

SPERDVAC *RADIOGRAM*

Vol. XV, No. 3 The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy March 1989

Busy Actress Vander Pyl Guests



by Dan Haefele

Jean Vander Pyl's best known voice work is probably the role of Wilma Flintstone on the successful TV cartoon series. Years before she began cartoon work she was one of that select group of Hollywood's radio performers.

"Radio was in the hands of advertising agencies," she explained at SPERDVAC's February meeting. "The

Robert Young and Jean Vander Pyl
as Jim and Margaret Anderson in *Father Knows Best*

All fotos courtesy Ms. Vander Pyl

sponsors hired the advertising agencies who in turn had their own writers, producers and directors of the radio shows." She frequently spent her days approaching casting directors at the advertising agencies in search of jobs.

Cont. p. 8

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Larry Gassman

New Meeting place for March

Thanks to Chester Allen we have a new place in "The Valley". We will give it a try on March 11. The meeting will begin at noon and will take place at Western Federal Savings and Loan in Studio City. Turn off the Ventura Freeway at Laurel Canyon Blvd. The bank is one block west of Laurel Canyon Blvd. at 12175 Ventura Blvd.

There is plenty of parking in the back. Please remember that we have to contend with two hour parking which is enforced. Park in the back and go through the back lobby into the building. The community room is upstairs on the 2nd floor. Be careful to stay out of the bank. They are open until 1 PM. We will have a sign just inside the back entrance to guide you to the meeting room. The phone number is: 818-760-0822.

Thank you to:

Jim Watson who takes over from Duane Harding as our new Printed Material Librarian. We will give you Jim's address as soon as the library can be moved. Jim will start operating sometime in April.

Barbara Watkins now takes over from Bobb Lynes as HM open Reel librarian. The library has already been moved. They both live inside the same PO Box so you can contact Barbara by writing to PO Box 628, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Please note the new zip code for South Pasadena.



Ms. Vander Pyl as Mary Aldrich
with Ezra Stone--Henry Aldrich

SPERDVAC DIRECTORY

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SPERDVAC INFORMATION AND OFFICIAL BUSINESS:

Box 1587, Hollywood, CA 90078 - (213) 947-9800

MEMBERSHIP AND RADIOGRAM SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Duane Harding, 443 Appletree Court, Camarillo, CA 93010

CIRCULATION MGR: Dan Haefele, 436 D, 136th St., Hawthorne, CA 90405

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

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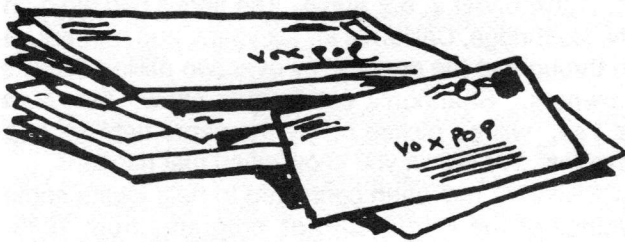
SPERDVAC MEETING

Saturday
March 11th
12 Noon

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Ivan Shark in Capt. Midnight

Western Fed Savings & Loan
12175 Ventura Blvd., Studio City, CA

VOX POP



ABOUT THE MATTER OF THE "FIRST D.J."

Martin Block may well have been the first to employ the term, "Disc Jockey"; but, he was certainly not the first to play records over the air - especially as an easy way to fill air time. There were indeed others; and, that thread of prototypical DJ-ism is also woven into the ongoing argument of who-did-what-first in broadcasting.

It is said that KDKA, in Pittsburgh, once claimed the distinction of being the first on the air, but backed off when dozens of other angry broadcasters pointed out that they had had experimental transmitters going from about 1900 on. In fact, so many of these guys emerged from the woodwork that the argument became moot. And, with no points to be made with that claim, folks started looking for others. KDKA, by the way, settled for the distinction of being the first commercial station in the country, being licensed in 1920.

The only transmitters available between 1895 and 1905 were the so called "spark gap" type. Conventional Wisdom of the day declared that one could transmit a dandy bunch of Morse Code with the things, but not voice - hence no music either. By 1907, or so, the vacuum tube was available to a few experimenters, among them Frank Conrad; and, yes, he did indeed play records over the air in 1910. hence, he is today given credit by some broadcast historians as being the first Disc Jockey.

However, in 1902, there was a little man in San Jose who didn't hear the Conventional Wisdom because he was too busy devising a Rube Goldberg sort of gizmo to actually modulate a spark gap transmitter. And, as all you OTR types know, if you can modulate a carrier, you can put a voice on it. For want of a better name, one would have to call the device a microphone - although it didn't resemble what we now recognize as a microphone. It was large and cumbersome; and, since it was part of the transmitter, it couldn't be moved. It was also very hot (the thing had to be water cooled), so neither could it be handled.

Still, it worked. Since the "microphone" couldn't be moved, a wind-up phonograph was pushed up close to it and played. By that very token, the little man in San Jose became this country's (if not the world's) first Disc Jockey.

I don't, at the moment, recall his name either. However, if you'd like his name, I'm sure you can get it by calling the research desk at the Santa Clara County Library, in San

Jose, and inquiring into the history of Radio Station KQW (not KQEW as suggested in February's "Green Eye-shade" column).

James R. Ahern

KNX began on one of the motion picture lots, was operating out of a couple of penthouse-type structures atop the Otto K. Olesen building, Southeast corner Vine & Selma, when I came to L.A. in 1934. Company name, Western Broadcast Company, owned by Naylor Rogers and Guy Earl. KNX moved to 5939 Sunset in '35 or '36, into former headquarters of Hollywood Women's Club. Studio A, big enough for orchestra and drama, still had a fireplace along the North wall; engineers never could decide whether it helped or injured acoustics. I went to work there in February 1937. The move to Columbia Square was a banner event, and should have been really celebrated last April 30th, the 50th anniversary; understand it wasn't. The East wing housed offices of Lord & Thomas (later Foote, Cone, & Belding), Columbia Artists Bureau, an insurance firm, a clothing store, a record shop, B of A branch, and Brittingham's restaurant & Bar ("Brittenhaus"?)

