jose calling." The programming then was school announcements, music and news.

Herrold was a classmate of Herbert Hoover at Stanford University before the turn of the century, and it is interesting to note that as Secretary of Commerce during the Coolidge administration, Hoover was responsible for establishing rules and means for enforcing the laws of broadcasting. As for Herrold, he carefully saved his clippings, correspondence and some of his equipment. He passed away in 1948 at the age of 72 in a rest home in Hayward, California. An interesting note is that his contemporaries can verify what happened, and they added to the story of this station.

Herrold's first wife, later Mrs. Sybil M. True, of San Jose, recalled that she was a pre-World War I disc jockey on what she called her "Little Ham Program." The program attracted teen-age amateur set enthusiasts and weekly contests encouraged them to listen regularly. "I really believe I was the first woman to broadcast a program," she recalled in the 1959 article. What she did was borrow phonograph records from a local music store "just for the sake of advertising the records to these young operators with their little galena sets. And we would play up-to-date, young people's records. They would run down the next day to be sure to buy the one they heard on the radio the night before . . . We would ask them to come in, and sign their names, where they lived, and where they had their little receiving sets . . . and we would give a prize away each week."

If this is true, then we have located the world's first disc jockey, for she qualifies under all criteria of a dj. Mrs. True also said she always acknowledged audience requests. As you can guess by now, KQW was truly a pioneer station, but had really not been recognized for its accomplishments in broadcasting. Well, the good news is that this is changing, and that the station is now being recognized.

Not too long ago, I had the pleasure of visiting the Foothill Museum, in Palo Alto, California, near the Stanford University Campus. There, on display, are the photographs, correspondence, and yes, some of the surviving equipment that lay claim that KQW was the first broadcasting station to go on the air with regular, day-to-day programming. If you are ever in that area, do pay a visit to the museum. I hope that this short article will help settle the contention on what was the first radio station and the first disc jockey on the air.

*References: Article is based upon Journal of Broadcasting, IV, 1,3. 1959, writer Gordon Greb; "Doc" Herrold's comments and letters March & April Journal of Broadcasting; Mrs. True's quotes are from an interview by Prof. Greb printed in first reference above; for more info this theme see: Robt. St. John, Encyclopedia of Radio and Television Broadcasting; Oscar Rose, ed., Radio Broadcasting and Television, An Annotated Bibliography; J. Fred Mac Donald, Don't Touch That Dial.*

# RADIO IN REVIEW

by Chris Lembesis

Welcome again! Before our visit to the OTR Bookshelf, a time out for some reflection. It seems hard to believe that two years have past since my first column back in April 1987. I recall I had planned to do it for a few months only, but I should have known better. As I got more involved in my work, I noticed that you did also, expressing your appreciation for this column, and asking that it continue. Some of the more interesting new works in OTR could be the most obscure and hard to find, so I saw to it that you found out about it, and allow you to decide on whether you wanted that title or not.

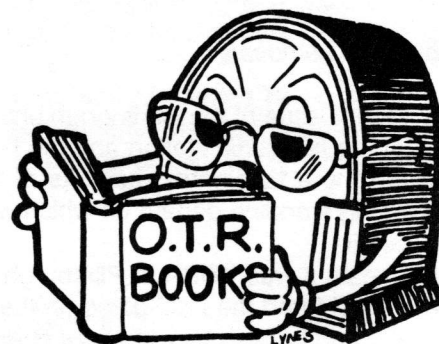
There seems to be no letting up on new titles to be out this year or next. I hope to be able to keep up with it, and through this column you should find out about it first. To those of you who have sent me announcements to share with our members, a warm thank you. For those who have something to share, please pass them on to me, and I will find the room to announce it through this column. For a hobby that is primarily an audio medium, it is wonderful that many of you are discovering that a good library of books goes hand in hand with a good library of tapes. You have found out that rare titles are still in demand, even if published over fifty years ago, and new titles are still asked for, even if they just went out of print. For those of you who wish to collect OTR books as a sound investment, it is a wise choice, and I encourage you to continue your endeavors in this area.