The "wag" who put a flash bulb in the "on the air" cue light in the "Frank Watanabe and the Honorable Archie" studio (in the Vine and Selma location) is reputed to be the same fella who, fulfilling his staff announcer's duty of supplying props where needed, brought in a glass of ice water instead of the needed hot water (real hot!) for the moment when Fred Shields would intone in the Alka Seltzer com'l on the nightly Glenn Hardy 9 o'clock News, "Listen to it fizz!" That night it didn't! The "wag" was one of the finest people who ever worked in radio, Thomas Frebairn Smith, a true pioneer at KNX, who went on to become a producer-director and the first Secretary of the Television Academy. He was my friend and mentor. His serious demeanor cloaked his terrific wit.

CBS acquired KNX in December of 1936, after the Don Lee Network (26 affiliates in California, Oregon, and Washington) defected to Mutual. It was decided to use the pronunciation, "Lohss Ang (hard g) eless" because our big rival, NBC affiliate KFI, used "Lohss Anjeless". As an independent, KNX had not mentioned L.A., using "The Voice of Hollywood". CBS combined them, as you mentioned, leading to a couple of funnies, thanks to announcer Hal Sawyer, who sometimes dozed a bit. Night supervisor Tom Hanlon usually checked up on him, but twice he didn't fully awake: once saying, "KNX, etc., the Voice of Hallowe'en" (Oct. 31) and next, after the Havana Treaty, reallocating frequencies in the U.S., Mexico, Canada, and Cuba, "KNX, etc., soon to be 20 miles higher on your dial"!! (we were moving from 1050 to 1070).

I have many wonderful memories of those great days and people, saddened a bit by what I saw in my last visit to Columbia Square in 1969--most of the studios being used for storage, dimly lit and deserted.

SPERDVAC is great--more power to you all!

Dick Joy



by Barbara J. Watkins

Recently a gentleman called SPERDVAC and inquired about the following information. He is doing research on several programs produced by CBS and NBC in America and then broadcast in Mexico. The shows were done between 1942 and 1945. He would like to hear from anyone who knows about these shows and others done in a similar fashion. If copies exist he would like to hear them. Sr. Ortiz is writing a book about these shows and the ideological impact on Mexico.

The shows in question are, from NBC: *Contra Es Pionaje*, *LaMarcha del Tiempo*, *Epopeya del Nuevo Mundo*, *Radio Teatro de America*. From CBS: *Las Ideas No Se Matan*, *La Marca del Jaguar*, *Estamos En Guerra*, *Hit Parade*, *Hace Un Mundo Mejor*.

Write to Jose Luis Ortiz, Augusto Rodin 475. Col. Mixcoac. Del Benito Juarez. 03910 Mexico D.F. Mexico.

Bill and Teresa Harper, publishers of POW-WOW, newsletter for *Straight Arrow* fans, are looking for information on **Glen Delano** and **Fred Howard**. They would like to hear from anyone who knew or worked with either of them, or have information about them or the whereabouts of surviving family members. Please write to them at POW-WOW, Harpers, 310 E. Buena Vista Avenue, North Augusta, SC 29841. You are invited to use this same address if you are a fan of *Straight Arrow* or just want to learn more about this fictional character of radio, comic books and strips. Please enclose a SASE.

New member Art Pierce is working on a book about **Jean Arthur's** career and would be glad to hear from anyone who has copies of Jean Arthur radio appearances. He knows that she did at least 22 broadcasts, but has so far located only nine. If you can help Art, please write him at 339 Nassau St., Rome, NY 13440.

Another new member, Michael H. McCoy, writes that the September/October 1988 issue of *American Heritage* included a feature on Amtrak's Empire Builder, and led off with mention of an NBC radio show in the early 1930's based on the train, and named after it. He is also a member of another organization that is planning statewide celebrations on June 10, 1989, on the train's 60th birthday, and would love to locate some tapes of any episodes from this series. If anyone has any of these shows or more information about it, please write to him at: One Hiawatha Circle, Madison, WI 53711.

Honorary member Bob Shannon is pleased to announce that his series *Tales of the Old West* has started on the North America One satellite network. The show airs at 11:15 am and 10:00 pm central time on Galaxy 2, Transponder 2, 6.2 Audio. The series had aired on KCSN, Northridge, California for six years, and now will be heard throughout the country, by over two million satellite dish owners. Shannon's call-in quiz show, *The Man Says Yes*, will be picked up by the same network in a few months. We will let you know when that happens.

SPERDVAC has been contacted to help locate some recordings of the **Eddie Cantor** programs from 1933-1936. If you have any or have any leads to finding some, please contact Bob Albrant, Box 7840, Ventura, CA 93006.

If you have questions or information to share, write to INFORMATION PLEASE, Barbara J. Watkins, P.O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91030. Till next time, space-man's luck!

ATTENTION PLEASE

I am collecting recordings of Stan Freberg's appearances on radio and television in which he promotes his new book, *It Only Hurts When I Laugh*.

If you have tapes of local interviews he has done, please let me know. I will trade or provide tape to you. And if you can provide these specific interviews, I would appreciate it.

1. KRLA 2-hours, Thursday 2-16-89
2. Michael Jackson ABC Radio 1-hour Friday 1-27-89
3. Tom Snyder ABC Radio probably 1-hour, Thursday 2-1-89
4. An interview done on KGIL in San Fernando, date unknown.

Call me at 213-947-9800 or write PO Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90604.

Perhaps you can also help with another project. Jack Benny fans will be happy to know that later this year we hope, the most complete Jack Benny radio log will be released. Gary Dunn, Larry Gassman and I would appreciate hearing from anyone who can tell us if the following Benny shows exist. We would very much like to hear them. They are: 77 Canada Dry Shows 5-4-32 through 1-26-33, plus 3-3 through 3-24-33, 4-7, 4-14, 4-28, 5-5 through 6-2-33, 6-16-33 through 12-3-33, 12-17-33 through 2-18-34. Also in 1934: 3-25, 4-20, 5-25 through 7-13-34, 7-27, 8-10, 8-17, 9-7, 11-25, 12-9, 12-23 and 12-30. From 1935: 1-13 through 10-27, 11-10 through 12-29. 1936: 1-5, 1-12, 1-26, 2-2, 2-9, 3-1 and 5-31. 1937: 1-17, 1-24, 10-17, 11-14, and 12-26. 1939: 4-2-39. 1950: 12-24 and 12-31-50. And 1951: 1-14, 2-4, and 2-25.

If you have Benny on guest appearances or on shows done overseas, I would also appreciate hearing from you. Or if you have any information you think might be of interest for the completion of this log, write me or call 213-947-9800 or Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90604.

John Gassman

Hugh's Hues

by Hugh Anderson

"Golden Throats & Silver Tongues" by Ray Poindexter is an absorbing recounting of the flow of announcers through the first twenty-five years of radio. One of my favorites is chronicled below.

Rise of Red Barber

Walter Lanier "Red" Barber was working his way through the University of Florida as a janitor at the University Club where the professors lived. During the Christmas holidays of 1929, an agricultural professor, a club resident who broadcast a daily 45 minute program on the campus station, WRLT, needed help to read scripts and enlisted Red with an offer of dinner. Off to the station and Red read. . . without a rehearsal, "Certain Aspects of Obstetrics." After the program ended, the station manager asked Red to work as a part time announcer. Red declined because of his work load but the manager persisted. Finally Red said O.K. but at fifty dollars a week. The manager agreed and on March 4, 1930, Red Barber started his career in broadcasting. He remained an announcer until the station's sportscaster left at the beginning of the football season. Red asked for and was given the job. He made no preparation, not even names, for the first game. A disaster! After the third game, Red was given the word and he asked for another chance. He made a spotting chart, watched practice and informed himself of the game. His next broadcast brought two hundred favorable telegrams.

Gets Raise in Salary

Red had his first play-by-play endurance test broadcasting the Florida State High School Basketball Tournament on WRLT in early 1931. The games started at 8:00 a.m. and continued throughout the broadcast day. He learned how demanding continuous announcing could be. His salary went up to \$75 a month the second year. Toward the end of the year, the chief announcer left and Barber was given the job at \$150 a month. He was twenty-three now and would be married.

Barber wanted to advance and would take audition trips to the big city. He took the NBC audition in Chicago and was invited to WLW, Cincinnati, for a tryout. He bought a new suit of clothes and competed against thirty others for the chief announcer, Chet Thomas, in the cathedral studio. Red won, returned to Gainesville and gave his notice but a telegram arrived canceling the job. Barber fired off an emphatic letter about this being breach of ethics and on March 4, 1934, received a telegram asking if he would broadcast the Cincinnati Reds baseball games at \$25 a week, not on WLW but on sister station WASI. Red accepted, was upped to \$30 a week before the season started and after the season, was given the job of broadcasting the University of Cincinnati football games.

Broadcast First World Series

Barber and Bob Elson did Mutual's first World Series Broadcast in October, 1935. He also broadcast Ohio State football games that year. He went to Havana for the

New Year's day football game between Villanova and Auburn for Mutual, 1937. Later in 1937, Al Helfler was named as Red's sports assistant in Cincinnati.

Wins First Award

Greater New York baseball broadcasts started in 1939. Red did the Brooklyn Dodger games on WOR and WHN. Helfler was his assistant. That summer, Bob Elson (baseball on WSN, Chicago), Barber and Helfler broadcasted the All-Star game for Mutual. Red won the Sporting News baseball award that year. He also had the distinction of doing the first telecast of a major league game, August 26, 1939, between the Dodgers and Cincinnati Reds.

Red earned \$15,000 a year in 1941 as a play-by-play man and \$15,000 a year for a daily sports show and commentary for Pathe' News. Just nine years before he had done play-by-play for \$50 a week. Walter Lanier "Red" Barber. One of the best!

Fifty years ago, the New York "Telegram" Editor's Poll selected **Lowell Thomas** as the top news commentator, **Don Wilson** as the best announcer and **Bill Stern** as the number one sportscaster. The "Radio Guide" poll named Don Wilson as best announcer and as top commentators, Lowell Thomas and **Dorothy Thompson**.

From Wallik to Wallace

Fifty years ago Myron Leon Wallik (later known as **Mike Wallace**) graduated from the University of Michigan and went to work as a salesman, continuity writer and announcer at stations WOOD and WASH, Grand Rapids, Mich. The stations were owned by a furniture store and a laundry. His total income was twenty dollars a week.

DIDJAKNOW?

On March 14, 1937, **Fred Allen** appeared on Jack Benny's program to do physical battle with him. This was the apex of a month's feuding between the two, trading insults each week. Radio survey figures show that only one broadcast of FDR's fireside chats had ever drawn a larger audience. The demand for tickets to the show was so enormous that the show was broadcast from the ballroom of the Hotel Pierre in New York. . . . The one Fireside Chat that outdrew the Benny-Allen Feud Broadcast was on March 15, 1933. On March 12th, President Roosevelt addressed the nation on his **First Fireside Chat**, explaining the reason for his historic bank moratorium. Then three days later, on the 15th, he broadcast the chat in which he detailed his plans to reopen the banks. . . . NBC broadcast the first World News Roundup at 8:00 pm (EST) on March 13, 1938. The anchor man was **Robert Trout**, in New York, with **William L. Shirer** in London, **Edgar Ansel Mowrer** in Paris, **Edward R. Murrow** in Vienna, **Frank Gervasi** in Rome and **Pietette Huss** in Berlin. Their on-the-spot reporting gave a sense of immediacy and accuracy to the program. . . . In March, 1941, Murrow hired **Charles Collingwood**. Murrow then began broadcasting from London. . . The U.S. Office

RADIO IN REVIEW

by Chris Lembesis

Welcome again! Before we take our visit to the OTR Bookshelf, a side trip is in order to the mailbag and some announcements to share. First off, I would like to correct an error. In January, I reviewed a work titled RADIO STATION TREASURY: 1900-1946, and mentioned it was self published. I stand corrected, and I wish to thank the author for bringing it to my attention. CRB Research Books, Inc. has a catalog of about 100 titles from many authors on areas such as espionage, electronics, and CB radio.