Earlier this year I talked about radio related premium books that just came out. For those of you who are getting into this specialized area of OTR collecting, there is a fine magazine specializing in this area called BOX TOP BONANZA, edited and published from the beginning by Joel Smilgis. Joel created this magazine because of the need to get collectors together, share interesting stories, articles, and the like. In six years of publication, over 100 issues have been put out, with over 1,000 subscribers.

As Joel explains, "The collecting of old radio shows and the collecting of radio premiums is a perfect related interest. We have many of our readers who do both and we would like to see many of the SPERDVAC readers give our magazine a try." To subscribe, contact Joel Smilgis at BOX TOP BONANZA, 1531/2 15th Avenue, E. Moline, IL 61244. Brochures of his magazine will be available at SPERDVAC meetings.

No it's time for our visit to the OTR bookshelf and a concluding look at radio biographies I started last month.

**Jolson: The Legend Comes to Life.** Herbert Goldman, Oxford University Press, Inc., 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016, 1988, \$22.95, Clothbound.



They called him "The World's Greatest Entertainer." But was he, and if so why? In a penetrating biography, meticulously researched, Goldman presents a most in-depth study of Al Jolson. It is surprising to note that Jolson had a long and varied career in radio. Those series included: *Presenting Al Jolson, Kraft Music Hall* (1st time), *Shell Chateau, Cafe Trocadero, The Al Jolson Show*, and *Kraft Music Hall* (2nd time).

Jolson's career ran in cycles. From headliner to has-been and back again. Jolson's life in radio is not passed over lightly. We find how these programs were created and how Jolson performed on them. Some interesting anecdotes about Jolson's radio regulars are recounted, and there are some interesting revelations about him. For example, in 1957, when Al Jolson, Jr. was ten, a vault that was left to him was opened. In it were transcriptions of the shows Jolson had done for Kraft between October 1947 through May 1949, all of them recorded at the highest fidelity possible. Anybody know where Al Jr. is? Until we find him, enjoy the book. The large Radiography is thorough and accurately dated.

**Thanks for Listening!** Jack Brickhouse with Jack Rosenberg and Ned Colletti, Diamond Communications, P.O. Box 88, South Bend, IN 46624, 1986, \$25.95, Clothbound.

If you're a fan of the Chicago Cubs, you remember "Oh Brother!" and the man who said it for more than 30 years as an announcer for that team. This is the autobiography of Jack Brickhouse and the enthusiasm he brought to the game. This is memoirs galore, and even if you're not a Cub fan, Jack's reveries about the game and his early days in radio, when he was "the man on the street" doing interviews in Peoria, Illinois, will impress you.

With a half century in broadcasting, Brickhouse learned the skills of interviewing, the art of ad libbing, the value of an imagination, and to expect the unexpected -- always with a sense of humor. This is a memoir of a time when sports announcing was really exciting. Brickhouse retired from Cubs announcing in 1981 and was inducted into Baseball's Hall of Fame in 1983.

**Don Dunphy at Ringside.** Don Dunphy, Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 115 West 18th St., New York, NY 10011, 1988, \$18.95, Clothbound.

Radio history is full of famous programs openings that are remembered to this day. For those of you who remember the Golden Age of Boxing, you must remember



# Radio

"Good evening, everyone. I'm Don Dunphy, your ringside commentator." This is a wonderful autobiography of a man who saw history in the making in the ring. Broadcasting over 2,000 fights, including 200 title bouts, he became known as "the voice of boxing," and this is his story. Well written, with a keen insight to the events of the times, Dunphy relates the best and worst fights he has called.

His career paralleled that of radio and then TV. We find out how the important fights were broadcast (it seemed like all of them were from Madison Square Garden), how they were sponsored, and the preparation that went on before each fight broadcast.

The sponsor that comes to our mind is Gillette, and many of the fights were broadcast on Mutual, and later on ABC. In a chapter simply called Sports Announcers, Dunphy pays tribute to the pioneers of radio sports coverage. Ted Husing, Bill Corum, (Dunphy's between rounds color commentator), Graham McNamee, Mel Allen, Win Elliot, Bill Stern, Clem McCarthy, and others are cited for their contributions to the art of radio sports announcing.