My thanks to author Thomas DeLong for sending a copy of the **Museum of Broadcasting's Classical Music Collection** guide. He co-authored this publication with an excellent article titled: *Reaching Out: The Classical Touch of Radio*. It covers the programs and personalities in the classical field during the Golden Age of Radio. It is available from the Museum of Broadcasting, 1 East 53rd St., New York, NY 10022, for \$2 + postage.

From member Don Maris, an announcement that the Big-D Super Collectibles Show is rapidly approaching. The Big-D means Dallas, and every year this is THE show collectors try not to miss. If your forte is Disneyana, OTR premiums, Big Little Books, Comics, and other collectibles, plan on attending. For additional information, write to: Don Maris, P.O. Box 111266, Arlington, TX 76007. It's scheduled for July 21, 22, 23, 1989.

If your interest is advertising, especially radio's use of it during its Golden Years, an excellent museum exists that shows that and more. The American Advertising Museum, 9 NW 2nd Ave, Portland, OR 97209, is a must visit if you are ever in that area, but if visiting is not possible, they have an excellent 6 cassette series called: An Audio History of Commercial Radio. Written, produced and narrated by John Salisbury, with opening commentary by Red Barber, this is a production highly recommended. Don't worry if the excerpts are out of order, or a few have minor sound defects. It is the meaning of the project you will appreciate as you listen. Mr. Salisbury spent three years putting this together. His own company, Radio Heritage Production, gave over \$40,000 of its time as its contribution. The cassette production reviewed above sells for \$29.95 + \$3.50 postage for those interested. Like ourselves, The American Advertising Museum is non-profit, and you may be interested in their projects.

Do your OTR collecting interests include **Big Little Books**? They played an important part in our cultural growth when our favorite film, comic characters, and yes, radio heroes were written to an eager audience. They were small in size, with text and artwork on each facing page.



They are fun to collect and many of you certainly have a few in your collection. For those who want to know more or to expand your collection, and meet fellow fans and collectors, there is an excellent organization you may want to know about. The Big Little Book Collectors club of America, P.O. Box 1242, Danville, CA 94526, has been in existence for eight years. They publish a bi-monthly magazine called The Big Little Times, and have over 400 members. My thanks to Larry Lowery, its founder, for sharing this information. Larry is also the author of **The Collector's Guide to Big Little Books and Similar Books**.

As a final note, I wish to thank University Microfilms International for the surprise I saw when they sent me their latest **Mass Media and Communications** Brochure! I edited and restructured their OTR dissertations to assist those of you who wanted to know what is written on our favorite subject, and to be able to locate it quickly. My thanks to Barbara Buckley and her staff. For a copy, write to UMI, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. For those of you who can attend our meetings, I will have brochures of the above, until they run out. Now it's time for our visit to the OTR Bookshelf and the latest releases.

The Damrosch Dynasty - America's First Family of Music. George Martin, Houghton Mifflin Co., Wayside Rd., Burlington, MA 01803, 1983. \$30, Cloth-bound.

This is a fascinating multi-biography of the members of the Damrosch family who contributed more than any other to the development of serious music in America. The most prominent name that comes to our mind is Dr. Walter Damrosch who conducted the **NBC Music Appreciation Hour** from 1927 to 1942.

Though only one chapter covers his radio work, it is still an important one. I have included this because so little has been written about classical music from the Golden Days of Radio in comparison to the comedy and dramatic shows.

In this chapter, Martin sets the scene that allowed for the development of classical programming. Damrosch used the classroom for his program to introduce young people to the enjoyment of classical music. It was a bold idea and it worked. We also learn about the politics of radio at that time and we go behind the scenes to learn about the composition of this program.

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Radio

It Only Hurts When I Laugh. Stan Freberg, Times Books, 201 E. 50th St, New York, NY 10022, 1988, \$19.95, Clothbound.

How many of you were at the SPERDVAC meeting of June, 1976? I, and many others enjoyed a wonderful afternoon with our first guest and Honorary Member, Stan Freberg. Whether it was *Time for Beany* on live TV, his wonderful Capitol albums such as *St. George and the Dragnet*, *Green Christmas*, or *The Stan Freberg Show*, we were witnessing a master satirist at work.

Here, in his long overdue autobiography, are his reflections on humor, advertising and radio. Yes, radio was Stan's first love. As he recalled . . . "When other kids ran out to play baseball, I ran in to play the radio. I was born on August 7 between the NBC chimes and a Rinso commercial, which makes me a Leo, with Lever Brothers as my rising sign." In a chapter titled Radiohead, Freberg presents a fine tribute to what radio was all about. Special tributes given to Fred Allen and Norman Corwin, both for their contributions, and influence.

Wonderful anecdotes fill this volume. His radio work with Henry Morgan, Jack Benny and others are recalled. And of course, that wonderful fifteen week series he did in 1957.

How good was that series? The critics and the fans loved it, but the ax still fell. -- TV you know. It is interesting to note that Capitol Records put out a two-hour album of the highlights of that series . . . and it won a Grammy award!

Freberg's award-winning commercials are also spotlighted in this volume, which we are told, is the first of a planned two volume autobiography. We at Sperdvac congratulate our Honorary Member for this work and wish him all the success, which we hope might be a return visit to the Sperdvac mike.

KATE SMITH: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY. By Michael Pitts. Greenwood Press. 1988. \$37.95 Clothbound. (88 Post Road West, Post Office Box 5007 - Westport, CT 06881).

For those of you who attended our last convention, you had the opportunity to meet and hear long time Kate Smith fan and friend Richard Hayes talk about his experiences in knowing and collecting her works. The same enthusiasm and knowledge he gave us comes through again in a beautiful foreward to this work in the Greenwood Press continuing series of Bio-Bibliographies in the Performing Arts, this volume being No. 2. Included are an Introduction, Biography, Discography, Stage Appearances, Broadcast Appearances, Sheet Music, Song Books, Filmography, Bibliography, Record, Song, and Subject Index.

Pitts' book is well researched and Smith's radio output is not skimpy. Her contributions to broadcasting, especially her wartime contributions require serious study, and this penetrating work does just that, and more.

SOURCEBOOK FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS: A DIRECTORY OF COLLECTIONS, RESOURCES, SCHOLARS, AND CRITICS IN THEATRE, FILM, AND TELEVISION. Compiled by Anthony Slide, Patricia Hanson, and Stephen Hanson. Greenwood Press. 1988. \$45 Clothbound. (88 Post Road West, Post Office Box 5007 - Westport, CT 06881).

To the researcher of radio history, the resources available to him are vast and varied. Major collections for listening and the written memoirs for study are located in various public and private institutions throughout the country. This work is an attempt to put those resources together as a valuable reference tool for the researcher. This work will be of use to the Librarian as well as the scholar specializing in the arts.

The contents include: an Introduction that defines the scope and purpose of this work; a listing of institutions and the works collected there, including addresses and phone numbers; a Who's Who of authors, scholars, archivists, critics, historians, and librarians involved in theatre, film, radio and TV, with addresses for the researcher who needs additional information; a list of bookshops in the English speaking world specializing in the performing arts; a list of journals and magazines in this subject area; specialist publishers; organizations, including the names, addresses and phone numbers of the guilds, unions, associations, and other institutions of the performing arts; and an index.

My feelings are mixed about this work. On one hand, this is a tremendous research tool, especially for those doing film research. On the other hand, it needs to be revised, especially in the area of radio history research I would revise the title to include radio. Most OTR organizations have been left out, including SPERDVAC. But, I am gratified to see groups such as The Thousand Oaks Public Library, Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, and NARA left in. I would suggest to the compilers that a revised edition be written to include ALL OTR groups. Until one is written, I recommend this one.

First You Dream, Then You Die. Francis Nevens, Jr. The Mysterious Press, 666 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10103, 1988, \$19.95, Clothbound.

In our collection of *Suspense* programs, you might have a few titles written by that master of suspense, Cornell Woolrich. This is his biography, written by the legal and literary consultant of the Woolrich estate for the last twenty years, and best qualified to write about a man who perceived himself as a failure, yet is considered by many as the Poe of the 20th century. How fortunate we are that his work was superbly adapted to radio. *Deadline At Dawn*, *The Black Curtain*, *Three O'Clock* and other works are considered radio masterpieces. Between 1943 and 1950, 31 Woolrich stories were adapted for *Suspense*. He was William Spier's first choice.

Vander Pyl ---

From page 1

Toilet Training

Director, **Carroll O'Meara** hired her to work on **The Phantom Pilot**. O'Meara, who was also the program's writer and producer, later became her husband. O'Meara hired actor **Howard Duff** for the program "because his voice sounded so mysterious". Vander Pyl's character was originally named "Taluha". Snickering musicians at a Polynesian restaurant informed Vander Pyl and O'Meara that the character name means "toilet".

Owen was a Meany

Dave Owen hired her to play Jennifer Asbury on **Scattergood Baines**. She won the audition over several top-rated actresses. Director Owen was rumored to have been thrown out of Chicago radio because he was often verbally abusive to performers.

"He'd make us all use just one microphone," she recalled. "We'd step over people (getting to the microphone) to do the shows. Then he would come into the studio and get down on his hands and knees and crawl - on the air - in and out between our legs, just trying to make it difficult. The man was a little mad."

Once Owen became so verbally abusive to Miss Vander Pyl that actor **Lou Merrill** had to be restrained from fighting with him. Several years later she asked Owen why he was so difficult. "Look, this is a tough business," he replied. "If you can put up with me and survive it, you won't have any trouble with any directors as long as you live."

Commercials Paid Better Until. . .

For several years Vander Pyl did many live commercials on network broadcasts. **The Packard Hour** paid actors \$25. I did the commercials and got paid \$50," she revealed. "I didn't get calls every week for acting parts, but if you did a commercial and the sponsor liked you, you would get called back. So I was working every week. I did this in spite of radio actors looking down on ad work." After the American Federation of Radio Artists (AFRA) was formed, actors received higher pay than the commercial performers.

Fate Figures

During the forties, Vander Pyl's radio work included jobs on **Amos 'n Andy**, **The Dinah Shore Show** and **Fibber McGee and Molly**. After losing the audition for the lead in a short-lived series called **Chicken Every Sunday**, Vander Pyl received some memorable advice from actress Jan Morgan: "If the part is yours, nobody can take it away from you and if the part is not yours, there's no way you're going to get it anyway." Irony: the series soon folded.

A few weeks later, she received an emergency phone call asking her to be at NBC in 30 minutes to substitute for **Dorothy Lovett** on **Father Knows Best**. Later, she was offered the role permanently, which she first refused because of her friendship with Miss Lovett. It was Lovett,

however, who convinced her to take the role. In 1948, the show was moved temporarily to Chicago because of other commitments of actor Robert Young. Dorothy Lovett reassumed the role of Betty Anderson while Jean Vander Pyl stayed in Los Angeles with her ailing mother.

H.S. Grad Scores

The veteran radio actress traces her desire to perform to a church play she acted in at age four. Later, as a drama student at Beverly Hills High School, she was part of a school voice choir that performed on KMPC, Los Angeles. Director **Mel Williamson** offered her the opportunity to do other programs on the station and Vander Pyl decided to take him up on the offer after she graduated from high school in 1937.

But, upon returning to see him at KMPC, she learned that Williamson had moved on to station KHJ where he was producing **Calling All Cars**. At KHJ Williamson and other directors, including **True Boardman**, hired her for acting jobs. Her early credits also include **Wedding Bells**, **Witches' Tales** and **The Phantom Pilot**.