The Golden Age of Radio and the Golden Age of Boxing. They ran about the same time, and Don Dunphy was there to cover some of the greatest fights in radio and TV history. No split decision here, this book is a winner.

**KMA RADIO - THE FIRST SIXTY YEARS**, Robert Birkby, Barnhart Press, KMA Book Department, Shenandoah, Iowa 51601, 1985, \$5, Softbound.

Local radio played just as important a story as the growth of the networks during the same period. Going on the air in 1925, KMA served its citizens especially in the areas of farm and homemaking programs. We see the growth of this station in pictures and text. An interesting highlight is the radio logs of the day, reproduced from 1925 to 1985, generally in five and ten year intervals. Though starting as a local station, KMA in the early 1930's picked up affiliation with NBC Blue and Mutual, and later joined ABC in 1945. Not too many stations have published their stories with such depth of information, especially a local one. For those of you who live or did live at one time near KMA's signal, this work should bring back some fond memories. Affordably priced, I recommend this book and do commend the author for the wealth of research and interviews he did to make this as thorough a book as you would want on local radio.

**COOKING WITH KMA**, Evelyn Birkby, World Publishing Company, KMA Book Department, Shenandoah, Iowa 51601, 1988, \$5, Softbound

Here is the second and final book about KMA, and it is a look of the various homemaking programs that were on over the years. The author had a program on KMA called *Down a Country Lane* that began in 1950.

We are given capsule biographies of the personalities who did these programs along with some of the recipes aired over the years. An interesting companion to the first book, this is one you will enjoy reading, and using,

**Edward R. Murrow: An American Original.** Joseph Persico, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 11 W. 19th St., New York, NY 10011, 1988, \$24.95, Clothbound.

Of all the newscasters who graced the airwaves, more has been written about Edward R. Murrow than any other. In this new work, with the cooperation of Murrow's widow and other family members, Persico had access to private papers not available to previous biographers.

This is a definitive portrait of a man who almost single handedly made broadcast journalism shine during Radio's Golden Age and TV's early age, leaving a legacy that others continue to emulate today. Murrow's shortcomings and triumphs are well chronicled from a man who was part of radio and TV's Golden Age of newscasting.

Persico shows a respect and admiration for his subject. Murrow joined CBS in 1935 as Director of Talks and his career took an upswing when he went to England in 1938 to organize the CBS News operation in Europe. War followed, and "This Is London" brought home the horrors of war, told frankly and honestly.

His *Orchestrated Hell* broadcast won a Peabody award for outstanding journalism. After the war, he left the microphone to become an executive at CBS, but he disliked it and returned to broadcasting, later to enter the world of TV.

Persico covers all the facets of Murrow's career well, and we discover the standards he set and demanded of others in this profession. We meet "Murrow's Boys", and their contributions to broadcast journalism: Eric Sevareid, Charles Collingwood, Howard K. Smith, and others. We enter the world of being a newsman and surviving the ratings and politics of that time.

Murrow did not insult your intelligence and his commentaries were written, as he said, "as adults capable of receiving hard truths and becoming better for it." When you heard a Murrow newscast, with that famous opening . . . "This is the news," you knew you did.

How many of you remember the closing of **Edward R. Murrow with the News?** It was "Good night and luck." If I may use that cue, it is time to close this column. I'll be back next month with the best in OTR books,

Next month we get technical. That is, we take a look at subjects ranging from tape care to just how did TV and the movies affect and change radio as we knew it? As always, Good Luck and Good Reading!



# Boris Aplon

From page 1

ed by Skelly Oil in the Midwest. In 1940, the makers of Ovaltine dropped their sponsorship of **Little Orphan Annie** and replaced it with coast to coast broadcasts of **Capt. Midnight** on Mutual. **Ed Prentiss** replaced Bouchey in the lead.

## The One and Only

Actor Aplon was radio's only Ivan Shark. He remained with the series until its demise in December 1949. He left the show for a five year stint in the Army, but his character never appeared on the air without being voiced by Aplon.