Radio Daze

"Radio was so nerve-wracking even the best of us got mike-fright. For one ad I had to end a sentence with 'towel, sheet and shirt'." The quatrain required a rather speedy delivery. But I never blew it even though the orchestra, bless 'em, always taunted, "you're going to say it this week!"

"Every radio actor wanted to get into pictures; so did I. **Ronald Coleman** heard me do an ad and recommended me to MGM and I got a part but only as a voice. My biggest beef was that it was hard to get into TV simply because TV people called radio actors 'Voice People' and therefore couldn't do TV. The truth was that many, many radio persons were firstly stage actors."

Got to Emote

She got her first cartoon voice job with the fledgling **Hanna-Barbera Studio** in 1957 as Mrs. Greeply in **Blabber Mouse**. Her favorite animation role was Wilma Flintstone. Her favorite radio role was in **Sherlock Holmes** with **Tom Conway** and **Nigel Bruce** (who shook her hand for a good job). She played an Asian murderess and loved it because "I got to yell, scream, threaten, and carry on!"

As an anecdotal finale, our guest related a time she auditioned for a part in a show her husband was directing. He and **Ezra Stone** were in the booth listening to the readings. It came down to two lady finalists. Mr. O'Meara wouldn't make the final choice. Stone got edgy, "Come on, pick!" "Can't" "All right then, her!" pointing to Jean. "Now, are you satisfied?" "Perfectly! She's my wife." Over the speaker from the booth came Stone's voice, "Congratulations, Mrs. O'Meara. You got the part." Big laugh from the cast--They knew who Jean was even if Ezra didn't.

SPERDVAC will soon add a recording of our interview with Jean Vander Pyl to the General Library.

Ken Niles Passes On

by Wendell Niles, Honorary Member

Ken Niles was one of the true pioneers of radio and the first big West Coast announcer. Ken along with his also famous brother Wendell, and a few more young people, actually changed the face of the world. The stars of Ken and Wendell Niles shine brightly on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Ken was born in 1906 in his beloved state of Montana, in the lovely little town of Livingston, nestled in the heart of the Rockies. He loved the outdoors with the great mountains, the crystal streams, and the big sky. Later the Niles family migrated to Seattle, Washington, where he majored in dramatics.

Ken sang in operettas, played saxophone and was active in the then famous stock company, *The Henry Duffy Players*. This was at the end of the roaring twenties and he wanted to be part of it, so he sold his saxophone and headed for Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, he landed a job as announcer with the Don Lee radio network which later became part of CBS.

Radio in those days consisted of music and people talking into microphones, everything pretty static. Prompted by his background in drama, Ken had the idea that drama could be done on radio; consequently he approached Don Lee with the idea. Mr. Lee thought the idea pretty ridiculous --- drama on radio? Putting on action that you couldn't see? But being a man who came to play, he said give it a go. Ken did and that is how the *Theater of the Mind* was born.

He announced and helped produce many of the first big shows from the west coast; shows like *Witches Tales*, *California Melodies*, *The Bing Crosby Show*, and so many more.

One of the biggest and most successful shows of that early period that Ken announced and co-produced was *Hollywood Hotel*, sponsored by Campbell Soup, with **Louella Parsons, Judy Garland, Dick Powell, Francis Langford** and almost every star in Hollywood. This was the time he met and married his delightful Nadia. These were Radio's "Golden Years," at a time when announcers were stars. (Now the stars are the announcers.)

Ken is the first to leave an illustrious family. He is survived by brother Russell Niles, the former chancellor of New York University and president of the New York Bar Association, brother Donald, a much respected judge in Seattle, Grace his beloved sister and Wendell of radio and television fame.

Ken leaves Nadia, his wife of fifty seven years, daughter Denise, son Ken Jr., several grand children and millions of friends.

Left over from February

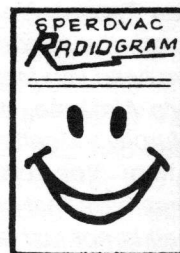
We cannot end this column without noting one of the most important events in our history. On March 3, 1939, Mr. Lothrop Withington, Jr. swallowed a 3-inch goldfish at Harvard Union to win a \$10 bet.



Jerry Hausner snapped this photo of Jean Vander Pyl, Edw. G. Robinson, Paula Winslow, and Ona Munson on BIG TOWN in 1940.

SPERDVAC

Friends



MARTHA (TILTON) BROOKS
ART HERN
ELLIOT REID
IVAN DITMARS
RICHARD CHANDLEE
TRUDA MARSON
EZRA STONE
PAULA WINSLOW E
CARROLL CARROLL
ANDY RUSSELL
GLENHALL TAYLOR
PEGGY WEBBER
EDDIE MAYEHOF
JIM KING
VEOLA VONN NELSON
WILLIAM FROUG
BETTY LOU GERSON
MARY LEE ROBB CLINE
JACK & MARY KRUSCHEN

PHIL LESLIE
KAY ST. GERMAIN
JUNE FORAY
ART GILMORE
JOHN GUEDEL
LES TREMAYNE

We are so grateful to the many Friends of SPERDVAC who have contributed \$50 or more to help defray costs of the society. The above members have donated funds during the past year.

Listen -- Hear! Allen's Antics On Tap

FRED ALLEN SHOW May 1, 1940-CBS RADIO

The show was written mainly by Artie Auerback and Herman Wouk, who met in college, and Don Johnson another writer and director Bill Schorr, all pulling together to form a solid knit staff that gave Fred Allen the back-up and support he needed to grind out those 1-hour weekly programs. With lots of other help too, Fred got the credit for this "different" type of comedy show. A sample of dry-humor in the Allen-vein, a "take-off" on those panel-quiz shows that were heard regularly on radio at the time, that Fred despised, but ended up appearing on a TV panel later, after the end of his radio show. Those that didn't get to "hear" him then on those live shows, we say "try", and "listen". . . concentrate. . .

Allen: And now, the Mighty Allen Art Players with a burlesque on one of radio's most popular programs. .it's called. .Information Tease, or the Guest Is Always Right, except on a quiz show. .