## End of Shark?

"When I went into the Army, they wanted to replace me," Aplon recalled for SPERDVAC last month. "There was one other character man in Chicago at that time, an Italian lawyer, who loved radio. We were competitors. He was always going after roles I was going after. 'He wasn't going into the Army and I was,' Aplon continued. "He went after all of the parts that I was leaving behind, including Ivan Shark. They auditioned him and said, 'Can't you sound more like Boris Aplon? Can't you sound more like Ivan Shark?' And he said, 'Damn it, if you want Boris Aplon, go get him.' So they wrote him (Shark) out."

## Shark Rises Again

Aplon was released from military duty the day after VJ Day and was immediately written back into the **Captain Midnight** action.

Recalling his years as radio's hated villain, Aplon noted, "People loved to hate him. I think people love villains. They're interesting characters. I found a voice which I used all the time and I guess that's why they never replaced me."

## Mix to Midnight and Back Again

During those years he appeared on **Captain Midnight** prior to the War, Aplon also played Dan Shaw, sidekick to **Tom Mix**. "This was (broadcast) at the Tribune Tower in Chicago. Our studios were right across the hall from each other," the radio performer noted. "The shows followed each other on the air. **Capt. Midnight** came first and then **Tom Mix** followed. So I had to split rehearsal time."

"I would come in at three for **Captain Midnight**, at 3:15 I would rehearse **Tom Mix** and then I'd go back to **Captain Midnight** and we'd do the cuts (script changes), then I'd go back and get the cuts from **Tom Mix**. When I'd get off the air on **Captain Midnight**, they'd hold the door open so I could run right across the hall to do **Tom Mix**." Actors **Russell Thorson** and **Curley Bradley** played the **Tom Mix** lead during the years he appeared on the western serial.

In the late thirties Aplon appeared on his first dramatic series, **Today's Children**. Program writer Erna Phillips played the lead, Mother Moran. Mr. Aplon also appeared on **Scattergood Baines** when it originated in Chicago. He also played a regular role on **Manhattan Mother**, a CBS serial of 1939.



BORIS APLON AS IVAN SHARK

The beard is fake but the moustache has been with him since age 15.

One SPERDVAC audience member asked how radio actors remembered the correct voices to use on the variety of shows they did. Radio performers are, according to the Aplon, "very proficient in instant characterization." He continued, "They weren't in great depth the way you approach a stage play. You find certain things in a character (to replicate) and a lot of them were stereotyped, I'm afraid."

"It seems that when the closing (program) announcement is made," he observed, "you go on to the next (character). It's out. You don't carry the character with you, until you get back to the studio."

At 78, Aplon, who looks about twenty years younger, is now playing the part of a 98 year old man in the stage play "Social Security." It will open April 4th at the La Mirada, CA, Civic Theatre.

**SPERDVAC MEETING**

Saturday  
15 April  
12 Noon

BOB LEMOND  
CBS Radio Announcer  
Buena Park Library  
7150 LaPalma, Buena Park, CA



## LIBRARY INDEXES, CHAPTER TWO

by Rex Quinn

In the September 1988 RADIOGRAM an article written by Chester Allen describes the newly available SPERDVAC Master Index. The creation of such an index has been discussed during the last two years, but it just never occurred until Chester and his team of volunteers made some decisions and went to work. And it required a LOT of work. There is now available to SPERDVAC members, a very well-implemented index of every show in every SPERDVAC library. Since the index has already been so well described by Chester, I will not pursue the many advantages of a printed index. Instead, I will attempt to amplify on the versatility of the Master Index in dBase III format.

### Database Is Powerbase

While many members may choose the printed copy in its loose leaf binder with annual supplements, there are some who have a computer and will be more interested in the 'Master Index on a disk'. Although the previous article indicates that the Master Index is available in dBase III format, other formats are available. The basic form begins with a format generated by Chester using a database program called Powerbase. Powerbase can then export the data file into formats that can be imported by other computer programs and word processors. The most simple form is pure text. At this time the computer system being discussed is based on the IBM or compatible PC/MS-DOS computer using 5 1/4" diskettes, but if there is an interest in the Apple Macintosh or CP/M version, those could be made available. Using the pure text form of the Master Index, any word processor should be capable of modifying and updating the index in your own computer.

For maximum versatility, a member would use one of the many database management programs. dBase III is one that has become a defacto standard but there are others that may also be suitable.

For those who are unfamiliar with a computer database, you can think of it as a kind of card file. For our use, the data file would be a card case containing almost 10,000 individual index cards. The card case is referred to as the 'database'. Each card would contain the desired information about only one radio show. The card in database terminology is a 'record' in the database. Each line or specific portion of a line on the card would be reserved for a particular bit of information such as the name of the show, date, etc. Each reserved area on the card is called a 'field' and the allotted space is predefined and named at the time the database is created. The user can place the cards in the case in any order desired. In the case of the Master Index, the cards would be organized alphabetically by show and chronologically by date. The computer makes it possible for the user to have more than one such 'card file' each with the cards in a different order. It also makes it possible for the user to insert new 'cards' in the proper order or to add new information to the card as desired. If the cast of each show were to be entered onto the card, it would be a simple matter to find every show in which a particular performer appeared.

## SPERDVAC MEETING SCHEDULE

*Planning Meeting:* 8 April, 10:30 AM

American S & L, 12185 Ventura Blvd., Studio City

*Regular Meetings:* 12:00 NOON

15 April - Buena Park Library

13 May - Western Federal, Studio City

10 June - Western Federal, Studio City

15 July - Buena Park Library

12 Aug. - Thousand Oaks Library

16 Sept. - Buena Park Library

14 Oct. - Western Federal, Studio City

10 & 11 Nov. - Annual Convention at

the Viscount Hotel, Los Angeles

No December meeting planned!

### PCFile Adequate and Cheaper

You can easily see the advantage to having the ability to sort and manipulate this information, but those who have a computer know that most database programs are expensive. There is an alternative. I recently obtained a copy of PCFile+ and found it to be quite useful for those having a PC/MS-DOS computer but lacking the budget to purchase one of the expensive commercial database packages. It will allow you to modify the data structure to add additional fields such as one for performers' names or your own reel reference numbers. You could also sort by year if you wish. It will very quickly find strings of text so that you could find a particular show by title if even if you couldn't remember, for example if it had been done on Escape or Suspense.

PCFile+, together with two other utility programs, is available from SPERDVAC. The charge is \$16.00 to cover the cost of the four diskettes plus a nominal copying and mailing charge. The program comes on three diskettes, one of which contains a 390 page manual that you can print out. This program is offered as 'shareware' which means that it can be freely distributed, but cannot be sold.

If you like and use the program you are asked by the author of the program to pay for it. For \$69.95 you would, as a registered user, receive a bound copy of the manual, technical assistance from the author and upgrades as they become available.

The two other 'shareware' programs would be of use to those interested in looking at only the text version on a disk. They are List and Search. They will enable the user to browse through the text or to scan for a particular string of characters. Documentation covering the use of the software is included on the diskette. The authors of these programs ask for donations of \$15 and \$12 respectively.

I hope that this has helped to explain some of the mysteries of the 'Master Index on a disk' and that some of you will find it to be of some use.



Send your wants in  
O T R - r e l a t e d  
m a t e r i a l t o  
McGee's Closet, %  
Barbara J. Watkins,  
PO Box 561,  
South Pasadena,  
CA 91030

## WHAT IS THE ALLEN ROCKFORD AWARD? by Larry Gassman

In the January issue of the RADIOGRAM, Bobb Lynes wrote an article which mentioned that Barbara Watkins had won the Allen Rockford award. We have received a few inquiries asking about the history of this award.

In 1979 radio collector and radio broadcast host Allen Rockford died. Allen, was in the good sense of the word, a total radio fanatic. He would eat, drink, sleep, and think radio 24 hours a day, 25 hours during leap year.

His commitment was so strong that the Friends of Old Time Radio chose to honor his memory by inaugurating the Allen Rockford Award. Rockford was 35 when he died, but his name lives on every year at the Friends of Old Time Radio conventions when a deserving collector is presented with this award which bears his name. The award is subjective in nature. Nominations for this award are submitted to Jay Hickerson and his committee makes

the selection. To be considered you must have your name submitted. For example, this year Bob Lynes wrote a letter submitting the name Barbara Watkins. The man who shares this award for 1988, Barry Hill, had his name submitted by Tom Monroe.