Von Zell: This is station FOO, operating on a frequency that gets on your nerves, we bring you the time, brought to you by the makers of Bango cigars, when you hear the chiseler inhale his Bango, it will be exactly 9:48. . . .

Peter Van Steeden: (Bang) Ow! Where's my nose?

Von Zell: Stop snoring America. .it's time for Information Tease! Yes, expertly unrehearsed, every question used, the sender gets \$5 and if you stump our experts, we send you last year's unabridged complete set of Farmer's Almanac, bound in burlap by our sponsors, Mother Murphy's Meatballs! (fanfare)

Allen: Yes, folks. .Mother Murphy's Meatballs! The only meatballs that contain helium. The Mother Murphy Meatball is not just another meatball in pill form, no sireee, it contains real liquid quality rubber, if you drop a Mother Murphy Meatball on the floor, don't be embarrassed. It will bounce right back on your plate! Have fun with Mother Murphy Meatballs. .dribble them up and down your table. Tie on on your spaghetti and play yo-yo, but buy them. Buy-spelled B-U-Y. As in by-by.

Von Zell: And now our board of experts. . .

Allen: I thought you'd never ask. .! We have myself, Tifton Battiman, as m.c. and celebrated newspaper columnist, Franklin O. Baddams, better known as FOB. Next, famous sports writer and animated encyclopedia, John Tieran. . . .

Peter: Oh, yes, that's me. .uh. .with a gretting. .a greeting, that's a common usage, hello--is actually a corruption of the Latin gladiators salute morituri te salutamus. .

Allen: Don't show off, Mr. Tieran. .

Peter: I was just warming up. .

Allen: Oh, excuse me. .and shut up! Next, we have our noted music critic, and wit, Oscar Bevant. .and as Beethoven said to Mozart, notes to you there Mr. Bevant. .ha-ha-ha. .oh well, let's move on. Our first question from Mrs. Ira Wack, Rat Falls, Arkansas. Mrs. Wack says there are

three colors in the American Flag. . let's name two. Now, Mr. Tieran's hand is up. Now it's down. Now it's up. Now it's down again. Now it's up. . .

Von Zell: (as Bevant) Blue. .?

Peter: (as Tieran) My wife grew the prettiest roses this year.

Allen: What colors were they, Mr. Tieran?

Peter: Red and White.

Allen: Amazing gentlemen, you were to name only two but got all three of the colors in the American Flag! Well, we are hot tonight, so let's try this one from Harley Drag of Cheesecake, Ohio. Compete this rhyme. . .I like coffee, I like tea, I like the girls and the girls like . . . Can you finish that line?

Von Zell: Gable

Allen: No, no, really now. .who is the greatest musical genesis alive today?

Von Zell: Me

Allen: Quite correct! I just don't know how you do it, gentlemen! (cheers, laughs) Now, from Mr. Roquefort Fumes, Bedspreed, Iowa comes this question. .but wait, we need a commercial here, in fact we need a lot of things here, but let's do away with the commercial and get to another question. .quickly now, here it is. .name the following fish by these sounds they make underwater. . .all right Mr. Tieran?

Peter: I wasn't doin nothin. . .I just had my hand up wetting my cowlick.

Allen: Well, you'll be in trouble if you try to catch my eye to leave the room from now on. .! Ah, yes, Mr. Bevant, you know the answer?

Peter: Don't bother him, he's asleep.

Allen: Did he leave a message?. .all right Mr. Tieran. .listen to this sound and tell me the name of the fish making this sound underwater. (sound of bubbling water)

Peter: Very simple, that's a fellow in Liggett's drugstore finishing a chocolate soda.

Allen: Wait a minute. .you said a fish?

Peter: The man's name is Trout.

Allen: Why yes, how stupid of me, that is absolutely correct. .that is as correct as it will ever get. Elementary gentlemen, but let's send \$5 to everyone for sending these absolute brain-breaking questions in to this so illustrious panel of nit-wits. (cash register rings). . .

Allen: Ah, Mr. Bevant and Mr. Tieran. .get your hands out of the cash register!

HUGH'S HUES

of War Information chief Elmer Davis began a fifteen minute weekly news broadcast in March, 1943, which was carried by four networks. . . . **Truth or Consequences** opened on four CBS stations March 23, 1940. It was the hit of radio quiz shows, jumping to the top ten and ran continuously until 1957.

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



Send your wants in
O T R - related
material to
McGee's Closet, %
Barbara J. Watkins,
PO Box 561,
South Pasadena,
CA 91030

WANTED: RCA microphone Type 44 BX. Also transcriptions of the Pure Oil and General Motors broadcasts of the Edwin Franko Goldman Band (circa 1928) on the NBC Radio Network. Contact: Edward A. Greene, 100 Garden City Plaza, Garden City, NY 11530.

WANTED: 12/26/88 broadcast from KCRW, Santa Monica, CA, *Theatre of the Imagination: Radio Stories by Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre*. Prefer 1/4-track 1800' open reel. This six-hour anthology will fit that format perfectly. Will trade or provide two additional blank 1800' reels in exchange. Contact: Bob Arlow, 2346 McCrea Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362, (805)529-4161.

WANTED: Good quality copies of *The Big Show*, NBC 1950-52. Looking for best quality I can find on reel-to-reel. Also looking for pictures or any other *Big Show* memorabilia. Would like to correspond with *Big Show* collectors and fans. Contact: Gilbert Smith, 248 South 36th Street, San Diego, CA 92113, (619)233-8646.

WANTED: Someone who can help transfer a pair of wire recordings to tape. Contact: Steve Jelf, Parker Farm, Box 200, Route 5, Arkansas City, KS 67005.

WANTED: A four-track reel-to-reel recorder; all the shows of *The Hall of Fantasy*, ran from January to September 1953; NIGHTBEAT, and BARRIE CRAIG CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATOR. Contact: Peter Roseboom, 52 Mill Street, Binghamton, NY 13903, (607)722-1777.

FOR TRADE: Four BBC Theatre episodes: *Kill Me, The Big Bite, Murder for Fun* and *Hunt the Man Down*. Will trade individually or as a group. Prefer *I Love a Mystery, Suspense, Escape, or Lights Out*. Will consider books on OTR history. Contact: Steve Weeks, 121 Toles Rd., N.E., Rome GA 30161.

..... The famous old animal, vegetable or mineral parlor game in which an unknown object had to be named in twenty questions or less came to Mutual February 2, 1946. It ran until 1954. One of the many radio shows to switch to TV, it opened on NBC November 26, 1949 and closed May 3, 1955 on ABC.

NOTE!

Those who live in the Los Angeles area will want to know that both Ray Bradbury and Norman Corwin will appear on KPFF's Hour 25 on Friday evening March 31st at 10 pm. KPFF is 90.7 FM. Until next month please keep in touch and don't forget to vote.

SPERDVAC notes with sadness, the passing of:

Rad Robinson who sang with Ken Darby and the Kingsmen; Herb Morison who described the crash of the Hindenberg; Donald Vorhees, musical conductor on The Bell Telephone Hour; Art Rush, long-time producer and Friend of Roy Rogers; Frank Hursley, fine radio writer of Suspense plus other dramatic shows. (Frank and wife Doris Hursley wrote many of the *That's Rich* which starred Stan Freberg.); Mandel Kramer, outstanding radio actor and voice man who worked on almost every show done from New York including the starring role as *Johnny Dollar*.

NOREEN GAMMILL IS REMEMBERED by Rex Quinn

21 December 1988 Noreen Gammill died rather suddenly. October 1981 she was guest speaker at SPERDVAC meeting in Buena Park, CA. Her picture and story front paged Vol. VI No. 10 *Radiogram*. That piece detailed her amazing media acting career.

In addition she, in later years, became a writer. She wrote a Civil War romance novel, *The Agony of Virtue*, and was working on a book that would best be described as an autobiography. A story she liked to tell was about the time she was auditioning some young men for the Sunny Valley show. They sang well but she felt that they had trouble reading lines. Also, she only wanted one or two of them and they wouldn't break up the group. So, they went on their way and the leader changed his name from Leonard Sly to Roy Rogers and the group became known as the Sons of the Pioneers. We regret the passing of this great radio talent.

CAL ART SCORES AGAIN

Congratulations to The California Artists Radio Theater and producer Peggy Webber for another fabulous effort. On February 12th they produced *APresidential Love Story*. Portions were taken from Norman Corwin's production which aired in 1940 on *The Cavalcade of America*. Corwin was on hand to direct some of the segments which aired on KUSC in Los Angeles. Others who took part in the broadcast were Pat Butrum as Lincoln; with Jeanette Nolan, Dan O'Herlihy, Kathleen Freeman, Parley Baer, Lou Krugman, Vance Colvig, Eddie Firestone, William Woodson, Sean McClory, Peggy Webber. The 60 minute program was outstanding. Peggy's next production is scheduled to be *The Importance of being Earnest*.

SPERDVAC



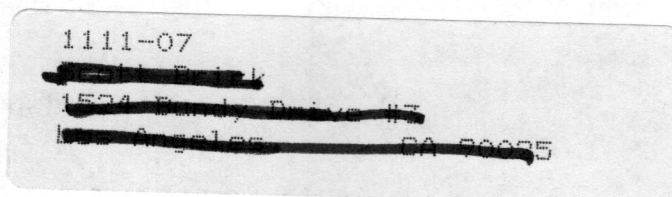
The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy

SPERDVAC RADIOGRAM

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



FIRST CLASS MAIL



DEADLINE

APRIL ISSUE
17 March 1989

From Under the Green Eyeshade



Beware, Sperds! The Ides of March, you know! Now, we'd like to test your elocution. Please observe and recite at a goodly speed the following just like the auditioning announcers at NBC had to do back in the early days.

"A sacrilegious son of Belial who suffered from bronchitis, having exhausted his finances, in order to make good the deficit, resolved to ally himself to a comely, lenient and docile young lady of the Malay or Caucasian race. He accordingly purchased a calliope and a coral necklace of a chameleon hue and, securing a suite of rooms at a principle hotel, he engaged the head waiter as his coadjutor. He then dispatched a letter of the most unexceptional calligraphy extant, inviting the young lady to a matinée. She revolted at the idea, refused to consider herself amenable to his desires and sent a polite note of refusal, on receiving which he procured a carbine and a bowie knife, said that he would now forge letters hymenical with the queen, went to an isolated spot, severed his jugular vein and discharged the contents of his carbine into his abdomen. The debris was removed by the coroner."

Courtesy of Dresser Dahlstead.

The gauntlet we tossed last issue regarding radio's first DJ was picked up by J.R. Ahern and Dick Joy. To quote from Mr. Joy's letter, "The first DJ was probably on KQW, San Jose, which competes with KDKA, Pittsburgh, as the 'first radio station', circa 1920-ish. Surely not 1902!" Now read Mr. Ahern's letter in **Vox Pop** this issue.

See! It was KQW, San Jose, Ca, just as we wrote here, and Mr. Joy notwithstanding, probably about 1902. However, we shall, as suggested, write the "San Josey Libe" for info and report their response next time. Thanks to the two radio gentlemen for taking the bait. Anybody else out there willing to enter the tourney?

In his letter, Dick Joy discussed other matters. See-**Vox Pop**:

Ed stands corrected on the restaurant mentioned last time--it was indeed Brittingham's, and, further, t'warn't KQEW, rather KQW. We're questioning Mr. Dahlstead's citing of the original brace of NBC networks as Orange and Green, later called Red and Blue. Was this right? Or did we hear wrongly?

Please, if you change your address, send us PO card notification quickly--you'll get your 'gram that way and we'll save postage. For you locals, note the changed March meeting place. Map included at no extra cost. VOTE!

Won't see you 11 March. Will be in Imperial Valley and May-hee-ko! Read you, Ciao. RMK