The trophy has been awarded since 1979. Past winners include:

Ken Piletic, 1979; John Dunning and Charles Ingersoll, 1980; Charlie Stumpf, 1981; Roger Hill, 1982; Ray Stanich, 1983; Jim Snyder and Bob Burnham, 1984; Dick Osgood, 1985; Frank Bresee, 1986; no award, 1987; Barbara Watkins and Barry Hill, 1988.

Perhaps one of the best ideas in quite awhile was the suggestion of Barry Hill. Mr. Hill lives and collects radio shows in England. He began a radio association called the Old Time radio Collectors Association. He maintains an extensive library for members as well as a huge personal library. He records up to 90 hours of programs per week for preservation purposes. Contrary to popular belief, the BBC does not have a great deal of room for storage. Remember that radio did not die in Britain as it did here. The shows continue to be produced even to this day. Hill has worked out an agreement with the BBC to record and preserve a great deal of the material which has recently been produced.

My guess is that there are a very few collectors in this country or any other for that matter who would have the energy to do what Barry Hill has done over the past several years. We applaud him for his dedication and skill.

If you wish to submit the name of a person you feel would be deserving of such an award, contact Jay Hickerson at PO Box 4321, Camden, Ct. 06514. While you're at it, ask for subscription information concerning Jay's fine publication: **HELLO AGAIN**. The newsletter comes out 6 times a year and is packed full of interesting information.

**FOR SALE:** REVOX Model B-77 recorders: 1)71/2 & 15 i.p.s. half-track version with direct-input and tape-dumb (edit) modifications, improved output amplifier, remote control, vari-speed, and carrying case; good condition except for some "smoggy" switches, \$1150.00; 2)71/2 & 15 i.p.s. quarter-track version, with direct-input modification and hard fiber carrying case, very little use, \$865.00. AKG C-450 series condenser microphones: set includes three C-452EB preamps (modified for universal Phantom powering), three CK-1 cardioid capsules, four CK-2 omnidirectional capsules; all in excellent condition, \$1,000.00 for complete set. contact: Ron Streicher, 545 Cloverleaf Way, Monrovia, CA 91016, (818)359-8012, FAX: (818)357-0602.

**WANTED:** Any information on KMOX St. Louis country music radio show of the 1940's. Its stars were Skeets Yaney and the Lucky Penny Trio, and was sponsored by Slacks Furniture company. contact: Charlie Salvato, 12119 Pompano, Houston, TX 77072.

**WANTED:** Cassettes on Rita Hayworth. She appeared on six or seven LUX RADIO THEATER shows; anyone know which ones and when? Believe she was on a FIBBER McGEE AND MOLLY also. Any information will be appreciated. Contact: Al Perry, 343 3/4 N. Occidental Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, (213)389-6096.

**WANTED:** As many programs of any background information on THE SIXSHOOTER starring Jimmy Stewart and BIG JON AND SPARKIE with Jon Arthur Goerss as I can get. Would like to contact Eugene in Cincinnati who was Eukie Butcha, and writer Don Kortekamp, also in Cincinnati, but no addresses. Can anyone give me a lead, please? Contact: C. Alain Ladd, Apt. #19, 1535 East Canfield Lane, Anaheim, CA 92805-1036, (714)758-9924.

**FOR TRADE:** Good copy of Fred Allen's Much Ado About Me with dust jacket. Will trade for Tune In Tomorrow, Big Broadcast (soft or hardcover), or your OTR on cassette (send catalog if interested). contact: Greg Seltzer, 39 Martin Cook Road, Richmond, NH 03470.

**FOR SALE:** REVOX B-77 tape deck, Professional Studio model, 1/2 track, 71/2/15 i.p.s., perfect condition. These list for \$2,600 now, the first \$1,000 can have it, shipped case and all. Contact: J.A. "Ted" Theodore, 1175 Brockton St., El Cajon, CA 92020, (619)448-444.

**WANTED:** Will the person who requested my catalog of radio shows please send another postcard. I lost your address. Sorry! contact: David Fisk, 4585 College View Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90041.



# Hugh's Hues

by Hugh Anderson

Mercury Theatre Marches On! Battle Creek, Michigan, is the home of two luminaries: The cereal giant Kellogg's and Sperdvacian Jack Palmer. Jack had graciously volunteered four shows into the Mercury Collection. They are 1/2 hour shows from the early forties. Now all the rest of you good folks have to do is look thru your collection and help us find the other 60 or 70 shows. We might just be the only source of Mercury Theatre. Your help is needed! It only takes a few minutes and it is a way we can all have an active part in Sperdvac.

On April 15, 1908, near Polcat Creek, Gilford County, near Greensboro, NC, a little fella began a life that would reshape radio newscasting beginning with WWII and later TV newscasting. At the age of five, 1913, his family headed to Blanchard, Washington, 70 miles north of Seattle, and lived in a tent in the back yard of a cousin of Ethel Lamb, his mother. His dad became a locomotive engineer for a logging camp; he became a logger working with his dad. He attended Washington State College in Pullman, graduating in 1930 with a Phi Beta Kappa key. He worked as a dishwasher, local sportscaster, chairman on a surveying team, among others. He majored in history & speech, participated in drama & debates, was president of the student council.

Washington state is generally credited with offering the first course in radio broadcasting. It also put on the air campus station KWSC in 1922 which is where our subject did his sportcasting.

## First Jobs

His first job, at \$25 a week, was arranging European tours for student groups. He later helped displaced German students and professors who were fleeing Hitler's Germany. He made his first overseas trip by working aboard ship; made speeches at schools to raise money for student betterment; did radio lectures in 1930 & 1932; arranged speeches by academics including radio broadcasts; did minor broadcasts in 1933 with radio talks in '34 including one on CBS.

In the summer of 1935, CBS created the position of Director of Radio Talks and Education to arrange for radio speakers. Raymond Gram Swing was offered the job but he declined since it involved no actual broadcasting. Fred Willis, an assistant to Wm. Paley, and himself the Director of Education for the network, remembered a young man he had worked with in helping the displaced students and later, in arranging the educational broadcasts. And so in September, 1935, Edward R. Murrow became an employee of CBS.

Murrow and his wife went to Europe, meeting CBS's only full-time overseas representative, Cesar Saerchinger in London, continuing thru Europe attending to the business of arranging for radio talks. Ed made his broadcasting debut as a CBS employee before leaving Europe, doing a newscast on Christmas Eve filling in for Robert Trout.

In February, 1937, Murrow became European Director since Saerchinger wanted to return home. This was somewhat of a downward step at the time. He did little

broadcasting, doing such airings as describing a world-wide Boy Scout encampment and a man-in-the-street interview.

## European Experience Begins

Murrow hired Wm. L. Shirer who began as European correspondent in Vienna, October 1, 1937. NBC was looked upon as the National Radio of the United States and it was Murrow's and Shirer's job to dispel that notion. In march, 1938, Shirer was in Yugoslavia, Murrow in Warsaw, both assembling segments for a Columbia School of the Air program when it became apparent Hitler intended to take over Austria. Shirer returned to Vienna, but could not broadcast so Murrow sent him to London to give his report and Murrow went to Vienna.

Bill Paley wanted to know what people in other countries were thinking so he had Shirer and Murrow set-up a multinational location radio link to broadcast their reactions. At 8 PM, march 13, 1938, in New York, 5 PM, Los Angeles and 1 AM, Monday March 14 in London, the **European Roundup** began. Robert Trout was the announcer followed by Wm. Shirer-London, Labour M.P. Ellen Wilkinson-London, Edgar Mower in Paris, Pierre Huss-Berlin, Frank Gervasi-Rome, Ed. R. Murrow in Vienna and Senator Lewis B. Schwellenbach, state of Washington, from Washington D.C. This later evolved into the **World News Roundup**. It was Murrow's first significant news broadcast.

## Records Blitz from Roof Top

Murrow returned to London, began regular broadcasts. He made his first **This is London** opening on September 22, 1938. He later did the nighttime rooftop broadcasts beginning in August, 1940, amid the blitz. These developed into the **London After Dark** series with nine microphones: Murrow from a rooftop, Larry Lesueur from an Air Raid Precaution Force Hdqs., Eric Sevareid at Hammersmith Dance Hall, NBC's Fred Bates at Buckingham Palace with ensuing segments by Canadian and British reporters.

## Told It As It Was

Murrow was extremely influential in guiding the average American's view of the war and the manner the English people were handling the shortages, the defeats, the nights in air raid shelters, The Battle For Britain, having their children sent to the country to live out of the bombing, and the V-2 rocket barrage while we worked in neutrality coming out of the depression. He felt and said America needed to send more to Britain than it was doing.

While doing this he further developed and refined his speaking style. Murrow established the broadcast attitude that "I have an old fashioned belief that Americans want to make up their own minds on the basis of all available information. The conclusions you draw are your own affair. I have no desire to influence them and shall leave such efforts to those who have more confidence in their own judgments that I have in mine." Edward Bliss, who along with Raymond Gram Swing was a TV writer for Murrow, wrote his style in radio shortwave reports from London during the war years, "What is happening, how does it relate to America, how does the common man feel?"

Go to next page

# SPERDVAC



The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

## SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM

c/o Marty Kallenberger  
11782 Lorealen St.  
Garden Grove, CA 92641



1111-07

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## FIRST CLASS MAIL

## From Under the Green Eyeshade



Hello again. Cheers to the minute minority! 180 out of electorate of 1465, Egad! In SPERDVAC the majority does not rule.

Got a letter from S. Scott re. not getting Dec. 88 'Gram. If others still wondering--no meeting, no 'Gram. Rec'd a cordial short note from John Dehner saying he enjoys the 'Gram for keeping him informed on current activities of old (radio) friends and reminds him of the past. Ed Weichsler, D.J. at Large, 2550 Locust St., Port Huron, MI 48060, writes of his interest in our organization.

He states he's a free-lance dj with an audio libe dating back to the teens. He also has a soft spot for late 30's & 40's suspense & comedy radio shows. Wanna trade with him?

For the second time apologies to Mr. John Cooper. Ed: forgot to give him credit for Allen's Antics script last issue. It popped up from somewhere with no by-line. Sorry for the ego deflation. Please send items in again.

The thing goes on--note Mr. Lembesis' article on the first dj and the shorter one by Mr. Schneider in Vox Pop, the latter shortened to eliminate duplication. Egad, lads, maybe t'was a woman--that should perk up the girdle brigade.

Again please get in your offerings before the deadline. Too, let our Circulation Manager (Directory) know right away if you have an address change. "Deputy" Dan, said manager, will then get our masterwork to you nearly on time.

Read you, Ciao, RMK

RADIOGRAM PAGE TWELVE

## Hugh's Hues

### Becomes CBS Exec

After the war, Murrow returned to the states to become a vice-president of CBS. He had two TV shows, "See It Now" and "Person To Person". He became an attacker of Senator Joe McCarthy and on March 9, 1954, on "See It Now", did a documentary on McCarthy. To some, this was viewed as Murrow's supreme moment. He became Director of the United States Information Agency in January, 1961, overseeing the Voice of America.

### Cigs Get Him

The lighted cigarette had been a Murrow trademark. Murrow's health began to fail and in 1963, lung cancer was discovered. One lung was removed. A week after Murrow returned to work following the operation and recovery, President Kennedy was assassinated. President Johnson and Murrow had different views about the Information Agency and Murrow resigned. He retired to his home in Pawlin, New York, going in and out of hospitals until he died on April 27, 1965.

This is Eric Sevareid's eulogy: "There are some of us here, and I am one of them, who owe their professional life to this man. There are many working here and in other networks and stations who owe to Ed Murrow their love of their work, their standards and sense of responsibility. He was a shooting star and we will live in his afterglow a very long time."

There is so much to be written about this man, it was difficult to reduce his life to these few paragraphs. I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I did writing it. I gathered this material from: "Those Radio Commentators", "News for Everyman", "As Good As Any" and "Golden Throats and Silver Tongues." All super books about super newsmen and announcers.

"I'm goin' back to the wagon, boys. These shoes are killin' me!"